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Pope Francis pleads for end to Russian war in Ukraine

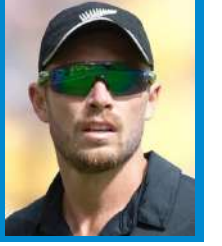
Detailed News On Page-07

Young people to pursue Quaid's footprints

Detailed News On Page-02

New Zealand gearing up for Pak challenge

Detailed News On Page-06



Briefs

'Project Imran' was a failure

DNA

LAHORE: Federal Minister of Railway Khawaja Saad Rafique on Sunday said that bringing Imran Khan into power was a huge mistake. The federal minister while taking a jibe at Imran Khan said that it was very unfortunate that the use of foul language became a common practice in Pakistani politics. While addressing the PML-N workers, Saad Rafique said "We did not protest even when we were thrown away into jail cells, they (PTI) have 4 provincial governments and should use the power to serve the nation by coming back to NA if they want to negotiate."

Fawad: Our numbers are complete

DNA

LAHORE: Senior Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leader Fawad Chaudhry said on Sunday they had requisite numbers for the vote of confidence. He told media in Zaman Park that assemblies would dissolve at any cost because they had 187 members for confidence vote - required numbers are 186. Mr Fawad added that the session for discussing resignations in the National Assembly would be held on Wednesday. Fawad Chaudhry has said that the assemblies will be dissolved at all costs. He said that a meeting of the parliamentary party will be summoned soon.

PML-N to form govt in Punjab

DNA

LAHORE: Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Sardar Ayaz Sadiq claimed on Sunday the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) will form its government in Punjab in January. Addressing a public gathering in Tajpura, Mr Sadiq said that his party supreme Mian Nawaz Sharif will soon return to the country to get it out of all the crises. Mr Sadiq claimed his party will claim majority in the next general elections.

Imran 'confident' Elahi to dissolve PA after trust vote

The PTI chief says that he foresees elections taking place in April 2023

ABID RAZA



LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan said Sunday he is "confident" that Punjab Chief Minister Parvez Elahi will dissolve the provincial assembly after he wins the confidence vote. The Lahore High Court (LHC) earlier this week reinstated Elahi as the chief minister in the country's largest province on the condition that he would not disband the legislative but did not restrict him from taking a vote of confidence. The court will resume hearing the case on January 11 and Imran Khan, while speaking to senior journalists in the provincial capital today, said Parvez Elahi would take the vote of confidence before it. Following the confidence vote, the PTI plans on dissolving not just the legislature in Punjab, but Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as well, the deposed prime minister said.

Continued on Page 06

PTI lawmakers to visit NA on Wednesday

DNA

LAHORE: PTI leader Farrukh Habib said on Sunday that lawmakers from his party would be visiting the National Assembly on Wednesday for the acceptance of their resignations as members of the lower house of parliament. The PTI had announced mass resignations from the NA in April this year, a day after party chief Imran Khan's ouster as the prime minister through a no-confidence vote and shortly before Shehbaz Sharif was elected as his successor. Habib while speaking to the media in Faisalabad today that "we are going to the National Assembly on Wednesday to get our resignations accepted". He maintained that all PTI lawmakers had submitted their resignations in writing. "But they accepted just 11 resignations on the basis of mala fide [intentions]," he went on to say, adding, "Now accept our resignations. Why are they being evasive?"



LAHORE: Federal Minister for Railways and Aviation Khawaja Saad Rafique calls on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. DNA

US embassy bars staff from visiting Marriott Hotel

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The US embassy in Islamabad on Sunday prohibited its staff from visiting the city's Marriott Hotel due to concerns of a "possible attack". A security alert issued by the embassy said the US government was "aware of information that unknown individuals are possibly plotting to attack Americans at the Marriott Hotel in Islamabad sometime during the holidays". The embassy also urged all its personnel to refrain from "non-essential, unofficial travel in Islamabad throughout the holiday season" due to the red alert declared in the city and the ban on public gatherings.

The embassy advised its staff to exercise vigilance at events, places of worship, and avoid locations with large crowds; review their personal security plans; carry identification and follow requests from law enforcement; be aware of their surroundings and monitor local media for updates. The prohibition comes two days after a suicide bombing in the capital killed a policeman and wounded six others. The capital administration had subsequently banned all types of gatherings, especially activities related to the upcoming local government elections, for two weeks and declared a high alert in the city for 48 hours.

Taliban ban 3 foreign NGOs stop work in Afghanistan

NEWS DESK

KABUL: Three foreign aid groups, including Save the Children, announced on Sunday they were suspending their operations in Afghanistan after the Taliban ordered all NGOs to stop their women staff from working. The announcement came as top officials from the United Nations and dozens of NGOs operating in Afghanistan met in Kabul to discuss a way ahead after the Taliban's latest restriction delivered a blow to humanitarian work across the country. "We cannot effectively reach children, women, and men in desperate need in Afghanistan without our female staff," Save the Children, the Norwegian Refugee Council and CARE said in a joint statement. "Whilst we gain clarity on this announcement, we are suspending our programmes, demanding that men and women can equally continue our lifesaving assistance in Afghanistan." Saturday's order issued by the Taliban authorities drew swift international condemnation, with governments and organisations warning of the impact on humanitarian services in a country where millions rely on aid.

Six soldiers martyred in Balochistan

Captain Fahad, Lance Naik Imtiaz, Sepoy Asghar, Sepoy Mehran and Sepoy Shamoon embraced Shahadat

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

RAWALPINDI: A Pak Army Captain, and five other soldiers embraced martyrdom on Sunday in two different incidents. According to ISPR, based on credible intelligence, a clearance Operation is underway in Kahan area of Balochistan since 24 Dec 2022. On Sunday, an IED exploded close to the leading party. Resultantly, Captain Fahad along with four other brave sons of soil Lance Naik Imtiaz, Sepoy Asghar, Sepoy Mehran and Sepoy Shamoon have embraced Shahadat, laying their lives in defence of the motherland against an externally perpetrated threat of terrorism. Such cowardly acts by inimical elements cannot sabotage the hard earned peace and prosperity in Balochistan. Security Forces remain determined to challenge their nefarious designs, even at the cost of blood and lives. The sanitization Operation continues in the area to apprehend perpetrators. In another incident, a terrorist was killed and a soldier martyred during an exchange of fire between terrorists and security forces during an intelligence-based operation (IBO).

Continued on Page 06

Five dead in triple bomb blasts

DNA

QUETTA: At least five people were killed and 13 others injured as three separate blasts hit Balochistan - two in Quetta and one in Kohlu district - officials said on Sunday as the nation battles rising terrorism. The third blast occurred in the evening when unidentified men threw a grenade at a police checkpoint in Quetta's Satellite Town, injuring three on-duty men, law enforcers said. Moments before this, an improvised explosive device (IED) blast in Kohlu district killed five people and injured six others, Balochistan Levies said in a statement. The security officials said the injured

Continued on Page 06

Inside...

- PIDE Unveils Crucial Charter of Economy - Page 02
- HEC invites proposals for technology development fund - Page 03
- Chinese green investment: Pak to get 30% renewable energy - Page 04
- China requires all able hands on deck - Page 05
- PKK terror group supporters turn Paris into battlefield - Page 06
- West refuses to negotiate, aims to 'tear apart' Russia - Page 07
- China demonstrates 'strike drills' around Taiwan - Page 08

Putin: Russia ready to negotiate over Ukraine

I believe that we are acting in the right direction, we are defending our national interests, the interests of our citizens, our people

AGENCIES

MOSCOW: Russia is ready to negotiate with all parties involved in the war in Ukraine but Kyiv and its Western backers have refused to engage in talks, President Vladimir Putin said in an interview aired on Sunday. Russia's Feb. 24 invasion of Ukraine has triggered the most deadly conflict in Europe since World War Two and the biggest confrontation between Moscow and the West since the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. There is, thus far, little end in sight to the war. The Kremlin says it will fight until all its aims are achieved while Kyiv says it will not rest until every Russian soldier is ejected from all of its territory, including Crimea which Russia annexed in 2014. "We are ready to negotiate with everyone involved about acceptable solutions, but that is up to them - we are not the ones refusing to negotiate, they are," Putin told Rossiya 1

state television in the interview. CIA Director William Burns said in an interview published this month that while most conflicts end in negotiation, the CIA's assessment was that Russia was not yet serious about a real negotiation to end the war. An adviser to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said that Putin needed to return to reality and acknowledge that it was Russia which did not want any negotiations. "Russia single-handedly attacked Ukraine and is killing citizens," Mykhailo Podolyak said on Twitter. "Russia doesn't want negotiations, but tries to avoid responsibility." Putin said Russia was acting in the "right direction" in Ukraine because the West, led by the United States, was trying to cleave Russia apart. Washington denies it is plotting Russia's collapse. "I believe that we are acting in the right direction, we are defending our national interests, the interests of our citizens, our people.

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PIDE Unveils Crucial Charter of Economy

The Charter impresses upon the need for an independent Planning Commission to be the convergence point of all the planning and development across the country

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), being the nation's premier think-tank, amid continuous calls for the Charter of Economy by different segments of the society as well as political leadership, has presented its "Charter of Economy." The country's economic indicators over the course of its entire history have fluctuated widely without a clear and sustainable growth trajectory. Despite experiencing extreme economic and political experimentation, the country fails to get on the road to development. All thanks to the myopic approach. This was stated by the former Deputy Chairman Planning Commission, Renowned Economist, and Vice Chancellor of PIDE, Dr. Nadeem ul Haque while talking to a group of Senior Journalists here in Islamabad. He said that the focus, thus, has to be long-term, as short-term quick fixes have not worked, and it must start from somewhere. The only way out of the economic turmoil that Pakistan has been stuck in has to be sustained and accelerated growth. How to achieve it? Not without a complete reset of the fundamentals of governance systems and markets. "In this context, a political consensus in Pakistan is critical because implementing any new rules of the game in letter and spirit seems highly unlikely without a broad-based political consensus. First and foremost, the pre-requisite must be policy consistency for at least the next 15 years. Once there is a political consensus, there should be no off-tracking from the set direction, whatever the case may be" VC PIDE added. According to the Press Release issued from the PIDE office, Dr. Nadeem ul Haque further said that through this document, PIDE brings to the spotlight the real issues that matter, hitting right at the core, in an attempt to set the fundamentals right. The Charter has been divided into six

broad themes that include: Governance for the 21st Century, Sludge and Deregulation, Economic Policy Focus, Developing Markets, 3Ts (Trade, Tariff, and Taxation) and Modernization. He said that the PIDE views political uncertainty as the root cause of Pakistan's economic problems. It is evident that policy inconsistency is due to rapid governmental changes and overlapping roles. The undefined jurisdiction of the arms of the state further magnifies the policy bottlenecks. Hence, it is essential to make amends to the political set-up for better system efficiency and smooth economic performance. So, the Charter calls for empowered local governments and local police, new rules for the cabinet and parliament as well as electoral reforms. The suggestions comprise putting limits on the number of cabinet members, terms limit for parliamentarians and direct Senate elections and so on. Moreover, it is pertinent to note that economic growth is not limited to just traditional economic indicators. Instead, in modern times as has been practiced globally, growth is supported by seemingly minuscule but significantly important areas. This involves a modern civil service and a network of independent organizations across the economy. So, under sludge and regulations themes, the Charter envisions a modern bureaucracy with digitization at the center, monetization of perks and privileges, bidding farewell to colonial examination and lifetime job security, along with independent authorities with the sovereign board of governors instead of centralized bureaucratic control" Mr. Haque added. He further elaborated that the third theme is about the Economic Policy Focus. Here, the Charter impresses upon the need for an independent Planning Commission to be the convergence point of all the planning and development across the country. This would bring synergy, efficiency and a collective approach leading to better outcomes. Addition-

ally, it recommends the Parliamentary Budget Office to enhance the technical side of the budget-making process. PIDE, here, is also in favor of initiating five years plans once gain for policy consistency and stable economic signaling. Besides that, an independent Debt Agency is also included in the blueprint. He said that next theme is about developing markets. The Charter focuses on three key markets: energy, agriculture and real state. The basic argument is to reduce the government footprint, modernize the processes and let the markets evolve and function on their own. Dr. Nadeem ul Haque added that then comes 3Ts. Taxation, Tariffs and Trade. Firstly, make taxation simple and progressive, while universal income tax treatment should be followed. Secondly, tariff lines must be rationalized and reduced. A clear perspective is required regarding the extent of openness, and broader guidelines for policy directives must be present. Thirdly, a 15-year Export Policy - owned and monitored by an "Export Cell" and by the Independent Planning Commission should be initiated. Having said that, the policy should be targeted to enhance competitiveness rather than spoon-feeding. "In the last theme, PIDE's Charter of Economy talks about vertical, dense and inclusive cities. It also urges to unlock the dead capital in Pakistani cities. In a nutshell, cities should be the engines of growth. Lastly, it makes the case of the internet for all - as a basic necessity if we are to plunge into a modern progressive society" VC PIDE mentioned. However, he said that the PIDE emphasizes that its Charter of Economy must not be mistaken for a policy document, rather it is meant to set the direction for future policy frameworks. PIDE enunciated that the Charter should be considered as a live document, open to changes and improvement. The Institute looks forward to any consultation, feedback or dialogue in this regard.



HYDERABAD: Girls attend musical concert during the 2nd day of 8th Shaikh Ayaz Melo.—DNA

IG Punjab applauds Rahim Yar Khan police

LAHORE: Inspector General Police Punjab Aamir Zulfiqar Khan has appreciated the Rahim Yar Khan Police for safely recovering the four hostages who were kidnapped from the Kacha area. IG Punjab directed that speed up action against criminals should be taken and the process of protecting lives and property of citizens should be made more effective. According to the details, operations of the Punjab Police against the criminals were ongoing in the area of Kacha and in this regard, Punjab Police Rahim Yar Khan took timely action last night and safely recovered the four hostages who were abducted from the area of Kacha. DPO Rahim Yar Khan Akhtar Farooq said that the kidnapers abducted Dr Riaz Dashti and three relatives on the pretext of check-up of patient late at night. As soon as the information was received, a heavy contingent of police chased the accused along with armored vehicles and elite teams. DPO Akhtar Farooq further said that the kidnapers escaped by taking advantage of the fog and darkness, leaving the hostages surrounded by the police. Police were conducting a search operation in the area to find the kidnapers, he said. DPO Rahim Yar Khan further said that the names of the rescued citizens including, Riaz, Siraj, Jan Muhammad and Waheed resident of Bhong. During the search operation, the police took the four hostages into safe custody and handed them over to their relatives. DPO Rahim Yar Khan further said that the actions against the criminals would continue on a priority basis.—APP

Impressive change of guard ceremony held at Mazar-e-Quaid

KARACHI: An impressive ceremony of change of guards was held at mausoleum of Quaid-i-Azam in Karachi on Sunday. The Pakistan Air Force (PAF) cadets handed over the guards' duty to the cadets of Pakistan Military Academy (PMA), Kakul. Major General Umar Aziz was the chief guest on the occasion. He laid a floral wreath at the mausoleum and offered Fateha. He also penned down his impressions in the book of the guests. A flag-hoisting ceremony was held at the Quaid-e-Azam Residency. Sindh Governor Mohammed Kamran Khan Tessori and Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah have laid emphasis on following the principles of Father of the nation Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah for the development of the country. They said we have

come here at the mausoleum to pay tributes to Quaid on his 146th birthday. They stated this while talking to media at Mazar-e-Quaid here on Sunday. Sindh CM Syed Murad Ali Shah said that on the Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah's 146th birth anniversary we should reaffirm our commitment to steer the country out of different crises by forging unity and discipline so that the country he founded could flourish. He said that the nation needed unity to face all the challenges, including the financial and reemerging wave of terrorism so this beloved country that Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah founded with his untiring efforts, visions, and sagacity could attain new vistas of development and prosperity.

He said that a new wave of terrorism has started emerging. "The incident of Bannu and Islamabad are condemnable, and this nation brought into being by Quaid-e-Azam would nip in the bud all the nefarious designs of the enemies of this country," he said. Murad Ali Shah said that on this day we must remember the sacrifices and struggles of the people of Kashmir for their just cause. He said that the people of Pakistan were with the oppressed people of Kashmir. The CM also recalled the problems of the people affected by the devastating floods. "The winter has multiplied their problems and we all must help them at this time of need," he said and added that his government was trying its best to rehabilitate the flood-affected people.—DNA

Kaira says PPP wants assemblies to complete term

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) senior leader Qamar Zaman Kaira on Saturday said that the party leaders wanted assemblies to complete their constitutional terms. Speaking to Private News channel, Kaira said that the people accusing others of horse trading in Punjab Assembly should be questioned first, adding that PPP always wanted assemblies to complete their constitutional terms. In response to a question regarding Lahore High Court's (LHC) ruling to restore Punjab Chief Minister and the Cabinet, the PPP leader expressed regret over the parties taking assemblies matters to court. "Many political leaders have reservations over LHC's ruling to take the matter to next month," he added. Regarding inflation, Kaira said that prices of commodities were increasing in the international market with each passing day, which is directing affecting the country's local market. In response to a question regarding size of the Federal Cabinet, Qamar Zaman Kaira pointed out that the cabinet consists of the same number of ministers mentioned in the constitution.

Sindh Governor, CM call upon pursuing Quaid's principles

KARACHI: Sindh Governor Mohammed Kamran Khan Tessori and Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah have laid emphasis on following the principles of Father of the nation Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah for the development of the country. They said we have come here at the mausoleum to pay tributes to Quaid on his 146th birthday. They stated this while talking to media at Mazar-e-Quaid here on Sunday. Sindh CM Syed Murad Ali Shah said that on the Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah's 146th birth anniversary

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ABBOTTABAD: Addl AC along with Rev. Staff, local police enforced status quo in Selhad village, on public complaints. Give directions to parties with evidences before the concern Revenue officers.—DNA

Kashmiris remember Quaid on his birth anniversary

All the three radio stations of Azad Jammu Kashmir including Mirpur, Muzaffarabad and Tararkheil and AJK TV aired special programs highlighting the marvelous role of the great leader, his meritorious and remarkable services for the emergence of the separate homeland for the Muslims of the Sub-continent

MIRPUR: People across Azad Jammu Kashmir observed the 146th birth anniversary of the founder of Pakistan, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah on Sunday with great enthusiasm and devotion coupled with the renewal of the pledge to continue the individual and collective role for making Pakistan a progressive and prosperous state as envisioned by the Father of the Nation. The day dawned with special prayers in the mosques throughout AJK for the integrity, solidarity, progress and prosperity of Pakistan and for the early success of the Kashmir

freedom movement. Special ceremonies were held in all the districts and its tehsil headquarters of the State including Muzaffarabad and divisional headquarters of Mirpur and Rawalakot. Various social, political and intellectual organizations held special programs to celebrate the Day with great fervor and enthusiasm. Special cake cutting ceremonies were by the jubilant participants to express their heartfelt love and affection with the great leader of the Sub-continent. Speakers paid glorious tributes to the founder of Pakistan besides highlighting his life, ideas

and achievements. In Mirpur, a special ceremony in this connection was hosted by a Kashmir based NGO Jinnah Foundation which was addressed by Deputy Chief of the organization Dr. Khalid Yousaf, Secretary General Altaf Hamid Rao and others who paid rich tributes to Quaid-e-Azam for his unprecedented services for the Muslims of the Sub-continent. The speakers said that the best way to pay tribute to Quaid-e-Azam was to continue his mission with national spirit and devotion as envisioned by the late Father of the Nation. They

reiterated Kashmiris' resolve coupled with the renewal of the pledge to continue to follow the policy of founder of Pakistan on Kashmir, who had described Kashmir as the jugular vein of Pakistan. They said that the people of Jammu and Kashmir would continue their freedom struggle for the liberation of occupied Jammu Kashmir from the Indian illegal and forced rule and for the achievement of their legitimate right to self determination and to reach their ultimate destination, Pakistan. They emphasized for performing their individual and collective role for turning Pakistan

a true Islamic welfare, prosperous state to enter the ranks of the developed nations by strictly acting upon the vision of the Quaid. Similar special ceremonies were also held in other towns of AJK and Pakistan by the Kashmiri refugees under the auspices of various social and political organizations. All the three radio stations of Azad Jammu Kashmir including Mirpur, Muzaffarabad and Tararkheil and AJK TV aired special programs highlighting the marvelous role of the great leader, his meritorious and remarkable services for the emergence of the separate homeland for the Muslims of the Sub-continent.—APP

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

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

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



Hospitals

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



Departments

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

Islamabad Metropolitan

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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....	0321-5744480
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HEC invites proposals for technology development fund

About the duration of the project, the official conveyed that the life of each project would be for a period of not exceeding two years

ISLAMABAD :The Higher Education Commission (HEC) has invited the faculty members to submit proposals under its Technology Development Fund aimed at facilitating institutions of higher learning to serve as engines for socio-economic development of Pakistan. An official of HEC told on Sunday that the fund would finance proposals of completed interdisciplinary applied research for prototype development and industrial value addition for technology-based product or process development. The idea behind this initiative of HEC is to help the productive minds of Pakistan to impact the economy through the development of new and emerging technologies, the official added. This initiative enabled the re-

search ecosystem lied with higher education institutions to be available for the industry with financial and technical assistance (IP, Licensing, and Commercialization) through academic scientists for the solution of indigenous industrial problems. This program has already funded 200 joint academia-industry projects and over 160 licensed to industry for mass scaling and commercialization. A good number of such projects have already started yielding revenue and which is shared with all stakeholders. Considering the facts above, Central Development Working Party approved the project's enhanced scope to give the 4th Call for proposals. Hence, PhD Faculty Members who have ready research, lab scale, or pre-prototype

should submit the proposals with the consortia of industry and academic partners in the thematic areas including climate change and its impact on the socio economics of Pakistan, Telecommunication, Information and Technology/Computers, Engineering Sciences, Micro Electronics, Water, Power, Energy, and Fleet Management and Biotechnology and Allied fields. The other areas include Material Sciences/Man-Made Material (Nanotechnology), Robotics, Defense and Military needs and any other applied discipline which is inductive or conducive to the success of products developed or upscale the process of Industrial level manufacturing. The proposed funded projects would be expected to develop a product or service which

would positively impact, inter alia, the economy, solve a current problem, meet a market need, utilize local raw materials, move current products up the value chain, create large scale employment, and generate the revenue. The applicants have to submit their research proposals on prescribed forms (available online) and the Office of Research Innovation and Commercialization (ORIC), Research Office or Registrar Office of their respective universities must initially scrutinize before endorsing the proposals to HEC for competitive consideration. The applicants may apply for the project through <https://research.hec.gov.pk/> on or before December 30. About the eligibility criteria, the official in-

formed that the faculty members of public and private sector higher education institutions with relevant commercialization partners from industry, investor, private or public sector Research and Development institutes, spin-offs or startups at leading Incubation Centers or Accelerators can apply for the program. The proposals need to be joint academia-industry, multi-disciplinary, and multi-institutional leading to products or services which solve a current problem of industry, society or identify a new opportunity of business that leads to positive cash-flows. About the duration of the project, the official conveyed that the life of each project would be for a period of not exceeding two years.

Authorities take steps to decline begging trend in twin cities

ISLAMABAD: The concerned authorities had taken tremendous solid steps and measures to decline the professional begging trend in the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad. After the completion of the investigation process, during the month of October 2022, a total number of 35 cases were registered against 67 beggars/accused persons and were sent to the concerned Court of competent jurisdiction for trial proceedings, an official in the Ministry of Interior told APP. Due to such measures, he said the rise in begging had witnessed a decline approximately in twin cities and beggars were also encouraged to earn money through various means of laboring and hardworking. The government was utilizing all-out efforts to mitigate inflation, and poverty and provide equal employment opportunities to every segment of society. Professional beggars were found in Rawalpindi at Saddar, Committee, Mureed and Chadni Chowk, Sixth Road, Pindora Chongi, Faizabad, Dhoak Kala Khan and other residential and commercial places while in Islamabad beggars founds at Aabpara, Melody Market, G-7, G-8, H-9 and other sectors. Professional beggars were making crocodile tears to get sympathies of the citizens for alms. Begging is a growing business here at every age and gender like women carrying infants and young men trying to convince through their fake disabilities.—APP

Eco-friendly, plantable stationery options grab public's attention

ISLAMABAD: Eco-friendly stationery options have grabbed the attention of masses due to their plastic-free, plant-free, recycled, and sustainable nature. Talking to APP here on Sunday, the owner of an eco-friendly stationery boutique 'Warq Station', Zainab Goahar said that environment-friendly stationery has used paper infused with seeds, and when the paper is sowed in soil, it germinates growing into a plant. She said the idea is not only to save trees but also aid in reforestation with the use of cotton paper, jute paper and plant fiber paper. "This idea is the very first of its kind in Pakistan that has come up with plastic-free, tree-free, and handmade products", she added. Zainab said that climate change was a problem that was not going away and there had never been a more important time to collectively become more aware of how individuals, corporations and businesses were affecting the planet.—APP

Dealer selling fireworks online arrested

RAWALPINDI: On the special directives of City Police Officer CPO Syed Shahzad Nadeem Bukhari, Ganjmundi police have arrested a firecracker dealer involved in selling firecrackers online by advertising fireworks on social media. According to the details, Police held Tayyab Elahi, who advertised fireworks on social media and sold fireworks online. Police have recovered a large cache of firecrackers from his possession. The SHO said the accused used to advertise fireworks on social media and sell them online. Efforts were underway to nab other facilitators of the accused, he added. SP Rawal Barbar Javed Joya appreciated the performance of the police team and said that endangering the lives of citizens through fireworks is a punishable crime. He made it clear that the crackdown against fireworks would be accelerated.—APP

Communications Ministry revamping its allied depts

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Communications Asad Mehmood is revamping the allied departments of the Communications Ministry to facilitate the masses through the provision of high-quality digitized universal postal services, technical education, and an international standard road network across the country. This was disclosed by National Highway Authority (NHA) Spokesperson Sohail Aftab, who told APP on Sunday that out of 1,603 closed post offices, 442 were opened and recruitment of the required staff to open the remaining post offices was in the final stages. He said that due to non-recruitment for years, around 2,064 posts were vacant, due to which the service was badly affected. He said that the minister was determined to bring innovation to Pakistan Post to meet the modern demands and provide world-class postal services to the public. After the distribution of 1000 more motorcycles, the total number of two-wheelers would be 2359 in the near future, after which arrangements would be made for the distribution of mail through motorcycles in the remaining beats, he added. He further said that the ministry was bringing innovation in the system of payment of military pension that would give facility to the retired soldiers in remote villages and backward areas to receive their pension from the post office. He highlighted that the construction of the Sukkur-Hyderabad Motorway (M-6) was a longstanding demand of the people of Sindh, "which will be fulfilled by the current democratic government". He underlined that M-6 would be completed in a record time of 30 months and it would be constructed according to international standards. "The M6 motorway will have 15 interchanges, a major bridge over the River Indus, 19 overpass bridges, 82 bridges over canals, six flyovers, and 10 service areas, on a 306 km long mega project", the spokesman said. He said, "Along with Sukkur-Hyderabad Motorway, a service road of 61 kilometers will also be constructed." "The estimated cost of the project is Rs 307 billion and the Motorway will pass through the districts of Jamshoro, Hyderabad, Matiari, Benazirabad, Naushahro Feroze, Khairpur, and Sukkur", he said adding that the speed of economic and social development would increase by providing new employment opportunities in the areas through which the M-6 would pass. He said the Bahrain-Kalam section of National Highway 95 was opened after which relief supplies started reaching the flood-affected areas of Matilat, Ariani and Gabral.—APP

PMNH scientists discover rocks and invertebrate fossils collection

ISLAMABAD: Scientists at Pakistan Museum of Natural History (PMNH) have discovered collection of rocks and invertebrate fossils from coastal line of Karachi and adjacent areas through conducting a study recently. According to the PMNH, the study resulted in collection of 3265 well-preserved large and small foraminifera's specimens of different species, 80 specimens of Gastropods and 65 specimens of fossil corals have been collected. Different Rock samples of Gaj Formation (Miocene age) were collected to cover all the lithological and facies variations from bottom to top for further laboratory analysis. The PMNH carried out 11 days geological and paleontological studies at coast line of Karachi and adjacent areas, Pakistan this month. The study was carried out by two researchers from Earth Science Division Aamir Yaseen, Curator and Khalil-ur-Rehman, Associate Curator for collection of invertebrate fossils. Fossil corals and rock samples of Gaj Formation of Miocene age and other exposed Geological Formations in coastal areas of Karachi, Pakistan. The PMNH was established in 1976, under the patronage of Pakistan Science Foundation (PSF), Ministry of Science and Technology, Pakistan. It has four divisions namely Botanical Sciences, Earth Sciences, Zoological Sciences and Public Services.—APP

Action against smog SOPs' violators in full swing

RAWALPINDI :The administration is taking strict action in accordance with the law against the violators of smog Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and lodged 46 FIRs besides imposing fines amounting to one million rupees during anti-smog operations conducted in Rawalpindi Division in December. Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, Saqib Manan told on Sunday that the authorities concerned on the directives of the Punjab government were taking action against the violators of smog SOPs. He informed that the officials concerned had been directed to ensure surveillance of the industrial units in their respective areas and also penalize the brick kilns not using modern technology. The industrial units causing pollution would be dealt with iron hands, he said adding, action would be taken against the industrial units for using bad quality fuel and burning old tyres for fuel. The Commissioner said efforts were also being made to take action against the stone crushers, brick kilns and vehicles for emitting smoke. It is pertinent to mention here that with the onset of the winter season in November, smog had started to increase, causing air pollution in different cities of Punjab including in Rawalpindi district.

The Punjab government had formulated a 10-point policy to control pollution, which would remain in force until further notice. Fines against smog emissions had also been increased. The Punjab government had issued a notification banning the burning of all types of crops and garbage, smoke-emitting vehicles, factories, brick kilns and stone-crushing plants in all districts including in the Rawalpindi district. Transportation of uncovered building material, traffic obstructing parking and all types of dust-blowing activities had also been banned. The fine for crop burning had been increased to Rs 50,000, the fine for smoking brick kilns has been increased to Rs 100,000, the fine has been increased to Rs2,000 for smoke-emitting vehicles and motorcycles and the fine for smoke-emitting factories, bakeries and stone crushing machines has been increased to Rs 50,000. According to a spokesman of the Commissioner Office, the Rawalpindi administration had also issued a notification instructing the environmental protection department to take action against smog-emitting setups and vehicles. The smog control policy had been put in place by EPD and accordingly squads and teams had also been formed to check violations, he said. According

to the district administration officials, an awareness campaign had also been launched across the district apprising the citizens of the negative effects of smog and the role they could play to mitigate it. The efforts were being made to make the awareness campaign effective so that the citizens themselves could also play a role in mitigating the effects of the smog. The EPD officials informed that there was zero-tolerance policy against smog-emitting brick kilns, industries and stone-crushing plants. The staff concerned was monitoring the quality of smoke with a special gadget on the GT Road and near the motorway in collaboration with traffic police. They said that the anti-smog squads were also monitoring the proper disposal of waste from hospitals and a complete ban was imposed on the burning of plastic waste of any kind throughout the district. The officials added that the Punjab government had established special labs across the province to protect the citizens from the dangers of smog. District Emergency Officer (DEO) Rawalpindi asked the drivers to adopt all out precautionary measures in fog. He advised the people to avoid unnecessary traveling in fog hours. Keep the fog lights of their vehicles on and commute with slow speed by keeping a reasonable distance between

vehicles. He also appealed to avoid roadside parking of vehicles. Chief Traffic Officer, Rawalpindi Tamoor Khan urged the people to take precautionary measures and follow traffic rules during smog season. The drivers should also attach dense fog lights on to their vehicles, he maintained and advised the citizens to maintain vehicles at a greater distance from each other during smog season. According to experts, smog is a kind of air pollution which was originally named after smoke and fog mixed in the air. It affects visibility, human health and crops. The phenomenon has been observed in the country for the past few years, they added. The Dean of Public Health Rawalpindi Medical University Professor, Syed Arshad Sabir declared the situation dangerous for human health. He said that due to air pollution, the problems could arise for the residents when they breathe, especially people who have asthma or respiratory diseases. Air pollution is also harmful to the health of pregnant women, he added. He stressed the fact that the citizens need to take special care, especially during smog season. He said that the citizens should restrict their outdoor movements and should concentrate on breathing through their nose during the smog season. —APP

Latest technology up lifts standard of NHMP

ISLAMABAD: The current democratic government has helped the National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP) in the last six months to develop and adopt technological solutions to enhance road safety. Talking to APP here on Sunday Spokesperson of NHMP, Asad Shabir said that NHMP has been equipped with body-worn cameras, rescue cutters, wireless equipment, FM stations, generators, and solar systems. He said with the support of the government, NHMP has installed drone cameras, and spotters, and installed variable sign boards that inform drivers about speeding, fog, and other safety measures. He said that the key objective of technological enhance-

ment was to provide a safe and secure driving environment by promoting safety and security on roads through effective enforcement. He said NHMP aims to help road users while observing the highest level of courtesy, integrity, and professionalism. He said that the efficiency of the department has increased with the purchase of night surveillance devices, cameras, wireless devices, and docking stations. He said that a National Driving License Repository has been set up which has centralized the records of over 9 million licenses from all provinces which has helped in identifying duplicate documents. He said that NHMP has launched a Demerit System which keeps a record of violations. "A driver loses six points

on 20 violations and after losing 20 points, the license would be suspended", he informed. He emphasized that a monitoring system has been introduced for public service vehicles to monitor lane discipline and over-speeding. He said that public service vehicles have been advised to install dashboard cameras similar to black boxes which will be used for both training and safety. Asad said that a pilot project was started on Lahore-Sialkot Motorway in collaboration with Frontier Works Organization (FWO) to solve the problems of e-tolling, adding that remote control centers as a successful project. Improved communication. He informed that live camera feeds of FWO and National Highway Authority was provided to NHMP's state-of-

the-art command and control center which enhanced the quality of police operations. He said that two-wheelers were violating the rules on highways causing loss of property and lives. To address this issue a letter was written to the engineering board for sensitizing the motorcycle manufacturers regarding the adoption of security measurements as per law, he informed. He said NHMP gave safety briefings to the motorcyclists about the importance of helmets and gave away complimentary helmets. He said that high-level meetings were held with the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) for safety reforms in view of incidents of fire and accidents in oil tankers. He said the #Nomore cam-

aign was launched during which violators were chased and fined heavily along with banning the unfit, overcharged, and overloaded vehicles. He said it was made mandatory that vehicles on long routes will have two drivers. He said NHMP focused on the availability of emergency exits, window-breaking equipment, fire extinguishers, first aid boxes, and road safety cones. Passengers can call the 24-hour helpline on non-availability of these facilities and strict action will be taken against vehicles running without these items. Asad informed that during six months five motorways were declared as tourist carriageways and tourist facilitation desks

were established to provide the key information for safe journeys. He said capacity enhancement training of 153 employees was held in the training colleges. He underlined that the media projection of NHMP improved after collaboration with 120 TV networks, regional networks, and newspapers. 250 messages on safety briefings were issued and Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) advised the media to broadcast public service messages, he informed. He said that senior officials including the inspector general appeared in the media and gave safety messages, adding that celebrities, journalists, and icons were reached out for the creation of safety messages.—APP

Briefs

China to increase investment in Pakistan's power sector

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Chinese Government would further increase investment in the power sector of Pakistan, said Chinese Ambassador Nong Rong while addressing the Health, Safety and Environment (HSE) ceremony held here. The National Electric Power Regulation Authority (NEPRA) has celebrated the outstanding achievements of NEPRA's licensees in Occupational HSE. Chairman NEPRA, Tauseef H. Farooqi chaired the ceremony while the Chinese ambassador graced the event as Chief Guest. The Ambassador appreciated NEPRA's efforts of organizing an amazing ceremony and shedding light on various CPEC energy projects initiated by the Chinese Government in Pakistan vis-a-vis HSE and reiterated his government's resolve to help Pakistan's Power Sector. "The Chinese Government would further increase investment in the power sector, especially in renewable energy," Mr. Rong added. Chairman NEPRA, remarked that HSE issues are at the forefront of his priorities and therefore each licensee shall strive hard to improve its performance in this area. He also elaborated that NEPRA through its PwS drive is making tremendous headways by developing safety protocols and conducting awareness sessions which have resulted in a decrease in accidents and electrocutions.

Readers buying less books due to mobile phones

ISLAMABAD: Readers including writers, intellectuals, authors, poets, students and others were buying less books now a days due to emergence and frequent usage of mobile phones which also decreasing books reading habit among its lovers. Talking to APP, a shopkeeper selling the books on stall in Saddar Rawalpindi said the people were showing less interest in purchasing books from stalls compared to past. Before the emergence of mobile phones, he had sold almost 400 books on weekend but now readers were buying around 40 books. Managing Director of National Book Foundation, Dr Raja Mazhar Hameed said the foundation provide more conducive and enriched supportive academic environment to the authors either writing for children's, school and college going students or at university level. Assistant Professor of Shah Abdul Latif University Khairpur, Dr Sahib Khan said reading books would give readers massive knowledge to compete in the world and also teaching ways of talking and postures.—APP

Chinese green investment: Pak to get 30 % renewable energy

China is already the biggest investor in green energy in Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: CPEC 2022 is going to be wound up with spillover opportune in Pakistan's green energy landscape underpinning the nation's plan to boost the share of its electric power that comes from renewable to 30 percent by 2030. According to a report published by Gwadar Pro on Sunday, imitating year, China-Pakistan green electricity romanticism has blossomed that helped CPEC energy-mix momentum gain perpetuality igniting the ongoing spark and future projects in the sphere of hydro, wind, solar, and others will transform Pakistan environment outlook. Anchoring Pak-China new green corridor announced in 2022, green electricity bond between the two nations will also support Pakistan to meet its Climate

targets and UN sustainable development goals.

When renewable energy is talk of the town across the world, Belt & Road Initiative of China is not behind in contributing towards green revolution. On similar lines, CPEC energy investments from China are now focusing on green energy. It won't be an exaggeration if we say that 2022 brought a new era in Sino-Pak cooperation in renewable energy, as we have witnessed extremely encouraging signs in green energy sector between the two friendly nations. Until now, renewable energy sources make up a very minor fraction of Pakistan's overall power generation mix. According to a recent report of the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority, the installed capacity for wind and solar accounts for roughly 4.2% (1,831 MW) and 1.4% (630 MW) of a total of 43,775



MW, respectively.

China is already the biggest investor in green energy in Pakistan. Currently, out of the \$144 million in foreign investment in solar PV plants in Pakistan, \$125 million is from China, accounting for nearly 87% of the total. Thanks to Chinese investments, a few weeks ago Federal Power Minister Khurram Dastgir Khan inaugurated two new wind energy projects in Jhimpir, Thatta District, Sindh, with an aim to produce cheaper and clean electricity

through indigenous energy sources. Wind projects in this region have been one of several renewable energy projects to have received Chinese investment in recent years. Around 90 kilometers from Karachi, Jhimpir is the heartland of the country's largest 'Wind corridor', which has the potential to produce 11,000 megawatts (MW) of energy from green resources. Another major development took place in Wind Energy promotion when Beijing-based multinational

wind turbine manufacturer, Goldwind corporation launched the first-of-its-kind solution factory in Pakistan. The Solution Factory aims to develop localized solutions for Pakistani wind power plants. Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif recently announced the quick installation of 10,000 MW of solar energy throughout the country to lessen reliance on imported fuel. Experts believe that China will play a big part in installing Solar Power projects as it has previously installed a mega Quad-e-Azam Solar Park. Furthermore, China is also building the cheapest solar material, therefore domestic and commercial consumers prefer Chinese solar kits in Pakistan. Regional Sales Manager of Longi Solar, Li Xiaoping said that said that "we will focus on the distributed solar power in Pakistan by providing more solar panels on roofs for

residents as well as industrial and commercial buildings." The company is also customizing the operation and maintenance of solar devices amid high temperatures, which plagued Pakistan this summer, to adapt its goods to the escalating climate change. There will be measures in place to protect the solar gadgets when a flood occurs after the prediction and alert of extreme weather conditions. During mid 2022, Power Division of Pakistan decided that the 300MW imported coal-based power facility at Gwadar will be abandoned, to replace it with a solar project. China has also been investing in Pakistani hydro power sector for the last several years under CPEC and otherwise. According to a recent report in Pakistani media, China is prepared to assist Pakistan with cleaning its Tarbela Dam using steel straw.

MG Pakistan donates Rs. 15.25 million to flood victims

DNA

ISLAMABAD: MG Motors Pakistan, with the support of its shareholders SAIC International and Pakistan's JW Group, provided a disaster relief fund of Rs. 15.25 million through the Pakistan Alkhidmat Foundation, which is responsible for the procurement and distribution of supplies and medical assistance services. According to Gwadar Pro, the delivery ceremony was held Friday to deliver the supplies to the affected people in Sindh Province. The floods brought about by the monsoon rains from mid-June to the end of August this year have destroyed one million houses, affected the basic livelihoods of 33 million people to varying degrees, and resulted in huge economic losses estimated at US\$50 billion. People from all walks of life in Pakistan and China, including the motor industry, have taken action one after another to donate money and materials.

IT parks - a revolutionary step towards digital era

ISLAMABAD, Dec 25 (APP): With digital growth going through a rapid evolution, Pakistan is inching towards establishing a vibrant network of state-of-the-art Information Technology (IT) parks aimed at providing young professionals a launching pad to execute their innovative ideas and contribute to the national economy efficiently. The software technology parks would not only generate employment opportunities for IT professionals but also attract millions of dollars in precious foreign exchange, boost the IT industry, and increase exports, once they are completed and become fully operational. Currently, work on establishing the IT parks in Karachi at the cost of Rs. 41 billion and Islamabad at the cost of Rs 13.72 billion is underway. Experts believe that after their completion, they would provide job opportunities to around 35,000 IT professionals collectively. Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Syed Amin-ul-Haq said the Karachi IT Park would be a gateway for an innovative future and strengthen the economy. "Karachi IT Park is the largest IT project of its kind in Pakistan, which will benefit not only the citizens of Karachi but also the IT professionals and companies of Sindh and the rest of Pakistan," he added. The establishment of IT Park, Karachi was approved by ECNEC on June 4, 2021 at a capital cost of USD 186.658 million including USD 158.416 million from Korean Exim Bank as a loan and PSDP local share of USD 28.242 million. The project, for which land has been acquired near Jinnah International, would be completed in June 2026.—APP

ICCI calls for following Quaid's vision



DNA

ISLAMABAD Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) has called upon the government to strictly follow the vision of founder of Pakistan Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali for making Pakistan a progressive and prosperous country. He said this while addressing a ceremony organized at Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) to celebrate the 146th birthday of Father of the Nation. A cake was cut and the importance of Quaid's guiding principles

of unity, faith and discipline were highlighted at the occasion. ICCI President said that the economy of Pakistan was in dire straits and implementing the economic vision of Quaid-e-Azam was vital to make the country self-reliant and a welfare state. He said that from the very beginning, Quaid-e-Azam had stressed for developing a strong industrial base besides promoting agriculture and other sectors to reduce Pakistan's dependence on others. He said that Quaid-e-Azam had termed commerce & trade as the life-blood of the economy and emphasized that the

nation should work honestly & integrity to make Pakistan a hallmark of good standards and quality in the world markets. Ahsan Bakhtawari said that the birthday of Quaid-e-Azam reminded us to develop strong unity and stability in every sphere of life including political, economic, cultural, religious and inter-faith harmony to make Pakistan a rising economy. He stressed that the government should focus on enabling the trade and industry to flourish by promoting ease of doing business and take all possible measures to address the key issues of

the business community for economic revival of the country. He said that Quaid-e-Azam had stressed for eradicating the illiteracy, which can be achieved by promoting the SMEs as these businesses are the largest job creators in Pakistan. Engr. Muhammad Azhar ul Islam, Vice President ICCI said that Quaid-e-Azam had desired rapid economic progress of Pakistan. He was fully aware of the economic backwardness and poor economic conditions of the Muslim nation and on numerous occasions he advised the Muslims to learn commerce, industry and technical education to prosper.

China-Pak Youth community brings warmth to Baltistan

ISLAMABAD: In awe of the imposing mountains and the inescapably cold winter, the China-Pakistan Youth Exchange Community paid a three-day visit to the Gilgit Baltistan region and handed over 1,700 packages of food, tarpaulins, quilts, blankets and other supplies to the local people. Following the recent biblical floods, a significant number of GB people are living in tents and makeshift wooden houses as their homes have been devastated by the deluge. Standing by the people of GB, the China-Pakistan Youth Exchange Community distributed the second batch of relief supplies to Gilgit, supported by the Tencent Charitable Foundation and the China Foundation for Rural Development. Relief supplies were distributed in the areas of Gilgit, Ghizer, Khunjerab, Hunza, Nagar and other areas. Accompanied by officials from the local governments and chambers of commerce, the community drove for nearly four hours to the Ghizer district, to distribute anti-disaster and cold-weather supplies to 800 families. Qurban Ali, Chairman of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) Capital Office, lauded the China-Pakistan Youth Exchange Community for its long-term assistance to Pakistan. The community was warmly welcomed and received at the office of the GB Disaster Management Authority (GB-DMA). Zaheer Uddin Babar, Deputy Director of the Authority, briefed the community on the situation in Gilgit and the difficulties faced by the affected people. He also revealed the measures taken by the Gilgit government to rehabilitate the flood victims. He hoped that the community could cooperate with more public welfare organizations to help the affected Pakistanis in their long-term recovery. In Nagar district, where a large number of houses and buildings were destroyed by the floods, the community distributed materials to 400 affected families. Relief supplies were also provided to 500 affected families in Hunza, Khunjerab. Mr. Irshad Sadan, Vice President of the Nagar Chamber of Commerce and Industry, expressed his gratitude to the community for the timely help extended by China to the people of Gilgit.—DNA

Black marketing and smuggling of dollars increasing

ISLAMABAD: Former President of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt on Sunday said the concern expressed by opposition leaders over the deteriorating economy is nothing but crocodile tears. The opposition would have started negotiations with the government to find a solution to the economic mess if they had any inclination for this, he added. Shahid Rasheed Butt said that improving the economy and giving relief to the people is not on the agenda of opposition leaders. He said that the opposition is misleading the people and disturbing the government by showing a new drama every day, which is further affecting the economy. "The drama of dissolving the assemblies has failed and now a new issue is being sought to create problems.—DNA

Economic revival is no obligation of friendly countries

DNA

Former Vice President of FPCCI Atif Ikram Sheikh said saving the sinking economy of Pakistan is not an obligation for international institutions and friendly countries but the responsibility of our leaders. Vague economic

policies are resulting in nervousness among the investors which is damaging to the economy therefore Government should take a clear stance on important economic matters which should support the national interests, he said. Atif Ikram Sheikh who has also served as Chairman PVMA said that country cannot borrow more unless the demands of lenders are met and the government will have to take unpopular decisions to tackle the economic crisis. He said that popular decisions and lavish expenditure for decades have made the country a slave and we have no other option but to follow the dic-

tion of lenders and now the situation has worsened to an extent that the country has to borrow for its defense needs. He noted that external debt stood at \$3.5 billion in 1970, which jumped to \$33 billion in 2004, and now it is over 130 billion dollars because of irresponsible spending. Now Pakistan cannot pay debt and liabilities without taking new loans but there is a limit to it as many governments borrowed heavily for personal welfare and popularity which has weakened the country economically and politically. Now, our economy has lost the strength to withstand internal and

external shocks while health, education, and development are being compromised, he observed. He said that many countries borrowed to ensure development but Pakistan mostly borrowed to bridge the current account deficit but it never tried to reduce imports. The US has lost interest in the war against terror in the region which has reduced the importance of Pakistan but our Government and masses have not learned to spend wisely. Proper handling and reviving the economy is not the responsibility of the US or friendly countries but that of our leaders, he said.



25th December 1876 – 11th September 1948
146th Birth Anniversary

“Freedom, however does not mean license. It does not mean that you can behave just as you please and do what you like, irrespective of interests of other people or of the State.”

(Address to students at Dhaka University, 1948)



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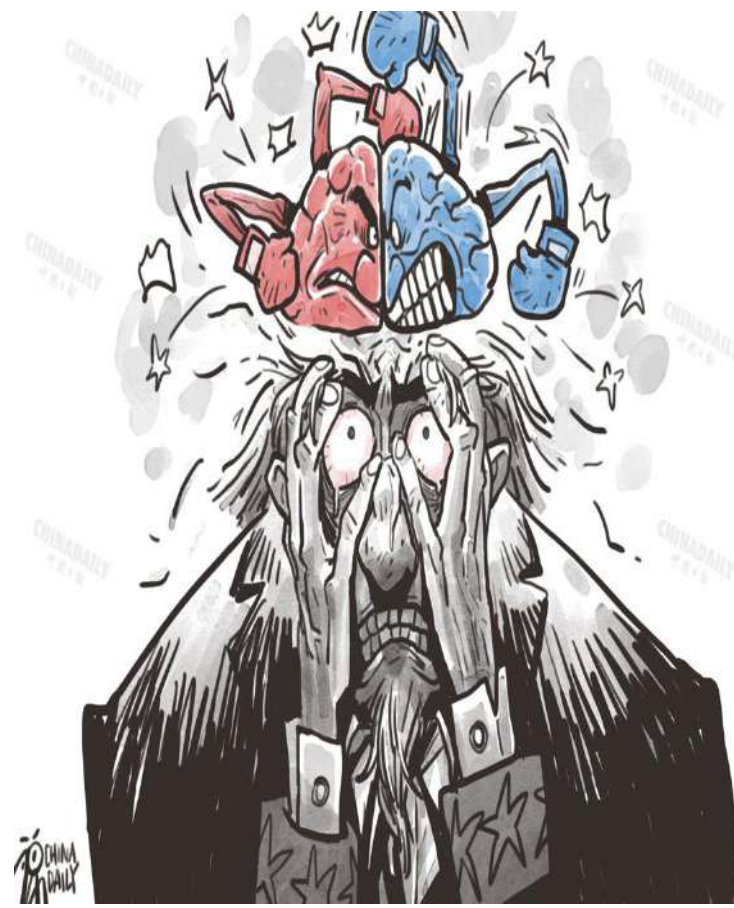
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How Americans can stand against Extremism

Whoever shot the small steel ball through the front window of the Brewmaster's Taproom in Renton, Wash., this month wasn't taking chances. The person wore a mask and removed the front and rear license plates of a silver Chevrolet Cruze. The police still have no leads. The bar's owner, Marley Rall, thought the motivation seemed clear: The attack followed social media posts from conservatives angry about the bar's Drag Queen Storytime and Bingo, slated for the following weekend. Sitting in a corner of the Taproom a few hours before her story time was set to begin, Sylvia O'Stayformore said she didn't care if the Proud Boys showed up to an event that was aimed at teaching children empathy. Protesters or not, she had a show to put on. "I'd never be intimidated by all this," she said. Far-right activists have been waging a nationwide campaign of harassment against L.G.B.T.Q. people and events in which they participate. Drag queen story events are similar to other public readings for children, except that readers dress in a highly stylized and gender-fluid manner and often read books that focus on acceptance and tolerance. This month alone, drag queen events were the target of protests in Grand Prairie, Texas; San Antonio; Fall River, Mass.; Columbus, Ohio; Southern Pines, N.C.; Jacksonville, Fla.; Lakeland, Fla.; Chicago; Long Island; and Staten Island. Some Republican lawmakers are using the power of the state in service of the same cause. Several states are trying to restrict or ban public drag shows altogether, amid a record number of anti-L.G.B.T.Q. bills introduced this year. Republican politicians also used a barrage of lies about trans people in their campaign ads during the midterm elections, funded to the tune of at least \$50 million, according to a report released in October from the Human Rights Campaign Foundation. The silence from a great majority of Republicans on the demonization of, and lies about, trans people has indeed meant complicity — complicity in what experts call stochastic terrorism, in which vicious rhetoric increases the likelihood of random violence against the people who are the subject of the abusive language and threats. After extremists posted online the address of a physician who works with trans children at the hospital, the doctor had to flee the home. "These have been some of the hardest months of my life," the doctor said. Political violence comes in many forms, and the country now faces a choice: Either violence becomes endemic to our democracy or Americans decide not to tolerate it. That's a tall order in a country where too many people consider political violence to be sometimes acceptable. If Americans are going to put a lid on political violence, they'll need more than law enforcement and legislation to do it. Inside the bar, Ms. O'Stayformore read "Twas the Night Before Christmas," "The Little Blue Truck's Christmas" and a few other stories to nine children who squeezed into the crowd among the bar patrons. She led the audience in a round of "Jingle Bells." "It is scary that this violence is happening to our community around the country," Ms. O'Stayformore said. "It's a scary time. But it is heartening to see this community support come out to back us." They have power — to vote and donate money, to lobby elected leaders and set high standards for police departments. They have the power to change the channel or close the tab to ignore violent rhetoric. And they have the power to support the most vulnerable members of their communities from immediate threats, in person if necessary. That's what a healthy and vibrant democracy looks like.

China requires all able hands on deck

The China's National Health Commission stopped disclosing the daily COVID-19 pandemic data on Sunday. That move marks the fight with the virus has entered a new stage, for the data has been widely taken as a foundation for policymaking and adjustment. It signals that more must be done to address the challenges posed by the continuous resurgence of infections nationwide. That the public health system in Beijing, which has the most medical care resources in the country, has been under great strain because of the sharp rise of severe cases caused by the virus should serve to make the dire situations elsewhere in the country imaginable, particularly the rural areas where the gap between people's demands and the supplies of medical resources is much bigger. Although most of those infected with the novel coronavirus recover after several days of home quarantine, the virus still poses a risk to senior residents, especially those with underlying health conditions. China has about 270 million people aged 60 and above, and 36 million aged 80 and above, more than the total of that of all developed economies combined. While the overall capacity of China's intensive care units is much smaller in comparison with those countries. Not to mention the uneven distribution of health care resources nationwide. That's why the COVID-19 prevention and control task force of the State Council, China's Cabinet, recently urged all local governments to prioritize treatment for the aged population, and all major hospitals to serve as the key defensive line for saving lives. The NHC has demanded these major hospitals to double the number of intensive care unit sickbeds by the end of this month from the current 4 percent of their total number of sickbeds to at least 8 percent. Meanwhile, local governments now need to divert their focus and inputs from nucleic acid testing and building collective quarantine stations to increasing the production and supplies of anti-fever and anti-inflammatory medicines to meet the surging demand. Local authorities should also pay attention to the scientific advice and keep the public informed of the pandemic situation. The current wave of infections will peak and people have no reason not to remain confident in the country's fight with the virus, which continues to put saving people's lives and protecting people's health first. Following the basic protocol of good hygiene habits, isolating at home, if one does become infected, and doing one's job well are all important contributions that individuals can make to ensure the country passes this test as quickly as possible.

Changing paradigms: Israel's far-right meets Christian nationalists (part 1)

James Dorsey

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's far-right, Jewish nationalist, ultra-conservative coalition government threatens to put the Jewish state on a collision course with Diaspora Jewry and could weaken or undermine a pillar of Israeli national security: unquestioned US support. The looming crisis with two of Israel's crucial constituencies, the United States and Diaspora Jewry, stems from Mr. Netanyahu's embrace of the far-right and willingness to sidestep the rise of anti-Semitism among Christian nationalists and Evangelicals, two groups that constitute the mainstay of US grassroots support for Israel. The Israel that was Details, leaked to Israeli media, of the coalition agreement between Mr. Netanyahu's Likud party and five ultra-nationalist and ultra-conservative religious parties provide a roadmap to multiple potential crises Israel and the new government could encounter. The agreement entails policies that would legitimize racism, impinge on the secular nature of the state, curtail democratic checks and balances, and pursue annexation of occupied territory and Judaisation of Palestinian-populated areas of Israel proper. Under the agreement, the parties intend to pass legislation that will end a ban on individuals who incite racism from serving in the Knesset, the Israeli parliament. They also plan to extend exemptions for the teaching of core subjects like English and mathematics in ultra-conservative religious schools, increase the funding of ultra-conservative religious schools, legalise public funding of gender-segregated events, and grant parliament the right to override Supreme Court decisions. The coalition partners also agreed to introduce the death penalty for perpetrators of political violence and legalise wildcat settlements hitherto described by Israeli governments as illegal. The accord further involves a vague consensus to move towards annexation of parts of the West Bank occupied by Israel during the 1967 Middle East war and draft plans to Judaize the Galilee and Negev, areas within Israel's pre-1967 borders that are home to significant Palestinian communities. Critics will take heart from potential timebombs that could blow the coalition apart at any point after it takes office even though it is a far more cohesive alliance than the unwieldy partnership of its predecessor that was led by Yair Lapid and Naftali Bennett. The timebombs include legal obstacles to passing a law that would fortify exempting religious seminary students from military service, definitions of the authority over the police of the incoming national security minister and of another hardliner's powers in managing the occupation's civil administration of the West Bank, the level of increased funding for religious seminaries, and Mr. Netanyahu's hesitancy to move ahead with understandings that would curtail the rights of non-Orthodox Jews because of the virulent response from American Jews and potential opposition to the measures by Russian Jewish segment of his electoral base. With the announcement of his government, Mr. Netanyahu rejected suggestions by prominent Israelis and American Jews, including Dan Kurtzer, a former US ambassador to Israel and Egypt, to form a coalition of centre-left parties. The alliance would cancel the prime minister's trial on corruption charges to keep the far right out of power. Some Israeli analysts argue that was never an option because Mr. Netanyahu is a changed man. "The 73-year-old Likud leader is no longer the 'responsible adult' in the room that he was perhaps a decade ago when he rejected calls from within his own party to weaken Israel's judiciary. He has adopted a conspiratorial worldview, leads a party that has shifted dramatically to the right, and is completely beholden to Israel's ultra-Orthodox politicians, who have grand plans to turn Israel into a more fundamentalist and less democratic society."

," said Haaretz columnist Amir Tibon. Seven years ago, Mr. Netanyahu was outraged when police discovered a video of an Orthodox wedding on which attendees celebrated by stabbing a picture of a Palestinian baby was murdered in a firebombing by an ultra-nationalist. At the time, Mr. Netanyahu condemned the revelers as "the real face of a group that poses danger to Israeli society and security." Today, Mr. Netanyahu has nominated one of the wedding's attendees, Jewish Power leader Itamar Ben-Gvir, as national security minister, in his newly announced government. Mr. Netanyahu is betting that his pledge not to govern based on Jewish religious law and tighten Israeli cooperation with the United States against China will appease the Biden administration and his Jewish critics. That is likely a slippery slope at best. Moreover, compounding potential upsets in Israel's foreign relations is a potential crisis in dealings with Egypt and Jordan, the two Arab states that initially concluded peace treaties with the Jewish state, if members of the new government act on their promises. Mr. Ben-Gvir, the incoming national security minister, promised that one of his first acts would be to visit Jerusalem's Temple Mount or Haram ash-Sharif and authorize Jewish prayer on the site. Such moves would infuriate Jordan, the custodian of the Muslim holy sites. At the same time, Avi Maoz, the minister in charge of shaping Jewish identity, has described Egypt as an "enemy state." "Over the years, the power of the Palestinians to motivate Arab public opinion has greatly eroded. The only place that perhaps can still produce protest is the Temple Mount It is also Jordan's weak spot, and when ties between Netanyahu and the (Jordanian) king are far from friendly, the king will have to rely on other Arab leaders and the United States to calm the Israeli government," said a Jordanian-Palestinian newspaper editor. To position itself as the Arab country with the most influence in Israel and a potential facilitator between the Netanyahu government, Palestinians, and other Arab countries, the United Arab Emirates, the Arab state that spearheaded the recognition in 2020 by Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan, took a different tack. It became, together with Bahrain, the first nation to legitimize Mr. Ben-Gvir by inviting him, even before the formation of the Netanyahu government, to attend a national day celebration at its embassy in Tel Aviv. Days later, UAE ambassador Mohamed Al Khaja visited Religious Zionism leader Bezalel Smotrich, another far-right Netanyahu coalition partner, in his office in Jerusalem. The outreach signalled that it would be business as usual after the UAE had initially unsuccessfully sought to convince Mr. Netanyahu not to include Mr. Ben-Gvir in his Cabinet. Changing tacks, the UAE has opted to bet on sustaining its past accomplishment of stopping Mr. Netanyahu from implementing some of his most provocative policies. In 2020, the UAE successfully made its recognition of Israel conditional on Mr. Netanyahu dropping plans to annex parts of the West Bank. The UAE and Bahrain's engagement with the Israeli far-right acknowledges Israeli political trends but sits uncomfortably with the divergence in attitudes of Diaspora Jews and Israelis towards Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands and Palestinians and non-Israeli Jews' concerns about the new Israeli government. Ties to Diaspora Jewry is a pillar of Emirati soft power. Apartheid in the making American Jews expressed a critical view of Israel in a poll on the eve of the November 2022 US midterm elections. Sixty-eight per cent supported placing restrictions on US aid to Israel to prevent it from being used to expand Israel's occupation of the West Bank. The poll contrasted starkly with a hardening of attitudes towards Palestinians and an increasing rejection of a two-state solution by Israeli Jews. Instead, Israeli Jews, according to Yuval Noah Harari, one of Israel's most prominent public intellectuals, embrace the notion of a three-tiered class system with Jews on top of the societal pyramid in a swath of land that stretches from the Mediterranean coast to the Jordan River. The three tiers are "Jews, who have all the rights; some Arabs, who have some rights; and other Arabs, who have very little or no rights. And

this is increasingly the situation on the ground. And this is increasingly also the aspiration or the mindset of even people in government," Mr. Harari said. Mr. Harari's assessment would legitimize assertions by Israeli and international human rights groups that Israel is embracing a system of apartheid that is borne out by the ambitions of Netanyahu's coalition partners. Finance Minister Smotrich's Religious Zionist Party, for example, aims to impose Israeli sovereignty over the West Bank and for Israel to be governed by the laws of the Torah. In addition, the party of Mr. Smotrich, who will be responsible for the civil administration of the West Bank, calls for disbanding the Palestinian Authority and expelling Palestinians "disloyal to Israel" in what would amount to ethnic cleansing. Mr. Ben-Gvir has expressed support for Rabbi Meir Kahane, an American-born, ultra-nationalist writer, and politician who founded the Jewish Defence League that called for expelling Israel's Palestinian citizens and banning sex between Jews and non-Jews. Mr. Kahane was sentenced to five years in prison in the United States on terrorism charges. He was assassinated in 1990 while speaking to an Orthodox audience in Brooklyn by an Egyptian-born American citizen. Mr. Ben-Gvir, who in 2007 was convicted on charges of incitement to violence and support of a terrorist organisation, also spoke positively about Baruch Goldstein, a West Bank settler who killed 29 Palestinians and wounded 125 more when he attacked a mosque in 1994. A picture of Mr. Goldstein long adorned Mr. Ben-Gvir's living room. Mr. Ben-Gvir has clearly defined his vision of policing. He has proposed new rules of engagement with potential perpetrators of violence. Police and security forces would be authorised to shoot on sight anyone they spot holding a rock or a Molotov cocktail if that person "hates" Israel, "a definition to be applied to Palestinians rather than Israeli Jews. In other words, Mr. Ben-Gvir's reforms were likely to reinforce rather than tackle racism in police ranks and the police's failure to address crime in Israeli Palestinian communities that is spiraling out of control. Mr. Tibon, the journalist, noted that Mr. Ben-Gvir was pushing a law in parliament that would make him the de facto commissioner of police rather than just the politician responsible for law enforcement. "This means that a man with a rich past as a suspect and defendant will have (the) final say on criminal investigations and indictments. Israel's attorney general issued a rare public warning against this legislation, but Netanyahu and his allies couldn't care less," Mr. Tibon said. The 13th tribe For a majority of Jews, Mr. Netanyahu's swing to the right amounts to turning Israel into a Jewish state that emphasizes relationships with far-right groups irrespective of their attitudes towards Jews rather than with Jewish communities regardless of their political leanings. "If Israel ceases to be an open democracy, I won't be able to support it. If Israel becomes a fundamentalist religious state, a theocratic nationalism state, it will cut Israel off from 70 percent of world Jewry, who won't qualify into their definition of 'who is a Jew'... I never thought...I would reach that point where I would say that my support of Israel is conditional. I've always said that (my support) is unconditional, but it's conditional," warned former director of the Anti-Defamation League Abe Foxman. "I don't need to tell you how politically, and strategically American Jewry is critical as a cement to the relationship between the two countries, and therefore it is critical that this new government not do damage to relationships; not tamper with Israel's democracy, its institutions, its legal systems, its civil rights of Arab minorities; not tamper with the Law of Return and the status of Christians and Muslims," Mr. Foxman added. Mr. Foxman was voicing a more deeply rooted root in Israel's relationship to Diaspora Jewry, particularly Jews in the United States, who, together with Israeli Jews, account for 80 percent of Jews worldwide. The rot dates to the days before the creation of the Jewish state. It stems from a sense of superiority among those who immigrated or made aliyah, the Hebrew word for ascent or going up, to Israel or were born in Palestine/Israel. Israeli Jews perceive Diaspora Jewry as sheep who, in World War Two, allowed themselves to be led to the Nazi's

gas chambers as opposed to muscular Israelis who respond to threats and attacks with a sledgehammer. Many Jews embraced the notion of the muscular Jew and the Israeli political, scientific, and military successes it produced, even if they disagreed with how that translated into policy toward the Palestinians. A. D Gordon, an influential Ukrainian-born 19th and early 20th century Labour Zionist thinker, described Jews as "a parasitic people...not only in an economic sense, but in spirit, in thought, in poetry, in literature, and in our virtues, our ideals, our higher human aspirations" because they had no roots in Jewish soil. Similarly, A. B. Yehoshua, widely seen as one of Israel's greatest writers, echoed Revisionist Zionist ideologue Ze'ev Jabotinsky when he dismissed American Jews as "playing with Jewishness," unlike Israelis for whom Judaism was part of their daily life. "The painful truth for American Jews is that while they have tended to worship Israeli Jews, their "cousins" have, historically, returned this feeling with a combination of amusement and contempt," said Eric Alterman, author of 'We Are Not One: A History of America's Fight Over Israel,' a recently published book. To be sure, Israel remains a central plank of American Jewish identity. Some 80 per cent of respondents in a 2021 Pew Research Center study said Israel was an essential or substantial part of what being Jewish means to them. However, 27 per cent between 18 and 29 said Israel was not an essential part of their Jewish identity. Fifty-one per cent said they felt little or no connection with Israel. Nevertheless, the divergence in perspectives on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the rise of an Israeli far-right that feels more comfortable with ideologically like-minded forces irrespective of their attitude towards Jews rather than with Jews, no matter their worldview, highlights the ultimate failure of Zionism. Rather than creating Israel as a haven for Jews, Zionism has produced the 13th Jewish tribe with aspirations of its own that differ from those of its Jewish brethren elsewhere. In a fictional Thanksgiving epistle, Alon Pinkas, a former Israeli consul general in New York, cautioned American Jews that "as you must have agonizingly realized by now, Israel no longer cares about you. You served your purpose — as we did for you — and now Israel isn't interested in you. In Benjamin Netanyahu's Israel, you've become obsolete.... You've outlived your usefulness; you've exhausted the goodwill." Mr. Pinkas went on to say that "Israeli-Jewish society and culture and American-Jewish society and culture have evolved so differently that you can no longer cover it up with pro-Israel and fundraising platitudes... The majority of evangelical Christians will replace the vast majority of American Jews. Since it's all about numbers, the evangelicals are the preferred ally.... When Netanyahu reversed course and aligned Israel with the right wing of the Republican Party, it was a clear message to most American Jews. He essentially said: I can do without you; I choose to ignore you. My political considerations with the ultra-Orthodox and my affinity with the far right greatly override your interests and concerns." Similarly, American Jewish fundraisers expect it will be increasingly difficult to persuade skeptics to open their wallets to support Israel. "I'm worried this new government is going to take steps that will bring American Jews to the point where they ask: 'Why even bother with Israel? What's the use? It's a racist place, and they don't respect our form of Judaism. Why should we give any of them anything?'" said Larry Katz, a Rhode Island-based fundraiser who prides himself on a stellar record in convincing critics of Israel to open their pocketbooks for causes in the Jewish state that speak to their values. In an early shot across the bow, several hundred rabbis and cantors signed an open letter entitled, "A call to action for clergy in protest of Israeli government extremists," that calls for a Jewish community boycott of far-right members of the Netanyahu government. "When those who tout racism and bigotry claim to speak in the name of Israel but deny our rights, our heritage, and the rights of the most vulnerable among us, we must take action," the letter read.

High-Level Crises in Gilgit-Baltistan

Hassnain Ali



Gilgit-Baltistan is a contested region of Jammu and Kashmir that is located in northern Pakistan. The erstwhile princely state has been administratively under Pakistan's jurisdiction since November 1947, with a formal transfer taking place in 1949 as a result of the Karachi Agreement. India and Pakistan have fiercely disagreed over who has administrative jurisdiction over it up to this

point. Any state's constitution should provide fundamental rights to its citizens. Unfortunately, this is not the case with the residents of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), since numerous colonial instruments are used to take away their rights. Because they are treated as second-class citizens and are unable to choose their representatives in the national assembly, they are either directly or indirectly subject to the rule of the federal agency. Since 1947, the people of Gilgit-Baltistan have faced several high-voltage crises. Some of them are discussed here, as well as the recent implementation to overcome the crises and future challenges with suitable solutions. One of the most serious issues is the constitutional crisis, which linked GB to Kashmir in a UN resolution and will prevent GB from becoming Pakistan's fifth province until the Kashmir issue is resolved. Many suggestions were made to give the constitutional right to GB, like Sir Taj Aziz's committee and so forth, but no complete solution was found. Political instability is also a major impediment to the people of the United Kingdom exercising their constitutional rights. The second crisis being to discuss in Gilgit-Baltistan is high-level load shedding so that's why people of Gilgit-Baltistan have suffered immensely due to the inadequate electricity supply. Where's Shatung Nala should be included in Sadpara Dam? However, the

need of the hour is to ensure better power distribution and management to reduce electricity losses and ensure a proper supply of electricity, not every corner of Gilgit-Baltistan but the whole of Pakistan as well. The third crisis still booming in GB is Health and Education there is no proper mechanism to deal with the fundamental issues like Education and Health sectors, Federal and provincial Governments are still unable to resolve Health and Education issues and the Government ought to put long run Policy to improve these mentioned sectors where GB masses easily got benefits. Since Last 5 years the fourth crisis faced masses of GB Wheat scarcity now in recent Last eight months the shortages prevail and no proper plan by the Federal and provincial Governments to overcome the wheat shortages even though The government of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto gave subsidies (1.6 million sacks of wheat) to the government of Gilgit-Baltistan as a basic right for the people of Gilgit-Baltistan, but the previous governments and current government of Pakistan were not focusing on the basic requirements of the people of Gilgit-Baltistan. Baltistan. The quota has been reduced, and price hikes are said to be on the cards, with a direct impact on the people of Gilgit-Baltistan. So According to Experts warned that GB is at high risk of food insecurity and may soon become one of the most

food-insecure regions of the world. The fifth crisis faced by GB is unemployment the highly Educated population is still deprived of Jobs, Unfortunately in GB no private or Government institutions for job opportunities for the youth that's why the massive and highly educated population still searching for Jobs, so Government encourages and brings private Institutions to invest in GB that step will normalize the youth satisfaction. So to save the people from high risk, the Federal and Provincial governments should focus on the high-voltage crises in Gilgit-Baltistan. The federal government should take immediate steps towards ensuring that all citizens in GB receive access to necessities such as electricity, quality education, and wheat. This has been a long-standing issue, and it is time for the government of Pakistan to finally take steps toward guaranteeing basic rights to the people of Gilgit-Baltistan. The government of Gilgit-Baltistan should take several steps to tackle the issue, such as increasing electricity production through renewable sources and increasing investments in hydroelectric power plants. Additionally, The Shatung Nala should be included in Sadpara Dam. However, the need of the hour is to ensure better power distribution and management to reduce electricity losses and ensure a proper supply of electricity to every corner of Gilgit-Baltistan.

Briefs

Imran
'confident'
Elahi ...

FROM PAGE 01

"When both the assemblies have been dissolved, then the [government] will be forced to hold general elections," the ex-PM said, adding that if polls are delayed even after PTI's move, "it won't affect" the party. Defending the delay in the assemblies' dissolution the PTI chief said the party had to convince its allies before it takes the major step.

The PTI and Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) are currently holding consultations on the date of dissolution and seat adjustment before they head into polls. However, for the date of dissolution, the PML-Q has time and again said it was awaiting Imran's instructions.

But both the PTI and PML-Q have stressed that assemblies will be dissolved — sooner or later. Reiterating his prediction about the general polls, the PTI chief said that he foresees elections taking place in April 2023 — just a day after he claimed that they might be held in March or April.

The Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM)-led coalition government has repeatedly snubbed the PTI's demand of holding snap polls and iterated that they would take place at their stipulated time.

Six soldiers
martyred in
Balochistan

FROM PAGE 01

conducted in Sambaza area of Zhob, Balochistan. According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the operation was initiated, based on credible intelligence, in Sambaza area of Zhob, Balochistan for the last 96 hours to deny terrorists use a few suspected routes to move across Pakistan-Afghanistan border to sneak into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) along the interprovincial boundary and target citizens and the security forces. The martyred soldier was identified as Sepoy Haq Nawaz who embraced Shahadat during the ensuing heavy exchange of fire and two other soldiers got injured. The terrorists were supported by their facilitators from across the border as well through fire. A group of the terrorists was intercepted in early hours on Sunday as a result of continuous surveillance and sanitisation of the area, it added. During the establishment of blocking positions to deny them escape routes, terrorists opened fire onto the security forces. The sanitisation operation continued in the area to apprehend remaining perpetrators.

Five dead
in triple
bomb blasts

FROM PAGE 01

people have been shifted to a hospital — and among them, five remain in critical condition. Hours before the second strike, a grenade blast across the Shaheed Ameer Dasti police station at Sabzal Road in Quetta left four people injured including a woman and a little girl, the police said. The bomb disposal squad was called to the site of the blast after reports of another grenade at the site, according to the law enforcers.

The Quetta police added that two hand grenades were thrown on the road of which one exploded while the other was defused. The police said they were determining the nature of the blast. The injured were shifted to the Bolan Medical Complex Hospital in the city, the law enforcers added.

The multiple blasts hit Balochistan as the nation celebrated the 146th birthday of the founder of Pakistan, Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Christmas. The security forces have cordoned off the effective areas and investigations are underway.

PKK terror group supporters
turn Paris into battlefield

These developments emerged as a clue that the patronage of terrorist organizations in Europe due to anti-Türkiye sentiment would eventually cause great troubles for the continent, the ruling Justice and Development Party (AK Party) Spokesperson Ömer Çelik also said Sunday

NEWS DESK

PARIS: Violent clashes broke out for a second day in Paris on Saturday between police and supporters of the PKK terrorist group, resulting in at least 31 French police officers injured, police chief Laurent Nunez said on Saturday. Having gathered at the central Place de la Republique at around 2:00 p.m. local time (1300 GMT), thousands of supporters of the terrorist group then marched to the Boulevard du Temple chanting pro-PKK slogans and carrying posters of the terrorist group's so-called leaders. They then ripped off the paving stones and threw them at the police, nearby houses, and shops. The attackers also turned the scene into a battlefield with fireworks and sparklers, destroying the bus stops. Speaking to local broadcaster BFM TV, Nunez said at least 31 security personnel were injured, along with one protester. There had been 11 arrests, he added. The intervention by police at the scene was rather limited and they occasionally used tear gas against the attackers. On Friday, a 69-year-old gunman in Paris opened fire at a Kurdish cultural center, killing at least three people and injuring three others. He was placed in custody after he fired gunshots on Enghein Street in the city center. The shots at the cultural center and a nearby hair-



dresser salon on Friday sparked panic in the city's bustling 10th district, home to several shops and restaurants and a large Kurdish population. Three others were wounded in the attack that the suspect told investigators was attributable to his being "racist", a source close to the case said. Suspected racist motivations behind the attack will be investigated, Paris prosecutor Laure Beccuaud said. Following the incident, supporters of the PKK terrorist organization wounded at least six police officers in Paris on

Friday, according to local media. In its more than 40-year terror campaign against Türkiye, the PKK, listed as a terrorist organization by Türkiye, the United States, and European Union, has been responsible for the deaths of more than 40,000 people, including women, children, and infants. Türkiye has been frequently voicing concerns over European countries' tolerance toward the PKK, however, the terrorist organization still maintains a strong presence in the region, being able to hold rallies and engage in re-

recruitment activities. The EU's law enforcement agency Europol classified the PKK as an "ethno-nationalist" and "separatist" terrorist group, saying in its 2020 and 2021 reports that the group still uses European countries for propaganda, recruitment and fundraising activities, even though in most of it is officially banned. Also, supporters of the PKK terrorist group on Saturday disrupted peace and clashed with police in London. Gathering in front of the French Embassy in London, a group of the terror group's supporters chanted slogans against

Türkiye and France over Friday's shooting in Paris. The terror group supporters, also marched toward the Turkish Embassy in London, carrying banners that read "Freedom for Öcalan," referring to jailed terrorist ringleader Abdullah Öcalan, who is serving a life sentence. The protesters also caused traffic disruptions as they marched through central London on a day when people rushed around for last-minute Christmas shopping. When they arrived in front of the Turkish Embassy, a clash between terror supporters and police took place after one of them threw a most likely stone toward the embassy building. They also chanted slogans including "revenge" and "no justice, no peace." Türkiye's Presidential Spokesperson Ibrahim Kalın on Sunday shared footage from Paris and wrote in a Twitter message that "This is PKK in France. The same terrorist organization you support in Syria. The same PKK that has killed thousands of Turks, Kurds & security forces over the last 40 years. Now they are burning the streets of Paris. Will you still remain silent?" These developments emerged as a clue that the patronage of terrorist organizations in Europe due to anti-Türkiye sentiment would eventually cause great troubles for the continent, the ruling Justice and Development Party (AK Party) Spokesperson Ömer Çelik also said Sunday.

President
pays tribute
to martyred
soldiers

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Sunday paid tribute to soldiers of Pakistan army who were martyred during a security forces' clearance operation in Kahan, Balochistan. In a statement, the president condoled with the families of the martyred and lauded them for their services in defence of the country. He also appreciated the efforts of the security forces for the eradication of terrorism from the country. He prayed to Allah to grant the martyred personnel the highest ranks in Jannah. — DNA

'LCCI official
documents
now more
secure'

LAHORE: In order to increase service quality and ensure document security, the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) has added a QR code to LCCI visa invitation letter, visa recommendation letter and certificate of origin. LCCI President Kashif Anwar, Senior Vice President Chaudhry Zafar Mahmood, and Vice President Adnan Khalid Butt told media here on Sunday that introduction of the QR code had rendered counterfeiting of LCCI documents impossible. According to them, the Lahore Chamber's certificate now had this new security feature, making it impossible to falsify and making it simple to check it anywhere. They informed that the QR code could also be used to verify the information on the certificate. The LCCI office-bearers said that to make the LCCI documents foolproof was one of the top priorities of the present management and the work was going on rapidly in this regard. They said that the digitization of all other documents would also be completed very soon. — APP

Paris: Suspect
admits
'pathological'
hatred of
foreigners

PARIS: A French man suspected of killing three Kurds in a Paris shooting has confessed to a "pathological" hatred for foreigners, Paris prosecutor Laure Beccuaud said on Sunday. The 69-year-old man was removed from custody for health reasons on Saturday and taken to a police psychiatric facility. Beccuaud said in a statement that the suspect was "depressive" and "suicidal" and said he "wanted to kill foreigners" after a burglary in his home in 2016.

The shooting at a Kurdish cultural centre and a nearby hairdressing salon on Friday sparked panic in the city's bustling 10th district, home to several shops and restaurants and a large Kurdish population. Three others were wounded in the attack but none are in a life-threatening condition, with one now out of hospital, the prosecutor said on Sunday. The suspect said he initially wanted to kill people in the northern Paris suburb of Seine-Saint-Denis, which has a large immigrant population. But he changed his mind as few people were around and his clothing made it difficult for him to reload his weapon, the prosecutor said. He then returned to his parents' house before deciding to go to the 10th district instead. The shooting has revived the trauma of three unresolved murders of Kurds in 2013. Many in the Kurdish community have expressed anger at the French security services, saying they had done too little to prevent the shooting. The frustration boiled over on Saturday and furious demonstrators clashed with police in central Paris for a second day running after a tribute rally. The French capital's police chief Laurent Nunez told BFM television channel on Saturday that 31 officers and one protester were injured in the disturbances, while 11 people were arrested, "mainly for damage". Hundreds of Kurds in Syria demonstrated on Sunday in solidarity with the victims. The suspect — named as William M. by French media — is a gun enthusiast with a history of weapons offences who had been released on bail earlier this month. — APP

Playing XI will be finalised
after discussion with Afridi

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Pakistan captain Babar Azam has said that the playing XI for the first Test against New Zealand will be finalised after discussion with interim chief selector Shahid Afridi. The prolific right-hander also stated that the pitch in Karachi looks similar to that in Australia. "We haven't finalised the playing XI. We will do that after discussion with the chief selector [Shahid Afridi], who will meet us today. We will try to select the best possible XI," Azam said in a press conference. "Pitch looks good. I think we can say that it is similar to the ones in Australia. As you know, here [in Karachi] the behaviour of the pitch changes every day," he added. Azam also opened up about the inclusion of three additional players in the Pakistan squad on Saturday. It must be noted that the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Interim Selection Committee had included pacers Mir Hamza and Shah Nawaz Dahani and off-spinner Sajid Khan in the Pakistan Test squad for the two-match series against New



Zealand. "Yes, we had a discussion on it [inclusion of three additional players]. Obviously, they have their own mindset. I gave them my opinion and, in the end, we did what was best for our side," he said. The Pakistan skipper also admitted that Pakistan, who have lost four Test matches in a row on home soil, haven't played good cricket in the recent past but he backed his players to make a strong comeback. "I ac-

cept that we didn't play good cricket at times. There were things that we should have executed in a better manner but we couldn't do that," he said. "I feel no pressure because pressure brings your game down. I'm a confident captain and I have confidence in my players. We will try our best to make a comeback in the series, since it is a new day and a new team," he concluded.

Australia's Warner
defiant ahead of
100th Test

SYDNEY: Ahead of his 100th Test for Australia in a Boxing Day match against South Africa in Melbourne, David Warner vowed to keep fighting despite having his back "up against the wall" after his recent struggles in the longest format. Warner has not scored a Test century in almost three years, and his declining output has led to speculation he might retire from the format. However, selectors have said he is part of Australia's plans for the tour of India starting in February. Playing in his 100th test match "means the world to me", Warner told reporters. "It's the same old cliché but it's obviously a massive occasion. "I'm living every housing commission boy's dream - I wanted to play cricket for Australia and I'm doing that now," said Warner, who was raised in public housing in an underprivileged neighbourhood of Matraville. "My back's up against the wall but it's in my DNA to keep being competitive and take on whatever opposition I'm going to face... I couldn't be any more proud of myself, my family for getting me here and my closest friends." — APP

India beat
Bangladesh in
second Test
thriller

DHAKA: Shreyas Iyer and Ravichandran Ashwin held firm as India beat Bangladesh in a thrilling second Test on Sunday, dashing hopes in Dhaka of a first-ever win over their giant neighbours. India needed just 145 to win the match and the series 2-0 but the visitors in the end won by only three wickets in a nail-biting morning's play on day four in Dhaka. Bangladesh overcame India in the preceding 50-over series but have never beaten them in a Test. India had won 10 of the teams' previous 12 Tests, including five victories by an innings. India won the first Test comfortably by 188 runs in Chittagong and were widely expected to romp home in the second

game, cementing their position in second place in the ICC World Test Championship. India bowled Bangladesh out on Saturday for a sub-par 231 but the home side's spinners Mehidy Hasan and Shakib Al Hasan then reduced the visitors to 45-4 at stumps with 100 still to chase. Shakib started the slide with the wicket of captain KL Rahul for two and then Mehidy claimed Cheteshwar Pujara, Shubman Gill and Virat Kohli — all for single-digit scores. Bangladesh then reduced India to 7-7 when play resumed on Sunday but Shreyas (29 not out) and Ashwin (42 not out) put on 71 runs in an unbroken eighth-wicket stand to steer India home. Mehidy was the stand-out bowler for Bangladesh in the second innings, finishing with 5-63, which included two wickets in the morning. Bangladesh dominated play in the opening hour as Shakib dismissed night-watchman Jaydev Unadkat, who hit a six in the opening over but fell in the next after making 13. Mehidy then trapped danger man Rishabh Pant leg before for nine before he bowled unbeaten over-

night batsman Axar Patel for 34 runs. Ashwin was dropped by Mominul Haque on one at forward short leg before he grew in confidence, with Iyer looking solid against spin at the other end. After his three fours in two overs, Bangladesh were forced to finally bring pacers into the attack but to no avail. Ashwin — named player of the match — took India close with a six after Mehidy changed his bowling end and wrapped up the contest with two more boundaries. ("I'm not going to lie, there was a lot of tension in the dressing room. It was a tough wicket to bat on, they put us under pressure in both innings," said Rahul, who captained in place of injured Rohit Sharma. "Everyone contributed. We always knew that we had a chance... Very good Test cricket, that's what the crowds love to see," said Shakib. "Both teams were really good. Credit goes to Shreyas and Ashwin, they absorbed the pressure well and built a partnership." Shakib said. Rock-solid Pujara was named player of the series, with the Sussex star making 222 runs in the series.) — APP

New Zealand gearing up for Pakistan challenge

The second Test of the series, to be played from January 2, has been shifted to Karachi due to foggy weather in Multan, where it was to be played

KARACHI: Newly appointed New Zealand captain Tim Southee expects Pakistan to bounce back from a 3-0 home Test series whitewash at the hands of an aggressive England team, saying on Sunday that his men would find their own way to defeat the wounded hosts. England handed Pakistan their first-ever 3-0 home Test whitewash earlier this week, enhancing the reputation of their newly adopted ultra-aggressive style of Test cricket — coined "Bazball" after the nickname of head coach Brendon McCullum. The Kiwis take on Pakistan in the first match of a two-match series in Karachi on Monday. Southee described England's win as "impressive and incredible", but said his team would find their own strategy to take on Pakistan. "I think England played an incredible style of cricket and to



come over here and win three Tests and the way they did was very impressive," Southee said on Sunday. "It seems to be working for them (England), so we will be trying to look for ways that have worked for us and hopefully put on a perfor-

mance that works for our side," Southee, taking over the Test captaincy from Kane Williamson, said conditions in Pakistan would be likely to suit spin. "I think when you come to this part of the world, you tend to think that spinners will have

more of an impact," said Southee. "But there is a place for the pace as well." New Zealand have only won one Test series in Pakistan, way back in 1969. The last time they played a Test in Pakistan was in 2002, with Pakistan's "home" series in the interim being mostly played in the United Arab Emirates due to security concerns. The Kiwis have dominated Pakistan in recent contests, winning their last three series against them — twice in New Zealand (2016 and 2020) and once in the UAE in 2018. Southee said he expected Pakistan to bounce back from the whitewash. "Pakistan is a very good side, especially in these conditions," said Southee. Pakistan skipper Babar Azam vowed his team would come back strongly. "Yes, we could not execute what we wanted in the last series but I have the belief in my team and

my players that we can stage a strong comeback," said Azam. Pakistan's captain said he was unperturbed by recent changes in the Pakistan Cricket Board, with Ramiz Raja sacked as chairman and replaced by a management committee on Thursday. Chief selector Mohammad Wasim was also sacked, replaced by former player Shahid Afridi. "Things have changed in the last two or three days but as professionals you have to face such things," said Azam, whose captaincy is also under scrutiny. "Our job is to do effort on the ground, perform and apply what the best we have. These things are out of the ground and our full focus is on the ground as to how to win the matches and series." The second Test of the series, to be played from January 2, has been shifted to Karachi due to foggy weather in Multan, where it was to be played. — APP

Briefs

11 killed during clashes in Sudan's Darfur region

KHARTOUM: Nearly a dozen people have been killed and around 20 others injured in clashes between Arab and non-Arab groups in Sudan's restive Darfur region. "The number of bodies that have arrived at the hospital has reached 11," a doctor at Nyala hospital said on Saturday, adding at least 20 people were treated for gunshot wounds. The clashes began on Wednesday between Arab herders and the Daju minority and other non-Arab groups, around 20 kilometers (12 miles) from the South Darfur state capital Nyala, witnesses said. It was not immediately clear what sparked the fighting. According to the official news agency SUNA, four people were killed after a group of herders riding camels attacked Amuri village on Friday. It added that the fight claimed the lives of two other people between Wednesday and Thursday. Another person was killed when the fighting spread to nearby villages, which were "partially burnt" as shops were looted, the news agency added quoting a government statement. The spokesman for the General Coordination for Refugees and Displaced in Darfur charity, Adam Regal, said the death toll might be much higher as the fight is still going on. Security forces have been sent to the area to control the situation and prevent further violence, SUNA reported earlier. Witnesses have said that hundreds of people are protesting against the violence outside a government building in Nyala. As per reports, ethnic clashes often break out in Darfur, a vast region the size of France which was ravaged by a bitter civil war in 2003. This year some 900 people have been killed, 300,000 have fled their homes and 2.5 million Sudanese have been displaced because of the clashes in the country, according to the UN's Humanitarian Affairs report.—APP

Polls open as TRNC vote in local elections

LEFKOSA: Polls opened in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) as residents began voting in Sunday's local elections. A total of 208,236 registered voters are eligible to cast their votes in 768 ballot boxes across the country. Voters will choose 18 mayors, 220 city council members, 240 headmen and 960 council of elders, according to the country's Supreme Election Board (YSK). Turkish Cypriots will decide on 67 candidates, six of them women, for the mayoral posts. Voting started at 8 a.m. local time (0600GMT), with polls to close at 6 p.m. (1600GMT). Partners in the TRNC's ruling coalition — the National Unity Party, Democrat Party, and Rebirth Party — are participating in the elections as a full alliance. Cyprus has been mired in a decades-long dispute between Greek and Turkish Cypriots, with the TRNC founded in 1983, several years after Turkey's military intervention on the island as a guarantor power to protect Turkish Cypriots from persecution, violence, and ethnic attacks.—DNA

Heavy rains expected in many parts of Sri Lanka

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's Department of Meteorology on Sunday said that they expect heavy showers in many parts of the country within the next 48 hours. This is caused by a depression over southwest Bay of Bengal, which is moving across the country, the department said, adding that strong winds can also be expected at times over the country. Meanwhile, the Irrigation Department said that the water levels of many reservoirs have increased due to the heavy rains, warning those who live in low-lying areas near rivers to be vigilant of floods. The country's Department of Railways announced that train services in central Sri Lanka have been disrupted due to minor rock and earth slips and several trains have been canceled.—APP

UN chief 'deeply disturbed' by Taliban's ban on women

"The effective delivery of humanitarian assistance requires full, safe and unhindered access for all aid workers, including women"

FOREIGN DESK

NEW YORK: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has expressed deep concern about the reported ban imposed by the Taliban on women from working for national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Afghanistan. A statement issued by UN Spokesman Stephane Dujarric, said Saturday that the secretary-general was "deeply disturbed by the reported order of the de facto Taliban authorities" and that the UN chief "reiterates the rights of all women to participate in the workforce thus contributing to the greater good." According to media reports, the Taliban ordered all foreign and domestic non-governmental groups (NGOs) in Afghanistan

to suspend employing women after reportedly receiving "serious complaints" about their dress code. Reports of this latest restriction come less than a week after the Taliban authorities banned women from attending universities, prompting strong condemnation from the UN and sparking reported protests in some parts of Afghanistan. The statement issued on Saturday by the UN Spokesman went on to note that the United Nations and its partners, including national and international NGOs, are helping more than 28 million Afghans who depend on humanitarian aid to survive. "The effective delivery of humanitarian assistance requires full, safe and unhindered access for all aid workers, including women. The reported ban on women



working with the international community to save lives and livelihoods in Afghanistan will cause further untold hardship on the people of Afghanistan," the statement added. In a separate statement, the UN humanitarian coordination office in Afghanistan, condemned the

latest round of restrictions on women's participation and emphasized that any such order by the de facto authorities "would violate the most fundamental rights of women, as well as be a clear breach of humanitarian principles." The UN in Afghanistan went

on to say that it would seek to meet with the Taliban leadership to obtain clarity on the reported order. "Women must be enabled to play a critical role in all aspects of life, including the humanitarian response. Their participation must be both respected and safeguarded. This latest decision will only further hurt those most vulnerable, especially women and girls," said the statement. In addition, the UN in Afghanistan and its partners reminded the de facto authorities that "taking away the free will of women to choose their own fate, disempowering and excluding them systematically from all aspects of public and political life takes the country backward, jeopardizing efforts for any meaningful peace or stability in the country."

3 foreign NGOs suspend Afghanistan operations

KABUL: Three foreign aid groups, including Save the Children, announced on Sunday they were suspending their operations in Afghanistan after the Taliban ordered all NGOs to stop their women staff from working. The announcement came as top officials from the United Nations and dozens of NGOs operating in Afghanistan met in Kabul to discuss a way ahead after the Taliban's latest restriction delivered a blow to humanitarian work across the country. "We cannot effectively reach children, women and men in desperate need in Afghanistan without our female staff," Save the Children, the Norwegian Refugee Council and CARE said in a joint statement. "Whilst we gain clarity on this announcement, we are suspending our programmes, demanding that men and women can equally continue our lifesaving assistance in Afghanistan. Saturday's order issued by the Taliban authorities drew swift international condemnation, with governments and organisations warning of the impact on humanitarian services in a country where millions rely on aid. The latest restriction comes less than a week after the hardline Islamists banned women from attending universities, prompting global outrage and protests in some Afghan cities. The Ministry of Economy on Saturday threatened to suspend the operating licences of NGOs if they failed to implement the order. The ministry, which issues these licences, said it had received "serious complaints" that women working in NGOs were not observing a proper Islamic dress code. A meeting of the Humanitarian Country Team, which comprises top UN officials and representatives of dozens of Afghan and foreign NGOs was being held in Kabul to discuss whether to suspend all aid work following the latest Taliban directive, aid officials told AFP.—APP



MINSK: Ambassador of Pakistan to Belarus, Sajjad Haider along with other guests at the Pakistan pavilion during the Evening of Oriental Cultures. —DNA

HDP leader incites violence amid protests in Paris

ANKARA: The co-leader of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) in Türkiye, expressed support for violent protests in France by proponents of the PKK terror group after a recent shooting. Sezai Temelli tweeted in French and Kurmanji on Saturday, "Paris brule. Paris disewite, bila bisewite," which translates to "Paris is burning, Paris is burning, let it burn." Temelli later removed the tweet, saying: "I deleted my #Paris tweet. Emotions can sometimes cause other tensions, albeit unintentionally. I am very sorry for the massacre. I continue to defend the democratic right to protest." Having gathered at the central Place de la Republique at around 2.00 p.m. local time (1300GMT), thousands of supporters of the terror group marched to the Boulevard du Temple chanting pro-PKK slogans.—Agencies

Serbia sees protests against war in Ukraine

NEWS DESK

BELGRADE: Hundreds of people gathered in the Serbian capital, Belgrade, on December 24 to demand the immediate withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine. Marchers held banners calling on Russian President Vladimir Putin to keep his "hands off Ukraine," along with slogans such as "Freedom to Ukraine," "Stop War Madness," and "304 days of death and fear." Marchers were blocked from approaching the Russian Embassy in the Western Balkan nation, which traditionally has close ties to Russia. Moscow's closest ally in the Balkans even as it pursues EU membership, Belgrade has condemned Russia's unprovoked invasion but staunchly resisted joining unprecedented Western sanctions on Russia that would curb trade, energy shipments, direct flights, and other links. It is one of the few nations where rallies have also been held following the invasion in support of Russia and Putin by right-wing parties, Orthodox Christian church organizations, and other groups. Hundreds of thousands of young Russian men have left their home country over fears of being conscripted into the military since the invasion of Ukraine, many of them to Serbia. The December 24 protest was organized by the Russian Democratic Society, a Belgrade-based organization that opposes the Putin government and the invasion of Ukraine. "Today it's been 10 months since the Russian dictator ordered his army to launch a total invasion of the neighboring country," the group said in a statement. "As a result of this insane order, hundreds of thousands of human lives were destroyed and maimed during ten months of war." It said that millions of people in Ukraine have been forced to leave their homes, and that dozens of cities and towns there have been "completely or partially wiped off the face of the earth."

Pope Francis pleads for end to 'Ukraine war'

The pope also urged those celebrating Christmas to remember all those "who go hungry while huge amounts of food daily go to waste and resources are being spent on weapons".

ROME: Pope Francis on Sunday appealed for an end to the "senseless" war in Ukraine, in his traditional Christmas message from St Peter's Basilica at the Vatican. The 86-year-old also warned the 10-month-old conflict was aggravating food shortages around the world, urging an end to the use of "food as a weapon". The head of the Catholic Church addressed thousands of faithful gathered in St Peter's Square, some of them holding Ukrainian flags, before delivering the "Urbi et Orbi" blessing ("to the city and the world"). He has repeatedly called for peace ever since Russia invaded Ukraine in February, condemning the war but seeking to maintain a delicate dialogue with Moscow. In his address from the central balcony of St Peter's, he recalled "our Ukrainian brothers and sisters who are experiencing this



Christmas in the dark and cold, far from their homes." "May the Lord inspire us to offer concrete gestures of solidarity to assist all those who are suffering, and may he enlighten the minds of those who have the power to silence the thunder of weapons and put an immediate end to this senseless war!" "Tragically, we prefer to heed other counsels, dictated by worldly ways of thinking," he added, recalling "with sorrow" that "the

icy winds of war continue to buffet humanity". "Our time is experiencing a grave famine of peace also in other regions and other theatres of this third world war," he said. He referenced numerous countries in difficulty this Christmas, whether due to conflict or another crisis, from Afghanistan to Yemen, Syria, Myanmar, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Lebanon and Haiti. For the first time, he also called for "reconciliation" in Iran, rocked by women-led protests for the past three months. The pope also urged those celebrating Christmas to remember all those "who go hungry while huge amounts of food daily go to waste and resources are being spent on weapons". "The war in Ukraine has further aggravated this situation, putting entire peoples at risk of famine, especially in Afghanistan and in the countries of the Horn of Africa," he said. "We know that every war causes hunger and exploits food as a weapon, hindering its distribution to people already suffering," the pope added. "On this day, let us learn from the Prince of Peace (Jesus Christ) and, starting with those who hold political responsibilities, commit ourselves to making food solely an instrument of peace.—APP

Anti-Israel protests held across Morocco

RABAT: Moroccans have staged demonstrations across the North African country to reiterate their unwavering support for the Palestinian cause and voice outrage at the US-sponsored normalization of diplomatic relations with Israel on its second anniversary. People from all strata of society heeded a call by the "Moroccan Front in Support of Palestine and Against Normalization," took part in nationwide rallies in almost 30 cities, including in Casablanca, Oujda, Meknes, Tangier, Larache, Khemisset, Agadir, and Khourigba, to show solidarity with Palestinians and censure Morocco's normalization of ties with the Tel Aviv regime.—DNA

S. Africa tanker blast death toll rises to 15

JOHANNESBURG: The death toll from a fuel tanker explosion in a South African city east of Johannesburg has risen to 15, the health minister said Sunday. "Yesterday (Saturday), the death toll was at 10 people and now we are sitting at 15 as of this morning," Joe Phaahla told reporters at Tambo Memorial Hospital. The tanker, transporting liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), was caught beneath a bridge close to the hospital and houses on Saturday morning in Boksburg, east of Johannesburg. The minister said three hospital employees, two nurses and a driver, died later from severe burn injuries. Thirty-seven people were injured, including 24 patients and 13 staff members who were in the hospital's accident and emergency unit at the time of the blast. They "sustained severe burns and have been diverted to neighbouring hospitals", Phaahla said. Others were hit by shattered glass, he added, while some were hurt as they were in the parking lot or in front of the hospital. "We send our deepest condolences for the families that lost their loved ones," he said.—Agencies

18 dead, million without power in US & Canada

In Mexico, migrants camped near the US border were facing unusually cold temperatures as they awaited a US Supreme Court decision on pandemic-era restrictions preventing many from seeking asylum

NEW YORK: At least 18 people have been killed, and a million left without power, after a deep overnight freeze and snowstorm swept across the US. Forecasters said a bomb cyclone — when atmospheric pressure drops very quickly in a strong storm — had developed near the Great Lakes, stirring up blizzard conditions, including heavy winds and snow. The scope of the storm has been nearly unprecedented, stretching from Canada to the Rio Grande along the border with Mexico. About 60% of the US population faced some sort of winter weather advisory or warning, and temperatures plummeted drastically below normal from east of the Rocky Mountains to the Appalachians, the National Weather Service said. More than 2,600 domestic and international flights were cancelled on Sunday, with more than five thousand delayed, according to the FlightAware tracking site. The storm unleashed its full

fury on Buffalo, with hurricane-force winds and snow causing whiteout conditions, paralyzing emergency response efforts. The state governor said almost every fire truck in the city was stranded, and the airport will be

shut down until Monday. Freezing conditions and day-old power outages had Buffalonians scrambling to get out of their homes to anywhere that had heat. But with city streets under a thick blanket of white, that wasn't

an option for people like Jeremy Manahan, who charged his phone in his parked car after almost 29 hours without electricity. "There's one warming shelter, but that would be too far for me to get to. I can't drive, obviously, because I'm stuck," Manahan said. "And you can't be outside for more than 10 minutes without getting frostbit." Mark Poloncarz, executive of Erie County, home to Buffalo, said ambulances were taking more than three hours to make a single hospital trip and the blizzard may be "the worst storm in our community's history." The storm knocked out power in communities from Maine to Seattle, and a major electricity grid operator warned 65 million people across the eastern US of possible rolling blackouts. Across the six New England states, more than 273,000 customers remained without power on Saturday, with Maine the hardest hit. Some

utilities said electricity may not be restored for days. In North Carolina, 169,000 customers were without power Saturday afternoon, down from more than 485,000. Utility officials said rolling blackouts would continue for the next few days. Storm-related deaths were reported in recent days all over the country: Four dead in an Ohio Turnpike pileup involving some 50 vehicles; four motorists killed in separate crashes in Missouri and Kansas; an Ohio utility worker electrocuted; a Vermont woman struck by a falling branch; an apparently homeless man found amid Colorado's subzero temperatures; a woman who fell through Wisconsin river ice. In Mexico, migrants camped near the US border were facing unusually cold temperatures as they awaited a US Supreme Court decision on pandemic-era restrictions preventing many from seeking asylum.—Agencies



Briefs

Polls open as Turkish Cypriots vote in local elections

LEFKOSA: Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (AA/APP) Polls opened in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) as residents began voting in Sunday's local elections. A total of 208,236 registered voters are eligible to cast their votes in 768 ballot boxes across the country. Voters will choose 18 mayors, 220 city council members, 240 headmen and 960 council of elders, according to the country's Supreme Election Board (YSK). Turkish Cypriots will decide on 67 candidates, six of them women, for the mayoral posts. Voting started at 8 a.m. local time (0600GMT), with polls to close at 6 p.m. (1600GMT). Partners in the TRNC's ruling coalition - the National Unity Party, Democrat Party, and Rebirth Party - are participating in the elections as a full alliance. Cyprus has been mired in a decades-long dispute between Greek and Turkish Cypriots, with the TRNC founded in 1983, several years after Turkey's military intervention on the island as a guarantor power to protect Turkish Cypriots from persecution, violence, and ethnic attacks.—DNA

Four killed in Spain after bus plunges into river

MADRID: Four people died after a bus plunged into a river overnight while crossing a bridge in Spain's northwestern Galicia region, officials said Sunday. The accident occurred on Saturday night near Vigo and the border with Portugal. The regional La Voz de Galicia newspaper said the bus was carrying people visiting their loved ones jailed in Monterroso in central Galicia. The emergency services said two corpses had been recovered while two others, including the bus driver, had been rescued and taken to hospital. Spain's Civil Guard later said two more bodies were found on Sunday. The woman's body was recovered but a man's corpse was yet to be retrieved. "There could have been more people inside the bus," the emergency services had said on Twitter and posted a photo of the vehicle in turbulent waters. Rescue operations had to be suspended overnight due to bad weather but resumed Sunday morning. The accident took place "at a spot with a steep gradient", making access difficult, said a Civil Guard spokesman in the city of Pontevedra, some 30 kilometres (18 miles) from the site of the accident. The Civil Guard said the bus driver had tested negative for alcohol.—DNA

NA Spokesman says PTI members to be called

DNA ISLAMABAD: The spokesperson of the National Assembly on Sunday assured the parliamentarians of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) to call them to confirm their resignations which have already been tendered to the Speaker. The NA spokesperson has given a statement in a letter to the opposition party-the PTI's members regarding their resignations. "In the context of the news reports being circulated in Electronic and press Media regarding Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf decision to appear collectively in the office of the Speaker of National Assembly and confirm their resignations from their respective seats of National Assembly, the Spokesperson of National Assembly Secretariat has drawn attention to the letter written by National Assembly Secretariat on 22nd December 2022 to PTI Vice Chairman Shah Mehmood Qureshi in response to his letter," the statement said Sunday.



KARACHI: President Dr Arif Alvi laying a floral wreath on the mausoleum of the father of the nation, Quaid-e-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah.—DNA

China demonstrates 'strike drills' around Taiwan

China has never renounced using force to bring Taiwan under its control. Taiwan strongly disputes China's sovereignty claims, saying only the island's 23 million people can decide their future

NEWS DESK

BEIJING: China's military said it had conducted "strike drills" in the sea and airspace around Taiwan on Sunday in response to what it said was provocation from the democratically-governed island and the United States. Taiwan, which China claims as its own territory, said the drills showed Beijing was destroying regional peace and trying to cow Taiwan's people. China staged war games around Taiwan in August following a visit to Taipei by then-U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, and on Saturday it condemned the United States for a new defence authorisation law that boosts military

assistance for Taiwan. In a brief statement, the Eastern Theatre Command of China's People's Liberation Army said it had carried out "joint combat readiness patrols and joint firepower strike drills" around Taiwan, though it did not specify the exact location. "This is a resolute response to the current escalation of collusion and provocation from the United States and Taiwan," it added, without giving details. "Theatre forces will take all necessary measures to resolutely defend national sovereignty and territorial integrity." Taiwan's defence ministry said China's actions "once again highlight its mentality of resolving differences by force and destroying regional peace and stability". Taiwan-U.S. cooperation contributes to

the freedom, openness, peace and stability of the Indo-Pacific, and Taiwan will continue to boost its military in accordance with the enemy threat and its self-defence needs, the ministry said. "The Chinese Communist's 'military intimidation' acts are obviously aimed at cowering our people and are not conducive to (China's) international image," it added. Taiwan has complained of repeated Chinese military activity nearby over the last three years or so as Beijing seeks to pressure Taipei to accept Chinese sovereignty. The United States is Taiwan's most important international backer and arms supplier, despite the absence of formal diplomatic ties. U.S. arms sales to Taiwan are a con-

stant irritant in Beijing's relations with Washington. Taiwan's military is dwarfed by that of its huge neighbour China. Its air force in particular has come under strain from having to repeatedly see off Chinese incursions near the island. The Chinese drills coincided with newly-elected city mayors and county chiefs in Taiwan taking up their positions following local elections on the island last month, in which the ruling Democratic Progressive Party was trounced. China has never renounced using force to bring Taiwan under its control. Taiwan strongly disputes China's sovereignty claims, saying only the island's 23 million people can decide their future.

President visits Quaid's mausoleum

KARACHI: President Dr Arif Alvi on Sunday visited the mausoleum of the father of the nation, Quaid-e-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah, and paid rich tributes to him on his 146th birthday anniversary. He laid a floral wreath and offered fateha. The president also prayed for the development and prosperity of the country. He, later, inked his impressions in the book of visitors. While talking to media persons, he said the nation should follow the guiding principles of Quaid-e-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah for the development of

the country. He said that the Quaid was well aware of the misbehaviour and maltreatment meted out to minorities, including Muslims in the subcontinent. Dr Alvi said the poet of the east, Allama Iqbal, dreamt of Pakistan and Quaid-e-Azam struggled for its real existence. The President said that the dream came true through the struggle of the father of the nation. He said, "We have to pursue Quaid's guiding principles for the development of the country." He advised the nation to follow Quaid's principles of unity, faith, and discipline. —APP

Indonesia: Dozens of Rohingya refugees arrive on shore

WEB DESK

LADONG: The 58 Rohingya refugees arrived onshore hungry and weak after one month adrift. The UN said that up to 20 people had died during the journey, making it "one of the deadliest years in the seas in the region." Dozens of Rohingya refugees arrived on the shores of Indonesia's Aceh province early on Sunday morning, officials said. The group of 58 men reached land on Indrapatra beach in Ladong, a fishing village, local police chief

Rolly Yuiza Away said. Villagers who saw the group of Rohingya on a rickety wooden boat assisted them in coming to shore before informing the authorities of their arrival, the police official added. The Rohingya coming ashore in Indonesia came after demands from humanitarian organizations, pleading for them to be allowed to disembark after being adrift at sea for a month. On Friday, the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) called on regional governments to rescue at least 190 Rohingya people set adrift between the Andaman Sea and the Bay of Bengal. According to the UNHCR, the refugees were stuck aboard an unseaworthy vessel with very little food and water. Up to 20 people had died during the journey, the UN humanitarian body added.02:31 "It is devastating to learn that many people have already lost their lives, including children. Sadly, this makes it one of the deadliest years in the seas in the region," Indrika Ratwate, UNHCR's Director for Asia and the Pacific, said in a statement. Members of the Rohingya minority have been fleeing persecution in their home state of Rakhine in Myanmar and desperate conditions in refugee camps in Bangladesh.

Malaysia landslide: Death toll rises to 31, search ends

WEB DESK

KUALA LUMPUR: The death toll from a landslide at a campsite in Malaysia has risen to 31. The landslide occurred on December 16, around 50 kilometers (31 miles) from Kuala Lumpur, at a campsite in Batang Kali town of Selangor district. Ninety-two people were sleeping at the campsite when tons of soil and mud thundered down a hill. Among the deceased were 11 children. All those who died were Malaysian nationals. A total of 61 campers were rescued. Many of the victims were families enjoying their year-end holidays. Rescuers called off the search for bod-

ies after the last missing person was recovered on Saturday - a boy aged between 7 and 12 years. His body was found in a sleeping bag more than one meter below Earth's surface. "We found the last body, that of a boy. We will end our search and rescue operations," said senior rescue official Hafid senior Mohamad Noor. Two of the deceased - a mother and her baby daughter - were found hugging each other, while another man was uncovered still clutching his dog. For close to 10 days, nearly 700 government and emergency services personnel, backed by police tracker dogs and earth-moving machines, trawled through the debris searching for survivors and

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Extinction crisis puts 1 million species on the brink

MONITORING DESK

LONDON: Nature is in crisis, and it's only getting worse. As species vanish at a rate not seen in 10 million years, more than 1 million species are currently on the brink. Humans are driving this extinction crisis through activities that take over animal habitats, pollute nature and fuel global warming, scientists say. A new global deal to protect nature agreed on Dec. 19 has the potential to help, and scientists are urging the world's nations to ensure the deal is a success. When an animal species is lost, a whole set of characteristics disappears along with it - genes, behaviors, activities and interactions with other plants and animals that may have taken thousands or millions - even billions - of years to evolve. Whatever role that species played within an ecosystem is lost too, whether that's pollinating certain plants, churning nutrients in soil, fertilizing forests or keeping other animal populations in check, among other things.

Nation celebrates 146th birthday of Quaid

ISLAMABAD: The nation celebrated the 146th birthday of the founder of Pakistan, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, on Sunday across the country with pledges to uphold his guiding principles of unity, faith, and discipline. Pakistan is observing the birth anniversary of the father of the nation with traditional zeal and fervour by paying rich tributes to him for his untiring struggle, sagacity and leadership that led to the creation of a separate homeland for the Muslims of the sub-continent.—APP