



# Islamabad POST

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**Xi urges steps to 'protect' lives as China battles Covid**

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**Paris protests expose terrorist PKK's true face**

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**Australian test award named after Warne**

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**Briefs**

**Philosophy of Bibi guides me: Zardari**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In his message on the eve of the Martyrdom Day of Benazir Bhutto Shaheed, former president Asif Ali Zardari said that he could not become negligent of the mission of Bibi Shaheed even in sleep. He added that he had been guided by Benazir Bhutto Shaheed in politics, adding that the philosophy of Benazir Bhutto Shaheed was guiding him then. "For the sake of the Constitution and democracy, Benazir Bhutto Shaheed faced the difficulties that no one else has faced till date.

**Govt taking steps for welfare of journalists**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb said on Monday that the present government was taking all possible measures for the welfare of journalists. Congratulating the newly elected office bearers of Lahore Press Club, she said the PML-N government fully believed in freedom of speech and independence of the press. In a statement, she congratulated Azam Chaudhry on his election as President of LPC, ShadabRiaz as SVP, Zaheer Ahmed Babar as Vice President, Abdul Majeed Sajid as Secretary.

**Govt. to complete its tenure**

APP

LAHORE: Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif on Monday said that general elections would be held on time as the PDM govt would complete its constitutional tenure. Addressing the 50 death anniversary of Khawaja Muhammad Rafique, he said that no one would be allowed to pressurize the government for early general elections, adding that it was legal and constitutional right of any govt to complete its tenure.

## PM vows to curb menace of terrorism

Says will take all steps to control incidents of terrorism, inaugurates development projects in DI Khan

SHAMIM SHAHID

DERA ISMAIL KHAN: As the country has been witnessing an uptick in terror incidents, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Monday reiterated his resolve to uproot the menace of terrorism by using all resources to bring back peace in Pakistan. The premier, while addressing an event in Dera Ismail Khan, said that he will take all possible steps to control incidents of terrorism in the country. PM Shehbaz's assurance came while commenting on the recent terror incidents across the country, particularly highlighting the Bannu operation against the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) where its terrorists took the Counter-Terrorism Department's compound hostage, which was later cleared by security forces. "Security forces bravely combated against the terrorists in Bannu. In recent weeks, incidents of terrorism are on the rise again. Those who embraced martyrdom in Bannu are Pakistan's heroes. The nation will remember them," the premier said, speaking at an event following the launch of

**PM invites Qatari Amir to Climate Resilient Pakistan conference**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Monday invited Amir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani to participate in the International Conference on Climate Resilient Pakistan, co-hosted with the United Nations, in Geneva on January 9, 2023. The prime minister spoke on telephone with the Amir of Qatar, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. The prime minister thanked the Amir for the generous humanitarian assistance provided by Qatar in the wake of the devastating climate-induced floods in Pakistan earlier this year.

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**Saudi embassy advises citizens to remain careful**  
*Earlier the US embassy had asked its citizens not to visit Marriott Hotel*

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Saudi Arabian embassy in Islamabad issued a security alert for the kingdom's citizens in Pakistan on Monday, advising them to remain "careful and limit their movement" amid rising terror threat. The Saudi alert comes a day after the US embassy stopped its staff from visiting Islamabad's Marriott Hotel due to fears of an attack. A few other embassies have also advised their staff and citizens in the federal capital to restrict their movement for some time.

**FM lauds Saudi Arabia for flood assistance**

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari spoke with Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, Foreign Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

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ISLAMABAD: Foreign Secretary Asad Majeed Khan received H.E Furkat Sidikov, First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan. Wide range of issues of mutual interest were discussed to enhance co-op. - DNA



DERA ISMAIL KHAN: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif laying foundation stone of development projects for Southern Districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. - DNA

**Alvi backs down from statement regarding ex-COAS**



SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: President Arif Alvi on Monday rebutted a statement "wrongly attributed" to him regarding alleged support extended by then army chief General (ret'd) QamarJavedBajwa to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) during the 2018 general elections. A statement issued by the President's Office on Twitter said that the president has taken notice of the "wrongly attributed" statement, adding that it "has been quoted out of reference to the context and is twisted and self-concocted". "President DrArifAlvi has taken notice of the statement wrongly attributed to him about the alleged help extended by the former Chief of Army Staff, General (r) QamarJavedBajwa, and his team in the Senate, and their help to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) during the elections also," stated the tweet. The clarification by the President's Office comes after a local newspaper published a report in which Alvi was quoted telling journalists, leaders of the business community, and foreign diplomats at a dinner on Saturday that "Gen (ret'd) Bajwa and his team" had helped PTI Chief Imran Khan in the Senate and during elections also.

## Elahi to go for trust vote before Jan 11: Fawad

Says Gen (R)Bajwa wanted us to thank him for popularity

ALI HAMZA

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Fawad Chaudhry on Monday said the Punjab Chief Minister ParvezElahi would go for a vote of confidence before January 11. In a press conference, Fawad while launching a tirade against the ruling Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) said that the incumbent rulers incompetence has put Pakistan on the verge of default, adding that after the "regime change" operation, the overwhelming support from the masses for PTI chief Imran Khan put them in an unknown fear. "Institutions should play their role for snap elections," urged the PTI leader. Former information minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Fawad Chaudhry has claimed that former chief of army staff (COAS) Gen ret'dQamarJavedBajwa wanted them to thank him for the popularity the party gained. The former federal minister made these remarks while talking to a private television channel Monday.

Continued on Page 06

**Imran summons PTI legislators' meeting on Jan 2**

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Amid Punjab's perpetual crisis, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman Imran Khan summoned PTI and PML-Q's parliamentary party members meeting on January 2. The deposed premier presided over a meeting attended by former Federal Minister MoonisElahi and parliamentary party members from the PML-Q and PTI to discuss the number game ahead of the Punjab Assembly's expected dissolution and vote of confidence. Meanwhile the PTI leader Fawad Chaudhry said his party was going to issue a white paper on the country's economic situation.

Continued on Page 06

## Russia says can supply gas to Pakistan via Iran

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak has said that his country could export natural gas to the markets of Pakistan and Afghanistan. He stated this while giving a wide-ranging interview to the TASS agency, parts of which have been published throughout the weekend. Novak said that in the long-term, Russia can send its natural gas to the markets of Afghanistan and Pakistan, either using the infrastructure of Central Asia, or in a swap from the territory of Iran. On Oct 11, 2022, Pakistan's Ambassador to

Russia Shafqat Ali Khan called on Russian energy minister to discuss a potential deal for the LNG import. But Moscow didn't show its inclination to sell the LNG saying that the LNG contracts were long-term pacts and arranging them on short notice for Pakistan would be hard at the time. However, State Minister for Energy Musadik Malik said that Russia would provide crude oil and diesel at discounted rates. He further said that Russia was constructing new LNG production facilities and had invited Pakistan to begin discussions on long term LNG contracts for 2025 and 2026.

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## Thai civil society to continue helping flood victims

Ambassador of Thailand Chakkrid Krachaiwong says Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, the Royal Thai Embassy, and Thai civil society contributed approximately 134 million PKR for the flood relief operations

EXCLUSIVE

ANSAR M BHATTI

**Ambassador of Thailand Chakkrid Krachaiwong talked to Daily Islamabad POST on various issues. First part of his interview was published last week. Here is the 2nd part of his interview.**

PAKISTANI TRUCK ART

The 226-foot-long wall of the Embassy, which was painted with the Pakistan's truck art, is one of the projects to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the establishment of Thailand-Pakistan diplomatic relations. The Pakistan's truck art is globally known for its unique charm reflecting appreciation for Pakistan's love of art, friendliness, joyfulness, and diversity that resemble Thai people. I hope that this painted wall will connect the Pakistani and Thai people together in the

sense that when the Pakistanis come to the Embassy, they would feel welcomed by the art of their own and, at the same time, when the Thai people come to the Embassy, they would get to know more about the Pakistan's art and culture through this painting. It is also to demonstrate our respect to Pakistan's rich culture and talented artists. I would like to express my appreciation to the very talented artist, Mr. Siyar Khan, from Peshawar who has preserved this indigenous art for over 20 years of his work. We hope that this painting will contribute to the promotion and preservation of indigenous art, which has long history, in this digitalized era. I also would like to thank the Pakistan's media that help promoting this project to wider audiences. I am very pleased that Thai media are also interested in and published a number of articles on this project, one of which is written by myself. **THAI ROLE IN FLOOD RELIEF WORK** I wish to express my sincere condolence



es and pass on solidarity from the people of Thailand to those who have been affected by one of the most devastating floods in the Pakistan's history. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, the Royal Thai Embassy, and Thai civil society organizations contributed approximately 134 million Pakistan Rupees for the flood relief operations. Moreover, I also have a conversation with Mr. Aziz Boolani, CEO of Serena Hotel, and we agreed to have professional Thai traditional dancers and Muay Thai boxers who flew in from Thailand to perform at the Fundraising Gala Dinner both in Islamabad and Faisalabad to assist those who suffered from the severed flood. We are proud to be a crucial part of these fundraising galas and are appreciative of Serena Hotel and the donors as well as participants of the events. Currently, the Thai civil society still continues its financial support to the flood victims because we understand that even if the flood has been subsided

in many areas, the rehabilitation of the flood affected people still be a priority. I believe that it is important for the international community to focus much more on combating climate change and global warming. Otherwise, this can happen again and it could happen to any country. **IMPRESSIONS ABOUT PAKISTAN** I extremely value my assignment here as Ambassador because it allows me to meet Pakistani friends from all walks of life as well as my friends in Diplomatic Circle. It has also given me profound respect for the people of Pakistan and their patriotic minds and passionate hearts as Pakistani progresses through this challenging world. My Ambassadorship is also giving a great opportunity for me and our families at the Embassy, to return your kind hospitality, with our sincere friendship to our dear friends in Pakistan. Rest assured that, as a friend, Thailand will work hand in hand with Pakistan to achieve our common goals for the benefits of our peoples as well as people of the world.

# Alvi for service oriented conduct of officials

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: President Dr. Arif Alvi on Monday urged all government officials to ensure the dispensation of justice to the public and their service in its true spirit so that problems faced by citizens could be resolved in the shortest possible time. The president was addressing an awareness seminar titled "Roles, functions and Performance of Federal Tax Ombudsman" held here at Sindh Governor House Karachi. FTO's annual report for the year 2021 was also unveiled at the occasion. President Arif Alvi said that it was among the primary duties of an ombudsman that he should expedite the process of dispensation of justice to the aggrieved citizens and find a way out for resolving the issues affecting citizens in an individual capacity or as a larger group. The president said the written words of law sometimes cannot cater to and address all given situations therefore superior judiciary has been empowered to interpret the provi-

sion of the constitution and law. He said that legislation is a dynamic process that keeps on evolving to cater to new development, products, emerging business and trade processes, and development of the society which sometimes slow down the dispensation of services to the public. Like the overall legal framework tax laws also pass through a dynamic and progressive process and they always require amendments and interpretation for their implementation in the spirit of facilitating and serving the public. He said that there is a need to create friendly, services-oriented, and objective tax system where every taxpayer willingly and happily follows the law and pays tax obligations without any fear of exploitation, harassment, or intimidation. Ombudsman secretariats were important organs of state and those could play an effective role in resolving public issues by right interpretation of concerning laws and providing a remedy to the aggrieved citizens, Dr. Arif Alvi said adding that om-

budsmen-whether it is federal, tax, or insurance ombudsman-were not rival to government departments and organizations but those were to facilitate the public and ensure their access to the concerned forums for resolution of their grievances. Referring to the era of Hazrat Muhammad s.a.w. and Khulfa-e-Rashidain, the president said that whenever someone was appointed to administer public affairs at that time he was directed to ensure public access and keep the sense of service supreme. "The spirit of keeping the doors opened and listening to people's grievances must be kept alive," he stressed. Corruption and tax evasion prevailed all around the world while there were certain loopholes and anomalies in the law and rules which allow their misuse by the public or the authority, he noted and observed that corruption was a menace that could not be rooted out completely from society but it was regrettable that its proportion in our society was higher than other de-

veloped nations. The president said, unfortunately, fake news, disinformation, and misinformation thrive on the words spoken not on the spirit and real intent of the speech. He called upon the journalists' community that while reporting on serious national issues they should focus on the real intent and objectives of the statement rather than spinning the news. Dr. Arif Alvi said that the big machinery of statehood was like a narrow tunnel having dictatorship and anarchy on its outer rungs and democracy in the middle which balances out everything so that there is justice in the society and a viable and practical way out could be drawn out between extreme states of absolutism and anarchy. The president stressed imparting awareness to the public and said that mass awareness was an important element but a well-thought-out decision itself was an effective medium of promotion as it reinforces public confidence and persuades more people to refer to the institution to redress their grievances.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif along with participants posing for a group photo at the Grand Finale of National Amateur Short Film Festival (NASFF) 2022. - DNA

## Reduction in business hours will hit Government in collecting revenues: RCCI

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) has asked the Government to review its decision of reducing business hours. The government will lose billions of rupees in terms of sales tax, due to reduced business hours. RCCI President Saqib Rafiq in a statement said that stakeholders should be consulted before making the announcement and added that the early closure of businesses, especially hotel restaurants or food service will add more suffering to the masses. He said that it is appreciable that the Government is concerned about saving energy, which is a good initiative, but the government's revenue of electricity bills may decrease due

to reduction in power consumption during peak hours. He demanded that the government should focus on finding an amicable solution to this problem by holding talks with all the stakeholders and avoid imposing unilateral decisions. Reduced business hours will further stagnate the economy and reduce revenues, he added. The business community is aware of the current economic situation, however, it is necessary to formulate policies in consultation with stakeholders, he remarked. The decision to close the shops early to save electricity was also taken in the previous periods, however, it has not yielded any significant benefit or results, rather the officials of the district administration come down on harassment, he cautioned.



RCCI president Saqib Rafiq suggested that working hours should be fixed by consensus, applicable to all types of markets and shopping malls in the federal capital and all provinces.

## Imran's entire politics based on hatred, divisions

"If the country was in the right direction during the tenure of Imran Khan, why did the debts increase instead of decreasing? Imran Khan gave mafias a chance to play openly. Imran Khan made the rupee lose half its worth

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to the Prime Minister and Pakistan People's Party (PPP) leader Qamar Zaman Kaira said on Monday that extremism and discrimination had been increased in Pakistan, adding that Imran Khan's entire politics was based on hatred and division. "Now, bullying has replaced argument. Debates are initiated even on those statements of Imran Khan that

are contrary to the facts," he stated while addressing a press conference in Islamabad. "Visiting other countries and participating in forums is the job of the foreign minister. During the tenure of Imran Khan, Pakistan failed on the foreign front," he deplored. "Imran Khan angered Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Malaysia. What Imran Khan did to the CPEC angered China. Khan Sahib angered America too. India changed the law and made Kashmir

its part. Imran Khan did not have the support of any country on India's aggression in Kashmir. Shah Mehmood Qureshi spoiled our relations with the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) too," he castigated. "Bilawal Bhutto brought success to Pakistan on the foreign front. He presented Pakistan's stance on climate change to the world. He is visiting the foreign countries at his own expense. Criticism of Bilawal Bhutto's foreign tours is unjustified," Kaira asserted. "Pakistan is achieving success on the foreign front. Imran Khan is attacking Pakistan, and we condemn it," he stated. "The incidents of terrorism are increasing in the country. They have increased in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan," he expressed concerns. "Imran Khan can tell one thing that he has done in four years. Opposition is done even without bitterness. Pakistan took the highest amount of loans during Imran Khan's

tenure," he maintained. "If the country was in the right direction during the tenure of Imran Khan, why did the debts increase instead of decreasing? Imran Khan gave mafias a chance to play openly. Imran Khan made the rupee lose half its worth," he added. While commenting on the economic situation of the country, Kaira said that Pakistan would not go bankrupt. He further said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari were working hard to restore the positive image of the country at the global level to forge strong bilateral ties with friendly countries. Kaira said due to the best diplomacy Pakistan was capturing space again at the international level which was damaged by the previous regime. It was for the first time in the history of the country that a delegation of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) visited the Line of Control (LoC) along the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK).



## Quaid-e-Azam guaranteed minorities' rights

CM said that the last few years had been difficult for many of us, with the ongoing challenges and uncertainties of the COVID-19 pandemic. "But through it all, we have remained strong and resilient, and have continued to find ways to come together and support one another," he said and added to move forward into the new year

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, while addressing a Christmas Cake Cutting Ceremony, here at the CM House, on Monday said that Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah addressing the Constituent Assembly on August 11, 1947, had clearly guaranteed the freedom of minorities. The CM quoting the father of the nation said, "You are free to go to your temples, You are free to go to your mosques or to any other place of worship in this state of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion, caste, or creed that has nothing to do with the

business of the State." He said that this was the "manifesto of the Pakistan Peoples Party". The programme was attended by the provincial ministers, advisors, special assistants, MPAs, and PPP office bearers of the minorities wing of the Karachi division, and of all the districts of the province, clergy, including Cardinal Joseph Coutts, Bishop Kaleem John, people from Pentecostal Church and notables. The CM said that the last few years had been difficult for many of us, with the ongoing challenges and uncertainties of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"But through it all, we have remained strong and resilient, and have continued to find ways to come together and support one another," he said and added to move forward into the new year by holding onto the hope that the new year would make the world a better place for all. Murad Shah said that PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari always upheld the rights of minorities. "If any incident happens with any member of the minority community, he starts questioning me and directs me to redress the matter and report him," he disclosed. Mr. Shah

said that PPP was the only party in the country that took all the religious communities together. "Our one MNA and two MPAs are directly elected in the general elections and there is no such example of any other political party in the country." The CM said that six of his cabinet members were from minorities. "The PPP has never discriminated against any person on the basis of religion, caste, and creed but provides them with equal rights and opportunities," he said. The CM extended his heartfelt Christmas greetings to the Christian Community. "May this festive season bring you

joy, happiness, and all the blessings you deserve," he concluded. Minister for Minorities Gianchand Israni and MPA Lal Chand Ukran, Cardinal Joseph Coutts, and PPP MPA Naveed Anthony also spoke on the occasion. Minorities Minister Gianchand said that he was from the Hindu minority, but his party had given him the ministry with the portfolio of Minorities Affairs task to redress the grievances of the minorities on a priority basis. He disclosed that he has been elected MPA directly on the PPP ticket which was a great honour for him. -APP

## No one will be allowed to challenge writ of state

QUETTA: Balochistan Home and Tribal Affairs Minister Mir Ziaullah Langu on Monday said the provincial government was ready to talk to the protesters in Gwadar as it was a democratic right to protest but no one would be allowed to challenge the writ of the state. He expressed these views while addressing a press conference at Quetta Press Club here. The Minister said that eighteen people have been arrested for trying to take the law into their hands in Gwadar. Mir Ziaullah Langu said that the present government has ended every protest and sit-in peacefully. -APP

## CM chairs meeting of PMA

LAHORE: The 21st meeting of the Punjab Mass Transit Authority (PMA) was held under the chair of Punjab Chief Minister Chaudhry Parvez Elahi at his office on Monday. PMA Managing Director briefed about the procurement of new buses. The chief minister stated that new buses would have separate seats for women, blind and differently-abled commuters who would be provided seats near the bus entrance. Plying environment-friendly hybrid buses would reduce environmental pollution and smog while passengers would benefit from a cheap and quality transportation system, he added. -APP

## 5th convocation of Institute of Management Sciences held

PESHAWAR: The fifth convocation of the Institute of Management Sciences (IMS) was held on Monday and was attended by passed out graduates, their parents, dignitaries from academia and people from different walks of life. Kamran Khan Bangash, Minister for Higher Education Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was the chief guest on the occasion and distributed medals and degrees to the graduating students. A total of 07 graduates from various undergraduate programmes were awarded gold medals and 04 students were awarded silver medals. One posthumous MS degree was awarded to Muhammad Javed. IMS is the first and only educational institute

to award this degree in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Provincial Minister Kamran Bangash congratulated the graduates on successful completion of their studies. He also appreciated the role of IMS Sciences in producing graduates who have the ability to actualize theory into practice. He appreciated IMS Sciences for holding the event in a very organized way and said that IMS Sciences is one of the best educational institutions of the country and wished it more success. In his welcome address, the Director of IMS Sciences, Dr. Muhammad Mohsin Khan welcomed Kamran Bangash for sparing his time to grace this important event of the Institute and considered his

participation as a source of motivation. Director informed the participants that the convocation is being held after a gap of four years. However, he stated that the event would refresh the old memories of the Institute's graduates. He also informed the participants that IMS Sciences has been focusing on entrepreneurship and the graduates have initiated their startups. In addition to core subjects, IMS Sciences has also expanded its focus to other areas such as Development Studies and Social Sciences. He briefed the participants that the IMS Sciences is based on guiding principles of merit, transparency and open door policy. -APP

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

**Karachi**  
Room No. 54 & 55, 3rd Floor, Kankar Nagar, Main Tariq Road, 17D (Block-2), P.E.C.S.E. Karachi. Tel: (+92 21) 3430025, 34310479. Fax: (+92 21) 34317147. E-mail: karachi@freelinemovers.com

**Lahore**  
F-4, Gulberg Green, Main Boulevard, Lahore. Tel: (+92 42) 3575881, 35751081. Fax: (+92 42) 35717432. E-mail: lahore@freelinemovers.com

**Peshawar**  
Office No. C-3, 2nd Floor, Zameer Plaza, Laili Ahsan, Ring Road, Peshawar. Tel: (+92 91) 2527778. Fax: (+92 91) 2628368. E-mail: peshawar@freelinemovers.com

**Kabul**  
House # 4, Street # 4, Chahul Ahsan Road, Shahr-e-Naw, Kabul - Afghanistan. Tel: (+92 700) 773 33 79795. Fax: 88 83 77948. E-mail: kabul@freelinemovers.com

## National Days and Armed Forces Days

### December

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



### Hotels & Restaurants

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



### Airlines

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

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### Islamabad Metropolitan

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

### Water Tank

Islamabad.....	0321-5744480
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# Sherry nails Imran over Alvi's army help statement

“Imran Khan is instigating state institutions to interfere in the political and administrative matters and play an extra-constitutional role to bring him to power. Imran Khan has got used to doing politics on crutches”

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Climate Change and PPP Vice President Sherry Rehman has said that President Arif Alvi's statement that the PTI was helped by the former army chief during general and Senate elections was a charge sheet against Imran Khan. In a series of tweets posted on Monday, Ms Rehman wrote: "Arif Alvi's statement is a charge sheet against Imran Khan. Imran Khan and Tehreek-e-Insaf should explain his statement. Nowadays, Imran Khan is accusing the former army chief of plotting against his government, while his own president is saying that the former army chief helped him in the Senate and general elections."

"Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari had said on the floor of the National Assembly on the very first day that he was a "select-

ed" prime minister. Though belated, Arif Alvi has confessed that Imran Khan was a selected (premier). Now on one hand, he (Imran) is blaming the establishment and on the other, he is asking it to play a political and administrative role. "Imran Khan is instigating state institutions to interfere in the political and administrative matters and play an extra-constitutional role to bring him to power. Imran Khan has got used to doing politics on crutches. He should avoid making institutions a part of his political narrative."

President Dr Arif Alvi has made a big revelation by disclosing that former army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa and his team helped Imran Khan during general and Senate elections. President Alvi made this disclosure during a dinner hosted in his honour a couple of days ago. He confessed that the former army chief and his team helped the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf during general elections.

The president, however, advised the political parties to forget the past, forgive and take a fresh start. He said he urged both the government and opposition to find a middle way and hold elections by the end of April or in May. On the emergence of frequent audio and video leaks, President Alvi expressed his concern. He said that he had talked to the new army chief in this regard. "I wonder why this thing is going on. This should come to an end," he accentuated. Meanwhile, President Alvi held a meeting with Sindh Governor Kamran Tessori on Monday and discussed the development projects in Karachi. They also held discussion on political situation.



## Senate Committee on IT meets

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on Information Technology and Telecommunication was held on Monday at the Parliament House under the chairmanship of Senator Kauda Babar. PTA officials gave a detailed briefing to the committee regarding SpaceX's Starlink program in Pakistan. Officials said that this technology is still in its early stages and further progress could not be made due to some security concerns. Senator Afnanullah Khan said that it is an excellent technology for providing internet services in remote areas and it is not appropriate to forego it just because of security concerns.

The Chairman Committee, Senator Kauda Babar formed a sub-committee to settle the matter and bring it to a logical end, Sub-committee will sit with all the stakeholders and resolve the issues. The Committee was briefed on the Universal Services Fund's plans to improve voice and data services in underdeveloped areas. Officials said that many projects are underway to provide the best service to the customers in Balochistan. A private telecom company has introduced 4G internet service on 95% towers in Gwadar district.

The chairman committee said that mobile internet service is not available in most of the districts of Balochistan, due to which the students of Balochistan are facing difficulties. He further said that despite the availability of service in many areas, the service is suspended due to security concerns. - DNA

## IIUI extends last date of admission till January 02

DNA

ISLAMABAD: International Islamic University, Islamabad (IIUI) has extended the last date to apply for admission in more than 100 programs of its 11 faculties till Monday, 2nd of the January, 2023. The university administration made this decision keeping in view the interest and requests of applicants to extend the date. The university has offered admissions in BS, MS and PhD programs of 11 faculties including Social Sciences, Basic and Applied Sciences, Management Sciences, International Institute for Islamic Economics, Arabic, Usuluddin, Languages and Literature, Engineering and Technology and Shariah and Law, Faculty of Computing and Faculty of Education.

## PSX witnesses bullish trend, gains 485 points

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bullish trend on Monday, gaining 485.96 points, a positive change of 1.23 percent, closing at 40,155.16 against 39,669.20 points on the previous day. A total of 146,880,187 shares were traded during the day as compared to 132,633,704 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 5.134 billion against Rs 4.590 billion on the last trading day. As many as 329 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 207 of them recorded gains and 108 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 14 companies remained unchanged.

## Lost & Found

File serial No. 4058650, 1A Paradise Block, has lost in fire incident in Metro City. Failing for new file of same serial number, any objection, please contact with 3 days, after that no objection will be acceptable. **Ghazanfar Ali S/o Fazal Din** Resident of Islamia High School, Ward number 25, Abbaspura Jehlum

## Election Commission asks parliamentarians to submit statements

ISLAMABAD: Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has drawn the attention of all members of parliament and provincial assemblies to submit their statements of assets and liabilities including those of their spouses and dependents by December 31. According to ECP, all parliamentarians have to submit their yearly statements of assets and liabilities, including similar details of their spouses and dependent children, on the preceding June 30 on Form B for the financial year 2021-2022. The commission, on the first day of January each year, publishes the names of members who fail to submit the requisite statement of assets and liabilities within the period specified under sub-section (1). The commission will on January 16 by order suspend the membership of a member of an assembly or Senate, who fails to submit the statement of assets and liabilities and such Member shall cease to function till (s) he files the statement of assets and liabilities. The ECP further said that any member submitting a fake statement of assets and liabilities under this section in material particulars may, within 120 days from the date of submission of the statement, be proceeded against for committing the offense of corrupt practice. The ECP said that the prescribed form, along with instructions and guidelines prepared in this regard, can be obtained free of cost from the Election Commission of Pakistan Secretariat, Islamabad, offices of provincial election commissioners in each province, Senate Secretariat, National Assembly, and secretariats of provincial assemblies. Form B can also be downloaded from the ECP's website www.ecp.gov.pk. - DNA

## PALSP urge Govt to appoint full-time director general PSQCA

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Association of Large Steel Producers urge the Govt to appoint a full time DG PSQCA. For the last one year, the govt has not appointed a full time DG of PSQCA to steer the organization effectively. For the efficiency and proper functionality of PSQCA a full-time capable Head/DG is mandatory, to take responsibility of organization and take urgent needful measure to enforce the PSQCA Standards and Laws/Act in letter & spirit and put a permanent stop to the production and distribution of substandard steel products. Presently the market is flooded with substandard steel materials and there is no check on production and

sale of substandard steel. The dilemma is rules and standards are already there but unfortunately they are not implemented/enforced, providing perfect ground for the culprits that are putting the life of various at stake. There is blatant violation of standards countrywide that is not only creating national risk for the future generations but it is also creating unfair competition within the steel sector because of significant price difference between substandard and quality compliant bars. As a result, the documented and quality compliant sector at great disadvantage and discouraging further investments and hurdle in achieving economies of scale. Steel is included in PSQCA Mandatory List and has to meet the standards. So strict enforcement of the Section

14 of the PSQCA Act (1996) is required under which the Mandatory Items notified by the Federal Government prohibit the manufacture, storage and sale of articles that do not comply with the Pakistan Standards. Also, under Section 22 of the Act, the manufacturers who do not comply with the specified standard should be charged with strict penalties and punishments. According to Pakistan Standards (PS) specification for deformed and plain carbon-steel for concrete reinforcement, PS:1879-2018R Section 5 - "Material and Manufacture": "The bars shall be rolled from properly identified heats of mold-cast or strand-cast steel using the Electric arc furnace or induction furnace coupled with ladle refining furnace basic oxy-

gen or open-hearth process from Quality steel scrap or its substitute or combination of both. Material of re-rolling scrap from ship breaking industry is excluded for direct rolling" According to the standard the bars shall be produced by following the proper process and meet the tensile requirements. Whereas the domestic market is loaded with the substandard bars manufactured through direct rolling of re-rollable scrap and shipbreaking material/ship plates and fail to meet the strength and elongation tests when measured against the standard. The menace of production and sale of substandard steel is especially worrisome for Pakistan as it is prone to natural disasters because it comes under high seismic zone.

# Chinese company sings MoU in energy sector



DNA

ISLAMABAD: As Pakistan aims to increase its renewable energy share to 60% by 2030, GoodWe, one of China's leading smart energy solution providers, is also playing its part to boost renewable energy in the country, Gwadar Pro reported on Monday.

The GoodWe has signed a 50MW memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Maxgreen and Solcraft to boost the renewable energy sector in Pakistan. "We are looking forward to this cooperation. It will add significantly to Pakistan's fast-growing renewable capacity and will further contribute to green energy development and industrial clean electricity demand, as well as enhancing eco-friendly residential living," reads a statement of GoodWe. Maxgreen and Solcraft, with their head offices in Karachi, are Pakistani companies that deal with Solar PV and provide clean, green, and smart energy solutions through constant innovation and research.

ment and industrial clean electricity demand, as well as enhancing eco-friendly residential living," reads a statement of GoodWe. Maxgreen and Solcraft, with their head offices in Karachi, are Pakistani companies that deal with Solar PV and provide clean, green, and smart energy solutions through constant innovation and research.

## IHC seeks details of gifts presidents and premiers received since 1947

*Justice Aurangzeb inquired why the rest of the public servants were not included in it. "Why are you limiting yourself to the presidents and prime ministers?"*

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday ordered the Cabinet Division to provide details of gifts the presidents and the prime ministers of Pakistan received since 1947. The direction came during a hearing as Justice Mian Gull Hassan Aurangzeb heard the petition filed by Abu Zar Salman Niazi. At the outset of the hearing, the petitioner's counsel said his client had asked for the details of the gifts received by the presidents and prime ministers since 1947 but the Cabinet Division refused to provide the information on the plea that it was classified. He further stated that the Pakistan Information Commission (PIC) gave an order on June 29 but it had not been implemented despite the passage of five months. Justice Aurangzeb inquired why the rest of the public servants were not included in it. "Why are you limiting yourself to the presidents and prime ministers? This shows your ambition... every petition that comes is related to the prime minister". The deputy attorney general told the court that in his opinion, the records before 1990 would not be available and that such an information should be on the website. The court finally issued a notice to the Cabinet Division to not implement the decision of the Pakistan Information Commission and sought a report within a month. - DNA

# ICCI urges Dar to call meeting of business leaders

SVP ICCI said that due to hurdles in imports for industrial raw material and equipment, production activities are contracting, which are causing lay off of thousands of workers giving rise to unemployment

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) has said that the economic situation of the country is getting worse day by day, which is creating lot of concerns in the business community and called upon the Finance Minister Muhammad Ishaq Dar to urgently call a meeting of Presidents of all major chambers of commerce and industry of the country including ICCI to discuss options to cope with economic crisis and revive the fragile economy of the country.

Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari said that every crisis demands that the government should take stakeholders on board to evolve a consensus strategy in order to wriggle out of the crisis, but despite requests, the Finance Minister is not giving time for meeting with the business community. He said that the foreign exchange reserves of the country have tumbled down to around US\$ 6 billion, which can cover only four to five weeks of imports. He said that non-opening of LCs is hampering required imports for industry due to which many industries are losing export orders. He said that many consignments of imports are stuck



up at ports due to non-clearance of LCs and the business community is suffering huge losses as they have to pay demurrage and detention charges on them. Faad Waheed, Senior Vice Pres-

ident ICCI said that due to hurdles in imports for industrial raw material and equipment, the production activities are contracting, which are causing lay off of thousands of workers giving rise to unemployment. He said that the exports and remittances are also slowing down and these trends present a precarious economic future, which is a source of concern for the business community. He said that the Finance Minister should meet with the business leaders to find out ways and means to save the businesses and economy from further troubles. Engr. Azhar ul Islam Zafar, Vice President ICCI said that the current government had made

a massive hike of 47 percent in electricity tariffs in July this year to cope with the circular debt, which is still on the rise. He said that the circular debt of the country has increased from Rs.450 billion in 2013 to Rs.2467 billion till March 2022 showing an unprecedented hike of over 448 percent in a short span of 9 years. He said that if this trend continues, the circular debt is estimated to reach Rs.4 trillion by 2025 and urged that the government should bring drastic reforms in the energy sector to tackle circular debt and provide cheap energy to the private sector that would enable trade and industrial activities to flourish.

## Briefs

## Munir Niazi remembered on 16th death anniversary

ISLAMABAD: Prominent Urdu poet Munir Niazi was remembered on his 16th death anniversary on Monday for his contribution to Urdu language and literature. Munir Ahmed Niazi was born on April 9, 1928 in Khanpur, a village near Hoshiarpur, India and used 'Munir' as his pen name. After partition, he migrated to Pakistan and settled in Sahiwal. Talking to APP, poet Muhammad Asad said that Munir Niazi was a great poet of Urdu and Punjabi. "He (Munir) raised the standard of poetry in both the genres, ghazal and nazm" Asad added. "Munir also wrote songs and some prose poems, and he was credited with creating a distinct style, rhythm, and diction. Niazi, a master of the poetic imagery, was bold enough to experiment with the different genres of poetry," he said. "Mythology, nostalgia and haunting romance are some of the themes that are found frequently in poems of Munir Niazi. He wrote numerous songs for films and became known as one of the best songwriters of Pakistan. —APP

## CPO holds 'Khuli Kutchery' to address complaints of citizens

RAWALPINDI: City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi Syed Shehzad Nadeem Bukhari under the Punjab government's open door policy held a 'Khuli Kutchery' here on Monday in Police Lines Headquarters to address the complaints of the people. According to a Police spokesman, the CPO issued directives to the officers concerned to take action and submit detailed reports on the complaints submitted by the citizens in 'Khuli Kutchery'. He directed the Stations House Officers of the police stations to remain present for at least three hours from 3 pm to 6 pm in their respective police stations to hear public complaints. Shehzad Nadeem Bukhari said that negligence on part of the officials concerned would not be tolerated. The CPO on the occasion said, the 'Khuli Kutcheries' were being held to provide the citizens immediate relief and address their complaints besides it also helped improve standards of policing. He issued orders to the officers to complete inquiries and send reports within the given time frame. All-out efforts were being made to ensure the dispensation of speedy justice purely on merit to the people and improve service delivery standards in the district, he added. —APP

## PAC organized "Quaid-ka-Pakistan" Conference

RAWALPINDI: Punjab Arts Council, in collaboration with the International Recitation Research Academy (Iqra), on Monday organized a Husne Qirrat and Naat Conference entitled Quaid Ka Pakistan. The program was presided over by a prominent reciter of the Islamic world, Professor Qari Muhammad Mushtaq Anwar, while Pir Mujtabi Farooq Gul Badshah was the chief guest. Allama Sheikh Muhammad bin Qasim, while highlighting the Quaid-e-Azam and the message of Pakistan, said that the primary purpose of the establishment of Pakistan was to promote the elevation and power of Islam. Unfortunately, he added, "We deviated from the right path and followed another". Professor Qari Muhammad Mushtaq, while speaking on the occasion, said Allama Muhammad Iqbal vision of a separate homeland for the Muslims of the subcontinent was manifested by the charismatic leader, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. He said that young generations were fortunate to attend such gatherings, as these conferences were a refresher course for their spirituality. —APP

## Pak, Uzbekistan sign MoUs to increase bilateral trade

Pakistan and Uzbekistan have been closely collaborating at regional and international fora especially at the United Nations, Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, Economic Cooperation Organisation, and Shanghai Cooperation Organisation

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Uzbekistan on Monday finalised agreements to expand investment and increase bilateral trade to \$1 billion. To this end, Commerce Minister Naveed Qamar and Uzbek Deputy Prime Minister Khodjave Jamshid Abdulkhakovich signed nine Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs). Talking to the media on the occasion, Qamar said the two countries had decided to implement the Preferential Trade Agreement from February 1, 2023. In a press release issued afterwards, the commerce ministry said the two countries also discussed the implementation of the Agreement between Uzbekistan and Pakistan on Transit Trade (AUPTT) and Uzbekistan would notify rules in this regard in February. They also decided to undertake a joint visit to the Afghan capital in the last week



of January to discuss problems faced by Pakistani and Uzbek transporters. "Both sides agreed to formulate a joint strategy for transit trade through Afghanis-

tan. Regional understanding on Transit and Trade Framework to be prepared including joint fund/mechanism for the upkeep of road infrastructure in Afghanis-

tan." Uzbekistan requested an off-dock terminal at Karachi and Gwadar ports and was assured full facilitation, the statement added. Besides this, the coun-

tries also decided to hold trade exhibitions and prepare a strategy to cooperate in e-commerce. The Uzbek delegation is scheduled to meet a number of officials during its visit, including Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev had visited Pakistan earlier this year. During his visit, a number of agreements and MoUs were signed by the two sides. An MoU was signed between Uzbekistan's Ministry of Tourism and Sport and Pakistan's Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony to promote religious tourism. Another MoU was inked between the two states in the field of environment and climate change. Pakistan and Uzbekistan have been closely collaborating at regional and international fora especially at the United Nations, Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, Economic Cooperation Organisation, and Shanghai Cooperation Organisation.

## PNCA stages play for PWDs

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) staged a play featuring challenges and life of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) here Monday. The play titled "Hum Kar Sakhtay Hain" revolves around the life of a young girl with disability issues and the hardships she faced at different levels in life while her life is also an inspiration for many other such persons when she meets other persons with disabilities and how they achieved their goals. It also highlighted social attitudes for persons with disabilities and the challenges they face for their social inclusion. The play was a part of series of street theater performances by PNCA to highlight issues related to persons with disabilities, en-

vironment and social issues. The participants of the play were trained in a three week theater workshop organized by Pak Women, CBM and Human and Social Development in collaboration with PNCA for improving access to income-generating activities for young adults with and without disabilities in selected low income areas of Rawalpindi and Islamabad. The street theater aims at creating awareness on the rights of PWDs by presenting different stories. Various sessions of the workshop guided the young and budding actors and performing art lovers about the theoretical and practical steps of acting. PNCA along with senior artists and theater experts provided institutional sup-

port to the theatre lovers of Pakistan and promotion of street theatre as well, said Waqar Azeem, Program Organizer and mentor while talking to APP. The acting course aimed to utilize the energy of youth with a platform for supporting their inner abilities. It is an attempt to explore the talent of amateur and budding artists for promoting and preserving the rich culture of the country as well as to refine the talent of participants, he said. The training focused on involvement of youth in extra curricular activities as well as show their talent in the field of performing arts and promote healthy entertainment through expressions of art. The trend of quality and thoughtful

theater plays an important role in highlighting and resolving the issues like education, training and social problems. The history of theater is connected with the history of human society and it also lead towards revolutions in shaping the society. Stage drama is a strong medium of education and occupies a unique place among performing arts with reflection and identification of social evils in an entertaining way. Besides reviving the concept of theater in the twin cities with the theme of promoting peace, love and harmony, the play also focusses on highlighting and resolving the issues of society and also bring correction to the society through artistic expressions, he said. —APP

## 'Words of Wisdom' to ignite spark among youth, adults

ISLAMABAD: Action for Impact has launched "Words of Wisdom", a motivational poetic blog book focusing on humanity and women empowerment. The book was a new addition to Pakistan's literature, which educates all audiences to recognize self-worth and morality as the country was facing political, social, economic, and societal crises, thus requiring education on actualization of individual potential, a news release said. The poem "Power in you" speaks of utilizing hidden talent to build a constructive nation. The poem "Passionate" inspires achievement of deepest passions. Further, "The Mission" of life addresses acceptance of diversity and collectivism. The writer says that one step, one word, one simple action and one act of kindness can change the lives of people. The poems "Displaced" and "I am woman and I am powerful" highlight the resilience of Pakistan's women. The book carries over 40 blogs showcasing the writer's thoughts over the past decade. "Words of Wisdom" is written by the CEO of Action for Impact, Zartasha Niazi. She believes in the power of words and emotions. In this book, poems address pain, death, life diversity and passion. All Pakistanis need these lessons for self and societal improvement. —APP

## ECP asks MPs to submit statements of assets by Dec end

The ECP further said that any member submitting a fake statement of assets and liabilities under this section in material particulars may, within 120 days from the date of submission of the statement, be proceeded against for committing the offense of corrupt practice

ISLAMABAD: Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has drawn the attention of all members of parliament and provincial assemblies to submit their statements of assets and liabilities including those of their spouses and dependents by December 31. According to ECP, all parliamentarians have to submit their yearly statements of assets and liabilities, including similar details of their spouses and dependent children, on the preceding June 30 on Form B for the financial year 2021-2022. The commission, on the first day of January each year, publishes the names of members who fail to submit the requisite statement of assets and liabilities within the period specified under sub-section (1). The commission will on January 16 by order suspend the membership of a member of an assembly or Senate, who fails to submit the statement of assets and liabilities and such Member shall cease to function till (s) he files the statement of assets and liabilities. The ECP further said that any member submitting a fake statement of assets and liabilities under this section in material particulars may, within 120 days from the date of submission of the statement, be proceeded against for committing the offense of corrupt practice. The ECP said that the prescribed form, along with instructions and guidelines prepared in this regard, can be obtained free of cost from the Election Commission of Pakistan Secretariat, Islamabad, offices of provincial election commissioners in each province, Senate Secretariat, National Assembly, and secretariats of provincial assemblies. Form B can also be downloaded from the ECP's website www.ecp.gov.pk. —APP



ISLAMABAD: Chairman NDMA Lt General Inam Haider Malik presiding special session of NEOC at NDMA main hall. — DNA

## COMSTECH seeks applications for 2023 awards

ISLAMABAD: COMSTECH, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation, has invited applications from the citizens of OIC member states who have made extraordinary scientific contributions for the awards to be given in various categories. According to an official source, COMSTECH bestows biennial awards to distinguished researchers of OIC member states for their important scientific contributions.



The COMSTECH lifetime achievement awards in basic sciences are given in the fields of Biology, Chemistry, Physics and Mathematics. This year's nominations are sought for awards in the fields of

(2018-2022). Each of the above three awards carries a certificate, shield of honor, and cash prize of US\$ 4000. The Best Research Paper awards are given for the best paper published in an impact factor international journal during the last two years (2021 and 2022) in the fields of Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics, and Physics. The best research paper award in each discipline carries a certificate, shield of honor, and cash prize of US\$ 2500. The deadline for application submission is March 31, 2023, while citizens of all 57 OIC states are eligible to apply for the COMSTECH Awards. —APP

## Pakistan's organic skincare industry gaining foothold

ISLAMABAD: The global skincare industry over the years is captured by France, South Korea, United States and Germany, taking a major chunk of the overall revenue generated through synthetic beauty products. Germany, France, Italy and the United Kingdom have occupied 80 percent of the European natural and organic personal care products market. The global personal care active ingredients market size is reportedly US\$ 200 billion with China leading the East Asian market having US\$ 123 billion share by 2022. Though the skincare industry is booming worldwide, the Pakistani counterpart isn't far behind in the race with local natural and organic products not only gaining foothold in the country but also attracting global consumers. "The reasons behind popularity of the organic personal care products is growing public awareness on the significance of natural products and people don't want to compro-

mise on health," said Dr Ashraf Wani, an Economy expert. Women in Pakistan, specifically, are more concerned about their skin and skin-related issues, including acne, wrinkles, and sunburn. Dr Wani said that growing skin care problems were the force behind popularity of these organic and natural products as "the local industry unfortunately is flooded with synthetic standard beauty products sans quality monitoring from the relevant authorities." With climate change and pollution, the risk of skin diseases has worsened, leading many brands to look for producing skincare solutions sustainably. "Organic products are devoid of any harmful chemicals and are a more safe and healthy option for the environment, and they don't pollute groundwater," Co-founder and Director Conatural, Rema Taseer explained. Conatural, co-founded seven years back by Rema and her sister Myra, is among a variety of com-

panies, including SkinDeepIntl, Kishmish organic skincare, Aura, Lush Organix that sprung up in Pakistan for providing organic and authentic skincare to the public. These brands primarily use social media, specifically Instagram and TikTok for the promotion of their products and reaching customers, majority of whom rely on brands' official websites to avoid fake sellers. This practice also helps companies in gaining public trust and driving sales. Makeup enthusiast from Islamabad Aniee said that she never opts to buy skincare items from brands without an official website because, in her opinion, those with official websites are more reliable than those who don't. Minimum price of organic skincare items starts from Rs 2,500 and goes up to more than Rs 8,000 per product, she added. Even though these organic elixirs are good for the environment and skin, nonetheless they are not

suitable for everyone's pocket. Another consumer Amreen Ali said people buy expensive products thinking "they are more effective". There was a need to create awareness about the possibility that less costly skincare products can also be as good or even better than high-priced ones, she added. An online survey conducted with around 50 participants revealed that mostly females purchase skincare products. Women of 25-40 years of age are more likely to try skincare items, with most relying on online customer reviews. Majority of the respondents are satisfied with their brand of choice giving an 80% score. However, very few consult a skin specialist or beautician before making a purchase while most set a specific monthly budget for their daily skincare regime and confirm authenticity through reviews or testing. Beautician Kiran said that skincare brands can be useful to protect skin, adding that many

clients consult her before buying such products. Whereas, Dr Uzma, a dermatologist in Islamabad, said she recommends medicated skincare products. It would take time to be suggested by doctors because "we don't have substantial data on effectiveness of such products", she added. According to Statista, the Skincare segment in Pakistan is valued at US\$ 709.70m in 2022 and is expected to grow annually by 2.58% (CAGR 2022-2026). The data further shows that the majority of revenue share (70%) is of facial products, followed by body care solutions. Dr Ashraf Wani predicted exponential growth in the local skincare industry if "it gains public trust". He said the growing trend of seeking natural and organic solutions could see more brands enter the skincare arena and generate more business activities and employment opportunities thereby increasing revenue and decreasing dependence on foreign brands. —APP

## IESCO issues power suspension programme

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Monday issued a power suspension programme for Tuesday for various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work. According to IESCO spokesman, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period from 09:00 AM to 02:00 PM, Islamabad Circle CDA Flats, Bani Gala, Jinnah Super, PHA Flats, Zia Masjid, Tramri, ISI, Berot, Highway, F-8/2, G-11/1, I-8/3, Alketal, Police Line, G-11/3, Railway Road, Shahpur, Company Bagh, Kohala, P. Countina, Kotli Sattian, Balawara, Angori, Shahpur, Shadara, Mangyal, Disto, T&T, Treat, Bhara Kahu-2, Golf City, Bhara Kahu, NIH, Athal, NCP, Pir Sohawa, Daman-e-Koh, Quaid-e-Azam University, Punjab House, Bari Imam, Mandia, Athal feeders, Rawalpindi City Circle, Faizabad, Katarian, Holy Family, Khurram Colony, Khama Road, Muslim Town, Tahmasan abad, Committee Chowk, Gulshanabad, Jamia Masjid, Gwalmandi, Mangtal, Muslimabad, Banni Tench Bhata, Golra, I-16/1, Ratta, Capt. Amir, Dhok Choudhury feeders, Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, Bank Road One, Jahangir Road, PAF, EPF One, PWD One, CBR Two, River Garden, Humak, Gulistan Colony, Major Riaz, Adiala, Gulshan-e-Fatima, Quaid-e-Azam Colony, Ara Bazar, Chowk Pandori, Lahtrar One, Duberan, Fazal Ahmed, New Choa, Panjar, New Mandra, Industrial, Sukho, Raman, CB Khan feeders, Attock Circle, Bohi Gher, Haru, Nisar Shaheed, Margalla, Museum, Wapda Town, MVHS, Shaiya, Munir abad, AWC Housing, Rashid Minhas, Shafi Chauhan, Ahmed Nagar, Hassan Abdul, Shinka, Akhori. —APP

## IHC serves notices in Azam Swati's bail petition

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday served notices to respondents on the post-arrest bail petition of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) leader Azam Khan Swati. Chief Justice Aamer Farooq heard the case filed by Azam Swati seeking bail in the controversial tweet case registered by FIA. Earlier, a local court had rejected the bail petition of PTI's leader. Petitioner's lawyer Dr. Baber Awan said that his client had not tweeted and intended to defame any institution. He said the prosecution had no evidence against Swati even after the completion of the investigation. The lawyer said that the petitioner was a 75-year-old cardiac patient. The whole case was based on documented allegations, he contended, adding that keeping the accused in jail would be a punishment before the commencement of trial. The court served notices to respondents and adjourned the hearing till January 2. It may be mentioned here that the FIA had registered an FIR against Azam Swati on November 26, 2022, regarding the controversial tweets against state institutions. —APP

## PRCS distributes hygiene kits and non-food items in flood-affected areas of Sindh

ISLAMABAD: To prevent the spread of communicable and waterborne diseases and infections, Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) distributed hygiene kits and Non-Food Items (NFI) in flood-affected areas of Sindh. PRCS in collaboration with its allied partners including the International Federation of Red Cross (IFRC), Red Crescent Societies (RCS) and other partners are making nonstop efforts for the rehabilitation of the flood-affected people. The Non-Food Items (NFI) package distributed among the flood survivors included tents, shelter lot kits, kitchen sets, tarpaulin sheets, blankets and mosquito nets, etc. —APP

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Editor-in-Chief: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti

Deputy Editor: Abid Raza

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Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com

Phone: 051-2266165 / 051-2261960

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



## US on collision course

For decades, relations between China and the United States have to a great extent remained generally stable thanks to the US abiding by the one-China policy. That, coupled with conscious strategic restraint on both sides of the Pacific, has been instrumental to the healthy growth of bilateral ties. The days of generally constructive interactions between the two sides seem to be over, however, as Washington's so-called strategic ambiguity has been replaced by a toughening approach to China-US relations, especially to the matter of Taiwan. China hawks from the US government and Congress may find comfort in the development, which appears to serve them well politically at the moment. But the increasing clarity that is being added to the volatile China-US relationship – the clear message that Washington will stand behind Taipei against the Chinese mainland whatever foolishness Taipei may come up with – could prove disastrous for all stakeholding parties. For its claim of commitment to regional and global peace, especially peace across the Taiwan Straits, Washington needs a clearer head about the possible consequences of what it is doing, and to think twice about what to do next. The National Defense Authorization Act of 2023, which US President Joe Biden signed into law Friday, is a regrettable misstep that may unleash damaging potential going forward. Beijing has condemned the act, warning of serious repercussions. Being fully aware of the dangerous potentials of Washington's recent moves regarding Taiwan, it has always appealed for prudence and restraint on the part of Washington, constantly warning it against breaking "redlines". But such statements have mostly met deaf ears in the past, and there is no reason to think that Washington will pay any greater heed to Beijing's concerns this time. Yet the NDAA is dangerous in that it lends a legislative boost to US arms sales to Taiwan. It is a move Beijing vehemently opposes, as it is gross interference in China's domestic affairs. Not to mention that, in addition to the \$10-billion US financial commitment to arming Taiwan, it contains various other measures that clearly position China as a de facto security threat. Such clauses point to substantial changes that threaten to redefine the bilateral relationship, further reducing the room for possible improvement. Washington has been vocal about installing "guardrails" for the China-US ties, saying both parties should be serious about the matter. But what it has just done with the NDAA, however, seems to contradict its "guardrails" rhetoric. Instead of installing "guardrails", it is actually demolishing those that are already in place and which have been effective for decades in preventing relations from derailing. As China's Foreign Ministry said, the US is moving even further down a wrong and dangerous path with the act, which contains a large number of provisions that seriously violate the one-China principle and the stipulations in the three China-US Joint Communiqués. "The guardrails" the administration speaks of are evident to all: Washington should abandon its Cold-War and zero-sum mentality and ideological bias, adopt an objective and rational view of China's development and stop trying to use Taiwan to contain the mainland.

## 2023 coronation

After her 70-year reign, the death of Elizabeth II in September was a national shock. Much of the country came to a halt. Crowds processed past her lying in state in Edinburgh and London. The accession of Charles III was gracefully handled. The royal funeral was large and dignified. Some 43% of the population of the UK (and 11% of the population of France) watched it on television. It was the end of an era. Even in those solemn days, there was not, however, a settled national mood about the future. That is more true than ever now, three months into the reign of the 74-year-old king. The opinion polls suggest a two-to-one divide among the public in favour of a hereditary monarch. But under Charles III, the monarchy is still feeling its way into its post-Elizabeth relationship with the nation. The temper of the new era is not yet defined. The most immediate challenges to Britain's monarchy do not come from republican feeling. Instead, they arise from the anger expressed against the king and the Prince of Wales by the Duke and Duchess of Sussex. By using their Netflix documentary series to paint a picture of racism, misogyny, insensitivity and inflexibility within the House of Windsor, the Sussexes may be undermining the new king more effectively than a more constitutionally focused campaign could do. The publication of Prince Harry's memoir in January will only add to that. A very different but no less consequential test awaits in less than five months. The coronation of Charles III, which will take place on Saturday 6 May 2023, is creeping up on a nation that has not devoted much thought to what is involved in it. That is understandable. There has not been a coronation for 70 years. Most of the British people are too focused on the hard grind of a cost of living crisis to spend their time reflecting on an ancient ritual. We do not, though, know what kind of ceremony is planned, what oath the king will swear, what role non-Anglicans will play, who will be invited (this question is larger than the fate of the Sussexes), whether there will be any civil society dimension of the ceremony in, say, Westminster Hall, or even what kind of processions are envisaged. That leaves a lot of interesting and potentially symbolic and resonant questions unanswered. It is surely time for the planning of the coronation to come out of the closet of secrecy and be shared and debated. After all, the coronation is not just about him. It's about us too.

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

James Dorsey

The schism widens The divide between Israel and American Jewry will likely widen with the potential hollowing out of Israeli democracy by Mr. Netanyahu's far-right coalition. The prime minister's partners want the Knesset, the Israeli parliament, to adopt an "override clause" that would give the smallest possible majority of 61 seats in the assembly the power to overrule Supreme Court decisions. The clause, if legislated, would grant unchecked power to the government, with no mechanism to balance it or place limits on its choices. Moreover, moves to limit eligibility for Jewish immigration to Israel and citizenship envisioned by Mr. Netanyahu's partners could further exacerbate Israeli-Jewish Diaspora relations. To do so, the religious parties want the Knesset to cancel the "grandchild clause" in the Law of Return, which governs eligibility for immigration and automatic citizenship. Removal of the provision would disqualify people with only one Jewish grandparent and endorse only individuals with at least one Jewish parent. The law would affect an estimated three million Diaspora Jews, most of whom live in the United States. Moreover, Mr. Ben-Gvir, the national security minister, also wants to withdraw recognition of converts to Judaism whose conversion was performed by Reform or Conservative rabbis in Israel in a vaguely defined "recognized Jewish community," rather than abroad. A majority of American Jews adhere to Reform and Conservative rather than Orthodox Judaism. Adding fuel to the fire, Mr. Netanyahu appointed far-right, homophobic Noam party leader Avi Maoz as a deputy prime minister in charge of forging a national Jewish identity and defining Jewish values. Mr. Maoz is a disciple of Rabbi Zvi Thau, a nationalist cleric who believes that progressive ideologues are destroying Israel's Jewish character and subverting family values. Mr. Maoz will supervise some 8,000 extracurricular educational programs in thousands of secular schools. These include life skills classes and courses on religion; the Bible; Jewish culture, identity and thought; army preparation, and human rights. "There are currently 3,000 educational programs written by progressive, far-left NGOs, funded by foreign foundations and the European Union. Are they there to strengthen the Jewish state? Of course not. They want to make Israel a state like all states. Who will make sure that Jewish identity programs be written instead of 'state-of-all-its-citizens' programs? That's my job," Mr. Maoz said on the eve of his appointment. A proponent of "the normative family," who views sexually and gender diverse people as pervers, pedophiles, and freaks, Mr. Maoz has railed against supporting transgender youths and Israel's ban on conversion therapy. He has also targeted the rights of Reform Jews and an alleged foreign-backed, post-modernist deep state that supposedly controls the judiciary and the education ministry and undermines Jewish mores. Furthermore, Mr. Maoz has advocated restricting the rights of women whose "greatest contribution... is to marry and raise an honorable family." Mr. Netanyahu hopes that his likely appointment as foreign minister of Amir Ohana, the only openly gay lawmaker in the 64-seat pro-Netanyahu parliamentary bloc, will serve as a fig leaf for diehard supporters of the Jewish

state, who desperately want evidence that the Netanyahu government won't destroy Israel's democracy. It's a gesture that is unlikely to persuade a majority of American Jews or Democrats. Former Israeli Diaspora Affairs Minister Nachman Shai warned that Mr. Netanyahu's alliances "would be a strategic mistake second to none. The American-Jewish community has always been our bridge to the US administration. Move(s) like this could cause that bridge to become very shaky." Shortly after Mr. Netanyahu won a sixth term as prime minister in the November 2022 elections, Brooklyn Rabbi Rachel Timoner cautioned in a Sabbath service that the polls "have brought in the most racist and farthest-right leadership Israel has ever seen." Comparing the Israeli swing to the right to similar trends in the United States, Italy, Sweden, and Hungary, Ms. Timoner noted that "periodically, a kind of authoritarian, nationalist, fascist insanity grips many countries in the world simultaneously." Similarly, Rabbi Rolando Matalon told his B'nai Beshurim congregation on Manhattan's Upper West Side that Jewish Power was a "racist, Jewish-supremacist" party that promoted "hateful and violent ideas." In a separate interview, Mr. Matalon added, "my most dominant emotion is fear. 'I'm afraid about the erosion of what was a liberal democracy, democratic values, of the judicial system.'" A safe haven no more Mr. Netanyahu's turn to the right calls into question the status of Israel as a haven for Jews at a time when some American Jews have begun to ask whether they still have a future in a United States in which anti-Semitism has been mainstreamed. "Hostility to Jews, in both word and deed, is now a growing presence within the public sphere and has been moving from the fringes, where it has long existed, into the mainstream," warned Alvin Rosenfield, director of the Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism at Indiana University. Mr. Rosenfield argued that rising hostility was fuelled by an amalgam of Christian anti-Semitism and militant white nationalism, "two deeply hostile, anti-Jewish ideologies" into "racially and religiously inspired white supremacist, Christian neo-nationalism." The Anti-Defamation League, an anti-hate group, focused on protecting Jewish communities, counted 2,717 anti-Semitic incidents in the US in 2021, up 34 per cent from 2020 and the highest number in its records dating to 1979. Attacks and threats at synagogues, including the Tree of Life shooting in Pittsburgh, which killed 11 people in 2018, and a hostage standoff during Sabbath services in 2022 in Colleyville, Texas, have added to the sense of insecurity. In November 2022, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) issued a broad warning of security threats to New Jersey synagogues and later arrested a man in connection with the matter. That same month, FBI Director Christopher Wray testified to Congress that American Jews account for 2.4% of the US population but were the target of about 63% of religious-hate crimes. "Anti-Semitism and violence that comes out of it is a persistent and present fact," he said. The rise of anti-Semitism contrasts starkly with the pro-Jewish sentiment expressed by Americans in opinion polls. A 2019 Pew poll showed that Americans liked Jews more than any other religious group. Even so, Yizhar Hess, deputy chairman of the World Zionist Organisation, warned that "the impact of (the) Israeli election result on Diaspora Jewry could be devastating, perhaps even fatal." Far-right wingers of the world unite There are precedents for Israel

either joining the Christian nationalist and Republican fray or looking the other way when anti-Semitism is in play. Mr. Netanyahu had no compunction about acting hand in hand with the American right and Hungarian Prime Minister Victor Orban, who campaigned with anti-Semitic overtones against George Soros, the Hungarian-born American Jewish billionaire, philanthropist and Holocaust survivor. Mr. Netanyahu also remained silent about Mr. Orban's rewriting of Hungary's World War Two history, which included rehabilitating anti-Semitic, pro-Nazi wartime figures as anti-communist icons. Mr. Netanyahu's willingness to opportunistically back a tainted attack on someone of Jewish descent because of a political disagreement raises tantalising questions about how he will deal with, for example, Sweden's new government that a party with roots in neo-Nazism supports. The Sweden Democrats, who helped the country's new conservative government secure a majority in parliament without being rewarded with Cabinet representation, have insisted that the party has put its past behind it. But in September 2022, Rebecca Fallenkvist, the 26-year-old head of the party's television programming, called Anne Frank "immoral" and "horniness itself" in an Instagram post that was later deleted. Ms. Frank was an acclaimed Dutch Jewess, who documented in a diary life in hiding under Nazi persecution until the Germans killed her in 1944. Days later, Ms. Fallenkvist celebrated her party's electoral success in Swedish with the words "Helg Seger" which means weekend victory but sounds like 'Sieg Heil,' the Nazi greeting. The party quickly moved Ms. Fallenkvist from her publicly visible job to its administrative office in parliament, likely to play a role in the mechanics of the Sweden Democrats' parliamentary support for the new conservative government. Israel's ambassador to Sweden, Ziv Nevo Kulman, condemned Ms. Fallenkvist's remarks. He warned that "unfortunately, there are many more bad weeds that must be uprooted." It was unclear if he was referring to the Sweden Democrats or anti-Semitism in general. There is little indication that Mr. Kulman's condemnation will have political consequences. Two months later, members of Mr. Netanyahu's Likud party attended a conference hosted by the Alliance for the Union of Romanians (AUR). This anti-Semitic political party denies the Holocaust and dreams of returning Romania to its 'glorious' past during World War Two when it collaborated with Nazi Germany. The Israeli embassy in Bucharest has refused to deal with the alliance. Michael Kleiner, the head of Likud's internal court and a former member of parliament, defended the party members' engagement with the Romanian group. "I checked the whole issue myself. I visited Romania three months ago and met with the representatives of the party. AUR is a conservative party that advocates family values, tradition, social equality of opportunity, and, above all, the fight against corruption. I am convinced that they are not antisemitic. The claims against them are a blood libel, and we Jews know what a blood libel means," Mr. Kleiner said. Responding to Likud's engagement, Ephraim Zuroff, director general of the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Jerusalem, took Mr. Netanyahu's party and past government to task for "legitimising" anti-Semitic parties and organizations and Holocaust deniers." Mr. Zuroff said, "this is a process that has lasted for years, in which Israel's governments and its official political institutions are prepared in the name

of such security or diplomatic interests or others to turn a blind eye to the disgrace." Pointing the finger at Mr. Netanyahu, Mr. Zuroff asserted that the prime minister had embraced right-wing leaders in Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Lithuania, and other countries and "turn(s) a blind eye to the fact that they rely on radical right-wing parties with anti-Semitic roots." Mr. Netanyahu did speak out when a Polish law made it illegal to accuse the Polish nation or state of complicity in Nazi German crimes. No longer on the fringe Nevertheless, the Israeli reluctance takes on added significance given that Christian nationalism is no longer a fringe movement within the Republican Party. On the contrary, a recent poll suggested that a majority of Republicans believe that the United States should break with its constitutionally mandated secularism to declare itself a Christian nation. Christian nationalists will be prominent in the next US Congress. The Republicans' Christian nationalist sentiment contrasts starkly with other results of the poll that showed that more than 60 percent of Americans favour religious pluralism and oppose the United States identifying itself as a Christian nation. In contrast to a majority of American, Israel's problem is not Christian nationalism as such but the anti-Semitism of many of its proponents. One Israeli litmus test may be what happens if Christian nationalists are flagged in a proposed joint Israeli-European project that would monitor anti-Semitism on social networks as part of a global coalition against anti-Semitism. "We are not necessarily speaking about a structured coalition with defined criteria and a legal framework... We would rather unite all interested partners in a looser coalition committed to the same values of battling anti-Semitism in all its forms," said Shuli Davidovich, the head of the Israeli Foreign Ministry's Bureau for World Jewish Affairs and World Religions. Even so, Israel may find it increasingly difficult to reconcile the Jewish state's raison d'être as the protector of Jews and a safe haven with giving a pass to a Republican Party that tolerates anti-Semitic expression. American Jewish leaders raised alarm bells about rising anti-Semitism long before the US midterm elections in November 2022 and responded to its mainstreaming in the pre-poll electioneering. "It is disgraceful. Shame on you, America: you let it grow in this petri dish," said Rabbi Jeffrey Myers. "There is a moral decay occurring in the body of America. Anti-Semitism is just the beginning; it moves beyond anti-Semitism to cover other minority groups." In 2018, Mr. Myers led services at his Pittsburgh synagogue when a white nationalist gunman burst in and murdered 11 Jewish worshippers in the deadliest antisemitic attack in US history. "If the leaders are not explicit and right out front against (anti-Semitism), it can grow," warned former senator John Lieberman, the first Jewish candidate on a vice-presidential ticket. American Jewish Congress president Jack Rosen noted that "on the right... we don't see the kind of leadership it's going to take to stop the growth of this kind of anti-Semitic hatred." The number of anti-Semitic incidents has only increased since the Pittsburgh attack. They include an assault by a gunman on a synagogue in Poway, California, a town some 32 kilometres north of San Diego; a shooting at a kosher grocery store in New Jersey, antisemitic comments from public figures such as Mr. Trump and members of Congress, and conspiracy theories related to the Pittsburgh shooting itself.

# AMAN – 23: Coming together for peace

Hadiya Siddiqui

While interacting with all the participating navies through joint bilateral and multilateral exercises, Pakistan Navy has proudly been able to claim the growing stature of the exercise and the largest participation of representatives of about more than forty friendly nations. Pakistan Navy is conducting the AMAN series of exercise biennially since 2007 and the 8th of its edition has been scheduled in February 2023

Since 2007, the Pakistan Navy has had the honour of conceptualising and hosting the AMAN series of exercises, which promotes peace at sea. The exercise includes a multinational exercise with friendly regional and extra regional naval forces, which has been essential in raising the morale of the Pakistan Navy. In order to ensure

effective maritime security in the Indian Ocean Region, it is necessary to establish relationships, improve compatibility, and increase mutual understanding among navies (IOR). While interacting with all the participating navies through joint bilateral and multilateral exercises, Pakistan Navy has proudly been able to claim the growing stature of the exercise and the largest participation of representatives of about more than forty friendly nations. Pakistan Navy is conducting the AMAN series of exercise biennially since 2007 and the 8th of its edition has been scheduled in February 2023. The aim of the exercise is to establish Responses, Tactics, Techniques and Procedures against conventional and unconventional threats faced by today's world. Therefore, these exercises play an important role for formation of a joint strategy among the participating navies to develop a united approach for the regional maritime security. Moreover the exercise includes enhancement of professional expertise in capability of joint operations and regional peace and security. Thus, this authenticates the exercise's declared resolve of 'Together for Peace.' The resolve will not only help to eradicate terrorism and pledging peace and harmony in the region, but in fact the regional navies can ensure a smooth route to prosperity via trade, by strengthening multi-layered security cooperation and enhancing inter-operability in Naval Ops and cross culture interaction. Pakistan Navy believes in inclusive policy and if the world stands together, there will be great benefits for all. The IOR is experiencing swift geostrategic changes which have

arose a number of challenges for Pakistan but have also provided many opportunities that promise a security improvement not only within Pakistan but also in the region at large. The strategic security environment of the world is being transformed by dynamism observed in global maritime trade and therefore, there requires an increase in security arrangements in and around the IOR. Regional nations that heretofore have provided periodic coastal protection may find they must expand patrols from the Strait of Hormuz to Egypt's Suez Canal, transiting between the Red Sea and the Mediterranean and down the east coast of Africa to secure the waterways. The Arabian Sea and Eastern waters would always be of immense importance and cannot be ignored. Hence, AMAN exercise also targets this particular aspect to warrant global Maritime security. Furthermore, to combat the design to maintain Maritime Superiority by certain countries, especially in IOR, Pakistan encourages the nations to join hands and equip themselves to face traditional as well as non-traditional threats in the Sea. Maritime security challenges in the IOR are both multidimensional and multifaceted. Threats like maritime terrorism, drug trafficking, and piracy have acquired international dimensions. Stymieing Maritime aspirations of conventional and unconventional threats, the AMAN exercise would help work against human trafficking, narcotics smuggling, and terrorism in the region. Cooperation between international fleets is essential for fending off growing threats, underscoring the

necessity for a strong naval presence. Megaprojects present a wide range of regional and trans-regional economic opportunities, particularly in the marine sector, and Pakistan, a key player in the Arabian Sea's maritime security, is completely dedicated to preserving freedom of navigation and the rule of law. In the harbour phase of Exercise AMAN-23, there will be an international maritime conference, a maritime terrorism demonstration, roundtable discussions on professional topics, and various cross-cultural activities. During the sea phase, advanced naval drills including antipiracy tactics, counter terrorism operations, maritime security operations and an International Fleet Review will be conducted. With the launch of the AMAN series of exercises, the Pakistan Navy is taking the lead and laying more emphasis on international cooperation in an effort to make the world a safer place. Pakistan's naval forces actively participate with other fleets in the IOR as a leading nation and significant contributor in the fight against terrorism, narcotics trafficking, people smuggling, gun running, and high seas piracy. Hence, the strong realization that no one nation can single handedly cope with the quantum of this prevailing threat, making cooperative maritime strategy a matter of compulsion rather than choice and that the importance of this collaboration will enhance with the complete operation of China Pakistan Economic Corridor and Gwadar Port – which are meant to bring prosperity not only to Pakistan but the region and beyond.

## Briefs

## PM vows to curb menace of terrorism

FROM PAGE 01  
development projects in DI Khan. He told the attendees about visiting the Rawalpindi Hospital to meet soldiers injured in the Bannu operation. The prime minister also spoke about the spate of terror attacks in Balochistan a day earlier. "Another terror incident took place in Balochistan yesterday. We are working hard to prevent incidents of terrorism. We will employ all resources to uproot terrorism to bring peace in Pakistan," Premier Shehbaz added. He also assured of the eradication of extortion and other incidents. Commenting on the state of development in Pakistan, the prime minister said that the country was led towards a disaster due to the wrong policies of the previous government. While inaugurating development projects in district DI Khan and realising the dream of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz supreme Nawaz Sharif of constructing motorways across the country, he said: "Inaugurated development works in DI Khan today. [We] have also laid the foundation for the Sukkur-Hyderabad motorway. Nawaz Sharif's dream of motorways from Peshawar to Karachi has come true."

## PM invites Qatari Amir to Climate Resilient Pakistan conference

FROM PAGE 01  
He recalled that Pakistan now faced the enormous challenge of rehabilitation and reconstruction in a climate-resilient manner. The prime minister highlighted that while Pakistan had mobilised its own limited resources to the extent possible, continued international support and solidarity was required to meet the daunting challenge of recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction of the affected areas, and to build resilience against future climate shocks. The prime minister congratulated the Amir on Qatar's successful hosting of FIFA-2022 Football World Cup, which had set a new benchmark for international sports events. The prime minister and the Qatari Amir also had a brief exchange of views on bilateral and international issues of mutual interest.

## Saudi embassy advises citizens to remain careful

FROM PAGE 01  
especially until Jan 1. The Islamabad police had also raised security to high alert in the capital. The police had said that checking was increased at all entry and exit points and requested the public to cooperate with inspections. The Saudi security alert advised incoming Saudi residents and those in the country to "be cautious" and not venture out except for any necessity. "Security of Islamabad has been placed at the highest level," the alert said, adding that Saudis should contact the embassy and consulate if the need arises. The developments come in the wake of a suicide bombing in the federal capital on Friday which claimed the lives of a policeman and a taxi driver.

## Imran summons PTI...

FROM PAGE 01  
Mr Chaudhry said in connection with this decision, PTI Chairman Imran Khan summoned the meeting of the economic experts, adding that in the meeting, the country's economic situation will be discussed in detail. He added the white paper will be issued by the PTI based on the proposals of the economic experts.

## Babar, Sarfaraz star on opening day of NZ Test

Babar becomes highest scoring Pakistani batter in all formats of a calendar year

DNA

KARACHI: Skipper Babar Azam and wicketkeeper-batter Sarfaraz Ahmed starred as Pakistan reached 317-5 at stumps on day one of the first Test against New Zealand in Karachi. At the close of play, Azam was unbeaten on 161 runs with the help of 15 fours and a six. Meanwhile, Ahmed was other major contributor in the Pakistan innings as the former captain scored 86 runs and added 196 runs for the fifth wicket with Azam. For New Zealand, spinners Ajaz Patel and Michael Bracewell claimed two wickets each. In the first session, Pakistan had slipped to 48-3 with Abdullah Shafique (7), Shan Masood (3) and Imam-ul-Haq (24) all dismissed cheaply. At this stage, Azam and Saud Shakeel stitched a crucial partnership of 62 runs to get things back on track for the home side. However, Shakeel was caught in the gully region, near the lunch break, after scoring 22 runs. Earlier, Azam won the toss and opted to bat against New Zealand Monday in the first Test in Karachi. The home team made three changes from the last Test which they lost to England at the same venue, suffering their first-ever home 3-0 whitewash. Sarfaraz Ahmed is playing his first Test since January 2019, while pacer Mir Hamza returns for the first time in four years. Opener Imam-ul-Haq is back after recovering from injury. New Zealand start the Test with three spinners and as many pace bowlers. The



visitors were also beaten 3-0 by England in their last Test series. After remarkable knock here at National Bank Cricket Arena, Sarfaraz talked his heart out with journalists. "When I walked out for batting, my heartbeat was out of control. During first three balls of the innings, it felt like I was making debut," shared Sarfaraz. "I needed confidence at that moment and Babar Azam supported me a lot. Alhamdulillah, things worked for me and I performed," he added. Sarfaraz scored 86 runs off 153 balls to save Pakistan from further collapse. "I was too excited when I got to know about my comeback. Shahid Bhai texted me and I called him back. He gave me much confidence," he said. The former captain thanked his friends, fans, family members and media for their support. "I wasn't sure whether I will be able to play my 50th Test or not," he said. "Last four years were tough for me, but I sat in good gathering where people always motivated me. I would like to thank my friends, fans, family and media for always supporting me," he concluded. **Lineups: Pakistan:** Babar Azam (captain), Abdullah Shafique, Imam-ul-Haq, Shan Masood, Saud Shakeel, Sarfaraz Ahmed, Agha Salman, Abrar Ahmed, Mir Hamza, Mohammad Wasim and Nauman Ali. **New Zealand:** Tim Southee (captain), Michael Bracewell, Tom Blundell, Devon Conway, Tom Latham, Daryl Mitchell, Henry Nicholls, Ajaz Patel, Ish Sodhi, Neil Wagner and Kane Williamson.

## Salman wins Quaid-e-Azam Classical Chess Tournament



ISLAMABAD: Quaid-e-Azam Classical Chess Tournament was organized in collaboration with Chess Federation of Pakistan, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry and AEO to celebrate the Quaid Day in a dignified and positive manner. 67 selected players from across the country participated in the tournament.

Cash prizes of Rs 75,000, trophies, medals and certificates were awarded to players divided into Open (U-1800 FIDE), Women and U-14 categories. The FIDE rated tournament was consisted of eight rounds, with classical format and played with a Swiss league system. In the open category, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa player Salman Ali Khan won the first position, while Punjab players Saad

Farooqi and Raja Gauhar Iqbal won the second and third positions. Muneza Kanwal from Sindh and Raja Hattam ur Rehman from Islamabad were declared the winners of Women and Under-14 categories respectively. Deputy Commissioner of Islamabad Mr. Irfan Nawaz Memon, President of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry Mr. Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari and

Patron Chess Federation of Pakistan & Federal Additional Secretary Finance Mr. Anwar Sheikh were among the guests who attended the closing ceremony as special guests. On this occasion, Deputy Commissioner Islamabad Mr. Irfan Nawaz Memon said, "Chess is the best game for mental development. I congratulate Chess Federation of Pakistan for the best initiatives to promote the game and ensure all possible cooperation with the Federation." President Chess Federation Pakistan Mr. Hanif Qureshi appreciated the efforts of General Secretary CFP Umar Khan, Finance Secretary CFP Raja Gauhar Iqbal and Rating Officer CFP Shujaat Ali for promoting the game of chess in the country. He further expressed determination of holding large-scale tournaments and create chess academies all over country in the future with the cooperation of Governmental and private institutions.

## Top Australian Test award named after Shane Warne

As one of Australia's all-time greats, it is fitting we acknowledge Shane's extraordinary contribution to Test cricket by naming this award in his honour in perpetuity," said Cricket Australia chief Nick Hockley

MELBOURNE: Australia's men's Test Player of the Year award will be renamed in Shane Warne's honour, officials said Monday, as tributes were paid to the late spin-king at the Boxing Day Test against South Africa. Warne, considered by many as second in stature only to Donald Bradman in sports-mad Australia, died unexpectedly aged just 52 in March. The Shane Warne Men's Test Player of the Year award will be presented annually, second only to the prestigious Allan Border Medal for the most outstanding player across all formats. "As one of Australia's all-time greats, it is fitting we acknowledge Shane's extraordinary contribution to Test cricket by naming this award in his honour in perpetuity," said Cricket Australia chief Nick Hockley. The announcement came on the opening day of the Boxing Day Test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, Warne's home venue where he achieved many memorable feats, including an Ashes hat-trick and his 700th Test wicket. Warne's Test cap number 350 has been painted square of the wicket for the duration of the match, while both the Australian and South African teams wore floppy white hats in his memory during the national anthem ceremony. "His place as a legend of Australian and world sport is assured," added Hockley. "Whilst we continue to mourn his passing, it is fitting that we honour Shane at his beloved Boxing Day Test at the MCG." - APP

## Red Bull Off The Roof show redefines the live music ecosphere

LAHORE: On December 26, 2022, the place to be was Expo Center, Lahore and the time was right for a musical extravaganza like none other seen in Pakistan before. The first show in the Red Bull Off The Roof series set off in Lahore with a must-see card of musical talent. The reveal of the Red Bull Off The Roof bus to an awe-struck audience was a sight to behold. The 9000-kilogram silver-and-gray titan appeared to fall over everything in its way as it arrived at the venue. Headlined by Pakistan's beloved icon Bilal Maqsood (formerly of Strings), the show comprised of talent from various musical styles and genres, all adored by Lahore. From indie pop artist Taha G and hip hop artist RizzyRozeo to viral sensations such as Abdul Hannan and metal heads like Takatak, all electrified the audience like they've been yearning for it. After the live crowd was hyped up enough after a series of incredible performances, it was time for Pakistan's beloved veteran to show up and show off. The audience showered the iconic Bilal Maqsood with deafening cheers as he climbed aboard the rooftop stage. Scores of people sang along to his every word and Maqsood had the crowd in the palm of his hands. Finally, the sensational Hasan Raheem brought his A-game and conquered the night with one hit song after another. By the end of the night, one thing was for sure. Red Bull Off The Roof's first show in Lahore leveled up the live music scene with a new twist of the Red Bull Off The Roof bus - a concert venue on wheels. Bilal Maqsood said, "Red Bull has taken this very old idea with its rich history, played creatively on it and given it a new, modern look with a stunning bus and contemporary musicians." - DNA



ISLAMABAD: Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari President ICCI is giving trophy to Salman Ali Khan the winner of all Pakistan Quaid e Azam Chess Tournament at ICCI. - DNA

## Kane starts for Tottenham against Brentford

Kane was present as Tottenham drew 1-1 with Nice last Wednesday, popping into the dressing room at half-time as he reunited with his club team-mates. He was not involved, however, despite fellow England international Eric Dier making a substitute appearance

DNA

LONDON: Harry Kane has been named in Tottenham's starting lineup for their Boxing Day clash away at Brentford. The 29-year-old makes his first appearance since missing a penalty as England crashed out of the World Cup at the quarter-final stage, having returned to Tottenham training last week. Tottenham get their campaign back underway with a tricky London derby, returning later than some of their Premier League counterparts having been knocked out of the Carabao Cup in the third round in November. Kane was visibly distraught after missing what proved to be a decisive spot-kick against France, with the England captain subsequently taking responsibility

for the defeat. He returned to training on Thursday having been given 10 days off following England's World Cup exit, however, with the striker taking to social media insist he is 'ready' for the Premier League's resumption. Kane was present as Tottenham drew 1-1 with Nice last Wednesday, popping into the dressing room at half-time as he reunited with his club team-mates. He was not involved, however, despite fellow England international Eric Dier making a substitute appearance. Meanwhile, World Cup finalists Hugo Lloris of France and Cristian Romero of winners Argentina are not in the side, with Fraser Forster and Japhet Tanganga starting. Lloris is on the bench, however. And alongside Kane, who has been

thrown straight back into the action, his fellow World Cup semi-finalist Ivan Perisic and quarter-finalist Dier



have both been named in the starting lineup. Also named in the side for Tottenham are Son Heu-

ng-min and Dejan Kulusevski, who complete an attacking trident for the north London side. Confirmed Tottenham XI: Forster, Doherty, Tanganga, Dier, Lenglet, Perisic, Bissouma, Hojbjerg, Kulusevski, Son, Kane. While Tottenham last played a competitive match a little over six weeks ago, manager Antonio Conte is furious that football is returning so soon after the World Cup. "It is a strange situation and honestly to play so quickly - only one week after the World Cup - I am not really happy," he said at the pre-match press conference. "In one hand, you are happy because for my club, Tottenham, to have 12 players at the World Cup it means that we are in the right way to try to be competitive and to try in the future to win something. 'But it is normal

that when you have so many players play a tournament like this, especially during the season, that now it is not easy because the physical condition is not at the top. 'It is impossible to give them a lot of rest and for sure with the players that didn't play the World Cup and we work for four weeks, now they are in a great physical condition. 'We work a lot on the tactical aspect and physical aspect. Now they are at a level that is better than the players who finished the World Cup. 'For this reason I think I have to make the best decision for the game against Brentford. On one side I have players who I worked with for four weeks really well and on the other side, I have players who worked at the World Cup and are not at the top at the moment.'

## Elahi to go for trust vote before Jan 11: Fawad

FROM PAGE 01  
Fawad Chaudhry noted that former prime minister Imran Khan has now become an important factor in the country's politics and whoever ignores the PTI Chief would harm himself and the country. He claimed that Gen Bajwa assured his party of immediate elections even their government was ousted. "Gen Bajwa kept assuring us of elections but, on the other side, everything changed. Later, the former army chief wanted us to thank him for popularity," he alleged. Responding to a question, the former information minister admitted a change since General Asim Munir becomes new Chief of Army Staff (COAS), saying that they haven't received any unknown calls and Imran Khan's live speeches were not being banned. Earlier, the PTI leader Fawad Chaudhry said his party was going to issue a white paper on the country's economic situation. Mr Chaudhry said in connection with this decision, PTI Chairman Imran Khan summoned the meeting of the economic experts, adding that in the meeting, the country's economic situation will be discussed in detail. He added the white paper will be issued by the PTI based on the proposals of the economic experts. Mr Chaudhry went on to say the PTI had formed the working groups for the basic reforms, which will prepare the proposals on the country's economy and governance. "The PTI believed that after getting rid of the current rulers, the country could not get out of the quagmire without the major reforms", added Mr Chaudhry.

## Russia says can supply gas to Pakistan via Iran

FROM PAGE 01  
In his interview to the TASS agency, Novak said that Russia has agreed with Azerbaijan to increase gas supplies for its domestic consumption. "In the future, when they increase gas production, we will be able to discuss swaps," he said. The Russian deputy PM maintained that his country had already supplemented LNG supplies to Europe in the previous year and further expressed Moscow's intention to increase gas supplies to the global market following the establishment of an energy hub in Turkey. Moscow is ready to resume gas supplies to Europe through the Yamal-Europe Pipeline. He further said "the European market remains relevant, as the gas shortage persists, and we have every opportunity to resume supplies."

## FM lauds Saudi Arabia for flood assistance

FROM PAGE 01  
Reaffirming the fraternal relations between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, the two Foreign Ministers reiterated their mutual commitment to further enhance and deepen bilateral cooperation across all areas of mutual interest. Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari thanked the leadership of the Kingdom for valuable flood relief assistance to Pakistan. The Foreign Minister apprised his Saudi counterpart of the upcoming International Conference on Climate Resilient Pakistan, which is being held in Geneva on 9 January 2023. The Saudi Foreign Minister conveyed the Kingdom's strong support for all initiatives aimed at strengthening and reinforcing Pakistan's post-flood reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts. The two Foreign Ministers also discussed the recent developments in Afghanistan. They reaffirmed the importance of guaranteeing women's rights and their full and equal participation in all aspects of life. They also reiterated their support for security, stability and peace in Afghanistan and the importance of international engagement for building a more sustainable future for the Afghan people.

## Briefs

## Slavery apology start of 'long journey': Dutch king

THE HAGUE: Dutch King Willem-Alexander welcomed the government's apology for the Netherlands' role in 250 years of slavery in his Christmas address, saying it was the "start of a long journey." Prime Minister Mark Rutte officially apologized for the Dutch state's involvement in slavery in its former colonies, calling it a "crime against humanity." "Nobody today bears responsibility for the inhumane acts that were inflicted on the lives of men, women and children," Willem-Alexander said from the palace of Huis ten Bosch in The Hague. "But by honestly facing our shared past and recognizing the crime against humanity that is slavery, we lay the ground for a shared future - a future in which we stand against all modern forms of discrimination, exploitation and injustice." "The apology offered by the government is the start of a long journey." The Netherlands funded its "Golden Age" of empire and culture in the 16th and 17th centuries by shipping around 600,000 Africans as part of the slave trade, mostly to South America and the Caribbean. —APP

## Ethiopia sends delegation to held Tigray for talks

ADISS ABABA: A high-level Ethiopian team was on its way Monday to the capital of the rebel-held Tigray region for talks on implementing a peace deal to end over two years of conflict. Addis Ababa and Tigray's rebel forces have agreed to create a joint monitoring body to ensure the November peace deal to end the brutal war is respected by all sides. Among the terms of the agreement was a provision to establish a monitoring and compliance mechanism so that both sides could be confident the truce was being honoured, and any violations addressed. Tens of thousands have died in two years of bloodshed in Tigray. "The delegation is the first of its stature as a high-level federal government body heading to Mekele in two years," a statement said, adding that it was led by House of Representatives speaker Tagesse Chafu. The aim is to supervise the application of the peace deal signed on November 2. The agreement provides for the disarmament of rebel forces, the re-establishment of federal authority in Tigray and the reopening of access to the region. "This gesture is an attestation to the peace agreement getting on the right track and progressing," the statement said. Estimates of casualties vary widely, with the United States saying that as many as half a million people have died, while the EU's foreign policy chief Josep Borrell says more than 100,000 people may have been killed. —Agencies

## China stops revealing COVID-19 numbers

ISTANBUL: Facing a reported surge in infections, China has stopped publishing its daily COVID-19 data. The National Health Commission (NHC) put up the last update on its website on Saturday and said on Sunday that "daily epidemic information will no longer be released." The decision comes as China contends with an alarming rise in infections, while the number of fatalities has also reportedly spiked. Earlier this month, the NHC stopped releasing statistics for asymptomatic cases in the country. The world's most populous nation also dumped its strict "zero-COVID" policy this month, following growing unrest and unprecedented protests in parts of the country. It has shifted to a policy of treating confirmed patients rather than trying to curb the virus' spread. The NHC statement said relevant information will be released by the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention "for reference and research." The last update on the NHC website said 4,128 new infections and no deaths were reported across the country on Friday. —APP

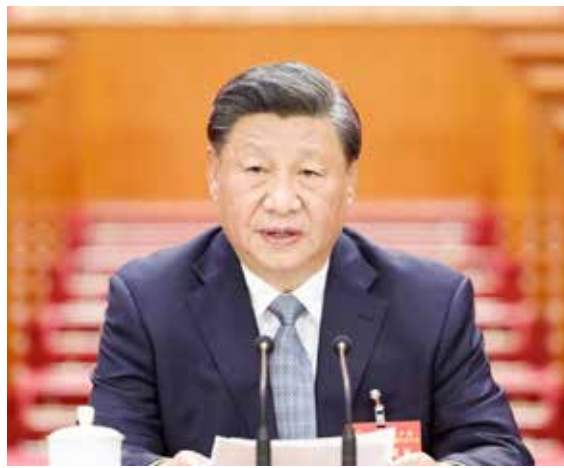
## Xi urges steps to 'protect' lives as China battles Covid wave

We should launch the patriotic health campaign in a more targeted way... fortify a community line of defence for epidemic prevention and control, and effectively protect people's lives, safety and health," Xi said

## NEWS DESK

BEIJING: Chinese President Xi Jinping urged officials on Monday to take steps to protect lives in his first public remarks on Covid-19 since Beijing dramatically loosened hardline containment measures this month. Having mostly cut itself off from the rest of the world during the pandemic, China is now experiencing the planet's biggest surge in infections after abruptly lifting restrictions that torpedoed the economy. Studies have estimated that around one million people could die over the next few months. Many in the population are now grappling with shortages of medicine, while emergency medical facilities are strained by an influx of undervaccinated elderly patients. "At present, Covid-19 prevention and control in Chi-

na are facing a new situation and new tasks," Xi said in a directive, according to state broadcaster. "We should launch the patriotic health campaign in a more targeted way... fortify a community line of defence for epidemic prevention and control, and effectively protect people's lives, safety and health," Xi said. Hospitals and crematoriums across the country have been overflowing with Covid patients and victims, while China's National Health Commission on Sunday announced it would stop publishing daily nationwide infection and death statistics. The decision to scrap the daily virus count comes amid concerns that the country's blooming wave of infections is not being accurately reflected in official statistics. Beijing has admitted the scale of the outbreak has become "impossible" to track following the end of mandatory mass



testing, as people are now not obliged to declare test results to authorities. And last week, Beijing narrowed the criteria by which Covid-19 fatalities were counted - a move experts said would suppress the number of deaths attributable to the virus. The winter surge comes ahead of two major public holidays next month, in which millions of migrant workers are expected to travel to their hometowns to reunite with relatives. Authorities are bracing for the virus to hit under-sourced rural areas hard, and on Monday called for the guaranteed supply of drugs and medical treatment during New Year's Day and the week-long Lu-

nar New Year holiday, which begins January 21. The ruling Communist Party and State Council issued a notice calling on officials to "ensure the smooth and orderly adjustment and transition of epidemic prevention and control measures". In recent days, health officials in the wealthy coastal province Zhejiang estimated that one million residents were being infected per day, while the coastal city of Qingdao predicted roughly 500,000 new daily infections and the southern manufacturing city of Dongguan eyed 250,000 to 300,000. Unofficial surveys and modelling based on search engine terms suggest that the wave may have already peaked in some major cities, including Beijing and Chongqing. A poll of over 150,000 residents of the southwestern province of Sichuan organised by disease

control officials showed that 63 percent had tested positive for Covid, and estimated that infections peaked Friday. Only six Covid deaths have been officially reported since Beijing unwound most of its restrictions earlier this month. But crematorium workers interviewed by AFP have reported an unusually high influx of bodies, while hospitals have said they are tallying multiple fatalities per day, as emergency wards fill up. The main funeral service centre in the southern metropolis of Guangzhou postponed all ceremonies until January 10 to focus on cremations due to the "large workload", according to a notice published online Sunday. China's censors and mouthpieces have been working overtime to spin the decision to scrap strict travel curbs, quarantines and snap lockdowns as a victory, even as cases soar.

## Pakistani students ready to take part in eco-actions on the Shusha-Khankendi road

BAKU: Pakistani students joined the initiative of the Eurasian Regional Center of ICYF in support of the eco-action. The Board of the Pakistan Students Association (PSAA) has issued a statement in support of the environmental action that has been held for two weeks by Azerbaijani activists on the Shusha-Khankendi road. The statement expresses concern over the illegal actions of the Armenians that are damaging the environment in Karabakh and notes the need to fulfill the demands of Azerbaijani environmentalists in this direction. The document highly appreciated the activities of the Eurasian Regional Center of the Youth Forum of the Islamic Cooperation Youth Forum (ICYFERC) in this direction, the reconstruction works in Karabakh, and expressed the readiness of Pakistani students to take part in monitoring activities



voluntarily to protect the environment in Karabakh. Recently, Pakistan's Global Strategic Institute for Sustainable Development, the Youth Diplomacy Forum, and Indonesian Youth Council as well as OIC Youth Indonesia have made relevant statements. It should be noted that the International Board of Directors of the Eurasian

Regional Center of ICYF issued a statement of support for the environmental campaign held by Azerbaijani activists on the Shusha-Khankendi road. With deep regret, the document noted that for 30 years the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, and now the lands where the Russian peacekeeping contingent (RPC) is temporarily de-

## Serbia sends military chief to Kosovo border as tensions rise

BELGRADE: Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic dispatched the army chief on Sunday night to the border with Kosovo, General Milan Mojsilovic himself announced, as strained relations between the two countries were exacerbated by recent blockades. Kosovo declared independence from Serbia in 2008, but Belgrade refuses to recognise the move and encourages the remaining 120,000 Serbs to defy Pristina's authority. Hundreds of ethnic Serbs, outraged over the arrest of an ex-police officer, set up roadblocks on December 10 in Serb-majority northern Kosovo which have paralysed traffic through two border crossings. "The situation there is complicated and complex," the Serbian army chief said in an interview with local news channel Pink TV on Sunday. "It requires in the coming period the presence of the Serbian army along the administrative line," he said, using the term Belgrade uses for the border with Kosovo. The general added that he was on his way to Raska, a town about 10 kilometres (six miles) from the border with Kosovo after meeting with Vucic in Belgrade. "The tasks the Serbian army has got ... are precise, clear, and will be fully implemented," Mojsilovic said. The latest bout of tensions came after Kosovo scheduled local elections in Serb-majority municipalities on December 18, and the main Serb political party said it would stage a boycott. An ex-police officer suspected of involvement in attacks against ethnic Albanian police officers was arrested, outraging ethnic Serbs who erected the barricades. Shortly before Mojsilovic departed for the border area, several Serbian media outlets broadcast a video shared on social networks in which gunfire can be heard. The outlets said it was "fighting" that occurred early Sunday evening when Kosovar forces tried to dismantle a barricade. This account was rejected by Kosovar police, who said on their Facebook page that their members had not been involved in any clashes. Pristina-based news outlets said a patrol of the NATO-led peacekeeping KFOR was in the area of the shooting, but that no injuries or damage were reported.

## Colombia's oil theft soars

BOGOTA: In a clearing of Colombia's Pacific jungle, the dense canopy encircles an area of desolation left by a clandestine refinery, where oil waste blackens everything underfoot, seeping into the soil and coating the vegetation. The scent of moist earth and flowers is overpowered by the stench of chemicals from stagnant pools, the waste product from a rudimentary refining process that turns oil stolen from a nearby pipeline into a bootleg fuel known as patergrillo, or "cricket's foot," because of its greenish hue. According to the UN's estimation, oil theft is on the rise: The volume stolen from two of Colombia's major oil pipelines has more than trebled since 2018 to an average of 3,447 barrels a day as of November 30, according to police data. But little is known about the scale of the environmental impact of spills from tapping pipelines and from illicit refineries, which are often in remote and dangerous regions. Reuters accompanied a police unit tasked with tackling oil theft in September to two sites near Tumaco, a Pacific port in southwest Colombia that is the terminal for the country's Transandino oil pipeline. —APP

## Philippines floods force thousands to flee homes

MANILA: Christmas Day floods in the Philippines forced the evacuation of nearly 46,000 people from their homes, civil defence officials said Monday. Eleven people were killed and 19 others were missing after a week's worth of heavy seasonal rain in the southern and eastern regions of the country, they said, updating earlier official figures. The flooding hit the south on Sunday, with the disaster dampening celebrations on the mainly Catholic nation's most important holiday. Rivers overflowed, swamping rural villages and highways as well as the cities of Ozamiz and Oroquieta, governor Henry Ominal for the province of Misamis Occidental said on government radio. "The heart of the city was flooded including the public market. Power was cut off and there was no (telephone) signal," he said, referring to Oroquieta, the provincial capital with 72,000 residents. "We've had floods before, but these are the worst rainfall and water flow levels we have ever had," he added. "The waters rose above the chest in some areas, but today the rains have ceased," civil defence worker Robinson Lacre told AFP by phone from Gingoog city, which accounted for 33,000 of the 45,700 people evacuated from their homes. —Agencies

## Turkiye launches new anti-terror operation in southeast

ISTANBUL: Turkish security forces launched yet another counter-terrorism operation in the country's southeast, the Interior Ministry said on Monday. The operation, called the Eren Abluka Autumn Winter-19 (Sırnak-Bestler Dereler) Martyr Gendarmerie Master Sergeant Serkan Unsul-1, started in the Sırnak province with 470 security personnel. On the first day of the operation, two caves and 10 shelters were found during the land search carried out in the rural area of the Bestler-Dereler district. During the searches, a remote-controlled improvised explosive device, two tubes, two kilograms (4.4 pounds) of food, and a large amount of life-sustaining and clothing materials were seized. They, with the shelters, were destroyed. Turkiye initiated Eren operations last year, naming them after Eren Bulbul, a 15-year-old boy killed by the PKK terror group on Aug. 11, 2017. In its more than 35-year terror campaign against Turkiye, the PKK - listed as a terrorist organization by Turkiye, the US, and the EU - has been responsible for the deaths of over 40,000 people, including women, children, and infants. —APP

## Savage US blizzard leaves 32 dead

New York: A brutal winter storm that brought Christmas chaos to millions of Americans will be slow to dissipate, the US National Weather Service said Monday, after intense snow and frigid cold caused power outages, travel delays and at least 32 deaths across the eastern part of the country. "Much of the eastern United States will remain in a deep freeze through Monday before a moderating trend sets in on Tuesday," the NWS said in its latest advisory. In Buffalo, western New York, a blizzard left the city marooned, with emergency services unable to reach the worst-hit areas. "It is (like) going to a war zone, and the vehicles along the sides of the roads are shocking," said New York Governor Kathy Hochul, a native Buffalo, where eight-foot (2.4-meter) snow drifts and power outages made for life-threatening conditions. Hochul told reporters Sunday evening that residents were still in the throes of a "very dangerous life-threatening situation" and warned anyone in the area to remain indoors. More than 200,000 people across several eastern states woke up without power on Christmas morning and many more had their holiday travel plans upended, although the five-day-long storm featuring blizzard conditions and ferocious winds showed signs of easing. The extreme weather sent wind chill temperatures in all 48 contiguous US states below freezing over the weekend, stranded holiday travelers with thousands of flights canceled and trapped residents in ice- and snow-encrusted homes. Thirty-two weather-related deaths have been confirmed across nine states, including at least 13 in Erie County where Buffalo is located, with officials warning the number is sure to rise. Officials described historically dangerous conditions in the snow-prone Buffalo region. —APP

## CIS countries seek to resolve problems by joint efforts



ST. PETERSBURG: If CIS countries face any issues, they seek to resolve them by joint efforts, together, providing each other with comradely assistance and mediation, Russian President Vladimir Putin said at the CIS informal summit in St. Petersburg on 26 December. Strengthening of security and

stability in the Eurasian region is one of the key areas of cooperation in the CIS, the Russian president said. "Unfortunately, the challenges and threats in this area, primarily from the outside, are only growing every year. Unfortunately, we have to admit that disagreements also arise between the member states of

the CIS. The main thing, however, is that we are committed to cooperation. If CIS countries face any issues, they seek to resolve them by joint efforts, together, providing each other with comradely assistance and mediation," the Russian leader said. It is in this vein that the CIS countries cooperate on the fight

against terrorism and extremism, cross-border crime, drug trafficking and corruption. This year, close operational contacts are still maintained between the national security agencies and special services, other structures responsible for ensuring law and order and internal stability. —APP

## Paris protests expose PKK's true face

## FOREIGN DESK

ANKARA: Everyone must see the PKK terrorist group's true face now, Defense Minister Hulusi Akar said Sunday after supporters of the group launched violent protests in Paris that left over two dozen police officers injured. "They saw how troublesome it is to help and enable terrorists," Akar said, referring to the scores of PKK supporters who have been protesting an attack on a Kurdish cultural center in the French capital since Friday. Their violent demonstrations saw at least 31 French police officers injured and a lot of public property damaged. "The snake fed by the French began to bite," Akar remarked as he addressed a videoconference with the commanders of Turkish land forces on the Syrian border.

Thousands of terrorist sympathizers gathered at the central Place de la Republique on Saturday and marched to the Boulevard du Temple chanting pro-PKK slogans and carrying posters of the terrorist group's so-called leaders. They then ripped up paving stones and threw them at police, nearby houses and shops. The attackers also turned the scene into a battlefield with fireworks and sparklers, destroying bus stops. The police intervened in the scene in a limited fashion, occasionally using tear gas against the attackers. Eleven arrests were made, according to police chief Laurent Nunez. The protests erupted after a 69-year-old gunman on Friday opened fire at the cultural center in the city's bustling 10th district, home to several shops, restaurants and a large Kurdish population. The gunman killed at least

three people and injured three others, local media reported. Paris prosecutor Laure Beccuaud said on Sunday that the shooter, named as William M. by the local media, has "pathological" hatred for foreigners and that he "wanted to kill foreigners" after a robbery in his home in 2016. Suspected racist motivations behind the



attack will be investigated, Beccaud assured. Paris turned into a battleground over the weekend as violent protests by supporters of the PKK terrorist organization clashed with police as residents were preparing to celebrate Christmas. Speaking to Anadolu Agency (AA), French journalist Jean-Michel Brun, editor-in-chief of the Musulmansenfrance news website, said the violence raised the "question of political exploitation." "When we see the images of these demonstrations where people come to smash cars or set fires, throw projectiles at the police, we can clearly see that it is most definitely not a demonstration of support for the families of the victims, but a question of political exploitation," he said. "I hope that this political exploitation will not fool the French people and the French government."

He added that the attackers were members of the PKK terror group and have expressed hostility to Turkiye and the Turkish government. Some have also voiced hatred for the Turkish people, he claimed. Speaking to AA, residents of Paris have also shared their concerns and expressed how they were shocked by the violence that erupted in their city. "They broke everything," said one French citizen. "Trucks, cars, scooters. Everything." Another eyewitness said she was "surprised to see so much violence and vandalism on Paris' streets." "It's very saddening to see this on Christmas day," she added. A shop owner said he had to close his shop due to violence by PKK supporters who set vehicles on fire near his shop. He also added that those incidents "deteriorate Paris' image."

**Briefs**

**Authorities fully prepared to deal with any variant**

ISLAMABAD: Health authorities on Monday said they were fully prepared to deal with any sub-variant of the Omicron variant of Covid-19, including BF.7, in the country. According to official sources at the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination, an efficient system with a proper management team was fully functional in the country to remain vigilant and was ready to make an emergency plan in case of any untoward situation. They said that there was a surveillance system at all entry points of the country including airports. They added medical staff at intensive care units (ICU) of hospitals across the country were also active to handle any situation. They said that genome sequencing was started in laboratories of all four provinces and the federal capital. They added that 90 percent of the country's population already got the Covid-19 vaccine so they are safe. They said that special directions had been issued to ensure the availability of an adequate quantity of ventilators, oxygen supply, and antiviral medicines in the hospitals. Meanwhile, as per data shared by the National Institute of Health (NIH), 14 new Coronavirus cases were reported during the last 24 hours across the country. The case positivity ratio is 0.53 percent while 18 patients were in critical condition. No death was reported from Covid-19 in the last 24 hours while 3,394 tests were conducted. Around 151 tests were conducted in Islamabad, 824 in Lahore, and 55 in Multan. - APP

**IHC issues notices on Azam Swati's bail plea**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court on Monday issued notices to the state and the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) while hearing a bail petition filed by PTI Senator Azam Khan Swati seeking his release in a case related to controversial tweets. Swati was arrested on November 27 after the FIA booked him in Islamabad over a "highly obnoxious campaign of intimidating tweets [...] against state institutions". It was the second time that Swati was booked and arrested by the FIA over his tweets about army officials in less than two months. Last week, the senator approached a special court in Islamabad for bail. However, Special Judge Central Azam Khan dismissed the plea ruling that he had "committed the same offence twice". Subsequently, Swati filed a post-arrest bail petition through his lawyer Babar Awan in the IHC, challenging the special court's orders.

**Taliban women ban 'gravely' curbs aid**

PARIS: France on Monday denounced the Taliban for ordering all NGOs in Afghanistan to stop employing women, calling the ban the latest intolerable attack on women that risked aid deliveries. "This latest hounding (of women) is intolerable," the foreign ministry said in a statement. Paris "condemns in the strongest terms" the ban that "will gravely hinder the delivery of humanitarian aid, to the detriment of the Afghan population... while the country is in the midst of a serious economic and humanitarian crisis," it said. Several foreign aid groups announced on Sunday that they were suspending their operations in conflict-torn Afghanistan after the Taliban order. The ban is the latest blow against women's rights in Afghanistan since the Taliban reclaimed power last year. Less than a week ago, the Taliban also barred women from attending universities, prompting global outrage and protests in some Afghan cities. - APP

**Ukrainian drone hits Russian bomber base**

**Three air force personnel had been killed in the incident but no planes were damaged, says Russian defence ministry**

NEWS DESK

KYIV: Moscow said on Monday its forces had shot down a Ukrainian drone close to a long-range bomber base deep inside Russia, while Ukraine said the Russians had unleashed heavy artillery barrages on its cities in the past 24 hours. The drone was allegedly flying near Russia's Engels air base, where long-range strategic bombers that may have been used to target Ukrainian cities and infrastructure are based. The Russian defence ministry said in a statement three air force personnel had been killed in the incident but no planes were damaged. However, Russian and Ukrainian social media accounts said a number of planes had been destroyed. Reuters was not able to independently verify those reports. As the war entered its 11th month, Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Sunday he was open to negotiations, and he blamed Ukraine and its Western allies for failing to engage in talks. But his forces kept up

their relentless attacks, with the Ukrainian military saying early on Monday dozens of towns in the Luhansk, Donetsk, Kharkiv, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions had been shelled. "In the Kherson direction, the enemy continues artillery shelling of populated areas along the right bank of the Dnipro River," the Ukrainian military said. Ukrainian forces launched attacks on almost 20 Russian targets, it added. Ukraine's energy grid operator said power was still significantly lacking on Monday, with emergency restrictions for electricity consumption introduced in five Ukrainian regions and the capital Kyiv. The attack on the Engels air base - located near the city of Saratov, about 730 km (450 miles) southeast of Moscow and hundreds of kilometres from the frontlines in Ukraine - was the second this month. It was previously hit on Dec. 5 in what Russia said were Ukrainian drone attacks on two Russian air bases that day. The air base is one of two strategic bomber bases housing Russia's air-delivered nuclear

capability. There was no comment from Kyiv, which has never publicly claimed responsibility for attacks inside Russia. "A Ukrainian unmanned aerial vehicle (drone) was shot down at low altitude while approaching the Engels military airfield in the Saratov region," the defence ministry statement said. Three Russian servicemen were killed by falling drone wreckage, it said. Russia has 60 to 70 strategic bomber planes of two types - the Tu-95MS Bear and the Tu-160 Blackjack. Both are capable of carrying nuclear bombs and nuclear-armed cruise missiles as well as conventional munitions. Moscow has used its air force to fire cruise missiles in attacks that Kyiv has said amount to war crimes. Saratov's regional governor Roman Busargin said on Monday civilian infrastructure facilities had not been damaged in the latest incident at the base and there was no threat to residents. Putin on Sunday again said he was open to negotiations - a stance Ukraine's most powerful backer, the United States, has

previously dismissed as posturing given the relentless Russian attacks. "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 said in an interview on Rossiya 1 state television. An adviser to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said Putin needed to acknowledge it was Russia that did not want talks. "Russia single-handedly attacked Ukraine and is killing citizens," the adviser, Mykhailo Podolyak, said on Twitter. "Russia doesn't want negotiations, but tries to avoid responsibility." Russian attacks on Ukraine's power stations have left millions without electricity and Zelenskiy said in an address to the nation that Moscow would aim to make the last days of 2022 dark and difficult. Russia's defence ministry said on Sunday its forces had killed about 60 Ukrainian servicemen the previous day along the Kupiansk-Lyman line of contact and destroyed numerous pieces of Ukrainian military equipment.

**FO says 'no ban' by UAE on visas for Pakistanis**

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch on Monday confirmed that the United Arab Emirates (UAE) had not banned or blacklisted the issuance of visas to Pakistanis belonging to specific cities. "We have seen the reports. We can confirm that no such ban is in place by UAE for the issuance of visas to Pakistani citizens," said the spokesperson. The response by the FO came in view of the queries by journalists on reports of blacklisting or ban by the UAE on the issuance of visas to Pakistani citizens belonging to specific cities. The UAE also strongly denied reports of not providing visas to Pakistani citizens belonging to certain cities, terming it as "fake news". Consulate General of the UAE Karachi Bakheet Ateeq Al Remeithi said that no such ban had been imposed by the UAE government.



**RAWALPINDI:** CJCS General Sahir Shamsah Mirza, General Syed Asim Munir, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) hold coffin of Captain Muhammad Fahad Khan, who embraced shahadat in IED Blast near Kahan Balochistan. - DNA

**President talks to families of martyred troops**

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Monday telephoned the families of the soldiers martyred in various incidents in the line of their duties. The president spoke to the relatives of Havaldar Muhammad Amir and Sepoy Nasir Khan who were martyred on December 14 in a suicide attack in Miranshah and on December 4 in north Waziristan, respectively. Dr Alvi also talked to the families of Naib Subedar Qasim Khand and Havaldar Muhammad Changez Chughtai who lost their lives on November 26 in a terrorist incident in Lakki Marwat. He telephoned the father of Havaldar Parosh Khan who was martyred in north Waziristan on November 30. The president paid tribute to the martyred troops for rendering immense sacrifices for the motherland. He prayed to Allah Almighty to grant patience to the families of the martyrs. - APP

**Gilgit-Baltistan gets relief supplies**

GILGIT: The China-Pakistan Youth Exchange Community paid a three-day visit to the Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) region and distributed 1,700 packages of food, tarpaulins, quilts, blankets and other supplies among the local people. Relief supplies were distributed in the areas of Gilgit, Ghizer, Khunjerab, Hunza, Nagar and other areas. Following the recent floods, a significant number of the G-B people were living in tents and makeshift wooden houses as their homes had been devastated by the deluge. Standing by the people of G-B, the youth community distributed second batch of relief supplies to Gilgit, supported by the Tencent Charitable Foundation and the China Foundation for Rural Development, CEN reported. - APP

**Netanyahu looks to vote in new govt on Thursday**

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM: Israeli Prime Minister-designate Benjamin Netanyahu called a vote in parliament on his new government for Thursday Dec. 29, the speaker of the Knesset said on Monday, after almost two months of coalition wrangling. Netanyahu's bloc of right-wing and religious parties won a clear victory in parliamentary elections last month, but the veteran leader has had a harder time than expected in finalizing deals with his partners. Despite campaigning together, Netanyahu has struggled to meet the demands of his allies, who have demanded a significant slice of power in exchange for their support. Ahead of the vote in parliament and a formal swearing in of the new government, Netanyahu will have to officially present the members of his cabinet. - Agencies

**OIC condemns Taliban ban on women**

NEWS DESK

JEDDAH: The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) on Sunday condemned the Afghan Taliban's announcement, which ordered all local and foreign non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to stop their women staff from working, saying that the ban is "self-defeating and diserving the interests of Afghan people". The statement issued on the cooperation's official Twitter handle stated that OIC Secretary-General, H.E. Houssein Ibrahim Taha expressed his concern over the reported ban, adding that the "move reflects a willful policy by the de facto leadership apparently seeking to further impact Afghan women's rights". The secretary-general further pointed out that the ban will seriously "affect humanitarian and relief operations conducted by a wide network of national and international non-governmental organizations in favor of vulnerable Afghan communities".

**Iran protests: 'No going back' as unrest hits 100 days**

MONITORING DESK

TEHRAN: A hundred days after they began, the longest running anti-government protests in Iran since the 1979 Islamic revolution have shaken the regime, but at a heavy cost to the people. More than 500 protesters, including 69 children, have been killed, according to the Human Rights Activists' News Agency (HRANA). Two protesters have been executed and at least 26 others face the same fate, after what Amnesty International calls "sham trials". Although nationwide demonstrations have swept Iran before - once in 2017 lasting until early 2018, and another in November 2019 - the current protests are unique, as they involve people from across society and women are taking a lead role under the slogan "Woman, Life, Freedom". Some Iranian celebrities have taken irrevocable steps to support protests, leading to their arrest or exile. Taraneh Alidoosti, a well-known Iranian actress, is being held in the notorious Evin prison after she condemned the execution of a young protester. Previously, she published a photo of herself without a mandatory headscarf, holding a sign with the protesters' slogan. "I have worked with Taraneh on four films and now she is in prison for her rightful support of her fellow countrymen and her opposition to the unjust sentences being issued," Asghar Farhadi, who directed Alidoosti in his Oscar-winning film The Salesman, wrote on Instagram.

**South Korea scrambles jets as North sends drones over border**

WEB DESK

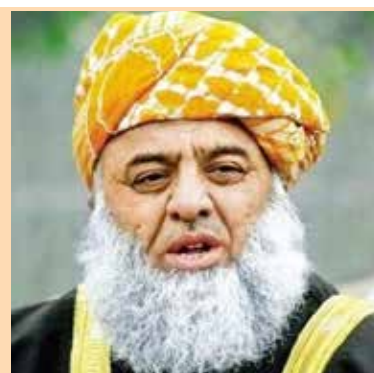
SEOUL: Five North Korean drones crossed into South Korea on Monday and South Korea responded by scrambling jets and attack helicopters and opening fire to try to shoot down the North Korean aircraft, the South Korean military said. As part of its response, the South Korea military also sent surveillance aircraft into the North to photograph its military installations, a South Korean military official said.

"This is a clear act of provocation by the North violating our airspace," a South Korean official with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Lee Seung-o, told a briefing. One of the five North Korean drones flew near the South Korean capital, Seoul, and the others flew near the west coast. Lee said the South Korea military "operated assets to shoot down" the drones. He did not say if any drones had been shot down but the Yonhap news agency later said South Korea's military fired about 100 shots but failed to shoot any down. Lee said South Korea initially fired "warning

shots" when it first detected the drones. One of the drones was known to have returned to North Korea while South Korea lost track of the other four, Yonhap reported, citing the Joint Chiefs of Staff. North Korea has no channel for media queries from South Korea and its state media made no mention of any drones. South Korean reconnaissance aircraft flew into the North to take photographs in action corresponding to the North Korean drone flights, Lee said, suggesting the North Korean drones were also meant for reconnaissance.

**Fazal lauds PM development initiatives for KP**

D.I.KHAN: Jamiat Ulemai-e-Islam Fazl (JUI-F) Chief Maulana Fazal-ur-Rehman on Monday said that development initiatives inaugurated by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif would herald an era of social and economic prosperity for the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Highlighting the significance of the geopolitical location of Dera Ismail Khan, he said it was linking all the provinces, adding it deserved such mega projects to make it an economic hub. He expressed these views while addressing a ceremony where Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif inaugurated a host of development initiatives for the southern districts of KP, especially Dera Ismail Khan.



He recalled that he had already said on several occasions that one day the Dera Ismail Khan would become a trade hub for the entire world and today his vision was being given practical shape. He said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif-led coalition government had put the country on a path of development by initiating concrete measures to enhance trust of other countries in Pakistan. The JUI-F chief, who also heads the PDM, said the restoration of trust which the country lost during Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) tenure was currently a big challenge for the present coalition government and expressed the strong resolve that the PDM leadership would overcome this challenge like it successfully tackled other inherited challenges. - APP

**Taiwan reports China's largest incursion yet**

The office of Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen said Tsai will call a high-level national security meeting on Tuesday morning to discuss reinforcing the island's civil defence system, followed by a press conference on new civil defence measures

AGENCIES

TAIPEI: Seventy-one Chinese air force aircraft including fighter jets and drones entered Taiwan's air defence identification zone in the past 24 hours, the island's government said on Monday, the largest reported incursion to date. Of the aircraft, 43 also crossed the Taiwan Strait's median line, an unofficial buffer between the two sides that lies within the defence zone, Taiwan's Defence Ministry said in a report, as Beijing continues military activities close to the Chinese-claimed island. Taiwan's official Central News Agency said it was the largest Chinese air force incursion to date, although there was no sense of alarm on the island, which has witnessed a steady increase in Chinese pressure in recent years. China, which claims Taiwan as its own territory, 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 strongly rejects China's sovereignty claims, said the drills showed Beijing was destroying regional peace and trying to intimidate Taiwan's people. A senior Taiwan official familiar with security planning in the region told Reuters that Taiwan assessed China had staged the military "provocation" to express anger at a new U.S. defence authorisation law that boosts military assistance for Taiwan. The person, who declined to be identified as the information was not made public, said during the drills China's air force dispatched warplanes from several locations across the country to carry out simulated attacks on Taiwanese and U.S. warships. China's Taiwan Affairs Office did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The office of Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen said Tsai will call a high-level national security meeting on Tuesday morning

to discuss reinforcing the island's civil defence system, followed by a press conference on new civil defence measures. The statement gave no details, but the defence ministry said it was considering extending compulsory military service beyond four months, as the war in Ukraine and rising tensions with Beijing renewed discussion about how to respond to Chinese military pressure. China's military also sent early warning, electronic-warfare and antisubmarine aircraft, as well as drones, into Taiwan's southern air defence identification zone, or ADIZ, according to the report, which detailed Chinese activities near Taiwan over the 24 hours to 6 a.m. (2200 GMT on Sunday). Taipei has complained of repeated missions by the Chinese air force over the last two years, often in southern areas of its ADIZ. Taiwan sent unspecified combat aircraft to warn away the Chinese planes, while missile systems monitored their flight, the ministry said, using standard wording for its response.