



Islamabad POST

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Warner retires after making 200 in 100th test

Detailed News On Page-06

Iran's Raisi vows no mercy for protestors

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Russia warns Kyiv to meet their demands

Detailed News On Page-07



Uzbek delegation meets PM Pakistan wants enhanced ties with Uzbekistan

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif says Pakistan offers connectivity to Central Asia through road and railways

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Recalling his recent meetings with Uzbek President, Shavkat Mirziyoyev on the sidelines of SCO Summit held in Samarkand in September and the 6th CICA Summit held in Astana, Kazakhstan in October 2022, the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif reaffirmed Pakistan's resolve to further enhance the existing excellent relationship between the two brotherly countries. The Prime Minister said Pakistan offers connectivity to Central Asia through road and railways. He hoped that the connectivity projects in the region will not only bring the trade communities together but also usher in a new era of peace, prosperity for the two countries and the region. He expressed these views while meeting with the High level delegation from Uzbekistan led by Deputy Prime Minister/Minister for Investment and Foreign Trade Khodjaev Jamshid Abdulkhakimovich in Islamabad.

Ministries of Pakistan during which it was agreed to enhance economic and trade ties between the two countries. The visiting dignitary also briefed the Prime Minister about the discussions between the business groups of Pakistan and Uzbekistan in various fields. Prime Minister appreciated that fruitful discussion between business community to establish B2B contacts would enhance bilateral trade and investment. The Uzbek delegation thanked Prime Minister and reiterated that the bilateral relationship is further deepening and pace of interactions is moving towards a positive trajectory. Prime Minister reiterated that friendship between Pakistan and Uzbekistan is strengthening with the passage of time and visit of delegation led by Deputy Prime Minister of Uzbekistan is manifestation of the growing relationship. Meanwhile, the delegation called on Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar here at Finance division on Monday and discussed with him matters of mutual interests. The delegation comprised of Kudratov Laziz Shavkatov, 1st Deputy Minister-Ministry of Investment and Foreign Trade, Mahkamov Ilkhom Rustamovich, Minister of Transport, Siddikov Furqat Ahmedovich, 1st Deputy Minister-Ministry of Foreign Affairs, YuldashevKahramon Anvarjanovich, Deputy Minister-Ministry of Agriculture, Ergashev Ibrohim Kenjaboevich, Chairman-Agency of Plant Protection & Quarantine and Oybek Arif Usmanov, ambassador of Uzbekistan to Pakistan. Finance Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar welcomed the delegation and highlighted cordial and brotherly relations based on common faith, shared history and cultural affinities between Pakistan and Uzbekistan. The Finance Minister further underscored that constructive interaction at the top leadership level has given a positive momentum to our bilateral relations which must be continued and strengthened. He highlighted the potential of cooperation in economic and investment sectors and expressed desire of Govt to further strengthen and diversify bilateral trade and economic linkages between the two countries.

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif meeting with the High level delegation from Uzbekistan led by Deputy Prime Minister/Minister for Investment and Foreign Trade Khodjaev Jamshid Abdulkhakimovich in Islamabad. - DNA

PML MNA arrested on corruption charges
PM terms arrest political victimization



BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: The Anti-Corruption Establishment (ACE) of Punjab Tuesday arrested Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Member National Assembly Chaudhry Mohammad Ashraf for illegally occupying state land. In a statement, the ACE said that Ashraf is a PML-N lawmaker elected from NA-148. Meanwhile Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif termed the action as political victimization. Ashraf faces accusations of encroaching on state-owned land by forging the land documents and records in connivance with the revenue officer (Patwari). The anti-corruption department has registered a case against the lawmaker.

NA speaker 'running away' from PTI MNAs resignations: Fawad
PTI will have to approach the SC if the resignations not accepted

ALI HAMZA/DNA

LAHORE: PTI leader Fawad Chaudhry accused on Tuesday National Assembly (NA) Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf of "running away" from accepting the remaining resignations of his party lawmakers. The PTI had announced mass resignations from the National Assembly in April, a day after party chief Imran Khan's ouster as the prime minister through a no-confidence vote and shortly before Shehbaz Sharif was elected as his successor. Speaking to journalists about the matter in Lahore, Fawad said that former chief whip of PTI Malik Amir Dogar called on Ashraf but he was "nowhere to be found". "He was told that the speaker has gone to Larkana," Fawad claimed. "We're getting information that he's going to Australia afterward." He further said the PTI will have to approach the Supreme Court if the resignations were not accepted. "I want to tell the speaker that tendering resignations is our constitutional right," the PTI leader said, adding that Ashraf should "accept the resignations and hold countrywide elections".

Shujaat advises Imran to return to parliament

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) President Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain said Tuesday that deposed prime minister Imran Khan should return to parliament - whose party quit the National Assembly in April. "The people, who elected and sent them to parliament, are observing their actions," Shujaat said while talking to senior journalists at an event in the federal capital, saying that if the PTI lawmakers keep enjoying the perks despite not being in parliament, it will be in no one's interest. During conversation, Shujaat said that political and economic stability are crucial for

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Briefs

Some IMF conditions anti-people

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Hinting at the further delay in reaching the agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on the ninth review, Minister for Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal Monday said that some of the Fund's conditions were too harsh for the common people and can't be accepted. "Still, the government is trying to negotiate [with IMF] and lessen the burden on the people," the federal minister added. Speaking in talk show, the federal minister, said they are negotiating with IMF to soften their conditions for the ongoing review and strike a deal. He was asked to share the details regarding the ongoing talks with the Washington-based lender on the Extended Fund Facility (EFF).

ECP postpones Local Govt polls in Islamabad

"IHC also recognised the increase in population but authorised the ECP to take the final decision after listening to the govt's point of view"

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Tuesday postponed the local government elections scheduled for December 31 in Islamabad following a change in the union councils of the federal capital. A five-member bench had reserved the verdict earlier in the day after arguments were concluded in the case. During today's hearing, former attorney general Ashtar Ausaf, who is representing the federal government in the case, told the bench that the union councils were increased in Islamabad based on the increase in population. At this, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikander Sultan Raja asked whether the census report had been published. Ausaf told the bench that the census bureau had informed about the increase in Islamabad's population, adding that the ECP must look at the increase in population. "The Islamabad High Court (IHC) also recognised the increase in population but authorised the Election Commission to take the final decision after listening to the government's point of view," Ausaf told the bench.

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IHC serves notices in ICA regarding LG polls

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Tuesday served notices to respondents in an intra court appeal of Pakistan Tehreek e Insaaf (PTI) regarding the local body elections in federal capital. A two-judge bench comprising Justice Mohsin Akhter Kayani and Justice Arbab Muhammad Tahir heard the appeal of PTI against the decision of single member bench. The single member bench had ordered the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to decide the matter related to the increasing the number of union councils in ICT after hearing the Federation. Petitioner Ali Nawaz Awan's counsel Taimoor Aslam Advocate adopted

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Afghan girl stages solo protest against Taliban ban

DNA

AFGHANISTAN: An 18-year-old Afghan student endured Taliban taunts and insults at the weekend as she staged a solo protest against the ban on women attending university. "For the first time in my life, I felt so proud, strong, and powerful because I was standing against them and demanding a right that God has given us," Marwa told media, asking not to be further identified. Women-led protest have become increasingly rare in Afghanistan since the Taliban's return - particularly after the detention of core activists at the start of the year. Participants risk arrest, violence, and social stigma. But Marwa was adamant. Her sister shot a video of the silent protest with a phone from a car as Marwa held up a poster just metres from the entrance to the Kabul University campus, the country's biggest and most prestigious institution. In their latest assault on women's rights, the Taliban last week banned university education for women, prompting international outrage. Some women have tried to protest the ban, but they have been swiftly dispersed. On Sunday, in front of Taliban guards deployed at the Kabul University gates, Marwa courageously carried a placard that read "Iqra", the Arabic word for "read". "They said really bad things to me, but I stayed calm," she said. - DNA

Imran has become a thing of the past: Bilawal

PPP chief pays tribute to late mother, saying ex-PM Benazir Bhutto also believed in the politics of truth

NAZIR SIYAL

GARHI KHUDA BUKHSH: Pakistan's Foreign Minister and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto on Tuesday said that unlike the proclamations of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan that there was an American conspiracy, the former prime minister was ousted through a conspiracy hatched by 'Bilawal House'. He said this while addressing a mammoth rally in Garhi Khuda Bukhsh in Larkana on Tuesday to commemorate the 15th death anniversary of PPP slain chairman and former prime minister Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto. He said that the conspiracy against the 'selected' was not hatched behind closed doors, rather it happened on the streets and in the parliament in plain sight. "Bilawal House, not White House ousted Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman Imran Khan from power," he said. Bilawal Bhutto said that the 'selected' (a term for former prime minister Imran



KARACHI: Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari addressing a public gathering in Ghari Khuda Baksh. - DNA

'Ruling PDM in trouble after raising Toshakhana issue'

LAHORE: Provincial interior and information adviser Omer Sarfraz Cheema said on Tuesday Shehbaz Sharif and Asif Ali Zardari ended up in hot waters when the court demanded complete details of the Toshakhana gifts. Mr Cheema said why there was absolute silence over the Toshakhana, especially when the incumbent govt used to do politics over that issue. He said a PML-N MNA backtracked when court asked for the complete information related to the gifts. "Those who are putting the blame on others are themselves involved in the illegal purchase of cars and gifts from Toshakhana," he alleged. He claimed that it had been proven through record that ruling coalition was involved in theft and plunder of Toshakhana. - DNA

Khan to denote alleged political engineering to bring him into power), has no political future in the country. "The future is for common people of the country and for democracy," he said. "Now it is time to say goodbye to the handlers of the selected," he added. He further said that in the past, the PPP challenged the dictator General (retired) Pervaiz Musharraf, and ousted him through democratic means. He said that we have to unite as a people and not ignite conflicts, adding that they have had to struggle to obtain democratic rights for the sake of the country. He said that Benazir Bhutto has provided rights to laborers and the underprivileged. "We have to complete the work left behind by Shaheed Benazir and restore their democratic rights by all means," he said. "My mother was a patriotic Pakistani and her name was carved not only in country's history but across the world. She was the voice of the poor, an ambassador for the destitute, a true supporter of

Continued on Page 06

Maulana Tariq suffers cardiac arrest

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Renowned Islamic scholar Molana Tariq Jamil was shifted to a hospital on Tuesday due to a heart attack. Taking to Twitter, Molana's son Yousaf Jamil informed that his father (Molana Tariq Jamil) suffered a heart attack and was shifted to a hospital in Canada. He further said that now his father's condition is stable and requested prayers for his speedy recovery. Later on, Yousaf Jamil's tweet was retweeted from the Islamic Scholar's official account.

Climate Change

Need stressed to build long term robust resilience

PESHAWAR: International community is urged to take destruction and damages caused by disastrous flooding in Pakistan as a test case and initiate practical measures to build long-term and robust resilience in a manner that we do not have to meet emergencies again and again. "Rebuilding again after a climate-induced disaster is not the solution that can help countries like Pakistan, we need to build for the better to withstand greater pressures," observes Dr. Arjumand Nizami, Country Director Helvetas Pakistan. These views were expressed by her in a virtual message sent during the recently held Climate Change Conference (COP 27) in Sharm el-Sheikh. "In a longer term we have to rethink and revisit our concept of development," opined Dr. Arjumand who has 29 years of work experience in development cooperation. The high emitting countries need to fast track emission reductions and spend more on providing low emitting countries with stronger and well governed adaption solutions, she proposed. "Today its Pakistan, tomorrow it can be some other country because there are eight hundred million people living in climate hot spots and we should not wait for another disaster to happen," she warned. "Now its time for international community to actually translate promises made in different conferences

into action," Dr. Arjumand remarked. Pakistan being a badly hit country due to monstrous flooding need technical support of world community, but not as an act of charity but as fair compensation of losses particularly from global north, she advocates. Disaster of this space enhances existing challenges of malnutrition, diseases, inefficiency in food system, water scarcity, social injustices, gender inequalities and to overcome these problems which we are also facing after recovering through the damage wreaked by floods, there is a need to build for the better to withstand greater pressures, she reiterated. Dr. Arjumand also apprised participants about the scale of damage and destruction caused by unprecedented rainfall and flooding in Pakistan. She said out of total of 160 districts, 81 were officially declared as 'calamity hit' and 40 were categorized as 'flood affected', making a total of 75 percent of the country. This is not the first or last disaster the country is facing, Dr. Arjumand opined and presented three examples of her assessment of climate change turning into human disasters in recent years. Elaborating her assessment of climate disasters one by one, she said most of these districts affected by rain and floods specially in Baluchistan and Sindh are repeatedly facing drought emergency and heatwaves for

the last several years. This contrasts of water deficiency and extreme water reflects the fact that these areas are facing climate extremes and are not capable of receiving so much water all of a sudden and in such cases people have to suffer. The second example of climate extreme in Pakistan is melting of glaciers with an accelerated pace, she said while sharing three satellite images of one of the largest glaciers of Pakistan, Baltoro. The pictures taken in March 2011, March 2016 and September 2019 clearly show fast melting of ice and creation of several hundreds of lakes in the alpine region. The third example, she continued, is poverty because floods have hit that parts of the country where lots of poor population live who mostly rely on agriculture and livestock while both of the sources of livelihoods have been taken away from them by ferocious flood water. "We could have done better with better infrastructure, preparedness and emergency management and for this we need world community as a fair compensation of our losses," she surmises. While concluding, Country Director Helvetas reiterated her urge of rethinking and revisiting our concept of development for a longer term solution of such climate change disasters. _APP



ISLAMABAD: Minister for National Food Security and Research Tariq Bashir Cheema witnessing a signing ceremony between Minister of National Food Security and Research and Agency of the Plant Protection and Quarantine of the Republic of Uzbekistan to strengthen cooperation in plant quarantine. – APP

Boxing to be promoted in Punjab: CM

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Chaudhry Parvez Elahi on Tuesday said the Punjab government would provide all possible facilities for the promotion of boxing in Punjab. Talking to the Boxer Amir Khan, who called on CM at his office, he announced to set up a boxing arena and gym in Punjab. Former federal minister Moonis Elahi and MNA Hussain Elahi were also present. The CM said that Amir Khan was a pride of Pakistan who was bringing laurels home. It was important to pay attention to every sport, not just cricket, he said. A sports endowment fund of two billion rupees would be set up to give scholarships to players, he said and added that international coaches would be invited to train local players. Talented players would be provided ample opportunities to advance their skills and players in remote areas would also be trained, coached and assisted, he maintained. He directed the Secretary Sports to take steps for the establishment of the boxing ring. Amir Khan said that Chief Minister Parvez Elahi's interest in sports, especially boxing, was commendable. Punjab had great boxing talent, he added. Ashfaq Farooq, Provincial Advisor Amir Saeed Raan, Principal Secretary to CM Muhammad Khan Bhatti, secretary sports, DG Sports and others were also present. – APP

KP Govt decides deduction from salaries of 3800 teachers

PESHAWAR: The government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has approved deduction from the salaries of 3800 teachers of BPS-17 and above for absence from duty without permission. The decision was taken during a high-level meeting regarding the monitoring mechanism in the Education Department held here with Secretary Elementary & Secondary Education, Muatasim Billah Shah on Tuesday. The meeting was convened on the directives of the Provincial Minister for Elementary & Secondary Education, Shahram Khan Tarkahi. The meeting also decided to hold science exhibitions in all schools after the winter vacation. A 10-member committee of

women officers was constituted during the meeting, which will pay visits to girls' schools across the province and check laboratories and cleanliness conditions. On finding inactive laboratories and poor cleanliness conditions will issue suspension orders of the concerned officers. The meeting also decided to cross check the demands of books regarding the new academic year through the Education Management System, which will complete in one or two days and then will issue show-cause notices to all those principals, which have sent demand for new year books. The meeting also took an important decision of writing letters to all Deputy Commissioners and inform them the

education department has banned ready-made practical copy, wherever that copy found will be confiscated and the shopkeeper will also face legal proceedings. The meeting also decided that in case of not matching the hand-writing, the students will be granted zero marks and he would be considered a failure in the practical paper. Furthermore, the meeting also decided on regular monitoring of the training standard of all Regional Professional Development Centres and for this purpose a joint meeting of the senior officials of the Education Department and District Education Officers (DEOs) of the concerned districts has been convened in divisional headquarters next week.

Zia supports proposal of trade in local currency

PESHAWA: Director Pak-Afghan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PAJCCI), Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi has supported a proposal of making trade and investment in local currency to overcome dollar crisis in the country. In a press statement issued here on Tuesday, Zia Sarhadi termed the suggestion made by Chairman Exchange Companies of Pakistan, Malik Bostan as timely and need of the hour. Malik Bostan while addressing a press conference in Karachi had also urged investors and exporters to do business in local currency. Zia said presently, an hefty amount of dollar two billion are being smuggled to Afghanistan on monthly basis, creating a very difficult situation for businessmen in Pakistan. He advised Federal Minister for Finance, Ishaq Dar to end the condition of trade with Afghanistan in Dollar and allow opening of Letter of Credit (LC) and trade with neighboring country in local currency. He also endorsed the suggestion of Malik Bostan of imposing restriction on banks from transferring more than one hundred thousands dollars abroad on annual basis. –APP

RCCI inks MoU with PITB for job centre in Punjab



RCCI inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB) on establishing a job centre in Punjab Province. President, RCCI Saqib Rafiq lauded the PITB initiative and said that the portal would play the role of bridge between employers, promoters, job exchange agencies, workers, and job seekers. Saqib Rafiq and senior programme Manager PITB Shams ul Islam signed the MoU. Job Center in Punjab Province', a collaborative effort of PITB, and the Labor & Human Resource Department (L&HRD) Punjab, was being developed at divisional and district levels across Punjab. The initiative, in its initial stage, had already registered 20,000 workers. –APP

Early years and lower primary's Sports Day held

HSCR held the Early Years and Lower Primary's Annual Sports Day. The Sesame Street Character-themed colourful decorations enhanced the splendour of the venue. The activity was a mashup of academic and extracurricular pursuits. The march past presentation, a remarkable display of students' and teachers' cooperation, coordination and teamwork, kicked off the day. The event was hosted by the members of Eloquent Orators Club, who were well appreciated for their outstanding speaking abilities. Fatima Tu Zahra, a youthful and curious reporter from grade 2 Rose at HSCR, brought beauty to the Skill and Tell Club's presentation through her extempore lively

reporting. Energizing and vibrant displays of suns of Son and Aerobics club weren't much appreciated by the parents. Adding to the spirit were mood boosting melodious performances by the school

choir which kept the students and audience's spirits high. The students showcased their strength and skills as they competed in variety of races with fun obstacles and inter-

esting props including hoola-hoop rings, flower pots, posters, monster boxes and much more. The winners were awarded with medals and yummy treats after the races.



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

Disease management system in place to curb Corona's sub-variant

He also highlighted the need to strictly follow the guidelines for the management of markets

ISLAMABAD: Health authorities on Tuesday said that 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 to deal with any sub-variant of Covid-19. According to official sources at the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination, in case of any untoward situation the health system was fully prepared to deal with any sub-variant of the Omicron variant of COVID-19 including BF.7 in the country. 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), 12 new Coronavirus cases were reported during the last 24 hours across the country. The case positivity ratio is 0.41 percent, while 13 patients were in critical condition. No death was reported from Covid-19 in the last 24 hours while 2,901 tests were conducted. Around 106 tests were conducted in Islamabad, 857 in

Laure, and 172 in Peshawar. As many as four confirmed cases with a 0.47% case positivity ratio were reported from Lahore, two cases with a 1.89% case positivity ratio were reported from Islamabad, and no case was reported from Peshawar. Minister for National Health Services Abdul Qadir Patel appreciated the efforts of all stakeholders, healthcare staff, vaccination teams, and administration working across Pakistan despite multiple challenges. He advised all provinces and regions

to administer booster doses to further improve protection against COVID-19 transmission. He said that in view of the global pandemic situation, the Central Health Establishment (CHE) will be strengthened to enhance its functionality. The minister emphasized the importance of precautions, including social distancing and mask-wearing, especially in crowded places. He also highlighted the need to strictly follow the guidelines for the management of markets. –APP



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We cordially invite diplomatic missions to visit us on any Saturday from 10 am to 1:30 pm to enjoy our hospitality and our products tasting. However, since, we are located in the Red Zone / Prohibited area and it will be mandatory to obtain No Objection Certificate (NOC) from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs well in advance of the intended visit date. We look forward to welcoming you all soon.

For further information please contact the following.

Maj (r) Sabih Ur Rehman
Mobile: 0300 8553342

National Days and Armed Forces Days

December

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



Hotels & Restaurants

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



Airlines

Turkish Airlines.....	8494949
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Emergency

Rescue (Police).....	15
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Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad.....	1122 & 16
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Shifa International.....	4603666



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Islamabad Metropolitan

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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....	0321-5744480
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'Special' security plan for Capital after suicide attack

The citizens have also been advised to register tenants and employees at the nearest police station or khidmat markaz

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: After a suicide attack that rocked the federal capital, the Islamabad Police Tuesday issued a "special security plan" considering the current security situation. While sharing the plan on Twitter, the law enforcement agency said that at least 25 temporary security check posts have been established at different locations in Islamabad. The authorities will be using safe city cameras to record Red Zone entrances while the metro bus service passengers' video will also be recorded. The police requested the residents and foreigners to carry their identification documents. The residents were also advised to use excise office issued number plates on vehicles. "Legal action will be taken against

illegal number plates and unregistered vehicles," warned the police.

The citizens have also been advised to register tenants and employees at the nearest police station or khidmat markaz. Citizens employing unregistered local or foreign workers will also be investigated, it further said. The police urged citizens to report any unusual activity on their helpline 15. Since the suicide attack in Islamabad, multiple foreign missions have advised their citizens and staff to limit their movement due to the security situation in the city.

The Saudi embassy has issued a security alert for its citizens in Pakistan, advising them to remain careful and limit their movement. While the Australian high commissioner also said officials in Islamabad have been advised to increase vigilance and limit travel within the city. A few other embassies

have also advised their staff and citizens to restrict their movement for some time during the ongoing holidays, particularly until Jan 1. On Sunday, the US Embassy in Islamabad advised its mission personnel to avoid "non-essential and unofficial" travel in the federal capital throughout the holiday season days after the suicide attack.

In a statement, the embassy said that the directions have been issued in light of Islamabad being placed on high alert due to security concerns. "As Islamabad has been placed on a Red Alert citing security concerns while banning all public gatherings, the embassy is urging all Mission personnel to refrain from non-essential, unofficial travel in Islamabad throughout the holiday season," the statement stated. The embassy also advised its staff to exercise vigilance at events, places of worship

and avoid locations with large crowds, review their security plans, be aware of their surroundings, carry identification, follow requests from law enforcement, and monitor local media for updates.

The alerts were issued after a suicide attacker, riding a cab, blew himself up when four bike-riding cops of Eagle Squad intercepted the car at Sector I-10/4 — sending the federal capital into a frenzy.

As a result of the blast, a police official was martyred, while seven — including a policeman and civilians were injured — police told the media. Later, a joint investigation team (JIT) was formed to probe the suicide bombing. There has been a rise in terror incidents across the country — especially in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa — after the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban (TTP) ended its ceasefire with Islamabad last month.

President upholds order to grant due share to sisters in property

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has upheld the orders of the Federal Ombudsman for Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace (FOSPAP) to grant four sisters their due share in the inherited property belonging to their deceased father after putting the property for open auction or sale and the proceeds to be distributed among all the siblings.

The President gave these orders under the Enforcement of Women's Property Rights Act, 2019 in a case where four sisters had complained to FOSPAP that their brothers had declined to give their inherited right of share in the property of their deceased father and had prayed that their respective shares should be given to them.

The President in his decision observed that the brother

along with other legal heirs of the deceased had signed a statement agreeing to enter into an amicable settlement, according to which the property in question, a house in Rawalpindi, would be evaluated through a commission appointed by FOSPAP to evaluate the market value of the said property. After fixing the market value of the said house, every sharer of the house would be given his or her due share as per the sharia share and also all the expenses made would be adjusted whoever had spent duty.

The President underscored that such an amicable settlement could not be brushed aside at the desire and instance of a single signatory whereas all others were owning and accepting the same settlement. He further stated that it was a well-settled principle of law that a person cannot blot hot and cold and a person having a choice between two courses of con-

duct is to be treated as having made an election from which he cannot resile. He noted that in the instant case, the brother had signed the joint statement with his consent during the course of the proceedings before the Ombudsman and had stated that he had no objection to the evaluation of the said property.

As per details, Shabana Hanif, Nabeel Ulfat, Rehana Zulfiqar, and Naila Naem (the complainants) who are real sisters had filed a complaint under the Act, stating that their father had left a three-storey house in Rawalpindi and their four-brothers had declined to give their share in the property. One of the brothers had contended before FOSPAP that the complainants had already sold their respective shares in respect of the inherited property by executing different agreements. He further contended that after the sale of their re-

spective shares in his favour the complainants had filed the complaint with FOSPAP. During the course of the proceedings, the parties unanimously agreed that the property should be partitioned among them as per their respective shares and in case it was not partitionable, it should be sold and proceeds should be distributed among siblings. After the settlement, the brother, Tanvir Sarfaraz Khan, resiled from his words by saying that the sisters had already transferred their respective shares and thus any settlement was out of the question. The FOSPAP had rejected this plea of the brother and had ordered to appoint a local commission to evaluate the market price of the property for sale as per rules and procedures. Tanvir Sarfaraz Khan then filed a representation with the President, which he rejected on the above-mentioned grounds.

PM Shehbaz Sharif pays tribute to Benazir Bhutto

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday paid tribute to politician Benazir Bhutto on her death anniversary, saying that she was a "crusader for human rights and democracy". Shehbaz Sharif said Benazir Bhutto left an indelible mark on politics of the country, adding that the void left by her martyrdom continues to widen over the years. He said the black day of 27 December 2007 is an unforgettable day relating to the martyrdom of a beloved leader of the people. "Benazir Bhutto is a shining example of democratic and political struggle who sacrificed her life while fighting for the rights of people," he said. He mentioned that as the first woman prime minister of the Islamic world, Benazir Bhutto, was a fascinating story of continuous struggle throughout her life. "We pay tribute to the historical services of Benazir Bhutto for the country, people and democracy," he said. He recalled that Pakistan Muslim League leader Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and Pakistan Peoples Party's Benazir Bhutto gave the historical gift of the Charter of Democracy that started a new era in the country's politics. He termed the Charter of Democracy a landmark achievement of the political vision of the country's leaders which ushered in a new political culture and tradition in Pakistan. Shehbaz Sharif said Benazir Bhutto took a bold and clear stand against terrorism and added that her martyrdom showed the country's determination against the menace. He said Benazir Bhutto also rendered immense services for the strengthening of national defence, constitutional institutions and for social welfare. The PM extended condolences to the family of Benazir Bhutto including his husband Asif Ali Zardari, son Bilawal Bhutto and all other relatives. He prayed to Allah Almighty to elevate the ranks of all martyrs including Benazir Bhutto, and grant patience to the families. — DNA

Oil, gas reserves discovered in DI Khan

ISLAMABAD: Exploration and Production (E&P) companies, under a joint venture, have discovered oil and gas reserves at 92 Kot Palak-1 well in Baska North Block located in Dera Ismail Khan District of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. "Drill Stem Test-1 (Post Acid) in Pab Sandstone and Dughan Lower Limestone has tested 17.1 Metric Million Standard Cubic Feet per Day (MMSCFD) Gas, 807 Barrels of Condensate per Day (BCPD) and 17 Barrels of Water per Day (BWPD) through choke size 40/64-inch at WellHead Flowing Pressure (WHFP) of 2308 Pounds per Square Inch (Psi)," the Petroleum Division (PD) announced on its twitter handle on Tuesday. While, the Drill Stem Test-2 (Pre-Acid) in Dughan Upper LimeStone and Dughan Middle Sands had tested 22.02 MMSCFD gas, 1,033 BCPD oil and 15.8 BWPD. The discovery is the result of a joint venture carried out by E&P companies including Al-Haj Enterprises (Pvt) Ltd, Al Haj Pak Kirthar B.V (85%) and Government Holdings (Private) Ltd (4.15%) at an exploratory well, spud on May 7, 2022 and drilled down to depth of 3,527 meters on November 18, 2022. "Based on wireline logs interpretation and drilling results, potential hydrocarbon bearing zones were identified on which the testing was conducted successfully," the PD added. The discovery in Baska North Block showed the commitment of Baska North JV to exploit the hydrocarbon (HC) potential of the block and aggressive exploration strategy. It has opened a new avenue and will positively contribute to mitigating energy demand and supply gap from indigenous resources and will add to the hydrocarbon reserves base of Al-Haj Enterprises (Pvt) Ltd and the Country. "This is the fifteenth oil & gas discovery during the current calendar year," the PD said, adding the subsequent production from these discoveries would help reduce reliance on imported oil and gas besides bridging the demand and supply gap. — DNA

Sadiq Sanjrani inaugurates IT Complex in Parliament House

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani on Tuesday inaugurated the recently established IT Complex in the Parliament House. Director General (IT) Senate, Syed Asim Raza apprised the Chairman about the current IT projects undertaken as a part of Chairman's initiative of Digital Parliamentary Framework, which consists

of upgradation of IT Infrastructure, Automation of Parliamentary Processes and Citizen Centric IT services.

The Chairman was briefed that the newly established IT Complex was comprising on Telecasting Cell, Software Development Hall, Helpdesk, IT Store and Workshop. Sadiq Sanjrani also inaugurated the project of Digitalization of Analog Video Record of the Senate Proceedings. Chairman Senate appreciated and lauded the efforts of

IT Directorate. Speaking on the occasion, the Chairman Senate said that the ICT had revolutionized the functioning of institutions of high public importance. Parliament, to this end, needs to rely more and more on information technology to facilitate the people, he said. He underlined that Parliament was a forum, where the will of the people was residing and the synergy of ICT made it convenient for the people to communicate and interact

with their representatives directly. He further said that our aim was to galvanize the Parliament's functioning by introducing state of art ICT services. The Chairman hoped that the newly developed IT Complex would maximum facilitate the Senators, Senate Staff and ultimately make the Institution more efficient. Senators, Kauda Babar, Fida Muhammad and Secretary Senate, Qasim Samad were also present on the occasion.

Seven outlaws arrested; drugs and weapons recovered

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad capital police apprehended seven outlaws from different areas and recovered drugs and weapons with ammunition from their possession, a police public relations officer said. He said that, following the special directions of Inspector General of Police Islamabad, the Islamabad capital police has intensified crackdown against the criminal elements in order to eliminate the crime from the city.

Following these directives, the Phulgran police arrested an accused namely Waheed Ali and recovered 510 gram

hashish from his possession. Likewise, the Banigala police team arrested an accused namely Abdul Samad involved in illegal gas cylinder filling.

Moreover, the Ramna police team arrested an accused namely Tahir Mehmood and recovered one 30 bore pistol from his possession. Tarnol police team arrested two accused namely Momin Khan and Abdul Samad and recovered two pistols from their possession. Cases have been registered against the nabbed accused and further investigation is underway. During a special crackdown against proclaimed offenders and court absconders police teams arrested two proclaimed offenders from various areas of the city.

IGP Islamabad directed all senior officials for effective crackdown against the accused involved in drug peddling possessing illegal weapons. The performance of police officials in this regard would be reviewed on a continuous basis, he maintained. — DNA

Chairman NDMA meets Chinese envoy

The Ambassador underscored the strong collaboration at the front of climate-induced disaster management and stressed further expansion of the existing working relations with Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), Lieutenant General Inam Haider Malik met Chinese Ambassador Nong Rong and acknowledged the continued assistance from China for the rehabilitation phase in flood-affected areas. Both discussed the various aspects of mutual collaboration and proactive approach to disaster management in Pakistan, a news release said. The Chairman NDMA thanked the overwhelming support by the Chinese Government in rescue and relief operations during Floods 2022. He shared details of the transformation plan of the futuristic and technology-driven National Emergency Operation



Centre (NEOC) which will be the interface of integrated emergency response with all Government stakeholders, humanitarian agencies and international Donors.

The Ambassador underscored the strong collaboration at the front of climate-induced disaster management and stressed further expansion of the existing working relations with Pakistan. He suggested chalking out a comprehensive bilateral MOU between NDMA and the Ministry of Emergency Management of China (MEM) for remodeling of the National Preparedness and Response Regime complemented with technology & information sharing, the establishment of Early Warning System and Weather Prediction Analysis. He further stressed enhancing the bilateral communication between NDMA and MEM.

Minister slams PTL leadership

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister Mian Javed Latif on Tuesday demanded for taking maximum punitive action against those responsible for running the country's economy and triggering political instability in the country. Addressing a news conference, he said Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman Imran Khan who ruined the country's thriving economy must be exposed and punished. The minister said Imran Khan was imposed on the nation in year 2018 when the country's economy was performing excellently and the country was thriving but alas the vibrant economy nose was vivid in over three years rule of Imran Khan.

A former prime minister was disqualified to pave way for Imran Khan. However, the experience of elevating Imran Khan had miserably failed and this should be rectified by bringing back Nawaz Sharif after seeking apology from him, the minister expressed.

Nawaz Sharif was disqualified on flimsy grounds just to pave way for Imran Khan, the pampered boy of 72. Imran Khan left the government after lying landmines for new government. The nation was paying the price of incapable government of Imran in shape of burgeoning inflation and price hike, he said adding that the people of the country were very perturbed that Imran Khan was being facilitated even then.

Islamabad Capital Police issued 2364 fine tickets

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad capital police has expedited stern legal action against the traffic rules violators and issued 2364 fine tickets to road users during the last 24 hours, a police public relations officer said.

Following the special directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, Islamabad capital police expedited stern action against traffic rules violators and took stern action in order to implement the traffic rules and maintain the smooth flow of traffic in federal city. Various police teams issued 2364 fine tickets to road users over violation of traffic rules in which 201 challan were issued over lane violation, 63 for red signal violations, 145 for using mobile phone during driving, 05 for amateur driving, 07 over violation of one-way, 10 for violation of zebra crossing, 01 vehicles for having pressure horns, 74 for having tinted glasses, 06 for emitting smoke, 107 for having fancy number plates, 289 bikers for riding without helmets and 271 motorists for violations of different traffic rules. The Chief Traffic officer said that, strict action would be taken against traffic rules violators.

INL Director hands over metal detectors to Police

ISLAMABAD: US Embassy director of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement handed over modern metal detectors to Islamabad capital police Security division for effective checking purposes, a police public relations officer said. He said that, for better cooperation among Islamabad Capital Police and US Embassy in Pakistan and to improve the security of the diplomatic enclave, the Director of INL provided modern metal detectors to the Islamabad Capital Police Security division. SSP Security division Masood Khan said that these metal detectors will be provided to the officials performing duties at various pickets of the red zone and entrance gates of the diplomatic enclave which will enhance the efficiency of the Islamabad Capital Police and the checking at all entry exit points of diplomatic enclave will be more effective. These metal detectors are able to trace weapons and other metal equipment easily, he added.

Briefs

Retailers
reject early
closure of
markets

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The retailers in the country have rejected the government's decision of early closure of markets, urging the authorities to allow businesses to remain open till 10pm, as the decision will badly affect business activities and thwart all efforts to improve the economic situation in the country. Tariq Mehboob Rana, the Chairman of the Chainstore Association of Pakistan (CAP), which is the retail sector's largest body in the country, while talking to the media here in his office on Tuesday, stated that recently announced decision by the Federal Cabinet is based on an unfounded claim of annual savings of Rs. 62 billion. Rather, this measure will counterproductively cause a significant plunge in revenues of up to 30% for retail businesses of which 'Tier-1 retailers' are connected with the FBR-POS system. Such a sharp dip in sales will amount to several hundred billion rupees of national economic loss across the domestic economy and a proportionate drop in tax collection. The CAP Chairman urged the government to resolve the issue of early market closure in consultation with the real stakeholders, appealing the authorities that the controversial decision of early market closure should not be implemented without due consultation with retailers. He said the government should take the business community on board while having such trade related decision and also launch awareness campaign through print and electronic media regarding energy conservation.

17 booked
over fraud
charges during
crackdown

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Commissioner, Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) along with Assistant Commissioner Industrial area, booked 17 over fraud charges at Excise and Taxation Office (ETO) and shifted them to police station here on Tuesday. According to statement issued here, a crackdown was organized against the tout mafia outside the ETO. Speaking on the occasion, Deputy Commissioner Irfan Nawaz Memon said that touts were seen roaming freely and extorting money from applicants by using different tactics to get their work done. He said, "Applicants are requested to directly reach out to ETO officers with documentation and contact higher officials in case of inconvenience."—DNA

EPA public
hearing of
Golf Flora
held

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA) on Tuesday held a public hearing of the environmental impact assessment (EIA) report of the multistory residential project here which was participated by a large number of civil society members. The public hearing was presided over by Deputy Director, EIA and Monitoring Khalid Mehmood along with the representatives of the Imarat Group of Companies proposing the project. The public hearing under the Pakistan Environmental Protection Act, 1997 and review of IEE/EIA Regulations, 2000 includes a detailed account of existing environmental conditions, a project description, an analysis of the impacts and proposed mitigation measures to be implemented during the project execution. Speaking on the occasion, the project proponent informed that there were 15 projects of the Imarat Group of Companies out of which eight schemes were given approval by the EPA. He said the health safety requirements compliance was mandatory for project implementation and the Imarat Group was considering all such formalities seriously. The project proponent was of the view that the project land was procured by Imarat Group from Bahria Town which was approved by the Capital Development Authority.—APP

Book 'An enigma with no easy solution' launched

SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's energy sector is going through a severe crisis. The circular debt of the power sector has escalated to Rs 2.44 trillion. To research and find solutions to the long-standing energy sector problems, the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) formed a 'PIDE Power Commission'. The Commission comprises power sector experts with decades-long experience in the sector. With their valuable contribution, PIDE has compiled a book titled 'Power Sector: An Enigma with No Easy Solution', funded by the RASTA programme. The book provides deep insights into various segments of the power sector and suggests workable, sustainable, and integrated solutions to the power sector woes. The PIDE book "Power Sector: An Enigma with No Easy Solution" was launched today at the Planning Commission. The book is a combined effort of PIDE Power Commission members and staff at the PIDE. PIDE Power Commission comprises the most knowledgeable energy team ever assembled in the energy sector. At the event, introductory remarks were given by the Vice Chancellor of PIDE, Dr. Nadeem ul Haque.

He said Pakistan had suffered a lot because of the energy crisis for many years. Circular debt has been with us for 15 years or so. Pakistan has incurred massive losses (a cumulated loss of more than Rs 5 trillion). It's time to take the matter seriously. This book is an effort from our side. The Federal Minister for Energy (Power Division), Engineer Khurram Dastgir Khan graced the occasion with his presence. In his remarks as a chief guest, he said, a policy has been adopted to generate electricity from cheaper sources and thousands of megawatts will be generated from solar power in different areas of the country. "During the recent floods in the country, we did not let electricity become a problem and ensured power supply in all affected areas" he mentioned. He said that in the future, all power-generating plants in the country would be planned on local fuel. The foreign exchange would be saved by reducing the consumption of imported oil, furnace oil, and coal. Federal Minister said that it is a fact that the country has plenty of expensive electricity, but the government does not have plenty of cheap electricity. The challenges for us are many. All issues mentioned in this book are correct. We have to address these issues. He said that the Bill-

ing issues would be addressed as a top priority to reduce losses in the power sector. In addition, adequate measures are being taken to prevent and catch electricity theft. This will reduce the burden on common consumers. "At the governance level, significant steps are being taken to collect electricity bills. Because bills are not being paid on a large scale, but only electricity is demanded. In the next two weeks, the vacant vacancies will also be filled", he added. He further added that the government is working fast on eco-friendly and affordable power generation projects that will yield far-reaching results. He said that the Shanghai Electric Power Project of 1320MW would start production next month that would run on Thar coal and provide cheaper electricity. The federal minister said that to check expensive rates, the government is trying to find cheaper resources that can generate electricity from Rs7 to Rs8 per unit to reduce the burden on the common man. To speed up the development journey, local coal, water, wind, and solar power generation projects are being promoted. Earlier, a leading member of the PIDE Power Commission, Engr. Tahir Basharat Cheema presented the overview of the book. The PIDE book has gone into power

sector history and every power supply chain segment to find the current crisis's root. It covers generation problems, transmission constraints, and noncompliance with industry codes leading to unreliable power supplies, distribution side challenges, and weaknesses in the regulatory structure. It has discussed in detail the inefficiencies in the existing tariff design. Furthermore, it argued that a lack of adequate planning and a comprehensive policy over the years had taken us to the stage where we are today. Various departments in the energy sector are less oriented toward delivery; they lack resources and have outdated techniques and procedures. Apart from providing deep insights into various segments of the power sector, this book has suggested workable, sustainable, and integrated solutions to all the power sector's perennial difficulties. For instance, the book talked about decentralizing power for better management and making companies accountable for their decisions. Further, it suggested strengthening human resources at all levels through independent professional management and human resource development. It advocated for the mandatory listing of the DISCOs on the stock

exchange with a limit of 5% maximum by one shareholder. The book suggested the forensic audit of both public and private generation companies immediately, followed by recoveries without any relaxation for any IPPs, and asks for a complete halt on sovereign guarantees to investors in the future. It asks for a complete revamp of tariff design and to start the market with bilateral contracts keeping transmission constraints and participants' capacities in mind. It urges the adoption of technology, such as pre-paid smart meters, to solve many of the power sector problems. Among many other suggestions, the book recommended forming a Power Commission comprising committed power sector professionals to guide and monitor the reform process in the sector. The members of the PIDE Power Commission including Engr. Salis Usman, General Manager Power Planning, NTDC; Engr. Mujahid Islam Billah, Ex. CEO, FESCO; Mr. Basharat Ali, CFO, PEPCO; Engr. Sajad Haider Syed, Dy. Manager, NTDC; Engr. Masood Akhtar, Former GM, NPCC; Engr. Azhar Iqbal, Director Finance, PEPCO; Engr. Adnan Riaz Mir, GM, Monitoring, PP&MC; and Engr. Abdul Qadeer Khan, Ex GM, NPCC, were also present the event.

Pak energy
sector needs
up to \$155b
investment
until 2030

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's energy sector needs investments ranging from US\$62 billion to US\$155 billion until the 2030, according to a report titled "CAREC Energy Outlook 2030", recently released by the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The energy investment needs until 2030 vary with estimates ranging from \$62 billion to \$155 billion. The most significant investments are required in the power generation and energy efficiency sectors because of the rapidly growing demand and low baseline efficiency, the report added. One of the objectives of this report is to present a detailed overview and analysis of future energy market trends in Pakistan. For this purpose, three areas were developed considering the country's regulatory framework, technological development and consumer preferences. The three areas include business-as-usual (projected energy supply and demand, with current energy system and policies), government commitments (projected energy supply and demand, considering individual priorities of the Government of Pakistan) and green growth (projected energy supply and demand, considering enhanced energy transition and environmental policies).

Govt.
restores 11
revoked E&P
licenses

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Making a true calculation of the country's existing and future energy needs, the incumbent coalition government has aligned its strategy to achieve self-sufficiency in the oil and gas sector by stepping up exploration activities to exploit indigenous resources in potential areas. The Petroleum Division, under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, has taken solid steps to find a permanent solution to energy scarcity and reduce reliance on imported fuel by attracting investment in the oil and gas sector. For this purpose, the government during its first six months, not only restored 11 revoked licences of different Exploration and Production (E&P) companies but also received bids for the award of 14 new exploration blocks through a transparent bidding process to make the much-needed new oil and gas reserves. With the award of new E&P blocks, the country would get more than \$92.8 million investment in three years, besides the utilization of funds amounting to over \$1.2 million by the successive E&P companies under the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative to carry out welfare activities in surroundings localities of their oil and gas production fields.

President ICCI pays tributes
to the injured policemen

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ahsan Zafar Baktawari President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry along with a delegation visited Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) to enquire about the health of ASI Hassan Raza and Constable Muhammad Hanif who got injured during a suicide blast in I-10/4, Islamabad on last Friday in which one policeman was also martyred. Engr. Muhammad Azhar ul Islam Zafar Vice President ICCI, Khalid Chaudhry former Senior Vice President, Saif ur

Rehman Khan former Vice President, Dildar Abbasi, Zareef Khan and others were in the delegation. Addl/SP (Ops) Iqbal Khan was also present at the occasion Ahsan Zafar Baktawari paid tributes to the courage and valour of the injured police personnel who endangered their lives to save the city from any big catastrophe. He said that the business community and the citizens feel proud over the excellent performance of police personnel who are ever ready to sacrifice their lives in the line of their duty to protect others. He said that the role of such police persons creates a sense

of confidence in the business community and the citizens. ICCI President said the Islamabad police has issued a special plan to introduce 25 temporary check posts in the city for enhancing security measures. However, he said that the coverage of safe city cameras should be further increased in the federal capital to boost the security situation in the federal capital. He said that Pakistan needs a peaceful environment to promote business and investment activities for which taking measures to further improve security is the key requirement. He assured that the business community

will always cooperate with the police force in its endeavours to further improve the security situation in the city. Engr. Muhammad Azhar ul Islam Zafar, Vice President ICCI also appreciated the bravery and courage of injured police personnel and said that their commitment towards their duty is highly appreciable. He said that such brave police persons are a source of pride for the nation. Addl/SP (Ops) Iqbal Khan thanked the ICCI delegation for visiting PIMS to enquire about the health of injured police personnel, which was a source of encouragement for them.

DGTO's appointment as
administrator at FPCCI
will be unconstitutional

ISLAMABAD: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry's ruling group of Businessman Panel (BMP) has rejected the proposal of appointing the Director General Trade Organizations (DGTO) as the administrator at the FPCCI after December 31, 2022, terming it totally illegal and unconstitutional.

A meeting held here on Tuesday, with BMP Chairman and FPCCI former President Mian Anjum Nisar in the chair, categorically rejected this unlawful and unethical demand of a small group, as the whole business community has already condemned it and called it against the constitution of Pakistan. Mian Anjum Nisar said that on October 11, 2022, the Parliament in its joint session had unanimously approved the amendment in the Trade Act and Rules by extending the tenure of trade bodies, associations, chambers and Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), including the tenure of President, vice president (VP) and senior vice president (SVP). The amendment was an important requirement for the implementation of policies for economic, industrial and commercial organizations and it was warmly welcomed by Trade and industry circles all over the country, he added. Mian Anjum Nisar asked the opponent to act according to the prevailing laws and constitution of Pakistan. He said that they don't have ability to lead the businesses community, as they were defeated and rejected by the business community of entire Pakistan during the last three years and now pressurizing the government and its departments to act against the constitution of Pakistan. He observed that long-term and consistent policies are must for high industrial growth and sizeable improvement in exports. He said that a serious approach is needed to encourage increased localization of the manufacturing base, along with the lowering of energy intensity of the economy by ensuring energy efficiency and conservation. Moreover, amid the growing issues related to climate change and inadequate food security situation, there is an urgent need to formulate a well-thought-out strategy to meet these challenges, he said. He vowed that the BMP would use all its abilities to address the problems of the business community on priority basis and would surely fulfill the trust of the business community. He said that the solidarity shown by the business community in the FPCCI elections for the last three consecutive years was commendable especially their role in the success of the Businessmen's Panel will always be remembered. Our aim is only to serve the business community and to solve their problems and take every step to develop trade and industry so that business can flourish and the country's economy can flourish.—DNA

Achieve it all with save dreams at Sultana Foundation

HAYAH BAHRONI

Social work is a path that is filled with countless opportunities to impact lives both individually and collectively. The importance of social work lies in its aim to confront social issues in all facets of life; from providing the one-on-one support of family welfare to shaping legislative policies that eradicate systemic injustices. It is a code of life that involves helping others overcome challenges. Consolidating on our previous projects and working together for making life easier for the underprivileged & in order to make dreams come true, Team Save Dreams accomplished yet another milestone in December, 2022 as our team members visited Sultana Foundation located in Farash Town, Lehtar Road, Islamabad. Sultana Foundation as it stands today, is a monument of how a small group of people inspired by the call of a visionary for a noble cause, can bring so much of achievement in such a short time. Sultana Foundation programs instill ideas of discipline and leadership in our youth to prepare them to reconstruct a society of justice and cherished values. Sultana Foundation was established as

a pilot project right in the heart of the villages, which could serve as a model for others. It all started from a group of like-minded people, meeting once a week in Islamabad under the name of Halqa Islah-e-Fikr, founded in the year 1987, by Chairman Dr. Naem Ghani, who was already running free dispensaries at a few places in Rawalpindi, Islamabad and the surrounding villages in the name of Maqasid-e-Insan. Sultana Foundation is a Vision, converted into a Mission, an Idea made into a Movement, a Dream in Actualization, a Claim in Practice, towards our Commitment for Realization of Promise of Pakistan, which is to build a Society on our own Value System, Free and Fair for all who feel Pride in being Pakistani. Pakistan and its people have the Will and Potential to light a Candle in Global Darkness of Greed and Need and New World Disorder. Team Save Dreams consisting of Hayah Bahroni, Rafia Ali, Omama Basit and Husail Jamil, this time had the opportunity of visiting the primary branch of Sultana Foundation Schools. When we walked into the class we were pleasantly surprised with the cheerful welcome that we received from the little angels. About 20 children nicely dressed in the school uniform were busy

in their studies as we entered their classroom. They looked happy together, eager to talk to us and shared with us what all they had learnt in school. We started by getting to know each other more. Finger prints of all of them to fill in our logo were taken, followed by different intellectual activities being carried out. Our team shared a few words regarding our theme "Disability and Blessings of Allah" and assisted the young minds in putting their ideas on the canvas. It was an exceptional sight to see how wonderfully they portrayed their ideas on paper. The entire visit was coordinated by Mr. Hassan Naem who is a very active member of Board of Directors and carries a very inspiring disposition. Blessed with a very cheerful personality and working the footsteps of his father, Mr. Hassan Naem is determined to promote human well-being and help meet basic and complex needs of all people, with a particular focus on those who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty. He is strenuously pursuing his goal to improve people's lives by helping with social and interpersonal difficulties, promoting human rights and well-being. Similarly, getting to meet Ma'am Ghazala Sarwar, the Principal, in person was an enlightening experience for us all too. She is a

qualified and experienced educationist and is striving with her team for holistic development of children's personalities and strongly believes that every child has a right to be educated no matter what their gender is or what background they belong to. The Primary School is truly a unit where Sultana

Foundation has applied its thoughts about comprehensive child development. The captivating visit to Sultana Foundation Primary School instilled within us a thought that in order to truly enable Pakistan to move forward, together we must go further than providing justice and education. We must

ensure that each Pakistani has access to their inalienable rights to life, liberty, dreams and the pursuit of happiness without systemic impediments. We look forward to our youth joining hands with Team Save Dreams in supporting the underprivileged, because with correct focus and

sound determination each one of us has enough to achieve it all. Team Save Dreams truly believes that our efforts have the capacity to transform lives at the individual level while also creating a ripple effect at the community-level, to continue a wave of inspiration and motivation for generations.



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New stage for control of COVID-19

Starting from Jan 8 next year, COVID-19 will be managed as a Category B infectious disease rather than as Category A, the National Health Commission said in a statement issued on late Monday. This is indeed an important adjustment following the loosening of the tight prevention and control measures. It was responsible of the Chinese government to classify COVID-19 as a Category B infectious disease like HIV, viral hepatitis and H7N9 bird flu, in January 2020, after it was confirmed it could spread between humans. And it was also responsible of the government to manage it under Category A disease protocols, like bubonic plague and cholera, as there was still a lot to learn about the virus and its pathogenicity was strong and so was the fatality rate for those infected. Category A protocols gave local governments the power to place the infected and their contacts under quarantine and lock-down areas where there was a cluster of infections. There is no denying that the tight control and prevention measures such as the checking of nucleic acid test results for those entering public venues and the closed management of neighborhoods effectively protected the majority of residents from being infected, and therefore lowered the fatality rate of the disease by a considerable margin. However, it is impossible for such management measures to last given the toll they were taking on the economy and social activities, and there was no reason to continue these measures when the Omicron variant of the virus has strong transmissibility but weak pathogenicity and a much lower fatality rate. But what local authorities should be reminded of is the fact that this shift of policy does not mean reduced responsibility on their part for the management of the epidemic, but rather a change of focus. They will have to do an even better job in ensuring there is an adequate supply of medical services and materials and enough care for vulnerable groups such as the elderly. Relevant departments still need to monitor the mutation of the virus and keep the public informed about the developments of the epidemic. The shift of policy means a long-anticipated green light has been given to normalize cross-border exchanges of people and production factors. That will greatly expand the space for the recovery of the economy by presenting foreign businesses with the opportunities of one of the largest consumer markets that has effectively remained untapped for three years, as well as domestic export enterprises with a wider access to the foreign market. Tourism, education and cultural exchanges will also receive a shot in the arm, reviving related sectors. China has met the right conditions for downgrading the management of COVID-19 and putting an end to measures such as large-scale lockdowns and movement restrictions. The virus hasn't been eradicated but its control is now under the aegis of the medical system. It is time to move forward.



Danger of another powder keg igniting

In a further sign of the worsening relations between Serbia and Kosovo, Serbian Defense Minister Milos Vucevic said that Serbian armed forces had been put on the highest level of combat readiness. The escalating standoff between Serbia and Kosovo does not bode well for Europe, which is already reeling from the conflict between Russia and Ukraine and its consequences, ranging from a severe energy crisis to skyrocketing inflation. Any mishandling of the current situation could ignite a new powder keg. Northern Kosovo has been on edge since November when hundreds of ethnic Serb workers in the Kosovo police as well as the judicial branch, such as judges and prosecutors, walked off the job protesting a controversial decision to ban Serbs living in Kosovo from using Belgrade-issued license plates, which created a security vacuum in Kosovo. The situation worsened earlier this month when Serbs, who make up the majority of the population in Northern Kosovo, put up barriers to protest against the arrest of a Serbian former police officer suspected of involvement in attacks against ethnic Albanian police officers. Kosovo sent military and police officers to try to enter Serb areas, while Serbs blocked all thoroughfares, and the situation began to escalate. On Dec 15, Kosovo applied for European Union membership. At the same time, Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic asked NATO for permission to deploy up to 1,000 Serbian troops and police officers in Kosovo, as he said it is entitled to do under UN Security Council Resolution 1244 if the "peace and normal life" of local residents is threatened. But NATO subsequently turned down Vucic's request, and several NATO members even issued an ultimatum to Serbia on Sunday demanding that it end the standoff. Those Western countries, namely the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany and Italy, have been motivated to do so because of Belgrade's close ties with Moscow, rather than the merits of the situation. It seems they have not learned the lessons of history. In the time of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Kosovo was an autonomous province of Serbia, but Albania had a majority population. In 1999, because of ethnic issues, fierce conflicts broke out. NATO intervened forcefully, and Serbia was forced to surrender after more than 70 days of bombing. In 2008, with the support of the West, Kosovo unilaterally declared independence, which was recognized by major Western countries, but Serbia, Russia and other countries, as well as Spain, Greece, Romania, Slovakia and Cyprus in the European Union, refused to recognize it. With the Ukraine war continuing to spell trouble for Europe, the ghost of the Kosovo war might be revived and haunt the continent soon. All parties should show greater political wisdom to avoid such a gloomy prospect.

The coup attempt in Germany

Adham Kawa



According to information issued by the official government agencies in Germany, the details of this coup plot can be summarized in the following points: 1-The accused: 25 out of 52 wanted far-right extremists were arrested in a sweeping operation that covered all parts of Germany

On December 7, 2022, the German authorities announced the dismantling of a network of supporters of an extreme right-wing group that aimed to seize power by carrying out an armed attack on the German Parliament building and controlling it, stressing that it is an operation that has been planned since November 2021. German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier expressed his deep concern that the ideas of extremists have reached this unprecedented level internally. German Interior Minister Nancy Wesser described the activists behind the act as "united in their hatred of democracy and the German state." This attempted coup against power in Germany sparked a great controversy about the movement involved in it, its motives, as well as its repercussions during the coming period. According to information issued by the official government agencies in Germany, the details of this coup plot can be summarized in the following points: 1-The accused: 25 out of 52 wanted far-right extremists were arrested in a sweeping operation that covered all parts of Germany, most of them are elderly, and they are suspected of forming an organized group, and their supposed leaders include: Heinrich XIII, 71, a scion of a noble family from the state of Thuringia in eastern Germany, whose family origins give him influence among extremists. A former lieutenant colonel in the German army named "Rudiger", who was the

commander of a battalion of paratroopers in the 1990s. A judge named "Birgit Malsack Wenkman", a former deputy of the far-right "Alternative for Germany" AFD party between 2017 and 2021, and she was handed over the justice bag in the "conspirators' government", as described by the German authorities. A spokesman for the German Defense Ministry, Arne Kolatz, also announced that there were other soldiers involved, one of whom belonged to the Special Forces Command. 2-Their ideological orientations: The German Federal Prosecutor, Peter Frank, announced that the participants in the planning process for the coup are followers of the ideological ideas of the "QAnon" group, which believes in the conspiracy theory, and they belong to the "Reichsbürger" movement; It is a movement that appeared in the eighties and does not recognize the legitimacy of the current German state, and its supporters refuse to pay taxes or submit to the police, and their total number is estimated at about 20,000, including a small group estimated at about a thousand people who have become highly organized since the end of 2021, as it has a central organizational structure and a military wing. Its members have licenses to own weapons. 3-The coup plan: According to a press release issued by the German prosecution, the stalkers prepared concretely to enter the seat of parliament in Berlin (Bundestag) with a small armed group, in a scenario similar to the attack on the Capitol building by supporters of the former US President, Donald Trump. They were also trained to handle weapons, and at least four meetings were held during the summer to expand the network of members of this group. Recruitment efforts specifically targeted members of the German police and army. The military branch of the cell was responsible for purchasing weapons and organizing training. Multiple dimensions overlapped in an attempt to analyze the timing and objectives of this coup attempt in Germany, the most important of which are the following: 1-Hinting at Russian involvement in the coup plot: The German press indicated that there was a partner within the coup network, a Russian citizen named "Vitalia"; A friend of Henry XIII, she attempted to act as an intermediary to coordinate contact with the Russian authorities for possible support. However, the Kremlin strongly denied any "Russian interference" in this file, and the Russian embassy in Berlin denied any involvement in these terrorist activities. Later, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov commented that no Russian interference of any kind could be discussed. 2-The German security services showed their strength: about 3,000 security personnel were mobilized to carry out the coup thwarting operation, and more than 130 searches and raids were conducted, in a procedure that German media described as the largest ever police operation in the country. The campaign of arrests was also carried out in 11 out of 16 German states, and the inspections included army barracks in southwestern Germany, to show that the security system in the country is very strong, and that the intelligence services are working efficiently, after criticism that it had not obtained prior information about the plan to blow up the gas pipelines "Nord Stream 1 and 2" and the failure to find the perpetrators. 3-The power of in-

fluence of "conspiracy theory" narratives: "Reichscitizens" believe that a "deep state" actually rules Germany, similar to the ideas of the QAnon movement that emerged in the United States and considers that there is a targeting of the white man, which many analyzes linked to the storming of a building The Capitol in January 2021. Supporters of the "Reichsbürger" movement tried to enter the German Parliament in August 2020, in protest against the health restrictions imposed during the Corona pandemic, against which resentment was exploited to attract more supporters of their movement. Supporters of this trend have also intimidated some doctors who are vaccinating against Covid-19, and some of them are attributed to trying to plan the kidnapping of the German Minister of Health. 4-Evoking the imperial past of Germany: Some supporters of the "Reichsbürger" or "citizens of the Reich" believe that the true form of Germany existed between 1871 and 1918, while others consider that the constitution of the Weimar Republic between the two world wars is the constitution of the real Germany, while a third group focuses on considering The legal borders of German lands are the borders that were established in 1937. Most of the "Reichsbürgers" refuse to recognize the legitimacy of the current democratic state in Germany, and they aim to return to the former imperial form, but they lack a unified vision about the preferred alternative system, is it akin to a constitutional monarchy for Kaiser Wilhelm II, or the democratic experience of the Weimar Republic, or the experience of Nazi rule? The recent coup attempt and the selection of Henry XIII as the head of power reveals the longing for the restoration of a constitutional monarchy in the style of Caesarean rule. 5-Recalling the "Beer Hall" coup in 1923: The failed attempt at the current coup in Germany with the approach of 2023 brought back memories of the coup organized by the German National Socialist Workers' Party (the Nazi Party) about a hundred years ago, specifically in 1923. Although That coup was successfully suppressed by the police at the time, it changed the course of German history, because it drew the attention of the German people towards Adolf Hitler. At a time when Germany was facing high inflation, Hitler tried to overthrow the Weimar Republic, and although his coup attempt failed, his Nazi party grew significantly after that. The thwarted coup in Germany could have many repercussions in the near future, the most prominent of which can be explained in the following: 1-Tightening control over extremists and preventing their possession of weapons: There were calls to monitor supporters of the far-right to ensure their adherence to the law, and the German Minister of the Interior, Nancy Wesser, came out to stress that the government must do better to combat the violence of the extreme right, and to prevent its possession of weapons, especially within army and police. Organizations and associations that fight the extreme right criticize the previous censorship process, because it was not conducted sufficiently, as extremists managed to cross the red line for a long time despite the huge amount of warnings. There are currently demands to grant the intelligence service the right to wiretap phone calls, subject

public sector employees, especially teachers who propagandize and promote the ideas of this trend, to disciplinary measures, and prevent the employment of those suspected of belonging to it. 2-Increasing attempts to threaten public order in Germany through violence: In recent years, the German authorities have ranked violent acts of the extreme right as the number one threat to public order. The Reichsbürger rejects the Federal Republic of Germany and its democratic structures, and most of them believe that the Allies in World War II, who defeated Nazi Germany in 1945, still rule it in secret, and that Germany is not a sovereign state. The coup attempt, which was recently revealed, indicates that some followers of the "Reichsbürger" began to engage in political violence, especially since it was preceded by other acts of violence, such as the killing of a police officer during a raid on a member of this movement on charges of possession of weapons in 2016. It also occurred An attack on a bar in an area near Frankfurt in 2020, leaving 9 dead. An activist in the field of refugee assistance was also assassinated in June 2019, in addition to recording dozens of attacks on the homes of asylum seekers between 2015 and 2020. Also, 2020 saw the dismantling of a network of "neo-Nazis" within the Bundeswehr 3-The decline in the popularity of the AfD: In contrast to this right-wing populist party that has adapted its rhetoric to suit the prevailing and acceptable political atmosphere in Germany, some followers of the "Reichsbürger" completely ignore the current German laws, as they are known for their anti-democracy. The Alternative for Germany party has always tried to deny any links to the "Reichsbürger" movement, but the German Ministry of the Interior confirmed the existence of links between the two parties in some areas. Perhaps the involvement of a former deputy for the "Alternative for Germany" party in the recent coup would have negative repercussions on the popularity of this party, which tended to try to take advantage of the political climate dissatisfied with the performance of the government of the current German chancellor, Olaf Schultz, with inflation reaching more than 10%. 4-Fear of the expansion of political extremism in Europe: The limits of the extremist right's threats are not limited to Germany only. Attempts to resort to this type of behavior have been monitored in neighboring or close countries in Europe such as Belgium, but on a smaller scale. Some analyzes attribute the reasons for the spread of these violent groups in many European countries to the current rise of political extremism in Europe that question the credibility of democratic systems and are strict in the issue of refusing immigration. Despite the description of the recent coup attempt in Germany as a marginal act, the fear remains that the ideas of the "Reichsbürger" movement will appeal to a broader audience than those who are disaffected by the economic crisis in Germany resulting from the Russian-Ukrainian war, and before that the Corona crisis, or that groups will succeed Armed from this trend to associate with more influential political organizations, which will make it more dangerous, and perhaps that is why the German authorities took this matter seriously. -The writer is Scholar International Relations & Diplomacy (Iraq)

AUKUS alliance and China

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



The agreement will help Australia to build nuclear-powered submarines that are faster and harder to detect than conventional navies. These submarines can stay underwater for months and also can fire long-range missiles. However, Australia has declared that it has no plans to develop and to use nuclear weapons. Australia will become a seventh country in the world that may operate nuclear-powered

AUKUS is a trilateral security agreement between Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States for the Indo-Pacific region. Under the agreement, the United States and Britain will help Australia to acquire nuclear-powered submarines. The agreement was designed to counter Chinese influence in the Indo-Pacific region. But, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson later told parliament that the move was not intended to conflict with China. The agreement also includes cooperation on "additional cyber capabilities, artificial intelligence, quantum technologies and underwater capabilities". According to the agreement, Australia will purchase modern and long-range capabilities for its air force, navy and army. The agreement is big opportunity for these states with like-minded alliance to promote security, prosperity and other shared interests in Indo-Pacific Region. The agreement will help Australia to build nuclear-powered submarines that are faster and harder to detect than conventional navies. These submarines can stay underwater for months and also can fire long-range missiles. However, Australia has declared that it has no plans to develop and to use nuclear weapons. Australia will become a seventh country in the world that may operate nuclear-powered submarine. With the help of this technology and nuclear-powered submarines Australia will also be shared by cyber capability, artificial intelligence and other undersea technology. The alliance reflects in views of several scholars and policymakers that it would have to face challenges and resistance from the regional powers and their allies of other forum. AUKUS agreement's intentions may to deter the growing influence of China in Indo Pacific Region. When the USA was busy in Middle East and Afghanistan then China was struggling to modernize and expand its nuclear capabilities increase its influ-

ence in the region and beyond the region as well. China has established significant involvement in the South China Sea which is a main concern of Western powers because 1/3 maritime shipping of the world passes through it and US\$3 trillion trade every year. The strategy of AUKUS indirectly may protect the interest of America and Europe by using the shoulder of Australia. With the submarines deal, Australia may feel secure from the any aggression from the People's Liberation Army after the deal of Nuclear Submarines. The two countries with nuclear weapon may not attack on each other for the fear of mutual annihilation but the controversy would create long distance for trade and investment activities among the regional and beyond the regional powers. However, the strategy carries many challenges in the region to the AUKUS alliance. Although the agreement is an attempt to draw a line before China's aggressive moves in the region but separate New Zealand and Canada from United States, United Kingdom and Australia who are members of the Alliance of Intelligence sharing Five Eyes. This machismo has been working during the cold-war and has proved as a successful intelligence alliance. The AUKUS agreement will focus on military capability and intelligence sharing. The government of New Zealand has responded that it would ban Australian Submarines from its water under the present policy of nuclear-powered Submarines. The agreement might also lead towards Cold-war mentality and ideological prejudice. Chinese state media particularly Global Times took more extreme position on AUKUS and wrote that Australia's deployment of nuclear-powered submarines will "potentially make Australia a target of a nuclear strike if a nuclear war breaks out, even when Washington said it won't arm Canberra with nuclear weapons, because it's easy for the U.S. to equip Australia with nuclear

weapons and submarine-launched ballistic missiles when Australia has the submarines. As well as North Korea said nuclear submarines-agreements may spark a regional arms race. Malaysia has also said the deal serves as a catalyst for a nuclear arms race and once arms race started, and then it will be difficult to overcome. Although this is not the place to discuss the merits of this competitive version of the Australian National Strategy but it's worth noting that when Australia really relies on submarines, it will only face China. If the United States remains a major power in Asia then Australia has no need of it because the United States will be there. If USA is not a super power now, it will all be a part of the confrontation between Australian forces and the People's Liberation Army. So it makes sense to upgrade all of Australian forces and capabilities to defend Australia. This also interprets that the deterioration of the United States has started. The AUKUS controversy illustrates that the close friends can be divided if trade concerns are at stake. But, Britain and the United States have other ideas, as their own military-industry would be the one that would have benefit from the deal the most as France had planned. But the most disturbing reality that emerges from this conflict is the deployment of nuclear ships in the Pacific. Unfortunately, after false military adventures in the Persian Gulf and humiliated defeat of the world's strongest military in Afghanistan, it gives the impression that the Western bloc is now attempting to test the waters of East Asia and the Pacific coast. It might be to take forward Obama's "Pivot to Asia" policy rather than to relax military muscles. According to Carl von Clausewitz famous dictum "War is nothing but the continuation of policy with other means" same is happening and I think such developments are an unending series of Tom and Jerry show.

Briefs

Imran has become a thing of the past: Bilawal

FROM PAGE 01
democracy, and a strong answer to terrorists," said Bilawal. "It is our responsibility to follow Bibi's vision and achieve the mission she had set out on," the PPP chairman stressed. "President Zardari and I tried to take her mission forward and whatever work is left will be completed in the next 15 years," he promised. Launching a tirade against PTI chief Imran Khan, he said Khan attacked the 18th amendment, which gives legislative and financial autonomy to the provinces, many times for his personal gains. "We ousted Imran Khan through a no-trust motion and saved the country from a fascist leader," thundered Bilawal. The foreign minister held Imran Khan responsible for rising terror attacks in the country, saying he bent his knees in front of the proscribed TTP without asking people and parliament. He added that he would urge the government to review policy towards terrorism, adding that "we will have to quit that policy and establish the writ of the state." "Only the PPP has the ability to steer the country out of the prevailing crisis because we had dealt with the terrorists effectively in the past and will do so in future as well," he added. Furthermore, he said that the next time would be for jiyalas, suggesting that in the next general elections, the PPP will win. He also requested his followers to refrain from pursuing a politics of hatred and promote a politics of hope amongst the masses.

IHC serves notices in ICA regarding LG polls

FROM PAGE 01
the stance that there was another judgment of this court related to the matter. Giving reference of the court of Justice Mohsin Akhter Kayani, he said that the bench had terminated the local body ordinance which had increased the number of union councils from 50 to 101. Recently, the government had increased the number of UCs from 101 to 125 but the election schedule had already been announced and all preparations were completed. The lawyer said that the federal government had not challenged the decision of ECP dated December 20, instead it was challenged by the administrator MCI through advocate general. The court questioned whether it could issue directives to ECP if the institution didn't conduct elections. Justice Kayani remarked that first previous government was not interested in LG elections and now the current set-up was doing the same. The court noted that the government had given undertaking to it regarding elections on 101 UCs. The lawyer prayed the court to stop the ECP from giving decision on the appeal of Federation and conditioned it with the verdict of court. The court rejected the request of petitioner to grant stay order and adjourned further hearing of the case till Wednesday.

Argentina confident Scaloni will stay

BUENOS AIRES: Argentina's football federation chief insisted Monday that coach Lionel Scaloni will remain with the World Cup winners. "Scaloni is the coach of the Argentina national team. We are both men of our word, we said yes to each other. I have no doubt that he will continue," Argentine Football Federation (AFA) president Claudio Tapia said. Scaloni, 44, has been in charge of the team since 2018, leading them to the Copa America in 2021 - Argentina's first international trophy since 1993. He then guided Lionel Messi and the squad to a third World Cup with victory over France in the final in Qatar earlier this month. However, when he was named coach in succession to Jorge Sampaoli after a last-16 exit at the 2018 World Cup in Russia, he was not a popular choice. - APP

New Zealand make strong start after Pakistan post 438

Babar Azam, 161, and Agha Salman, 103, scored centuries for the hosts. Salman was the last Pakistan player to be dismissed but not before scoring his maiden ton in the longest format of the game

DNA

KARACHI: New Zealand reached 165-0 at stumps on day two of the first Test against Pakistan in Karachi on Tuesday. The visitors still trail by 273 runs after Pakistan posted 438 in their first innings. Tom Latham and Devon Conway were unbeaten on 78 and 82 runs, respectively, at the close of play. Pakistan bowlers struggled to apply pressure on the Kiwi batters throughout the innings on the second day, with a benign pitch not helping their cause. Earlier, Pakistan were dismissed for 438 in their first innings on Tuesday. Babar Azam, 161, and Agha Salman, 103, scored centuries for the hosts. Salman was the last Pakistan player to be dismissed but not before scoring his maiden ton in the longest format of the game. He was the star of the show on the second day of the match after skipper Azam was dismissed, without adding to his overnight score, in



the first over of the day. Salman's 155-ball 103 included 17 fours. He added 54 crucial runs for the seventh wicket with Nauman Ali, who

played a gritty knock of seven runs in 75 balls. The visitors were in a position to dismiss Pakistan for less than 400 but Salman added

63 runs for the final two wickets, with the tailenders, to frustrate the Kiwis. Tim Southee claimed three wickets, meanwhile Ish So-

dhi, Michael Bracewell and Ajaz Patel bagged two scalps each.

It must be noted that Azam knocked a fighting hundred and the recalled Sarfaraz Ahmed hit a half century to guide Pakistan to a healthy 317-5 on the opening day. The pair led Pakistan's recovery from 110-4 during a 196-run fifth wicket stand, as the home team lost only Sarfaraz in the last two sessions. New Zealand spinners had taken three early wickets on a spin-assisting National Stadium pitch and one before lunch but had to wait until the closing moments when Ajaz Patel got Sarfaraz caught in the slip for 86. At close, Azam was unbeaten on 161 and Agha Salman three as the home team looked to lift from last week's 3-0 loss at the hands of England, their first ever whitewash at home. Azam now has 1,170 runs in nine Tests this year - the highest run scorer in Tests in 2022. He also beat Mohammad Yousuf's 2006 aggregate of 2,435 in all three formats, taking 2,584 runs across the board this year.

Warner retires in pain after making 200 in 100th Test

MELBOURNE: David Warner battled through searing heat to hit an epic unbeaten 200 in his 100th Test on Tuesday before retiring in pain as Australia consolidated their advantage against South Africa at the Melbourne Cricket Ground. On a scorching day, the hosts were 386-3 at stumps on day two of the second Test, leading by 197 after the Proteas were dismissed in their first innings for 189. Travis Head was not out 48 with Alex Carey on nine. Steve Smith (85) and Marnus Labuschagne (14) were the only wickets to fall. But worryingly for Australia, Cameron Green, who took 5-27 in South Africa's first innings, also retired hurt after a nasty rap on the finger from Anrich Nortje. Smith and Warner's 239-run partnership took the game further away from South Africa, whose bowlers toiled in temperatures touching 37 degrees Celsius (98.6 Fahrenheit). Opener Warner, 36, snapped a near-three-year century drought in typically aggressive and gritty fashion, reaching three figures for a 25th time after coming into the game under pressure on a lean run. It was his first Test hundred since January 2020 and as the opposition bowlers tired, he battled the elements and converted it to 200 for only the third time. His wife Candice told host broadcaster Fox: "You'd think by now people would know writing David Warner off is the wrong thing to do." But it was an exhausting effort, as he passed 8,000 Test runs en route. Chairs had to be brought out for Warner and Smith to rest on in the drinks breaks, with towels draped over their heads and ice-packs on their shoulders. Warner needed treatment for cramp several times and retired in pain after reaching 200 and dropping to his knees, eventually helped from the field by support staff. "The boys were cramping left, right and centre," Smith told reporters. "So, difficult (conditions) but nice to get us to the position where we are now. I think we're in a nice spot." Australia resumed on 45-1, having lost Usman Khawaja late Monday after taking charge of the opening day, with Green's heroics

helping dismiss the visitors for under 200 again. They were all out for 152 and 99 in the first Test in Brisbane, which they lost by six wickets inside two days. Warner began on 32 and showed his aggressive intent with an early boundary off Kagiso Rabada. Nortje was routinely sending down 150 kph (93 mph) rockets, smacking Warner on the head when he was on 47. The batter was given the all-clear after a mandatory concussion test on the field, with a lengthy delay as a new helmet was found.

But disaster struck two balls after play resumed. Warner pushed Nortje for a single and came back for a second, but Labuschagne hesitated and was run out despite a lunging dive. "It looked like a good wicket in general if you bowled good areas, over time you would get rewarded. But they batted really well," said Nortje. "I felt the boys bowled really well... unfortunately it didn't go our way." Warner put his head down to motor to 100, punching the air when he got there after a near-flawless knock characterised by his trademark strong running between the wicket. Australia's David Warner celebrates scoring a century in his 100th Test.

© William WEST / AFP Smith was not as comfortable, escaping on nine when he was dropped by wicketkeeper Kyle Verand then on 39 when he was given out behind only for it to be called a no-ball. Warner persevered to reach a 37th Test fifty with the off Marco Jansen. Warner upped the ante and raced to 200 off 254 balls calling it quits. Smith departed shortly partner reached the milestone, with getting his reward for a hard day's work, as de Bruyn taking a catch at gully. - APP



reynne caught. But he a four after his before his Nortje with Theu-

Mbappe, Neymar back for PSG as Ligue 1 reboots

PARIS: Normal service is set to resume in France on Wednesday with Kylian Mbappe and Neymar both set to feature for leaders Paris Saint-Germain as they restart their Ligue 1 season, 45 days after it was popped on ice for the World Cup, with a home game against struggling Strasbourg. Lionel Messi, however, will not be on show in round 16 as he is still at home, celebrating Argentina's success in the World Cup final in Qatar. The club, though, has been buoyed by reports last week that the 35-year-old Messi is set to sign a one-year extension to his contract which expires in the summer. Mbappe, who scored a hat-trick in the World Cup final but still ended up on the losing side as France flunked the penalty shoot-out, reported back to training on Wednesday with Achraf Hakimi, one of the stand-outs in Morocco's run to the semi-finals. Mbappe, Messi and Hakimi were just three of the 14 Ligue 1 players - from eight different clubs - who reached the semi-finals in Qatar. Neymar, whose Brazil crashed out to Croatia in the quarter-finals, was back on Thursday with compatriot Marquinhos, with both expected to play a role in Wednesday's game at the Parc des Princes. PSG are currently five points clear of second-placed Lens who they meet in Flanders on Sunday. Lens, meanwhile, will look to keep up the pressure on PSG going into that game when they head down to Nice on Thursday.

Third-placed Rennes have Croatia's Lovro Majer and on-loan Wales defender Joe Rodon back from action in Qatar as they head to Reims on Thursday. "For me, it's a second season that's starting up again, with the same uncertainties, the same unknowns before a first league match of the season," said Rennes manager Bruno Genesio. "We'll see which teams have best managed this." Marseille, who are just one point behind in fourth, host a Toulouse side that is bumping around in mid-table. Messi is not the only World Cup winner in Ligue 1 - Nicolas Tagliafico has also been enjoying his moment in the sun and will be absent for Lyon's trip to Brest on Wednesday. "Tagliafico has become world champion and I take the opportunity to congratulate him," said Lyon coach Laurent Blanc who took charge in October when Peter Bosz was sacked after a five-match winless run. "He is due to return on January 1 and he is getting married on the 28th. He has a lot to celebrate at the moment. - DNA

Arsenal extend lead, Newcastle up to second

LONDON: Arsenal opened up a seven-point lead with a 3-1 win over West Ham as the Premier League returned on Monday, while Newcastle climbed up to second thanks to an impressive 3-0 victory at Leicester. Liverpool also made a winning return from the World Cup break by beating Aston Villa 3-1 and Harry Kane bounced back from his heartbreak in Qatar by scoring in Tottenham's 2-2 draw at Brentford. Arsenal's momentum towards a first league title since 2004 could have been disturbed by the six-week mid-season break. But Mikel Arteta's men passed another test of their resolve after going in 1-0 behind at half-time to Said Benrahma's penalty. Two goals in five minutes from Bukayo Saka and Gabriel Martinelli turned the game on its head at a jubilant Emirates before Eddie Nketiah stepped up in the absence of the injured Gabriel Jesus to seal the points. "I'm delighted with the result and performance," said Arteta. "We scored at the perfect time and the crowd was incredible, also in the moment we conceded the goal. They kept on believing. When we scored it got loud and we generated the momentum we needed." - DNA

Djokovic back in Australia after deportation

SYDNEY: Acclaimed Serbian tennis legend Novak Djokovic touched down in Australia on Tuesday, almost one year after he was controversially deported for refusing to be vaccinated against COVID-19. The nine-time Australian Open champion was initially banned from the country for three years after losing a high-stakes legal battle in January over his vaccine status. Australia has since lifted its requirement for visitors to show proof of vaccination against COVID-19. The government confirmed in November that the unvaccinated Serb was no longer barred and had been granted a visa allowing him to play in the opening Grand Slam of the year, which starts next month. Tennis Australia chief executive Craig Tiley said he hoped local fans would embrace Djokovic's return. "We welcome him back to Australia," he told reporters. "I think as we speak he's land-

ing in Adelaide and I think that he is going to be again the player to beat. "I have a great deal of confidence in the Australian public. I have a lot of confidence that the fans will react how we hope they will react." Tennis Australia confirmed that Djokovic had touched down. Djokovic, who has won 21 Grand Slams, has been criticized for his part in the saga, which played out as rolling anti-vaccination protests took place in Australia's major cities. He is scheduled to play in the Adelaide International, beginning Sunday, as he warms up for the Open in Melbourne. "Over the years I've been really fortunate to start very strong in Australia and I love playing there," the world number five said in Dubai last week after ending 2022 with a record-equalling sixth ATP Tour Finals crown. "After obviously what happened earlier this year, hopefully, I can have a decent reception there and hopefully that can help me play some good tennis." Djokovic last set foot in Australia nearly a year ago, claiming he had obtained a medical exemption to enter the country without being vaccinated because he had recently recovered from COVID-19. However, Australian border officials said he did not meet the requirements to be exempted from strict vaccination rules and he was detained for five days while pursuing an ultimately fruitless legal appeal. - DNA

PKK openly maintains dangerous foothold in Europe

The PKK is listed as a terrorist organization by Türkiye, the EU, and the US, and is responsible for the deaths of 40,000 people, including women, children, and infants

DNA

ANKARA: As supporters of the PKK, a known terrorist organization, openly protested in major European cities this weekend, Türkiye has been sounding the alarm over members of the group, responsible for the deaths of tens of thousands and for supporting human trafficking, drugs, and organized crime, being free to walk the streets. On Friday, a 69-year-old gunman opened fire on a cultural center and nearby hair salon in Paris, killing at least three people and wounding three others. Local media reports named the shooter as William M., a retired train driver and gun enthusiast with a history of armed

offenses. PKK supporters soon gathered in the area after Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin visited the scene. In the ensuing protest, they perpetrated acts of violence and clashed with the police, of whom more than two dozen were injured. Supporters of the terrorist group disrupted peace again on Saturday, this time in London, in another violent encounter with police. Gathering in front of the French Embassy in London, a group of the terrorist group's proponents chanted slogans against Türkiye and France over the Paris shooting. For its part, Türkiye reminded Europe on Sunday of the threat the PKK poses. "These developments have emerged as a hint that the patronage of terrorist

groups in Europe just because of their opposition to Türkiye will eventually cause great trouble for Europe," Omer Celik, spokesman for the Justice and Development (AK) Party, told a group of reporters. The PKK is listed as a terrorist organization by Türkiye, the EU, and the US, and is responsible for the deaths of 40,000 people, including women, children, and infants. The YPG - which also has a presence in Europe, openly sanctioned by several governments - is the terrorist PKK's Syrian branch. Several European countries have told EU law enforcement agency Europol that the terrorist group was also involved in serious and organized criminal activities, according to the report. PKK sympathizers have

vandalized mosques and shops frequented by the Turkish community in Germany. Similar incidents were also reported in Belgium and Switzerland, Europol reported in 2020. Over the weekend, thousands of PKK supporters marched in Paris, chanting pro-PKK slogans and carrying posters of the terrorist group's so-called leaders. They then ripped off pavement stones and lobbed them at police, nearby homes, and shops. The attackers also used fireworks and sparklers, destroying bus stops. The police intervention was rather subdued, with security forces occasionally using tear gas against the attackers. In London, the terrorist group's supporters marched towards the Turk-

ish Embassy, carrying banners reading "Freedom for Ocalan," referring to convicted terrorist ringleader Abdullah Ocalan, who is serving a life sentence in Türkiye. Protesters also disrupted traffic as they marched through central London on a day while residents were rushing to complete their last-minute Christmas shopping. When they arrived in front of the embassy, police clashed with terrorist supporters after one of them threw what is thought to most likely be a stone at the building. They also chanted slogans for "revenge" and "no justice, no peace." Europol classifies the PKK as an "ethno-nationalist" and "separatist" terrorist organization, saying in its 2020 and 2021 reports that

the group still uses European countries for its propaganda, recruitment, and fundraising activities, even though it is officially banned in most of these nations. "The group maintained an apparatus that provided logistical and financial support to its operatives in Turkey and neighbouring countries and promoted its political objectives. This apparatus mainly operated under the guise of legally recognised entities, such as Kurdish associations," said Europol's EU Terrorism Situation & Trend Report. According to the report, PKK recruitment networks within Europe also played a part in EU citizens or residents joining conflicts in the Middle East, such as in Syria and Iraq.

ECP postpones Local Govt polls in Islamabad

FROM PAGE 01

"In the past, even after the schedule was released, elections were postponed. The Election Commission has to decide according to the constitution and the law," said Ausaf, adding that the ECP cannot deprive citizens of their fundamental rights. The lawyer also told the bench that the Parliament has passed the legislation increasing the number of union councils, adding that ECP must conduct delimitation in Islamabad in light of the new law. Meanwhile, a member of the ECP wondered why there was a sudden increase in the population in six months. The lawyer informed that the government reviewed NADRA's data. However, CEC Raja said that the delimitation of constituencies was done for Islamabad twice. He also gave the example of Punjab where the exercise was done twice and is now being done for the third time. "Why did the government not realise at the right time to increase the UCs," asked CEC Raja. He added that UCs were increased once the election schedule was issued, saying that the government has put the electoral body in a difficult situation. "If a mistake is made then the commission should provide assistance," responded Ausaf. However, CEC Raja reminded the counsel that a mistake is made once not again and again.

"In Article 148 of the Constitution, it is written that elections are to be conducted according to the local law. Now, if that law is changed, then what should be done? There should be legislation binding the authorities to hold elections held on time," remarked CEC. He added that the ECP also faced resistance in provinces over the local government elections. Meanwhile, Justice (ret'd) Ikramullah Khan, a member of the bench, remarked that general elections are also supposed to be held, and wondered what would happen to the future of local body elections. On the other hand, CEC Raja said that the ECP fears that the government may change the UCs again, adding that the government has to stop this at some point. On this, Ausaf assured the ECP bench that there will be no changes in the law and wrapped up his arguments. Meanwhile, PTT's lawyer Babar Awan told the bench that the ECP has already issued the schedule and elections are supposed to be held on December 31, reminding that the law has been changed twice.

Awan said that the ECP was being misled by the government. "The president has not yet approved the bill," said Awan, adding that the president may send back the bill to the Parliament within 10 days with objections while backing the ECP's views on the local body elections. The PTI counsel also said that if the president signs the bill then the law can be challenged in a court of law, adding that under Article 264 even if a new law is made then elections are to be held under the previous law. The PTI counsel, while wrapping up his arguments, urged the bench to let the polls happen on December 31. Meanwhile, Jamaat-e-Islami's (JI) counsel Hassan Javed reminded the bench that the people of Islamabad have been deprived of representation for the last two years. He told the bench that his party is standing with the ECP. He added that the IHC in its judgment did not challenge the ECP's order. "The high court did not declare the authority, opinion or decision of the Election Commission as wrong. It only said that these parties were not heard, take a decision after listening to them," said the lawyer. After listening to all the parties, CEC Raja, while wrapping up the hearing, remarked that the voter list has no link with the election schedule.

Shujaat advises Imran...

FROM PAGE 01

the country and the general elections should be held on time - an issue on which the government and the PTI have been at loggerheads. "If we all work together for Pakistan, only then can we save it. In case we cannot set aside our difference and a similar situation persists, then all will be lost," he warned.

Briefs

Iran's Raisi vows 'no mercy' for protesters

TEHRAN: President Ebrahim Raisi said Tuesday Iran would show "no mercy" towards "hostile" opponents of the Islamic republic, gripped by more than 100 days of protests sparked by Mahsa Amini's death. The "riots", as Tehran generally refers to them, were triggered by the September 16 death in custody of Iranian-Kurdish Amini, 22, after her arrest for an alleged breach of the strict dress code for women. Addressing a crowd in Tehran, Raisi accused "hypocrites, monarchists and all anti-revolutionary currents". "The embrace of the nation is open to all those who were lured," said the ultraconservative president at a funeral procession for unidentified soldiers who perished during its eight-year war in the 1980s with neighbouring Iraq. "The embrace of the nation is open to everyone, but we will show no mercy to those who are hostile." Iranian officials say hundreds of people have been killed, including members of the security forces, and thousands have been arrested nationwide. Foreign-based rights groups have put the death toll among protesters at more than 450. Earlier in December, Iran executed two people in connection to the protests. The judiciary has said nine others have been sentenced to death, two of whom have been allowed retrials.—APP

Ukraine FM aims for February peace summit

KYIV, Ukraine: Ukraine's foreign minister said Monday that his nation wants a summit to end the war but he doesn't anticipate Russia taking part, a statement making it hard to foresee the devastating invasion ending soon. Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba told during an interview with US news agency that his government wants a "peace" summit within two months at the United Nations with Secretary-General António Guterres as mediator. The U.N. gave a very cautious response.

"As the secretary-general has said many times in the past, he can only mediate if all parties want him to mediate," U.N. associate spokesperson Florencia Soto Niño-Martínez said Monday. Kuleba said Russia must face a war-crimes tribunal before his country directly talks with Moscow. He said, however, that other nations should feel free to engage with Russians, as happened before a grain agreement between Turkey and Russia. The AP interview offered a glimpse at Ukraine's vision of how the war with Russia could one day end, although any peace talks would be months away and highly contingent on complex international negotiations.—DNA

Ethiopian Airlines to resume flights to Tigray

NAIROBI: Ethiopia's national carrier Ethiopian Airlines said it would resume commercial flights to the war-torn region of Tigray on Wednesday after a shutdown lasting 18 months. The announcement comes a day after an Ethiopian delegation made the first high-level government visit to the rebel-held region since the signing of a peace deal last month. The airline, the biggest carrier in Africa, said on Tuesday that it would operate daily flights from the national capital Addis Ababa to the Tigrayan capital of Mekele. The schedule will increase in frequency depending on demand, it said in a statement. "We are truly pleased with the resumption," Ethiopian Airlines Group CEO Mesfin Tassew said. "These flights will enable families to reunite, facilitate the restoration of commercial activities, stimulate tourist flow and bring many more opportunities which will serve the society." Aid has started trickling back into Tigray since the peace deal was signed on November 2, going some way to alleviating chronic shortages of food, fuel, cash and drugs.—Agencies

JICA extends support to flood affected areas of Punjab, KP

Prior to this, the Government of Japan provided USD 7 million as an emergency grant to address the immediate impact of the floods in September 2022

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Pakistan Office extends its support to the flood affected districts of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Provinces by providing in total 9000 mosquito nets, 80,000 ORS and 400,000 water purification tablets. On the request of Government of Punjab and KP, the Government of Japan and JICA Pakistan Office decided to extend its support to the worst affected districts of both the provinces. In Punjab the target districts are Dera Ghazi Khan and Rajanpur. In KP, the target districts are Kohistan, DI Khan, Tank, Nowshera and Charsada. The expected beneficiaries of this support are around



80,000 families with pregnant or lactating women and children under five. According to the Post Disaster Need Assessment (PDNA) on Pakistan Floods

2022, around 650,000 pregnant women are facing challenges in getting access to maternal services, nearly 4 million children lack access to health services and sub-

stantial increase of communicable diseases such as diarrhea, malaria, dengue and cholera has been observed. In this regard particular attention should be given

pregnant and lactating women and children under five. JICA support will help these vulnerable segments of the society and will also help in reducing the outbreaks of

communicable diseases. JICA is utilizing its ongoing technical cooperation projects "The Project for Strengthening Maternal and Newborn Health Care in Punjab" and "The Project for Strengthening Continuum of Care for Mothers, Newborn and Child Health in Primary Health Care Settings in KP" to provide its above said support to flood affected districts of both the provinces. Prior to this, the Government of Japan provided USD 7 million as an emergency grant to address the immediate impact of the floods in September 2022. In addition, the Government announced another grant assistance of USD 38.9 million to Pakistan as part of Japan's supplementary budget to deliver life-saving aid to the flood victims on December 2, 2022.

Philippines floods death toll climbs to 13

MANILA: The death toll from heavy rains and floods in the Philippines climbed to 13 while 23 others are missing, authorities said on Tuesday. The Southeast Asian nation was hit by heavy rains over the weekend, ruining Christmas celebrations. The country's National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council said in a statement that floods left 13 dead while 23 are missing as heavy rains lashed at least six regions of the archipelago nation involving 18 provinces. Six others were injured. Heavy rains were recorded in Camarines Sur and Misamis Occidental provinces, as well as Eastern Visayas, Bicol, and Northern Mindanao regions. The Filipino weather agency PAGASA said the cold and warm winds would continue to bring rain showers to Visayas, Caraga, Northern Mindanao, Zamboanga Peninsula, Basilan, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, and Palawan, which "may trigger floods and landslides."—DNA

Ukraine must demilitarize or Russia will do it: Lavrov

KYIV, Ukraine: Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on Tuesday warned that Ukraine must meet Moscow's demand for "demilitarization" and "denazification," as well as the removal of the military threat to Russia, otherwise "the Russian army (will) solve the issue." Sergey Lavrov also accused the West of fueling the war in Ukraine to weaken Russia, and said that it depends on Kyiv and Washington how long the conflict, which started on Feb. 24 when Russia invaded Ukraine, will last. "As for the duration of the conflict, the ball is on the side of the (Kyiv) regime and Washington that stands behind its back," Lavrov told the state Tass news agency. "They may stop senseless resistance at any moment." In an apparent reaction, Ukrainian presidential adviser Mykhailo Podolyak tweeted that "Russia needs to face the reality." "Neither total mobilization, nor panicky search for ammo, nor se-

cret contracts with Iran, nor Lavrov's threats will help," he said. "Ukraine will demilitarize the RF (Russian Federation) to the end, oust the invaders from all occupied territories. Wait for the finale silently..." Kuleba said Ukraine wants a "peace" summit within two months with U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres acting as mediator. But he also said that Russia must face a war crimes tribunal before his country directly talks with Moscow. Both statements illustrate how complex and difficult any attempts to end the war could be. Ukraine has said in the past that it wouldn't negotiate with Russia before the full withdrawal of its troops, while Moscow insists its military gains and the 2014 annexation of the Crimea Peninsula cannot be ignored. Meanwhile, fierce fighting continued on Tuesday in the Russia-claimed Donetsk and Luhansk regions that recently have been the scene



of the most intense clashes. Ukraine's Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Maliar said that Russian forces are trying to encircle the city of Bakhmut in the Donetsk region, but without success. Heavy battles are also underway around the city of Kremmina in the Luhansk region, Luhansk governor Serhiy Haidai said. In the partially occupied southern Kherson region, Russian forces shelled Ukrainian-held areas 40 times on Monday, wounding one person, Ukrainian authorities said. The city of Kherson itself — which Ukraine retook last month

in a major win — was targeted 11 times, said regional administrator Yaroslav Yanushevich. Since its initial advances at the start of the war 10 months ago, Russia has made few major gains, often pummeling Ukraine's infrastructure instead and leaving millions without electricity, heating and hot water amid winter conditions. Lavrov did not specify how the Russian army will achieve its goals of demilitarizing and de-nazifying Ukraine — which was Russia's stated goal when the invasion started in February. The reference to "denazification" comes from Russia's allegations that the Ukrainian government is heavily influenced by radical nationalist and neo-Nazi groups. The claim is derided by Ukraine and the West. Lavrov warned further Western support for Ukraine could lead to direct confrontation.—Agencies

South Korea pardons jailed ex-president Lee

SEOUL: Jailed former South Korean president Lee Myung-bak received a presidential pardon on Tuesday, cutting short his 17-year sentence on corruption charges, the justice minister said. Lee was on a list of more than 1,300 people who received special pardons "from the perspective of broad national unity through reconciliation, tolerance and consideration", Han Dong-hoon told reporters after a Cabinet meeting with President Yoon Suk-yeol. The 81-year-old Lee, who in June was granted a temporary release from jail due to his age and deteriorating health, is serving 17 years for bribery and embezzlement. It was effectively a life sentence as he was not due for release until 2036, when he would be 95. The former Hyundai CEO-turned-president was charged with 16 criminal allegations in 2018 and sentenced in 2020. He was found guilty of creating slush funds of tens of millions of dollars and accepting bribes from Samsung Electronics in return for a presidential pardon for its late chairman, Lee Kun-hee, who was jailed for tax evasion. A self-made man who was appointed head of a major construction firm at age 35 before entering politics, Lee served as president from 2008 to 2013. He steered the country through the global financial crisis and won its bid for the 2018 Winter Olympics, but was criticised by opponents for undermining the nation's democratic standards and freedoms of speech. The pardons, effective at midnight on Wednesday, mark the second time Yoon has exercised his clemency power since taking office in May. In August, Samsung Electronics executive chairman Lee Jae-yong was among the beneficiaries of Yoon's first pardons.—APP

S. Korea's president calls for stronger air defense

SEOUL: South Korea's president on Tuesday called for stronger air defenses and high-tech stealth drones while the military apologized for failing to shoot down North Korean drones that crossed the border for the first time in five years. South Korea's military scrambled warplanes and attack helicopters on Monday, but they failed to bring down any of the North Korean drones that flew back home or disappeared from South Korean radars. It raised serious questions about South Korea's air defense network at a time when tensions remain high over North Korea's torrid run of missile tests this year. On Tuesday, the military again launched fighter jets and attack helicopters after spotting suspicious flight paths at a front-line area. A local county office sent emergency text messages notifying residents of a new batch of North Korean drones. But the military later said it was a flock of birds.

"We have a plan to create a military drone unit tasked with monitoring key military facilities in North Korea. But we'll advance the establishment of the drone unit as soon as possible because of yesterday's incident," President Yoon Suk Yeol said during a regular Cabinet Council meeting. "We'll also introduce state-of-the-art stealth drones and bolster our surveillance capability."—APP

UN: 26 Rohingya refugees died at sea

PIDIE: At least 26 Rohingya Muslims had died in dire conditions during a month at open sea while making a dangerous voyage that brought scores of others to safety in Indonesia, a U.N. agency said Tuesday, adding there will likely be more.

Exhausted women and children were among 185 people who disembarked from a rickety wooden boat on Monday in a coastal village in Aceh's Pidie district, authorities said. A distressing video circulated widely on social media showed the Rohingya worn out and emaciated, with many crying for help. "They are very weak because of dehydration and exhaustion after weeks at sea," said local police chief Fauzi, who goes by a single name. The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees said that survivors told the agency that 26 people died during the long journey. One of the refugees, who identified himself as Rosyid, told The Associated Press that they left the refugee camp in Bangladesh at the end of November and drifted on the open sea. He said at least "20 of us died aboard due to high waves and sick, and their bodies were thrown into the sea." According to UNHCR, more than 2,000 people are reported to have taken risky sea journeys in the Andaman Sea and the Bay of Bengal this year, and nearly 200 have reportedly died. UNHCR has also received unconfirmed reports of one additional boat with some 180 people still missing, with all passengers presumed dead.—APP

Saudi Arabia to hold Hajj Expo from Jan 9

RIYADH: The Saudi Ministry of Hajj and Umrah will organize the 'Hajj Expo 2023' conference and exhibition January 9-12, 2023. The four-day event, being held under the patronage of Advisor to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques and Makkah Governor Prince Khaled Al-Faisal, was part of the ministry's ongoing efforts to build an innovative ecosystem of services and solutions to better serve pilgrims at the Two Holy Mosques, while enhancing their religious and cultural experiences, a ministry press release said. "It aims to create an integrated and sustainable ecosystem that improves pilgrims' experiences, anticipate their future trends, and establish opportunities for further collaborations, agreements, and local and international initiatives," the ministry added. Saudi Minister of Hajj and Umrah Dr Tawfiq bin Fawzan Al-Rabiah, said: "The conference will allow entrepreneurs, innovators, and researchers from more than 200 global organizations to share successful experiences, and brainstorm sustainable quality solutions designed to cater to pilgrims' aspirations and needs." It reflected the unrelenting support dedicated by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, and the Crown Prince to the Hajj and Umrah sector, in line with the Saudi Vision 2030, he added. "With delegations from over 56 countries, the 'Expo Hajj' is expected to witness the signing of 400 agreements and partnerships. It will feature 10 keynote sessions, 13 panel discussions and 'Hajj Talks', as well as 36 workshops and related events and activities, notably the Islamic exposition and the 'Hajj Hackathon' the ministry said. — APP



ANKARA: Pakistan ambassador to Türkiye Dr Yousaf Junaid calls on Minister of Foreign Affairs Mevlut Cavusoglu. Ambassador conveyed deep gratitude to FM for his invaluable contribution to Pak-Turk relations & discussed ways to further strengthen strategic partnership — DNA

5 elections that changed Europe in 2022

WEB DESK

1. Italy gets first far-right leader since World War II

One of Europe's most high-profile elections this year was in Italy, where Giorgia Meloni became the country's first far-right leader since World War II. Meloni's Brothers of Italy (Fratelli d'Italia) emerged as the biggest party after voters went to the polls in late September. Her party was sworn into government as part of a right-wing coalition with Matteo Salvini's Northern League (Lega Nord) and Silvio Berlusconi's Let's Go Italy (Forza Italia), sparking fears of Euroscepticism in one of the European Union's founding members. "People thought that Giorgia Meloni would pick a fight with Europe but she has done the opposite," Daniele Albertazzi, professor of politics at the University of Surrey, reviewing Meloni's first months in power. "Italy is economically reliant on the European Recovery Fund, which is also why Meloni cannot afford to pick fights on the scale that Hungary and Poland have with the European Commission." "She wants to come over as prime ministerial and conserv-

ative rather than extreme." As well as turning away from picking a fight with Brussels, Meloni — Italy's first female prime minister — has also taken a pro-NATO stance and backed increased European defence spending to help Ukraine following Russia's invasion in February.

2. Hungary's Viktor Orban irks Brussels with a record-breaking fourth term

Viktor Orban secured a record-breaking fourth term as Hungary's prime minister after a landslide election victory in April. His right-wing populist party Fidesz won more than two-thirds of parliamentary seats. Orban did not campaign on a specific policy manifesto, instead using speeches and televised TV debates to engage with voters. He also painted himself as the candidate who would keep Hungary from being drawn into the Ukraine war, then in its infancy. His victory was a huge disappointment to the opposition — who had united around one candidate to give them the best chance of ousting Orban — and Brussels. In his post-election comments, Orban boasted "we won a victory so big that you can see it from the moon, and you can certainly see

it from Brussels". That job at the European Commission is part of a long-running feud with Budapest over whether Orban's Hungary adheres to EU values. Zsuzsanna Vegh, an associate researcher at the European Council on Foreign Relations, told Euronews that since his reelection, "Viktor Orban's confrontational and aggressive attitude towards European institutions has escalated". It culminated in Brussels announcing in late November that it was freezing the transfer of €7.5 billion in EU recovery funds to Budapest because Hungarian reforms to address "rule of law" concerns were inadequate.

3. Far-right is the biggest winner in Sweden's election

As in Italy, Sweden's election also saw a triumph for the far-right. The Sweden Democrats, a party with its roots in fascism and Sweden's neo-Nazi movement during the 1990s, finished second in the vote, behind the Social Democrats. That meant leader Jimmie Åkesson was able to play a very strong role in the formation of the new right-wing government, and although his party is not a formal member of that coalition of the Moderates, Christian Democrats

and Liberals, it still has a big say in all policy decisions for Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson's government. The Sweden Democrats now have considerable political leverage, explained Lucas Dahlström, Nordic correspondent at Yle, Finland's public broadcaster. The Sweden Democrats, he added, have used it to influence "migration policy as well as law and order reforms".

4. Macron wins a second term as French president

Pro-European parties were handed a boost in April when France's president, Emmanuel Macron, secured a second term. Macron again beat far-right challenger Marine Le Pen in the run-off vote. However in France's legislative election, held two months later, Macron's Renaissance party lost its absolute majority in parliament. Despite talks to form a coalition, Macron's party and its allies decided to form a minority government. Since his re-election, Macron has continued to lobby for his controversial pension reform plan — which he failed to pass a vote on during his previous mandate.

5. Newcomer ousts populist prime minister Janez Jansa in Slovenia

Populist prime minister Janez Jansa, a supporter of Donald Trump who was accused of taking Slovenia on a similar right-wing path to Hungary, was ousted after a surprise election result in April. A new liberal party, the Freedom Movement, shocked observers by winning a 34.5% vote share, compared with 23.6% for Jansa's Slovenian Democratic Party. Party founder and leader Robert Golob became Slovenia's new prime minister. Throughout the election campaign, Golob framed the vote — which saw the highest voter turnout since 2000 — as "a referendum on democracy", accusing Jansa of undermining democratic institutions and press freedoms since he took over in 2020. He also promised to salvage his country's relationship with the EU, which has been badly damaged by Jansa's overtures to the Hungarian nationalist leader Viktor Orban. "This country has always been oriented towards Western Europe and I am convinced that we will return to our family," Golob told AFP during the campaign. In July, three months after the vote, Slovenia became the first post-communist European country to legalise same-sex marriage, part of Golob's socially progressive agenda.

Briefs

B.B.'s struggle unrivaled like her name, says Sherry

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Climate Change, Senator, Sherry Rehman on Tuesday said the life and political struggle of martyred Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto for the sake of people, constitution, parliament and the country was matchless like her name. In a series of tweets, the federal minister paid homage on the 15th martyrdom anniversary to the former prime minister and Pakistan Peoples Party chairperson also Mohtaram B.B. Senator Rehman said, "I salute the martyred Benazir Bhutto on her 15th martyrdom anniversary. The killing of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto was the killing of humanity. Today, we were deprived of our leader and the country from its future. Shaheed B.B. was a hope for the people of Pakistan, the murderers took away their hope from the people." The Minister while eulogizing the martyred leader said Shaheed B.B. was the chain of all the provinces, the killers tried to disintegrate the country by killing her.

China launches new earth observation satellite

ISLAMABAD: China sent a new earth observation satellite into space from the Taiyuan Satellite Launch Center in north China's Shanxi Province at 3:37 p.m. Tuesday. The satellite, Gaofen-11 04, was launched aboard a Long March-4B carrier rocket and entered its planned orbit successfully. It is an Earth observation satellite that will be used in diverse fields, including land resources surveying, urban planning, road network design, crop yield estimation and disaster relief, Xinhua reported. The launch was the 457th flight mission of the Long March carrier rocket series. - APP

26 more SL students arrive for higher studies

ISLAMABAD: Some 26 more Sri Lankan students have arrived in Pakistan to study in Pakistani universities at BS, MS, and PhD levels under Allama Iqbal Scholarships for Sri Lankan Students. The students arrived at Jinnah International Airport, Karachi, and Allama Iqbal International Airport, Lahore, a press release on Tuesday said. These scholarships are part of the comprehensive educational programme titled, "Pakistan-Sri Lanka Higher Education Cooperation Programme (HEC). The Sri Lankan students will pursue their BS, MS, and PhD studies in public sector universities of Pakistan. The scholarships are being offered in all major disciplines, including Medicine, Engineering, Business Studies, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, etc. Students were selected through a competitive selection process keeping in view their basic eligibility criteria for enrolment in Pakistani public sector universities. - APP

Taiwan extends military service to one year

TAIPEI: Taiwan will extend mandatory military service from four months to one year, President Tsai Ing-wen has said. The decision comes amid growing tensions with China, which claims the self-ruled island as its territory. Speaking at a press conference on Tuesday, President Tsai announced new plans to bolster Taiwan's defence in the event of an attack from Beijing. "Peace will not drop from the sky... Taiwan is on the frontline of authoritarian expansion," she said. President Tsai said conscripts will also undergo more intense training, borrowing some elements from the US and other advanced militaries. - APP

UN top official urges Taliban for ending ban

"We call on the Taliban authorities to reverse this decision as soon as possible," Neil Turner, the Norwegian Refugee Council's country director in Afghanistan, added in a separate statement

NEWS DESK

KABUL: The United Nations' top official in Kabul met with a Taliban minister on Monday after the government banned women from working with non-governmental organizations. The UN mission's acting head, Ramiz Alakbarov, met with the Taliban economy minister Qari Din Mohammed Hanif and called for a reversal of the ban. The initial block on Saturday ordered all local and foreign NGOs to stop their female staff from working until further notice, causing several major international aid organizations to suspend their operations in Afghanistan. "We cannot effectively reach children, women and men in desperate need in Afghanistan without our female staff," said Save the Children, Norwegian Refugee Council and CARE International in a joint statement after halting their work in the country. "We call on the Taliban authorities to reverse this decision as soon as possible," Neil Turner, the Norwegian Refugee Council's country director in Afghanistan, added in a separate statement. "This comes at the worst possible time when the economy of Afghanistan

Germany may stop aid to Afghanistan

MUNICH: Germany could suspend humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan after the Taliban banned women from working for aid agencies. Development Minister Svenja Schulze said Tuesday that the move was an "irresponsible attack on aid to the Afghan people". She said: "Without female employees, organizations cannot continue their work in many areas for half the population," adding that "I am therefore in favor of suspending the current support we are providing with others for the time being." Schulze's comments came after a German food and hygiene agency became the latest NGO to say it could not continue with its usual operations in Afghanistan. Mathias Mogge, head of the agency World Hunger Aid, said the ban would have "catastrophic effects" on food, health and education programmes, DW reported. An order issued by the Taliban on Saturday banned women from working for NGOs, a ban that followed just days after the group barred women from attending universities. "Without female staff, organizations cannot continue their work for half the population in many areas," Schulze said in a statement. Schulze said she would call a meeting with the World Bank and donors to discuss "how and whether support for the Afghan people can be continued in the circumstances created by the Taliban". The EU's top diplomat, Josep Borrell, separately warned that member states could scale back their assistance to Afghanistan. Europe "will have to consider what consequences this decision, and the recent decision by the Taliban to close universities for women, will have," he said. - Agencies

is collapsing, and we need women as part of the workforce to enable the economy to recover." The International Rescue Committee also said it was suspending its work in the country, as more than 3,000 members of its 8,000 staff are women. AfghanAid announced it was suspending operations while it consults with other aid organisations. And Islamic Relief said it will now only provide lifesaving health care in Afghanistan. The ban could see millions of people facing food shortages and go without education, health care and other critical services, as half of the country relies on humanitarian aid. It will also impact the individual lives of many women. "I'm the only breadwinner of my family. If I lose my job, my family of 15 members will die of hunger," said a woman in Afghanistan who has been working with NGOs for decades "While the world is celebrating the arrival of the new year, Afghanistan has become a hell for women." The Taliban justified its ban, alleging that some female employees at NGOs weren't wearing the hijab correctly. It follows a similar ban last week blocking women from accessing university education, sparking international condemnation and protests.

Nine Daesh terror suspects arrested in Ankara

ANKARA: At least nine people with suspected links to the Daesh/ISIS terror group were arrested in Türkiye's capital Ankara, security sources said on Tuesday. They were caught in simultaneous operations across the capital by counterterrorism and intelligence forces, said the sources, who asked not to be named due to restrictions on speaking to the media. The suspects were found to be in contact with Daesh/ISIS terrorists in conflict zones, and a large number of digital materials and organizational documents were also seized in the raids, the sources said. Operations are underway to nab one more suspect, the sources added. In 2013, Türkiye became one of the first countries to declare Daesh/ISIS a terrorist organization. The country has since been attacked by the terror group multiple times, with over 300 people killed and hundreds more injured in at least 10 suicide bombings, seven bomb attacks, and four armed assaults. - APP

Asad urges PTI to continue LG poll campaigning

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Asad Umar directed party activists in Islamabad to continue their electoral campaign for the local government polls even after the top poll body on Tuesday deferred the elections. The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Tuesday heard from stakeholders on holding the local government polls on December 31 following directions from the Islamabad High Court (IHC). However, he remained hopeful that the court would take a decision that is beneficial for the residents of the capital city. Addressing a press conference on Tuesday over the delays in local government polls, and the stance adopted by the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) on postponing the polls, Umar said that they are still contesting the matter in court. He added that ultimately, the apex court will decide who would be mayor and deputy mayor of the federal capital by giving the date for local body elections in the city. Umar further criticized the PDM, stating that during the tenure of the PTI-led government in the federal capital, an ordinance



to increase the number of union councils in the federal capital was held up because the PDM had challenged it in court. "Now they are going to court to request the court to increase the number of union councils," he chuckled. "It is nothing but another tactic to run away from the electoral process," he claimed, suggesting that the PDM knew they would not be able to secure the requisite number of votes and end up with egg on their face during elections.

China: People rush to book travel as borders reopen

WEB DESK

BEIJING: Chinese people have rushed to book overseas travel after Beijing announced it would reopen its borders next month. Passport applications for Chinese citizens wishing to travel internationally will resume from 8 January, the immigration administration said. It follows an earlier announcement on Monday that ended quarantine policies for inbound travellers. Travel sites have since reported a spike in traffic. But Chinese tourists will not have unfettered access to all countries. Japan - one of the most popular destinations for Chinese travellers - has announced that all travellers from China will have to show a

negative Covid test on arrival, or quarantine for seven days, because of the surge in cases there. India has also said travellers from China (as well as some other countries) must show a negative Covid test when they arrive - though this was announced before Beijing's easing of restrictions. The easing of travel rules in China - the last part of the country's zero-Covid policy - comes as the country battles a new wave of infections. Resentment against the government's policy - which sparked rare public protests against President Xi Jinping in November - led to a relaxation of Covid restrictions across the country. But an increase in Covid cases followed, with reports of hospitals overwhelmed and a shortage of drugs.

CPEC Health Corridor seeks inspiration from Health China Plan

ISLAMABAD: As 2023 draws closer, CPEC's newly announced health corridor set the direction to revamp and modernize Pakistan's healthcare infrastructure, bio-engineering, telemedicine, pharmacy, life sciences and medical market. According to Gowder Pro on Tuesday, CPEC Health corridor has been announced in 2022. It has unleashed a new chapter of Sino-Pak synergic collaboration encompassing health domain. Luckily, CPEC has a robust model of "Health China 2030" to pursue to make things happen. With Chinese cooperation, CPEC Health Corridor is likely to follow the policy that include training for primary health-care physicians, incentivizing high-quality and high-value care, integrating clinical care with basic public health services, and coordination between primary healthcare and hospitals. Pakistan has a mixed health system that includes public, parastatal, private, civil society, philanthropic contributors, and donor agencies. According to a survey by The Lancet, the performance of Pakistan's healthcare system as a whole, places it 154th out of 195 nations. Pakistan struggles to maintain a suitable healthcare system in terms of quality and accessibility as a developing nation with only 2% of its GDP allotted for total health expenses. The frequent cases of infectious and vaccine-preventable diseases in Pakistan illustrate that the country has a troubled healthcare system. - DNA

US winter storm traps New York State residents in cars

MONITORING DESK

CALIFORNIA: At least 28 people have died in western New York state, most in Buffalo, and 56 in total as a monster winter storm continues to batter North America. A state official said some people had been trapped in cars for more than two days during what was "probably" the worst storm of their lifetime. Up to nine more inches (23cm) of snow are expected in parts of the state on Tuesday, meteorologists warn. The storm has stretched from Canada to Mexico. US President Joe Biden approved an emergency declaration allowing federal support for New York State. "My heart is with those who lost loved ones this holiday weekend," he tweeted. Neighbouring state New Jersey also sent emergency services to New York state to provide further assistance. State Governor Kathy Hochul, a native of Buffalo, described the storm as "the blizzard of the century". "It is [like] going to a war zone, and the vehicles along the sides of the roads are shocking." She added that many emergency vehicles had been unable to reach worst-hit areas or had got stuck in snow themselves. New York state officials said emergency personnel were going from car to car searching for survivors of the storm, and finding bodies in cars and snow banks. Mark Polonczak, executive of Erie County where Buffalo is located, said others died from cardiac arrest while ploughing snow, with Buffalo state issuing a "Shovel Smart" warning, notifying people that over-exertion from shovelling snow can cause heart attacks or back injuries.

Serbian troops on high alert over rising tensions

NEWS DESK

BELGRADE: The Serbian army says it is at its "highest level of combat readiness" after weeks of escalating tensions between Serbia and Kosovo. President Aleksandar Vucic says he will "take all measures to protect our people and preserve Serbia". The sabre-rattling is louder than ever and follows some media claims in Serbia that Pristina is preparing "an attack" on ethnic Serb areas in north Kosovo. The government in Pristina has made no comment about the allegations. But it has previously accused Mr Vucic of playing "games" to stir up trouble. Kosovo, which has an overwhelmingly ethnic Albanian majority, broke away from Serbia after a war in 1998-99. Serbia does not recognise Kosovo as an independent state, nor do the ethnic Serbs who live there. Belgrade accuses Kosovo of plotting "terrorism against Serbs" in areas where some 50,000 ethnic Serbs live. In return, Pristina says Belgrade is behind "paramilitary formations" that set up roadblocks in majority Serb areas of north Kosovo on 10 December. The European Union has been attempting to mediate. The 27-member bloc is calling for "maximum restraint and immediate action" and for the leaders of Serbia and Kosovo to "personally contribute to a political solution". Belgrade has increased its armed presence on the border in recent days after conflicting reports about a shooting incident in which no-one was hurt. Reports from Belgrade alleged ethnic Serbs came under attack, but the claim was rejected by Kosovo authorities in Pristina.

Nevertheless, Serbia appeared to use the reports to justify intensifying its military presence on the border. So far, hostilities have been limited to harsh words, then on Monday, Serbia placed its army on combat alert. Kosovo has warned that if Nato's KFOR peacekeeping force does not remove the roadblocks, then it will take matters into its own hands. Nato, which has some 3,700 peacekeeping troops in Kosovo, has called on all parties to avoid provocations. For years, its KFOR troops have played a crucial role in guaranteeing the peace. The European Union, which has a rule-of-law mission in Kosovo, has warned it will not tolerate attacks on EU police or criminal acts. It is a worryingly combustible situation. Tensions between Belgrade and Pristina have ebbed and flowed since Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence from Serbia in 2008. But they have been running particularly high over the past few months, with ethnic Serbs withdrawing all co-operation with Kosovo authorities. The trigger was, of all things, a row over number plates. Pristina demanded that ethnic Serbs should surrender the Serbian-issued vehicle licence plates that they had continued to use and replace them with "Republic of Kosovo" plates. For both sides, the symbolism was significant. For Pristina, it was a matter of asserting its sovereignty. For Kosovo Serbs, number plates represented their identity. Only a handful made the swap before the deadline. Pristina's plan to impose fines on the holdouts sparked last month's mass resignation of ethnic Serbs from all of Kosovo's national institutions. This included police, with more than 600 ethnic Serb officers handing in their badges.

MOST EXPERIENCED MANUFACTURERS & EXPORTERS OF MARTIAL ARTS UNIFORMS IN PAKISTAN

WHERE EACH STITCH IS WATCHED

TAIWAN KARATE

BOXING

KOBOJING

TAIKWONDO

JUDO

KARATE

KUNG-FU

JU-JUTSU

TAEKWONDO

UNIFORMS AND COLOURED BELTS

WHERE EACH STITCH IS WATCHED

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