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S. Korea, US discuss nuclear planning amid North threat

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Turkiye assures Syrian opp. over talks with regime

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China slams unacceptable covid-19 curbs

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Briefs

Pakistan's stability is redline

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Hina Rabbani Khar said on Tuesday Pakistan aimed to have cordial ties with its neighbors and the message had been sent to Afghanistan that the country's security was its redline. Giving a briefing at the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, she said Pakistan should not be the victim of terrorist activities by the proscribed TTP. Mentioning her recent visit to Afghanistan, she went to say the Afghan officials gave complete assurance that their territory would not be utilized against Pakistan.

Maryam tasked to re-organize party

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb announced on Tuesday that Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) President Shehbaz Sharif has appointed Maryam Nawaz Sharif as Senior Vice President of the party with immediate effect. In a tweet, while sharing the notification of Maryam Nawaz's appointment as PML-N senior vice president, she said Shehbaz Sharif has announced the major organizational decision of the party.

Huge crowds bid Pele farewell

DNA

SANTOS: Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva was among 230,000 mourners to view Pele's open casket in Santos, where some fans shed silent tears and others gave the Brazilian soccer star rousing cheers as they filed through the coastal city's stadium. A 24-hour memorial service at the Vila Belmiro stadium for Pele, who died last week at the age of 82 after battling colon cancer for a year, ended on Tuesday morning and his casket was taken in a procession through the city for private burial.

Punjab, KPK reject plan

Govt unfurls new plan to save energy

Under new energy plan, markets to be closed by 8:30pm

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has announced the energy conservation plan that will be implemented across the country. Under this plan, all markets will be closed at 8:30pm and all marriage halls will be shut by 10pm across the country. Meanwhile the governments of Punjab and KPK have rejected the federal govt plan saying they were not consulted before taking this decision. This was informed by Defence Minister Khawaja Asif who was flanked by Climate Change Minister Sherry Rehman, Energy Minister Khurram Dastagir and Information Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb during a press conference after a meeting of federal cabinet held in Islamabad under the chair of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday. The minister said that the cabinet approved the energy conservation plan today. He said through this plan the country would save Rs62 billion. He said that the plan would be implemented all over Pakistan. Kh Asif told the presser that the prime minister has ordered to reduce the electricity use in government offices by 30 percent. He said under the new plan, the fans powered by electricity will not be manufactured anymore from July 1 during the current year in order to save on energy. He said the additional duty will be levied on the inefficient electric fans which will help save Rs15 billion.

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PM directs Covid-19 vaccination of children

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday, expressing satisfaction over the COVID-19 situation being under control in Pakistan, directed the authorities concerned to ensure the vaccination of children aged 5-12 years on an urgent basis. The prime minister, who chaired the meeting to review the COVID-19 situation in the country, instructed to further improve screening at border points as well as airports. He also sought a report on a third-party evaluation of the screening process at border points and airports. He said it was pleasing that no COVID-related death was reported from across the country in the last 15 weeks and said

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Bilawal hits out at Imran, says his tricks have failed

Says PTI lawmakers have been begging to NA speaker to not accept their resignations

NAZIR SIYAL

DADU: Foreign Minister and PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has come down hard on former premier and PTI Chairman Imran Khan saying his every trick has failed. He rejected early elections asking Imran to come to parliament and play his political part. He was talking to media on Tuesday in Dadu where he came to visit flood-hit areas. The foreign minister fired a broadside at PTI chairman saying "doesn't look like Imran's demands are going to be met." He revealed that PTI lawmakers have been begging to the National Assembly speaker to not accept their resignations. He believed that at an opportune time, even Shah Mehmood Qureshi and Pervaiz Khattak, too, would part ways with Imran. The PPP chairman wondered what big deal in it if Imran were not in power for six months. The PTI chief's demand for early

election cannot be fulfilled, he asserted, saying Imran Khan was hurting interests of Pakistan for the sake of his politics. He said we were lucky that we threw inept Imran out before the floods. He took a swipe at him saying Imran never visited any flood-hit area during his tenure as prime minister. Talking about the Sindh politics, Bilawal said that the PPP has had its differences with the MQM but we should try to work together. "We want to go along with the MQM under an agreement," the PPP chairman said adding that his party was ready to resolve all the problems by sitting with the MQM. He, however, reiterated that due to delay in the local government elections, administrative affairs get affected.

Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari also threw light on the destruction caused by floods in Pakistan and said that the government would provide loans to the flood-hit people on easy terms for building their houses.

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chairs meeting of federal cabinet. – APP

Shehbaz, Malaysian PM discuss climate moot

They discussed upcoming Int'l Conference on Climate Resilient Pakistan



MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday held a telephone conversation with his Malaysian counterpart Anwar Ibrahim wherein they discussed bilateral relations, flood situation in Pakistan, and upcoming International Conference on Climate Resilient Pakistan taking place on January 9, 2023 in Geneva. The prime minister felicitated his counterpart on his election as the Prime Minister of Malaysia. The two leaders expressed satisfaction over the momentum of Pakistan-Malaysia relations and agreed on the importance of regular high-level exchanges to strengthen bilateral dialogue and cooperation. Prime Minister Shehbaz underscored Pakistan's desire to forge a broad-based relationship with Malaysia with robust political dialogue and trade and economic linkages. The two leaders reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthen the historic ties between Pakistan and Malaysia anchored in strong economic and trade cooperation. They discussed the devastating climate-induced floods in Pakistan and the upcoming International Conference on Climate Resilient Pakistan when the international community will come together to support Pakistan's recovery and rehabilitation efforts.

'Tough decisions' crucial to tackle economic issues

Imran Khan claims around 750,000 Pakistanis have left the country in the last 8 months

ALI HAMZA

LAHORE: Since the country's economic condition is in the doldrums, former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan Tuesday said 'tough decisions' should be taken by the new government that comes with a mandate. "Which ever new government comes with people's mandate should take tough decisions. This [PDM] government doesn't have the moral authority to take tough decisions," the PTI chief said while addressing the launch of PTI's white paper via video link. The deposed prime minister's comments come as a default risk looms over Pakistan, the rupee continues to depreciate against the US dollar, and forex reserves have plunged to record lows – covering merely a month's imports. Meanwhile, the former premier lamented the country's economic state highlighting the increase in inflation. "Prices of flour, electricity, petroleum products and food items have all increased.

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PTI white paper paints bleak picture of economy

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has painted a bleak picture of the economy as it released a white paper on the economic situation of the country, blaming the PML-N-led coalition government of pushing the economy into a tailspin. The white paper, which was unveiled on Tuesday at a ceremony in Lahore, said inflation had increased by 45 per cent during the last eight months under the coalition government. Skyrocketing inflation and flawed policies of the PDM government have made life miserable for the masses, it said. The opposition party in the document said all economic

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Afghan govt upset over 'provocative statements'

DNA

KABUL: The Afghanistan government desired better relations with all its neighbors, including Pakistan, and believed in all the resources and means that could help them meet the goal, Taliban chief spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid said on Tuesday. His statement came a day after the National Security Committee (NSC), under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, asked the government in Kabul – without naming it – not to provide sanctuaries to Pakistani terrorist groups on its soil. Pakistan has witnessed a sharp rise in terror incidents, especially in Kyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, during the past couple of months after the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) declared to end the ceasefire with



Pakistan. Earlier, Interior Minister Rana Sanaulah, in an interview with a Pakistani news channel, had said, "Islamabad may target the TTP in Afghanistan if Kabul does not take action to dismantle them". Expressing his disappointment over the recent statements by the Pakistani authorities, the Taliban spokesperson said they are trying their best to ensure that Afghan soil is not used against Pakistan or any other country. "It is also the responsibility of the Pakistan side to try to control

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Ukraine, EU to hold summit on Feb 3 in Kyiv

"The parties discussed expected results of the next Ukraine-EU summit to be held on February 3 in Kyiv and agreed to intensify preparatory work," it said

CENTRELINE REPORT

KYIV: Ukraine and the European Union will hold a summit in Kyiv on February 3 to discuss financial and military support, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's office said, but the bloc Tuesday would not confirm the location. Zelenskyy discussed details of the high-level meeting with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in his first phone call of the year, the office said in a statement Monday. "The parties discussed expected results of the next Ukraine-EU summit to be held on February 3 in Kyiv and agreed to intensify preparatory work," it said. For the latest headlines, follow our Google News channel online or via the app. A spokesman for European Council President Charles Michel, however, could not confirm on Tuesday that the joint summit would take place in the Ukrainian capital. He said the bloc would be represented at the summit by Michel and von der Leyen, and not with the various leaders of EU countries. EU officials said there was a standing invitation for Zelenskyy to visit Brussels. Zelenskyy and von der Leyen, in their call, also talked about the supply of "appropriate" weapons. And they discussed a new 18 billion euro (\$19 billion) financial assistance program to Ukraine, with

Russian fury grows over Ukrainian strike

NEWS DESK

MOSCOW: Russian nationalists and some lawmakers have demanded punishment for commanders they accused of ignoring dangers as anger grew over the killing of dozens of Russian soldiers in one of the deadliest strikes of the Ukraine conflict. In a rare disclosure, Russia's defence ministry said 63 soldiers were killed on New Year's Eve in a fiery blast that destroyed a temporary barracks in a vocational college in Makiivka, twin city of the Russian-occupied regional capital of Donetsk in eastern Ukraine. Russian critics said the soldiers were being housed alongside an ammunition dump at the site, which the Russian defence ministry said was hit by four rockets fired from U.S.-made HIMARS launchers.

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the Ukrainian leader pushing for the first tranche to be sent this month, the statement said. Last month, the EU cleared the way to giving Ukraine the aid in a so-called "megadeal" that included the adoption of a minimum 15 percent global corporate tax rate. The move followed an impassioned plea from Zelenskyy not to let internal disputes within the 27-nation bloc stand in the way of backing Kyiv. Meanwhile, Russia is planning to launch a long-term campaign of attacks against Ukraine using Iranian-made drones in an effort to demoralize and "exhaust" the war-weary country, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said, citing intelligence reports. For the latest headlines, follow our Google News channel online or via the app. During his nightly address on Monday in Kyiv, the Ukrainian president said he received intelligence indicating that the attacks would be carried out using Iranian-made Shahed drones. "We must ensure - and we will do everything for this - that this goal of terrorists fails like all the others," the BBC quoted Zelenskyy as saying. "Now is the time when everyone involved in the protection of the sky should be especially attentive." He claimed that Russia aims to "exhaust" Ukraine through a sustained wave of drone attacks and called on those responsible for protecting the sky to be vigilant.

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Attock police failed to curb wave of target killing

The tall claims of the District Police for protection of lives, assets and honours of its people arise a question mark

QAZI SHOAB KHAN

ATTOCK: Attock Police could not control over the recent wave of target killings in Attock posing life threats and panic among the people of the inter provincial bordering territory despite taking prompt notice of the Inspector General Punjab Police Mr. Muhammad Aamir Zulfiqar Khan. Reports said three innocent persons include a local journalist Arshad Jaffery along with Akhtar Nawaz and Nazim Khan were gunned down by some unknown assailants on Dec 28, 2022 in broad day light in village Mari Kanjoorand fled away leaving the dead on the spot. The District Police Officer Attock Mr. Fazal Hamid constituted a committee to find

the clue of the incident in coordination with the bereaved family following the orders of the Inspector General Punjab Police. Meanwhile, three masked killers also opened indiscriminate firing upon a vendor Mr. Sher Mohammad in a day light at Fawara Chowk Attock City on January 02, 2023 and earlier one Mr. Fazal Dad was also targeted in an overcrowded area of Attock City. All these incidence of targeting killings were also reported to the local police as usual but police could not reach the conclusion till to date. However, the tall claims of the District Police for protection of lives, assets and honours of its people arise a question mark. It is mentioned that the Inspector General Police Punjab Muhammad Amir Zulfiqar Khan has

also directed that red tapeism culture in internal working of police must be eliminated and delay-ing tactics regarding the work-ing of important decisions will not be tolerated. The Inspector General Punjab Police said that in order to further improve the working of the police force, the supervisory officers should ensure efficient performance of administrative matters and all professional matters should be completed within the stipulated time line. The socio-political circles of the district demanded of the IG Punjab for posting of some competent field officers capable to fight against the alarming proportion of target killings, land grabbers, narcotic suppliers, proclaimed offenders, street criminals instead of wasting their energies in their offices.



ISLAMABAD: PTI senators and leaders welcoming Senator Azam Swati upon his release from Capital Investigation Agency (CIA) center. — DNA

Azam Swati says following Imran Khan's footsteps

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf 1 (PTI) senator Azam Swati said on Tuesday that he was following PTI chairman Imran Khan's footsteps regarding Pakistan army upon his release from the Capital Investigation Agency (CIA) center. PTI senators including Shibli Paraz, Saifullah Niazi, Dr. Shehzad Waseem, and Seemi Ezzid amid a number of PTI workers welcomed Mr Swati outside the jail. Speaking to media outside the center, he said his leader [Imran Khan] had, on regime change [PTI's mantra of a foreign conspiracy hatched to oust former Prime Minister Imran Khan], said that "country and also the army is mine" adding those who got First Information Reports (FIRs) registered against him had ruined every institution of the state. "I'll comment on Justice Amir Farooq's verdicts after meeting Mr Imran", he added. He said only a few people were ruling the country adding Rs.11 thousand billion of the country had been looted. "Those who recorded videos and released them are criminals", he added while referring to his video leaks. He claimed that Mr Imran was the only leader who could steer the country out of crises. He had been indicted in tweeting controversial remarks regarding the state institutions. Earlier, he was granted bail by the Islamabad High Court (IHC) but was not released due to non-submission of surety bonds in the court. — DNA

Police, Levies arrest 500 accused of various crimes in Kohlu during 2022

QUETTA: Police and Levies arrested 500 accused in different cases including murder, robbery, and kidnapping for ransom from various areas of Kohlu district during the year 2022. According to the crime data shared by the police and Levies, a total of 205 cases were registered in Kohlu district during the last year. Of them, 122 cases were registered in the Levies jurisdiction while 83 cases were registered with the police. Police sources said 13 accused persons nominated in six murder cases were also arrested. They said the overall performance of the police in terms of arresting the accused persons in different cases was much better than in the last five years. In 2022, the police also arrested the most wanted 192 accused in various cases. —APP

Business community mourns demise of Yunus Tabba

KARACHI: On behalf of the entire business, industry and trade community of Pakistan, Mr. Irfan Iqbal Sheikh, President FPCCI, has extended heartfelt condolences on the sad demise of the Late Yunus Tabba — an iconic, long-serving and highly-accomplished business leader & industrialist of Pakistan. He was highly-acclaimed as a philanthropist and public figure as well, he added. Mr. Irfan Iqbal Sheikh said that Late Yunus Tabba led from the front for five-long-decades with innovation, ambition, perseverance and institution-building. He was an utmost optimist in the future of Pakistan and kept expanding his businesses; and, venturing into new businesses for more than 50 years. FPCCI Chief added that his companies are at par with the top multinational companies of the world; and, that is the reason that he was successful in bringing many multinationals to Pakistan in large-scale joint ventures, investment deals and industrial collaborations. —DNA

KP Governor for strengthening political harmony

PESHAWA: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ghulam Ali on Tuesday emphasised upon the political parties to strengthen political harmony and unity to pull the country out of present crises. He was talking to the provincial Chairman of Qaumi Watan Party Sikan-dar Sherpao who called on him here at the Governor House. They discussed the country's current political, developmental and economic situation and reiterated the resolve to fight together at every forum to end the political and economic cri-

ses in Pakistan. Meanwhile, a 39-member delegation of Lions' club of Peshawar, Dera Ismail Khan, Mardan and Nowshera under the leadership of Muhammad Asif on Tuesday called on Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ghulam Ali here at Governor House. They congratulated the Governor on his appointment and also gave him honorary membership of the club by pinning the badge of the club. The Governor said that the axis of his successful life is selfless service to the people and he always looked for-

ward to meeting with the organizations and individuals engaged in public and social services. Ghulam Ali also presented a certificate of appreciation to Muhammad Asif for his 50-year of social services. The delegation told the governor that the Lions Club is the largest social service organization in the world, which has been engaged in social services in the country since 1956. The Governor assured full support to the Lions Club and said that the Governor House would always welcome them. —DNA

Antibiotic drug miss use kills 5 million in 2019, Health Experts

KARACHI: Principal Dow International Medical College Prof. Zeba Haque has said that there is a need to form a committee at the national level to formulate guidelines on the lines of the American Heart Association (AHA). Mortality rate has been reduced in most of the world by following the AHA guidelines. Proposal has been prepared by Dow University of Health Sciences for framing Pakistani guidelines. She said these things while addressing as a Chief Guest

in (CME) seminar, titled as "Endocarditis-Pharyngitis-A Holistic Review" organized by Dow Institute of Cardiology in collaboration with Professional Development Center at A.Q. Khan Auditorium DIMC, Ojha Campus. Turkish-born implantologist, who came from Netherlands, Dr. Taner Yildiz, Dr. Mohammad Hashim (Assistant Professor of Cardiology, Consultant Interventional Cardiologist), Dr. Shaimim Bahram (Consultant, Infectious Diseases, Indus Hospital) including

local and foreign health experts spoke the event. While at the end of the seminar, a panel discussion was organized to answer the questions of the students. Dr. Anwar Ali, Dr. Afzal Qasim, Dr. Tariq Farman, and Dr. Afshan Kaleem were the guest speakers of the panel. Addressing the seminar, Dr. Zeba Haq said that there is a need to be careful in the use of antibiotic drugs and legislation should be enacted to prevent their unnecessary and frequent misuse. —DNA

AJK President lauds Khubaib Foundation's welfare work

MUZAFFARABAD: Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) President Barrister Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry while praising Khubaib Foundation (KF) for its unprecedented role and welfare work has said that it had been serving humanity worldwide. While talking to a delegation of Khubaib Foundation UK that called him here on Tuesday. The delegation was comprised of members of the British House of Lords and the British Parliament. Speaking on the occasion, the president while referring to the dire situation in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IIOJ&K) said that it was heartening to see that the KF was doing great job but it was high time that the foundation should focus

on the plight of Kashmiris in IIOJ&K and play its role to help stop bloodshed and violence in the region. Terming Kashmir as the biggest humanitarian issue, Barrister Sultan urged the visiting delegates to raise their voice in support of suffering humanity in Kashmir and play their due role in putting an immediate end to human rights violations being committed by the Indian troops. The president said that collective efforts were required to raise the issue of Kashmir effectively at international level. He said that the atrocities inflicted on Kashmiris in IIOJ&K and Indian tyranny have reached at their peak. He said that members of the British House of Lords and the British Parliament should

play their part and raise the issue at every important forum. Urging world community to play its role in resolving the lingering dispute, he said, "Kashmir is not a geographical problem, but it is all about the right of self-determination of the Kashmiri people", he added. On this occasion, the members of the delegation appreciated Barrister Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry's efforts to highlight the Kashmir issue at international level. The delegation included Lord Wajid Khan, Member of the British House of Lords, Lord Qurban Hussain, Member of the British House of Lords, Imran Hussain, Member of the British Parliament and Shadow Minister, Mirza Khalid Mahmood, Deputy Lord Mayor of Manchester,

Executive Chair of Regeneration and Environment Overview Committee Kamran Hussain, General Secretary Pakistan Press Club UK Arshad Rachiya, Chairman Overseas Pakistan Global Foundation Zahir Ahmed Mehr, Chairman Jammu and Kashmir Self-Determination Movement International Raja Najabat Hussain, Chairman Slack Asian Majid Nazir, President Khabib Foundation UK Ayman Majid, Vice President Khubaib Foundation UK Hamas Majid, Chairperson of Pakistan Organization of Worker Education and Rights America Tahira Muhammad, Nawabuddin, Syed Ali Kamran Kirmani, Chairman Khubaib Foundation Nadeem Ahmed Khan, Afzal Butt and others. —APP

Federal govt. will establish national compliance centre

PESHAWAR: The federal government would establish a national compliance centre (NCC) to develop a user-friendly online database for compliance related information and maintaining an inclusive repository of requirements of an international compliance. According to official documents, the proposed centre would help collaborate with an international standards organizations and economic blocs for obtaining desired information besides disseminating data regarding regular outreach activities including workshops, trainings and facilitate public-private sector dialogue for benefits of all provinces including Azad Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan. The centre would keep an effective liaison with the concerned institu-

tions, agencies and organizations pertaining to information sharing particularly in awareness campaigns besides developing capacity building and business development strategies and assist SMEs. The NCC secretariat's headquarter would be established in the ministry of commerce Islamabad while trade development authority of Pakistan (TDAP) and provincial TICs would serve as secretariats for provincial compliance centres (PCC) headed by the secretary commerce. NCC would be headed by Chief Compliance Officer reporting to a proposed steering committee headed by the secretary finance. Under NCC, eight compliance centres clusters have been identified for humans and labor rights, climate

change, governance and democracy besides quality assurance standards and sustainability etc. A comprehensive working paper along with presentations and contact details of the focal person for coordination had been prepared and all provincial governments including AJK and Gilgit Baltistan were invited to shared its relevant data and input by January 4, 2023 in this regard. The provinces were further requested to indicate any capacity's functions and resources for an establishment of NCC at provincial level and immediately identify human resources requirements for the proposed project. In case of no comments are received by January 5, 2023, it would be assumed that the respective ministries and departments are in agreement. —APP

FBR launches modules for facilitation of exporters

LAHORE: Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has developed and launched various modules for facilitation of exporters under Export Facilitation Scheme (EFS). Export modules were rolled out here at APTMA House by Nayyar Shafique, Collector Customs along with a team of technical experts, senior officers from Directorate General of Customs Automation and PRAL. Earlier on his arrival, Nayyar Shafique was welcomed by

Kamran Arshad, Senior Vice Chairman and Raza Baqir, Secretary General APTMA. The workshop was attended by a large number of APTMA members from all over the country. Nayyar Shafique said the FBR had developed various modules for smooth functioning of Export Facilitation Scheme for the facilitation of all categories of exporters including both direct and indirect exporters. He said the FBR attached greater importance

to export sector and a large number of officials were exclusively assigned the task to develop and roll out modules for ease in doing business. He said that a series of workshops would be organized to educate exporters about the newly developed modules and the modules to be rolled out shortly. The Collector explained salient features of modules which focused on facilitation for exporters and were easy to follow. —APP

1.35 mln patients receive treatment at HMC

PESHAWAR: Hayatabad Medical Complex (HMC), Peshawar treated 1.35 million patients in its Medical Teaching Institution (MTI), 390,000 in the Institute of Kidney Disease (IKD), and 60,000 in Burn and Plastic Surgery Center during the last year. The HMC Spokesperson on Tuesday said that more than 800,000 patients were brought to HMC's accident and emergency department, while 30,000 Afghans benefited from the health facilities at the hospital. Some 550,000 people received OPD while 40,000 people received treatment through Sehat Sahulat Programme, on which more than Rs 1280 million was spent. He informed 102,507 patients were admitted to HMC Peshawar for various medical facilities while more than 50,000

surgeries were performed, including more than 20,000 major surgeries. More than 30 percent of patients were referred to HMC from other hospitals of the province, including the private hospitals of Peshawar for better treatment. Apart from the Sehat Sahulat Programme, the hospital provided free medicines worth 400 million rupees during the year 2022, he added. Moreover, he said, for the convenience of the patients, the hospital administration established pharmacies within the operation theaters so that the medicines used during the surgery can be provided to the patient on the spot. In 2022, as in previous years, diagnostic services continued uninterrupted in the Radiology and Pathology Departments of the hospi-

tal and 9,574 MRIs, 19,731 CT scans, 165,965 different X-rays, 113,314 ultrasounds, and 2,017,962 different tests were performed, while 300 Afghan patients benefited from free radiology and pathology services. It may be noted that HMC is the only public sector hospital in the province to provide diagnostic facilities through 1.5 Tesla MRI machines and in 2022 advanced CT scans and 3D mammograms were installed to further improve diagnosis. Providing cardiology services during 2022, some 400 open heart surgeries, 4,428 angiographies, and 2,086 angioplasties were performed while the facility of heart link was introduced in CRC, via which the treatment facility is being provided to patients through a video link in Chi-

tral. Furthermore, 5 cath labs and modular operation theaters provided facilities to cardiac patients throughout the year. The IKD, being a specialized hospital for kidney diseases, facilitated 390,000 patients including 27,552 dialysis procedures. Similarly, 60,000 patients were treated in the Burn and Plastic Surgery Unit, of which 20,000 received burns treatment and 60,000 underwent plastic surgery services. A Complaint Management Service has been launched for the redressal of complaints regarding the Sehat Sahulat Programme, which received 1,300 complaints during the year which were resolved within 24 hours. In the year 2022, a Patient Facilitation Center was also established to provide one window facil-

ity to patients admitted for different treatments. HMC continued its journey of rapid success and the hospital got approval from the College of Physicians and Surgeons Pakistan (CPSC) to start post-graduate training in Neurology, Pulmonology, Cardiology, and Spine as sub-specialties. Furthermore, 234 doctors completed FCPS training in 2022. In order to continue the best medical services to the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, for the first time in the province, HMC is going to establish a specialized unit for stroke patients, apart from establishing a special accident and emergency department and an orthopedic center within the premises in 2023. —APP

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

JANUARY

Jan 01 / CUBA
Revolution Day

Jan 01 / Palestine
Palestine Revolution Day

Jan 01 / Sudan
National Day

Jan 04 / Myanmar
Independence Day

Jan 06 / Iraq
Armed Forces Day

Jan 12 / Tanzania
Armed Forces Day

Jan 14 / Uzbekistan
Armed Forces Day

Jan 15 / Nigeria
Armed Forces Day

Jan 20 / Mali
Armed Forces Day

Jan 20 / Laos
Armed Forces Day

Jan 25 / Thailand
Armed Forces Day

Jan 26 / Australia
National Day

Jan 26 / India
Republic Day



Hotels & Restaurants

Serena Hotel.....111 133 133

Marriott.....051- 2826121

Monal.....0334-5421812



Airlines

Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

Rescue (Police).....15

Bomb Disposal.....15

Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad.....1122 & 16

Emergency Ambulance..1122

& Rescue Services.4451122

Motorway Police.....9266044

Motorway Police..9270601-20

Women Police Stations Islamabad.....9222596

Rawalpindi.....9270601-20



Enquiry

Edhi Ambulance.....115

PIAFlightInfo.....114

PIA Cargo.....9280979

Railway Inquiry.....117

Railway Exchange9270831-5

WASA Rawalpindi..555489

CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

CMH.....5611111

MH.....561116

Cantt Hospital...9270907-11

DHQ.....5556311-4

RGH.....9290301-7

Holy Family.....9290322-7

PIMS.....9261170-79

Polyclinic.....9218300-09

Shifa International.4603666



Departments

CDA.....9221334-43

CDA.....9208301-04

Met Office.....9250360-6

RDA.....5555864

TMA.....5770886

Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Islamabad Metropolitan

Corporation.....9209224

Potohar Town.....9209224

Rawal Town.....5773343

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

No case of Omicron variant BF.7 detected so far in Pak

Based on observations, BF.7 is more contagious than other sub-variants of Omicron but less virulent. Infection with BF.7 has a much lower risk of hospitalization and severe Covid

ISLAMABAD: The National Institute of Health (NIH) on Tuesday clarified that no case of Omicron's sub-variant BF.7 is detected in Pakistan so far. According to the spokesperson of NIH, since its appearance, a total of 29 cases of XBB (Omicron) have been reported from Pakistan and made it clear that this is not the BF.7 variant which is spread in the neighboring country. Clarifying the news circulating about the new COVID variant, the spokesperson said that such news was not accurate as the reported variant in some areas of the country is XBB which is an old variant of Omicron. Based on observations, BF.7 is more contagious than other sub-variants of Omicron but less virulent. Infection with BF.7 has a much lower risk of hospitalization and severe Covid.

However, BF.7 infection can be severe in those with high blood pressure, kidney diseases, diabetes, or other comorbidities and in those aged over their sixties. According to health experts, BF.7 is a sub-lineage of the Omicron variant - the dominant variant circulating globally of the Sars-CoV-2 coronavirus. It has a 4.4-fold higher neutralization resistance than the original D614G variant. This means, in a

laboratory setting, antibodies from a vaccinated or infected individual are less likely to destroy BF.7 than the original virus first detected in the Chinese city of Wuhan in December 2019. This sub-variant also has a shorter incubation period and a higher capacity to cause reinfection or infect even those vaccinated. The XBB.1.5 variant of Covid is actually a sub-variant of XBB. It is made of a combination or say mutation of BA.2.75 and BA.2.10.1. BF.7 is a

BA.5.2.1.7 mutation of Omicron BA.5. The variant BF.7 has an R346T mutation in the spike protein of the virus and can evade antibodies originally derived from the Wuhan virus, particularly vaccines such as the Sinovac. The XBB.1.5 variant is said to be more dangerous as it is more contagious than BF.7 and its cases are 56% more than BF.7, XBB.1.5 scales up to 120 percent faster than BF.7 and XBB.1.5 is not only affecting the vaccine and the body's antibodies but also weakening it. The symptoms of BF.7 infection are similar to those of other Covid-19 variants, such as fever, sore throat, runny nose and cough. Some patients may also experience diarrhoea and vomiting. While the variant may not cause severe complications, early detection and isolation of cases is crucial, because it is spread more easily. - APP

Group show on print making goes on display

ISLAMABAD: A group show of print making by various artists was put on display here on Tuesday featuring works by national and international printmakers. The show titled "Etched and Inked" carries work of artists Aqeel Solangi, Atif Khan, Fatima Saeed, Irum Wani, Kate Bassett, Laila Rahman, Sameera Khan and Sarah Hopkins at Khaas Art gallery. "Etched and Inked", is an exhibition of group of innovative and established printmakers from UK, Denmark and Pakistan. It is focused solely on the art of printmaking. It builds a positive context whereby artists are involved in the dissemination of their art works and share their ideas with the public through the mediators of a gallery, stimulating a greater sentence and knowledge of Original Prints to larger audiences. - APP

ISLAMABAD: Secretary Senate, Muhammad Qasim Samad Khan exchanging views with Hamid Abbas Lafta, Ambassador of the Republic of Iraq at Parliament House Islamabad. - DNA

ICCI demands more lenient import policy to promote business activities

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Faad Waheed, Acting President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry has lauded the initiative of State Bank of Pakistan for relaxing some restrictions on imports and allowing imports pertaining to HS Code Chapter 84, 85 and certain items of Chapter 87 from 2nd January 2023, which would facilitate in improving manufacturing and business activities. However, he said that the economy of Pakistan needs to boost exports for which it is important

that the SBP should further relax import restrictions and adopt a more lenient import policy as many export-oriented industries have to import raw materials and intermediate goods to produce the finished products. He expressed these views while talking to a delegation of the business community. Group leader Khalid Iqbal Malik, Mian Shaukat Masud, Muhammad Ejaz Abbasi, Hamayun Kabir, Sheikh Muhammad Ejaz, Dr. Muhammad Usman, Faseeh Ullah Khan, Ashfaq Chatha, Khalid Chaudhry and others were in the delegation. Faad Waheed said that the

collection at the import stage contributes almost 50 percent of the total revenue collection. However, the restricted imports policy is badly affecting the tax collection of the country as the loss in revenue collection at the import stage varies while talking to Rs.30 billion to Rs.50 billion per month. He said that if the imports are not further relaxed, the contractionary policy will further impact the revenue collection in the coming months. He stressed that the SBP should take the major chambers of commerce and industry of the country including ICCI on board to

make further relaxations in imports so that the business activities can flourish and exports can be further increased to improve the meagre forex reserves of the country. Engr. Muhammad Azhar ul Islam Zafar, Vice President ICCI said that the FBR has missed its collection target for December by almost 24 percent i.e. Rs.225 billion mainly due to sharp drop in imports. It shows that the import contraction policy is not producing beneficial outcomes for the economy and emphasized that the SBP should consider making it more lenient to promote business and investment activities in the country.

CTP issues 204,339 driving licenses during 2022

RAWALPINDI: The City Traffic Police (CTP) Rawalpindi issued 204,339 driving licenses during 2022. According to a Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Rawalpindi Taimoor Khan, a total of 148,271 citizens got learner permits from the department while 12,190 applicants were issued new licenses besides 1751 international licenses during last year. He said that 37,221 driving licenses were renewed during the period besides 3337 of other districts of the province. He said that 838 citizens got duplicate licenses while 731 licenses were also endorsed. The four licensing facilities of the city including of CTP headquarters and six set up in 'Khidmat Marakaz' of the tehsils were providing all driving licensing services to the citizens. The CTP Licensing Branch had been directed to ensure merit and transparency, CTO said adding, the CTP were issuing computerized driving licenses under a transparent procedure. He said that in order to provide driving license facility to the residents at tehsil level, CTP had inaugurated driving license facilities in six tehsils of the district. The CTP Licensing Branch was providing all services under one roof at One Window Operation of CTP headquarters. He said that the citizens should directly contact the licensing branch of the traffic police and get all required information in this regard so that they could not face any difficulty regarding issuance of driving license. In case of any difficulty in getting driving license, the citizens could also contact CTP's help line 1915 and 051-9272616. The CTO informed that the driving license branch is corruption free and working in transparent way. To attain a learner permit or the driving license the applicant has to visit and get it from Rawalpindi driving license office in CTP Headquarters. If the applicant has the ID card with address of Rawalpindi district then he is eligible to get driving license from here. The CTP also offers the international driving license along the motorcycle, car, jeep, LTV, HTV and the PSV types of license. For an international driving license the applicant should have a passport and a valid visa stamp on it. - APP

USC consistent in providing subsidized items

Federal govt, under the PM Relief Package, has extended a historic subsidy through utility stores to customers registered with the Benazir Income Support Program whose poverty index score is PMT-32 or whose monthly income is RS.29,000 or less

ISLAMABAD: Utility Stores Corporation (USC) is consistent in providing subsidized items to general public under Prime Minister's (PM) Relief Package. Apart from the subsidy, special discounts are also being given on hundreds of other branded items available at the utility stores, said a press release issued here. The Federal government has announced a subsidy of billions of rupees under the Prime Minister's Relief Package through utility stores, keeping in mind the difficulties of the people.

This will not only reduce the hardships of the people but will also help in controlling the general market prices. The procedure of providing subsidy has been changed on all utility stores across the country. Now, the poor and the middle class people will get maximum share in this subsidy and it will provide relief to the deserving people/persons of poor, remote and backward areas. The Federal government, under the Prime Minister's Relief Package, has extended a historic subsidy through utility stores to

customers registered with the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) whose poverty index score is PMT-32 or whose monthly income is RS.29,000 or less. According to which all such consumers who are registered under the Benazir Income Support Program will be given Atta (flour) for Rs 400 per 10 kg, ghee for Rs 300 per kg and sugar for Rs 70 per kg. While 15 to 20 rupees per kg subsidy will be given on pulses and rice, which will be given under a comprehensive initiative and organized system.

Atta will be available at Rs 400 per 10 kg bag at the Atta sales points and mobile utility stores established for the poor people of remote and backward areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on the special orders of the Prime Minister. Thus, Utility Stores Corporation is also providing subsidy to common consumers under Prime Minister's Relief Package. In which Atta (flour) is available at Rs 648 per 10 kg, which is for Rs 980 to Rs 1200 per 10 kg in the open market, ghee is available at Rs 375 per kg which

is available at Rs 410 to Rs 440 per kg in the open market, thus sugar is being supplied at Rs 89 per kg whereas, in the open market sugar is available at Rs 95 to 105 per kg. Thus, these items are available at very low prices compared to the general market. Utility Stores Corporation continues to take necessary steps for timely delivery of cheap and quality goods to the public so that timely delivery of cheap and quality goods to the public at their doorsteps is possible without any hassle. - Agencies

Ahsan Iqbal for afresh curriculum

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives here on Tuesday underlined the importance of devising afresh comprehensive curriculum that would help produce analytical and creative minds to cope with the 21st century challenges. Addressing a roundtable conference here, the federal minister said that all the public sector universities, institutions of education and leading private schools do have potential to promote education, however there was need to develop the curriculum with consensus so that it may have an ownership. He said, the curriculum should lead towards producing creative and analytical minds and encourage critical thinking. He said, in this era of knowledge economy, intellectual capital power and brain power determine future of a nation. The minister deplored that currently we have lost the epistemology i.e observation and reason which is basics of education and knowledge. He said, the existing educational system does not encourage observation and reasoning and even teachers discourage students to question in the classes. He said, when this methodology was adopted in the past, Ibn e Sina, Ibn-e-Rushd and Al-Khwarizmi like people were produced, adding that had there been the concept of noble prize at that time, over 70 percent of those would have gone to Muslim intellectuals. He said, there was need to promote education that leads to creativity and innovation adding that the examination system also needed reformation. - APP

Imran firing accused 'passes' polygraph test

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Naveed, the accused of firing on PTI Chairman and former Prime Minister Imran Khan, underwent a polygraph test and the forensic report could not detect falsity of his statement. The Joint Investigation Team (JIT) investigating the assassination attempt received the polygraph testing report. The forensic science laboratory did not add its comment to the polygraph test and, according to sources, marked the report with "No Opinion" and forwarded it to the JIT. Besides Naveed, three other accused also underwent the polygraph test. Naveed in his statement had stated that he had carried out the attack on his own and nobody told him to do so, which has apparently been proved by the polygraph test report.

More public sector hostels in capital needed for women

ISLAMABAD: Working women and women with disabilities have demanded more public sector hostels in the federal capital to address their accommodation issues. Talking to APP, Shahida Zain, a working woman with disability said that the majority of working women in the federal capital have no option but to live in hostels already congested with little room and high prices. She said that "I had no other choice but to take refuge in a private hostel for which I have to pay lion's share of my salary. She said that apart from payment of a heavy amount, she has to face poor facilities like unhygienic environment, insufficient food and laundry issues combined with wash-rooms, privacy and security. Due to the lack of public sector accommodations, the private hostels have been charging heavily and exploit the situation to the fullest. Another working woman Zahra said that she has been searching for a public sector hostel for 3 years but she could not find one and she is compelled to live in a private room. She said that private hostels charge hefty amounts which some of the women cant afford. - APP

Briefs

Police arrest
7109 POs
in 2022

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi police arrested 7,109 proclaimed offenders (POs) wanted in different cases in 2022. According to a police spokesman, Police on the special directives of City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi Syed Shehzad Nadeem Bukhari launched operations against POs and court absconders and rounded up 7109 accused. He informed that Police also netted 637 gamblers during last year and registered 160 cases besides recovering Rs 3.6 million cash, 545 mobile phones, 70 motorcycles, vehicles and other items from their possession. Rawalpindi district police in their crackdown against fireworks dealers and violators of the Punjab Sound Systems (Regulation) Act arrested 456 and recovered a huge cache of fireworks items. He informed, district police also rounded up 25 dacoits wanted in dacoities committed in the jurisdiction of different police stations. 2690 FIRs were registered against drug smugglers and drug peddlers while 2537 accused were rounded up during last year, he said adding, 1280 kg charras, 22 kg heroin, four kg opium, 735 grams Ice drug and 13,000 liters liquor were also seized during different operations. Police in their crackdowns against illegal weapon holders nabbed 1885 accused and registered 1952 cases. —APP

Aviation
sector gets
Rs494.97
mln for 15
projects in 5
months

ISLAMABAD: The government has so far released funds amounting to Rs 494.97 million, under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP 2022-23) against a total allocation of Rs2,484 billion to execute 15 different projects and schemes aimed at ensuring improved aviation sector services in the country. Out of the total authorization/disbursement of Rs 494.97 million, around Rs366.25 million have been utilized on the aviation sector projects during a five-month period (July-November) of the current fiscal year, according to official data available with APP. As per the PSDP document, an amount of Rs 2.303 billion had been allocated for 10 ongoing schemes, out of which Rs 60 million were meant for construction of Airport Security Force Camp at Islamabad International Airport, Rs 29,871 million for building barrack accommodation for ASP personnel along with Mess and allied facilities, ladies rest room. —APP

Pakistan post
strives to
reduce delays
in postal
deliveries

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Post is striving hard to minimize delays in postal deliveries due to the foggy conditions prevailing in various parts of the country. The air and rail transit operations of Pakistan Post have been affected due to the foggy conditions prevailing in plain areas of the country for the last two weeks. "As a result of the current weather conditions across the country, our air and rail transit operations are adversely affected which might result in delayed deliveries at final destinations," said a statement issued by Pakistan Post. "We are working to keep these delays to a minimum and request cooperation and understanding from the customers of Pakistan Post". According to weather experts, dense fog will continue to prevail for the next few days in the plain areas of Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh. The foggy conditions have not only caused inconvenience and hazards for travelers but also impacted air and rail transit operations across the country. Pakistan Post is providing postal services in every nook and corner of the country through a network of around 13,000 post offices. Pakistan Post is providing delivery services to about 20 million households and businesses as community service without any cost considerations. —APP



ISLAMABAD: A motorcyclist selecting sunglasses from vendor at roadside in Federal Capital. —APP

Import restriction withdrawal
to revive Pakistan Economy

Local manufacturing is a clear direction to reverse Pakistan's economic woes. It is in the interests of both sides for more Chinese labor-intensive manufacturing factories to come to Pakistan to build joint ventures," Victor added

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Import restriction withdrawal will revive Pakistan's economy, said Moazam Ali, President of Pakistan-China Joint Chamber of Commerce & Industry (PCJCCI) in an interview with Gwadar Pro. He said, "Obviously many businesses rely on imports, and withdrawing the restrictions placed on imports will benefit both countries but need to be reviewed for lenient approaches for importers, keeping in view the current global economic situation." The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) on Tuesday notified its decision to withdraw the restrictions placed on imports with effect from January

2, 2023 to provide a relief for industries and businesses. Dealers may prioritize or facilitate imports under essential imports, energy imports, imports for export-oriented industries, imports for agricultural inputs, deferred payment/self-funded imports and imports for export-oriented projects nearing completion, the central bank said. Moazam Ali said Pakistan was facing low foreign exchange reserves but it decided to lift the ban in order to keep pace with world economies and trading bodies like the World Trade Organization. "These measures are necessary for a stabilized approach of imports and encouragement of in-house manufacturing. This step in the future will lead to less im-



ports, self sufficiency of small industries and then towards exports globally," he added. "Pakistan needs China's technological assistance to empower local industries. China can play a major role in this regard by granting budget-friendly and cheap technology resources," the president underlined. "PCJCCI is working to manage easily available sources for investors of both countries. In this regard, we recently signed an MOU

for Alternate Dispute Resolution. It will bring together the legal bodies of the two countries on one platform, providing legal information and solutions under one roof. Such initiatives are a step forward for better trading policies and I am hopeful that our economy will revive out of this situation very soon," the president said. Victor Luo, CEO of Sanlian International Company (Pvt) Ltd, which is engaged in China-Pakistan trade business, believes that the withdrawal of the restrictions placed on imports will considerably benefit trade between the two countries. "It would help maintain the country's credibility, strengthen foreign confidence, reassure the country's major factory traders, and solve the problem of a large number of

containers stuck in Karachi port for the past six months," he explained. He added that the key to the implementation of the policy is whether the administration can address the trade deficit, which is estimated about \$31 billion in fiscal year 2021-2022. According to his observation, demand in the current consumer market remains very strong, but the entire industrial sector has been very affected, with shortages of goods leading to a sharp rise in the prices of industrial products. "Local manufacturing is a clear direction to reverse Pakistan's economic woes. It is in the interests of both sides for more Chinese labor-intensive manufacturing factories to come to Pakistan to build joint ventures," Victor added.

China contributed over 23%
of FDI to Pakistan in 2022

DNA

ISLAMABAD: China has contributed over 23% of the total foreign direct investment (FDI) that Pakistan has received in the first five months of the ongoing fiscal year 2022-23, Gwadar Pro reported quoting Board of Investment (BOI). As the official statistics, in July-November 2022 (first five months of FY22-23), Pakistan received \$102.5 million in FDI from China which is 23.83% of the total \$430.1 million from all contributing countries. The



statistics show that China continued to be the largest investor and biggest trade partner of Pakistan. After China, UAE remains the second largest investor with \$81.6 million while FDI from the Netherlands, Switzerland, and Hong Kong remains at \$44.3 mil-

lion, \$22.7 million, and \$ 22 million respectively. In the first five months of the current fiscal year, Pakistan received \$13.3 million from the US. An FDI of \$133.6 million has come from the rest of the world. In FY 2021-22 Pakistan received \$531.6 million (28.46 % of the total) FDI from China while in FY 2020-21 despite the Covid pandemic Pakistan received \$751.6 (41.3%) million FDI from China. In Sector-wise FDI in July-Nov 22, the power sector received \$204 million followed by the financial

business and oil and gas sectors with \$141.1 million and \$40.2 million respectively. According to experts, since its launch in 2015, China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has remained a major stimulus for Pakistan to attract FDI. CPEC has laid a solid foundation for Pakistan's economic development. Now, when special economic zones (SEZs) under the umbrella of CPEC are established, they will attract more FDI for Pakistan in the near future not only from China but also from other countries.

Polythene bags
manufacturing
banned in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad District Administration has put a ban on the manufacturing of polythene bags within the limits of the federal capital in an effort to make city more environment friendly. The district administration has also banned the use of polythene bags in weekly markets rather a stall selling woven or biodegradable bags will be set up in every weekly market. According to Deputy Commissioner Irfan Nawaz Memon, all wholesalers have also been banned from selling polythene bags. "Although, biodegradable bags are expensive but reusable," he said. He further said that special instructions have been issued to all assistant commissioners regarding polythene bags ban. Moreover, there is a complete ban on polythene bags in big stores. He proposed that citizens should buy reusable cloth bags. —DNA

FGEHA reserves 75
plots for employees

ISLAMABAD: Federal Government Employees Housing Authority (FGEHA) has reserved around 75 plots for the employees of constitutional bodies in Park Road Housing Scheme in the federal capital. "Around 42 plots have been reserved in category-I of size 50x90 and 33 plots in category-II of size 40x80," official sources in the authority told APP. They said the number of plots as per specific approved quota had been reserved in the Park Road Housing Scheme for the registered members of constitutional bodies. The allotment in the FGEHA Housing Scheme at Park Road, the sources said, would be made in line with the age-wise seniority of members registered in membership drive-II. They said the first right of allotment was reserved in Sectors F-14/ F-15; while the remaining registered members would be accommodated in the Housing Scheme at Park Road as per available plots in the respective quota. Since there is litigation in F-14/ F-15, the sources said the quota was still to be finalized. After clearance of litigation and finalization of the layout plan of F-14/ F-15, the allotment to the employees of constitutional bodies in the housing scheme at Park Road would be made accordingly as per approved quota policy, they concluded. —APP

Rs 113.8bn for up-gradation
of gas transmission system

ISLAMABAD: The two state-owned companies, SNGPL and SSGC, are expected to spend over Rs 113.8 billion on the up-gradation of gas transmission and distribution systems in their respective operational areas across the country during the current fiscal year. "The gas companies have planned to invest Rs 27,669 million on transmission projects, Rs 77,484

million on distribution projects, and Rs 8,746 million on other projects bringing the total investment of Rs 113,899 million during the fiscal year 2022-23," according to an official document available with APP. The Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL) has planned to lay 9,605 kilometer transmission and distribution pipelines, while Sui Southern Gas

Company (SSGC) 1,102-kilometer pipelines to improve their efficiency and smooth supply of gas to domestic, industrial, and commercial consumers. The available statistics indicate that Pakistan has an extensive gas network with more than 13,513 KM transmission, 155,679 KM distribution, and 41,231 KM service gas pipelines to cater to the

requirement of millions of consumers. The number of consumers has increased from 10.3 million to more than 10.7 million across the country. The companies are also executing at least three strategic projects to supply gas to two Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and an industrial park in their respective areas to boost industrial production. —APP

NDMA holds NEOC session on Post-Flood situation

ISLAMABAD :The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) on Tuesday held a meeting at National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) here which was presided by Chairman NDMA, Lieutenant General Inam Haider Malik. The representatives from Ministry of Food Security, Ministry of Health Services, Pakistan Meteorology Department (PMD), National Highway Authority (NHA), National Information Technology Board (NITB), Provincial Disaster Management Authorities (PDMAs) and Irrigation departments of Gilgit Baltistan (GB) and Sindh participated in the meeting. However, the representatives from the PDMAs briefed the house on recovery and rehabilitation progress in their provinces

after Floods 2022. Sindh Irrigation Department informed that 95 percent flood water had been evacuated from Right and Left Bank of River Indus.

The PMD presented the weather outlook and stated that first week of January would remain frigid in most parts of the country, whereas, foggy condition in north

and east Punjab and frost in Islamabad, Potohar region, Upper KP and Kashmir was likely to prevail in the same period. The Ministry of Health and

Services updated the forum on construction of houses for lady health workers in Sindh. The NHA briefed the session on restoration of Lunda Bridge in Balochistan

and told that revised designing of structure had been completed and installation process was underway. The representative of Ministry of Food Security apprised of mustard and sunflower seed sowing in Sindh and stated that nearly 80 percent cultivation target had been achieved in lower Sindh. NITB informed NEOC about registration of farmers on digital application for provision of relief to flood-affected farmers. Chairman NDMA expressed satisfaction over the progress on recovery and rehabilitation efforts in flood ravaged areas. He instructed the relevant stakeholders to make coordinated efforts for speedy execution of restoration work in flood affected areas. —APP

Trains
punctuality
ratio
improves
from 63 to
80 percent

ISLAMABAD: The overall punctuality ratio of train services has improved from 63 to 80 percent owing to close monitoring by Pakistan Railways at divisional and ministry level.

"With the punctuality of trains and concrete measures taken by the present government in last nine months, the number of passengers have increased by over 20 million, which is ample proof of department's achievement," an official in the Ministry of Railways told APP. He said the punctuality of passenger trains, was around 60 percent during the tenure of previous government of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf which was now improving day-by-day on the directives of Minister for Railways Khawaja Saad Rafique. He official said the present government had taken several steps to end the deficit of department including introduction of RAAABTA an initiative towards enhanced customer facilitation. "RAABTA platform lets customers plan the trip, check train status, choose seat, purchase seat, order car rental, meals and refreshment, and book hotels," he added. To facilitate passengers, he said a mobile application Pakrail live has been launched for real time tracking of trains. The official said the high capacity/high speed hopper trucks have been inducted in the current fleet for swift movement/unloading of coal and new high capacity high speed rolling stock coaches and wagons are being procured. —APP

Govt releases
funds for
various water
resources
schemes

ISLAMABAD: The government has released an amount of Rs22,859.62 million for various water resources schemes under Annual Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) till November 2022. According to the data of the Planning Commission, the government has specified a sum of Rs 97,559.38 million for various projects in PSDP 2022-23. Out of total release amount, the local component stood at Rs 17,859.08 million while foreign aid component was 4,581.62 million. The Ongoing schemes included 13 hydel and 61 water sector projects, whereas the new projects were only 13 in total. The allocation of ongoing hydel projects included Rs 55,383 million for Dasu Hydropower Project (2,160 MW), Rs 12,083 Neelum Jhelum Hydropower Project (696 MW), and Rs 12,000 million for Tarbela 5th Extension Hydro Power Project (1,410 MW). Among the ongoing water sector projects, Rs 20,000 million each was allocated for Diamer Basha Dam Project and K-4 Greater water Supply Scheme (260 MGD), Rs 12,060 million for Mohmand Multipurpose Dam Project, Rs 7,000 million for Diamer Basha Dam Project (Land Acquisition and Re-settlement), and Rs 5,000 each for Nai Gaj Dam Project Dadu (Sindh) and Kaachi Canal Project (Phase-I) Dera Bugti, Naseerabad, Bolan and Jhal Magsi. —APP

ANF seizes
over 742 kg
drugs;
arrests 18

RAWALPINDI: Anti Narcotics Force (ANF) Pakistan seized 742.991 kg drugs and 0.650 kg suspected substance worth US\$ 19.15 million internationally, arrested 18 accused including a woman and impounded seven vehicles while conducting 21 counternarcotics operations throughout the country last week. According to an ANF Headquarters spokesman, the seized drugs comprised 56.57 kg heroin, 470.271 kg hashish, 24.15 kg methamphetamine (Ice), 192 kg opium and 0.650 kg suspected substance. ANF Punjab recovered 8.7 kg heroin and 0.650 kg suspected substance in four operations and arrested two accused involved in drug smuggling. ANF KPK recovered 178.959 kg drugs in six operations and arrested four persons involved in drug smuggling. —APP

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China-US ties in 2023

With the advent of 2023, whether China-US relations, one of the most important bilateral ties in the world today, can stabilize after the ups and downs in the past year has drawn worldwide attention. At the beginning of the New Year, Chinese Foreign Minister Ambassador Qin Gang held a phone conversation with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken in the US, expressing his hope to continue close working relations with Blinken for a better China-US relationship. In the past year, China-US relations reached the brink of danger. On the Taiwan question, Washington's insane "extreme testing" of China's bottom line, in particular the then House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's provocative visit to the island, has severely hit the political foundation of China-US relations and worsened the already fragile mutual trust between the two countries. In addition, Washington regards China as the "top strategic competitor," constantly stepping up sanctions against China in the economic and trade field, and implementing a "decoupling" policy in the high-tech industrial chain. In 2023, will there be a certain degree of rebound in China-US relations, or will the relations inevitably deteriorate or even collide? It is not difficult to find that recently there have been increasing discussions about the "time window" to stabilize China-US relationship, and there is also a view that there may be a "spring" to come in China-US relations this year. These claims themselves reflect certain expectations from the outside world.

However, such a "window of opportunity," even if in existence, is still very fragile, and this requires Washington to reflect. The political polarization and division in the US have formed huge challenges to China-US relations. Even if the Biden administration intends to step on the brake, but in the Capitol Hill where the more anti-China one is, the more attention one gets, a political mine could be detonated all of a sudden. Of course, China-US relations are facing many uncertainties, but one thing is certain, that is, China's stability will positively shape China-US relations. This kind of stability not only includes our attitude as a responsible major country, the certainty of our diplomatic principles and policies toward the US, but also includes China's insistence on "doing its own things well," realizing the development of comprehensive strength step by step, and allowing its own development closely intertwined with the tide of the times. In the face of many challenges, for the world to become better, major countries must set an example. Over the past year, we have unremittably explored the correct way for the two major countries, China and the US, to get along with each other and shown our utmost restraint and goodwill. In the new year, it is obvious that Washington needs to do more regarding how the two countries should correctly view each other's domestic and foreign policies as well as strategic intentions, establish the exchange tone of dialogues rather than confrontation and win-win rather than zero-sum mentality.

Afghanistan's suffering

The Taliban's relentless campaign against women is not only a matter of rights, but of survival. It is not only cruel and oppressive, but deadly. In a country already on its knees, where 97% of the population live in poverty, two-thirds need humanitarian assistance, 20 million face acute hunger and parents sell kidneys to feed their families, it has made life still more desperate. By banning women from working for NGOs, they are denying essential, life-saving services to women and children. Almost all the large aid agencies have suspended operations and the United Nations has paused some "time-critical" programmes. In many cases, these staff – who number in the tens of thousands – are also the only breadwinners in their households. Denying them their salaries ensures that women, children (and, incidentally, men too) will starve. The Taliban's earlier decision to bar women from universities – and reportedly even primary education – means that no more female doctors or teachers will be trained. Teenage girls have already been kept out of school for almost a year and a half. The Taliban strove to create the impression of a more moderate "Taliban 2.0" before their return to power, promising not to repeat the cruelties of the 1990s regime. But the new Taliban look more and more like the old one. If there are more moderate figures in the ranks, they are unable to prevail. Last month, there was the first public execution since their return to power. Women have been among those punished in public floggings. If the Taliban's priorities were not so horrific, they would be bizarre: this viciousness appears to be all they care about, despite the country's parlous state in every possible regard.

Relations with Islamabad are breaking down as cross-border attacks by the Pakistani Taliban (TTP) increase. In December, members of the TTP – separate to but allied with the Afghan Taliban – overpowered guards at a counter-terrorism facility in Pakistan and seized control. As the security situation deteriorates, Islamic State has claimed responsibility for attacks on the Pakistani and Russian embassies in Kabul. The Chinese ambassador ordered all nationals to leave the country after gunmen attacked a hotel used by Chinese businessmen.

In these grim times, women have demonstrated extraordinary courage and resilience in challenging the Taliban's harsh rule. Men have taken a stand beside them. They deserve not only admiration, but support. The UK did extremely poorly at evacuating Afghans before Kabul fell last year. As of early December, not one person had been accepted and evacuated under the Home Office's Afghan citizens resettlement scheme, which was launched in January for those at risk because they had worked for or were affiliated with the British government. Afghans, and especially those brave enough to challenge this regime, need more than words from the British government.

Heartland the theory of geopolitics

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



As it is said, the heart pumps blood from it to the rest of the body, to the fingers and toes. In the Heartland Theory, someone would gain power over Eastern Europe, and then his power would spread from there to cover the entire earth, like blood flowing to feed the rest of the body. Like the Heartland Theory, our bodies are susceptible to weapons that sometimes prevent the heart

The Heartland theory is a form of geopolitics. Geopolitics is politics influenced by geography. Since human geography is about how humans are affected by geography, we would say that geopolitics has a lot to do with Human Geography. This theory was proposed by Sir Halford Mackinder in his 1904 essay "The Geographical Axis of History". There is a lot to this theory and its importance, so let's describe some key terms: Heartland = Eastern Europe Area of the axis = area of the heart World Islands = Europe, Asia and Africa Periphery = rest of the world (including US) Keep in mind that major historical figures like Hitler believed in the Heartland Theory, and that theory was at the heart of politics in the World Wars, the Vietnam War, and the Cold War, no pun intended. Mackinder believed that whoever controlled Eastern Europe, the heart, would control the world. The idea was that whoever gained control of Eastern Europe would control the Heartland, also known as the Pivot Area, and whoever controlled the Heartland, would easily control the World Islands (Africa and Eurasia). Naturally, if one can control them all, one can easily rule the world. Eastern Europe has some of the greatest resources in the world in terms of raw materials and agriculture the basic ingredients you need to command a large army. A large army will gradually make it easier to conquer the rest of the world. It

sounds crazy, but the USSR has really tried it during the Cold War.

Previously, many believed that the conquest of the world would be through sea power, but this theory suggests that land power can lead to world power. Mackinder believed that after gaining control of the heart and all of its resources, one could easily gain an island world by controlling the coasts and warm-water ports or key areas that facilitated international trade. What about the rest of the world? Circle? USA? Well, Mackinder assumed that once the world island was under one power, the Americas and Oceania would quickly fall under that power. Now if this sounds also are crazy. Mackinder failed to account for many things that we take for granted as part of our everyday world, and it is these things that challenge his theory. In 1904, the wealth and military that Americans think of, the supreme power of the United States were not yet visible. This makes the idea of America's easy fall to the global power of the island more difficult than Mackinder thinks. Mackinder also does not see what kind of military technology it will have in the future, such as nuclear weapons, high-tech missiles, military aircraft, etc., which complicates any scheme to take over the world through the Heartland Theory. Perhaps that is why the Soviet Union and Hitler ultimately failed in their plans.

There is a question why Mackinder uses the word "heart" to describe Eastern Europe. Image of where Eastern Europe is on the map. Eastern Europe is like the upper middle part of Eurasia. The heart is in the upper part of your chest and also in the middle (but a little more on the other side). The heart also pumps much-needed blood to our bodies, and Eastern Europe has many good resources to feed an army because blood helps fuel our bodies. Without a heart, our bodies cannot continue to be fed by our minds. Think of your mind as the force that controls everything in your body, including what your heart does. Without controlling the heart, it was believed that one power could not control the entire world, in our example; the body carries on with this heart idea for a while.

As it is said, the heart pumps blood from it to the rest of the body, to the fingers and toes. In the Heartland Theory, someone would gain power over Eastern Europe, and then his power would spread from there to cover the entire earth, like blood flowing to feed the rest of the body. Like the Heartland Theory, our bodies are susceptible to weapons that sometimes prevent the heart from controlling the rest of the body, such as a nuclear bomb for the Heartland Theory. A single bullet to the heart is enough to challenge the idea that the heart is the result of a power higher than everything.

The unprecedented Crime

Under international agreements as well as customary law, assassination of foreign officials, official guests, or internationally protected persons is illegal and many countries around the world have criminalized it in their criminal laws. For instance, the United States Code of Crimes and Criminal Procedure in Section 1116 of Chapter 51 which includes crimes related to "murder" provides: "Whoever kills or attempts to kill a foreign official, official guest, or internationally protected person shall be punished as provided under sections 1111, 1112, and 1113 of this title". Furthermore, according to this Code, if the victim of an offense is an internationally protected person outside the United States, the United States may exercise jurisdiction over the offense if (1) the victim is a representative, officer, employee, or agent of the United States, (2) an offender is a national of the United States, or (3) an offender is afterwards found in the United States. Therefore, US courts have the jurisdiction to deal with the crimes of people who have violated this provision even outside the territory of the United States of America. Thus, with respect to the legal status of internationally protected persons under domestic and international laws, the assassination of a foreign official or official guest is not only an example of violation of the domestic law of most countries, but also any failure of courts to try the perpetrators of these crimes is a violation of anti-terror conventions, especially the 1973 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Crimes against Internationally Protected Persons, including Diplomatic Agents. In such a situation, the victim's government, in the capacity of asserting its rights, can

take action to try the perpetrators of such a crime in its domestic courts.

But the assassination of a foreign official by a government, often in addition to violating the domestic law, is also considered an international criminal act which will provide countermeasures for the victimized government. This is while the United Nations Charter, in order to prevent the occurrence of any war, has emphasized on principles such as the prohibition of intervention, the right to sovereignty and the non-use of force, as the fundamental and key concepts of international law and the foundations of this historical document. According to reports by the Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee, the main cause of terrorism is actions that lead to the violation of political independence, sovereignty and political integrity of countries, as well as the widespread and systematic violation of human rights. The United Nations General Assembly Resolution 40/61 explicitly condemns all acts, methods and methods of terror as a criminal act regardless of the perpetrator or perpetrators (state or non-state actor). Killing and terrorizing civilians as well as organizing and encouraging such brutal acts have always been condemned by the international community as gross violations of human rights, and all mandatory international documents confirm the statement that governments are obliged to avoid any form of participation in acts of terror either by inciting or organizing them. This is why the crime of assassination of a senior Iranian official and top anti-terror figure on January 3, 2020, by the United States is unprecedented and cannot be compared to any other assassination in the world. So far, no country's military in the world has assassinated a

foreign official, who is an internationally protected person, with drones and officially claimed responsibility for it. The US committed the first and most horrific and unprecedented crime in history.

The impropriety of America's action was such that shortly after this incident, Agnes Callamard, the special rapporteur of the United Nations, in her official report, called the US drone attack illegitimate and a violation of international human rights. She said, "This is the first time in history that a drone targets a foreign official on the territory of a third country. Targeting Soleimani will undoubtedly cause the international responsibility of the US government. This assassination shows that the American government does not even adhere to its own domestic laws; because with this action, it has practically violated its internal laws in accepting the right to life of people". It is worth noting that US is the only covenant-breaking country in the world which is an indication that this country holds no respect for its domestic law as well international commitments. The assassination of Iran's top anti-terror commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, in addition to violating the provisions of international agreements and customary law that the United States is committed to fulfilling, is also an example of violating the domestic law of crimes and criminal proceedings of this country. Based on this, any failure and procrastination of the US government in not prosecuting the perpetrators behind the terror will not only result in the international responsibility of this government; rather, according to international documents, it will place Iran in the position of demanding and fulfilling those rights in any possible way.

Abbas Ali Kadkhodaei

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Briefs

Govt unfurls new plan to save energy

FROM PAGE 01

Khawaja Asif said a campaign will be launched on print, electronic and social media to create awareness amongst the people about the energy conservation plan. He said all government offices would buy energy-efficient gadgets and unnecessary use of electric appliances would be discouraged in these places. Kh Asif said that the cabinet created a precedent in this regard and held today's meeting in daylight. While propounding the energy plan, he said that everywhere in the world markets open and close early. But the situation in Pakistan is other way round, he added. He held that we should make maximum use of daylight. He announced that the government has decided to put a ban on the use of common electricity bulbs and 'we can save Rs22 billion in this way'. He said the government was mulling banning all extra energy-consuming gadgets. He said that the government has also decided to introduce electric motorcycles as motorbikes are consuming Rs3 billion oil annually. The defence minister said water rates will be reviewed in order to ensure the conservation of water. He said building control authorities will bring necessary reforms in by-laws of housing societies to ensure efficient use of water. The federal cabinet also approved reduction of maximum retail price of 20 medicines to provide relief to the common man. Khawaja Asif said the FBR has been directed to publish a separate tax directory of the parliamentarians.

PM directs Covid-19 vaccination of children

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the whole nation was thankful for the countries which had donated vaccines to Pakistan. The prime minister said the decline in the ratio of COVID infection was pleasing but "we have to be alert all the time." He appreciated the efforts by the NCOC and other relevant office bearers for containing the spread of COVID. During the meeting, the prime minister was briefed about the current COVID situation, new variants, ongoing efforts, and the status of vaccination. It was told that Pakistan apparently faced no threat from the new variant as almost 90% of the population was fully vaccinated and 95% partially vaccinated. Around five million children of 5-12 years of age have been vaccinated which was 25% of the total strength and the target of full vaccination would be achieved within the next few months. The meeting was told the infection ratio of 0.2 to 0.5% average was reported in the country. The participants of the meeting were told that an effective mechanism was in place at the borders to contain the spread of COVID. Moreover, the ratio of random sampling at the airport has been increased to 2% besides ensuring the fumigation of the planes coming from the affected countries. It was told that Pakistan was among very few countries where genomic surveillance of COVID has been introduced to ensure early detection of the new variants. The prime minister also appreciated the efforts by the NCOC, the officers of the Ministry of National Health Services and the officials of Civil Aviation to contain the spread of the virus.

Afghan govt upset over 'provocative statements'

FROM PAGE 01

the situation and avoid issuing baseless and provocative statements," he said, adding that such statements and an atmosphere of mistrust are not in the interest of any party. The Afghanistan government does not only give importance to peace and stability inside the country but in the entire region, the Taliban spokesperson said and vowed that his country would continue its efforts in this regard.

Haq anchors Pakistan after NZ pile on 449 in second Test

Haq drove Bracewell towards mid-wicket and saw Azam stranded at his end attempting a third run. But Haq took charge with his seventh half-century — even as Shakeel needed 42 balls to get off mark at other end

DNA

KARACHI: Opener Imamul Haq anchored Pakistan with a pugnacious half-century as the home team reached 154-3 at the close on Tuesday after New Zealand piled up a handy 449 in their first innings of the second Test in Karachi. At the close of day two, Haq was unbeaten on 74 and Saud Shakeel 13 as the home team need another 96 runs to avoid the follow-on. Pakistan started chaotically, losing opener Abdullah Shafique (19), Shan Masood (20) and skipper Babar Azam (24) before the Haq-Shakeel stand added 55 runs for the unbroken fourth wicket. In contrast, New Zealand's tail wagged furiously, with Matt Henry (68 not out) and Ajaz Patel (35) both scoring Test-bests as they added an invaluable 104 runs for the last wicket. The two-match series is tied after the first Test, also in Karachi, ended in a draw. The National Stadium pitch offered little to the bowlers, but Pakistan did themselves no favours by having skipper Azam, the team's best batsman, run out. Haq drove Bracewell towards mid-wicket and saw Azam stranded at his end attempting a third run. But Haq took charge



with his seventh half-century — even as Shakeel needed 42 balls to get off the mark at the other end. Earlier, Shafique was the first Pakistan wicket to fall when he pulled pacer Henry's short delivery straight to the hands of Ajaz Patel and Masood gave a catch off Patel. Henry and Patel had combined earlier to lift New Zealand from 345-9. Henry smashed eight boundaries and two sixes in his knock, improving his previous high against Australia at Christchurch in 2016 by six runs. Patel also bettered his previous Test-best of 20 — against England last year — before he was the last wicket to fall, caught off spinner Abrar Ahmed. Naseem took the day's first wicket when he bowled Ish Sodhi for 11 with a ball that cut through sharply. Blundell, who was 30 overnight, reached his fifty with a boundary and a single off Ahmed. He hit six boundaries in his 51 before being bowled by Ahmed. The spinner then had Tim Southee stumped for ten, before Henry and Patel prolonged the innings, helping New Zealand cross the 400-mark. Ahmed was the pick of the bowlers with 4-149, while Naseem Shah (3-71) and Agha Salman (3-75) were the other successful bowlers.

Raducanu makes winning start to 2023 with victory in Auckland

AUCKLAND: Emma Raducanu made a winning start to 2023 with victory over teenager Linda Fruhvirtova in her opening match at the ASB Classic in Auckland. Emma Raducanu's latest coach Sebastian Sachs wore a slightly pained look at the side of the court as he watched her scrap to a three-set victory in her opening match of 2023. Was Sachs frowning because Raducanu needed four hours — including a couple of rain breaks — to dispatch 17-year-old Czech prodigy Linda Fruhvirtova? Or is that just the way he looks? We will find out over the coming weeks. Overall, Sachs should have been pleased with the way Raducanu applied herself here — and particularly with her aggressive intent. This was the main takeaway from her 4-6, 6-4, 6-2 win: that she appeared to have taken a New Year's Resolution to impose herself more. Raducanu served unexpectedly quickly — with one delivery reaching 111mph — and increasingly stepped up to receive Fruhvirtova's slow second serves from well inside the court. She came to the net from time to time and went after her forehead, using it to strike the majority of her winners. These are all basic enough strategies, but it



should be remembered that Raducanu's game was accused of lacking identity last season by no less an expert than the seven-time grand slam champion Mats Wilander. In 2022, she was often passive in big matches, waiting for things to develop rather than proactively forcing the play. And while this was hardly the grandest of stages — a first-round outing at a WTA 250 event in Auckland against a developing teenage talent — it was still good to see Raducanu looking to be so positive. Raducanu's can-do attitude was particularly important after a poor start in which she dropped the first set and then found herself trailing 2-0 in the second. Speaking afterwards, she said: "I was like, you need to stop this and just pick it up, like be more aggressive and swing more freely. 'It's always difficult playing your first match of the year, so it was always going to be a little bit of a challenge, especially with the conditions. I was loving the support. I felt like everyone was behind me and I absolutely loved it. Some moments it was tricky in the score and I would hear a young kid say, 'Come on Emma', and I was like, 'Come on, let's go'." Standing further from the court, Raducanu began to pile pressure onto Fruhvirtova's shaky second serve. By the end of the match, she had won two-thirds of those "second return" points — which ended up being the difference. — DNA

FIA wants more teams to enter Formula One

LONDON: Formula One's governing body is ready to start a process for new teams to enter the championship, president Mohammed Ben Sulayem said on Monday. The move could open the door to American Michael Andretti's Andretti Global F1 project, which has so far met little encouragement from most existing teams and Formula One management. Hong Kong-based billionaire Calvin Lo has also talked of entering a team. "I have asked my @F1 team to look at launching an Expressions of Interest process for prospective new teams for the FIA @F1 World Championship," International Automobile Federation (FIA) head Ben Sulayem posted on Twitter. US-owned Haas are the most recent completely new Formula One team to enter, debuting in 2016 when the sport had 11 teams until the demise of Manor Racing before the start of the 2017 season. Manor were one of three new outfits, all now defunct, who entered in 2010. Formula One chief executive Stefano Domenicali said last September that the sport, which could have a record 24 races this year and is growing in global popularity, did not need more than 10 teams. — DNA

Murray loses to Korda in Adelaide International

ANDY Murray's first match of 2023 ended in a straight-set loss to American Sebastian Korda in the Adelaide International. The Briton, 35, ranked 49 in the world, 16 places below his opponent, was beaten 7-6 (7-3) 6-3. Murray had recovered from a break down in the opening set to force a tie-break but Korda, 22, took control of that and went on to dominate the second set. Murray's fellow Briton Kyle Edmund also exited the tournament on Tuesday. Edmund, who is ranked 582 in the world but was using a protected ranking to enter the event after a series of injuries, lost 6-3 6-2 to Italian sixth seed Jannik Sinner. Earlier, Novak Djokovic swept to victory over France's Constant Letienne in his first singles match on Australian soil since being deported a year ago. The Serbian 21-time Grand Slam winner was given a warm welcome when he played a losing doubles match on Monday and

"If I have to pick one country where I've had the most success, which treated me in the best way in terms of tennis, it's here, definitely"

received similar treatment on a packed centre court in his 6-3 6-2 win. "For the first match I can't complain, I played very well," said the 35-year-old, who is now the world number five and will be seeking a record-extending 10th Australian Open men's singles title later this month. "Thank you all for coming out today. Thank you for giving me the welcome that I could only wish for. "If I have to pick one country where I've had the most success, which treated me in the best way in terms of tennis, it's here, definitely." Djokovic was deported before the 2022 Australian Open because of his Covid-19 vaccination status but his three-year visa ban was overturned in November, allowing him to enter the country. Russian Daniil Medvedev, who lost to Djokovic in the 2021 Australian Open final and was beaten by Rafael Nadal in the Grand Slam decider 12 months ago, saved nine set points on his way to a 7-6 (8-6) 2-1 win over Italian Lorenzo Sonego, who retired injured. — DNA

Liverpool's defensive nightmare continues

Yoane Wissa doubled Brentford's lead and although Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain got one back, Bryan Mbeumo wrapped up Brentford's first victory against Liverpool since 1938

DNA

LONDON: Liverpool crashed to a shock 3-1 defeat against Brentford as a series of defensive blunders damaged their bid for a top four finish in the Premier League on Monday. Jurgen Klopp's side endured a nightmare start to 2023 and they had only themselves to blame for the horror show in west London. Ibrahima Konate's first half own goal set the tone for an evening scarred by mistakes at the back from Liverpool. Yoane Wissa doubled Brentford's lead and although Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain got one back, Bryan Mbeumo wrapped up Brentford's first victory against Liverpool since 1938. In his first appearance since playing in France's World Cup final defeat against Argentina in December, Konate took a large share of the blame for Liverpool's woeful defensive performance. But the centre-back was far from alone in deserving criticism for a Liverpool display that left them in sixth place, four points behind fourth placed Manchester United who play their game in hand against Bournemouth on Tuesday.



Although seventh placed Brentford are on a six-game unbeaten run in the league, including an impressive win at champions Manchester City just before the World Cup, it was still surprising to see Liverpool torn apart so easily.

Darwin Nunez, signed from Benfica for £64 million last year, was another poster-boy for Liverpool's struggles. The 23-year-old had 13 shots without scoring in his previous two league games and was out of luck again in the early stages

at the Brentford Community Stadium. Mohamed Salah's superb pass unhinged the Brentford defence and Nunez looked certain to end his barren run when he rounded David Raya. But Ben Mee scampered back to clear his

shot off the line as Nunez held his head in disbelief. Mbeumo went close with a blistering strike that Alisson Becker turned away for a corner. It was only a temporary reprieve for Liverpool as Thomas Frank's team went in front from the resulting set-piece in the 19th minute. Mee tried to flick on but it was Konate who got the final touch as the ball ricocheted off his knee and squirmed past the wrong-footed Alisson. Liverpool were fortunate to avoid more set-piece misery when Wissa struck from close-range after the Reds made a hash of clearing a corner, only for an offside call to deny Brentford. Klopp's side failed to heed the warning and Wissa was left unmarked to drill home from yet another dangerous corner before an offside flag against Mee once again spared Liverpool's blushes. In disarray at the back, Liverpool were unable to deal with Brentford's aerial threat and Wissa finally got on the scoresheet in the 42nd minute. Mathias Jensen's cross picked out Wissa and the Congo forward got in front of Trent Alexander-Arnold for a header that just crossed the line before Alisson could claw it out.

Russian fury grows over Ukrainian strike

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Ukraine and some Russian nationalist bloggers have put the Makiivka death toll in the hundreds, though pro-Russian officials say those estimates are exaggerated. Rallies to commemorate the dead were held in several Russian cities, including Samara, where some came from, RIA Novosti news agency reported. Mourners laid flowers in the centre of Samara. "I haven't slept for three days, Samara hasn't slept. We are constantly in touch with the wives of our guys. It's very hard and scary. But we can't be broken. Grief unites ... We will not forgive, and, definitely, victory will be ours," RIA quoted Yekaterina Kolotovkina, a representative of a women's council at an army unit, as telling one of the rallies. The strike on Makiivka came as Russia was launching what have become nightly waves of drone attacks on Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in his nightly video address that the attacks were aimed at "exhausting our people, our anti-aircraft defences, our energy".

Bilawal hits out at Imran...

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He said floods had caused massive destruction in the country, adding that it had happened nowhere in the world a large part of the country came under water. "The floodwater is still accumulated in many areas. The places where the floodwater has drained there is destruction everywhere," he stated. "There is still a lot of work to be done for the flood-hit people. We are making great efforts for the rehabilitation of the flood victims," he added. Bilawal also stated that he had presented Pakistan's stance on climate change before the world, adding that the Sindh chief minister had started measures even before the flood. "We are taking a \$2 billion loan from the World Bank for the rehabilitation of the flood-hit people. We have the data of the flood victims, and the loans will be given on merit," he declared.

'Tough decisions' crucial...

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Today, the country's industries are shutting down," Khan said, highlighting that the nation is afraid of seeing the country's direction. He claimed that around 750,000 Pakistanis had left the country in the last eight months. Khan also stressed the need for increasing the country's exports. "For 30 to 40 years, we did not consider increasing exports. Pakistan won't be able to stand on its feet for as long as the exports don't increase. When I met exporters, they informed me about the obstacles," the PTI chairman revealed. Circling back to his demand for elections in the country, the former prime minister said: "The economy is linked to politics. It cannot improve without political stability." He said that elections were the only solution to get the country out of the economic crisis. "The election is necessary to end instability. No matter what initiative is being taken, the election is the only solution," the PTI chief said.

PTI white paper...

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indicators including exports, remittances, foreign direct investment and others have deteriorated since the coalition government came into power in April last year. Due to the shortage of dollars and depreciation of the rupee, hundreds of workers have been rendered unemployed as industrial units were forced to shut down their production plants, it added. Moreover, it said the agricultural sector also suffered due to "unwise actions of the government". The PTI further said that Pakistan has to pay back \$127 billion dollars in external debt, of which largest loan was from the IMF and 37 per cent of Pakistan's total GDP would be spent on servicing this debt.

Briefs

Greek Communists rule out coalition with Syriza

ATHENS: The Communist Party of Greece (KKE) on Monday ruled out the possibility of forming a "progressive coalition" as urged by the main opposition Syriza party. The last time Syriza called for a government that would oppose austerity measures dictated by the European Union and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), it formed Greece's most establishment friendly government ever, KKE general secretary Dimitris Koutsoumpas said in an interview with the Ta Nea daily. Koutsoumpas claimed that when it comes to "serving the EU, the interests of the capitalist class and the privatization of public properties and land," Syriza as well as the center-left PASOK party pursue policies very similar to those of the ruling conservative Nea Dimokratia (ND) party. He added that the Greek working class would never forgive the party's participation in such a coalition. Referring to the ongoing war in Ukraine, he said "Ukraine, and more specifically its people, has become a punching bag between Russia, the US, China, the EU, and NATO under the responsibility of its ruling class and the Zelensky government," referring to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. —DNA

Tanzania lifts 6-yr ban on opposition rallies

DODOMA: Tanzania's president Samia Suluhu Hassan has lifted a ban on opposition rallies imposed in 2016 by her strongman predecessor, in an overt move to political rivals seeking the restoration of democratic traditions. "According to our laws, it is the right of political parties to hold their public meetings... my presence today in front of you is to give permission... that the announcement to prevent public meetings is now lifted," local news outlet ITV, reported Hassan as saying on Tuesday. The ban was proscribed by former President John Magufuli in 2016 during his first term. Initially meant to apply to all political parties, critics said it targeted only the opposition. In 2018, the Magafu- lised government passed a law forcing bloggers, social media influencers and online platforms to apply for a licence and pay a one-time fee of \$930 to keep their sites up. Three years on, Hassan took office after the death of Magufuli who was nicknamed "The Bulldozer" by many who said he curbed free speech and targeted dissidents. The incumbent president is constitutionally serving the remainder of Magufuli's second five-year term, which ends in 2025. She has also been accused of carrying on with Magufuli's authoritarian tendencies. —DNA

Snow shortage in the Alps amid high temperatures

PARIS: Much of the Alps does not look right for this time of the year, with sparse snowfall and unseasonably warm weather allowing grass to blanket the European mountain range. The lack of snowfall on mountain tops has caused headaches for ski slope operators and admirers of Alpine white. Patches of grass, rock and dirt were visible on Monday in some of Europe's skiing meccas – like Innsbruck in Austria, Villars-sur-Ollon and Crans-Montana in Switzerland, and Germany's Lenggries. The near absence of snow has renewed worries about the impact of abnormal seasonal temperatures linked to climate change. On a swath stretching from France to Poland, many parts of Europe are currently enjoying short-sleeve weather. The mercury in Poland hit double-digit daily highs, topping 10 degrees Celsius in recent days. Swiss state forecaster MeteoSuisse pointed to some of the hottest temperatures ever this time of year. A weather station in Delemont, in the Jura range on the French border, already hit a record average daily temperature of 18.1 degrees Celsius on the first day of the year. —Agencies

Khan, Abrar, Jamil become goodwill ambassadors for Niaz

He further said "PWDs who are provided with unprofessionally designed wheelchairs develop disability over time, and that is the absence of hope. They lose hope in the system; they lose hope in their lives. I am privileged and honored to be part of this initiative and we are trying to spread the word so that all of us together can help and make lives better of those in need

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Niaz announced that Squash Legend Mr. Jahangir Khan, renowned Singer-Songwriter, Philanthropist & Politician Mr. Abrar-ul-Haq and Country Head Siddiqi Hospitality, Former Minister of State, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister & Chairman PTDC Mr. Azam Jamil would be the Global Goodwill Ambassadors for Niaz. NIAZ, meaning gift, is a self-sustainable social enterprise to enable the world to gift with a purpose. It is an initiative to transform lives of persons with disabilities by providing them customised wheelchairs to fulfill their daily functional goals and improve the quality of life. Tailoring a wheelchair to individual needs and body measurement provides them independence in the area of self-care, mobility and posture management. Founder Niaz Mr. Hussain Odhwani said, "No occasion gift can be more precious than gifting a life-



JAHANGIR KHAN

ABRAR-UL-HAQ

AZAM JAMIL

line to a person with disability. We've begun this journey with customised wheelchairs, working with certified engineers who apply design and customisation based on the individual needs and body measurement. We will endeavour to continue

our research and development of other products serving disability needs." He added, "I am truly honored and thankful to our Honorable Goodwill Ambassadors to join us and be part of this noble journey to transform lives of persons with disabilities." Speak-

ing on the occasion Mr. Jahangir Khan said, "Not much attention is paid towards the disabled community in our country. They are provided with an ordinary patient wheelchair that is not according to their body. Hence, it further deshabes and damag-

es the body in longer run." Mr. Abrar-ul-Haq said, "Niaz has not only highlighted the issue faced by persons with disabilities but also provided its solution. PWDs spend 16-18 hours on a wheelchair that is not according to their measurement. I strongly believe that this is a very noble cause and people should come forward to support it." Mr. Azam Jamil highlighted that the number of disabled persons in Pakistan is staggering. These are in millions and multiple of millions. Most of them are confined to a wheelchair for the rest of their lives. He further said "PWDs who are provided with unprofessionally designed wheelchairs develop disability over time, and that is the absence of hope. They lose hope in the system; they lose hope in their lives. I am privileged and honored to be part of this initiative and we are trying to spread the word so that all of us together can help and make lives better of those in need.

Israeli far-right minister Ben-Gvir defies warnings to visit Al-Aqsa

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM: Israel's far-right National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir defied warnings from local and Palestinian politicians as he visited the Al-Aqsa mosque compound in Jerusalem on Tuesday. The visit prompted fierce condemnation from the Palestinians, several Arab countries and even several Israeli politicians amid warnings it could lead to violence. "The Temple Mount is open to all," Ben-Gvir said on Twitter, using the Jewish name for the site. Video footage showed him strolling at the periphery of the compound, surrounded by a heavy security detail and flanked by a fellow Orthodox Jew. An Israeli official said the 15-minute visit by Ben-Gvir, a top member of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's nationalist-religious cabinet, complied with a so-called status-quo arrangement dating back decades that allows non-Muslims to visit on condition they do not pray. He did not approach the mosque. Although the visit passed without incident, it

risks stoking tensions with Palestinians that have already been running high after an upsurge in violence in the occupied West Bank in the past year. Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh called on Palestinians to "confront the raids into Al-Aqsa mosque." He accused Ben-Gvir of staging the visit as part of a bid to turn the shrine "into a Jewish temple." Israel denies having such designs. Ben-Gvir once advocated ending a ban on Jewish prayer at the site but has been more noncommittal on the issue since aligning with Netanyahu. Other members of his Jewish Power party still advocate such a move. The rise of Ben-Gvir in Netanyahu's government, one of the most right-wing in Israel's history, has deepened Palestinian anger about their long-failed efforts to secure a state. Hours before the visit, Israeli troops shot dead a Palestinian teenager in a clash in nearby Bethlehem, medical officials and witnesses said, the lat-

est in a growing death toll in the West Bank. Israel's army said troops fired on Palestinians who threw improvised explosives, rocks and firebombs at them. A spokesman for Hamas, a Palestinian group that rejects coexistence with Israel and which controls Gaza, said of Ben-Gvir's visit: "A continuation of this behavior will bring all parties closer to a big clash." Al-Aqsa is a symbol of Palestinian hopes of securing a state, a goal that looks ever bleaker with Ben-Gvir and other far-right allies now in Netanyahu's government. U.S. ambassador to Israel, Thomas Nides, "has been very clear in conversations with the Israeli government on the issue of preserving the status quo in Jerusalem's holy sites," the embassy said in a statement, adding that "actions that prevent that are unacceptable" without elaborating. Jordan, the custodian of Al-Aqsa and whose peace deal with Israel is unpopular at home, criticized the visit, saying it had violated inter-

national law and "the historic and legal status quo in Jerusalem." Turkish Foreign Ministry also condemned the visit and urged Israel "to act responsibly to prevent such provocations that would violate the sanctity of the region and cause tensions to escalate in the region." "We are concerned and condemn the provocative action of Israel's Minister of National Security Itamar Ben-Gvir against Al-Aqsa Mosque under the protection of the Israeli police. We invite you to act responsibly in order to prevent such provocations," the ministry said in a statement. Egypt and United Arab Emirates (UAE), which are among the few Arab states to have recognized Israel, also condemned the visit. Saudi Arabia, with which Netanyahu wants to forge a peace deal, also criticized Ben Gvir's action. Earlier Monday, Israel's opposition leader and former Prime Minister Yair Lapid had warned that such a visit by Ben-Gvir would spark violence. —Agencies

Turkish FM assures Syrian opposition over talks with regime

ANKARA: Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu said talks with the Syrian regime will be conducted first on a ministerial level, adding it was premature to plan a "presidential-level" discussion between Türkiye and Syria. He also reassured the Syrian opposition about concerns regarding the impact of the normalization of ties. The minister was speaking to reporters on his way home from Brazil where he attended the inauguration of that country's new president and a wake for footballer Pele. The minister said officials talked to representatives of the Syrian opposition both at his ministry and at the National Intelligence Organization (MIT) and that he was scheduled to hold talks with them later on Tuesday. "We won't have a normalization process or discussions with (the Syrian regime) amid objections from the Syrian opposition. Türkiye is also a guarantor country for the opposition," he said. On his upcoming talks with his Syrian and Russian counterparts, scheduled to be held in Moscow, he said they would not be "available" on the date proposed by Russia and they were working on new dates. "We have preparations to do for the meeting. We are conducting joint work to turn issues discussed between intelligence organizations and at the level of the Defense Ministry into concrete steps. Thus, we will not have a single meeting or an all-day meeting," he said. The minister noted that the Syrian opposition has long been engaged in negotiations with the regime, pointing to the Astana process and talks in Geneva, "although they failed to reach a conclusion." "We will always exchange views with the Syrian opposition before any political talks with the regime," he said, noting that the current process with the regime was "not against (the interests) of the opposition." He also denied comments that Türkiye would compromise with the regime and forcibly send Syrian refugees back to Syria. "It is out of the question. Certainly, there may be returns, but they will be safe and dignified and returnees should be provided with the necessary means. Therefore, engaging the United Nations in this process is crucial. European Union countries affected by migration should also be engaged in this process," he said. Çavuşoğlu said engaging with the regime was necessary for the safe and secure return of Syrian refugees from Türkiye as well as other neighbors of Syria and other regional countries agreed upon this as well. —APP

Iranians across country pay tribute to Gen Soleimani

TEHRAN: Iranians across the country have paid homage to their hero General Haj Qassem Soleimani, a world-renowned anti-terror commander who was assassinated by the US in 2020. People gathered in the southeastern city of Kerman, General Soleimani's hometown, to pay tribute to the iconic commander. Similar ceremonies were also held in the Iranian capital, Tehran, and other cities, including Esfahan, Yazd, Birjand, Rasht, Shah-e Kord and Arak. General Soleimani, commander of the Quds Force of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), and his Iraqi trenchmate Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the second-in-command of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), were martyred along with their companions in a US drone strike on January 3, 2020. The strike near Baghdad International Airport was authorized by then-US president Donald Trump. Days after his martyrdom, the anti-terror icon's body was transferred to Iran and was laid to rest in his hometown of Kerman. The two noted anti-terror commanders were tremendously respected and admired across the region for their instrumental role in fighting and decimating the Daesh Takfiri terrorist group in the region, particularly in Iraq and Syria. In a Monday statement, Iran's Foreign Ministry said the assassination of the country's top anti-terror commander is a "glaring example of an organized terrorist act." "Indubitable as it is, the criminal act of assassinating General Soleimani, designed and executed by the United States, constitutes yet another glaring example of an 'organized terrorist act'," the statement said. —APP

'Majority' of EU wants tests on passengers from China

BRUSSELS: An "overwhelming majority" of the EU's 27 member countries want passengers coming from China to be systematically tested for Covid before departure, the European Commission said on Tuesday. The consensus recommendation emerged from a meeting of EU health ministry officials held Tuesday in Brussels. A crisis meeting to be held Wednesday on the issue will decide what coordinated measures will be applied across the bloc. The gatherings were called in the wake of China deciding to lift its "zero Covid" policy, which has sparked massive demand for flights to other parts of the world by Chinese citizens and residents who had been grounded for nearly three years. The European Union fears a sudden influx of passengers from China could bring Covid variants that may be able to evade current vaccines. There are also concerns that China's data on infections is incomplete, partial and insufficient. "The overwhelming majority of countries are in favour of pre-departure testing," a commission spokesman said after Tuesday's meeting. EU health commissioner Stella Kyriakides said the officials also agreed to recommend stepped-up monitoring of wastewater from flights and at airports to detect traces of Covid, and for member states to

boost surveillance. She emphasised the need for EU "unity" at the meeting to take place on Wednesday. Several EU countries including France, Spain and Italy have already imposed testing requirements on arrivals from China pending a bloc-wide approach. Beijing has reacted angrily to the increased restrictions, which are also being applied by the United States, Japan and Australia. China has only recorded 22 Covid deaths since December and has dramatically narrowed the criteria for classifying such deaths – meaning that Beijing's own statistics about the unprecedented wave are now widely seen as not reflecting reality.

Data compiled by the World Health Organization, upon which the EU relies, shows no fresh Covid figures from China for over a week. Earlier Tuesday, the commission said an "offer stands" for the EU to provide Covid vaccines and expertise to China. A spokesman said Kyriakides had repeated the vaccine offer recently and that any supply of them was dependent on Beijing's reaction. Many EU countries have a surplus of mRNA vaccines – especially the one made by BioNTech/Pfizer – that scientific studies have shown to be more effective against severe Covid than the inactivated-viruses ones China has developed and uses. — APP

Dialogue on peace treaty with Tokyo 'impossible'

MOSCOW: The Russian deputy foreign minister on Tuesday said dialogue between Moscow and Tokyo on a peace treaty is "impossible" due to Japan's "anti-Russian course." "It is quite obvious that it is impossible to discuss the signing of such a document with a state that takes openly unfriendly positions and allows itself direct threats against our country," Andrey Rudenko said in an interview with Russian state news agency TASS. Rudenko said Moscow does not see signs of Tokyo moving away from its "anti-Russian course" and does not see any attempts to correct the situation. The diplomat recalled that negotiations between Russia and Japan were taking place on a peace treaty "designed to determine the main directions for the accelerated development of the entire complex of Russian-Japanese relations." "With the start of a special military operation in Ukraine, (Japanese Prime Minister Fumio) Kishida's administration actively joined the Western-led Russophobic campaign, in fact, completely dismantling the results of mutually beneficial cooperation accumulated over many years," Rudenko said. Tokyo has joined its Western allies in sanctioning Moscow for its "special military operation" in Ukraine, with hundreds of Russian officials, including President Vladimir Putin, alongside companies and organizations, having been sanctioned by Japan. Last October, just a week after a Japanese political affairs consul was declared persona non grata by Moscow, Tokyo asked a consul in Russia's consulate in the northern Japanese city of Sapporo to leave the country. —DNA

Türkiye and Bulgaria ink natural gas agreement

SOFIA: Türkiye and Bulgaria on Tuesday signed an agreement for the transmission of up to 1.5 billion cubic meters of natural gas a year. The new deal covers a 13-year period, said Turkish Energy and Natural Resources Minister Fatih Donmez visiting the capital Sofia, hosted by his Bulgarian counterpart Rossen Hristov. Donmez added that such cooperation would contribute greatly to the natural gas supply security of Europe, along with Bulgaria. The gas deal was signed between the two countries by the general managers of the Turkish Petroleum Pipeline Company (BOTAS) and Bulgargaz. The deal comes a month after both country leaders and energy ministers met in Istanbul. —APP

China criticises 'unacceptable' new Covid rules

BEIJING: Beijing has slammed the recent decisions of 12 countries requiring passengers flying in from China to have a negative Covid test 48 hours before their flight. "We believe that the entry restrictions adopted by some countries targeting China lack scientific basis, and some excessive practices are even more unacceptable," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said at a daily briefing on Tuesday. "We are firmly opposed to attempts to manipulate the Covid measures for political purposes and will take countermeasures based on the principle of reciprocity," she said. Italy, France, the United States and Japan are among those implementing the testing requirement. However Germany has said it would not impose a test rule but instead would seek a coordinated system to monitor variants across European airports. The decisions were taken as a result of the explosion in the number of cases in China following the abrupt reversal of the country's zero Covid policy. Following the repeal, hospitals across China, including Shanghai, are seeing a large increase in the number of Covid patients. Countries like the US have justified their decision, citing China's lack of infection data transparency and new variant risks as a reason for imposing the mandatory testing. —APP

S. Korea, US discuss nuclear planning amid North threat

SEOUL: South Korea and the United States are discussing joint planning and implementation of U.S. nuclear operations to counter North Korea and hope to conduct a tabletop exercise soon, officials from both sides said Tuesday. The plan came amid South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol's push to strengthen American extended deterrence – the U.S. military capability, especially its nuclear forces, to deter attacks on its allies – since taking office in May, in the face of evolving North Korean threats. In a newspaper interview released Monday, Yoon said the allies are discussing joint nuclear planning and exercises and that would help clear doubts about the extended deterrence, with its existing concept "falling short of convincing" South Koreans. "In order to respond to the North

Korean nuclear weapons, the two countries are discussing ways to share information on the operation of U.S.-owned nuclear assets, and joint planning and execution of them accordingly," Yoon's press secretary, Kim Eun-hye, said in a statement. A senior U.S. administration official said both sides are looking at enhanced information sharing, joint contingency planning and an eventual tabletop exercise following a request from their presidents after a meeting in Cambodia in November to explore ways to address North Korea's threats. But the official noted regular nuclear exercises would be "extremely difficult" because South Korea is not a nuclear power, echoing the comment from U.S. President Joe Biden that the allies were not discussing such activities. "This is going

to be done through a variety of ways, including as President Yoon said, through enhanced information sharing, joint planning and expanding the range of contingencies that we plan for, as well as training, and with the idea eventually leading up to a tabletop exercise," the official told Reuters. The timing of the planned tabletop exercises has not been finalized, but they would take place "in the not-too-distant future" and cover scenarios including nuclear situations, the official said. "The idea is to also try and make sure that we're able to fully think through the range of possibilities based on the DPRK capabilities which they've demonstrated, as well as their statements," the official added, using North Korea's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. A National Se-

curity Council spokesperson said in a statement that the United States is committed to providing extended deterrence and that the allies are working on "an effective coordinated response to a range of scenarios, including nuclear use by North Korea." When asked about the tabletop exercises, a spokesman for South Korea's Defense Ministry said talks were underway but declined to provide details. The two countries have revived consultations on extended deterrence this year after a yearslong hiatus amid North Korea's increasing nuclear and missile capability. Pyongyang defined South Korea as an "undoubted enemy" and vowed to beef up its nuclear arsenal this year, after firing a record number of missiles in 2022 and fuelling tension by sending drones into the South in December. "The U.S. countermeasures

have not kept up with the North's advancing nuclear programs, and the extended deterrence strategy is almost no different from when their nuclear capability was insignificant and weaker," said Go Myong-hyun, a research fellow at the Asan Institute for Policy Studies in Seoul. But Kim Dong-yup, a professor at Kyungnam University, said the comment from Biden, who has sole authority to authorize the use of U.S. nuclear weapons, suggests an American reluctance to share nuclear operations, given their sensitivity and security concerns. "Given growing voices for tactical nuclear weapons, Washington could try to give reassurances and send more nuclear assets when we want, but they're unlikely to fully materialize President Yoon's push for greater extended deterrence," Kim said. —Agencies

Briefs

Cabinet slashes drug prices by 30 percent

DNA

ISLAMABAD: On the recommendation of Federal Health Minister Abdul Qadir Patel, the federal cabinet on Tuesday approved a cut in the prices of 20 medicines. According to the Health Ministry spokesperson, the prices of most of the medicines have been decreased by 30 per cent. On the occasion, Abdul Qadir Patel said that the decrease in the prices of medicines used against various diseases was another step towards providing relief to the people.

"The prices of medicines used against blood pressure, cancer and eye diseases have been reduced. An approval has also been given to fix the prices of 54 new medicines," he added. "The PTI government increased the prices of medicines by 700 per cent," he deplored. "Ensuring uninterrupted supply of quality medicines for the welfare of the people is our top priority," he stated. On the other hand, upon a letter from the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) for opening Letters of Credit (LCs) for importing raw material for manufacturing medicines, former Pakistan Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association (PPMA) chairman Qazi M Dilawar Mansoor said that \$30 to \$40 million should be allocated for the pharmaceutical industry on the pattern of Sri Lanka. "In view of the increasing value of dollar, the prices of medicines should be increased by 40 per cent," he demanded.

PML-N tries to artificially control rupee value: Tarin

DNA

LAHORE: Former Finance Minister Shaukat Tarin claimed on Tuesday that the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) was trying to artificially control the rupee value. Speaking of the economic situation during the PTI-led government, Mr Tarin said, "We were witnessing growth by getting dollars. When we headed to Saudi Arabia, former premier Imran Khan hesitated to ask the KSA for money. Going back to the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, Mr. Tarin said, "Imran was concerned about the situation of daily wagers, if a complete lockdown in the country could have been imposed." Expressing satisfaction with the IMF programme during his tenure, Mr Tarin said, "When we deal with the IMF in a good way politically, the IMF does not give us a tough time." Commending his party chairman, Mr. Tarin said, "Imran never begs from anybody."

Imran must issue white paper on his 'evil deeds'

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Tuesday said instead of pointing a finger at others Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan should better introspect and issue a white paper on the corruption, loot and wrongdoings during his four-year misrule. The minister, in a media talk, rejected the white paper issued by the PTI on the current economic situation, saying those who had pushed the country to the brink of default should be ashamed of themselves for their own "misadventures".



"This is not the white paper rather a record of Imran Khan's own evil deeds which were already being exposed every other day," she said, asking the PTI chief to apologize to the nation for rendering a lot of countrymen unemployed, unleashing extreme inflation, taking record foreign loans and ruining the national economy during his govt from 2018 to April 2022.

The white paper seemed to be an attempt on his part to hide his "sinister deeds", but it would not help legitimize his "family corruption", she added. "Imran Khan should stop staging dramas as the people fully know about his corruption, wrongdoings, loot and plunder, and conspiracies against the country," the minister said.

Marriyum accused Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi of "doing black magic". Their "evil deeds" had put the country on the verge of default. She said the economic growth rate was at 6 percent, with inflation at the lowest level, the China Pakistan Economic Corridor in full swing and terrorism fully wiped out when the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's (PML-N) previous government completed its tenure.

Pakistan, she added, was progressing at a fast pace and was self-sufficient in energy resources, with wheat flour being sold at Rs 35 per kilogram and sugar at Rs 52 per kg in 2018, but the situation got worsened when a "fascist, propagandist and incompetent person" was imposed on the country. The minister said Imran Khan should have issued a white paper on the performance of his government, which was marred by a negative growth rate, high inflation, diplomatic blunders, corruption, and incompetency. Whether he would let the people know about the worst economic situation of the country from 2018 to April 2022, she asked.

Israeli minister's holy site visit angers Palestinians

A spokesman for the Palestinian militant Islamist group, Hamas, which governs the Gaza Strip, called it a "crime" and vowed the site "will remain Palestinian, Arab, Islamic"

MONITORING DESK

OCCUPIED WEST BANK: Palestinians have condemned a visit to a contested holy site in Jerusalem by a far-right Israeli minister as an "unprecedented provocation". National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, who has called for a harder line towards the Palestinians, walked around the site surrounded by police. Competing claims to the compound bitterly divide Israel and the Palestinians. Tensions have risen with the advent of Israel's new nationalistic government. Mr Ben-Gvir's visit was his first public act since the government, led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, was sworn in five days ago. The hilltop site is the most sacred place in Judaism and the third holiest in Islam. It is known to Jews as the Temple Mount, site of two Biblical temples, and to Muslims as Haram al-Sharif, the site of Muhammad's ascent to Heaven. The entire compound is

considered to be al-Aqsa Mosque by Muslims. Jews and other non-Muslims are allowed to go to the compound but not pray, though Palestinians see visits by Jews as attempts to change the delicate status quo. Mr Ben-Gvir, leader of the Otzma Yehudit (Jewish Power) party, has long said that he wants to bring about a change to the rules to allow Jewish worship at the site. There is no indication that Mr Ben-Gvir prayed during Tuesday's visit. "The Temple Mount is open to everyone," he tweeted, accompanied by a photograph of him surrounded by a security cordon with the golden Dome of the Rock in the background.

Ahead of November's election, Mr Ben-Gvir said that he would demand that Benjamin Netanyahu introduce "equal rights for Jews" there. However, Mr Netanyahu has sought to reassure Israel's allies that he will not allow any changes. A clause in his coalition deals states that the status quo "with regard to the holy places" will be left intact. Mr Ben-Gvir was given the go-ahead for his

first visit since becoming a minister after consulting Mr Netanyahu and security officials. Following the 15-minute walkaround, the Palestinian foreign ministry denounced what it described as "the storming of al-Aqsa mosque by the extremist minister Ben-Gvir and views it as unprecedented provocation and a dangerous escalation of the conflict". Palestinian Prime Minister Muhammad Shtayyeh called for "thwarting the raids that aimed at turning the al-Aqsa Mosque into a Jewish temple", saying Mr Ben-Gvir's visit was "a violation of all norms, values, international agreements and laws, and Israel's pledges to the American president".

A spokesman for the Palestinian militant Islamist group, Hamas, which governs the Gaza Strip, called it a "crime" and vowed the site "will remain Palestinian, Arab, Islamic", AFP news agency reported.

Jordan, one of a small cluster of Arab countries to formally recognise Israel, summoned Israel's ambassador in protest. In his tweet, Mr Ben-Gvir sent a message

of defiance to Hamas, declaring: "No Israeli government that I'm a member of is going to bow to a despicable and murderous terror organisation... and if Hamas thinks that I'll be deterred by its threats, it needs to accept that times have changed and that there's a government in Jerusalem."

Tensions between Israel and Palestinians which escalated into violence at the site in May 2021 saw Hamas fire rockets towards Jerusalem, triggering an 11-day conflict with Israel. A visit to the site in 2000 by Israeli right-winger Ariel Sharon, then opposition leader, infuriated Palestinians. Violence which followed escalated into the second Palestinian uprising, or intifada. The Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif is the most sensitive site in Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Situated in East Jerusalem, it was captured by Israel from Jordan in the 1967 Middle East war. Under a delicate set of arrangements, Jordan was allowed to continue its historical role as custodian of site, while Israel assumed control of security and access.

Strike-hit UK faces first rail stoppage of 2023

LONDON: UK rail staff disrupted the New Year return to work on Tuesday in the latest strike action by workers in a range of sectors over the worst cost-of-living crisis in a generation. Workers across the economy are at loggerheads with the government as they demand big pay rises to cope with decades-high inflation, currently running at nearly 11 percent. Normally bustling London train stations were quiet on Tuesday – the first normal working day of 2023 after the New Year break.

Network Rail, which operates the UK's rail infrastructure, warned travellers of "significantly reduced" train services or no services at all in some areas until Sunday. Five days of strike action beginning on Tuesday were to include two 48-hour strikes by around 40,000 members of the RMT union. – APP

British couple killed in chopper crash

WEB DESK

LONDON: The British victims of a mid-air collision between two helicopters on Australia's Gold Coast have been named. Diane Hughes, 57, and her 65-year-old husband Ron were from Neston, Cheshire. They got married last year and were on holiday, Queensland Police said. Their pilot and another passenger also died in Monday's crash, which happened as one helicopter was taking off from a sandbar and the other was landing. Three others, including two children, were badly injured and are in hospital. In a statement to Australian news outlet 7NEWS, Mr Hughes' daughter Jane Manns said: "Our family is heartbroken and we are still trying to contact friends and family to let them know."



ISLAMABAD: Leader of Awami National Party Mr. Aimal Wali Khan calls on PM Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Federal Minister for Defence, Khawaja Muhammad Asif is also present. – APP

Actresses slam character assassination attempts

ISLAMABAD: On Monday, actor Sajal Aly put up a tweet that left some fans confused. Many thought the aforementioned tweet was just some unfiltered thoughts on possibly the misogyny several female stars often face in the industry. "It is very sad that our country is becoming morally debased and ugly," the Mom star had shared. "Character assassination is the worst form of humanity and sin." Soon after Sajal, actor Kubra Khan, too, shared a message where she shared similar sentiments as her peer, however, the Sange-Mar-Mar star was more stern in making her stance known. "I stayed quiet initially because obviously a fake video isn't going to take over my existence but enough is enough!" she shared. "If you think that any random person can just point his finger at me and I wouldn't respond, then you are terribly mistaken." Her calling out propelled many to dig deeper into the matter. Over the weekend, an ex-Army major claimed in a YouTube video that several 'actresses and models often stayed at ISI safe houses and were 'used' by former senior officials, according to the officials' closed aids.' Adil Raja further alleged that several politicians were also invited and several videos were purportedly recorded as well. He went on to claim that the anonymous sources shared that four prominent actors were involved. While Adil didn't fully name the actors he accused of, he took the initials of their names. "First one is MH, second is MK, third is AK (in another video, it sounds like KK) and fourth is SA. I don't want to insinuate something and it is painful for me to share this information with you. God as my witness, you can see how torn I feel about this." – DNA



PM, UAE President vow to further diversify ties

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and President of the United Arab Emirates Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan on Tuesday reiterated their mutual commitment to further expand and diversify special bilateral relations between Pakistan and the UAE. During a telephonic conversation, the prime minister thanked the UAE president for the financial and material support to Pakistan after the recent devastation caused by climate-induced floods in Pakistan. PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. The prime minister briefed him on

the upcoming 'International Conference on Resilient Pakistan', to be held in Geneva on January 9 and solicited his support for high-level participation from the UAE. President Sheikh Mohamed expressed UAE's wholehearted support for the initiatives to strengthen Pakistan's climate resilience which is the main agenda of the conference. The PM also reiterated an invitation to the UAE president for a visit to Pakistan. "Pakistan and the UAE enjoy close fraternal ties for five decades that are rooted firmly in common belief and shared values and culture. UAE is Pakistan's largest trading partner in the Middle East and a major source of investments," the press release further added.

Young woman's horrific death shocks India

NEWS DESK

NEW DELHI: The gruesome death of a 20-year-old woman in India's capital Delhi on 1 January has shocked the country. News reports say the woman, who was an event manager, was returning from work in the early hours of New Year's Day when her scooter collided with a car.

Police say the driver of the car, which was carrying four other passengers, kept going for miles, dragging the woman's body along. Several CCTV videos have emerged that show the body underneath the car. Road accidents are common in India - and kill hundreds of thousands of people every year - but this particularly horrific case has gained national attention and generated widespread media coverage. The Indian Express newspaper reported that the woman's body was pulled along the road for almost an hour, and that witnesses made at least five calls to the police before it was located. That this occurred at New Year - when thousands of policemen had been deployed to patrol Delhi's roads - has only added to the questions around the case.

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