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Sarfaraz Ahmed hits ton as Pakistan hold NZ to a draw

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PTV Virtual studio to help bridge tech gap

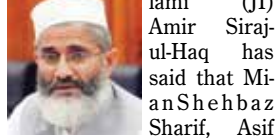
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Briefs

Shehbaz, Khan, Zardari dangerous

DNA

GUJRANWALA: Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Amir Siraj-ul-Haq has said that Mi-an Shehbaz Sharif, Asif Ali Zardari, and Imran Khan are more dangerous for the country than an atom bomb of the enemy.



Addressing a JI workers' convention in Gujranwala on Friday, he said the three political party heads have pushed the country towards inflation and destruction. He said the nation is ready for any kind of sacrifice, but before that, the assets of Shabbaz Sharif, Asif Zardari, and Imran Khan should be sold. "These people are above the law. Courts and NAB are unable to deal with them." Siraj-ul-Haq said the people of Balochistan are neither terrorists nor against CPEC. "Balochistan is burning and the people who came out for their rights were shot by the police." He added negotiations should be held with the deprived people of Balochistan. JI Amir said the federal government is planning to sell the institutions that are the backbone of the country.

Attempts being made to kill Khan

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Awami Muslim League (AML) chief Sh e h e k h Rashid Ahmad has alleged that the PML-N-led coalition government was trying to kill PTI chief Imran Khan by giving him "slow poison".



"They hatched a plot to kill Imran Khan... first they [government] said Imran Khan was not hit by bullets then did your father's firecrackers hit him?", he said while lashing out at the PDM leaders. Rashid made these remarks on Friday while addressing an "anti-inflation protest rally" outside his Lal Haveli residence in Rawalpindi. "Now they are conspiring to eliminate Imran Khan through slow poisoning as they don't want to contest elections against him," he added.

Holiday Notice

The offices of daily Islamabad POST shall remain closed on Saturday on account of weekly off therefore there will be no newspaper on Sunday. - Editor

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Imran, Elahi face off ahead of trust vote

PTI chief warns Punjab CM over his decision against taking trust vote before January 11



SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

LAHORE: As the date for the trust vote draws closer, an apparent rift emerged between Punjab's ruling allies - Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) - over Chief Minister Parvez Elahi's vote of confidence. PTI Chairman Imran Khan has tasked the party's senior leaders to ensure that the provincial chief executive takes a vote of confidence before January 11, but CM Elahi has ruled it out, saying that Punjab Governor Baligh-ur-Rehman's order for the trust vote is "illegal". PTI Senior Vice-President Fawad Chaudhry has said that the party wants the chief minister to take the trust vote before January 11 as the Lahore High Court (LHC) will resume hearing Elahi's petition against his dismissal as the chief minister on the day - and the coalition

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PTI decides to hit the streets again

ABID RAZA

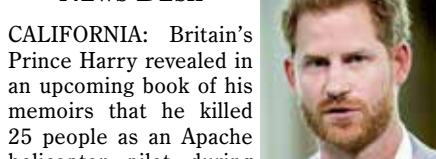
LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has decided to hit the streets again as it has decided to give tough time to the PDM-led federal government, ARY News reported on Friday. As per details, Imran Khan has become active to give tough time to the federal government. The former prime minister has asked the party leaders to protest against the government. The PTI leaders have been directed by former prime minister Imran Khan to devise a narrative on the increasing inflation, economic condition and early elections in the country. Imran has also hinted to attend the protest movement. Apart from this, the PTI will continue its door-to-door campaign. The local leadership has been directed to fill at least 1,000 forms in every UC of Punjab.

Continued on Page 06

Prince Harry reveals he killed 25 in Afghanistan

Says he viewed those he killed as 'chess pieces' to be taken off board

NEWS DESK



CALIFORNIA: Britain's Prince Harry revealed in an upcoming book of his memoirs that he killed 25 people as an Apache helicopter pilot during his second tour in Afghanistan. Prince Harry's claim in the book, titled Spare, which will be available at bookstores in the UK next week, came as the book's Spanish version was accidentally put on sale in Spain. The Duke of Sussex, who has stepped down from his royal duties and left the UK with his wife Meghan Markle, flew during the war in Afghanistan and his missions resulted in "the taking of human lives." He reportedly said in the book that he was neither proud nor ashamed of the killings as he described those killed as "baddies" who tried to kill "goodies." Prince Harry did not think of the 25 killed as "people" but as

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Taliban criticise Prince Harry

DNA

KABUL: The Taliban on Friday slammed Prince Harry after the royal disclosed he killed 25 people on military duty in Afghanistan and said it was like removing "chess pieces" from a board. AnasHaqqani, a senior Taliban leader, criticised the Duke of Sussex over the remarks, saying those Harry killed were Afghans who had families. "Mr Harry! The ones you killed were not chess pieces, they were humans," Haqqani tweeted, accusing the prince of committing "war crimes". "The truth is what you've said; Our innocent people were chess pieces to your soldiers, military and political leaders.

Continued on Page 06

Signs of fighting as Russian unilateral truce kicks off

It's bad, very bad. We need to pressure them, get them to leave, maybe more air defence systems would help

AGENCIES

KYIV: Artillery fire could be heard from the front line in Ukraine on Friday, even after the official start of a unilateral ceasefire declared by Moscow and rejected by Kyiv. President Vladimir Putin ordered the 36-hour ceasefire from midday on Friday to observe Orthodox Christmas. Kyiv has said it has no intention to stop fighting, rejecting the purported truce as a stunt by Moscow to buy time to reinforce troops that have taken heavy losses this week. Russia's defence ministry said its troops began observing the ceasefire from noon Moscow time (0900 GMT) "along the entire line of contact" in the conflict, but said Ukraine kept up shelling populated areas and military positions. One witness in the Russian-occupied regional capital Donetsk, close to the front, described outgoing artillery fired from pro-Russian positions on the city's outskirts after the truce was meant to take effect. In the hours prior, rockets slammed into a residential building in the Ukrainian city of Kramatorsk close to the eastern

frontline, damaging 14 homes but with no casualties, the mayor said. Residents described several explosions. "It's bad, very bad. We need to pressure them, get them to leave, maybe more air defence systems would help. This happens often, not only on festive occasions. Every other day," said Oleksandr, 36, outside a supermarket at the time of the attack. One rescue worker was killed and four others injured after Russian forces shelled a fire department in the southern Ukrainian city of Kherson before the deadline early on Friday, the regional governor said. Reuters could not immediately verify this. Putin ordered the 36-hour ceasefire in the 10-month-long war in a surprise move in Thursday, saying it would run through to the end of Russian Orthodox Christmas on Saturday. But Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy rejected the ceasefire out of hand as a ploy for Russia to buy time. "They now want to use Christmas as a cover, albeit briefly, to stop the advances of our boys ... and bring equipment, ammunition and

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: CEO SK Hydro presenting a cheque of One Hundred Thousand US Dollars to Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif for the flood victims. - DNA

Food prices push weekly inflation to 30.6pc

PBS showed inflation rose 1.09pc week-on-week

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Short-term inflation measured by the Sensitive Price Index (SPI) reached 30.6 per cent year-on-year in the week ending on January 5, up from last week's 29.3pc, as food prices continue to remain high. Data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) on Friday showed inflation rose 1.09pc week-on-week. It had fallen slightly by 0.09pc in the previous week. The SPI monitors the prices of 51 essential items based on a survey of 50 markets in 17 cities across the country. During the week under review, the prices of 23 items increased and nine decreased while 19 remained unchanged. Pakistan has been in the grips of high inflation in the past few months.

Continued on Page 06

PM says IMF team will visit Pakistan to finalise 9th review

Says Pakistan would try its best to fulfil the terms of the IMF deal

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said on Friday that a delegation from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) would travel to Pakistan in two to three days to finalise the ninth review of Pakistan's \$7bn Extended Fund Facility (EFF). He made the remarks while addressing the inaugural ceremony of Hazara Electric Supply Company (HESC) in Islamabad. Pakistan entered a \$6 billion IMF programme in 2019, which was increased to \$7bn last year. The programme's ninth review, which would release \$1.18bn, is currently pending. It had earlier been put off for two months due to the PML-N-led government's unwillingness to accept certain conditions placed before it by the Fund, and the disagreements have yet to be resolved. During his address, the premier said he had spoken with International Monetary Fund (IMF) Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva last night (Thursday) regarding Pakistan's agreements with the international money lender.

Continued on Page 06

Terrorists cannot demoralise determination

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has said that miscreants and terrorists cannot demoralize the determination of the Pakistani nation. While chairing a meeting to review the security situation in the country held in Islamabad on Friday, the Prime Minister said the nation would not hesitate to make any sacrifice for the safety of the beloved country. "We will not hesitate in rendering any sacrifice for the defence of the motherland," he said and emphasized on enhanced collaboration among all the provincial and federal agencies to curb the recent wave of terrorism.

Continued on Page 06

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Saadhay 14 August: All set to bring laughter to Islamabad

ISLAMABAD: Saadhay 14 August is all set to begin performances in Islamabad after successfully finishing 100 shows in Karachi. The play, which has been written by the eminent Anwar Maqsood and directed by Daawar Mehmood, was able to gather audiences from all walks of life, and individuals of all ages and genders. It drew packed houses from the first performance until the very last.

The famous play will be performed for the first time in Islamabad on January 7, 2023. The play, Saadhay 14 August which features some of the most well-known national figures from both the past and present, is a part of the trilogical series that was first staged as Pawanay 14 August, ten years ago. The series' final chapter, Saadhay 14 August commemorates its conclusion. The play's legendary writer, Anwar Maqsood states "This series is really close to my heart and was made while keeping something positive while also considering the current plight of the nation. We expect that Saadhay 14 August will receive the same level of support in Islamabad as it has in Karachi."

KP hills likely to receive rain with snowfall

PESHAWAR: The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has predicted rain with snowfall over the hills in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa during January 7 to 9. According to a dispatch of the Provincial Disaster Management Authority issued to all deputy commissioners on Friday, it said that a westerly wave is likely to enter north Baluchistan on January 6 (evening/night) and grip most of the province on the weekend (January 7 and 8), and may persist on upper parts of the province till Monday (January 9). Under the influence of emerging weather system, rain with snowfall over the hills is expected in Chitral, Lower & Upper Dir, Malakand, Swat, Buner, Shangla, Kohistan, Battagram, Torgar, Mansehra, and Abbottabad districts. Similarly, light to moderate rain with light snowfall over the hills is also expected in Haripur, Mardan, Swabi, Nowshera, Peshawar, Charsadda, Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Kurram, Orakzai, Hangu, Karak, Kohat, Bannu, Lakki Marwat, Tank, Dera Ismail Khan, North and South Waziristan districts.—DNA

Woman murder accused held from KSA

GUJRANWALA: Criminal Investigation Agency (CIA) Special Operations Cell of Gujranwala Police carried out an operation in Saudi Arabia and apprehended an accused involved in killing of a woman for resisting robbery 14 years ago. According to the police, fugitive Badar Mumir was arrested from Saudi Arabia after 14 years. Besides that, another accused, who killed a youth in Nowshera Virkan, was detained at Lahore airport. Police sources said that the accused was fleeing to Italy after committing the crime. Both the accused have been arrested and handed over to the concerned police department. The Central Police Office (CPO) said that the arrest of the accused was no less than a challenge as both of the accused went into hiding.—DNA

Tourists advised to take precautionary steps

He requested the tourists to follow the advisory to avoid any kind of inconvenience. The Tourism Police and the special squads were also directed to make coordinated efforts to provide the best facilities to the tourists, he added

RAWALPINDI: Commissioner, Rawalpindi Division, Saqib Manan has advised the tourists visiting Murree and adjoining areas to take precautionary measures. According to the Commissioner Office spokesman, Saqib directed the authorities concerned to utilize all available resources to facilitate the tourists in Murree. All snow removal machinery should be kept operational, besides arranging salt sprinkler machines and ensuring presence of the required staff, the commissioner said. The spokesperson said that a control room had also



KARACHI: Directorate of Electronic Media and Publications, DEMP, Karachi organised a digital photographic exhibition and quiz competition in observance of 146th birth anniversary of Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah at his alma mater Sindh Madresat Ul Islam University Karachi. — DNA

People of Pakistan have already rejected imported govt

MPA Syed Yawar Abbas Bukhari, Former Federal Minister Syed Wajid Bukhari and Focal Person Syed Khawar Abbas Bukhari (all from PTI) called on Former Federal Minister Sheikh Aftab Ahmad (PMLN) and inquired about his health at his residence on Friday

QAZI SHOAB KHAN

ATTOCK: The Central Leader of Pakistan Tehrik e Insaaf Syed Zulfiqar Abbas Bukhari (Zulfi Bukhari) has said that the imported Government of PML(N) Alliance is manipulating pre-poll rigging besides making all out efforts to get the forthcoming general elections delayed for obtaining results of their own choice but PTI led by Mr. Imran Khan will be the vic-

torious of overwhelming majority whenever the elections are held as the people of the country have reposed their blind confidence over the bold leadership of Mr. Imran Khan and his party manifesto. This he said while addressing a public gathering herein village Chakki of Tehsil PindiGheb where a large number of people led by Qazi Mukhtiar Vice Chairman UC Chakki announced to join PTI along with his political group.

Speaking on the occasion, Syed Zulfiqar Abbas Bukhari (Zulfi Bukhari) said that the people of Pakistan have already rejected the mandated less PML(N) alliance rulers because the general public of the country is also fully annoyed on the day to day price racketeering of petroleum products, flour, bread, cooking oil, chicken, vegetables and other daily use items. He said that he would contest the elections from this constituency (NA 50

Attock) and will get upgraded the socio-economic situation of his constituency which was being ignored since independence. He said, during PTI govt a large number of development schemes have been completed in this constituency at the cost of millions of rupees and recently tenders have been issued for the remaining schemes. Zulfi said, on his request Punjab govt has given approval for upgradation of two schools while the remaining

schools will be upgraded soon. Zulfi said, KhundaJand road has already been carpeted benefiting thousand of people and thanked Qazi Mukhtiar and his group for joining PTI. Meanwhile MPA Syed Yawar Abbas Bukhari, Former Federal Minister Syed Wajid Bukhari and Focal Person Syed Khawar Abbas Bukhari (all from PTI) called on Former Federal Minister Sheikh Aftab Ahmad (PMLN) and inquired about his health at his residence on Friday.

Coop of Police with business community is indispensable

On this occasion, Chamber President Saqib Rafiq said that ADRC should be activated for alternative dispute resolution, street crime should end, Rawalpindi Chamber should solve the problems related to peace and order of the city, Safe City and solve the problems related to the business community.

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: Police cooperation with the business community is indispensable, the business community plays an important role in running the country's economy, and is the backbone of the country's economy, to improve communication and cooperation with the police, Chamber Police. A coordination committee will be formed, these views were expressed by IG Punjab Amir Zulfiqar

Khan while talking to the delegation of Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce in Rawalpindi Police Lines. The chamber delegation included President Saqib Rafiq, Group Leader Sohail Altaf, Senior Vice President Muhammad Hamza Sarosh, Vice President Faisal Shahzad, former presidents Asad Mashhaddi, Raja Amir Iqbal, Saboor Malik, Nasir Mirza and Nadeem Rauf were included. IG Punjab also issued instructions to RP Onasir Mahmud Sati and CPO

Shahzad Nadeem Bukhari regarding the formation of Police Liaison Chamber Committee. On this occasion, Chamber President Saqib Rafiq said that ADRC should be activated for alternative dispute resolution, street crime should end, Rawalpindi Chamber should solve the problems related to peace and order of the city, Safe City and solve the problems related to the business community. will cooperate with the police as much as possible. Group leader Sohail Altaf said that the eco-

nomical situation is worsening the law and order situation which should be controlled, and effective measures should be taken, the interaction between the police and the business community is very important, he said that Rawat Industrial There is a need to activate the police post established in the state, in this regard the police will be co-ordinated. Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce President Saqib Rafiq presenting a bouquet to IG Punjab Amir Zulfiqar Khan.



RAWALPINDI: President RCCI presenting bouquet to IGP Punjab, Amir Zulfiqar Khan.—DNA

Constitution binds CM to secure trust vote

DNA

9LAHORE: Punjab Governor Baligh ur Rehman on Friday said Chief Minister Parvez Elahi was constitutionally bound to secure vote of confidence in Punjab assembly. His statement comes in the wake of fresh talks on the vote of confidence in the province. At a meeting with Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) lawmakers, he said those spreading propaganda regarding economic default in the country would fail adding the incumbent government had put the country's economy on track. "It is the government's top priority to stabilize the economy and friendly nations have hinted at cooperation", he added. Lawmakers included MPAs Rana Mash'hood Ahmad Khan, Khawaja Imran Nazir, Hina Pervez Butt, Sumaira Komal, former MPA Faisal Hayat Jabboana, Rana Abdul Rauf Ghazali, Mian Fida Hussain Wattoo, MNAs Malik Muhammad Riaz, Nawab Sher. Earlier, a political fiasco rose in the province after the deposed prime minister Imran Khan repeatedly announced to dissolve Punjab and KP assemblies. The governor de-notified Mr Elahi as CM that added fuel to the fire. The CM moved the Lahore High Court (LHC) in response, and the LHC suspended the governor's notification that led to restoration of Mr Elahi as the CM. However, the court bound the CM to refrain from dissolving the Punjab assembly until he obtained the trust vote.

SHC temporarily hands over custody of minor girl to parents

KARACHI: The Sindh High Court (SHC) on Friday ordered to temporarily hand over the custody of the 14-year-old girl — who was reported missing from Karachi on April 16, 2022, but was recovered from Punjab later and declared that she had run away from her home to marry 21-year-old Zaheer Ahmed — to her parents. Justice Iqbal Kalhoro of the SHC heard the case today during which the minor girl was also presented before the court. During the hearing, Justice Kalhoro asked the girl whether she wants to stay at the shelter home or with her parents. The 14-year-old replied to the judge that "she wants to go to her parents' home and stay with them". The court then asked the parents — Mehdi Kazmi and Saima Kazmi — to submit a bond of Rs1 million. However, the permanent custody of the girl will be decided by the trial court.—APP

30 mentally-challenged patients escape Karachi hospital

Police informed that incident was occurred on Thursday noon and they took into their custody some of the patients

KARACHI: In an unusual 'mental hospital escape', more than 30 mentally-challenged patients fled the facility situated in North Nazimabad, Karachi. Once the patients got out of the confines of the mental health facility and were on the loose, they slammed the doors of nearby houses with sticks. They also damaged vehicles parked outside these houses. While fleeing, they got hold of the hospital's security guard and gave him a good thrashing. According to police, a mentally-challenged patient drove away a jeep. However, they recovered the vehicle parked a few miles away. Police informed that the incident was occurred on Thursday noon and they took into their custody some of the patients. But many of them have managed to escape, they added.—DNA

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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



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TMA.....5770886
Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Islamabad Metropolitan

- Corporation.....9209224
Potohar Town.....9209224
RawalTown.....5773343

Water Tank

- Islamabad.....0321-5744480

NDMA issues advisory ahead of rain, snowfall prediction

The concerned departments have been asked to prepare general and area or region specific awareness campaigns and ensure wide spread propagation of likely threats and hazards

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) here on Friday has issued a detailed advisory for the nationwide preparedness measures to cope with rain and snowfall prediction advising the provinces to ensure mass awareness and sensitization of the travellers and tourists to the high risk areas.

Balistan (Diamir, Astore, Ghizer, Skardu, Hunza, Gilgit, Ghanche, Shigar), Chitral, Dir, Swat, Malakand, Kohistan, Mansehra and Abbottabad from January 7th to 9th. The weather prediction may also cause light rain expected in Islamabad, Pothohar region, Charsada, Bajaur, Kurram, Waziristan and Kohat during January 7th and 8th.

spread propagation of likely threats and hazards. Moreover, they should also engage local communities at traditionally dangerous and hazard prone sites to enable round the clock monitoring and establish feedback mechanism for early warnings and alerts for at-risk population.

forecast weather and road conditions in coordination with NH&MP, law enforcement agencies (LEAs), NHA and FWO, ensure availability of emergency services personnel during the forecast period.

Islamabad police established 25 pickets

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Police have set up 25 pickets at different points of the city with a purpose to enhance the security and to tackle any untoward incidents.

Art, Craft Bazar to open today

ISLAMABAD: A two-day Behbud Art and Craft Bazar will open on January 7, here at Pakistan China Friendship Center to promote handmade products and support the less privileged women.

USC cuts price of premium brands ghee across the country

ISLAMABAD: Utility Store Corporation (USC) on Friday announced that the corporation has reduced the price of premium brand (Dalda) ghee by Rs 12 per kilogram (Kg).



ISLAMABAD: Secretary Senate, Muhammad Qasim Samad Khan exchanging views with Abdul Mubdi Osman, acting High Commissioner, High Commission of Brunei Darussalam at Parliament House Islamabad.

Low gas pressure multiplies problems

ISLAMABAD: With the increase in cold, shut-off or low gas pressure in various parts of the twin cities has multiplied the problems of the domestic as well as the commercial consumers.

Saudi Arabia to launch e-applications for overseas pilgrims

ISLAMABAD: The Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Hajj and Umrah has confirmed that it will soon launch the "Individual Pilgrims" service to apply for the Hajj from outside Saudi Arabia.

Capital's safe city project successfully operating

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Safe City project is playing key role in maintaining law and order situation in the federal capital and assisting the police officials in nabbing criminal elements through surveillance cameras.

New Virtual Studio of PTV to help bridge tech gap

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb Friday said in the era of modern technology, largest Virtual Studio of Pakistan Television would help in bridging the tech gap.

said. "The establishment of Virtual Studio is another milestone for Pakistan Television which has the distinction of being the largest virtual studio in Pakistan, she said.



and international news as well as weather and sports news and current affairs programs to the public in an innovative manner, she said.

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Political virus on entry of Chinese travelers

Recently, there have been some discussions worldwide about the optimization and adjustment of China's epidemic prevention and control policy. A few countries are worried that "a new COVID variant could emerge in China," and thus have adopted new restrictions on travelers from China. On January 4, the World Health Organization (WHO) said that most of the virus strains circulating in China "are known and have been circulating in other countries, and at the present time no new variant has been reported." China's epidemic prevention and control has entered a new stage, and it is normal for the outside world to be concerned about it. At present, several basic facts are relatively clear: First, no new mutant COVID strain has been discovered in China so far. Second, China has been maintaining close communication with the WHO and sharing relevant information and data in a timely manner. Third, the current epidemic in China is controllable, and China is confident that the transition will go ahead smoothly and orderly. But there is another case. Some countries have been putting on a show from the very beginning, and political factors have overwhelmed scientific judgment. The additional prevention and control measures they have taken against Chinese travelers are not based on scientific research and judgment, but are based on prejudice against China and political calculations. For example, Washington seems to be encouraging other countries to follow suit and restrict Chinese travelers. It claims that this is a "prudent health measure to protect their citizens." But why hasn't Washington taken "prudent health measures" to protect its citizens when Delta and other more lethal strains were spreading in the US? At the moment, XBB.1.5, a new COVID variant, is rapidly circulating in the US and spreading to other countries, why doesn't Washington take "prudent health measures" to prevent this new variant? The relevant restrictive measures have attracted criticism in countries including the US, and they are considered to be neither scientific nor effective. US media The Hill said in an article that hundreds of thousands of infected people are already freely circulating in communities around the US. "Given that just a few thousand visitors from China enter the United States on average every day, adding a few hundred infected people each day into the population from China barely increases population risk." Since the outbreak of the epidemic, China's contribution is obvious. When the global epidemic was at its most critical moment, China's production supported the entire world and ensured that the global industrial chain and supply chain were not interrupted. On the other hand, China's prevention and control measures have maximized the protection of people's lives and health. In this context, the political manipulation of the border entry of Chinese travelers not only ignores scientific facts, but also runs counter to the expectations of the world to walk out of the shadow of the pandemic. When we review this period of history in the future, countries that only want to use the epidemic to attack China and pass the buck must bear historical responsibility.



Europe's heatwave: there is a way out

Warm winter days do not instinctively feel like an extreme weather event. Unlike the freezing bomb cyclone endured by the US at Christmas, or the floods that swept through the Philippines, they are unlikely to cause immediate widespread death and devastation. At a time when soaring energy costs have pushed so many into poverty, many will have welcomed the warmth that has been felt across Europe, especially the millions in Ukraine suffering due to Russia's attacks on its power infrastructure. Yet the heatwave should alarm us all. Though it may have been less punitive to experience than last summer's record temperatures, which led to thousands of deaths, it has spread across many more countries. "We can regard this as the most extreme event in European history," said one climatologist. Poland, where the average January temperature is around 1C, saw the thermometer climb to 19C on New Year's Day. At least seven more European countries have seen record highs. Ski resorts closed slopes or resorted to artificial snow. Natural variations in weather demand caution when attributing individual events. But the pattern is unmistakable: rising temperatures and extreme weather events intensified by human-made global heating. On Thursday, the Met Office confirmed that 2022 was Britain's hottest year on record, with the annual average temperature passing 10C for the first time – and the heat made 160 times more likely by the climate crisis. NASA says that the last decade saw eight of the 10 warmest years since modern records began in the 1880s. Ten years ago, it would have seemed outlandish to talk of the kind of temperatures and extreme weather now witnessed regularly. Frighteningly, all this is happening with a rise of just 1.1C above pre-industrial temperatures. Yet 2022 set other records too: renewables are performing far beyond predictions. A new wind power record was set last May, with the UK producing enough to cover half its electricity needs. The government now needs to turn its emissions targets into action. So far, it has been lamentably slow in doing so and in some cases – such as in offering approval for a new Cumbrian coalmine – is actually going in the wrong direction. It should be smoothing the path for renewable firms and investors. The Oxford Farming Conference currently in progress offers an important chance to drive down the substantial emissions resulting from farming and food production; ministers show no signs of seizing it. There is no real transport strategy; the government is refusing to release the emissions figures behind its decarbonisation plan. It needs to prioritise insulation and other measures to cut domestic emissions. Economics and traditional national security concerns now point in the same direction as environmental protection – there is no excuse for delaying further. The door is closing fast, but there is still a way out. The UK, and other nations, must take it while they can.

Pak-Russia relations post fall of Kabul

Muhammad Faisal Yousafzai



For the next ten years their relations were not good even USA imposed sanctions on Pakistan for making nuclear bombs (1998). In 2001, 9/11 event occurred, in which approximately 2760 American civilians were died, and this terrorist acts were acknowledged by terrorist group AL-QUAIDA leader USAMA BIN LADEN who was present in Afghanistan. At that time, in Afghanistan there was a government of "Mulla Omer"

From the beginning Pak-US have not a constant relationship, their relationships have been gone through many twists and turns. After independence, to run the country smoothly Pakistan joined CETO and SENTO, however their relation was changed in 1965 and 1971 wars (arms embargo). In 1979 when USSR intervene in Afghanistan,

due to her interests she made a good relationship with Pakistan, she assisted Pakistan to establish a group of jihadis to train, equip them to fight against USSR in Afghanistan and Pakistan did this because of her interest (deterrence). During 10 years of proxies Pak-US relation was at peak and at the end of the day USSR was disintegrated. After the disintegration of USSR, USA left this region as well as Pakistan to deal along with these jihadis' groups because her interest in this region was achieved. For the next ten years their relations were not good even USA imposed sanctions on Pakistan for making nuclear bombs (1998). In 2001, 9/11 event occurred, in which approximately 2760 American civilians were died, and this terrorist acts were acknowledged by terrorist group AL-QUAIDA leader USAMA BIN LADEN who was present in Afghanistan. At that time, in Afghanistan there was a government of "Mulla Omer", and USA tried to persuade him so that he will take over Usama bin Ladin to them but were failed. Then UNSC passed resolution and started a "war on terror". Before intervening in Afghanistan USA president "Gorge W. Bush" call Pakistan's president "general Pervez Musharraf" and asked him "whether with us or against us", Pakistan has no other option except to accept the American proposal and became front non-NATO ally in war on terror, due to which once again their relationship became strong. In this war, Pakistan receives 53,000 deaths, 126 million economic losses, over 500 suicide bombers, 1.4 million registered and 1.5 million non-registered Afghan refugees but Pakistan didn't step back she helped USA in clearing terrorists' sanctuaries in the tribal belt, conducting operations on western borders, she played a role of dismantling, decimating AL-QUAIDA, almost top seven wanted criminals of AL-QUAIDA operatives were taken out with the assistance of Pakistan, bought Taliban to negotiating table in Qatar, helped in safe evacuation of American forces and officials from Afghanistan, even early two to three years success of USA in overthrowing Taliban government and achieving objectives in Afghanistan was also a hard work and sacrifices of Pakistan. Unfortunately, after withdrawal of NATO forces from Afghanistan (15 august, 2021) USA didn't give credit to Pakistan even imposed a label of "DOUBLE GAME" on Pakistan which was unexpected. After fall of Kabul, there is opportunity for both states to reframe their relationship, this time, in a more realistic manner. Pakistan is the world's only Muslim majority country with nuclear arsenals. Its borders are with India, China, Afghanistan and Iran as well as

have a Gwadar port which falls into Arabian sea and these all factors are important for US foreign policy in different ways, and these are the factors which makes Pakistan more important after the USA withdrawal from this region, because current US foreign policy is revolving around Indo-pacific region, she made QUARDS, arms deals with Taiwan, provide nuclear submarines to Australia, made India strong enough in terms of economy, politically and socially all these is to counter China, which seems a threat to her hegemony. The core dysfunctionality has been a strategic misalignment with regards to Afghanistan. They must need to put their relationship in a more modest plane; not overloaded with every issue under the sun and make a relationship more stable, predictable, and more sustainable, which would avoid the unrealistic expectations that had really curse the past. I think both countries must accept the ground realities which is that Pakistan is a middle income, post-colonial country, struggling with unusual crisis like stagnant bureaucracy, unemployment, poverty, inadequate infrastructure, dysfunctional and corrupt politicians, TTP, outsized military influence and an insurgent group. On the other hand USA have to realize that, in contemporary world the cosmopolitans are more aware of the past motives of USA in this region, it's not a time for USA to "micromanage" events in every part of the world, including in Pakistan and Afghanistan, currently USA is facing a competitor like China and Russia as well as social challenges at home and it would be difficult for USA to control the whole world as she did in the post-cold war era. There is no doubt that both states are duplicitous, because thing that were said were not done or not followed up on both sides. Due to their duplicity their relationship became worsen. However, USA is still the largest exporter destination for Pakistan. The USA is still one of the top five investors, that has been investing in Pakistan, USA is the fourth source of remittances to Pakistan, USA is home to one of the most influential dynamic Pakistani diasporas anywhere in the world. The relationship between Pakistan and USA in future needs not to emphasize so much on security and to curb terrorism, but there must be focus on economic and commercial issues as well. I think this is the area that hasn't been developed overtime and I think Pakistan is a type of country in which American's companies should want to invest because of cheap labors, resource rich, unused population/raw materials etc. Currently what Pakistan need is adequate infrastructure, economic

aids for quality education, political stability, to counter refugee's crisis etc. to strengthen democracy. On the other hand, USA was a state which from 1945 wanted/trying to spread and strengthen democracy. Thus, it is the time for both states to move away from misunderstanding and misplaced expectations of the past and to open the possibilities of going beyond government-to-government relationships. USA needs to allow Pakistani businesses and American businesses to interact and for that the simple path would be to take a second look at the "travel advisory", which is a big barrier for travel by US investors, because not all of Pakistan is in a security threatened zone and there are businesses in Pakistan that are sitting on cash, that would like to invest jointly with Americans partners. Bringing economic stability, greater regional connectivity in Afghanistan for any government will be another priority, and Pakistani government clearly stated and moved from geostrategic to geoconomics paradigm, where Pakistan's government are very keen to see the point of interests for Pakistan in seeking peace in Afghanistan which will lead to wider region. After 4 decades, there is chance to create a real condition of peace; framing Taliban as the enemy and demonizing Taliban that would help USA to achieve its objectives in Afghanistan is a choice that she made early. However, Pakistan shared its perceptions and perspectives from the last 2 decades that "there is no military solutions", and it is a fact that "when military get involved in any political decisions things became alright, because they have their own objectives". There are various aspects where I believe that both states interests are still aligned and due to which their relationship in future is going to be more batter than in the past, some of these aspects are.... 1) There is a continuing threat of terrorism which is directed against the USA by AL-QUAIDA. 2) USA concerned are about the safety and security of Pakistan's nuclear arsenals which recently President Biden claim that a threat to whole world if Taliban acquired it. 3) There is a need to prevent a future war between Pakistan and India that could escalate to nuclear level. 4) Humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan due to which refugees burden fall on the shoulders of Pakistan and some other European states. Due to this crisis, there is a lot of violation of human rights reported by amnesty international. 5) Climate change, a threat to global world etc. This means whether USA like or not, she must have to finds ways to work together with Pakistan to curb all these challenges.

Enhancing maritime security cooperation among Indian Ocean countries

Ali Basit

The addition of BRI has provided new avenues to harness the true potential and alleviate the poverty by improving existing socio-economic ties in the Indian Ocean littoral countries. There is a growing concern observed in the level of relevant international stakeholders that the geo-political and geo-economic aspects have diverse dimensions in the region where the philosophy of enhance cooperation of maritime security, peace and stability would be highly needed in order to promote socio-economic uplift and ensure prosperity

There is no doubt that Indian Ocean is one of the busiest and important Ocean of the world trade. The geo-economic and geo-significance of the Indian ocean littorals are interconnected to each other due to large scale of population, trade and cultural roots, sea-based economy, cultural tourism and other interests of leading global powers. IOR has tremendous potential of geo-economic activities, which are not only important to the Asian countries but also equally important for the entire world. The addition of BRI has provided new avenues to harness the true potential and alleviate the poverty by improving existing socio-economic ties in the Indian Ocean littoral countries. There is a growing concern observed in the level of relevant international stakeholders that the geo-political and geo-economic aspects have diverse dimensions in the region where the philosophy of enhance cooperation of maritime security, peace and stability would be highly needed in order to promote socio-economic uplift and ensure prosperity in the region and beyond. The new economic initiative by the Chinese government is promising for the entire region, where Pakistan and Iran would be the major beneficiaries of overall development. The role of major global powers needs to promote peace and cooperation. For which China, Pakistan and Iran need to make extra effort on diplomatic fronts. From Pakistan's perspective, it is important to ally itself with forces of regional progress and for that it has to alter the region and turn itself in mega corridor. For this purpose, Pakistan increasingly realized that its future lies in pursuing the common future of this region including Afghanistan, CARs, Russia, Iran and China. Furthermore, it also realizes that perpetual hostility with India is not going to serve any purpose and the only way to solving the dispute in this region is through shared vision of prosperity for huge population deprives form the opportunities. It deserves to materialize its potential but India has a very typical mind-set with its hegemonic designs in the Indian Ocean region and is trying to pose itself as a maritime regional power. It is interested in holding way over the choke points in the IOR thus, causing turbulence in the existing security of the regions. However, it is not possible going to the magnitude of the China's military and economic competence. The biggest and the most important player to carve out this constructive picture out of this troubled region is undoubtedly

China. China's emerging strategy for the maritime affairs in the IOR has two interconnected building blocks that is the philosophy of two oceans navy initiative of the maritime Silk Road. For which an aggressive work is being done by the China over the last 10 years or so in order to achieve these two milestones in an influencing manner. The strategic significance of Gwadar will certainly help China in addressing its current vulnerability of the Malacca dilemma. The geo-economics of the maritime silk route, present China with interest to acquire, maintain and defend if needed and these interests can only be safeguarded through a strong level. Pakistani ports and Harbours, especially, Karachi Port Qasim have tremendous significance not only for Pakistan but also for landlocked Afghanistan, CARs, Russia and now very much increasingly China in view of the CPEC project. Long coastlines and significant harbours provide Pakistan with a strategic location which is ideal for the sea trade and other commercial activities conducted in mostly foreign ships. The role of Pakistan in international navigation, the Gwadar port and EEZ is very important for development. However, the rise of non-conventional threats near the coastal areas of Pakistan hampers its economic and security interests ignoring all these impacts will intentionally place Pakistan in an adverse position in with landlocked countries to which Pakistan wants to offer a pathway to the IOR. Until or unless these non-traditional threats are resolved, Pakistan will not be able to its national security. It is important to stabilize the economy for acquiring the defence modernization and to deal with NTS threats. Pakistan needs to focus more on the naval empowerment of its naval forces for ensuring security as its sea lanes, and international maritime interest in the IOR. The uninterrupted threats of terrorism have transnational apprehensions of diplomatic interests of Pakistan in IOR. Possible assaults by radical military factions with the assistance of regional powers opposing CPEC, a sea ports and coastline along with the danger of weaponization, human trafficking and smuggling could obstruct global trade activities on the coastline of Pakistan. The serious maritime security threats not only marginalize national security of Pakistan but other coastal states of the IOR. For collective efforts and comprehensive maritime security strategy to safeguard national and regional interests, Pakistan Navy started off multinational naval exercise 'AMAN' in

North Arabian Sea in 2007. This was marked as a blue diplomacy move by the Pakistan Navy bringing together Maritime Nations in the IOR and calling for galvanizing efforts to maintain strong correlations at sea. The exercise has been aptly named "AMAN", which is the Urdu term for "PEACE". It signifies Pakistan's endeavor for peace while remaining fully prepared to ensure peace in the region. Pakistan Navy till to date had conducted seven AMAN exercises. The next year's exercise is the 8th in number, which have been held biennially since 2007. All previous naval exercises of the AMAN series have been highly successful and not only were participated wholeheartedly by navies of friendly countries, ushering goodwill to Pakistan, but have also resulted in all participants including the host Pakistan Navy, gaining tremendous professional experience. The main objective of AMAN series of multinational exercises is to promote regional cooperation and stability, greater interoperability and to display a united resolve against terrorism and crimes in maritime domain including piracy. Whereas in sea phase, the participating navies attend the military drills with their surface and air assets, special operation forces, and maritime teams. They are involved in various activities, including maneuvers, weapon firing drills, maritime interdiction operations, flying operations, search and rescue exercises, and international fleet review- all of this improves Pakistan Navy's capability to combat nontraditional threats and improve the country's soft image in the international community. Moreover, this time alongside AMAN-23, an important maritime conference is going to be held for the first time at Karachi expo center. Pakistan International Maritime Expo and Conference (PIMEC) is an initiative of Pakistan Navy which is being organized under the patronage of Ministry of Maritime Affairs in order to jump start development of maritime sector in Pakistan and spur Blue Economy. PIMEC is scheduled from 10 to 12 Feb, 2023 and the exhibition will bring together stakeholders and companies from diverse maritime fields to exploit and explore the potential of Blue Economy. It is actually to venture new chapter where we explore the true potential of much more that is to follow. Not only it will give us livelihood and vibrancy to our economy but also provide endeavors to mitigate climate change effects.

Briefs

France suffered record heat in 2022

PARIS: France experienced its hottest average temperature and lowest levels of rainfall on record in 2022, the national weather office said on Friday. The average temperature for the year was 14.5 degrees Celsius (58.1 Fahrenheit), "very far above 2020 which held the previous record" of 14.07 degrees Celsius, Météo France said in a statement.

The heat was "a symptom of climate change," it added. The country also suffered a "record rainfall deficit" of 25 percent below the long-term average, the lowest since 1989, the weather office added. Like much of western Europe, France experienced a punishing summer of record temperatures and forest fires that led to a renewed focus on climate change. Autumn and winter have also been exceptionally mild, with rain and warm temperatures reducing usually icy ski slopes in the Alps and Pyrenees mountains to muddy expanses. French President Emmanuel Macron faced criticism from some climate scientists this week over his New Year's Eve address to the nation last weekend, in which he suggested the drought and baking temperatures last year were a surprise. Talking about overlapping problems that buffeted the country, he said: "Who could have predicted the wave of inflation, sparked thereafter? Or the climate crisis with spectacular effects again this summer in our country?"—DNA

Pilot killed as trainee aircraft crashes in India

NEW DELHI: A pilot was killed and a trainee was injured after a private trainee aircraft crashed into a temple in India's central Madhya Pradesh state, a senior police official said on Friday morning. Navneet Bhasin, a senior police official in the state's Rewa district, told Anadolu Agency the incident happened late on Thursday night when the aircraft on a training mission crashed, hitting the dome of the temple. "The injured has been shifted to the hospital for treatment," he said. Bhasin stated that preliminary investigations indicate that bad weather conditions may have been the cause of the crash and that further investigations are underway.—APP

Violence hits Mexico cartel stronghold

MEXICO: The sun wasn't yet up in Culiacan when David Téllez and his family began making their way to the city's airport for a return flight to Mexico City after their vacation. But not long after they set out they encountered the first crude roadblock, an abandoned vehicle obstructing their way. Téllez turned to social media to find out what was going on and saw that Sinaloa's state capital, a stronghold of the cartel by the same name, was filled with roadblocks and gunfire.

It would be hours before Mexico's defense secretary would confirm that the military had captured Ovidio Guzmán, a son of the notorious former Sinaloa cartel boss Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán, on Thursday in a pre-dawn operation north of the city. Just like that, Culiacan was thrust into a day of terror unlike any its residents had experienced since October 2019 — the last time authorities tried to capture the young Guzmán. Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador has railed against his predecessors' aggressive efforts to capture drug lords, but his administration bagged the high-profile cartel figure just days before hosting U.S. President Joe Biden, and at least in the short term locals were paying the price. Culiacan residents posted video on social media showing convoys of gunmen in pickup trucks and SUVs rolling down boulevards in the city. At least one convoy included a flatbed truck with a mounted gun in the back, the same kind of vehicle that caused chaos and mayhem in the 2019 unrest.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Inspector General Police Punjab Aamir Zulfiqar Khan, Islamabad Chamber Senior Vice President Faad Waheed, Vice President Azharul Islam, ICCI Former President Zafar Bakhtawari and Former Senior Vice Presidents Khalid Chaudhary and Saif ur Rehman are in a group photo.—DNA

9 million more people risk being pushed into poverty in Pakistan, warns UNDP

"We estimate that up to around nine million people - additional people - could be pushed into poverty due to the flood impact" Knut Ostby, the UNDP Resident Representative in Pakistan, said in Geneva

DNA

UNITED NATIONS: An additional nine million people risk being pushed into poverty on top of the 33 million affected by last summer's devastating floods in Pakistan, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) said Thursday, ahead of next week's International Conference on Climate Resilient Pakistan in Geneva. "We estimate that up to around nine million people - additional people - could be pushed into poverty due to the flood impact" Knut Ostby, the UNDP Resident Representative in Pakistan, said in Geneva. His remarks were also released at UN Headquarters in New York. Although the Pakistan flooding was

"unprecedented", it could happen to other countries affected by climate change, Ostby warned. He said that crops had been lost from the last harvest and from the missed planting season. "Agricultural prices - food prices - are therefore increasing and could push double the amount of people into food insecurity, increasing that number from seven to 14.6 million," added. Echoing those concerns, Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva, Ambassador Khalil Hashmi, said that some eight million of the 33 million affected by the emergency remain "acutely displaced", as flood waters have still not receded in some areas. Among the most urgent needs today, Ambassador Hashmi listed



housing, agriculture and livelihoods. "That's the immediate side of it and that's the human side of it," he

said, ahead of the high-level conference on Monday in the Swiss city, where Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres are set to co-host the event. Concretely, the aim of the conference is to bring together public and private sectors leaders and generate financial and international support to communities impacted by last year's devastating floods in Pakistan, and to rehabilitate and rebuild damaged infrastructure in a climate-resilient manner. Some \$16 billion is needed to help the country's rehabilitation and reconstruction over the long-term. "It's not just a one-year project," said Syed Haider Shah, head of UN division in Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, speaking via Zoom from Islamabad. "The needs have been further classified into four strategic recovery

objectives: and they deal with the Government's capacity-building, inclusive reconstruction, gender issues and livelihoods." More than 1,700 people were killed in the monsoon flooding disaster, UNDP's Ostby said, adding that at least two million homes were destroyed and damaged, along with "13,000 or more kilometres of roads, 3,000 kilometres or more of railway tracks, 439 bridges, 4.4 million acres of agricultural land". Over one million livestock were also lost, the UNDP official said, adding that because there is still standing water in several areas, "many people cannot get back to their regular livelihoods" and therefore remain reliant on humanitarian assistance".

Kazakh official announces January 2022 protests as coup attempt

ISTANBUL: Kazakhstan's Prosecutor General Berik Assyllov has announced during the delivery of a report to the Kazakh parliament that the protests which erupted in the country in January 2022 turned out to be a "coup attempt." "We can say that the operation to dismiss the country's top leadership in conditions of controlled chaos was carefully planned. In fact, it was a coup attempt," Assyllov told the lower house of the parliament, the Majilis, on Thursday. The chronology of the protests was made and the identities of their organizers were determined under an investigation, Assyllov noted, saying the investigation determined those responsible to be among senior government officials, as well as crime rings. "The tragedy of January has deeply affected our country and has been an important lesson for all of us. Speaking here is an opportunity to tell a wide audience what's going on," Assyllov further said. He also said that on the orders of former internal security chief Karim Massimov, buildings of the National Security Committee were abandoned by the employees in some regions. "As a result, no measures were taken to stop the protests in time, and the cities of Almaty and Taldykorgan remained in the grip of fully armed bandits for two days. 3,000 gun ammunition fell into their hands. The whereabouts of about 2,000 guns is still unknown," he said, adding that Massimov is on trial as one of the main organizers of the protests.—APP

NATO calls for more military support to Ukraine

BRUSSELS: NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg on Thursday said Ukraine must be strong at the negotiation table to make peace with Russia, and this will be possible with more weapons support to Kyiv. In his speech at the annual conference of the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise in Oslo, Stoltenberg made evaluations about Russia's war on Ukraine that began last February. Pointing out that wars are unpredictable, but most of them end at the negotiation table, Stoltenberg said this war will also most likely end through dialogue. "What the Ukrainians can achieve at the table depends on their strength on the battlefield. If we want a negotiated peace where Ukraine will remain an independent democratic country in Europe, the fastest way to achieve that is to support Ukraine. The way to peace is actually through weapons," he said. Saying that whatever may be the outcome of the war, Stoltenberg argued that the security situation in Europe has changed permanently. Russia wants a different Europe and aims to control its neighbors, he added.—APP

UK set to introduce new anti-strike law

LONDON: The British government is set to introduce a new anti-strike law as the country grapples with a wave of industrial action including from nurses, postal workers and university lecturers amid a bitter cost-of-living crisis triggered by soaring inflation and a deteriorating economy. Business Secretary Grant Shapps said in a statement that measures were being introduced to "restore the balance between those seeking to strike and protecting the public from disproportionate disruption." He said the government has been in talks with the unions about having an honest conversation on pay, conditions and reform. "Industrial action is disruptive for everyone - from people relying on essential services to get to work or care for their family to hard-working business owners whose sales suffer. It also costs those striking at a time when family budgets are tight," he said.—DNA

Tsai visits base as China protests US ship passage

CHIAYI: Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen visited a military base Friday to observe drills while rival China protested the passage of a U.S. Navy destroyer through the Taiwan Strait, as tensions between the sides showed no sign of abating in the new year. Beijing claims self-governing Taiwan as Chinese territory to be brought under its control by force if necessary, and regularly protests the passage of U.S. and other foreign warships through the Taiwan Strait, one of the world's busiest waterways. Tsai's visit to the base in the central county of Chiayi comes as Taiwan is seeking to boost its defenses against the rising threat from China. That includes expanding the domestic shipbuilding and arms industry, buying more defensive weaponry from the U.S., and extending the national service requirement for all men from four months to a full year beginning in 2024. Along with observing the display by an army mechanized infantry battalion, Tsai visited the air force's Fourth Tactical Fighter Wing, whose pilots are largely responsible for intercepting Chinese military aircraft approaching the middle of the Taiwan Strait. "I would like to reiterate that the continuous activities of the People's Liberation Army (around Taiwan) are not helpful to cross-strait relations nor to the peace and stability of the region," Tsai said. "As we are facing the expansion of authoritarianism, we can only but strengthen the country's combat capabilities and toughness to secure our national security and interests," said Tsai. Meanwhile, China accused the U.S. of "publicly hyping" the passage Thursday of the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Chung-Hoon through the strait, adding that its forces monitored the ship the entire time. "The Eastern Theater Command of the Chinese People's Liberation Army organized troops to monitor the U.S. ship's entire passage.—APP

Pak-UK relations based on shared culture of democracy: NA Speaker

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD :National Assembly (NA) Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf on Friday said Pakistan and the United Kingdom (UK) enjoyed cordial relations based upon a shared culture of democracy and a parliamentary form of government. He expressed these views during his meeting with Speaker of the House of Commons Lindsay Hoyle on the sidelines of the 26th Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of Commonwealth (CSPOC) in Canberra, Australia. The speaker said these ties could be further strengthened by enhancing parliament-to-parliament contacts. Discussing the innovative initiatives introduced by the parliament of Pakistan, he said it had been at the forefront to guide the nation on the path of progress of development. He informed that it was the first Green Parliament, the first in the region to estab-

lish a parliamentary caucus on child rights, first to open the doors for those who were real pillars of democracy like women, children, minorities, and the transgender commu-

nity on the occasion of diamond jubilee celebration. He also said this year parliament of Pakistan also enacted a record number of legislations besides fighting

successfully the case of climate justice for Pakistan. House of Commons Speaker Lindsay Hoyle expressed solidarity with the floodaffected people of Pakistan.



Taliban govt. signs oil extraction deal with China

Xi calls for cooperation with Turkmenistan on natural gas Meanwhile, on Friday, Chinese President Xi Jinping said he wants more cooperation with Turkmenistan on energy, Chinese state television reported

FOREIGN DESK

KABUL: The de-facto Taliban government in Kabul has signed a contract with a Chinese company to extract oil from the Amu Darya basin in the country's northern Sare Pul province amid efforts to revive the fledgling economy. The contract was signed on Thursday by the Xinjiang Central Asia Petroleum and Gas Co (CAPEIC), making it the Taliban administration's first major public commodities extraction deal with a foreign company since coming to power in August 2021. "The Amu Darya oil contract is an important project between China and

Afghanistan," China's ambassador, Wang Yu, told the news conference. Taliban's mining minister, Sheikh Shahabuddin Delawar, said that the condition of the deal was that the oil is processed in Afghanistan. The Chinese company will invest \$150 million a year in Afghanistan under the contract, the spokesperson for the Taliban-run administration, Zabihullah Mujahid, wrote on Twitter. Its investment would increase to \$540 million in three years for the 25-year contract, he hastened to add, saying the Taliban-run administration will have a 20 percent partnership in the project, which can be increased to 75 percent. The announcement came a

day after the Taliban administration claimed to have killed eight Daesh terrorists during military raids, also including the culprits behind the December attack on a hotel used by Chinese businessmen in the Afghan capital. A Chinese state-owned company is also reportedly in talks over the operation of a copper mine in the east of the country. China has not yet officially recognized the Taliban administration but has a striking interest to be in economic involvement in the region, especially because of its strategic importance to China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Xi calls for cooperation with Turkmenistan on natural gas Meanwhile, on Friday,

Chinese President Xi Jinping said he wants more cooperation with Turkmenistan on energy, Chinese state television reported. The comments that were aired on national television during President Serdar Berdimukhamedov's two-day visit to Beijing saw Xi telling Berdimukhamedov that China supports more Chinese firms investing in Turkmenistan. "Natural gas cooperation is the cornerstone of the China-Turkmenistan relationship," Xi was quoted as telling Berdimukhamedov. Being China's single largest supplier of piped natural gas, it has been buying more Turkmen gas. For the first 11 months of 2022, China's imports of Turkmen gas were

valued at \$9.3 billion, up from \$6.79 billion in the whole of 2021, according to Chinese customs data. China is estimated to have imported 23.03 million tonnes of gas from Turkmenistan in the first 11 months of 2022, according to Rystad Energy, equivalent to more than 50 percent of China's piped gas imports. "Because of the large transmission volume and its abundant gas reserves, it's (Turkmenistan) a very important partner to China on energy imports. Xi and Berdimukhamedov had also discussed energy cooperation when they met last September on the sidelines of a summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in Uzbekistan.

Briefs

Travel curbs rack up as Covid-hit China readies reopening

AGENCIES

SHANGHAI: More countries around the world are demanding that visitors from China take COVID tests, days before it drops border controls and ushers in an eagerly awaited return to travel for a population that has been largely stuck at home for three years.

From Sunday, China will end the requirement for inbound travellers to quarantine, the latest dismantling of its "zero-COVID" regime that began last month following historic protests against a suffocating series of mass lockdowns. But the abrupt changes have exposed many of China's 1.4 billion population to the virus for the first time, triggering an infection wave that is overwhelming some hospitals, emptying pharmacy shelves of medication and causing international alarm.

Greece, Germany and Sweden on Thursday joined more than a dozen countries to demand COVID tests from Chinese travellers, as the World Health Organisation said China's official virus data was under-reporting the true extent of its outbreak.

Chinese officials and state media have struck a defiant tone, defending the handling of the outbreak, playing down the severity of the surge and denouncing foreign travel requirements for its residents. Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning warned on Friday of possible reciprocal measures after the European Union recommended pre-departure testing for Chinese passengers. "The EU should listen more to ... rational voices and treat China's epidemic prevention and control objectively and fairly," Mao told a regular media briefing in Beijing.

Centre issues dark web advisory to ministries, provinces

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has sent a cybersecurity advisory to ministries and provincial governments to prevent data leaks through the dark web, it emerged on Friday.

The dark web, or darknet, is a part of the internet that lies beyond the reach of search engines. Users are largely anonymous and untraceable and mainly pay with cryptocurrencies like bitcoin. The advisory, titled 'Leakage of Sensitive Data on Dark Web (Advisory No 53)', noted that the anonymity offered by the dark web makes it a "gateway to the world of crime" and constitutes 96 per cent of total data available on the internet. "Dark/deep web is being used by nefarious mindsets, including criminals, terrorists, Hostile Intelligence Agencies (HIAs) and non-state actors," it stated. - APP

Need for coherent counter terrorism policy stressed

Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed was of the view that there is a need to gain strategic clarity to deal with the menace of terrorism for which National Action Plan should be revisited considering challenging geo-strategic environment

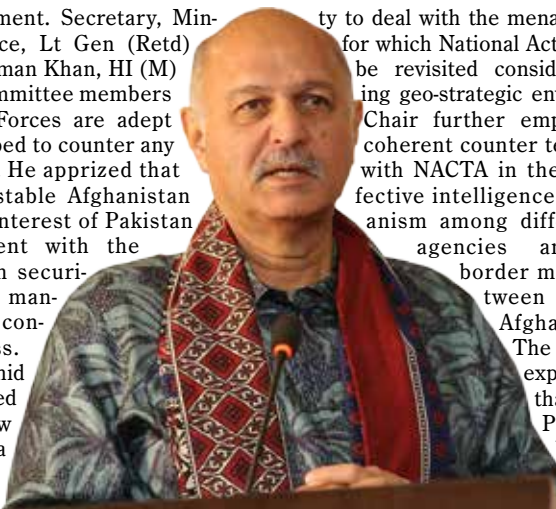
DNA

ISLAMABAD: Senate Defence Committee briefed on Pakistan-Afghanistan Border Situation amid increase in cross border attacks and remedial measures undertaken to ensure peace and security throughout the country, Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed says that there is need to develop coherent counter terrorism policy with NACTA in the lead role.

Senate Defence Committee presided by Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed, received a comprehensive briefing on the Pakistan-Afghanistan Border situation and deteriorating internal security situation in the Province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with specific reference to the recent attack, capture and hostage situation at

Bannu Cantonment. Secretary, Ministry of Defence, Lt Gen (Retd) Hamood Uz Zaman Khan, HI (M) assured the committee members that Security Forces are adept and well equipped to counter any security threat. He apprized that peaceful and stable Afghanistan is in the best interest of Pakistan and engagement with the Afghan side on security and border management is a continuous process.

Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed was of the view that there is a need to gain strategic clarity



to deal with the menace of terrorism for which National Action Plan should be revisited considering challenging geo-strategic environment. The Chair further emphasized for a coherent counter terrorism policy with NACTA in the lead role, effective intelligence sharing mechanism among different security agencies and enhanced border management between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The Committee expressed resolve that people of Pakistan stand by the valiant armed forces in such testing

times and appreciated Pakistan Army's successes in the fight against terrorism and continued efforts for bringing peace and stability in the region. The Defence Committee also appreciated the role and sacrifices of the police, the CTD and other law enforcement agencies in combating terrorism. The Committee offered Fateh for Shuhada martyred in various terror related incidents in the recent past.

The meeting was attended by Committee members, Senator Anwar ul Haq Kakar, Senator Umar Farooq, Senator Palwasha Muhammadzai Khan, Senator Dr. Zarqa Suharwardy Taimur, Senator Hidayatullah, Leader of the Opposition in Senate, Dr Shahzad Waseem, Secretary Defence Lt Gen (Retd) Hamood Uz Zaman Khan HI (M) and Secretary Committee, Major @ Syed Hasnain Haider.

Karachi LG polls will not be delayed at any cost: CEC

DNA

KARACHI: The Election Commission of Pakistan on Friday reserved the verdict on the MQM petition challenging the voters' lists to be used during the forthcoming local government elections in Karachi.

The MQM has raised objections to the voters' lists under which the local government elections in Karachi would be held. During the hearing, Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja remarked that the commission would not let the Karachi LG polls to be delayed. The MQM lawyer said that the use of old voters' lists during the forthcoming local government elections in Karachi was against the law. The CEC remarked that the MQM used to move to the courts in the past against the delimitations of constituencies.



ISLAMABAD: Secretary Senate, Muhammad Qasim Samad Khan exchanging views with Ambassador of Germany, Alfred Grannas. - DNA

World food prices hit record high in 2022

PARIS: World food prices fell for a ninth month in a row in December but hit their highest level on record for the full year in 2022, UN data showed Friday. Food prices soared to a monthly record high in March after Russia invaded agricultural powerhouse Ukraine, a major supplier of wheat and cooking oil to the world. But prices have dropped since then, with more relief brought by a deal brokered by Turkey and the United Nations in July that lifted a Russian naval blockade on Ukrainian grain exports. The Food and Agriculture Organization said Friday its price index, which tracks the monthly change in international prices of a basket of food commodities, fell to 132.4 points in December, a 1.9 percent drop from November. It was also one percent lower than in December 2021. But the index was 14.3 percent higher overall in 2022 compared to the previous year as it reached an all-time high of 143.7 points. "Calmer food commodity prices are welcome after two very volatile years," FAO chief economist Maximo Torero said in a statement.

"It is important to remain vigilant and keep a strong focus on mitigating global food insecurity given that world food prices remain at elevated levels," he said. Torero said many staples are near record highs, with prices of rice rising and "still many risks associated with future supplies". World prices of maize were 24.8 percent higher on average in 2022 than in 2021, according to the FAO. Wheat was 15.6 percent more expensive. But maize prices fell in December, mostly due to "strong competition" from Brazil, the FAO said. Wheat was also down for the month "as ongoing harvests in the southern hemisphere boosted supplies and competition among exporters remained strong". - Agencies

Deaths spike as Denmark battles 'triple epidemic'

DENMARK: Around 1,400 people died in Denmark during the last week of 2022, at least 30% higher than estimates, according to the country's infectious diseases agency. The State Serum Institute (SSI) said the ongoing "triple epidemic" - flu, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), and COVID-19 - was possibly the biggest factor, having particularly impacted Denmark's elderly population.

"It's a steeper curve than we usually see, and it surprises us a little bit. We usually see a higher mortality in the winter months, but the figures show that right now there is higher mortality than there usually is at this time of year," Lasse Vestergaard of the SSI said in a statement on Thursday.

While December's last week also saw more hospitalizations for flu, the increase was not as high as previous weeks, the SSI reported, but warned that flu cases are likely to increase in the coming weeks.

At the same time, there was a decline in RSV cases and hospitalizations, but the "level is still high compared to the seasons that preceded COVID-19," the health agency said. From 157 in the previous week, the number of COVID-19 infections decreased to 115 per 100,000 people, with a drop recorded in all regions and age groups, except infants, according to the SSI. - APP

Chad says it foiled 'destabilisation' bid by officers

N'DJAMENA: The government in Chad said that it had foiled an "attempted destabilisation" plot by army officers and a prominent human rights activist. A group of 11 officers, led by Baradine Berdei Targuio, president of the Chadian Organisation of Human Rights, were behind the attempt, according to a government statement.

The security services arrested those responsible some time after December 8, the statement added. A formal investigation had been opened for "violation of the constitutional order, criminal association, illegal possession of a firearm and complicity", said Communications Minister and government spokesman Aziz Mahamat Saleh. The investigating magistrate leading the case has charged them and ordered their detention, he added. "The investigation is following its course and the government means to do everything to shed light on this affair and to determine responsibility," Saleh said. Targuio was sentenced in February 2021 to three years in jail on charges of undermining the constitutional order for having written that Chad's then leader, General Idriss Deby Itno, was seriously ill. Deby, who died in April 2022, has been replaced by his son, General Mahamat Idriss Deby Itno. Outlawed demonstrations were held on October 20 to mark the date when the military junta had initially promised to cede power - a deadline that has now been extended by two years. - APP

Huge anti-terrorism rally held in South Waziristan's Wana

WANA: A massive rally was carried out to raise voice against rising cases of terrorism and banned outfit Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in Wana, the largest town of South Waziristan district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). Videos posted on social media shows thousands of people took to the streets carrying pro-peace banners and placards with their major demand

of restoring law and order in the region. People can be heard raising slogans for establishing peace. Pakistan has witnessed surge in terrorism cases, particularly in KP and Balochistan, after the TTP announced withdrawal from ceasefire agreement in November last. Reports said the banned outfit was responsible for around 100 attacks carried out in 2022.

In December last, security officials in Islamabad managed to foil a major terror bid when a suicide bomber had to blow himself up in a tax when he was intercepted for checking on the way to meet his handler.

The huge gathering of people in the former tribal district recalled a historic rally carried out by people of Swat against terrorism after a van of school children was attacked by militants. Leaders of PPP, PTM, PML-N and AWP also joined the pro-peace rally in Wana. In their addresses, they demanded the government to establish writ of state, asserting that terrorism was not acceptable at any cost. Saying attacks of security forces have increased, the speakers highlighted that common citizens were also unsafe as they are facing threats of extortion and kidnapping. - DNA

Standoff over US speaker grinds on as McCarthy opponents unbowed

McCarthy, who was backed by former President Donald Trump for the post, offered the holdouts a range of concessions that would weaken the speaker's role, which political allies warned would make the job even harder if he got it

WASHINGTON: Republican Kevin McCarthy's perilous quest to become speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives entered the fourth day on Friday, with a scale of congressional dysfunction not seen since before the U.S. Civil War. The House was scheduled to reconvene at noon (1700 GMT), as lawmakers negotiated behind closed doors on a possible deal that McCarthy's supporters hoped could break the logjam and finally allow him to succeed after 11 failed floor votes since Tuesday. "We've got some progress going on. We've got members talking. I think we've got a little movement, so we'll see," McCarthy told reporters. This week's 11 failed votes marked the highest number of ballots for the speakership since 1859. But McCarthy rejected a suggestion it meant he would be a weak leader if he succeeded. "Apparently, I like to make history," he joked.

The California Republican faces a party rift between an overwhelming majority of House Republicans who support him and 20 hardline conservatives who continue to oppose him, even after McCarthy offered to curb his own clout. The speaker's gavel would give McCarthy the authority to block President Joe Biden's legislative agenda, force votes for Republican priorities on economy, energy and immigration, and move forward with investigations of Biden and his administration. But the holdouts want a deal that would make it easier to oust the speaker and give them greater influence within the House Republican caucus and on congressional committees. Some of his opponents also say

they don't trust him to mount the political brinkmanship necessary to contain the federal debt and impose spending cuts on Biden and the Democratic-controlled Senate. Late on Wednesday, some Republicans held out hope of a deal on the direction of the party caucus that could persuade at least some of his opponents to yield. "I think that's coming together well," said Representative Patrick McHenry, a McCarthy supporter who is poised to lead a top congressional committee. McCarthy, who was backed by former President Donald Trump for the post, offered the holdouts a range of concessions that would weaken the speaker's role, which political allies warned would make the job even harder if he got it. A possible agreement could also allow for a vote on term limits for members of Congress.

But it was not clear how many holdouts would be persuaded. Some Republicans believed the agreement under discussion might give McCarthy as many as 10 additional votes. Because of its inability to choose a leader, the 435-seat House has been rendered impotent - unable even to formally swear in newly elected members let alone hold hearings, consider legislation or scrutinize Biden and his administration. Republicans won a slim 222-212 House majority in the November midterm elections, meaning McCarthy cannot afford to lose the support of more than four Republicans as Democrats united around their own candidate. Some of McCarthy's opponents showed no sign of yielding. - DNA

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