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Blinken reiterates need for two-state Palestine solution

Detailed News On Page-08

Peru's President renews call for early election

Detailed News On Page-06

NATO seeks Korean support for Ukraine

Detailed News On Page-07



TTP CLAIMS RESPONSIBILITY

62 martyred, 200 injured in suicide blast

Explosion took place around 1:40pm as Zuhr prayers were being offered in Police Lines Mosque

SHAMIM SHAHID / DNA

PESHAWAR: At least 62 people were killed and over 200 people were injured, including 27 policemen, after an explosion rocked a mosque next to the Police Lines in Peshawar. The Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan has claimed the responsibility. Security officials said the explosion took place around 1:40pm as Zuhr prayers were being offered as a result of which the roof of the mosque caved in. The explosion was so powerful which shattered windowpanes of nearby buildings and the blast was heard for areas relatively far away as well.

It caused a section of the mosque's facade and roof to collapse as well. Part of the mosque roof and wall structure had collapsed, and bloodied survivors were limping away from the wreckage. While confirming the blast was a suicide hit, security officials said the bomber was standing in the first row while the Zuhr prayers were being offered. He then exploded himself during the prayers. The explosion was so huge that it completely levelled a section of the mosque and damaged other parts. Rescue workers and ambulances had reached the spot and shifted the casualties to the nearby the Lady Reading Hospital and the Khyber Teaching Hospital. Heavy machinery was sum-

US, Romanian, Palestine embassies condemn attack

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Palestine and Expatriates has condemned the terrorist attack that targeted a mosque in the Pakistani city of Peshawar which resulted in dozens of martyrs and dozens of wounded.

It affirms the support of the State of Palestine with the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and its people in confronting terrorism, and affirms its confidence in the ability of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, as President, Government and people, to confront and defeat terrorism and victory over it.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Palestine extends its deepest and sincere condolences and sympathy to the friendly Pakistan, its President, Government and people, and to the families of the victims, and wishes a speedy recovery for the injured. Meanwhile the Embassy of Romania in Pakistan has expressed grief over the tragic mosque attack in Peshawar. In the Twitter message the embassy said it was deeply saddened by the horrific terrorist attack in Peshawar that took many innocent and precious lives. "We strongly condemn terrorism in any form and hope that the perpetrators will be punished. The embassy also prayed for the souls of the departed ones and for their families. The U.S. Mission to Pakistan also extended its deepest condolences to the families and loved ones of the victims of the horrific attack at a Police Lines mosque in Peshawar on January 30. The United States stands with Pakistan in condemning all forms of terrorism.

and more than 157 wounded." He added that some of the injured were in critical condition and were currently receiving treatment in the hospital.

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PESHAWAR: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Shari along with COAS Gen. Asim Munir, inquires after the injured of Peshawar Police Lines terrorist attack at Lady Reading Hospital. In other pictures injured being rushed to the hospital for treatment. - DNA/ONLINE

Marriyum condemns Peshawar blast



KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD, Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Monday strongly condemned the blast which took place in a mosque at the Police Lines in Peshawar, earlier in the day. The minister, in a news statement, paid homage to the martyrs for their sacrifices and expressed condolence with the bereaved families over the loss.

She prayed to the Almighty to rest the departed souls in eternal peace and grant courage to the bereaved families for bearing the irreparable loss with fortitude. Marriyum also prayed for the early recovery of injured persons. She said attack on a mosque by terrorists was testament of their hatred towards Islam, Quran, Muslims and Pakistan. "The enemies of Pakistan are mistaken in thinking that they can weaken our resolve against terrorism by spilling the blood of innocent." The minister said that Pakistan Muslim League's (Nawaz) supreme

Continued on Page 06

PM, Army Chief in Peshawar to review security situation

The Premier accompanied by army chief also visited the Lady Reading Hospital

BUREAU REPORT

PESHAWAR: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir on Monday arrived in Peshawar following the suicide bombing at a provincial capital's mosque which left at least 32 people dead and more than 140 injured earlier Monday. In a tweet from her official handle, Information Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb said the premier summoned an emergency meeting which will review the motives behind terrorist attack. All relevant institutions have been directed to attend the meeting, she said. "A preliminary investigation report on the incident will be presented in the meeting." PM Shehbaz accompanied by the army chief also visited the Lady Reading Hospital in the provincial capital and inquired after the health of injured. Information Minister Marriyum, Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah and other officials were also present on the occasion. At least 32 people were martyred and more than 150 were injured after a suicide bomber blew himself up at a mosque in Peshawar's Police Lines during afternoon prayers on Monday, security and health officials said. Security officials, confirming that it was a suicide attack, said the bomber was standing in the front row at the time of the explosion. PM Shehbaz strongly condemned the attack, reiterating the national resolve and unity to eliminate terrorism from the country.

Imran condemns Peshawar blast

Improving intelligence gathering, equipping police a must to combat terrorism: Khan

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman and senior party leadership strongly condemned the terrorist suicide attack in police lines mosque Peshawar and expressed sympathies with the family of he martyrs. PTI Chairman, in a condolence message on Monday, strongly condemned the terrorist suicide attack in police lines mosque Peshawar during prayers. "My prayers and condolences go to victims' families," he added. Imran Khan stressed the need: "It is imperative we improve our intelligence gathering & properly equip our police forces to combat the growing threat of terrorism."



Briefs

President of UAE's visit being rescheduled

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb said on Monday that due to weather conditions, UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan's visit to Pakistan scheduled for Monday had been postponed to a later date. In a statement, she said, the UAE President was scheduled to pay an official visit to Pakistan to discuss the friendship, cooperation and relations between the two brotherly countries and ways to enhance them in various fields.

Pakistan to raise voice for oppressed

DNA

GENEVA: Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Hina Rabbani Khar on Monday said that with the country's human rights progress on an upward trajectory, Pakistan will continue to be a leading voice of the vulnerable and the oppressed. "From drafting the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the International Convention on Racial Discrimination to establishing the Human Rights Council, Pakistan has remained and will continue to be a leading voice of the vulnerable and the oppressed," she stated here at the 4th Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Pakistan.

Assembly dissolution

Polls must within 90 days, LHC says

Court admits PTI plea for hearing

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Justice Jawad Hassan of the Lahore High Court (LHC) said on Monday that elections must be held within 90 days of the dissolution of an assembly as he vowed to "struggle for democracy". The court was hearing a petition filed by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Secretary General Asad Umar, seeking direction from the authorities concerned regarding the announcement of the election date for the Punjab Assembly. During the proceedings, PTI's counsel Barister Ali Zafar requested the court to direct Punjab Governor Balighur Rehman to announce the election date. Justice Jawad Hassan agreed on the time frame prescribed for holding the election but said that "the question is who is announcing them" and told the PTI to include the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) as a party to the case. The PTI lawyer complied while arguing that the ECP had written to the governor however

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No plan to extend tenure: Ishaq Dar

SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Ishaq Dar has rejected the speculations about an extension in the tenure of national and provincial assemblies, terming them 'rumours', media reported. Talking to journalists outside the Parliament House in Islamabad, the finance minister rejected the speculations about an extension in the tenure of assemblies, saying that no such planning was underway. In response to a question, Ishaq Dar said that the 'scourge of terrorism' can be eliminated through unity, noting that Pakistan had once successfully eliminated terrorism. "In the past, all operations against terrorism were done with domestic resources", the FM said, condemning the suicide blast at a mosque in Peshawar's Police Lines area.

Bilawal for resolving Ukraine issue thru diplomatic means

Russian FM fears USA would try to hamper Pak-Russian energy project

CENTRELINE REPORT

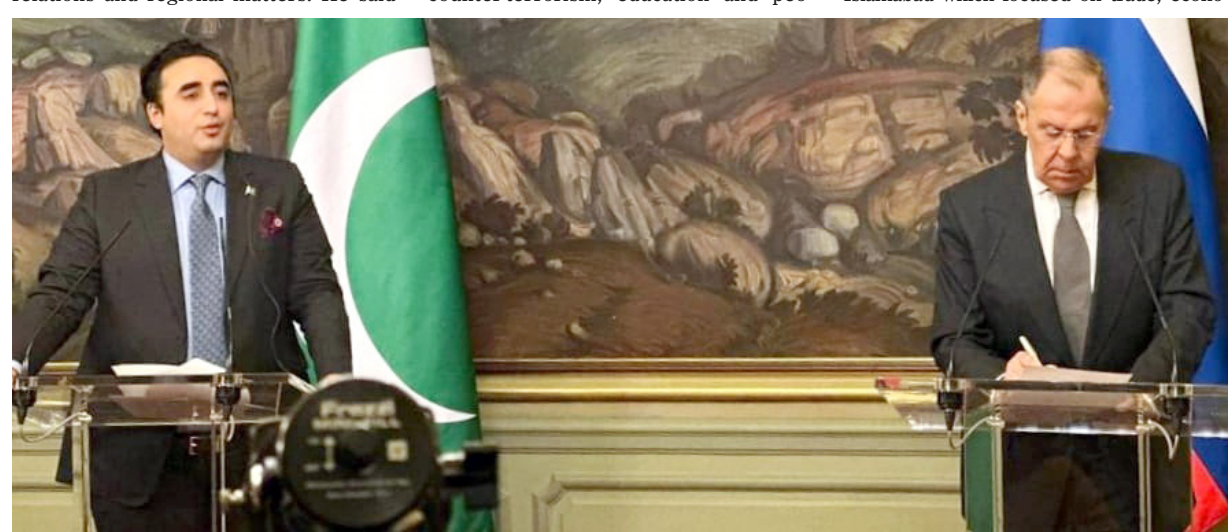
MOSCOW: Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Monday called for the resolution of the Ukraine conflict through diplomatic means saying that developing countries like Pakistan were facing consequences in terms of its economic impact. "We have a firm belief that all conflicts can be resolved peacefully and there are no obstacles which diplomacy cannot surmount. Ukraine conflict is no exception. Developing countries like Pakistan are facing negative consequences of the conflict in terms of economic impact," the foreign minister said addressing a joint press conference with Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov during his visit to Moscow. He expressed that hope that the "strong tradition of diplomacy of Russia would help achieve the peaceful resolution of the conflict. The foreign minister said that Pakistan considered Russia an important player in West, South and Central Asia and that the country would keep up high-level

contact with the Russian Federation. Apprising the media of their meeting, Foreign Minister Bilawal said that their "friendly" and "detailed" discussion encompassed all aspects of bilateral relations and regional matters. He said

both countries were celebrating the 75th anniversary of bilateral diplomatic relations and that Pakistan desired to strengthen its cooperation with Russia in the fields of trade, security, defence, counter-terrorism, education and peo-

ple-to-people contacts. He mentioned the summit-level meeting between Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Russian President Vladimir Putin in Samarkand as well as the 8th Inter-Government Commission held in Islamabad which focused on trade, econo-

my and energy cooperation. He said during their meeting, they also discussed bilateral cooperation at multilateral fora including the United Nations and Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. Foreign Minister Bilawal told the media that Pakistan and Russia had "good cooperation" on Afghanistan and wanted to achieve common goals of peace and stability in the war-torn country. To a question on Pak-Russia energy cooperation, the foreign minister said the incumbent government was committed to coping with the country's energy needs. He said Pakistan valued its cooperation with Russia, the United States, and Europe and that the country consistently called for dialogue and peaceful resolution of disputes. The Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov while responding to a question said that USA would certainly try to hamper energy project between Pakistan and Russia. He said the US had already done in the cases of China and other countries. He further said Iran shall soon join the SCO as a member while some members may also be given membership status.



Marri inaugurates BISP 'Benazir Nashonuma Centre'

KARACHI: Federal Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety and Chairperson BISP Shazia Atta Marri on Monday said that the government was cognizant of challenges being encountered by people, particularly the lower and middle-income class due to the present economic situation as various measures were being taken for easing their difficulties. She was speaking to the media, at the inauguration of Benazir Nashonuma Centre under Health and Nutrition Conditional Cash Transfer Program to prevent stunting growth, at Sindh Government Hospital, Shah Faisal Colony here. The federal minister said that an enormous number of children were facing the issue of malnutrition and stunting around the country and BISP in collaboration with World Food Program had initiated the program. Under the program 364 Nashonuma centres would be opened in 119 districts across the country, where pregnant women registered with BISP would be provided facilities of nutrition-rich food supplements, quarterly medical checkups, cash assistance and health guidance, the minister said. She further apprised that the outreach of the program would be further expanded in more districts as well. She said that the project was initially pi-

lotted in the least developed districts of Thatta and Sujawal and later expanded to 15 underdeveloped districts of the country. She apprised that now it was being launched nationwide to deal with issue of mother and child malnutrition that leads to immune efficiency and diseases. Shazia Marri said that Sindh government was also contributing in the efforts, and it was not only supporting BISP's Nashonuma program, but it had also initiated a program that would cover those women who were not registered with BISP. The minister stressed other provinces to replicate the Sindh government's measures so that maximum number of deserving women could be covered and issues of malnutrition and stunting could be addressed effectively. Responding to a question on serious economic challenges, she said that PDM wore the thorny crown only in the best interest of the country and the nation and the coalition government was committed to resolving the issues but later on unprecedented floods aggravated the situation. "Pakistan is facing grave repercussions of climate change that was a global issue and we are not only taking measures to deal with arising challenges but also raising the issue at the international level effectively,"

she added. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, immediately after the flood disaster, provided Rs.70 billion to flood affectees through BISP and also sanctioned Rs.1 billion for nutrition program of BISP to assist the affected families, the minister said. The incumbent government is determined to address all the issues being faced by nation and decision of seeking IMF's assistance for economic stability was one of the difficult but inevitable step, she said adding that government would keep the interest of the country and the difficulties of the nation supreme while dealing with IMF. Shazia Marri said that previous PTI government "devastated the economy, made extravagant expenditures on luxuries and committed corruption of billions of rupees". "Imran Khan is a narcissist who could not see beyond himself and used to malign others to cover up his own deficiencies and weakness," she alleged, while responding to another question adding that allegations on Asif Zardari were baseless as PPP, its leadership and workers themselves were affectees of terrorism. On the other hand, "Imran Khan and PTI has always supported and promoted terrorism," she held and demanded that Imran must tender an apology for is fabricated and flawed accusations on Asif Zardari. —DNA



RAWALPINDI: The participants of 32nd Senior Management Course of National Institute of Management visited Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and met President RCCI Saqib Rafique.—DNA

QWP leadership condemns Peshawar blast

PESHAWAR: Chairman Quami Watan Party (QWP) Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao and provincial chairman Sikandar Hayat Khan Sherpao have condemned Peshawar's Police Lines apparent suicide explosion. In a joint statement, issued here on Monday, the leadership of QWP termed the incident highly sorrowful. They said that besides large-scale casualties, dozens of people had also been injured in the explosion and called upon the government to take notice of it. Expressing solidarity and sympathies with the bereaved families, they said that the whole nation was grieved by this barbaric attack inside a mosque. Aftab Sherpao and Sikandar Sherpao said that they were repeatedly seeking the attention of the government towards the crucial issue of law and order, which was essential to ensure durable peace after addressing the menace of terrorism. They said that the objective behind the occurrence of such incidents was to once again disrupt the peaceful environment in the country. However, he said that national unity would foil all such nefarious designs.—APP

Jhagra, Hafeezur Rehman call on Punjab Governor

LAHORE: Former governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Iqbal Zafar Jhagra, former chief minister Gilgit-Baltistan Hafiz Hafeezur Rehman and a delegation of overseas Pakistanis led by Irfan Iqbal called on Punjab Governor Muhammad Balighur Rehman at Governor House here on Monday. The Punjab Governor said that services of overseas Pakistanis were remarkable for the progress of national economy by sending foreign exchange. He said that overseas Pakistanis were ambassadors of Pakistan and 'we all would have to work together for the progress of country'. The Overseas delegation said that honor of green passport and dignity of overseas Pakistanis always increased, whenever, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz government came into power.—APP

APTMA bids to increase textile exports through e-commerce

LAHORE: All Pakistan Textile Mills Association (APTMA) on Monday organized an orientation session on e-commerce for its members to increase textile exports. Chief Executive Officer (CEO) MindWhiz Shah Hassan made a detailed presentation to the APTMA members on how to utilize international e-commerce platforms to increase exports. APTMA Vice Chairman Asad Shafi and Secretary General Raza Baqir were also present. Shah Hassan said that global market volume of Amazon, a leading e-commerce platform, was over \$600 billion and China was top global exporter in the world through e-commerce. He said Pakistan was ranked as third most country with highest number of sellers after USA and China and major exports of Pakistan that contributed to e-commerce included textile, leather and sports goods, chemicals, carpets and rugs. According to him, Amazon

number one seller was also from Pakistan that generated US \$ 650 million revenue in 2022. He said there was enormous scope for textile exports from Pakistan in the fields of hosiery, bedding and bath, apparel, sports and outdoors and kitchen and dining items. He also informed the audience that there was a huge potential to grow for brands on e-commerce platforms and explained selling strategies on these platforms. He said the ultimate goal of e-commerce platforms was to build up brands in terms of sales, customer satisfaction, and overall performance. Sellers could achieve 46 percent profit margin by selling their products through e-commerce, he added. Vice Chairman APTMA Asad Shafi said, Pakistan could increase its exports by US \$ 6 billion per annum in case it availed one percent of the global market volume of US \$ 600 billion at Amazon. He said the Pa-

tron-in-Chief APTMA Gohar Ejaz had envisioned utilizing surplus yarn and fabric valuing about US \$ 3 billion in local production of garments and other value added textile products by establishing 1000 garment units each costing US \$ 7 million and giving employment to 700 workers. He continued that this new addition of stitching units would have the potential to provide employment to around one million people and additional exports of US \$ 210 billion. Asad said that stitching revolution coupled with normal BMR and expansion would uplift total textile exports to US \$ 50 billion in the next five years. According to him, the purpose of the orientation session was to identify supply chain issues, logistic challenges and the goal of customer satisfaction while promoting e-commerce in the textile industry of Pakistan to maximize Pakistan's share to the global textile exports.—APP

Security heightened at imambargahs, mosques in Karachi

DNA
KARACHI: Following a suicide blast in Peshawar mosque that claims lives of at least 32 people, Sindh Rangers have tightened the security at imambargahs and mosques in Karachi. According to details, the Sindh Rangers tightened the security at imambargahs and mosques and started conducting snap checking across the city to maintain law and order situation. The Rangers were using modern technology devices during snap checking to check 'criminal records' of citizens. The development

came after a suicide blast in Peshawar's Police Lines mosque claimed the lives of at least 32 people and wounded more than 150 people. Videos and pictures shared by social media users show horrific scenes as the injured drenched in blood were shifted to local medical centres for first aid after the Peshawar mosque blast. A part of the mosque has collapsed. The nature of the blast is unknown as per initial reports. An eye witness while talking to a private television channel said, he was going to the mosque when the blast occurred and panic

prevailed. Earlier in the day, the Islamabad police also put the security of the federal capital on high alert. The Islamabad Capital Territory police tightened security at the entry and exit points of the federal capital. The police officials instructed the citizens of Islamabad to keep important documents with them including computerized national identity cards (CNICs) besides appealing to the residents to cooperate with the on-duty cops during the checking process. Security is also being monitored through safe city cameras in the federal capital.



LAHORE: Activists of Young Doctors Association hold a protest against burning of the holy Quran in Sweden in Provincial Capital.—Online

Sultan urges diaspora to highlight IIOJK situation

ISLAMABAD: The Council of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Pakistan (ICAP) unanimously elected M.Ali Latif as its President for the year 2023-24 in its 365th meeting held on Monday. M. Ali Latif is a Fellow Member (FCA) of the ICAP. He is a 2nd generation Chartered Accountant and the son of a well-known practicing chartered accountant, M.T.K Rehmani (Late) - who practiced under the name and amp; style of "M/s Rehmani & amp; Co., Chartered Accountants", said a press release issued here. He has more than 20 years of experience in the accounting audit profession and is responsible for managing a wide-ranging portfolio of clients across different economic sectors. He is currently working as Partner in "M/s Muniff Ziauddin Co., Chartered Accountants - (Representing BKR International). He is a Council Member since 2017. He had earlier also served as an Elected Member of the Northern Regional Committee of ICAP for two consecutive four-year terms (2009-2013, 2013-2017) and as Chairman of various ICAP Committees.—APP

2022: 13004 TB cases diagnosed in Balochistan

All available resources are being used for the diagnosis and treatment of TB in Balochistan

QUETTA: Manager TB Control Program Balochistan, Dr Asif Shahwani said on Monday that with the support of the Global Fund, it has become easier for patients with medicines and other medical equipment. "Last year TB Control Program Balochistan diagnosed 13004 TB cases which is the highest number of previous years. This diagnosis would not have been possible without the help of Global Fund". He said this during his visit to Fatima Jinnah Institute of Chest Disease flanked by Global Fund head Azsak-in Guaya. CEO Fatima Jinnah Institute of Chest Hospital Pro-

essor Dr. Shireen Khan, MS Dr. Tahira Kamal Baloch, Project Manager TB Control Program Dr. Irfan Raisani, were also present. The delegation inspected various departments including Provincial Reference Lab, PMDT Site and Dot Center. Dr. Asif Shahwani, Manager TB Control Program Balochistan, on the occasion said that all available resources are being used for the diagnosis and treatment of TB in Balochistan, thanks to the support of Global Fund and other institutions. The head of the Global Fund, Azizkin Gwaria, lauding the efforts of the TB

control program officials said that the Global Fund will continue to support the TB control program of Balochistan. CEO Fatima Jinnah Institute of Chest Hospital Prof. Dr. Shireen Khan on the occasion said that with the support of Global Fund, a 45 KV solar system for PRL is being installed, which will help in the continuous maintenance of electricity for the lab. MS Hospital Dr. Tahira Kamal Baloch said that the Global Fund needs to provide more facilities in TB control considering the special conditions and geography of Balochistan.—APP

Council of ICAP unanimously elected Ali Latif as President

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(2009-2013, 2013-2017) and as Chairman of various ICAP Committees. He has also served as Vice President of ICAP President of Pakistan Institute of Public Finance Accountants - PIPFA and has recently been appointed as the Non-Executive Director on the Board of the SBP.—APP

Govt moves to end HEC autonomy

ISLAMABAD: Despite the widespread opposition from the stakeholders of the higher education in the country, the federal government is moving ahead with the proposed amendments to the Higher Education Commission (HEC) Ordinance, 2002, revealed the sources to this scribe. The Cabinet Committee for the Disposal of Legislative Cases, which is finalizing the draft amendment bill, has sought the input from the Federal Ministry of Law and Parliamentary Affairs, disclosed well-placed sources privy to the matter. The sources further added that it will then be placed before the Cabinet, and subsequently the National As-

sembly, in order to become the law. The Vice Chancellors' Committee and the Association of Private Universities in Pakistan have already condemned the move by saying that the said amendments not only limit the autonomous role of the institution but also negate the basic principles of the federation. The HEC was established as an autonomous national institution to regulate the affairs of public and private universities and colleges. The 1973 Rules of Business do treat higher education as a subject of the Education Ministry, but the Task Force on improvement of Higher Education in Pakistan that drafted the HEC Ordinance, 2002

recommended that "HEC should be governed and managed independently, associated with the Ministry of Education but not controlled by it," explained the sources. That is why the HEC was given the status of the Federal Ministry, which was directly responsible to the Prime Minister Office, sources said. The composition of the 18-member Commission, the HEC's apex body, ensured collaborative decision-making on higher education matters, including due representation from all the provinces as well as from the relevant government officials, higher education representatives and eminent persons. Moreover, the HEC Chairman and

the members of the Commission were appointed for a period of four years, with the possibility of a second tenure. While the Chairman was to be appointed by the Prime Minister, the Executive Director and other HEC officials were to be appointed by the Commission. In April 2021, the PTI government amended the HEC Ordinance, 2002 twice in order to remove the incumbent HEC Chairman by reducing his four-years tenure into half respectively. Several PML-N and PPP leaders had then strongly condemned this arbitrary decision and called for the restoration of HEC Ordinance, 2002. Ironi-

cally, the amended HEC Ordinance, 2022 not only retains the 2021 amendments but also goes beyond them to undermine the autonomy of HEC by placing it under the direct control of the Federal Ministry of Education and Professional Training, sources said. For instance, while the Controlling Authority of the Commission still rests with the Prime Minister, but it can be delegated to Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training, sources said. The composition of the Commission is reduced to 10 members, excluding the representation from provinces and representatives of the higher education sector.—Online

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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
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Emergency

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Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad.....	1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance.....	1122
& Rescue Services.....	4451122
Motorway Police.....	9266044
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PIMS.....	9261170-79
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Shifa International.....	4603666



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Islamabad Metropolitan

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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....	0321-5744480
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President Arif Alvi says Human resources vital for socio-economic prosperity

The President said that the GB was rich in natural resources like minerals, gems, and fruits. He said that we needed to use scientific methods for cutting and finishing gems and the skills required for such work could be learnt in a very short period of time

DNA

ISLAMABAD: While addressing the GB Dream Road Show, President Dr Arif Alvi has said that human resources and not natural resources alone were essential for making a country socio-economically prosperous, adding that intellect, consistency in policies, avoiding confusion, and actively cooperating with each other would enable the country to tread the path of development. The President expressed these views while addressing a ceremony titled, "GB Dream Road Show", organized by the Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) Government, in Islamabad, on Monday. The ceremony was attended by Governor Gilgit-Baltistan, Syed Mehdi Shah, Chief Minister Gilgit Baltistan, Mr Khalid Khurshid Khan, the ministers of GB government and others. Addressing the ceremony, the President said that Gilgit-Baltistan was very dear to him and he always represented the region as its ambassador for promoting its tourist attractions. He said that tourists should be facilitated in the area, adding that the biggest charm of tourism for a tourist was easy and shortest possible access to the destination. The President said that the GB



was rich in natural resources like minerals, gems, and fruits. He said that we needed to use scientific methods for cutting and finishing gems and the skills required for such work could be learnt in a very short period of time. While highlighting the importance of IT skills for GB's youth, the President said that people with IT skills could earn their livelihood by offering their services in other countries while living in Pakistan through online platforms. He said

that IT sector could also provide employment opportunities for women allowing them to work from their homes. He said 2.4 million people from different academic backgrounds had benefited from the Prime Minister's Digital Skills program, digiskills, adding that such programs could be replicated to provide critical and marketable digital skills to the youth and women of the country. He said that a GB student who got his

training from Digiskills program was earning almost \$100,000. The President said that there were enormous opportunities for GB in the field of agriculture as well by using vertical farming and drip farming. He said that GB could not only fulfil its own food requirements but it had the potential to export to the world like Netherlands which was 19 times smaller than Pakistan but the second-largest food producer in the world. He said that there was an

abundance of ideas but it was high time now to translate these ideas into practical steps and execute them. He said that indeed development was not possible without community participation and GB's people should be fully and actively engaged in promoting development in the area. Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan, Mr Khalid Khurshid Khan, said that the GB had been neglected in the past in terms of resource allocation and the funds which used to be given were mostly consumed in salary-related expenses. He said that the Government had been allocating more funds for development for the last two years. He said that his government's focus was on the development side, especially improving the road connectivity of GB with the rest of the country through different routes, revamping the education sector, boosting the agriculture sector to overcome food shortages, improving the health sector, and bringing reforms in the local government system. The seasoned civil servant, Mr. Shoaib Sultan also narrated his journey with the Agha Khan Rural Support Program for GB. He said that he worked for 40 years for the rural support program and it was the support of people and community which made it successful.

Six illegal arm holders arrested during crackdown

SSP Operations appreciated the performance of police teams and said that operations against those possessing illegal weapons will be accelerated

RAWALPINDI: Police have arrested six illegal arms holders and recovered arms and ammunition during a crackdown here on Monday, informed a police spokesman. Waris Khan police held Ismail and recovered 01 pistol 30-bore from his possession and the same police recovered 01 pistol 30-bore from Malik. Similarly, New Town police nabbed Waheed and recovered 01 pistol 30-bore from his custody. Airport police arrested Amir Afzal and recovered 01 pistol 30 bore from his possession and the same police recovered 01 rifle 08mm from Zahid. Following the operation, Kalar Syedan police recovered an iron rod from Ghulam Jilani. Police have registered separate cases against the accused and further investigation was in progress. SSP Operations appreciated the performance of police teams and said that operations against those possessing illegal weapons will be accelerated.



ISLAMABAD: A beautiful view of clouds hovering over Margalla Hills during rain in the federal capital. - Online

Islamabad Marathon hosts runners from diplomatic corps

ISLAMABAD: Hundreds of participants from different cities alongwith the diplomatic community based in the country participated in the 2nd edition of Islamabad Marathon. The second edition of the Marathon was organized by enthusiasts from the running community Islamabad Run With Us (IRU), a news release said. The weather conditions were perfect for the marathon run which was 42.2 KM distance whereas a great increase in the number of participants from last year was witnessed. Moreover, to create awareness and encourage masses to vaccinate children aged

under 5 years against polio, IRU collaborated with Pakistan Polio Eradication Programme and dedicated the event with the theme Race To End Polio in Pakistan. The Islamabad Marathon 2023 was organized with full support of Islamabad Capital Territory Administration, District Health Office and Capital Traffic Police. Qasim Naz, the founder of Islamabad Run With Us said that the main objective of the event was to promote healthy lifestyle, promote marathon tourism and project a positive image of Pakistan all over the world. With the beau-

tiful Maragalla Hills in the backdrop, the runners also passed through the scenic jungle at Shakarparian as they completed their 21.1 and 42.2 km distances. Ambassador of Denmark to Pakistan, Jakob Linulf also ran the Full Marathon (42.2 km) and was thrilled to be at the biggest running event in Islamabad. He said, "Me and my brother enjoyed the enthusiasm shown by Pakistanis of all age groups coming from different cities to participate in the marathon organized by "Islamabad Run with Us". Such initiatives serve as a great way to raise awareness about

the importance of physical activity and healthy lifestyle choices. I hope Pakistanis integrate such healthy activities into their everyday lives." The event was very well organized that attracted huge attendance from families including elderly and children who gathered to support the runners. The running event included five different categories to cater to encourage vast participation of all ages and of different athletic abilities. Full marathon of 42km, Half marathon of 21 km, 10 km and 5 km running were the categories that were primarily chosen for the adults and teenagers. - APP

Newly appointed RPO takes charge

RAWALPINDI: The newly appointed RPO Rawalpindi Region Syed Khurram Ali took charge of his post here on Monday. On arrival at the RPO, Rawalpindi, the contingent of police saluted the newly deployed officer. According to the police spokesman, RPO was also briefed by the branch in-charges about various issues and related responsibilities and crime situations. Speaking on the occasion, RPO Syed Khurram Ali said effective crackdown against criminal elements. - APP

Implementation of Murree Emergency Plan urged

RAWALPINDI: Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Liaquat Ali Chatta has directed the authorities concerned to ensure strict implementation of Murree Emergency Plan formulated for snowfall season. According to a Commissioner Office spokesman, newly appointed Commissioner Rawalpindi Division during his visit to Murree reviewed all the arrangements finalized to facilitate the tourists and cope with any emergency situation. He visited different parts of Murree Express Highway, Jinnah Hall Main Control Room, Jhika Gali, Kuldana, Barian and other areas. On the occasion, Deputy Commissioner Murree Ahmed Hasan Ranjha, Additional Deputy Commissioner, Revenue, Qasim Ejaz and other officers were present. The Commissioner directed the authorities concerned to ensure safety and security of the tourists coming to Murree to enjoy the weather. He also instructed the officers concerned and traffic police to facilitate the tourists by regulating the traffic. The Commissioner advised the tourists visiting Murree and adjoining areas to take all possible precautionary measures. The spokesman said that the Commissioner directed the authorities concerned to utilize all available resources to facilitate the tourists in Murree. The Commissioner was briefed that a control room had been set up in Jinnah Hall Murree and the tourists in case of any emergency could contact the control room on 051-9269015, 051-9269016, 051-9269018. - APP

ICCI slams massive hike in prices of POL products

ISLAMABAD: Faad Waheed, Acting President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) said that the government has made massive hike of Rs.35 per litre in one go in the prices of petrol and diesel that would unleash a new wave of high inflation for the common man and further increase the cost of doing business making our exports uncompetitive in the international markets. He said that the fall of over 34 rupees in the value of our currency against dollar and 35 rupees hike in the prices of petrol and diesel would create a ripple effect as it would badly squeeze the purchasing power of people, reduce growth of business activities making it more difficult to revive the dwindling economy. He said that the price of petrol has jumped to almost Rs.250/litre and diesel to around Rs.263/litre

taking these prices to the record highest level in the country's history. He said that this unprecedented hike in POL prices would multiply the energy cost and further increase the cost of doing business due to which trade and industrial activities would badly suffer. He said that diesel is used in transportation and agricultural sectors while a big jump in its price would increase transportation cost of goods and agricultural products causing more inflation, especially for low-income people. Moreover, the hike in the price of petrol would also increase transport fares that would bring more misery to the already inflation-stricken people. ICCI Acting President said that an artificial shortage of petrol and diesel is being created in the market as the oil marketing companies (OMCs) are not distributing them to the petrol pumps

and this situation can cause unnecessary panic in the market. He urged that the government should look into this issue and take strong measures to deter the OMCs from hoarding the stock of petrol and ensure the smooth operation of its supply chain to save the people from further troubles. He wondered who would invest in Pakistan in an environment of frequent hikes in the utility tariffs and POL products. He stressed that the government should make drastic cuts in its non-development expenditures and reduce the profit margins of OMCs instead of putting an unbearable burden on the masses. He urged that in these difficult times, the government should avoid taking harsh measures and focus on promoting ease of doing business to improve exports and steer the economy out of current challenges. - DNA

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Briefs

CDNS attain Rs 760 bn through fresh bonds

ISLAMABAD: The Central Directorate of National Savings (CDNS) on Monday realized the target of issuing Rs 760 billion in fresh bonds in the current fiscal year 2022-23 from July 1 to January 25, 2023.

The CDNS has set a reviewed saving target of Rs 1.3 trillion for the current financial year (2022-23) which will "promote the savings culture in the country", a senior CDNS official told APP. In view of the current market trend in the country, the ambitious target had been set to further improve the savings culture, he said. Responding to a question, he said the CDNS surpassed its annual target in the previous fiscal year 2021-22 and set a historic record of Rs 1,250 billion in savings till June 30, 2022.

For the first time in its history, CDNS crossed Rs 1,000 billion in fresh deposits and achieved the target of Rs 1,250 billion by June 30, 2022. He said CDNS had accomplished the target of issuing Rs 1,250 billion in fresh bonds from July 1, 2021, to June 30, 2022. It had set an annual gross receipt target of Rs 980 billion from July 1 to June 30 of the previous financial year 2020-21 to promote savings in the country. The senior official said the CDNS had set a Rs 250 billion annual collection target from July 1 to June 30 for the year 2020-2021 as compared to Rs 352 billion during the same period for the previous year (2019-20) to enhance savings in the country. The CDNS had set Rs 352 billion annual collection target for the year 2019-20 as compared to Rs 350 billion for the previous year (2018-19), he added.—DNA

ANF recovers over 16 kg drugs; arrests four

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) Pakistan while conducting four counter-narcotics operations seized over 16 kg narcotics, 180 intoxicated tablets and arrested four accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Monday. He informed ANF and ASF in a joint operation at Bacha Khan International Airport Peshawar recovered three charras-filled capsules from the possession of a Dubai-bound passenger resident of Bannu going on flight no PA-610. In another operation near Burhan Interchange, ANF recovered 12 kg charras from the possession of a female drug smuggler resident of Mardan. The spokesman informed that in third operation near Faizabad Bus Terminal Rawalpindi, ANF seized 180 intoxicated tablets concealed in a laptop and netted an accused resident of Khyber. ANF and Ranger conducted a raid in Kharadar Karachi area and recovered two kg heroin and two kg charras from the possession of an accused resident of Peshawar. The spokesman said that separate cases have been registered against the accused while further investigations are under process.—APP

Motorway Police to host Khuli Kacheri on Tuesday

ISLAMABAD: The National Highways and Motorway Police would host a "Khuli Kacheri" on Tuesday for giving a voice to road users to highlight their issues, suggestions, and opinions.

The event will be led by Additional Inspector General of National Highways and Motorway Police, Zubair Hashmi while it would be hosted by Patrol Officer Shumaila Aslam. The Kacheri will be broadcasted live on Radio FM 95 and the official Facebook page of the Motorway Police <https://facebook.com/NHMPofficial>. The public can also contact the Kacheri by calling 051-9250737 and sending a text message to the short code 4474. The Kacheri is a step towards improving the overall experience of road users and ensuring the highest standards of safety on the highways and motorways. It is also an important initiative that is providing a platform to road users for raising concerns.—APP



ISLAMABAD: The British High Commission celebrated Burns Night in memory of poet Robert Burns. There was haggis, a piper, poetry (including in Urdu) and Scottish ceilidh dancing.—DNA

Revival of China's tourism sends positive signal to Pak

"We have such a long, brotherly, wonderful relationship, and we must capitalize on it. I think with the revival after the Covid-19 pandemic, Chinese people must be looking forward to going out of their homes and traveling to Pakistan." Ghulam added

DNA

ISLAMABAD: "The opening of China's tourism is a very positive sign for Pakistan. Pakistan has made extensive preparations to welcome Chinese visitors," said Aftab ur Rehman Rana, Managing Director of Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation, Gwadar. He reported it on Monday. From January 8, 2023, China resumed outbound tourism after downgrading COVID-19 management measures from Class A to B. According to the 2023 Spring Festival Travel Summary Report released by Ctrip, domestic and foreign travel orders of Chinese tourists increased by four times compared with the Spring Festival of last year. The popularity of Spring Festival tourism is only a start, and Chinese tourism market will see a remarkable recovery this year. "International flights

within the Asia-Pacific region will recover faster than intercontinental flights for other regions. We plan to gradually expand our international routes," said Qin Ye, deputy general manager of Pudong Passenger Service Center of China Eastern Airlines. "This year is the year of Pakistan-China Tourism Exchanges. We're completely focused on this. Pakistan has everything it takes to become one of the world's best travel destinations. The government of Pakistan also identified tourism as a key priority," said Ghulam Qadir, commercial counselor of the Embassy of Pakistan in China. He revealed that numerous tourism-related activities will be happening between the two neighbors in this year. "Roadshows will be held with all of the cultural festivities, showcasing some of Pakistan's tourist attractions. We want our Chinese brothers and sisters to experience Pakistani cuisine and fashion



from our trendy brands in Pakistan. We'll come up with a complete guidebook to facilitate travel from China to Pakistan, and vice versa." Ghulam added. "We've seen new highways, highways, and side roads from south to east to north, and improving the road

network is critical for tourism promotion." Aftab ur Rehman Rana said. He stressed the important role that China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has played in transforming Pakistan's tourism. "CPEC not only improved access to various business hubs and cities

in Pakistan, but also facilitated access to various tourist sites. With improved accessibility, there will be a slew of new developments in the coming years, including the establishment of tourism zones, new hotels, and tourist resorts along the CPEC routes." Ghulam also noted that as CPEC enters its second phase of high-quality development, more partnerships, joint ventures, and travel are required. "CPEC is an excellent example of the two countries' friendship. We are constructing highways that will connect Pakistan from north to south, down to Karachi and ports, and a railway project will be implemented very soon." "We have such a long, brotherly, wonderful relationship, and we must capitalize on it. I think with the revival after the Covid-19 pandemic, Chinese people must be looking forward to going out of their homes and traveling to Pakistan." Ghulam added.

Pakistan's economy destroyed by so-called experts: PEW

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW) on Monday said Pakistan's economy was destroyed by so-called economic experts who acted as economic hitmen to fulfill their political agenda. The country has been under the control of plunderers for many years while one economic hitman after another is ruining the country's economy and there is no one to stop them, it said. Our representatives are traveling around the world for a billion dollars to hear denials from everywhere which is embarrassing, said Dr. Murtaza Mughal, President of PEW. He said that political and other elite have more money in their foreign accounts than in

Pakistan's exchequer. Dr. Murtaza Mughal said that the rulers have committed political suicide by expelling former Finance Minister Miftah Ismail otherwise the economic situation would have been stable. The stubbornness of one person has stalled the IMF program for four months since the expulsion of the former finance minister which has resulted in a loss of almost seven billion dollars. Miftah would have kept the IMF programme intact and the price of petrol and diesel would not have increased by 35 rupees per liter, which would bring another flood of inflation in the country, he observed. He said that in a few days, the value of the rupee has been reduced by fifteen percent, which is a clear failure of the policy of the

PML-N to stabilize the rupee. The country is facing gross mismanagement of the ruling coalition and the situation has come to an extent that now onions are considered a luxury. The government has not been able to do anything except change the NAB law. Overseas Pakistanis are not ready and are sending money through legal channels and they are preferring Handi which is causing huge losses to the country while it will take time to restore their confidence, he noted. Dr. Mughal recalled that the reluctance of the former prime minister to strike the IMF deal and its decision to disregard the tenets of the agreement with the donor last year are said to be populist decisions that derailed the IMF programme that drove the country to the

brink of sovereign default. Compelled by the twin deficits, the incumbent government revived the IMF Programme and former finance minister Miftah Ismail tried to deal with through on the deal by hiking fuel and energy rates. But, the incumbent Finance Minister avoided IMF's dictates that further deepen the crisis before surrendering to the IMF's wishes. The footdragging by the PDM government in complying with the IMF's conditions was also because of populism, he said. Talks with IMF are about to begin and Pakistan should urgently complete the 9th review as the government has no choice but to bow to the fund's demands as it has refused to make any concessions due to its continuous breach of promises.

Schedule of nationwide party organizational tours of Maryam

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Monday released the schedule of nationwide organizational tours of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz Senior Vice President and Chief Organizer Maryam Nawaz. In a statement, the minister said that Maryam Nawaz will start her whirlwind organizational tours from February 1. Maryam Nawaz will address the workers' convention in Bahawalpur on February 1, she said adding the organizational meeting of the party will be held on February 2 in Bahawalpur. On February 5 the PML-N convention will be held in Multan whereas the organizational meeting of the party will be held on February 6. Marriyum Aurangzeb said that on February 9, Maryam Nawaz will address the party convention in Abbottabad. She said that the party's organizational meeting will be held in Abbottabad on February 10. On February 15, Maryam Nawaz will address a convention and rally in Dera Ghazi Khan, she said adding on February 16, she will preside over the organizational meeting of the party in the same city. Marriyum Aurangzeb said that the PML-N workers convention will be held in Rawalpindi on February 19 whereas the party organizational meeting will be held on February 20. On February 23, Maryam Nawaz Sharif will address the workers' convention in Sargodha and preside over the party organizational meeting on February 24. She said that in Sahiwal workers convention will be held on February 27, and the party's organizational meeting will be held on February 28. The minister said that in Gujranwala, workers convention will be held on March 3 and party organizational meeting on March 4. In Sheikhupura workers convention will be held on March 7, and party organizational meeting on March 8, she said.—APP

Imran's decision a 'mockery of Constitution, democracy'

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's Senator Irfan Siddiqui Monday said Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chairman Imran Khan's announcement of contesting by-polls from 33 constituencies was tantamount to a mockery of the Constitution, law, and democracy. The PML-N leader, in a statement, said there was no precedent of such "jokes" in any other democratic country. The poor nation's money should not be allowed to be squandered on that count, particularly during an economic crisis. Imran Khan, he said, had won six out of seven National Assembly constituencies in October 2022 by-elections, and he had neither taken the oath nor resigned from any of the seats. Consequently, by-elections on those six seats would also be held. The PTI chief, he added, again announced to contest from all the 33 NA seats in the March by-election. If he won all the seats, then there would be re-election on 32 and he would once again be a candidate for all those seats. Irfan Siddiqui cited that in India no candidate could contest elections on more than two seats at a time. A proposal was now-a-days under consideration that the entire expenditure (from the public exchequer) incurred on the election/by-election on the vacated seats should be charged from the candidates concerned, and he had also written a letter to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in that regard. He said the Election Commission of Pakistan spent some Rs 30 to 40 million on a by-election in one constituency.—APP

CTO directs to maintain traffic flow during rains

RAWALPINDI: City Traffic Officer (CTO) Taimoor Khan on Monday issued directives to the traffic wardens to maintain a smooth flow of traffic during the rains. He said that additional staff was deployed at Airport, Murree road, Mall road, Peshwar road, Raja Bazaar, Pirwadi, Commercial Market, Sadiqabad, Adiala road, Dhoke Syedan, Masrail road, Chungi No 22, Jhelum road and other important roads to avoid traffic mess during rains. The CTO said the DSPs and sector in-charges have also been directed to issue continuous instructions for maintaining a smooth traffic flow during the rains.

He said the CTP has put in place effective parking measures besides taking action against encroachers. He urged the citizens to follow the traffic rules to avoid a mess on the roads. He said that traffic warden should perform their duties dedicatedly adding that strict action will be taken against those showing negligence in this regard.—DNA

Residents of twin cities enjoy weather following rain on local holiday

ISLAMABAD: The residents of federal capital have been enjoying weather, following a recent rain shower along with local public holiday on Monday. Talking to APP, a resident Shabana Hassan, said that the public holiday had provided residents with the opportunity to fully enjoy the weather and to make the most of their time with loved ones. She said that the rain had added to the charm of the already picturesque twin cities, providing a peaceful and rejuvenating atmosphere for residents. Another resident Touqeer Akram said that with the amusing weather conditions, residents were making the most of the opportunity to take the sights and sounds of the rain. "Whether it's a hot snack or simply taking in the beauty of the season, the twin cities are enjoying this winter" he added. He had further said that the rain had also brought a sense of calm and peace to the city, providing a much-needed break from the hustle and bustle of daily life.—APP

Steel Industry in Pakistan on Brink of Collapse

The steel industry is in dire straits, and the inability of the State Bank to open LCs is pushing our members to the brink of collapse," said PALSAP Secretary General, Bukhari. "

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The steel industry in Pakistan is facing a critical situation as the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) continues to fail in opening letters of credit (LCs), leading to the closure of numerous steel businesses and widespread job losses. The lack of LCs has caused a severe shortage of raw materials, leading to production delays and financial losses for companies. According to industry estimates, the steel sector in Pakistan employs over 200,000 people directly and has an annual production capacity of over 5 million tons. However, the crisis caused by the SBP's failure to open LCs has forced many steel companies to reduce production or even shut down

operations. This has led to job losses and a drastic decline in the steel industry's contribution to the country's economy. According to PALSAP (Pakistan Association of Large Steel Producers) Secretary General, Wajid Bukhari, "it is estimated that a total of approximately 7.5 million jobs are at stake because if there is no steel we will witness the subsequent closure of cement and all construction allied industries within a few weeks. Even during COVID-19, Steel industry was categorized as an essential industry." The SBP's inability to open LCs is reportedly due to a shortage of foreign currency reserves, leading to delays in the import of essential raw materials such as scrap steel and additives to manufacture steel indigenously.

In addition, the shortage of raw materials has led to a significant increase in the prices of steel products, making them unaffordable for many consumers. Steel bar prices have surpassed 275,000 rps/ton but if the shortage persists, experts believe that the prices can easily cross 300,000 rps/ton. The steel industry is calling on the government and the SBP to take immediate and drastic action to resolve the crisis. They are demanding that the SBP open LCs at a curtailed level declared through a policy or circular as soon as possible to ensure the timely import of raw materials and the continuation of production. They also urge the government to provide significant financial assistance to the industry to help mitigate

the catastrophic losses caused by the crisis. All major sectors, including food, textile, pharmaceuticals, chemical, machinery, steel, plastic and automobile are suffering from the decline in production. It is being said that currently 5,700 containers are stuck at the ports but in reality, the number is even higher than 9,000. Apart from that, demurrage charges of \$160 million and demurrages of Rs250 million have already been imposed. "The steel industry is in dire straits, and the inability of the State Bank to open LCs is pushing our members to the brink of collapse," said PALSAP Secretary General, Bukhari. "We urgently call on the government and the SBP to take immediate action to resolve this crisis and ensure the survival of our oper-

ations. The steel industry is a vital sector for Pakistan's economy, contributing over 5% of the country's GDP and providing jobs for over 200,000 people directly." "Pakistan's steel production could decrease by over 50% in the next year, with devastating consequences for the country's economy and its people. The steel industry is calling on the government and the SBP to act now to prevent this disaster from becoming a reality. The time for action is now, and the government and the SBP must act quickly to ensure the survival of the steel industry and its contribution to the economy. We need a circular to be issued effective immediately, allowing the manufacturers to import raw materials, albeit at curtailed levels."

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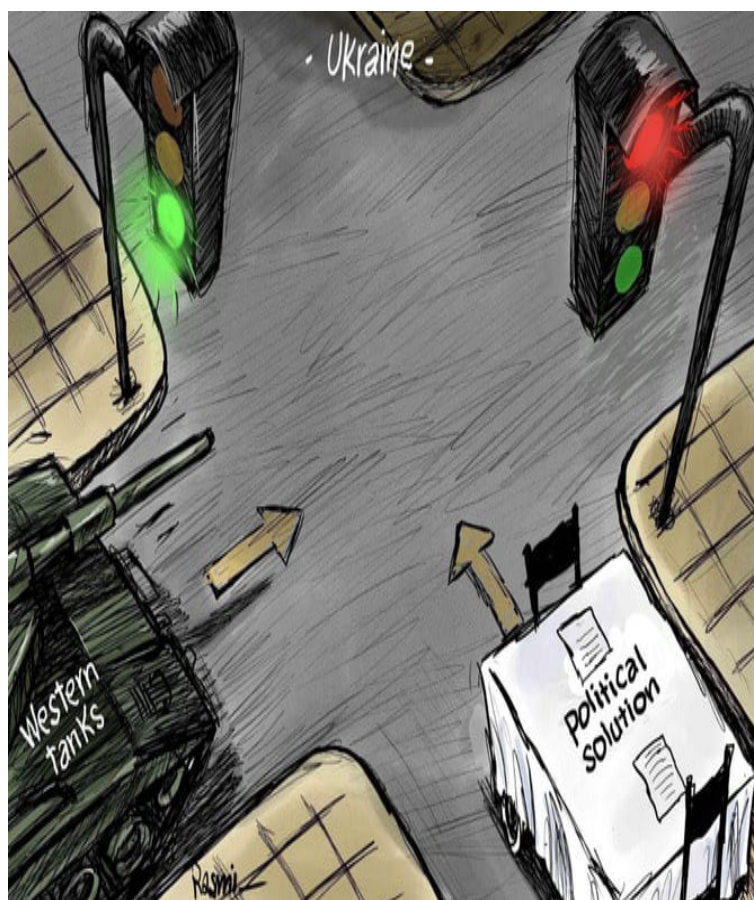
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The “rally round the flag effect” is well established: faced with an external threat, support for a country’s government and leaders usually surges. It is no surprise that Russia’s invasion of Ukraine prompted former critics of Volodymyr Zelenskiy to mute themselves. Not only has his performance as war leader inspired loyalty; no one wants to aid Moscow’s propagandists. That does not equate, however, to giving the government a free pass. Mr Zelenskiy knows it. In the last few days, 15 senior officials have quit or been sacked, six of them after allegations of corruption, and the Ukrainian president has declared a zero-tolerance approach. The former deputy minister of infrastructure, Vasyl Lozynskyi, was detained by anti-corruption investigators and fired. Prosecutors accused him of inflating the price of winter equipment, including generators, and allegedly siphoning off \$400,000. He has made no comment on the allegations. Vyacheslav Shapovalov, the deputy minister of defence, stepped down following allegations that his ministry was paying inflated prices for food for soldiers on his watch. He has not admitted to any wrongdoing. “I want this to be clear: there will be no return to what used to be in the past,” the president said. Transparency International ranked Ukraine as the second most corrupt country in Europe in 2021, behind only Russia. With Republicans in Congress calling for an audit of US aid, and concern that support across the west could falter as the cost of living crisis continues, Mr Zelenskiy is anxious to maintain foreign backing. But his actions reflect Ukrainian priorities too. Several of the cases came to light due to the courageous work of journalists. Institutional change is needed, as well as the targeting of individuals. The head of Ukraine’s anti-corruption agency has spelled out what is needed. First, the government should adopt a three-year anti-corruption strategy that would put extra auditing requirements on recovery and rebuilding projects – as it was supposed to do by 10 January. Second, political parties should resume filing financial declarations. Third, he argues, the mandatory registration of officials’ identities and incomes – suspended last year due to concerns about Russian forces targeting them – should restart after the tightening of internet security to ensure the register remains confidential. In the midst of war, it is perhaps understandable that these issues have not been at the top of the agenda. But for Ukraine to win, it must maintain both domestic and foreign support, and that requires getting it right on the home front as well as the battlefield. Action is needed not only to maintain unity, but because this is what Ukrainians are fighting for: a country that they can take pride in, and which values and respects them.

Epidemic data defy alarmist claims

That there has been no surge in novel coronavirus infections and no new variant of the virus has appeared on the mainland before and during the Chinese New Year holiday as of Jan 23, according to the latest China CDC Weekly report, is welcome news. Published by the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention on Wednesday and based on data provided by all provincial-level regions on the Chinese mainland from Dec 9 to Jan 23, the report says that the epidemic peaked in late December, and then continued to decline, with similar trends in all provincial-level regions and in both urban and rural areas. That’s a positive development given the warnings of some that there would be a likely burst of infections in the rural areas as migrant workers returned to their hometowns to celebrate the festival. That prompted action plans to be drawn up to cope with the expected uptick in infections in villages. Few of these plans, which essentially tilted more medical care resources to villages, have had to be implemented. But it is always better to err on the side of caution, and the process acts as a rehearsal for addressing any public health crisis that might emerge in the countryside in the future. And although it can perhaps be attributed to probability, it is certainly good to see that no new variant of the virus has appeared, defying the predictions of some who claimed that the largest scale and most intensive population mobility in such a short period over the past three years would be a happy hunting ground for the virus, enabling it to mutate. After a quick adaptation of the nation to the rise of infections after the latest adjustment to the prevention and control measures, the country is swiftly regaining its equilibrium by putting its socio-economic activities back on track as evidenced by the robust growth in consumption and traveling over the holiday season. Those China-bashing politicians in the United States who were prominent in making alarmist claims that China’s lifting of its strict virus control measures represented an immediate threat to global public health have been left to swallow their words. The Spring Festival holiday has demonstrated the effectiveness of the country’s virus control policies, which have been repeatedly adjusted over the past three years in light of the actual epidemic situation in the country. The latest CDC report is of great significance to the world, as it provides meaningful information for the World Health Organization as it continues to assess the pandemic situation. The world health body decided to maintain the global health emergency over the virus on Monday, and the country must still maintain a watchful eye on the epidemic situation to see how it develops.

RYTE is right

Dr M Ali Hamza



In the new millennium ongoing transformation of the world order from globalization to regionalization, characterized by the transition from a unipolar to a multipolar currency system, has seen the emergence of new currencies as alternative to the hegemony of the US dollar. As China is presumed to be a leading force of a future global monetary system, where the dependency on a single currency is not

Pakistan’s economy is in doldrum and at the verge of collapse. Long queues of vehicles at filling stations, extended black-out through-out the country, desperate fights for food, never stopping price hike of petroleum and non-petroleum goods, state bank refusal to open Letter of Credit (LCs) because of lowest ever dollar reserves in the country, this all sketch the picture of worst economic crises since its inception. Even in such economic condition Pakistan’s major political parties are face to face in a fiery battle that don’t seem to get resolved even if general elections are held in time. Though 2023 brought no sparkling start for the country, but there is still a visible silver line of hope. The arrival of Nikolay Shulginov: Russian Energy Minister in Islamabad and his statement “If term agreed with Islamabad, Russia would start exporting oil to Pakistan by the end of March this year” is a vital move in global politics. After the cold war, Pakistan and Russia took 4 decades to reach to a level of bilateral relation where a trade deal to start selling cheap oil to energy-starved Pakistan is about to finalize. This will fulfill 35% need of oil for Pakistan and make Islamabad a customer of Russian crude oil at a time when Moscow’s cash inflows are hurt by an EU oil cap and sanctions. Good for Russia, but what is there for Pakistan? As Islamabad and Moscow are having no commercial ties for decades, so the idea is novel in its present scenario and to resume these relations might unleash ways to start a new era of bilateral relationship and this surely hits the interests of many global players. As Pakistan has been quarrelling a balance of payment crises with foreign exchange reserves; falling to around 4 billion USD, hardly covers few weeks import mostly for oil. The business community of Pakistan is ready to handover the keys of their plants to present government that has shown week muscles in handling economic situation of the country. Considering Pakistan’s

flat broke economy, one of the clauses in the agreement is, that payments might be made through a “friendly” country, most probably China; a power play for Beijing, whose Yuan will be used for the transactions, giving the currency a chance as an alternative to the US dollar in global trade, and an opportunity for Pakistan to overcome the nastiest economic puzzle. So Russian Yuan Trade Engagement (RYTE) with Pakistan appears to be totally right for Pakistan and seems to be in the best interest of regional powers. It is important to understand that whatever is happening locally has its strings attached globally.

Five decades ago, the historic decision of former US President Nixon to suspend the convertibility of the dollar into gold; which changed unilaterally the global monetary system and forced the globe to recognize the hegemonic power of US dollar, since then world relies on the US dollar as the dominant reserve currency.

In the new millennium ongoing transformation of the world order from globalization to regionalization, characterized by the transition from a unipolar to a multipolar currency system, has seen the emergence of new currencies as alternative to the hegemony of the US dollar. As China is presumed to be a leading force of a future global monetary system, where the dependency on a single currency is not appreciated, in this scenario Chinese Yuan is gradually expanding and receiving recognition as the most preferred non-Western currency for the developing world.

Data from international insurance company Allianz Trade showed that the share of Chinese trade settled in Yuan rose from less than 20 per cent to nearly 30 per cent between early 2020 and August 2022. By the end of 2021, the People’s Bank of China (PBOC) had signed bilateral local currency swap agreements with 22 countries along the BRI, including European Union, and had set up Yuan clearing arrangements in eight countries. Moreover the

20th National Congress of Communist Party of China (CPC); held in Oct 2022, reiterated and stressed the importance of promoting the internationalization of the Chinese Yuan through an aggressive expansion strategy. A toping on this all is, that today China has become a forerunner in the development of sovereign digital currency, known locally as the e-CNY. Chinese do recognize that that process of Yuan internationalization can only gain ground through a stronger synergy between e-CNY and the Cross-border Interbank Payment System (CIPS); a clearing and settlement service for cross-border Yuan payments similar to the SWIFT system. Financially speaking, the Yuan clearing and settlement in Pakistan will help to reduce the exchange rate risk, as well as long and complex procedure of US dollar-based transaction via New York, especially when Pakistan is facing forex reserves depletion as the rupee faces pressure from rising interest rate set by the state and a stronger US dollar.

So RYTE is totally right, but there are thousands of slips between the cup and the lips, and it is pertinent to anticipate all these slips for programmed responses. Surly eastern powers along with their allies like Pakistan must have done so. The theme of Annual Conference of Financial Street Forum 2022 held at Zhejiang University International Business School (ZIBS) says “Forge ahead toward a shared future”; represents the voice of all developing countries like Pakistan. Economic suppression that brings social depression should not be the future of developing countries. This economic suppression can only be tackled through balancing the financial power between east and west, but countries like Pakistan desperately need to show courage for inner reflection and fix the inside anomalies with iron hand. This courage must extend to a limit where changing governance system of the country altogether, should be among the options.

President of French Football Federation was right

Abed Akbari

French social media showed a strong negative reaction to the remarks made by Le Graët whereby the French people reiterated that Zidane is more important to football, France, and the French than Noël Le Graët. His position as the President of the French Football Federation is contractual and will expire at the end of 2024. Zidane, however, has made history to become a time-honored figure in France without an expiry date. Be that as it may, it raises the question of why a figure like Zidane, who is of non-French descent and holds a high social position in French society, is attacked in this manner

Over the recent weeks, the disparaging remarks of the President of the French Football Federation, Noël Le Graët, against the former legendary player and current coach of the French football team, Zinedine Zidane aka Zizou, and his apologetic headlines in many newspapers in France and around the globe. The palaver, which took the President of the French Football Federation to the point of resignation, displayed unfathomable social rifts in France which were swiftly divulged by an 80-year-old man momentarily and then lost in the brouhaha of state propaganda claiming to serve immigrants and their posterity. French social media showed a strong negative reaction to the remarks made by Le Graët whereby the French people reiterated that Zidane is more important to football, France, and the French than Noël Le Graët. His position as the President of the French Football Federation is contractual and will expire at the end of 2024. Zidane, however, has made history to become a time-honored figure in France without an expiry date. Be that as it may, it raises the question of why a figure like Zidane, who is of non-French descent and holds a high social position in French society, is attacked in this manner – most probably not for the last time? The answer is that the government and the français de souche (FDS) (French nationals with no immediate foreign ancestry) support the immigration approach whereby migrants are accepted in French society. But in reality, these migrants are only accepted as people to die in wars, be sacrificed in the lower strata of society, and as servants and labourers in hard, menial jobs. This modern-day slavery even has its own brief history. “De souche” is a controversial term with different definitions and lacks a scientific consensus and standards. In historic terms, it was used for the first time by far-right French factions at the beginning of the 19th century. It is a term which is occasionally used in France today despite the discourse on social integration, communitarianism, and multiculturalism. Whether we believe it or not, the FDS is a living, dynamic entity within French society, having even succeeded to absorb immigrants on many occasions. It is vital to point out again that “de souche” is not anti-immigra-

tion, but anti-immigrants. Immigrants are allowed to exist in French society without carrying their cultural symbols, acting as propagators of a foreign culture in France, or reaching a position which in itself would be a symbol of success for the non-French community in France. The keystone of asylum-seeking and immigration from not just a French perspective but the EU as a whole, as Joseph Borrell mentioned in private comments in the not so distant past, is for the immigrants to accept that they have stepped out of the abyss into paradise. In other words, life outside the island of Europe is so savage and barbaric that the one and only acceptable human civilization is that of Europe. The creatures entering the European “garden from this jungle” must be aware that they are not only worth less than European cats and dogs, but even less than a Chanel bag or Luis Vuitton belt.

This far-right attitude towards immigrants is seen in many French authorities. It seems that immigrants are never accepted as being French, even if they are Zidane who is one of the most successful athletes having played under the French flag. This is precisely why we witnessed the recent remarks by Macron who firmly announced he was not going to “ask for forgiveness” for the widespread massacres and colonial activities of French agents in Algeria. Instead, he will try to resolve the misunderstandings between the two countries. It is not clear how the present can be dealt with as French atrocities in the Algerian War are still open to discussion? What happens to those like Zidane and his peers whose fathers became stateless in the anti-humanitarian policies of France, remaining neither here nor there at border crossings?

One hundred years of French colonialism in Algeria and the atrocious 1954-1962 Algerian War of Independence has left deep wounds which have at times been healed by Macron throughout his political career, and at times exacerbated. In 2017, the then-presidential candidate Macron called the French occupation of Algeria a “crime against humanity”. In 2020, after receiving a report by French historian Benjamin Stora, he recommended that more measures must be taken to reconcile the two countries. But at the same time, he turned down any ideas of “repentance” and “apology”. In 2021, in the

last confessions by Paris of its colonial crimes, Macron acknowledged for the first time that French soldiers had covertly murdered a prominent figure of the Algerian independence movement. But the French leader concurrently raised the question of whether Algeria existed as a nation prior to colonialization, heightening anger in this former colony. It must be said that most French authorities believe in the remarks made by the President of the French Football Federation on Algerians, and so he must not resign as all French officials are of the same opinion. The roots of the far-right are inseparable from the de souche in France and Algerian immigrants remain the forced migrants of France’s yesteryear policies. Algeria and France have maintained ties through immigration, working on the independence dispute, and the return of French migrants after the war. All the issues between the two countries affect the lives of over 10 million Algerians who live in France today. As a forgetful world often ignores the singular share of immigrants in economic developments with the overshadowing cliché that immigrants receive more help than they contribute to their country of destination, the last World Cup sealed the fate of this tiresome, threadbare narrative and proved once again that immigration must be celebrated instead of raising fear in host countries.

Whether Le Graët or someone else, Zidane or another immigrant. This is not the last time that social rifts in France, which is a country owing to the efforts of its immigrants, will be revealed. We will continue to witness such conflicts for as long as far-right extremism and its violence exist in the social and political layers of life in France. Conflicts which, in their new metamorphosis, even lead the immigrants in France to self-alienation and seeing their countries of origin as jungles and France and Europe as paradise, thus voting for the far-right to reduce immigration, particularly from the North African Muslim community, and keep “their France” as it is, as the supporter of human rights and freedoms such as choosing the right of residence. This is merely one level of the catastrophe of the human fall of whose dimensions we are unaware for being outside it.

Briefs

62 martyred,
200 injured
in suicide
blast

FROM PAGE 01
Twenty-seven of the dead people were said to be policemen. The mosque's prayer leader was also among the killed persons. "We have received dead bodies. It's an emergency situation," said Muhammad Asim Khan, a spokesman for Lady Reading Hospital in Peshawar, adding that at least 50 wounded had so far arrived at the facility. Meanwhile, Peshawar Deputy Commissioner Riaz-Mehsud said that they had shifted the bodies of 28 people and 150 injured to various hospitals of the city including LRH, KTH and Hayatabad Medical Center. He added that several injured were in critical condition and that the number of dead and injured could increase with many people believed to be trapped under the debris of the mosque. However, he did not comment anything on the nature of the blast, stating that the police are still investigating the matter. The area is located in a highly secure area of Peshawar with Police Secretariat and PTCL Colony all located nearby. To access the area, people have to cross several police check posts.

Polls must
within
90 days,
LHC says

FROM PAGE 01
he was yet to respond to the electoral watchdog. "On this issue, the ECP also stands with us," he said. Calling the governor's lawyer to the rostrum, the court inquired what his stance was over the delay; however, the lawyer requested the court time to prepare his case. Irked by the counsel's response, the judge remarked that the respondent did not appear to be taking the matter seriously. Justice Javed then went on to observe that "an important legal issue has been raised in the PTI's application" and issued notices to Governor Punjab and the ECP seeking their responses by February 3. It may be noted that earlier this month, the ECP had sent letters to the provincial governors of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) and Punjab with proposed dates for elections of the provincial assemblies.

Marriyum
condemns
Peshawar
blast

FROM PAGE 01
Nawaz Sharif eliminated terrorism from across the country during his previous tenure and this scourge would once again be rooted out with the same resolve and strategy. She said Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was a frontline province against terrorism, but ironically the past government committed "criminal negligence by ignoring this threat during the last ten years".

ANF seizes
over 955 kg
drugs in 22
operations

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) Pakistan seized 955.567 kg of drugs worth US\$24.078 million internationally, arrested 24 persons, impounded seven vehicles while conducting 22 counter narcotics operations during last week throughout the country. According to an ANF Headquarters spokesman, the seized drugs comprised 4.618 kg heroin, 887.461 kg hashish, 4.800 kg opium, 52.350 kg methamphetamine (Ice) 155 Ecstasy Tabs (0.076 kg), 40800 Valium Tabs (5.650 kgs), 824 Ltrs Hydrochloric Acid (HCL), 3700 intoxicant tabs (0.612 kgs), 46.650 kgs Cannabis seeds, two kg hashish oil and 30 injection ketamine (ketamine). ANF Balochistan recovered 785.346 kg drugs in eight operations and arrested seven persons involved in drugs smuggling besides impounding two vehicles.—APP

Army, PAF to fight for Interdep. Basketball C'ship Title

In the second semifinal match Pakistan Air Force outclassed POF by 93-68 points to reach the final of the championship. Ahmed Jan was the top player for PAF who scored 28 points with Umair Jan scored 12 points in the match

OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD, Jan 30: Defending champion Pakistan Army entered into the final round to see strong Pakistan Air Force (PAF) in the final encounter of the ongoing Inter-Departmental National Basketball Championship will be held on Tuesday here at Pakistan Sports Complex Islamabad. Pakistan Basketball Federation Secretary General Khalid Bashir, Army Sports Board Secretary Col. Sadaf Akram, Col Nabeel Ahmed Rana, Championship organising secretary Ouj E Zahoor Pakistan Sports Board DDG Saeed Akhtar, Azam Dar and other dignitaries were also witnessed the championship semi-final matches. Army, who is still unbeatable throughout the championship thrashed out Wap-



da in the first semi final match by securing 92-65 points. Army players were far better against the blue shirts team at half time by leading 14 points as second quarter of the match was concluded with 45-31 points. Army ace player Tughlab Ammar again led the winning side by scoring 20 points while Abdul Rehman scored 14 points for Army victory. Usman Khan 18 and Salman Butt scored 12 points for Wapda while Saadat Jehangir, Umair Muhammad, Naveed Ahmed, MM Alam and Choudhry Nadeem were supervised the semifinal match. In the second semifinal match Pakistan Air Force outclassed POF by 93-68 points to reach the final of the championship. Ahmed Jan was the top player for PAF who scored 28 points with Umair Jan scored 12 points in the match.

Brighton dump defending champion Liverpool out

DNA

BRIGHTON: Brighton dumped FA Cup holders Liverpool out of the competition on Sunday as Hollywood star and Wrexham co-owner Ryan Reynolds saw his non-league side denied a dramatic win by Sheffield United in a six-goal thriller. Kaoru Mitoma's brilliant control and finish in stoppage time to seal a 2-1 win for Brighton was another enormous blow to Liverpool, whose season is un-

ravelling just months after they came close to winning a historic quadruple. The Reds had led at the Amex through Harvey Elliott, but have now won just once in their past six games in all competitions. Lewis Dunk levelled before the break for the home side and they were well worth their place in the fifth round courtesy of a moment of magic from Mitoma. The Japanese winger cushioned Pervis Estupinan's cross into his path, flicked the ball over Joe Gomez

and fired high past Alisson Becker in the 92nd minute. "He is an incredible player who I think can play one step higher," said Brighton boss Roberto De Zerbi. "I am pleased for his goal." Liverpool are languishing in ninth place in the Premier League, 21 points behind pacesetters Arsenal. An FA Cup exit at the fourth-round stage leaves the Champions League as their only remaining shot at a trophy this season. Jurgen Klopp described Brighton's 3-0 win when the

sides met earlier this month as a "horror show". And the German coach at least took some heart from his team's battling performance on Sunday. "I am not over the moon about this performance but, again, the only thing that happened really is that we lost against a good side, who we lost to two weeks ago in a horrendous game," said Klopp. "Today was much better. We are obviously in a situation where we constantly want to make the final step. That's why it feels now especially bad in this moment because it didn't happen."

The hosts were without Moises Caicedo after the Ecuadorian took to social media on Friday to try and force through a move to Arsenal. Brighton have already lost Leandro Trossard, who scored a hat-trick against Liverpool earlier in the season, to the Gunners this month. But those absences did not show as Liverpool were left riding their luck for most of the second period. Ibrahim Konate and Fabio were extremely fortunate to escape red cards for challenges on Alexis Mac Allister and Evan Ferguson.

Celtic restore
nine-point lead

GLASGOW: Celtic restored their nine-point advantage over Rangers at the top of the Scottish Premiership with a 2-0 win at Dundee United on Sunday. Two goals in five minutes early in the second half from Jota and Aaron Mooy did the damage for the Hoops as Ange Postecoglou racked up a 50th league win in just 61 games in charge of Celtic. "We started the second half really well, scored a couple goals could have scored a couple more," said Postecoglou. "A really strong performance." On the ground where they won 9-0 earlier in the season, the visitors were frustrated before half-time by United and the intervention of VAR. Celtic thought they had a penalty when Mark Birighitti caught Kyogo Furuhashi as the goalkeeper punched clear. However, referee Don Robertson changed his initial decision after reviewing the incident on the pitchside monitor. Celtic did not have to wait long to make the breakthrough after half-time with Birighitti this time at fault. The Australian lost the flight of Mooy's cross and Jota headed in from the narrowest of angles at the back post. Moments later, VAR did come to the Scottish champions' aid as Kieran Freeman handled inside the box and Robertson was again advised to change his original call and point to the spot. —APP

Peru's president
renews call for
early elections

LIMA: Peruvian President Dina Boluarte has made a renewed appeal for congress to hold early elections as a way to end weeks of deadly protests, warning that otherwise she will seek constitutional reform to make a vote happen. "Vote for Peru, for the country, by moving the elections up to 2023," the president said in an address to the nation on Sunday. "Tomorrow you have a chance to win the country's trust." She added that if lawmakers — scheduled to convene on Monday — refuse, she will propose a constitutional reform so that a first round of elections will be held in October and a runoff in December. The South American country has been embroiled in a political crisis with near-daily street protests since December 7, when then-president Pedro Castillo was arrested after attempting to dissolve Congress and rule by decree. In seven weeks of demonstrations, 48 people — including one police officer — have been killed in clashes between security forces and protesters, according to the Ombudsman's Office of Peru. The unrest is coming mainly from

poor, rural Indigenous people from southern Peru who had identified Castillo — Indigenous and from that same region — as one of their own who would fight to end poverty, racism and inequality from which they suffer. Last month, lawmakers moved up elections due in 2026 to April 2024, but as protests show no sign of abating, Boluarte now wants them held this year — a call that Congress rejected on Saturday. But in the face of relentless protests, Boluarte on Friday urged Congress to move the vote up further but it was rejected at a plenary session with 45 votes in favour, 65 against and two abstentions. Demonstrators are calling for immediate elections, as well as Boluarte's removal, the dissolution of Congress and a new constitution. "Nobody has any interest in clinging to power," Boluarte insisted on Friday. "If I am here it is because I fulfilled my constitutional responsibility." As Castillo's vice president, Boluarte was constitutionally mandated to replace him after he was impeached by Congress and arrested. Apart from those who have died in protests, an additional 10 civilians, including two babies, died when they were unable to get medical treatment or medicine due to roadblocks, the ombudsman's office said. In southern regions, roadblocks have resulted in widespread shortages. Some of the worst violence and highest death tolls have come when protesters tried to storm airports in the south. Southern regions with large Indigenous populations have been the epicentre of the protest movement that has affected Peru's vital tourism industry. —DNA

Iran reiterates support for Palestinian nation

The Iranian foreign minister also paid tribute to the souls of the Palestinian martyrs and expressed sympathy with their families and the Palestinian nation. He reassured that Palestine has the continued support of the Islamic Republic of Iran

DNA

TEHRAN: Iran will continue its support to the Palestinian nation in face of Israeli aggression, Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian has said, as Palestine is struggling against the escalating acts of violence committed by Israeli settlers and army under the new extremist far-right cabinet. In separate phone calls with the heads of the Palestinian Hamas resistance group Ismail Haniyeh and Secretary General of the Islamic Jihad Ziyad al-Nakhalah, Amir-Abdollahian strongly condemned the Israeli killings of innocent Palestinian people, the Iranian Foreign Ministry Website reported early on Monday.

He emphasized that Iran will stand by its Palestinian brethren. His statement comes following the recent round of crimes committed by the Israeli regime in the Jenin camp, where 10 Palestinians including a woman were killed. Palestinian media outlets reported that Israeli occupation forces raided the Jenin camp early on Thursday, killing 10 and injuring more than 20, leaving residents and popular resistance groups with no choice but to defend themselves and confront the occupation forces. They said that more than 70 Israeli armed vehicles stormed the flashpoint city and the neighboring refugee camp, while Israeli snipers were deployed on rooftops and heavily armed soldiers opened fire at Palestinian youths who tried to block their way.



The Iranian foreign minister also paid tribute to the souls of the Palestinian martyrs and expressed sympathy with their families and the Palestinian nation. He reassured that Palestine has the continued support of the Islamic Republic of Iran. For his part, Haniyeh thanked Iran for its

principled positions in supporting the Palestinian nation on all levels. Nakhalah also said, "We are proud of the positions announced by the Islamic Republic of Iran, which has been always standing with us against the Zionist regime and its actions against Palestine and its Holy places."

Washington and Tel Aviv have claimed repeatedly that Iran is deeply involved in encouraging so-called Palestinian "terrorism" against Israel. However, Saleh Abu Izzah, a senior Palestinian political analyst from the Jenin camp, believes that Iran is sincere in its relations with other nations and that the Palestinian people have all the right to defend themselves in face of Israeli aggression. Speaking to Press TV website, Abu Izza said while Iran supports the Palestinian people who live under apartheid, unfortunately, there has been immense pressure from some Arab countries on the Palestinian resistance to stop its retaliation to Israeli crimes. Following the Jenin massacre, regional countries, including the UAE and Turkey,

have condemned Palestinian resistance operations against the Israeli apartheid regime. The UAE, Bahrain, Sudan and Morocco agreed to normalize relations with Israel under US-brokered agreements in 2020, when former US president Donald Trump was in office. Also, Saudi Arabia has been encouraging other nations to normalize with the Israeli apartheid regime, signaling it is willing to follow the lead of other Arab countries. "The Israeli Institute for National Security Studies issued a strategic report a few days ago in which it expressed worry and fear over what it called an imminent danger facing Israel, meaning the resistance in the West Bank that Israel wants to crush" Abu Izzah, a senior expert in West Asia affairs, told Press TV.

WHO urges
investment
in tropical
diseases

GENEVA: The World Health Organization on Monday called for greater investment in combating neglected tropical diseases, which left more than 1.6 billion people, often in least-developed countries, requiring treatment in 2021. NTDs are a diverse group of conditions, found mainly in tropical regions, that include dengue, leprosy and rabies. They are deemed neglected diseases because they are largely overlooked and benefit from only limited funding. The WHO said NTDs disproportionately affect the poorest, primarily in areas where water safety, sanitation and access to health care are inadequate. Soce Fall, director of the WHO's NTDs department, said they had been neglected precisely because they did not affect developed countries. By comparison, he cited the funding plunged into Mpox last year once it began spreading outside Africa. "The level of investment needed — we are far from reaching it," he told a press briefing. "We need to protect people wherever they are, and whatever their social condition." In 2021, around 1.65 billion people were estimated to require treatment for at least one NTD, of which 857 million were in south-east Asia and 584 million in Africa. The figure was down by 80 million from 2020 and has fallen consistently from 2.19 billion in 2010, the WHO said in a progress report released on World NTD Day. But 16 countries account for 80 percent of the global NTD burden. As of December, 47 countries had eradicated at least one NTD, with eight certified as having eliminated one in 2022 alone.—APP

McIlroy
comes
through
'battle' to
edge Reed

DUBAI: Rory McIlroy prevailed in a nail-biting finish over Patrick Reed, the man he "prefers not to acknowledge" after a spat between the two, in the rain-delayed Dubai Desert Classic on Monday. It was the first time McIlroy has won the first start of his new season and is his 15th DP World Tour victory in 231 starts. His one-stroke victory was also his third Dubai Desert Classic success in 13 appearances. He will remain world number one, after Spaniard Jon Rahm failed to win the Farmers Insurance Open on the PGA Tour on Saturday. McIlroy and Reed went into the tournament after a row when Reed reportedly threw a tee towards McIlroy on the practice range in Dubai. The incident, caught on camera, turned out to be a lot milder than reported but the two have been at odds since McIlroy criticised players, including Reed, who joined the rival Saudi-backed LIV Golf circuit. Relations were not helped by McIlroy receiving a subpoena from Reed's lawyer on Christmas Eve to appear as a witness in a case.—APP

PCB makes
selection
committee
for age-group
trials

LAHORE: The Pakistan Cricket Board has named an eight-member selection committee, which will conduct U13, U16 and U19 trials for the selection of regional and district teams. Former Test wicketkeeper/batter Kamran Akmal has been appointed as the chair, while other members of the panel are Sohail Tanvir, Amir Nazir, Taimoor Khan, Junaid Khan, Faisal Athar, Qaisar Abbas and Sanaulah Baloch. Each selector, along with head coach of the region/district, will conduct trials according to the schedule, which will be announced in due course. Kamran Akmal played 268 international matches, while Sohail Tanvir represented Pakistan in 121 matches. Amir Nazir played six Tests and nine ODIs from 1993 to 1995, Junaid Khan appeared in 107 international matches for Pakistan, Faisal Athar played in an ODI in 2003 and Qaisar Abbas played in a Test against England in 2000. Sanaulah Baloch and Taimoor Khan are former first-class cricketers.—DNA

DA in the first semi final match by securing 92-65 points. Army players were far better against the blue shirts team at half time by leading 14 points as second quarter of the match was concluded with 45-31 points. Army ace player Tughlab Ammar again led the winning side by scoring 20 points while Abdul Rehman scored 14 points for Army victory. Usman Khan 18 and Salman Butt scored 12 points for Wapda while Saadat Jehangir, Umair Muhammad, Naveed Ahmed, MM Alam and Choudhry Nadeem were supervised the semifinal match. In the second semifinal match Pakistan Air Force outclassed POF by 93-68 points to reach the final of the championship. Ahmed Jan was the top player for PAF who scored 28 points with Umair Jan scored 12 points in the match.

Briefs

Israel behind drone attacks at Iran plant: US media

WEB DESK

WASHINGTON: US officials believe drone attacks at a military plant in Iran's central city of Isfahan were carried out by Israel, according to US media reports. Tehran said on Sunday that drones had attacked the plant in Isfahan late the previous evening, calling the operation "unsuccessful." The Wall Street Journal and the New York Times reported that Israel was behind the attacks, citing US officials and people familiar with the operation. The New York Times cited senior intelligence officials who were familiar with the dialogue between Israel and the United States about the incident. None of the officials were named. "We've seen the press reports, but can confirm that no US military forces have conducted strikes or operations inside Iran. We continue to monitor the situation, but have nothing further to provide," the spokesperson said. Iran's Defense Ministry has not publicly offered any information about who carried out the attack. The Israel Defense Forces declined comment. "An explosion has occurred in one of the military centers affiliated to the Ministry of Defense," the deputy head of security for Isfahan governorate Mohammad Reza Jan-Nesari earlier told the semi-official Fars News Agency. Jan-Nesari said the explosion had left some damage, "but fortunately there were no casualties." The state news agency IRNA later said the explosion had been caused by "small drones." "There was an unsuccessful attack by small drones against a defense ministry industrial complex and fortunately with predictions and air defense arrangements already in place, one of them (struck)," IRNA said in a post on Twitter, citing the country's defense ministry. "The air defense system of the complex was able to destroy two other drones. Fortunately, this unsuccessful attack killed no one and minor damage was sustained to the roof of the complex." The ministry said the attack took place at 10:30 p.m. local time Saturday. The plant is about 440 kilometers (270 miles) south of Tehran.

Putin, Saudi crown prince discuss OPEC+ cooperation

DNA

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin held a phone call with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman on Monday to discuss cooperation within the OPEC+ group of oil producing countries in order to maintain oil price stability, the Kremlin said in a statement. Ministers from the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and allies led by Russia, known collectively as OPEC+, are due to hold a virtual meeting on Wednesday. Two OPEC+ delegates told Reuters on Monday that the panel was likely to recommend keeping the group's current oil output policy. Russian oil production has so far shown resilience in the face of Western sanctions imposed after Moscow sent troops into Ukraine on Feb. 24 and price caps introduced by Western countries in December.

Joint sitting of Parliament on Feb 8

ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi has summoned Joint Session of the Parliament at 3.00 p.m. on February 8 (Wednesday). The Parliament's Joint Session has been summoned under Articles 48(1) and 54 (1) of the Constitution, a press release issued by the President's Media Wing here on Monday said. - APP

Blinken reaffirms need for two-state solution

The US top diplomat lands in Israel amid surge of violence; due to meet Palestinian President today

MONITORING DESK

TEL AVIV: U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken urged Israel and Palestinians to calm tensions as he visited on Monday during the worst violence in years, reaffirming a long-stalled peace vision as the "only path" forward. While focusing on a Palestinian gun spree outside a synagogue that has put Israel on high alert, Blinken also cautioned against any celebration or avenging of such bloodshed. Seven people were shot dead in Friday's attack by an East Jerusalem man who was himself killed by police. Lionised by many fellow Palestinians, he had no known links to militant groups. A day earlier, Israel carried out an unusually deep raid on Jenin refugee camp in the occupied West Bank, killing 10 residents, most of them gunmen. At least 35 Palestinians, including fighters and civilians, have died in violence surging since Jan. 1, medical officials say. "It is the responsibility of everyone to take steps to calm tensions rather than inflame

Occupation forces kill Palestinian man

RAMALLAH: Israeli forces have shot dead a Palestinian man in the southern city of Hebron in the occupied West Bank, the latest killing in a wave of escalating violence. Identifying the deceased as 26-year-old Naseem Abu Fouda, the Palestinian Ministry of Health said he was shot in the head on Monday morning. Local journalists reported Abu Fouda was hospitalised just after 2am (00:00 GMT). The official Palestinian Authority (PA) news agency, Wafa, said Israeli forces "stationed at the military checkpoint 160, south of the Ibrahim Mosque in the centre of Hebron, fired live bullets at the young man's vehicle, wounding him with a bullet in the head, after which he was transferred to the Al-Ahly Hospital in the city" and that he was later pronounced dead. Abu Fouda is the 35th Palestinian to be killed by Israeli forces in January 2023. The death toll includes eight children. The latest killing comes as US Secretary of State Antony Blinken visits the region. - Agencies

them," Blinken told reporters after landing in Tel Aviv. Friday's rampage, he said, "was more than attack on individuals. It was also an attack on the universal act of practising one's faith. We condemn it in the strongest terms. And we condemn all those who

celebrate these and any other acts of terrorism that take innocent lives, no matter who the victim is or what they believe. Calls for vengeance against more innocent victims are not the answer." Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

PPP sends Rs 10 bn legal notice to Imran Khan

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) on Monday sent a Rs10 billion legal notice to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan for levelling "baseless allegations" against its co-chairperson Asif Ali Zardari. "The statements made by you [Khan] have caused great harm and hurt to the sentiments of the members of Pakistan Peoples Party which are not only in Pakistan but all over the world thereby damaging and defaming their reputation," read the notice sent by Zardari to the PTI chief. The notice contends that the PTI chief through his "baseless accusations" tried to create a link between Zardari and terrorist organisations "blindly disregarding the fact that our client and his party has remained the victim

of terrorism". The notice also reads that the PTI chief through his "defamatory actions" caused "severe agony, mental stress and loss of reputation" to the PPP co-chairperson. "You are, therefore, hereby called upon to render unconditional apology from our client, on television, print and social media, within 14 (fourteen) days from the receipt of this notice, failing whereof, our client shall be constrained to institute appropriate legal proceedings against you, civil as well as criminal, before the competent Courts of law and forums of Pakistan as well as of England, including but not limited to Suit for Damages for Rs.10,000,000,000/- (Rupees ten billion Only) at your risk as to cost and consequences," said the notice. - DNA

PPP to contest by polls, invites applications

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Differences have surfaced in ruling coalition over contesting by elections. All efforts by the chief of Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM), Maulana Fazlur Rehman, have failed to adopt a unanimous stance by the components of the political grouping over the participation in by elections. Meanwhile, Pakistan People's Party has decided to contest the by polls and formally informed the PDM leadership about its decision, sources said. According to sources, Fazlur Rehman has held two meetings with the PPP leadership to convince the party not to contest the by election. According to a press communiqué issued by the Secretary General PPPP, Farhatullah Babar the application should be addressed to the President Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians. A bank draft of Rs. 40,000 against the Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians should also be attached with the application. The aspirants from Sindh and Balochistan should send their applications to the Bilawal House Karachi

and aspirants from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab should send their applications to Zardari House Islamabad. The address of Zardari House Islamabad is House number 8, Street 19, Sector F-8/2, Islamabad. PPP sources said that the party has taken decision to contest by election over the pressure within the party ranks. Party leaders have forced the leadership to participate in general election. According to party sources, People's Party has been free to take its political decisions and will not take dictation of any other party or group. "Maulana Fazlur Rehman had announced boycott of by elections without consulting other parties", sources said. Sources said that the PPP will contact other PDM parties for support in the election. It is to be mentioned here that the MQM has already announced to contest the by election. The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has released schedule for by-polls on 33 National Assembly seats vacated by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) MNAs. The ECP has decided to hold by-polls on these NA seats on March 16, for which nomination papers can be received from February 06 to 08.

Boris says Putin threatened him with missile strike

LONDON: Boris Johnson has said Vladimir Putin threatened him with a missile strike in an "extraordinary" phone call in the run-up to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The then-prime minister said Mr Putin told him it "would only take a minute". Mr Johnson said the comment was made after he warned the war would be an "utter catastrophe". The claim is made in a BBC documentary on Mr Putin's interactions with world leaders over the years. The Kremlin spokesman said it was a "lie". Mr Johnson warned Mr Putin that invading Ukraine would lead to Western sanctions and more Nato troops on Russia's borders. He also tried to deter Russian military action by telling Mr Putin that Ukraine would not join Nato "for the foreseeable future". But Mr Johnson said: "He threatened me at one point, and he said, 'Boris, I don't want to hurt you but, with a missile, it would only take a minute' or something like that. Jolly. "But I think from the very relaxed tone that he was taking, the sort of air of detachment that he seemed to have, he was just playing along with my attempts to get him to negotiate." President Putin had been "very familiar" during the "most extraordinary call", Mr Johnson said. No reference to the exchange appeared in accounts released to the media of the call by Downing Street. But with all officially arranged phone calls, there are always detailed minutes taken by a Number 10 official and retained for the archive. It is impossible to know if Mr Putin's threat was genuine. However, given previous Russian attacks on the UK - most recently in Salisbury in 2018 - any threat from the Russian leader, however lightly delivered, is probably one Mr Johnson would have had no choice but to take seriously. - DNA

Zardari, Bilawal condemn suicide attack

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD/KARACHI: Former President of Pakistan and President Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians, Asif Ali Zardari and Chairman PPP Foreign Minister, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari have strongly condemned the terror attack on a mosque in Peshawar. President Zardari

and Chairman FM Bilawal said that the rise of terrorism in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is extremely alarming. The government should destroy the nurseries of terrorism by following the National Action Plan. Incidents of terrorism prior to the by-elections and general elections are a cause of concern. The federal government and the provincial interim government should see to it that the terrorises and their facilitators

are brought to book. President Zardari and Chairman FM Bilawal instructed the party officials and workers to help save lives of those injured by donating blood. They prayed to Almighty Allah for a speedy recovery of all those injured and to grant eternal peace to the martyrs and strength and fortitude to the bereaved families to bear this irreparable loss with equanimity.



ISLAMABAD: Leader of the Opposition in Senate Dr. Shehzad Waseem standing at Islamabad local courts before hearing of Fawad Chaudhry's case. - DNA

Scholz denounces 'bidding war' over jets for Ukraine

Chancellor's comments follow repeated requests by Ukrainian politicians for fighter jets

NEWS DESK

BERLIN: Chancellor Olaf Scholz has again pushed back against demands in Germany and from Ukrainian officials for fighter jets to repel Russia's invasion, urging Western nations not to join a "bidding war" for sophisticated weapons. Last week, Germany announced it will deliver its Leopard 2 battle tanks to Ukraine after weeks of pressure from NATO and European Union allies. "The fact we've only just made a decision [on sending tanks] and already the next debate [fighter jets] is firing up in Germany - that just seems frivolous and undermines people's trust in government decisions," said Scholz in an interview with the German newspaper Tagesspiegel on Sunday. "I can only advise against entering a bidding war over weapons systems." Ukraine's Dep-

uty Foreign Minister Andriy Melnyk has pressed Germany for dozens of its Tornados combat aircraft, and urged the international community to join a "fighter jet coalition" for his country. Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy again asked Western nations to provide his country with more high-end weapons systems in his daily address on Saturday. Zelenskyy specifically mentioned the Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS). "There can be no taboo in the supply of weapons to protect against Russian terror," said Ukraine's leader. Russia last week condemned the delivery of NATO battle tanks to Ukraine, calling it "direct and growing" evidence of United States and European involvement in the war. The German leader also said he will continue to phone Russian President Vladimir Putin, stressing the importance of maintaining an open chan-

nel of communication in order to find an end to Russia's war on Ukraine. Scholz said the tone of the conversations was "not impolite, but our perspectives are of course completely different". "And I will continue to phone Putin - because we have to keep talking to each other," he said. The last phone call to Putin was at the start of December. The Russian leader said at the time that the German and Western line on Ukraine was "destructive" and called on Berlin to rethink its approach. The conversations, Scholz said, were often about "concrete issues" such as prisoner exchanges, Ukrainian grain exports, and the fate of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant. "For me it's important that the conversations keep coming back to the main point: how does the world get out of this terrible situation? The condition for that is clear: the withdrawal of Russian troops," Scholz

said in the interview. No 'escalation' Scholz also warned that NATO should not be dragged into a war with Moscow. "A German chancellor who takes his oath of office seriously must do everything to ensure that Russia's war against Ukraine does not turn into a war between Russia and NATO," he stressed, adding he will not "allow such an escalation". The Leopard 2 announcement, followed shortly afterwards by a US pledge of M1 Abrams tanks to Kyiv, infuriated the Kremlin. "For now, there are no agreed talks [with Scholz] in the schedule. Putin has and remains open to contacts," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov was quoted as saying by RIA Novosti. Germany is the second-largest donor of military hardware to Ukraine after the US, according to the Kiel Institute for the World Economy, ahead of other European powers such as France and Britain.

ETPB seals Sheikh Rashid's 'Lal Haveli'

RAWALPINDI: The Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB) here on Monday sealed Awami Muslim League (AML) Chief, Sheikh Rashid Ahmad's residence, 'Lal Haveli' over illegal occupation. The Board sealed all its entrances with official locks. Heavy contingent of police and officers of the district administration were present while sealing seven units of the property. According to the administrator ETPB, Asif Khan, the department has sealed seven units of 'Lal Haveli' and has written to the authorities concerned to confirm the registry of one unit of Rashid's Rawalpindi residence. He maintained that 'Lal Haveli' is government's land that has been occupied for a long time. Several notices had also been issued to Sheikh Rashid and his brother in this regard, he added. - APP

Pakistani rupee crashes to Rs269 against US dollar

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The toothless Pakistani rupee kept suffering at the hands of mighty US dollar as the greenback topped the Rs269 mark in the interbank trading on Monday. According to the forex dealers, the US dollar resumed its hammering of the local currency and it appreciated by Rs8.90 as in the interbank trading by Monday noon. The greenback was currently being traded at Rs269.50. On the last trading day on Friday, Pakistani rupee had witnessed significant depreciation against the US dollar in the inter-bank market, falling 2.73%. As per the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), the rupee had closed at 262.60 after a fall of Rs7.17. The depreciation comes as Pakistan moves to convince the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that it has a no-holds-barred exchange rate, ahead of the Fund's visit to Islamabad. Many analysts said the rupee was bound to see significant depreciation as part of the prior conditions to revive the IMF bailout programme. The IMF had also announced its mission will visit Pakistan from January 31-February 9 to continue the discussions for the 9th review under the Extended Fund Facility (EFF). The IMF programme revival has been deemed crucial in the face of fast-depleting foreign exchange reserves held by the SBP that dropped a massive \$923 million to a mere \$3.7 billion, data released on Thursday last showed. This was the lowest level of SBP-held reserves since February 2014.

China covid: Officials say current wave ending

WEB DESK

BEIJING: Chinese health officials say the country's current wave of Covid-19 infections is "coming to an end". The number of severe Covid cases and deaths is trending downward, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said in a report. It also said there had been "no obvious rebound" during Lunar New Year holidays last week, where millions reunited for family gatherings. There have long been questions raised about China's Covid reporting. But experts say the decline reported now corresponds with the expected timing of an end to this major wave. The virus tore through Chinese cities and towns after authorities lifted zero-Covid restrictions in December. However fever clinic visit rates have dropped over 90% through January and hospitalisation rates are down over 85%. Fears that the virus could surge again during the festive period have also not yet been realised. In its report, the CDC said: "There has not been an obvious rebound in Covid cases during the Lunar New Year holidays."