



Afghan Taliban signs oil deal with Chinese firm – Bloomberg



KABUL: The Taliban government of Afghanistan has signed an oil extraction deal with a Chinese company, Bloomberg reported on Friday. The contract with Xinjiang Central Asia Petroleum and Gas Company (CAPEIC) was signed in Kabul in the presence of the Taliban's deputy prime minister for economic affairs, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, and the Chinese ambassador to Afghanistan, Wang Yu, the outlet said, citing a statement from the Taliban government. The 25-year oil extraction agreement would see CAPEIC drilling for oil in the Amu Darya basin.

It is the Taliban's first major international energy extraction deal since the group took control of the country in 2021. "In terms of natural resources, Afghanistan is a wealthy nation. In addition to other minerals, oil is the wealth of the Afghan people on which the economy of the country can rely," Bloomberg quoted Baradar as saying. The Chinese company will invest up to \$150 million a year, which will increase to \$540 million in three years, and will give jobs to 3,000 Afghans, the outlet added. Afghanistan is estimated to have more than \$1 trillion

worth of natural resources such as natural gas, oil, copper, and rare earths, which are largely untapped due to decades of turmoil. After the Taliban came to power in 2021, the US froze more than \$7 billion of its foreign currency reserves, leaving the country severely short of cash. China, which shares a 76km border with Afghanistan, said at the time that it was ready to deepen "friendly and cooperative" relations with Afghanistan. The Taliban has not yet been recognized as Afghanistan's legitimate government by any country. (Agencies)

Chad says it foiled 'destabilisation' bid by officers

N'DJAMENA: The government in Chad said Thursday that it had foiled an "attempted destabilisation" plot by army officers and a prominent human rights activist. A group of 11 officers, led by Baradine Berdei Targuio, president of the Chadian Organisation of Human Rights, were behind the attempt, according to a government statement. The security services arrested those responsible some time after December 8, the statement added. A formal investigation had been opened for "violation of the constitutional order, criminal association, illegal possession of a firearm and

complicity", said Communications Minister and government spokesman Aziz Mahamat Saleh. The investigating magistrate leading the case has charged them and ordered their detention, he added. "The investigation is following its course and the government means to do everything to shed light on this affair and to determine responsibility," Saleh said. Targuio was sentenced in February 2021 to three years in jail on charges of undermining the constitutional order for having written that Chad's then leader, General Idriss Deby Itno, was seriously ill. (Agencies)

Six-year-old student shoots teacher in US

Newport News: A six-year-old student shot and wounded a teacher in Virginia during an altercation inside a first-grade classroom, police and school officials in the city of Newport News said. No students were injured in the shooting on Friday at Richneck Elementary School, police said. The teacher – a woman in her 30s – suffered life-threatening injuries. Newport News Police Chief Steve Drew told reporters her condition had improved somewhat by late afternoon. Police said the child had a handgun in the classroom and that they took that student into custody. "We did not have a situation where someone was going around the school shooting," Drew told reporters. "We have a situation in one particular location where a gunshot was fired." The shooting was not an accident, he said. Investigators were trying to figure out where the child obtained the gun. The police chief did not specifically address questions about whether authorities were in touch with the boy's parents but said members of



the police department were handling that investigation. "We have been in contact with our commonwealth's attorney [local prosecutor] and some other entities to help us best get services to this young man," Drew said. The police chief did not provide further details about the shooting, the altercation or what happened inside the school. Newport News is a city of about 185,000 people in southeastern Virginia known for its shipyard, which builds the nation's aircraft carriers and other US Navy vessels. Richneck has about 550 students who are in kindergarten through to fifth grade (10-11 years old), according to the Virginia Department of Education's website. (Agencies)

Indian rupee, Asia's worst currency in 2022, may fall further

NEW DELHI: The Indian rupee, emerging Asia's worst performer in 2022, is likely to extend losses in the next fiscal year, according to a top private bank in the country. "A substantially wider current account deficit" in the next fiscal year will keep the rupee under pressure, Neeraj Gambhir, group executive for treasury, markets and wholesale banking at Axis Bank Ltd, said in a Bloomberg TV interview. "We haven't seen a meaningful reversal of capital outflows that we saw for the best part of (fiscal) 2023." The rupee



declined over 10% last year, weighed by a dollar bolstered by the Federal Reserve's aggressive monetary policy tightening and India's deteriorating external finances. The Reserve Bank of India may mop up any in-

flows to boost its foreign-exchange reserves, a move that may also work against the rupee, according to Gambhir. "RBI has used up a fairly large amount of reserves through the last year to manage the pace of depreciation," said Gambhir. "If there is a flow back of liquidity into domestic markets, that would be used to build back those reserves." He, however, doesn't expect any runaway depreciation, but a milder 2%-3% drop in the fiscal year starting April 1. The rupee was trading steady at 82.57 to a dollar on Friday. (Agencies)

Israeli, Palestinian envoys spar at UN over Al-Aqsa visit

UNITED NATIONS: Israeli and Palestinian envoys to the United Nations on Thursday traded heated barbs at a Security Council meeting over the controversial visit by an Israeli minister to Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa mosque compound. Israel's ambassador to the UN, Gilad Erdan, called the session "pathetic" and "absurd" while the Palestinian envoy accused the Jewish state of acting "with absolute contempt." The 15-member Council discussed the visit, which has en-

raged Palestinians, at UN headquarters in New York following a request by the United Arab Emirates and China. Ahead of the session, Israel's permanent representative to the world body, Gilad Erdan, told reporters there was "absolutely no reason" for the meeting to be held. "To hold a Security Council session on a non-event is truly absurd," he said. Tuesday's visit by Israel's new national security minister, firebrand Itamar Ben-Gvir, sparked a wave of interna-

tional condemnation, including from the United States, a longstanding ally of Israel. Al-Aqsa mosque lies in Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem and is the third-holiest site in Islam. It is the most sacred place to Jews, who refer to it as Temple Mount. Under a longstanding status quo, non-Muslims can visit the site at specific times but are not allowed to pray there -- although some Israeli nationalists are believed to do so covertly, which angers the Palestinians. (Agencies)

Hong Kongers await border reopening with mixed feelings

HONG KONG: Shanghai engineer Roy Wang has a pressing task now that the border between Hong Kong and the Chinese mainland is being reopened -- rekindling his long-distance relationship after a painful separation. "There were so many quarrels with my girlfriend. It was really miserable to handle," Wang, 23, told AFP on Wednesday. His wish to visit her was granted the very next day. Authorities announced that

widespread travel between Hong Kong and mainland China would resume from Sunday, initially allowing about 60,000 people a day to cross in each direction. Those measures are a game-changer for many after the border was effectively sealed for nearly three years during the coronavirus pandemic, separating loved ones, cutting off tourism and severing most business travel. "I feel so relieved," Wang said after he heard

the news. "After waiting for so long, even though the process is very hard, the result is satisfying." Hong Kong's recession-hit economy is desperate to reconnect with its biggest source of growth, and families are looking forward to reunions over the Chinese New Year later this month. Within a day of the new rules being announced, more than 280,000 Hong Kongers registered to go to the mainland. (Agencies)

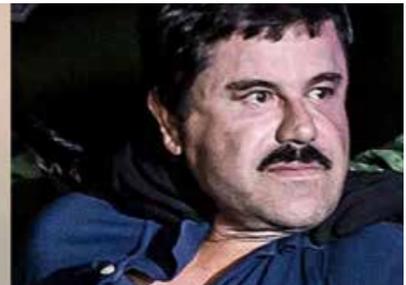
Nine million more risk being pushed into poverty in flood-ravaged Pakistan, warns UNDP

UNITED NATIONS: An additional nine million people risk being pushed into poverty on top of the 33 million affected by last summer's devastating floods in Pakistan, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) said Thursday, ahead of next week's International Conference on Climate Resilient Pakistan in Geneva. "We estimate that up to around nine million people – additional people – could be pushed into poverty due to the

flood impact" Knut Ostby, the UNDP Resident Representative in Pakistan, said in Geneva. His remarks were also released at UN Headquarters in New York. Although the Pakistan flooding was "unprecedented", it could happen to other countries affected by climate change, Ostby warned. He said that crops had been lost from the last harvest and from the missed planting season. "Agricultural prices – food prices – are

therefore increasing and could push double the amount of people into food insecurity, increasing that number from seven to 14.6 million," added. Echoing those concerns, Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva, Ambassador Khalil Hashmi, said that some eight million of the 33 million affected by the emergency remain "acutely displaced", as flood waters have still not receded in some areas. (Agencies)

Mexico arrests son of notorious drug kingpin 'El Chapo'



CULIACAN: Mexican security forces on Thursday captured a son of jailed drug kingpin Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman, scoring a high-profile win in the fight against powerful cartels days before US President Joe Biden visits. Ovidio Guzman, who was arrested in the northwestern city of Culiacan, is accused of leading a faction of his father's notorious Sinaloa cartel, Defense Minister Luis Crescencio Sandoval told reporters. The 32-year-old, nicknamed "El Raton" (The Mouse), has allegedly helped to run his father's drug trafficking operations since El Chapo was extradited to the United States in 2017. The

United States had offered a reward of up to \$5 million for information leading to Ovidio Guzman's arrest, accusing him of being a key player in the Sinaloa cartel. His capture -- which resulted in gunfire and cars set ablaze in Culiacan -- comes as Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador prepares to welcome Biden next week for a North America leaders' summit at which security is expected to be high on the agenda. "El Chapo" is serving a life prison sentence in the United States for trafficking hundreds of tons of drugs into the US over the course of 25 years. (Agencies)

State of emergency declared in California due to winter storms

WASHINGTON: California Governor Gavin Newsom declared a state of emergency as the Golden State prepares for winter storms. According to what was reported by the US media, the declaration includes allowing the governor of the state to mobilize the National Guard to assist in disaster response and to obtain assistance from the Federal Highway Administration if necessary, while securing equipment and

personnel for rapid response to disasters; such as floods, avalanches, and mudflows. Residents of the state of California received special warnings to avoid any unnecessary driving, and to develop contingency plans for alternative energy sources if necessary, and the city of Watsonville in Santa Cruz County announced evacuation orders for a number of neighborhoods at risk. (Agencies)

About Khyber Mail The Khyber mail was first published in Peshawar, Pakistan in 1932. A newspaper in English by the eminent journalist Sheikh Sana Ullah. From 1932 to 1989 it has survived as leading English newspaper in the region by the sons of Sana Ullah i.e. Sheikh Zaka Ullah, Sheikh Inayat Ullah and Sheikh Saleem Ullah. The publication was shut down in 1989 due to various reasons. The current owner Rizwan Inayat son of Sheikh Inayat Ullah and grandson of Sheikh Sana Ullah, has restarted the family heritage but meeting with the requirement of the century, by giving the readers current happenings around the world with one touch anywhere any time and updating the reader to pace up with the world.

Module Validation workshops on enterprise development training for cluster in district Khyber and Peshawar

PESHAWAR: Four validation workshops were conducted in Hotel Grand on 4th and 5th Jan 2023, organized by Khyber Pass Economic Corridor (KPEC) and Empowerment thru Creative integration (ECI). Different stakeholders participated including SMEDA, KP-TEVTA, KP - EZDMC, KP-IT Board, KP BOIT, Bank of Khyber (BoK), Small Industrial Development Board (SIDB), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Khyber Chamber of Commerce, Women Chamber of Commerce Peshawar, Agriculture Research Institute (ARI). Moreover, the participants also include business associations and representatives of business clusters in the region. KPEC is in the process of identifying potential clusters and improving their competitiveness, viz-a-viz international markets, in district Peshawar and Khyber. Based on the diagnostic study and training



need assessment 500 individuals from selected clusters and 30 Master trainer from KP-TEVTA will be trained in enterprise development skills. In this regard, comprehensive training modules were developed and presented to the relevant stakeholders in validation workshops. The workshops were attended by key individuals from Business Communities, Government Departments and identified clusters. Valuable inputs and suggestions shared by the participants were recorded during the validation workshops for incor-

poration in the training modules. The closing ceremony of the validation workshop was graced by Mr. Sohail Khan, Director General, SDU P&D Department, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He appreciated the activity and underscored the importance of the inputs and suggestions of the stakeholders. He also thanked the participants and stressed the need for continuous dialogue with the business communities for wider economic development and prosperity of the region. (PR)

KP hills likely to receive rain with snowfall

PESHAWAR: The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has predicted rain with snowfall over the hills in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa during January 7 to 9. According to a dispatch of the Provincial Disaster Management Authority issued to all deputy commissioners on Friday, it said that a westerly wave is likely to enter north Baluchistan on January 6 (evening/night) and grip most of the province on the weekend (January 7 and 8), and may persist on upper parts of the province till Monday (January 9). Under the influence of emerging weather system, rain with snowfall over the hills is expected in Chitral, Lower & Upper Dir, Malakand, Swat, Buner, Shangla, Kohistan, Battagram, Torghar, Mansehra, and Abbotta-

bad districts. Similarly, light to moderate rain with light snowfall over the hills is also expected in Haripur, Mardan, Swabi, Nowshera, Peshawar, Charsadda, Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Kurram, Orakzai, Hangu, Karak, Kohat, Bannu, Lakki Marwat, Tank, Dera Ismail Khan, North and South Waziristan districts. The rain will prove to be beneficial for the standing crops especially in Barani areas, with foggy conditions likely to subside during the forecast period and day temperatures to fall by 05 to 07 C during the wet spell. However, snowfall may disrupt normal vehicular traffic in mountainous/hilly areas and rain may also trigger landslides in some vulnerable parts of upper districts. (APP)

KPITB, Easypaisa sign agreement to facilitate government departments

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Information Technology Board (KPITB) has signed an agreement with Jazz cash and Easypaisa (Telenor Bank) enabling government departments to receive payments through an integrated payment gateway system from service providers in Pakistan. The agreement was aimed to enable government departments to accept digital payments through a unified and integrated payment gateway interface service and provide a convenient, acceptable, and reliable digital payment platform, said a release issued here Saturday. Moreover, through the platform, KPITB Board would provide an interface to the relevant department for the reconciliation of digital payments

and collect digital payments via Web or Mobile application. It would also citizens to access essential government services without visiting banks. "This partnership is a great example of how the public sector can work with private organizations, like Jazz towards a Digital Pakistan. I congratulate Chairman KPITB and his team for providing digital access and ease of payments to the people of KP, said Ali Naseer, CEO of Jazz Cash. "We are proud to partner with Jazz Cash and Easy paisa (Telenor Bank) to open a range of exciting new possibilities for KP government payment infrastructure and put it at the cutting edge of innovation in this space," said Ali Mahmud Managing Director KPIT Board. (APP)

CEO EZDMC pledges close, facilitative ties with industry

PESHAWAR: The Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zones Development and Management Company (KP-EZDMC), Javed Iqbal Khattak has assured building close, facilitative and supportive synergy between industries and the

company. He was addressing a reception organized in his honour by the Industrialists' Association Peshawar here the other day, said a press release issued here on Friday. Chief Commercial Officer, Chief Finance Officer, Chief Planning, Chief Zone Management and Estate Manager KP-EZDMC were also present on the occasion also accompanied by the CEO. Besides, Group Leader, Ghazanfar Bilour, executive members Riaz Arshad, Adeel Rauf, Malik Niazi, Zarak Khan Khattak, Mohsin Wadud, Haris Mufti, Junaid Altaf, Subhani Zia and Dr Maqbool were also present on the occasion. The KP-EZDMC chief was invited by the President IAP Malik Imran Ishaq & Management Committee to congratulate him on his service extension. After exchanging pleasantries, the CEO apprised the forum about future initiatives of the company and said that the PSO-operated Fuel Station would be established in the Industrial Estate Peshawar (IEP) and also assured

availability of subsidized industrial lubricants for the industry. He told the industrialists the company has also planned beautification and face-lifting of IEP with landscaping, smart street systems and electric signboards. The company is also going to establish a centralized security system with 24/7 patrolling, a control room and an active registry of factories' security guards and Hi-Tech CCTV cameras. Furthermore, he said that a no-objection certificate for the construction of a boundary wall around the industrial estate has already been obtained from the Irrigation Department. He said that street/road lights would be energized through connections from the nearby industries and asked the industrialists to beef up internal security arrangements and abstain from dumping debris on street roads. The CEO assured that the company will leave no stone unturned for industrial development and support of the business community, particularly industrialists. (APP)

GOLD PRICE IN PAK

Gold Rate	24K Gold	22K Gold	21K Gold	18K Gold
Per Tola Gold	Rs. 156400	Rs. 143366	Rs. 136850	Rs. 117300
Per 10 Gram	Rs. 134100	Rs. 122924	Rs. 117338	Rs. 100575
Per Gram Gold	Rs. 13410	Rs. 12292	Rs. 11734	Rs. 10058
Per Ounce	Rs. 380200	Rs. 348514	Rs. 332675	Rs. 285150

FOREX RATES

Currency	Buying	Selling
US Dollar	234.25	236.5
China Yuan	32.41	32.66
Japanese Yen	2.4	2.44
Saudi Riyal	66.7	67.3
U.A.E Dirham	69	69.6
UK Pound	301	304
Euro	264.5	267
Australian Dollar	162	163.25
Canadian Dollar	172	173.35

Emergency Numbers

Organization	Phone No
Rescue 1122 HQrs	091-2264224-25
Rescue 1122 Mardan	0937-9230770
Fire Brigade Cantt:	091-9212534
Fire Brigade City	091-2566666
Police Emergency	091-9212222
Edhi Ambulance	091-2214575
Red Crescent Ambulance	091-2210836
Emergency Ambulance	091-2590846
Civil Defence, Peshawar	091-9212176
Lady Reading Hospital	091-9211430
HMC Peshawar	091-9217140-46
KTH Peshawar	091-9216340-8
Irnam Hospital	091-9216115
Mission Hospital	091-2212371
Al-Khidmat Hospital	091-2215945
Fauji Foundation Hospital	091-9212771-4
Frontier Foundation Blood Services	091-5703463
Hamza Foundation, Peshawar	091-5841632
Sui Gas, Peshawar	091-9213016
Wapda Complaint Peshawar	091-9212041
PIA, Peshawar	091-9213351
Airport Inquiry	114
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All Pakistan Men Inter-University Volleyball Championship begins

PESHAWAR: The final round of the All Pakistan Inter-University Men Volleyball Championship organized by the Directorate of Sports University of Peshawar kicked off here at Sahibzada Abdul Qayyum Indoor Hall, inside the campus here on Friday. Secretary Higher Education Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Dawood Khan graced the occasion as a chief guest. Deputy Director Sports Higher Education Commission Islamabad Muhammad Asif, Vice Chancellor UET Swat, Project Director University of Engineering Swat Prof. Dr Najeeb, former Principal Government College Peshawar Prof. Dr Sharif Gul, Dr Noor Zada, Deputy Director Sports HED, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Arshad Hussain, Director General Sports University of Peshawar Bahre Karam, former international volleyball player Ghulam Abbas, Laiq Khan, players, officials and large number of spectators were also present during the colorful opening ceremony wherein a total of 14 teams from different universities across the country are taking part. Teams from 16 best universities are participating in the final round of the All Pakistan Inter-University Volleyball Championship. In addition to Peshawar University, Islamia University Bahawalpur, University of Management and Technology Lahore,

University of Science and Technology Bannu, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, NUML University Islamabad, Islamia College University Peshawar, Panch University Rawalakot, Minhaj University Lahore, Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto University of Science and Information Technology Karachi, Sargodha University, Sir Syed University, Karachi, University of Punjab Lahore and University of Central Punjab are taking part. Secretary Higher Education Dawood Khan paid tribute to Director Sports Peshawar University Bahre Karam and his team for organizing the best competitions. He said that the best opportunities and facilities were being provided to the players. "It is hoped that they will use their best skills and these players will shine the name of the country and the nation in the future," he added. More than 200 Public and Private Education Institutions took part in the Men Volleyball first round played in 14 different zones across the country and among them all the winners and two finalists teams are taking part. Peshawar University, which won the last year trophy of the Championship held at NUML, Islamabad, will be defending their title. Bahre Karam said, "Players are being accommodated in guest houses and all out facilities would be provided to them." (APP)

Govt paying equal attention to development of all segments of society: Saif

PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Muhammad Ali Saif on Friday said that provincial government was equally paying attention to development of all segments of society regardless of their political, religious or any other affiliations. Talking to a delegation of Majlis-e-Wahadat ul Muslimin KP here at his office, he said that Chief Minister Mahmood Khan has put the province on the path of devel-

opment and prosperity, adding that KP government was fully aware of the problems of people and taking pragmatic measures to provide maximum relief to them in available resources. The delegation apprised the CM's aide about the problems in their areas and requested the government's attention. They agreed to chalk out a mechanism with the government for solution of their problems. (APP)

Commissioner Peshawar requested to convene experts' meeting for halting illegal tree cutting

PESHAWAR: Commissioner Peshawar, Riaz Mehsud is requested to convene a meeting of experts and civil society members to discuss 'green development projects' and halt illegal tree cutting. This request is made by Sarhad Conservation Network (SCN), an organization working for the preservation of the cultural heritage and environment of Peshawar. In a press release issued here on Friday, SCN says KP is in the grip of the timber mafia as many districts have reported a trend of mindless uprooting of many old trees and natural flora. "Involvement of local communities of Peshawar will help to prevent further thoughtless destruction of Peshawar's shrinking natural heritage," it proposes. Recently many trees comprising amalras, and other indigenous species along the proposed walking track route were uprooted by PDA bulldozers without NOC to pave way for the proposed walking tract in the green belt in Hayatabad and was halted by Commissioner Peshawar Riaz Mehsud. Many large

indigenous old trees have become victims to the timber mafia embedded in PDA, as it has reverted to ruthless logging in a dry, arid Peshawar city that was once home to gardens and green boulevards. Because of cold weather timber is in huge demand all over Pakistan and reportedly KP is the biggest supplier of fuel timber in nationwide markets, SCN added. The ubiquitous timber mafia operates in the late evening hours. SCN members have reported several trees being cut without a permit or a valid reason. Only last week on social media a video of a big tree being cut down in the Yousafzai market was shared by a member of SCN. This unabated trend has also been reported in other markets, green and public spaces of Hayatabad. Peshawar will be unlivable if the local administration does not take concrete action against on-going tree felling. Globally the trend has shifted towards "green solutions for a sustainable development model" to offset the impacts of Climate Change. (APP)

KP CM terms merger of erstwhile FATA as turning point

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mahmood Khan has termed the merger of erstwhile FATA into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as a turning point in the development and prosperity of the tribal people. He was addressing a meeting of the elected public representatives from the newly merged districts here at Chief Minister's House, Peshawar. Former federal minister for religious affairs Noor-ul-Haq Qadri, provincial ministers Anwar Zeb and Iqbal Wazir, other members of National and Provincial Assemblies from NMDs attended the meeting. Addressing the participants, the Chief Minister said that the provincial government has successfully completed the merger

process despite numerous challenges. "In most of the merged districts, the provincial government had to start from zero because no attention was paid to the development of these areas in the past," he said and added that a new era of development has been started in the merged districts by introducing special development programs for redressing the decades-long deprivations of the tribal people. Chief Minister said that the incumbent provincial government has taken concrete steps to bring the people of the newly merged districts into mainstream adding that after the merger of erstwhile FATA into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, provincial departments have been extended to

the newly merged districts and an special development programme has been initiated with the sole purpose to address their longstanding deprivations. The Chief Minister said that the incumbent provincial government, during the last four years, has taken multiple steps resulting in significant improvement in the overall Services Delivery System. Despite multiple challenges, the provincial government has proved that it is not only committed to the development and prosperity of tribal districts but has gone beyond its capacity for this purpose. Absorption of Levies and Khasadars into regular police, regularization of ex-FATA project employees and provision of medical equip-

ment and emergency medicine are among the important initiatives completed by his government. Besides, significant measures in the education sector including provision of scholarships to male and female students of merged districts, recruitment of new teachers, solarization of schools, construction of playgrounds, establishment and up-gradation of educational institutions alongside establishing science and IT laboratories. Other important steps for the development including construction and rehabilitation of roads, establishment of micro hydro plants, construction of new grid stations, installation of transformers and feeders etc have also been initiated. (APP)



-Your Source for Alternate News-

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Consensus needed

Up to a whopping 24.5 percent in December, inflation gallops away, but it is the luckier part of the masses that have to deal with just rising prices. Because, in a large part of the country, a hapless citizenry is dealing with that other horseman of the apocalypse, terrorism. The specter of terror looms large over Khyber Pakhtunkhwa; the unfortunate three-cities model of the Pakistani news media unfortunately only covers incidents of terror when they spread to either the aforementioned three cities. Or if the incidents yield a particularly large body count and have crossed yet another level of brutality. The problem is that dealing with both these issues hinges on some sort of national consensus to the same. On the economic front, there are several initially unpalatable decisions to be made. The ruling PDM won't take them, and the erstwhile ruling PTI hadn't either. No sympathies for either on this front, but things are what they are, and the PDM are the incumbents, so they are the ones that should be blamed more. The PTI is certainly refusing to play ball, but they are a political party and they have to milk political capital out of the situation. Even the pound of flesh that they demand in exchange of sitting at the table to discuss the issue – fresh elections – isn't all too unreasonable a demand, in principle. On the terror front, the PTI-run Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is the most affected province, especially now that the seven Fata agencies have been merged into it. Law and order is a provincial issue and they cannot just sit this one out, especially given the scandalously lax behaviour towards the TTP that the party had been showing in the past. A former CM had even offered the banned outfit an office in the provincial capital. However, they do have some talking points in their defence, valid ones. Chiefly: the whole counter-terror ecosystem is managed by the military, and therefore the federal government is the one that has to step up to the plate and the provincial governments will follow in tow. These seem like petty squabbles to the people affected by these problems. The need of the hour is a consensus on these issues and all sides of the political divide have to budge from their entrenched positions.

HEC Scholarships- Capitalizing nation's real resource

— By Qaiser-u-Zaman

Human capital has always been the best-ever resource for any country to glitter on international horizons by taking strides in different arena of life and taking nation to new heights of progress and self-sufficiency. For this purpose, the educated youth is inevitable and every nation diligently focuses this area by creating more opportunities for its students within the country and at the best universities across the globe. Higher Education Commission (HEC) has performed valuably in recent years in offering various international scholarship schemes to make education accessible for students, particularly those from far-flung and less privileged areas. "Over 40% of the government's total investment in higher education sector has been on human resource development and we have maintained the most transparent and cautious approach for selection of students" said Chairman Higher Education Commission Dr. Mukhtar Ahmad. "Our students are very talented and under Erasmus Mundus scholarship program, which is very competitive, this year the highest number of students securing these scholarships are from Pakistan," Dr Mukhtar said. "We have allocated funds for need-based scholarships in recurring budget for universities so no brilliant student who falls within the merit, has to discontinue studies due to financial constraints," he added. "Owing to our initiatives, Pakistan won the greatest number of Erasmus+ Scholarships with India remaining second." Dr. Mukhtar appreciated USAID for providing Master's scholarships to 700 female students to study in different disciplines in top 30 partner institutions of Pakistan and "we are endeavoring to secure more slots." The USAID has been supporting scholarships for meritorious but financially disadvantaged students for the last 18 years to assist Pakistan Government in efforts to enhance students'

enrolment, especially female students from less developed districts to study in engineering, business, social sciences, agriculture and medicine disciplines. "With the investment of \$33.2 million, over 6000 need-based scholarships have been awarded making it one of the largest USAID funded scholarship program of Pakistan," the HEC Chairman said. "Under this program, 60% scholarships have been awarded to female students". Amidst challenge of keeping up with international education standards, the HEC has a gigantic task ahead to secure more scholarships for Pakistani students enabling them to pursue higher studies at the best universities of the world. "We are also endeavoring for more scholarships for Pakistani students at the University of Oxford," Dr Mukhtar said as he mentioned to facilitating institution-to-institution collaboration in academic and research areas with currently 22 Pakistani students availing scholarships for higher studies at Oxford University. Pakistan-UK Education Gateway can prove to be another potential way forward for students amidst some practical measures like sponsorship for mobility of students and scholars. The HEC has also signed a Document of Understanding (DoU) with the Edith Cowan University (ECU), Australia to jointly work under a collaborative arrangement on various academic and research areas. Under the agreement, ECU will admit up to 15 HEC's PhD scholars – who meet the HEC scholarship criteria and the normal selection criteria for entry to an ECU PhD course including academic and English language entry requirements as indicated on the ECU website – per year for five years, starting in 2023. Major research areas covered under the agreement include Engineering; Arts and Humanities; Education; Medical and Health Sciences; Science; Nursing and Midwifery and Business and Law.

Excessive pesticides usage hazardous to human health, soil fertility

— By Aatif Ismail

Excessive use of pesticides and insecticides in agriculture poses serious hazards to human health, soil fertility, and the overall environment of the country's food basket and hub of agriculture in South Punjab. Both male and female field workers are usually exposed to this phenomenon with 70% population of South Punjab living in rural areas and the majority among them directly associated with the agriculture sector. According to South Punjab Agriculture Secretariat, around five million farmers, the majority among them women, are used to working in agriculture fields to lend a hand to their men and eke out earnings for fighting abject poverty. Being frail in comparison with lower immunity levels than men, these women workers are more exposed to pesticide hazards than men due to direct contact with plants of different crops especially cotton as they have to stay at cotton fields for hours during picking season. The Agriculture Secretariat of South Punjab, a few months back, conducted a survey and then lab analysis to determine the presence of chemical pesticide residue in cotton fields and the results were alarming. Three parts of cotton bolls (peel, lint, and seed), collected from the pesticides usage fields after analysis at Chemical Pesticide Residue Lab, Kala Shah Kaku, revealed the presence of an abundant amount of Triazophos and Gamma-cyhalothrin in samples. According to European standards, the permissible residue limit of Triazophos (pesticide) should be 0.01 mg/kg but in Multan's sample, it was 20.34 mg/kg besides the abundant presence of Gamma-cyhalothrin as well. Medical practitioners see the lethal impacts on human beings exposed to pesticides and insecticides fearing these people suffer from unconsciousness, lung and liver complications, and cancer if the disease gets chronic. "There are two complications emerging from

excessive use of chemical pesticides - acute and chronic," said Dr Waqas Arqam. "In the acute form, the farmers become unconscious while spraying or visiting farms soon after spray. In the chronic form, they suffer from lethal diseases lung and liver problems, and finally cancer." He said a good number of pesticide-affected patients are brought to emergencies during the cotton season. "Excessive chemical pesticides also cause contact-dermatitis leading to itching, bleeding, infection and many other complications." He said, after continuous contact with pesticides the residues start accumulating in their bodies, and a particular level of accumulation, causes cancer, liver complications, and infertility, especially in women farmers. "Sometimes, this poison travels to their stomachs when they eat food with unwashed hands." "Women are more vulnerable to this phenomenon that results in stunting growth, liver and breast cancer, infertility, and skin complications," Dr Waqas said. He called upon the agricultural department to raise awareness among farmers on the safer use of pesticides and if possible to shift to bio-pesticides to secure crops and human beings from poisonous pesticides. Although the Central Cotton Research Institute CCRI prepared a cotton picker machine and numbers of farmers are shifting to bio-pesticides under Integrated Pest Management (IPM) plan yet these practices are not very common and scores of poor laborers are still exposed to health hazards. "Relentless use of chemical pesticide was damaging human health, land fertility, and environment as a whole," commented Malik Arif, a progressive farmer from Nawabpur. "The cotton picker can be used only on thick cotton crops and we have not yet this culture in our agriculture." Therefore, he suggested promoting bio-pesticides on a larger scale and curtailing the use of

chemical pesticides for the safety of people and land fertility. "Promoting the use of bio-pesticides and encouraging farmers by the South Punjab Agriculture Secretariat to opt for it under the Integrated Pest Management model is an excellent attempt," he remarked. He said the IPM model remained successful in health security, cutting the input cost and enhancing productivity when it was applied on nearly 500 plots. "But, it can be more beneficial if reaches all the farmers." He said farmers can prepare bio-pesticides by soaking "neem tree, aak, kortuma, tobacco, and moringa in specific amount of water for 10 hours and then boiling it. After boiling, more water can be mixed in it and the spray is ready for crops. Another progressive farmer Muhammad Afzal cultivates chemical pesticide-free crops at 70 acres and was getting handsome production. "Bio-pesticides and bio-fertilizers had improved the fertility of my land. I get as much produce by using these products as others get by using chemical pesticides," he said. "Some farmers are in haste for results. But, if they are consistent, they can improve production gradually at low cost." He also suggested an aggressive campaign to promote the use of bio-pesticides and to promote organic crops. Dr Ameen, an official of the agriculture department mentioned efforts being made to promote the use of organic pesticides. "This is a cheaper mode to kill pests. But, as the farmers desire quick results and enhanced production, they hesitate to opt for it." He regretted that excessive use of pesticides and fertilizers leaves residues in soil, water, and air and has adverse effects on human health and non-target organisms like pollinators, parasitoids, predators, and wild animals also. In this scenario, it is direly needed to promote the culture of healthy farming to secure our coming generations and protect our environment.

Reset the resolve

— By Zara Maqbool

As the new year starts, many of us have made resolutions for the new year ahead. 'I will start working out; I need to work on my relationship; I want to quit smoking.' The list goes on. I wonder what motivates us to make these resolutions at the beginning of a year. What inspires us to make these promises, and what does the timing of these decisions mean for us? Partly I believe that we are creatures of habit and inherently like to follow most trends. There is a sense of safety in adapting to the rule of the majority, and only a few will reject the norm. Social media is evidence of how we follow whatever is the current flavour of the month, and most of us don't even chew new ideas and impulsively act on them even if they don't resonate with us. We are all work in progress, and we try our best to survive to the best of our potential, which is challenging in one way or another. We all have our battles and struggles. We fall, and we get up. We keep trying even when it looks like we are not trying. I often hear people commenting, "only if you would try harder" without appreciating that someone who seems stationary is still trying their best to move within. So, all of us, in our way

and timing, like to make resolutions relevant to our life stories. We are inherently born with the desire to self-actualise, meet our potential, and aspire for that. So why the new year? I understand this as a reset button that we want to use; to have a clean slate on which we can rewrite our story. Making a resolution at the start of the year seems like a fantasy of having another chance to stand at the starting point of the marathon of life. We want to believe that if we had the opportunity to run again from the beginning, there would be something different; a new hope, a new promise of a chance to succeed contrary to the failure before. It's almost like there is a wishful need to delete the remnants of the unfulfilled goals from the year early, and a new year seems like the light that will brighten and infuse relentless energy into the self to achieve new heights. It is also about controlling outcomes by desiring and planning for a promising future. The challenge of keeping a resolution is that it could be more realistic. Why? The way this resolution is made in the new year seems like a grand gesture that expects this promise to be kept for the rest of the year. Yes, we can have goals that

we want to work towards, but we don't have to associate them with a new beginning that, for us, almost sounds like, 'Can we have one more chance,' rooted in the shame of prior failures that one has experienced. Inadvertently, it will set us up for failure and means that we do not accept or forgive ourselves for not meeting our goals. We cannot change until we accept ourselves, however, or wherever we are within us. So start the new year by accepting yourself. Honour your struggles and strength in surviving this world day in and out. Aspire for goals, whatever that may be but start with first accepting that you have done the best you could for yourself, and from that moment, aim as high as you like to. If you want to stay steadfast in your actions and reach the milestone, reset your resolution as often as you need to. You don't have to wait for a new year for that. Get up whenever you fall and remember that we have to drown a few times before we learn how to swim. Let this year be about acceptance and resetting your resolutions as often as you like.

Courtesy: The Nation

Letters to the Editor

Boosting foreign remittances
Overseas Pakistanis, both professionally qualified and unskilled workers, remit money to support their dependent families living in Pakistan. Those few, who along with their dependent families have acquired foreign citizenship hardly remit, except for investment in lucrative real estate business. This being considered as foreign investment, is legally transferable back to countries, where they reside. Pakistani expatriates, with dependent families living in Pakistan, will continue to remit their hard earned to support their loved ones. However, the widen-

ing gap between interbank and open market exchange rates, inflation etc., has created anxiety and losses to those who remit, and the families who are beneficiaries. This has forced our expatriates to resort to Hundi and other non-banking channels. It is also an accepted fact, that the real estate investors with black money, who make billions after paying a nominal tax, patronize Hundi operators. Foreign exchange remittances are allegedly being transferred to them abroad, whilst the poor beneficiaries of these remittances are paid in Pakistan at an exchange rate more than interbank rate.

This has been going on for decades now. Those who benefit from Hundi are the powerful few corrupt elite of this country, who prefer to buy properties and settle their families abroad permanently. How else, can billions of dollars assets, be acquired abroad by few? The Federal Government and all state institutions, if they are sincere, must rise up to face the challenge and offer our expatriates, a bonus of at least 3 to 4%, above the prevailing interbank rate, to boost much needed foreign exchange remittances.
— Malik Tariq Ali, – Lahore

Haripur police arrest 338 criminals and recovers huge quantity of drugs during 2022

HARIPUR: Haripur Police's drive against criminals and fugitives during the year 2022 arrested 388 drug dealers and seized huge quantities of drugs. According to the 2022 performance report, Haripur police along with the narcotics eradication team arrested 388 drug dealers and recovered 864 kg 34 grams of hashish, 160 kg 229 grams of heroin, 09 kg 713 grams of ice, and 8457 liters of alcohol. Police have also registered 971 cases against the accused under the Prohibited Drugs Act. During the action against fugi-

tives and criminals, and illegal arms during a search and strike operation in the year 2022, Haripur police also seized 27 Kalashnikovs, 109 rifles, 772 guns, 1944 pistols, and 169528 cartridges of various bores, patrols, and blockades, and 1068 cases were registered under Arms Ordinance. Following the violation of the National Action Plan police registered cases 557, non-availability of security arrangements and installation of CCTV cameras 563 cases, 17 under the Hotel and Inns Act, 223 under the Firing Act, 127 under the

Loudspeaker Act, 794 cases were registered against the drivers. While 6197 were bound for bail, 3436 suspects were arrested and legal action was taken against them. Similarly, police registered 15 cases against the gamblers under the Gambling Act, after arresting the accused involved in the incidents of theft, robbery, and violence, the amount of stolen property amounting to Rs. 32.6 million rupees have been recovered and 388 criminals wanted in various cases were arrested. (Agencies)

Two dacoits killed, two escaped in police encounter

FAISALABAD: Two dacoits were killed, while their two accomplices managed to escape during a police encounter in the area of Saddar Tandianwala police station here on late Thursday night. Police said on Friday that patrolling squad signaled four suspects riding on motorcycles near Chak No.615-GB but the accused accelerated their bikes. The police chased them and directed to surrender but they opened indiscriminate firing on the police team. The team retaliated and during the exchange of gunshots, two outlaws

received serious bullet injuries and breathed their last on the way to hospital. The accused were identified as Shahid Iqbal and Ehsan who were wanted by the police in dozens of dacoity, robbery, theft and other cases of heinous nature. The police recovered two motorcycles, a rifle (44-bore), pistol (30-bore), mobile phones and other items from their possession. A special police team was also constituted to trace whereabouts of the escapees and arrest them on priority basis, he added. (APP)

ZTBL to provide financial assistance to PARC for enhancing farm income

ISLAMABAD: Zarai Taraqiati Bank Limited (ZTBL) will provide financial assistance to Pakistan Agriculture Research Council (PARC) to extend its research outreach to the doorsteps of farmers for improving their livelihood opportunities across the country. In this regard ZTBL will collaborate with PARC for the up-scaling of PARC's innovative farming technologies to transform the agriculture sector for enhancing per-acre crop output. To this effect, both organizations have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to establish a collaborative relationship in promoting and adapting the latest agricultural technologies, best crop management practices, and agriculture mechanization for improving farm efficiency and for the benefit of the farming community. Under this MoU PARC and ZTBL will work jointly to conduct awareness webinars, field days, seminars, and workshops to disseminate the latest developments in the agriculture sector for uplifting the livelihood of the farming community, and both sides will also develop partnerships for running

joint ventures, pilot projects, and research activities. They will also establish demonstration plots, research trials on modern agricultural machinery, agronomic practices, and crop diversification, and ZTBL will conduct Zarai Baithaks as an integrated approach and invite PARC experts for their research outreach for the appropriate benefits of the farming community in various parts of the country. Under the agreement, PARC will also facilitate ZTBL in training and capacity building of bank staff in improved agricultural technology, crop production practices, dairy management, and agricultural entrepreneurship and provide technical assistance and guidance in the transformation of ZTBL Farm Islamabad into an agriculture tourism center. The PARC will also help the bank for devising and developing new agriculture loan products and value addition in existing loanable credit products for the development of the agriculture sector and shares their research outputs with manufacturers, suppliers of agricultural machinery, and progressive farmers across the country. (APP)

Man commits suicide

MUZAFFARGARH: A man committed suicide by cutting his wrist vein over a domestic issue here on Friday. According to a rescuer, the deceased named Khalid Hussain s/o Talib Hussain, aged 30, resident of Tibi chowk sabzi mandi road was shifted immediately to DHQ hospital after the incident where he was pronounced dead following increased bleeding. The body was handed over to the heirs afterward. Police reached out to the suicider's house to initiate legal action. DSP of local police and the forensic team also came up to review the crime scene and the dead body to help out with the investigation. (APP)

PFA disposes off 4,000 litres expiry beverages

MULTAN: Punjab Food Authority (PFA) has seized and disposed of 4,000 litres of expiry beverages. The food safety team raided a warehouse near Kasuri Chowk MA Jinnah Road here on Friday and found a large number of expired juices kept with fresh stock. There was no record of the sale and purchase of beverages on the site. The PFA team destroyed thousands of liters of beverages on the spot and also imposed a Rs 50,000 fine on the warehouse owner. Unhealthy drinks and expiry juices supplied in Multan city and suburban areas could cause diseases like cholera, stomach ache and ulcers. (APP)

IRSA releases 24,400 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: The Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Friday released 24,400 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 36,800 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1493.56 feet and was 95.56 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow in the dam was recorded as 15,800 cusecs while the outflow was 5,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1119.15 feet, 69.15 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water were recorded as 5,700 cusecs and 4,000 cusecs respectively. Whereas, the release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 7,100, 16,200, 7,800 and 16,900 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 8,700 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera and 6,700 cusecs of water was released from River Chenab at Marala. (APP)

Indus River facing acute water shortage

MUZAFFARGARH: The Indus River is facing an acute water shortage leading to inhibit water supply into local canals. The record water shortage in the river has been measured at the head Taunsa barrage located in Kot Addu. According to the official of the irrigation department, about 11,000 feet of water has been recorded at Taunsa barrage, while release measured around 14,000 cusec feet from the river. Following the water decrease, the Muzaffargarh canal, DG Khan canal, and TP-link canals originating from the Sindh River have been closed due to a shortage of water. It led to panic among farmers who were dependent mostly on canal water to irrigate their crops. (APP)

Over 75,000 MT imported wheat allocation set for Multan division

MULTAN: The imported wheat has started to reach as over 8077 metric ton out of over 75,000 metric tons total wheat allocation set for Multan division has been received so far to meet the needs of flour. Deputy Director food Asif Raza while talking to APP here on Friday said that the imported wheat was coming from FAP terminal Karachi and being distributed as per demand in Multan division. He informed that 57 percent wheat from first allocation of 14000 metric ton for Multan has been received. He said that there was no shortage of flour as ample stock of wheat was available across the division. Mr Asif Raza stated that all out efforts were being made to ensure provision of flour to citizens at cheaper prices

fixed by the government. He said that the flour was being sold on government rates through 1700 shops and sales points across the division. 34 check posts have also been established at entrance and exit points in Multan division to control the wheat smuggling. He said that the departmental staff was deputed in shifts while he himself, District Food Controllers (DFCs) concerned were also monitoring it. DD Food said that they had raided and imposed over Rs 1.7 million fine to four flour mills over less supply of flour. The fine was imposed to Ittehad flour mill, Karim sons, new Mailsi and three star flour mills. He said that wheat quota of two flour mills was also suspended. (APP)

ANF seized hashish, opium, heroin, arrest four drug peddlers

ISLAMABAD: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) seized over 256 kg of hashish, 39 kg of opium 2 kg of heroin in two different operations and arrested four drug peddlers. According to a spokesman, the force had recovered over 256 kg of hashish, and 39 kg of opium

and arrested two drug peddles from Islamabad. In a Joint operation, the ANF and Punjab Rangers in Kasur seized over 2 kg of heroin and arrested two drug pushers. The cases have been registered against the accused under the Anti-Narcotics Act. (APP)

USC cuts price of premium brands ghee across the country

ISLAMABAD: Utility Store Corporation (USC) on Friday announced that the corporation has reduced the price of premium brand (Dalda) ghee by Rs 12 per kilogram (Kg). According to press release, the price of 5 kg tin has also been reduced by Rs. 50. 1 kg of premium brand ghee (Dalda) would be available at 500 per kilogram instead of Rs.512 whereas 5 kg tin new price set at Rs 2530 compared to Rs 2580. The New prices have been applied immediately, it added. For purchasing the items other than those subsidized, no terms apply nor any password needs. One-Time

Password (OTP) has been temporarily abolished for the un targeted subsidy customers, now they can get subsidy by just showing the original and valid identity cards. Only targeted subsidies (Registered customers of the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) will send their ID Cards number to 5566 to get one-time password for the purchasing of subsidized items. Subsidy is being given only on wheat flour, sugar, ghee, pulses and rice. In addition to subsidized items, hundreds of items of other standard brands are also available at affordable prices than market. (APP)

Livestock dept provide treatment to 4.1 mln animals during 2021-22

FAISALABAD: Livestock department provided treatment facilities to more than 4.1 million small as well as big animals through veterinary hospitals and dispensaries in Faisalabad division during the year 2021-22. Livestock Director Dr Haider Ali said here on Friday that 1.7 million animals were provided treatment in district Faisalabad, 1.4 million animals in district Jhang, 0.5 million in district Chinot and 0.6 million in district Toba Tek Singh. He said that the number of big animals in the division was about 4.1 million, small animals about 1.9 million and horses and donkeys were about 1.2 million.

The number of domestic poultry birds was 1.5 million while the commercial poultry was 12.2 million. He said that the basic objective of the livestock department was to improve the financial condition of the 80% destitute farmers. He said that livestock hospitals and dispensaries were functional at union council level daily from 8a.m. to 3 p.m. adding that all types of medicine to cure the animals was being provided free of charge. "A laboratory equipped with modern instruments was also functional at district level for all types of animals' tests", he concluded. (APP)

Hong Kong signs MOU with Pakistan on education cooperation

HONG KONG: The Education Bureau of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) government on Thursday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training of Pakistan to enhance education collaboration. The MOU provides a framework to facilitate strategic education collaboration between Hong Kong and Pakistan and covers mutually beneficial initiatives, including the exchange of expertise and experience, exchange of educational literature, teaching aids and demonstration materials, as well as exchanges of scholars, teachers, experts, students and other education personnel, according to an official press release.

Choi Yuk-lin, education secretary of the HKSAR government, said that the MOU marks the beginning of a new phase of close cooperation between Hong Kong and Pakistan in the area of education. The HKSAR government has signed nine MOUs with countries along the Belt and Road to date, which demonstrates the HKSAR government's commitment to and effort in enhancing the internationalization of education as well as strengthening educational ties and exchanges with the Belt and Road countries, Choi said. "I am confident that the MOU will facilitate more comprehensive exchanges and collaboration in education between the two places," she added. (Agencies)

Srinagar records minus 5.5°C as cold wave continues in IIOJK

ISLAMABAD: Severe cold conditions continue in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir Valley. A meteorological department official said that Srinagar recorded a low of minus 5.5°C, today, against last night's minus 6.4°C which was the coldest for the season so far. Today's minimum temperature was 3.6°C below normal, he added. Qazigund recorded a low of minus 5.6°C against minus 6.2°C, the lowest re-

corded this season for the gateway town of Kashmir. Today's minimum temperature was 2.7°C below normal, he said. Pahalgam, the meteorological department official said, recorded a low of minus 8.6°C against minus 9.2°C on the previous night. Kokernag recorded a low of minus 4.3°C against minus 4.4°C on the previous night, he said. It was 0.3°C below normal for the place, he added. (APP)

IIOJK situation warrants international intervention: APHC leaders

ISLAMABAD: All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) leaders, while paying glowing tributes to the victims of Sopore massacre, have said that the deteriorating situation in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir warrants an international intervention. Over 60 civilians were martyred and more than 400 shops and other structures, including residential houses, were gutted on this day in 1993 after Indian soldiers set the Sopore town ablaze. The victim families are still awaiting justice while the perpetrators of the heinous crime are roaming free. The APHC leaders Ghulam

Muhammad Khan Sopori, Zamaruda Habib, Yasmeen Raja, Farida Bahenji, Dr Musaab, Maulana Sajid Nadvi and Muhammad Aqib in their statements, condemned India for committing Sopore-like massacres in the territory over the past three decades. They said that brute Indian troops ransacked the Sopore town, ruthlessly gunned down innocent civilians and vandalised the Apple orchards on the fateful day. The leaders reiterated their demand for an impartial probe into the gruesome massacre by the International Court of Justice. (APP)

Safe City project of Islamabad successfully operating to serve citizens

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Safe City project is playing key role in maintaining law and order situation in the federal capital and assisting the police officials in nabbing criminal elements through surveillance cameras. According to police source, more than 100 kilometers of optical cable including damaged cameras have been recently repaired and made functional on a priority basis. The process of installing 750 new cameras has been also completed to further increase the efficiency of Safe City Islamabad in which 50 additional cameras equipped with artificial intelligence technology were installed for effective monitoring at entry and exit points. Similarly, the installation of 20 additional cameras for reading vehicle number plates under the automatic system has also been completed. To further improve the communication system 14 out of 20 ELTV towers have been enabled. Safe City also established a

secure online portal for ongoing recruitment in Islamabad Capital Police to better coordinate all stages from online registration of candidate, submission of applications and conduct of tests. Flashlight and radar system has been repaired and reactivated on roads while 48 CDA cameras were installed at various locations to maintain law and order situation in Islamabad. Surveillance cameras at metro-bus service were also connected with Safe City while F-10, Shifa International Hospital, Jinnah Supermarket, DHA, various private institutions, shopping malls including toll plazas of National Highway were also linked to the centralized system Safe City Islamabad. Automatic tracking of vehicle number plates and a new system of auto-alert message on vehicle theft and loss has been introduced at Safe City while the e-challan system has been re-engineered and its performance has been further improved. (APP)

Saudi Arabia to launch e-applications for overseas individual Hajj pilgrims

ISLAMABAD: The Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Hajj and Umrah has confirmed that it will soon launch the "Individual Pilgrims" service to apply for the Hajj from outside Saudi Arabia. It will also allow pilgrims to issue permits of performing Umrah and praying in the Rawdah Sharif via Nusuk app. The ministry confirmed that it will work in providing the service of registering the vital features of biometrics for pilgrims online, to obtain an immediate Visa from 5 countries, which are: Tunisia, United Kingdom, Bangladesh, Malaysia, and Kuwait, via the (Saudi Visa Bio) app of the Interior Ministry, Saudi Gazette reported. Moreover, it has confirmed its intention in launching

a comprehensive insurance service for Hajj pilgrims and Umrah performers, which would cover emergency health cases, COVID-19 infections, general accidents and deaths and also the flight cancellations or delays. The ministry confirmed its endeavor during the coming years that all the procedures be electronically available, starting from the idea of arrival to Saudi to departure, passing through all the stations of hotels reservations, transportations, services, and crowd management. Regarding its achievements during 2022, the ministry said that it has provided its services to 7 million pilgrims, of whom, 4 million came on an Umrah visa. (APP)

Rangers arrest head of street criminals gang

KARACHI: Pakistan Rangers Sindh and Police in a joint intelligence-based operation in Orangi Town Frontier Colony arrested an alleged head of a street criminals gang and recovered a 9mm pistol along with 5 rounds from his possession. According to a spokesman for Rangers on Friday, the arrested one was identified as Hidayat ur Rehman alias Kotay. The arrested accused was involved in committing street crimes in Orangi Town, board

Office Roundabout, SITE area, 5 Star Chowrangi and adjacent areas. Arrested accused along with his other accomplices in October 2022, snatched mobile phones and cash from a staff of a private news channel at gunpoint. The CCTV footage of the incident also made rounds over social media. The arrested accused along with recovered arms and ammunition was handed over to the police for further legal proceedings. (APP)

SMEDA to organize training on January 09 (Monday)

ISLAMABAD: The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) is going to organize a one-day training programme on "Regulatory Compliance for Hotels and Restaurants" for profitable business growth on January 09 (Monday). The session is being offered by SMEDA under National Business Development Programme (NBDP) for SMEs, to extend non-financial advisory services to small

and medium businesses, according to a source in the authority. The objectives of the training include laws and regulations governing the hotels and restaurants industry, ensuring compliance proactively, building your brand for business success through compliance and winning customer loyalty. The training session would be attended by SMEs and staff from relevant sector. (APP)

Islamabad police established 25 pickets to enhance security

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Police have set up 25 pickets at different points of the city with a purpose to enhance the security and to tackle any untoward incidents. According to police source, all vehicles entering in capital jurisdiction will be checked and suspicious elements to be closely monitored. He said that it has been decided to take strict legal action against non-sample number plates and unregistered vehicles across the

city. The source said that foreign nationals living in Islamabad have also been advised to keep identity documents while travelling in the city. He said that citizens have been advised to register their tenants and employees on a priority basis at the nearest police station and Police Khidmat Markaz. He said those citizens who have kept unregistered local or foreign employees will be investigated. (APP)

ICCI for 15-years export policy to boost economy

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry has called upon the government to formulate a 15-year export policy to give a long-term direction to the national industry for enhancing exports. While talking to Muhammad Naseer, Director General, Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP), during his visit to the chamber, Faad Waheed, Acting President ICCI said that TDAP's trade officers should share market study reports with ICCI on a regular basis so that the business community can capitalize on the potential opportunities of trade and exports in foreign markets. The Acting President said that many members of ICCI from various sectors including, pharmaceuticals, IT, light engineering, and food products including rice, fruits, and vegetables, meat, marble, cement, textiles, pipes and furniture are being exported to many countries. TDAP should include exporters in its foreign delegations so that they could explore new avenues for export promotion. He said that ICCI and TDAP are working for the same goal to enhance Pakistan's trade and exports, therefore, close liaison between the two is important to achieve these goals more effectively. Speaking at

the occasion, Muhammad Naseer, DG, TDAP, Islamabad assured that he would try to address the issues highlighted by the members of ICCI to facilitate them in promoting trade and exports. The Director General said that Pakistan's major focus for exports is on European Union and the USA, but recessionary trends in these markets are causing a fall in our exports. The business community should focus on non-traditional markets including Africa, Central Asia and ASEAN region that offer great prospects for exports. Muhammad Naseer said that TDAP would cooperate with ICCI in exploring new markets for exports as we need to boost exports to improve the economy. He said that the business community should pay attention to regional trade as Pakistan has good potential to improve trade with Iran, Afghanistan and other countries in the region. He said that TDAP is planning to organize an expo for women entrepreneurs in March in Islamabad that would provide them a good opportunity of handling exports. He assured that TDAP Islamabad would organize awareness programs in ICCI for the facilitation of exporters and importers. (APP)

Commissioner orders crackdown against wheat hoarders

SUKKUR: Commissioner Ghulam Mustafa Phull on Friday directed the concerned to launch a crackdown against wheat hoarders with an aim to control the shortage of wheat. He said that the administrations of Sukkur, Khairpur and Ghotki districts

should take strict action against those who store wheat and sell food items at higher prices. The commissioner said that a special team should be formed for taking action against wheat hoarders, and directed the officers to submit a report in that regard. (APP)

NDMA issues advisory for preparedness measures amid rain, snowfall prediction

ISLAMABAD: The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) here on Friday has issued a detailed advisory for the nationwide preparedness measures to cope with rain and snowfall prediction advising the provinces to ensure mass awareness and sensitization of the travellers and tourists to the high risk areas. The NDMA advisory mentioned the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) forecast citing that a westerly wave was likely to enter North Balochistan

on January 6th (evening/night) and was likely to grip upper and Northern parts of the country from January 6th to 9th. Under the influence of this weather system, following events were forecast as light to moderate rain (with snowfall over the hills) was expected in Quetta, Zhab, Barkhan, Ziarat, Nokkundi, Dalbandin, Harnai, Qilla Saifullah, Qilla Abdullah, Chaman and Pishin on January 7th and 8th. However, moderate rain (with snowfall over the hills) was also expected in

Murree, Galliyat, Kashmir (Neelum valley, Muzaffarabad, Poonch, Hattian, Bagh, Haveli, Sudhanoti, Kotli, Bhimber, Mirpur), Gilgit Baltistan (Diamir, Astore, Ghizer, Skardu, Hunza, Gilgit, Ghanche, Shigar), Chitral, Dir, Swat, Malakand, Kohistan, Mansehra and Abbottabad from January 7th to 9th. The weather prediction may also cause light rain expected in Islamabad, Pothohar region, Charsada, Bajaur, Kurram, Waziristan and Kohat during January 7th and 8th. (APP)

Consumers of 3G/4G service increased to 121 mln

ISLAMABAD: The number of 3g and 4g service users in Pakistan has significantly increased and reached 121 million by end of November 2022. As per the details available on the official site of the PTA, the number of active mobile SIMs reached 194 million during the same period. The number of broadband subscribers reached 124 million while the broadband penetration was recorded at 56.00 per cent. (APP)

5 people dead in road accident in Azad Kashmir

ISLAMABAD: At least five people lost their lives in a traffic accident near Rahim Kot in Bagh in Azad Kashmir in the wee hours of Friday. According to a private tv channel, a coaster boarding 12 people was going to Mushtamba when the vehicle reached Rahim Kot, it met an accident in which five of the passengers were killed. The coaster off the road and fell into a ditch and five passengers including the driver and conductor died on the spot while three others were injured. The injured were shifted to Dheerkot Hospital. (APP)

Four injure in road mishap

KHANEWAL: At least four people were injured after a collision between a bus and truck head-on near Sadiqabad Friday morning. According to the rescuer, the bus was moving from Sadiqabad to Lahore when it met with the accident. The wounded included the bus driver namely Muhammad Shahid, 50, s/o mukhtar Ahmad, r/o Faisalabad with passengers, Shameer, 42, s/o Rehmat Ali, Rahim Yar Khan and Muhammad Amir, 20, s/o Muhammad Mansab, r/o Cholistan and Nasreen, 30, w/o Amir, r/o Yazman Mandi. (APP)

GCWU launched 'English Works program'

SIALKOT: Government College Women University Sialkot (GCWUS) in collaboration with the American Consulate started a six-month 'English Works Program' so that students would be able to get command in English language skills. Vice Chancellor (VC) GCWUS Prof. Dr. Rukhsana Kausar graced the ceremony as Chief Guest. While addressing, she said that under the program students will be provided free of charge books and stationery. She expressed gratitude to the US State Department, RELO Pakistan and US Consulate Lahore for offering this wonderful platform to the youth of Sialkot. Coordinator and Head of the English Department, Dr. Muhammad Shahbaz highlighted the importance of this program and its benefits. (APP)

Man killed by friend

SIALKOT: Sambrial police arrested a man who killed his friend over monetary issue here on Friday. Police said Sajad Nawaz (26) r/o mohallah Rasulpura area was in his home when his friend Shahnawaz alias Sunny called him and took him to the fields. After exchange of harsh words, Sunny fired gunshots, killing Sajad on the spot. A case was registered on the complaint of Muhammad Nawaz, father of victim. On the direction of District Police Officer (DPO) Sialkot Muhammad Faisal Kamran, a team consisting of DSP Sambrial and SHO police station, was formed for the early arrest of the accused. (APP)

New Virtual Studio of PTV to help bridge tech gap : Marriyum

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb Friday said in the era of modern technology, largest Virtual Studio of Pakistan Television would help in bridging the tech gap. This she said while inaugurating the Virtual Studio of PTV along with Minister for Power Division Khurram Dastgir. The minister said that Pakistan Television had the required assets but there was need to use them in the best way. Today, with the efforts of PTV staff and management, IT solutions were being used in PTV, which was a requirement of the modern age, she said. "The establishment of Virtual Studio is another milestone for Pakistan Television which has the distinction of being the largest virtual studio in Pakistan, she said. She said that now the PTV News will now work in a modern way, providing ac-

curate news to the viewers. Pakistan Television's state-of-the-art virtual set will present national, regional and international news as well as weather and sports news and current affairs programs to the public in an innovative manner, she said. Pakistan Television has achieved many milestones during its 58-year journey. With its largest Virtual Studio, Pakistan Television News will now keep the public updated with news, analysis and real views of Pakistan in a modern way. With the establishment of Virtual Studio, viewers of PTV News would be able to learn about national, regional news, politics, culture, education, current affairs and world affairs in a modern way. The minister said that best audios, high definition videos, beautiful graphics and PTV News will be part of the screen. (APP)

Low gas pressure multiplies problems in twin cities

ISLAMABAD: With the increase in cold, shut-off or low gas pressure in various parts of the twin cities has multiplied the problems of the domestic as well as the commercial consumers. The low or zero pressure specially during morning and evening timings compelled the residents of the twin cities to buy breakfast, lunch and dinners from markets which is much expensive as well as an unhealthy option for families. A number of families have started using substitutes compressors, cylinders, electric roti makers and electric stoves to cook food which is not risky but also very expensive option for the consumers. Beside the issues of domestic consumers, the commercial users especially restaurants, hotels and Tandoor owners are also facing the same issue and using alternate to run their businesses. They

also increased the rates saying that they can't manage the gas expense in the routine prices and are forced to transfer that burden to the customers. Shazia Bibi, a house wife living in Arya mohalla Rawalpindi while talking to APP said, "Normally I prefer to cook healthy and hygienic food for my family but now the outage of gas has compelled us to buy unhygienic food from the restaurants almost regularly which is effecting the health of my family." She said, "Many restaurants are also taking advantage of the situation and increased the prices of food which badly disturb the overall budget which is a big concern for me." A working woman Sadia Ali said, "The low gas pressure in my area has multiply my problems as I can't finish my kitchen work on time and get late from my office almost every day. (APP)

All Pakistan Universities BPS Teachers Association Elected its Central Cabinet.



Dr Sami ur Rahman has been elected as President and Dr Imtiaz Ahmad as GS APUBTA. Dr. Sami ur Rahman from university of Malakand (UoM) President, Dr. Hafsa Jamshed from NTU Faisalabad as Vice President, Dr. Rehana Kausar from AJK university as Vice President female and Dr Imtiaz Ahmad from UOM has been elected as General Secretary. While Dr Jawad Khan from Abdul Wali Khan university Mardan as JS, Dr M Asif Jan from Kohat University as Finance secretary and Dr Manzoor Ahmed from IIU Islamabad as media secretary have been elected for a term of one year. All Pakistan Universities BPS Teachers' Association APUBTA elections were conducted online and the cabinet notification of various chapters have been issued completing the phase wise process. The process for the elections was officially started in November 2022 with the submission of nomination papers by the candidates. Earlier, the stage of election of the provincial

chapters leadership of APUBTA and the members of Azad Jammu Kashmir cabinet, Punjab, KP, Sindh, GB, Baluchistan have also been completed. The newly elected central cabinet has expressed that they will continue to fight for the rights of BPS teachers and will make every possible effort to take effective measures at every forum for the right to in-service promotion for deserving BPS teachers. The elected cabinet is much thankful to the community for electing and trusting them to lead. The elected central cabinet shall continue its efforts till peaceful resolution of the longstanding legitimate rights of promotion for the BPS Teachers. It is to mention that university teachers have been divided by HEC into two groups of BPS and TTS, the service structure is granted to TTS and discriminatory policies are imposed on the BPS that have raised severe seniority issues even the provision of clear promotion is granted in HEC ordinance.

Pfizer explores options for rare disease, cancer drugs

NEW YORK: Pfizer Inc is exploring options for some early stage treatments for rare diseases and cancer in a bid to focus on “high-impact” medicines and vaccines, the company said yesterday. The US drugmaker said these options included collaborations with other drug developers for these medicines, or establishing a new company. Pfizer now plans to focus on internally developing rare disease treatments using technologies such as gene editing, it said, while exploring external opportunities for early stage



gene therapy programmes and its cancer-focused research facility in Boulder, Colorado. It would also seek to externally advance its gene therapy facility in Durham, North Carolina, the drugmaker said. That would free the company, which has

been investing heavily in its internal pipeline of medicines and striking deals to boost revenue, to focus its internal portfolio of experimental treatments to areas where the company thinks it is “best-positioned”. “We believe these actions will position us to lead the industry in reaching more patients,” a company spokesman said in an emailed statement, adding that depending on the externalisation approaches taken, Pfizer may maintain ties to some of these programmes through strategic investments. (Agencies)

World food prices hit record high in 2022 despite December drop

PARIS: World food prices eased in December marking the ninth consecutive monthly fall, but gained more than 14% in 2022 compared to the previous year, to reach the highest since records began, the UN food agency said on Friday. The Food and Agriculture Organization’s (FAO) food price index, which tracks international prices of the most globally traded food commodities, averaged

132.4 points last month compared with a revised 135.00 points for November. The November figure was previously given as 135.7 points. For 2022 as a whole, the benchmark index averaged 143.7 points, up 18 points or 14.3% from 2021, and the highest since records started in 1990. The decline in the index in December was driven by a steep drop in the international price of vegeta-

ble oils, together with some declines in cereal and meat prices, but mitigated by slight increases in those of sugar and dairy, the FAO said. Food prices surged after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in February last year on fears of disruptions to Black Sea trade. They have pared gains in part because of a UN-backed grain export channel from Ukraine. (Agencies)

China’s TCL unveils new TVs with quantum dot tech at CES

LAS VEGAS: China’s TCL revealed a range of new TVs utilising quantum dot (QD) technology ahead of CES 2023, which kicked off on Thursday, putting the electronics company in competition with other big names such as Sony Group and Samsung Electronics. QD is based on organic light-emitting diode (OLED) technology and is

considered more advanced than liquid crystal displays (LCDs). The semiconductor particles luminate close to natural colours, offering enhanced brightness and colour. The company showcased the Q6, its newest model, which delivers high-definition colour and 66% higher brightness compared to standard LCD TVs. Its high-end Q7 model has

doubled its peak brightness from the company’s QLED TV from last year. Conventional TVs add colour when light passes through filters, but QDs can easily produce rich colours because the particles themselves emit colours independently. QDs have the property of greatly diffusing light, allowing it to shine in all directions. (Agencies)

US home prices remain high despite interest rate hikes

NEW YORK: Higher borrowing costs are leading to fewer US home sales, but prices are staying elevated in a holdover from the torrid peak-pandemic market. In November, existing home sales were down more than a third from the January 2022 level, according to the National Association of Realtors (NAR). That came shortly after the borrowing rate for a 30-year fixed mortgage – the reference lending product in US real estate – hit

7.16% in late October, the highest level in 21 years. Interest rates have retreated slightly since then, but stood well above their levels for most of the last decade and a half, a reflection of the Federal Reserve’s monetary policy pivot to counter inflation. “The market has certainly shifted here in Denver,” said David Schlichter, a real estate agent for Compass in Colorado, who called the peak pandemic of the recent past “the hottest mar-

ket in history”. But today’s batch of properties last longer on the market and are “selling for a price below the asking price”, Schlichter said. Drake, a home buyer who declined to give his last name, expects to soon close on a house in Austin, Texas at 4% below the listing price. “Now is the best time to buy in the last 1.5-two years if you’re reasonably secure in your job and have a decent down payment saved,” he told AFP. (Agencies)

Teslas in China 40% cheaper than US as prices cut again

BELJING: Tesla Inc made another round of price cuts on its Model 3 and Y electric vehicles in China on Friday, while also introducing its higher-end Model S sedan and Model X to get a better hold on the premium end of the world’s biggest EV market. The starting price for the locally-built Model Y sports utility vehicle has been slashed to 259,900 yuan (US\$37,875) from 288,900 yuan, according to the company’s Chinese website. That’s a record

low for China and 43% cheaper than the US\$65,900 starting price listed on Tesla’s US website. The Model 3 goes to 229,900 yuan from 265,900 yuan, about 30% cheaper than in the US. Tesla already cut prices in China last year to boost sales as competition heats up in both the mass and premium segments, with the likes of Warren Buffett-backed BYD Co, Xpeng Inc and Nio Inc, as well as international players such as Porsche AG and Mercedes Benz Group AG,

all vying for sales. Tesla said its newly introduced Model S, with a redesigned interior, is priced at 789,900 yuan in China, while the Plaid version — Tesla’s fastest car, taking only 2.1 seconds to go from zero to 100km per hour — will be sold from 1.01 million yuan. The Model X SUV is priced from 879,900 yuan and the Model X Plaid starts at 1.04 million yuan. Deliveries will begin in the second quarter this year, Tesla said. (Agencies)

More political storms for TikTok after US government ban

NEW YORK: TikTok faces an uncertain year ahead in the US as anti-China Republicans take greater control in Congress demanding tighter scrutiny for the highly popular video sharing app. Owned by Chinese tech giant ByteDance, TikTok has become a political punching bag for US conservatives who allege that the app downloaded by millions of US young people can be circumvented for spying or propaganda by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). But now Democrats have

joined the groundswell of criticism and US president Joe Biden last week signed a new law that bans the use of TikTok on government-issued devices. The law also bans TikTok use in the US House of Representatives and Senate. TikTok is the equivalent of “digital fentanyl”, said Republican lawmaker Mike Gallagher, one of the leading voices in Congress against China, comparing the app to the deadly opioid. “It’s highly addictive and destructive and we’re seeing troubling data

about the corrosive impact of constant social media use, particularly on young men and women here in America,” he told NBC News. “We have to ask whether we want the CCP to control what’s on the cusp of becoming the most powerful media company in America,” Gallagher told NBC. A TikTok spokesperson said that there is “zero truth” to Gallagher’s comments and that the CCP “has neither direct nor indirect control of ByteDance or TikTok”. (Agencies)

BMW unveils colour-changing car with digital features

LAS VEGAS: BMW unveiled Wednesday the prototype of a car that can change colour and showcases digital features like projecting driving data across the inside of the windshield. This car, called i Vision Dee, was presented at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas at an event attended by “Terminator” actor and former California gover-



nor Arnold Schwarzenegger. BMW

unveiled last year at this same show a car that could change hue but only from white to black and gray in between. But the body of the new car can change in a rainbow of colours, in one solid hue or in stripes or checks. BMW i Vision Dee is just an idea for now but it is supposed to shape the design of future cars from the luxury manufacturer. (Agencies)

Samsung Electronics Q4 earnings plunge 69% on falling demand

SEOUL: Samsung Electronics said Friday it expected its fourth-quarter operating profits to plunge 69%, as the global downturn causes a sharp decline in demand for memory chips and smartphones. The South Korean tech giant said operating profits for the October-December period likely slumped to 4.3 trillion won (US\$3.4 billion), a stinging year-on-year drop

from 13.87 trillion won. In a statement, Samsung said fourth-quarter profits were “well below current market expectations”, blaming the performance on macroeconomic issues, spurred by central banks around the world raising interest rates. Weak demand for memory chips was “greater than expected as customers adjusted inventories ... to further tighten

finances spurred by concerns over deteriorating consumer sentiment caused by continued high global interest rates and weak economic outlooks”. Against that backdrop, the Galaxy smartphone maker “saw a significant drop in the memory business results due to lacklustre demand and also weaker sales of smartphones,” it added. (Agencies)

China boosts coal production, eases Australia ban

SINGAPORE: The increasing need to secure energy supplies after easing Covid-19 restrictions has pushed China to gradually resume Australian coal imports and urge domestic miners to boost their already record output. The lifting of the unofficial ban on Australian coal imports, which were halted in 2020 in a fit of Chinese pique over questions on Covid’s origins, is the clearest sign yet of the renewed ties between them. The resumption is also a reminder of their economic interdependence as Australia’s raw materials play a crucial role in fuelling the export-oriented economy of China, the world’s biggest coal consumer and producer. The decision came after the Chinese and Australian leaders met for the first time

in six years at the G20 summit in November, notably after a change in the Australian ruling party following elections in May. Australian foreign minister Penny Wong followed that meeting with a visit with her counterpart in Beijing last month. Beijing’s two-pronged approach to coal security comes as prices for power generation fuels and coking coal surged after western sanctions disrupted Russian supplies after its invasion of Ukraine. Chinese utilities and steelmakers will now have access to better quality Australian coal, while Australia, which used to be the second largest coal supplier to China, could recover some of its market share lost to suppliers including Russia and Mongolia. (Agencies)

Shell says European windfall taxes to cost US\$2bil

LONDON: British energy giant Shell on Friday said windfall taxes imposed by the European Union and UK following a surge in profits would cost the group about US\$2 billion. Shell said the exceptional tax bill, imposed after oil and gas prices surged last year, would be included in its 2022 fourth-quarter earnings to be confirmed next month. Energy prices soared following the invasion of Ukraine by key oil and gas producer Russia, contributing heavily to decades-high inflation

worldwide. That has led to governments subsidising rocketing energy bills for consumers, with help from the sector’s companies via additional taxing of profits. Shell said in a statement Friday that the impact on fourth-quarter earnings of the EU and UK windfall taxes “is expected to be around US\$2 billion”. It comes with Shell under new leadership after Ben van Beurden stepped down as chief executive at the end of last year after nearly a decade at the helm. (Agencies)

McDonald’s Japan hikes prices again on surging costs

TOKYO: The Japanese operator of McDonald’s restaurants announced its third price hike in less than a year on Friday in the latest sign of compounding inflationary pressures on the nation’s consumers. McDonald’s Holding Company Japan Ltd said it would raise prices on about 80% of its menu from Jan 16, citing currency fluctuations as well as surging costs for materials, labour, transportation, and energy. The hikes follow previous increases in March and September last year, as Japan grapples with inflation and a slide in the yen that has made imported ingredients more expensive.

The price for a single cheeseburger will go up to ¥200 (US\$1.49) this month from ¥140 a year ago. The cost of the signature Big Mac hamburger will go up to ¥450 from ¥410 yen previously. Japanese consumers will see price increases on more than 4,000 food items from next month, researcher Teikoku Data-bank said on Thursday, following an even bigger wave of hikes last October. Separately, Japanese restaurant operators Hot Palette Co and Royal Holdings Co said on Friday they would also be raising prices in January and March, respectively, mostly on beef and steak items. (Agencies)

Vietnam offshore wind power attracts foreign investment

HANOI: Japanese and European corporations are making major moves into offshore wind power in Vietnam, taking advantage of the developing country’s renewable power push. Strong winds off the southern coast of Vietnam make it one of the best places in the region to explore offshore wind power. The country’s commitment to fully decarbonise by midcentury, coupled with an urgent power generation deficit, make this an attractive time to invest in its renewable energy infrastructure. Japan’s Sumitomo Corp announced the development of an offshore wind power generation project in September. That was fol-

lowed by a survey in December to study routes for laying cables. The company plans to begin operations of a wind farm with a capacity of 500 megawatts to 1 gigawatts by 2030. If the initial plans get on track, the company aims to develop further projects, including in the northern part of the country. Sumitomo has experience developing offshore wind farms in Europe, including in Belgium and the UK. The output of the European plants, based on the investment ratio, is approximately 310 MW. That figure is expected to increase to about 600 MW when upcoming projects are included. (Agencies)

Asian stocks edge up before crucial US jobs data

TOKYO: Asian equities gained on Friday while the dollar hovered near a one-month high as investors braced for crucial US jobs data later in the day that should provide clues on how aggressive the Federal Reserve will be in tightening policy. Japan’s Nikkei rose 0.39%, while South Korea’s Kospi jumped 0.77%. Australia’s stock benchmark was 0.56% higher. Hong Kong’s Hang Seng rallied 0.6%, although mainland blue chips CSI300 were flat in early trading. MSCI’s broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares added 0.29%, putting it on track for a 1.55% advance for the first week

of 2023, its best weekly performance in a month. US E-mini stock futures ticked up 0.35%, pointing to a small bounce after the 1.16% overnight slide for the S&P 500. Wall Street sold off amid worries that robustness in the jobs market would keep the Fed raising rates for longer after data released on Thursday showed a bigger-than-expected rise in private payrolls and a drop in jobless claims. “There is concern that the labour market isn’t showing any signs of cooling,” putting financial markets “very much on edge”, said Tony Sycamore, a market analyst at IG. (Agencies)

Oil prices edge up on optimism over China’s reopening

SINGAPORE: Oil prices rose as much as \$1 on Friday, extending gains from the previous session, supported by hopes of a China demand boost and after data showed lower US fuel inventories following a winter storm that hit at the end of the year, according to Reuters. Brent crude futures were \$0.75, or 1 percent, higher at \$79.44 a barrel at 0645 GMT, after settling \$0.85 stronger at \$78.69 on Thursday. US

West Texas Intermediate crude futures were up \$0.74, or 1 percent, at \$74.41 a barrel. They had settled \$0.83 higher at \$73.67 in the previous session. “China’s reopening optimism, especially further stimulus measures to boost the property sector, is the main bullish factor for the oil prices, which has improved the demand outlook in the near year,” said Tina Teng, an analyst at CMC Markets. (Agencies)

Record-setting Shanaka helps Sri Lanka level T20 series against India

PUNE: Dasun Shanaka led from the front with a record half-century and two wickets in Sri Lanka's series-levelling 16-run win in the second Twenty20 international on Thursday. Shanaka hit an unbeaten 56 off 22 balls laced with two fours and six sixes to steer Sri Lanka to 206-6 after being invited to bat first in Pune. Bowlers led by Kasun Rajitha kept down India to 190-8 despite a threatening 91-run sixth-wicket stand between Suryakumar Yadav (51) and Axar Patel (65). Captain Shanaka turned up



with his medium-pace bowling for the 20th over to send back Axar and Shivam Mavi, who hit 26 off 15 balls, and take the series into the decider on Saturday in Rajkot. "They took the

game away from us but still we managed to hold our nerve," said Shanaka, who was named man of the match for his all-round show. "Really good to defend the total, especially against India in these conditions." Shanaka's batting set up victory as he tore into the Indian attack with his fifty off 20 balls the fastest by a Sri Lankan batsman in the T20 format. He beat two stalwarts of Sri Lankan cricket, Mahela Jayawardene and Kumar Sangakkara, both of whom got fifties in 21 balls. (Agencies)

Reignited Griezmann leading Atletico charge against hungry Barca

BARCELONA: Barcelona are aiming to make a statement victory at Atletico Madrid on Sunday to prove they can challenge for silverware in 2023, but former player Antoine Griezmann is standing in their way. The Catalans signed the French forward from Atletico in the summer of 2019 for 120 million euros (\$126.3 million) and loaned him back in 2021, making the deal permanent in October 2022. Barca threw away a two point lead on champions Real Madrid last weekend with a 1-1 draw in the derby against



Espanyol, leaving the title race tied neck and neck. Both Barcelona and Real Madrid have 38 points from 15 games, with Xavi's side top on goal difference for now, although some are

questioning their capability of going the distance against Carlo Ancelotti's well-oiled machine. The Catalans last won the league before Griezmann arrived in 2019, ending a run of four league titles in five years, but have struggled for silverware since. President Joan Laporta pulled various financial "levers" in the summer to spend big and bring in star signings including Robert Lewandowski from Bayern Munich, but the Catalans suffered a humiliating Champions League group phase exit. (Agencies)

Tatum's triple-double leads Celtics past Mavs, Nuggets rout Clippers

LOS ANGELES: The Boston Celtics broke out of their funk on Thursday as Jayson Tatum's 29-point triple-double propelled them to a 124-95 victory over Luka Doncic and the Dallas Mavericks. The Celtics boast the best record in the NBA but had dropped two straight coming into the contest in Dallas and knew things needed to change. "It was a tough one the other day," Tatum said in an on-court post-game interview of the Celtics' loss to the lowly Thunder in Oklahoma City on Tuesday. "We lost two in a row but we had a responsi-

bility just to respond, to play better. That last two games hasn't defined our season. "We're one of the best teams and we just had to come out and play like it and get back to playing like we know how." Tatum connected on just eight of 22 shots from the field but he added 14 rebounds and 10 assists in just his second career triple-double. Jaylen Brown scored 19 points for the Celtics, who ended the Mavericks' seven-game winning streak. Tatum said the Celtics defensive strategy on Doncic was to "just try and make it tough for him.

"He's obviously a hell of a player that can get any shot he wants." Doncic, who had averaged a stunning 46.2 points, 12.7 rebounds and 10 assists over the prior five games, scored 23 and sat out the entire fourth quarter after the Celtics took a 24-point lead into the final period. The Slovenian star, who appeared to be hindered by a sore left ankle, made seven of his 23 attempts from the field and missed all six of his three-point attempts. Despite the defeat the Mavs remained in fourth place in the West. (Agencies)

Washout raises Khawaja conundrum for Australia in Sydney Test

SYDNEY: The entire third day of the final Sydney Test was washed out Friday forcing a reappraisal of Australia's push for a series clean sweep over South Africa. Skipper Pat Cummins has a decision to make ahead of Saturday's fourth day: whether to declare the team's first innings at 475 for four and get the Proteas in to bat or give Usman Khawaja the chance to claim his first Test double century. Khawaja was stranded on 195 when rain ended play on Thursday, his highest Test score. Matt Renshaw, who tested positive for Covid at the

start of the match, was five not out. Another deciding factor will be the state of the Sydney Cricket Ground pitch following three days of rain interruptions. The frequent rain and covering of the wicket has prevented the pitch from drying out and deteriorating from wear and tear for the benefit of Australia's two selected spinners, Nathan Lyon and Ashton Agar. Australia have gone into the match with only selected two front-line pacemen - Josh Hazlewood and Cummins - making their task more even difficult if the pitch is not as

conducive to spin as initially game planned. The hosts are also pushing for a series whitewash to seal a place in the World Test Championship final in London in June. South Africa are naturally not as concerned about the weather as they try to avoid the ignominy of a 3-0 drubbing. "In the position we are in, the more time that is taken out of the game is probably more in our favour," spinner Keshav Maharaj said on Thursday's second day after rain brought South Africa some badly needed respite. (Agencies)

American football player Hamlin is awake, responsive after cardiac arrest during NFL game

ISTANBUL: American football player Damar Hamlin is awake and able to communicate with his doctors after Monday's collapse in the middle of a National Football League (NFL) game, said his team. The Buffalo Bills said in a statement that Hamlin made "substantial improvement in his condition over the past 24 hours." "Among those improvements include Hamlin being awake and responsive with the ability to move both his hands and feet, while also being able to communicate

with his doctors, nurses and family members via writing on a clipboard. More, Hamlin's neurological condition and function is intact after suffering cardiac arrest on Monday night," it added. Hamlin is still intubated to assist with breathing and the next hurdle in his recovery is to progress to breathing on his own, according to University of Cincinnati Health physicians William Knight IV and Timothy Pritts. When Hamlin awoke Wednesday night, one of the first questions he asked via

writing was who won the Bills-Bengals clash. Doctors told him: "You won. You've won the game of life." Hamlin suffered cardiac arrest and collapsed after making a tackle during a Monday NFL match between the Bills and the Cincinnati Bengals. The game, held in Cincinnati, Ohio, was suspended and will not resume, the NFL announced on Thursday. The 24-year-old player has been playing for the Bills, based in Western New York state, since 2021. (Agencies)

'Harsh' says Khawaja if denied double ton chance in Test

SYDNEY: Usman Khawaja said it would be "harsh" if he was denied the chance of claiming his first Test double century by a declaration in Australia's third Test against South Africa. The entire third day's play was washed out by rain in Sydney on Friday in the final Test of what has been a one-sided series in favour of the hosts. Australia skipper Pat Cummins now has a decision to make ahead of Saturday's fourth day: whether to declare the team's first-innings at 475-4 and get the Proteas in to bat or give Khawaja

the chance to bring up a landmark double century. Khawaja is stranded on 195. Matt Renshaw, who tested positive for Covid at the start of the match, is five not out. "I think it'd be pretty harsh if he (Cummins) bowled straight away. I don't think that's going to happen," Khawaja told reporters after another frustrating day in the rain-hit match at the Sydney Cricket Ground. "He's been making a few jokes... (saying) 'I've let (South African skipper) Dean Elgar know that we want to go out and have a bowl straight

away'. "We could go out there and get a few more runs really quickly or we could declare pretty much straight away. I'm not the captain... I don't make those decisions," said the batsman. Another deciding factor for Cummins will be the state of the SCG pitch following three days of rain interruptions. The frequent rain and covering of the wicket has prevented the pitch from drying out and deteriorating from wear and tear for the benefit of Australia's two selected spinners, Nathan Lyon and Ashton Agar. (Agencies)

Cristiano Ronaldo leads list of top earners in sports

ISTANBUL: As the new year brought fresh opportunities for teams to strengthen their squads, a record-breaking deal put Cristiano Ronaldo at the top of sports' highest-paid stars. Here are the highest-paid athletes: Cristiano Ronaldo fixed the contract price with Saudi Arabian club Al Nassr for

the next 2.5 years at \$214 million on Tuesday. The 37-year-old Portuguese football icon became the highest-paid earner in the sports world after moving to the 18-time Saudi champions. "This contract is unique because I'm a unique player as well," Ronaldo said during the signing ceremony. "This is not

the end for me. The Saudi Arabian League is very competitive. I know people don't know that," he added. In November, Ronaldo became a free agent after his contract with England's Manchester United was terminated by mutual agreement over his disputes with club manager Erik Ten Hag. (Agencies)

Hamlin health emergency hangs over NFL as regular season concludes

LOS ANGELES: Top playoff billing is on the line as the NFL season concludes this weekend with the league still shaken by Buffalo Bills defender Damar Hamlin's cardiac arrest during a game at Cincinnati. Hamlin, 24, was improving on Thursday, but he remained on the minds of everyone in the NFL as they prepared for their final regular-season games. He collapsed during the Bills' Monday night game against the Bengals and was resuscitated on field before being hospitalized in critical condition. The playoff-bound Bills, who host the New England Patriots on Sunday, have been buoyed by news

that Hamlin is awake and appears to be "neurologically intact," although he remains in critical condition on a ventilator in a Cincinnati hospital. Bills quarterback Josh Allen said that after an emotional week, the team is ready to play, thanks in part to the encouraging reports on Hamlin's progress and a "demand" from his father, Mario Hamlin. "We want to go out there and play for Three," he said -- a reference to Hamlin's jersey number. "It'll be a huge driving force." Bill Belichick, the Patriots' famously taciturn coach, said Hamlin's medical emergency was sobering. (Agencies)

Tributes for 'Mad Dog' surfer killed by Nazare waves

LISBON: Tributes poured in on Friday for Marcio Freire after the legendary Brazilian died while surfing the giant waves at Nazare in Portugal. Freire was among three pioneering Brazilian surfers who featured in the 2016 documentary "Mad Dogs" about their attempt to conquer the giant "Jaws" wave in Hawaii. He was killed Thursday while surfing the celebrated Atlantic waves in Portugal, home of the "Nazare Canyon", rated one of the sport's biggest and most terrifying challenges. "A 47-year-old man of Brazilian nationality died this afternoon after falling while practising surfing in Praia do Norte," Portugal's

National Maritime Authority said in a statement. "The rescuers found that the victim was in cardio-respiratory arrest, immediately starting resuscitation manoeuvres on the sand. "After several attempts, it was not possible to reverse the situation." Local sources told AFP the victim was the veteran surfer Freire, who had lived for 20 years in Hawaii, the sport's traditional homeland. The sources also said that sea conditions were not particularly dangerous on Thursday. Big-wave professional surfer Nic von Rupp led the tributes on social media. "Today we lost one of ours," he wrote on Instagram. (Agencies)

Pegula stuns tearful Swiatek as US take charge of semi-final

SYDNEY: Iga Swiatek was left in tears as Jessica Pegula stunned the world number one Friday before Frances Tiafoe gave the United States a commanding lead over Poland in the semi-finals of the inaugural United Cup. Less than two weeks before the Australian Open, Swiatek had no answers to the American's powerful serve and searing returns, crashing 6-2, 6-2 in a deflating 71-minute defeat in Sydney. "I played her a lot in a lot of different conditions but I felt these were definitely the fastest conditions," said Pegula, ranked three in the world. "I thought I did

a really good job playing aggressive, serving smart and returning really well." Men's world number 19 Tiafoe then put the United States on the cusp of Sunday's final when he swept past Kacper Zuk 6-3, 6-3. Tiafoe was initially supposed to play Daniel Michalski, but he pulled out with illness. With the roof closed at Ken Rosewall Arena on a rainy day in Sydney, Swiatek lost the opening seven points to be broken and go 40-0 down in the next game. She woke up to level at 1-1, but lost focus again and was broken twice more to concede the first set in 39 minutes. (Agencies)

DAILY HOROSCOPE: JANUARY 7, 2023



– It's a general reading which may differ from person to person because of time date and year.
 – **ARIES:** Look for compromise solutions today but don't expect to find them. You have never been the sort to back down in a fight and the full moon suggests those you clash with will be equally reluctant to give ground. It could get messy!
 – **TAURUS:** You cannot stand idly by while some sort of injustice is taking place. Do what you can to assist those who are getting a bad deal but don't place your own reputation or livelihood on the line. You can't win other people's battles for them.
 – **GEMINI:** If you decide to make changes of a financial nature today it's quite possible that later on you will look back and wish you had left well alone. If you are tempted to put your money where your mouth is be sensible and find ways to spread the risk.
 – **CANCER:** Today's full moon in your sign is sure to fire you up emotionally but try not to take on people who are bigger than you. Before you get involved in a dispute of some kind ask yourself this simple question: do you really need to get involved?
 – **LEO:** Try not to be annoyed with yourself if something you have been working on does not turn out the way you planned. Because today's full moon occurs in the most sensitive

area of your chart you could be hard on yourself for no good reason.
 – **VIRGO:** If someone challenges your authority today you must stand your ground and let them know that you are the boss and that you alone call then shots. Make it clear to them that if they don't like it they can always join a different team.
 – **LIBRA:** If you find yourself up against a rival who is clearly at a higher level than you it might be a good idea to swallow your pride and back down. The fact is you should not have allowed yourself to get in this position in the first place.
 – **SCORPIO:** The full moon warns that today and over the weekend what previously came easy to you is likely to turn into a bit of a slog. It's no big deal though. Come the start of next week you will be back to your best and having fun again.
 – **SAGITTARIUS:** You will need to be on your guard today, because a rival or competitor is planning to get ahead at your expense. They will only succeed if you are so laidback that they can just walk in and take what they want. Don't let that happen.
 – **CAPRICORN:** Because today's full moon takes place in your opposite sign you must expect people to stand in your way both in your private life and in your career. They won't succeed though – you are too much of a winner to be held back for long.
 – **ACQUARIUS:** The more a colleague tries to tell you that you are going about your job the wrong way the more determined you must be to prove them wrong. If you feel comfortable with your own methods and routines that's really all that matters.
 – **PISCES:** Don't worry too much if you fall out with a partner or loved one today because it is only a passing phase. You still have a great deal in common and both of you know that you will achieve more together than you ever could on your own.

UN slams attack on police van guarding polio workers in D.I.Khan

UNITED NATIONS: The United Nations Thursday denounced as "despicable" the gun-and-grenade attack on a police van guarding polio workers in Dera Ismail Khan, a district of Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, in which five policemen were reportedly injured. "It's not the first time that we've seen attacks on health workers; It's not the first time we've seen attacks on people trying to do polio vaccina-

tion in Pakistan and other places in the world," the UN Secretary-General's spokesman, Stephane Dujarric, said in response to a question at the regular noon briefing at UN Headquarters in New York. He added, "Sometimes we're faced with a situation where you really run out of words, but it is despicable to target and attack people who are going out in communities in extremely challenging circumstances,

trying to protect the lives of infants and babies from a preventable disease that is almost wiped out; except for a handful of countries, and that all too often is due to a security situation where people actively work against health workers." Pakistan is one of the only two countries — the other being Afghanistan — where polio is still prevalent despite relentless vaccination drives. (Agencies)

From tracking moods to putting on a show, it's AI-everything at CES

LAS VEGAS: Entrepreneur Antony Perzo introduces a small device called Emobot, which looks like a cross between a speaker and a piece of abstract art, and explains: "It's an emotional thermometer!" Like hundreds of other exhibitors at CES, the world's biggest tech expo, French engineer Perzo is selling the merits of an object that depends on the latest breakthroughs in artificial intelligence. AI is the big buzzword at the

Las Vegas tech extravaganza, with companies big and small unveiling anything from TVs to toothbrushes that depend on big data and connected computing to impress. Perzo's Emobot, shown in a corner of Sin City's Venetian hotel, is used to detect possible psychiatric disorders in the elderly and could help caregivers in nursing homes adjust treatment without waiting for the psychiatrist. The technology can "analyze

micro facial expressions" that reflect human emotions, themselves a magnifier of our "psychological and psychiatric state," said the engineer. Nufa, another startup, defines itself as a "pioneer in body transformation through AI." The mobile app allows users to edit a photo to see themselves with a slim and athletic body, and motivate themselves to follow a 90-day plan to achieve this result "in real life." (Agencies)

Hackers leak personal information of over 200M Twitter users

ANKARA: Hackers reportedly stole the personal data of more than 200 million Twitter users and shared these details, including email addresses and phone numbers, on a hacking website. The incident "will unfortunately lead to a lot of hacking, targeted phishing and doxing," said Alan Gal, co-founder of Israeli cybersecurity monitoring firm Hudson Rock, on Wednesday. Describing the breach as "one of the most significant leaks" he has seen in his entire life, Gal first posted it on the business-focused social networking site LinkedIn on Dec. 24. Screenshots of the hacker forum, where the data appeared Wednesday, have circulated online. Twitter has not responded to any posts mentioning the breach nor commented on the report shared by the security researcher. It is not clear if the social media platform has taken any steps yet to investigate or deal with the issue. The identity of those behind the hack is still unknown, along with other details. It may have happened as early as 2021, well before millionaire Elon Musk took over the company last October in a \$44 billion deal that has been followed by controversy and turmoil. (Agencies)

Colombia government weakened by 'truce' mishap: analysts

BOGOTÁ: In announcing a "bilateral" ceasefire before it existed, Colombian President Gustavo Petro may have weakened his government in ongoing peace talks with armed groups, experts say. Petro's New Year's Eve declaration was hailed by the United Nations and others as a step towards the "total peace" Colombia's first-ever leftist president has vowed to bring to the country. But the ELN guerrilla group poured cold water all over Petro's declaration just three days later, denying the group had entered into any such deal, and the government conceded that nothing was signed. Whether a calculated ploy to pile pressure on the ELN or mere miscommunication, Petro's move was a "mistake" that harmed "the legitimacy of the peace negotiations,"

conflict expert Laura Barrios of Rosario University told AFP. "The biggest challenge here will be how the government will regain the trust of the ELN," she said. For analyst Felipe Botero of the University of The Andes in Bogota, the events "revealed inexperience and political clumsiness." It was a "setback for the government," said Botero, but would not necessarily compromise the talks themselves. On December 31, Petro announced that a ceasefire had been agreed with the country's five largest armed groups, including the National Liberation Army (ELN), from January 1 to June 30. The government subsequently said the ceasefire would be monitored by the United Nations, Colombia's human rights ombudsman and the Catholic Church. (Agencies)

Muhammad is 2nd-most-popular baby boy name in Netherlands in 2022

ROTTERDAM: The second-most-popular name for newborn boys in the Netherlands in 2022 was Muhammad, according to new figures. According to data released by the Dutch Social Insurance Bank (SVB) on Thursday, the top name for newborn boys in the

country last year was also based in faith — Noah, with 871 — while Emma was the top girl's name with 677. Combining the various spellings of the name, Muhammad took second place among the names given to baby boys with 671. (Agencies)

Digital advertising trucks flash Kashmir freedom messages In New York, Washington

NEW YORK: The World Kashmir Awareness Forum (WKAF), a Washington-based advocacy body, rented digital advertising trucks — one in New York and the other in Washington — that displayed razor-sharp messages calling on the United Nations to implement its fulfill its resolutions pledging to the people of Jammu and Kashmir their right to self-determination, as they moved around the two cities. The electronic screens on the trucks carry messages such as: "UN obligated to implement its resolutions on Kashmir"; "Land grab operation in Kashmir is economic terrorism"; "Freedom for all: Freedom for Kashmir"; "Stop Indian

military & demographic terrorism in Kashmir"; "Indian occupied Kashmir: Most densely militarized settler colony" and "Hold India accountable for war crimes in Kashmir". The trucks appeared on the roads of New York and Washington on January 5, the 'Right to Self-Determination Day'. "Digital advertising trucks are considered to be the most effective way to spread a message as the brightly lit words on the screens catch attention of the people walking on the streets and those coming in and out of government and commercial buildings," Dr. Ghulam Nabi Fai, Chairman of the World Forum for Peace & Justice, said in a statement. (Agencies)

Kazakh official announces January 2022 protests as coup attempt

ISTANBUL: Kazakhstan's Prosecutor General Berik Assyllov has announced during the delivery of a report to the Kazakh parliament that the protests which erupted in the country in January 2022 turned out to be a "coup attempt." "We can say that the operation to dismiss the country's top leadership in conditions of controlled chaos was carefully planned. In fact, it was a coup attempt," Assyllov told the lower house of the parliament, the Majilis, on Thursday. The chronology of the protests was made and the identities of their organizers were determined under an investigation, Assyllov noted, saying the investigation determined those responsible to be among senior government officials, as well as crime rings. "The tragedy of January has deeply affected our country and has been an important lesson for all of us. Speaking here is an opportunity to tell a wide audience what's going on," Assyllov further said. He also said that on the orders of

former internal security chief Karim Massimov, buildings of the National Security Committee were abandoned by the employees in some regions. "As a result, no measures were taken to stop the protests in time, and the cities of Almaty and Taldykorgan remained in the grip of fully armed bandits for two days. 3,000 gun ammunition fell into their hands. The whereabouts of about 2,000 guns is still unknown," he said, adding that Massimov is on trial as one of the main organizers of the protests. More information will be given when the trials are concluded and Former Defense Minister Murat Bektanov's trial in military court continues, he also said. On Jan. 2 last year, massive protests broke out in Kazakhstan over a rise in fuel prices in the Zhanaozen city of the Mangystau region, which later turned into clashes with police, with the most violent incidents taking place in the country's largest city Almaty. (Agencies)

US man kills his family of seven, then self: Utah police

LOS ANGELES: A man shot and killed his family of seven, including five children, then turned the gun on himself after his wife filed for divorce. Police in the small Utah settlement of Enoch City found eight bodies — one of them that of a four-year-old — after being called by friends and relatives who were concerned for the family, US officials said on Thursday. A spokesman said officers had discovered three adults and five children at a single-family home on Wednesday, all dead from what appeared to be gunshot wounds. "Evidence suggests that the suspect took his own life after

killing seven others in the home," a statement from the city said, naming him as 42-year-old Michael Haight. The dead were his wife, her mother, and the couple's five children — three girls and two boys aged between four and 17. Enoch Mayor Geoffrey Chesnut said the shooting came after an apparent marital breakdown. "It appears, according to court documents, that (a divorce petition) was filed on the 21st of December and it was filed by the wife," he told reporters. Chesnut said Enoch was a small, close-knit community where people knew each other. (Agencies)

Why Indonesia is moving its capital to the rainforests of Borneo

JAKARTA: Indonesia is relocating its capital city from Jakarta to a site more than 1,000 kilometres (620 miles) away in the rainforests of Borneo Island. The project is set to launch at the end of President Joko Widodo's term in 2024. Here's why Southeast Asia's largest economy is moving its administrative centre to Nusantara, a lush, biodiverse region home to the world's oldest rainforests. Jakarta is sinking at an alarm-

ing rate due to the excessive extraction of groundwater. A study by Indonesia's Agency for the Assessment and Application of Technology in 2021 found that the sprawling megalopolis sinks about six centimetres on average every year, making it one of the fastest-sinking cities on earth. "Building a sea wall is inevitable because the flood is already here but over time the dam will sink, and the flood will happen again," (Agencies)

International Conference on accountancy education concludes

RIYADH: The activities of the International Conference on Accountancy Education were concluded yesterday. The three-day conference was held under the theme of "early preparation for the labor market". It was organized by the Saudi Organization for Certified Public Accountants- SOCPA in Riyadh, under the patronage of the Minister of Commerce and Chairman of the board of Directors of SOCPA, Dr. Majid bin Abdullah Al-Qasabi. The conference discussed the role of education in developing the accounting profession, highlighting the profession and the promising opportunities that the profession achieves, in addition to reviewing and exchanging local and international best practices in the accountancy profession, reviewing the developments in the profession and the latest international regulations and systems, and transferring international experiences in the profession and benefiting from it. Among them, highlighting the role of accounting education in formulating the outputs of accounting competencies that contribute to promoting economic growth. (Agencies)

Pilot killed as trainee aircraft crashes into temple in India

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

EU bans import of fishery products from Cameroon

ISTANBUL: The European Commission has identified Cameroon as a "non-cooperating country," banning import of seafood caught in waters of the Central African country. "The Commission decided to identify Cameroon as a non-cooperating country in the fight against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing, giving it a so-called 'red card'," the Commission said in a statement on Thursday. "From now onwards EU Member States shall refuse the importation of fishery products from Cameroon even when accompanied by catch certificates validated by the national authorities," it continued. (Agencies)

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