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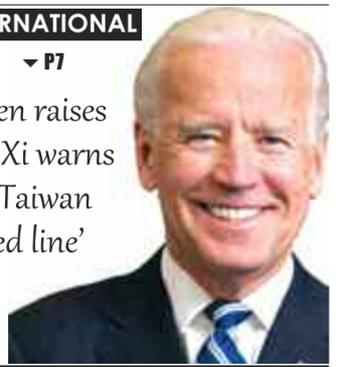


VC in varsities
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Biden raises
HR, Xi warns
of Taiwan
'red line'



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■ Opposition members tore copies of agenda, stage walk out of Parliament

Parliament allows EVMs in elections, OPs voting right

ISLAMABAD: Besides ruckus at the joint session of the Parliament on Wednesday, the government managed to find a way to get Parliament's approval to use Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and give voting right to overseas Pakistanis.

Among others, the Parliament on Wednesday passed Elections Second Amendment Bill, 2021, granting the right of vote to overseas Pakistanis and providing for use of electronic voting machines in the elections, along with bill to grant voting rights to overseas Pakistanis and ICJ review and reconsideration bill.

The ICJ review and reconsideration bill would grant the right of review and reconsideration in the Kulbhushan Jadhav case to bring into effect the judgment of the International Court of Justice. 'Furious' with the move, opposition members tore copies of today's agenda and walked out of today's meeting. Opposition lawmakers also assembled around Speaker Asad Qaiser's dais, chanting slogans against Prime Minister Imran Khan and his government.

Earlier at the start of today's session, government had withdrawn the bill regarding use of electronic voting machines, but later it was taken up again and put up to vote.

As the session started at around noon, Opposition leader and PML-N President Shahbaz Sharif lashed out at govt and termed the EVM as 'evil and vicious machine'. Shahbaz Sharif, while addressing the joint session said that government and its allies wanted to bulldoze important bills that needed 'mutual consensus'. Shahbaz termed the bills 'illegal' and said that government was 'spoiling the parliamentary traditions'.

Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari during his address to the session said that government was giving 'NRO' to Indian spy Kalbhushan Jadhav.

He took government to the cleaners and announced that opposition would challenge Wednesday's legislation in courts. Bilawal said that the government was introducing

'one-sided reforms'. Talking about the bill to grant voting rights to overseas Pakistanis, Bilawal said that opposition's suggestion was to introduce an 'AJK-alike' electoral procedure for overseas Pakistanis.

He said that no one was opposing overseas Pakistanis' right to vote. He said that if we carried out reforms together then the next election would not be controversial and it would have been Khan Sahab's success. However, he said that the opposition

would not accept the results of the next election if the govt continued in the manner it was proceeding in. Speaking about the EVM, he said even the ECP has rejected it and raised 37 serious objections over the machine. FM Shah Mehmood Qureshi said that EVM would write-off 'evil desires and methods' forever. Opposition was ready to accept remittances sent by overseas Pakistanis but couldn't accept their voting rights.

Qureshi termed parliament's joint session

as 'historic day' and said that electoral reforms are aimed at protecting the election process from being stolen. He asked the opposition parties to also vote in favor of the relevant bills. The Foreign Minister pointed out that questions have always been raised on the elections held after 1970.

He said time has come to set the direction right and ensure the transparency and credibility of the electoral process. Qureshi said the govt, on its part, time and again approached the opposition parties on electoral reforms. He said we repeatedly tried to give demonstrations to the opposition parties on Electronic Voting Machines. He said the aim of introducing EVMs is to bury the evil design and vicious mindset of imposing the govt. The FM said the PTI and its allied parties are fully united and have the majority to get the electoral reforms bill passed.

The Foreign Minister said the expatriate Pakistanis are our precious asset and they will be involved in the decision making. He said the overseas Pakistanis will be given the right to franchise. —DNA

221 support motion while 203 opposition members oppose

NPMC reviews prices of basic food items

ISLAMABAD: A meeting of the National Price Monitoring Committee (NPMC) was held Wednesday under the chair of Advisor to PM on Finance and Revenue, Shaukat Tarin.

Federal Minister for National Food Security & Research Syed Fakhar Imam, federal secretaries and other high-level entities participated in the meeting.

Committee reviewed the prices of wheat, sugar, pulses, chicken and other essential food items in the country. Secretary Finance briefed the NPMC about the weekly SPI situation which has been increased by 1.81 percent during the week under review. While reviewing the price trend of essential commodities, Secretary Finance apprised that prices of 06 essential commodities registered decline whereas prices of 15 items remained stable during the last week, he added.

Advisor Finance Shaukat Tarin commended the ef-

forts of provincial govts and Islamabad administration and expressed concern over the significant price difference of wheat flour in Sindh and Baluchistan Provinces as compared to other Provinces.

He advised the Provincial Chief Secretaries of Sindh and Baluchistan to increase the daily releases of wheat to improve the supply situation in the markets and make efforts to bring the prices of wheat at lower level. Sindh government's Chief Secretary briefed the meeting that Sindh Government is taking possible measures to control the price of wheat in the province by timely releasing the stocks.

Moreover, Secretary Finance informed that prices are easing out in Punjab, KP and Islamabad due to start of crushing of crop of sugar and proactive measures of the govt. He expressed concern on the high prices of sugar at retail level in Sindh and Baluchistan despite



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan at the Joint Session at the Parliament.

Indonesian envoy points out chances of Pak-Indonesia FTA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia to Pakistan, Adam Mulawarman Tugio on Wednesday said Pakistan and Indonesia had strong prospects for proposed bilateral Free Trade Agreement (FTA), which help strengthen economic and trade ties between the two countries.

The Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) already existed in both the countries which opened up the possibility of increasing bilateral trade, he said. Due to the PTA between Pakistan and Indonesia, cooperation between the two countries had increased in the industrial sector including agriculture, Ambassador of Indonesia, Adam Mulawarman Tugio told APP here.

The Ambassador said Indonesia had recently reduced trade tariff for facilitating to Pakistan in 20 trade items in the bilateral PTA review.

He said trade between the two countries had doubled since the PTA and Indonesia's exports had increased, adding that talks were underway to reduce the trade gap between the two countries.

He said strengthening the economic and trade ties between Pakistan and In-

donesia were being negotiated on ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA). The Ambassador said Indonesia had a strong role to play, adding, progress was being made to enhance economic and trade integration between Pakistan and Association of SouthEast Asian Nations (ASEAN). He hoped that the agreement of ATIGA would be finalized next year. He said ATIGA was a result of almost two decades of trade integration efforts amongst the AMS, starting with the signing of ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) in 1993.

ATIGA, which was the forerunner of the ASEAN Plus 1 FTAs, including the recently signed RCEP agreement, consolidated and streamlined the provisions in the Agreement on the CEPT and other relevant ASEAN agreements, and broadened its scope, he informed. He said ASEAN was a strong trade bloc and in the future ASEAN countries were striving to establish trade and economic ties with the world.

Ambassador Tugio said Pakistan and ASEAN countries had a combined economic and trade market of 870 million

people in which trilateral trade between the two sides was only \$7.5 billion which was not according to trade potential.

He said Pakistan could take full advantage of the \$3 trillion trade market in ASEAN, for which a comprehensive plan was needed for future. The Ambassador said Pakistan had an important geographical location which could connect Central Asian Countries with the world on the one hand and Western China on the other hand for which Gwadar Port was of utmost importance.

The Ambassador said ASEAN countries had FTAs with China, Japan and Korea. He said ASEAN countries had \$600b annual trade with China, \$200b with Japan, \$150b with South Korea and \$300 billion with the United States, which added up to \$1.25tr in its annual trade volume. He said Pacific Asia was also a major trade partner of ASEAN and global trade bloc with a worth of \$482b in annual trade opportunities. The Ambassador said ASEAN countries and Pakistan could take advantage of each other's FTA partners and EU Generalized Schemes of Preferences (GSP- Plus) partners as a third party to

Gold prices decrease by Rs 2850 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold witnessed decrease of Rs 2850 and was sold at Rs 122,000 in the local market on Wednesday against its sale at Rs Rs 124,850 the previous day.

The price of 10 gram 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs 2444 to Rs 104,595 against its sale at Rs 107,039 whereas that of and 10 gram 22 karat went down to Rs 95,880 from Rs 98,119, Karachi Sarafa and Jewellers Group reported. The price of per tola silver decreased by Rs40 and was traded at Rs1440 against its sale at Rs1480. Likewise, the prices of 10 gram silver went down by Rs34.30 to Rs1234.56 from Rs1268.86.

The price of gold in international market decreased by \$12 and was traded at \$1862 against its sale at \$1874, the Jewellers Group reported. —APP

Actor Shahzad Nawaz appointed PM's assistant

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Wednesday appointed Shahzad Nawaz, as his special assistant on culture, arts and communications.

"The Prime Minister, in terms of rule 4 (6) of the Rules of Business, 1973 read with Serial No. 1A of Schedule V-A of the said Rules, has been pleased to appoint Mr. Shahzad Nawaz, as Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Culture, Arts and related Communication, with immediate effect," read the notification dated November 16.

Shahzad Nawaz is a Pakistani filmmaker, actor, singer and advertiser, who started his career as an advisor to many news agencies and media publications. —DNA

When sports man steps in ground, he will win: PM

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister (PM) Imran Khan has said when sports man steps in the ground then he thinks only he will win.

The joint session of parliament took place Wednesday to legislate on important national issues. Several bills including use of electronic voting machine, right of vote to the overseas Pakistanis, electoral reforms and several other key bills were presented in the session by the government for approval.

When asked by the journalists in the corridors of the Parliament how much he was sanguine about the joint session of the parliament, the PM Imran Khan replied when sports man steps in the ground, he thinks only he will win. —Online

Rupee continues winning streak, gains Rs1.13

From Our Staff Correspondent

KARACHI: The exchange rate of US Dollar weakened by Rs1.13 in the interbank on Wednesday against Pakistani rupee.

The greenback closed at Rs173.76 on third business day of the week compared to previous closing of Rs174.89.

Meanwhile, the price of euro depreciated by Rs2.28 and closed at Rs196.63 against the last working day's trading of Rs198.91 the State Bank of Pakistan reported.

The Japanese Yen closed at Rs1.51, whereas a decrease of Rs1.65 was witnessed in the exchange rate of British Pound, which was traded at Rs233.77 as compared to its last closing of Rs235.42.

The exchange rates of Emirates Dirham and Saudi Riyal depreciated by about 30 paise each to close at Rs47.31 and Rs 46.32 respectively.

PSX loses 348 points to close at 46,194 points

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bearish trend on Wednesday, losing 348.49 points, with a negative change of 0.75 per cent, closing at 46,194.42 points against 46,542.91 points on the last working day. A total of 238,493,279 shares were traded during the day compared to the trade of 243,193,208 shares the previous day whereas the price of shares stood at Rs10.124 billion against Rs 10.432 billion the previous day.

As many as 343 companies' transacted shares in the stock market, 83 of them recorded gain and 241 sustained losses whereas the share price of 19 companies remained unchanged. The three top trading companies were Services Fabrics with a volume of 18,935,000 shares and price per share of Rs 11.94, TRG Pak Ltd with a volume of 15,965,296 and price per share of Rs120.67 and Ghani Glo Hol with volume of 13,965,500 and price per share of Rs31.65. —APP



KARACHI: Advisor to PM on Commerce & Investment Abdul Razzaq Dawood addresses a press conference at the Karachi Press Club.

EU encourages Pak SMEs to seek chances in EU Single Market

KARACHI: As part of its efforts to support Pakistani SMEs to access opportunities in the European Single Market and maximize the benefit from GSP+, the European Union held the EU-Pakistan Business Forum for Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) in Karachi Wednesday.

The EU-Pakistan Business Forum aims to provide opportunities for both EU and Pakistani businesses to work together to become engines of development and partnership and contribute to enhancing bilateral trade.

Ambassador of the European Union to Pakistan, Androulla Kaminara, welcomed the participation of Government representatives, including Sindh Governor Imran Ismail and PM Advisor on Commerce and Investment Abdul Razak Dawood.

The Ambassadors from Sweden and Denmark, as well as EU Trade Counsellors from other EU Member States, participated in the event alongside local. SMEs from four sectors -Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCGs), the chemicals and pharmaceuticals, the value added textiles and leather and gems, stones, onyx and jewellery designing.

Speakers focused on the importance of SMEs, their role in value addition and importance to Pakistan's sustained economic growth. Participants were informed about how SMEs could benefit from the European Union's GSP+ Scheme, providing two thirds of tariff lines duty free access to the EU market with the rest on preferential duties. The Pakistani economy consists of almost 3.3 mil-

lion SMEs. These consist of service providers, manufacturing units and start-ups. SMEs make up over 30 percent of Pakistan's GDP, account for approximately 25 percent of export generation and provide over 70 percent industrial employment.

While in the EU, Europe's 25 million SMEs are the backbone of the EU economy. SMEs provide two out of three industrial jobs in the EU.

The Business Forum aims to play a key role in bringing together SMEs from EU and Pakistan to enhance their export orientation, collaboration in technology transfer and promotion of businesses. The EU envoy, Androulla Kaminara said, "Over the series of three events, we have managed to bring together SMEs working in diverse sectors. —Online