

MNA Jaffar passes away

LAHORE (PPI): PTI MNA and former minister Muhammad Jaffar Khan Leghari died on Saturday at a hospital in Lahore. The 81-year-old politician was elected to the National Assembly from NA-193 (Rajanpur-I) constituency in August 2018. He was first elected to the lower house of parliament as a candidate of National Alliance from the same constituency in 2002 general election.

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# Islamabad LG Elections: Voters lineup while ECP's staff missing

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The number of voters were waiting outside different polling stations of Federal Capital to cast their vote in the Islamabad local government (LG) elections. However, the staff of Election Commission of Pakistan has been disappeared.

Islamabad high court (IHC) ordered to hold local government (LG) elections in the federal capital on December 31. As per details, the 101 polling stations assigned by the election commission of Pakistan (ECP) were still closed despite IHC orders. A large number of voters have gathered outside different polling stations in the federal capital as the polling was scheduled to begin at 8 am on Saturday.

Though ECP is not holding LG elections in federal capital today as directed by IHC, but the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf polling agents and the voters are still flocking to the polling stations to cast their votes.

The PTI and Pakistan People's Party, too, have established their party camps outside the polling stations. There is no polling activity in Islamabad, but still PTI's polling agents and the voters are making a beeline outside the polling stations. No polling staff reached any polling station today, nor was the election material dispatched to conduct the polls.

Despite this, the voters of UC 1 of Syedpur village reached the polling station and when they found that the gate of the polling station was closed and there was no polling staff, they stood there in a queue as a protest. Voters also thronged the polling stations in G-6, G-7, F-10 and F-11 Syedpur.

Earlier in the day, ECP and the federal government have filed intra-court appeals against IHC order to hold Islamabad LG polls today. IHC ordered to hold LG elections in the federal capital on December 31. Munawar Iqbal Duggal, the additional attorney-general, confirming the move said the ECP is going to file an intra-court appeal against the decision.

ECP held an emergency meeting after the IHC's orders and decided to file an intra-court appeal against the court's verdict. The election commission decided to seek at least a week to conduct the polls stating it requires time for the printing and delivery of ballot papers, the sources said.

ECP officials also held a meeting with Duggal over the inability to conduct the polls. Chief Election Commissioner Sikander Raja also reached Islamabad and held a meeting on the situation.

The election commission has expressed its inability in

(Continued on Back Page)

## Imran regretting failure to make Pakistan bankrupt

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb said on Saturday that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chairman Imran Khan was regretting his "failure" to make the country financially bankrupt.

In a statement in reaction to Imran Khan's tweet, she said that the "foreign agent" regretted that his commitment to bankrupt the country has not been fulfilled.

She said that the foreign agent and Tosha Khana thief was running away from the elections.

The minister said that Imran Khan was thrown out of power by exercise of the democratic right of a no-confidence vote.

Despite remaining in power for over three years, why Imran did not hold the local body elections, she



asked.

Castigating Imran, she said that the PTI was "committed" to conducting elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, what happened to that commitment? What happened to the commitment to give one million jobs and building five million housing units, she said while taking a jibe on PTI leadership.

She said that Imran was only "committed" to loot and plunder, telling lies and

fraud. She said Imran's "commitment" was only to get foreign funding, steal the Tosha Khana gifts, and bankrupt Pakistan's economy.

Marriyum said that the "commitment" of Imran was only to plunge the country into historic debt and push the people into unprecedented inflation.

She said Imran's "commitment" was only to make a compromise over Kashmir and sell national interests.

## One soldier embraces martyrdom, 4 terrorists killed

RAWALPINDI (APP): A soldier of Pakistan Army embraced martyrdom on Saturday whereas four terrorists were killed by the Security Forces during an Intelligence Based Operation (IBO) conducted in general area Jani Khel, Bannu of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

According to the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release, an intense fire exchange took place between own troops and terrorists during the conduct of the operation.

The Army troops effectively engaged the terrorists' location. However, weapon and ammunition was also recovered from the killed terrorists who remained actively involved in terrorist activities against security forces and killing of innocent citizens.

The martyred soldier was identified as Sepoy Muhammad Wasim (age 25 years, resident of Khairpur) having fought gallantly, embraced shahadat during intense exchange of fire.

The sanitization of the area was being carried out to eliminate any other terrorists found in the area.

## 5 terrorists belonging to banned outfits held

LAHORE (INP): The Counter Terrorism Department on Saturday arrested five terrorists from Lahore belonging to banned outfits, says in media reports.

As per details, the suspects arrested in the CTD operation include a banned outfit commander. The arrested terrorist had already planned to carry out an attack in sensitive districts. Apart from suicide jackets, explosives, guns, ammunition and literature pertaining to terror activities were recovered from the five suspects.

In the last week, 21,000 went through security checks in 504 combing operations and 153 suspected terrorists were arrested. Whereas 67 kidnapped people were also released. Earlier, the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) claimed to arrest a suspected terrorist during an intelligence-based operation (IBO) in Islamabad.

The Counter-Terrorism Department and other institutions conducted a joint raid on a tip-off in Islamabad and arrested a suspected terrorist. The raiding team found a large quantity of arms and ammunition in the custody of the arrested suspect.

The spokesperson said in a statement that the IBO was conducted under the supervision of the senior superintendent police (SSP) Counter-Terrorism Department.

## PM pledges to take Pakistan on path of prosperity

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has expressed his resolve to take Pakistan towards the destination of economic and political stability and social betterment. In a message on the eve of the new year, the prime minister prayed for the prosperity and welfare of the whole humanity. He said that 2022, was a year in which floods devastation increased miseries and problems for the people.

The prime minister reiterated to bring light into the lives of 33 million flood affected people of the country in the year 2023. He wished that the new year might be an end to price hike and terrorism and ensure security to

lives and economic prosperity. The prime minister observed that the world was confronted with various challenges like climate change. He said that they had to secure the future of the coming generations on durable foundations in the new year. The prime minister also expressed resolve for the creation of new opportunities for the youth in the new year.

He also prayed for the freedom of Palestine and Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir. Paying tribute to the bereaved families of Shuhada, the prime minister expressed condolences and prayed for the high ranks of the departed souls.



KARACHI: Commissioning Parade of 118th Midshipmen and 26th Short Service Commission held at Pakistan Naval Academy, COAS General Syed Asim Munir chief guest on occasion.

## COAS calls for national consensus to defeat terror as Pakistan at critical juncture

KARACHI (APP): The Commissioning Parade of 118th Midshipmen and 26th Short Service Commission (SSC) was held on Saturday at Pakistan Naval Academy, Karachi. Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir was the chief guest on the occasion, an Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release said.

Upon arrival at Pakistan Naval Academy, the COAS was received by Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi. Addressing the parade, the COAS congratulated the commissioning term for the successful completion of training and becoming guardians of the maritime frontiers of Pakistan.

The COAS said, "the maritime domain is continuously shifting, mainly due to technological advancement, herein only those navies would prevail and prove effective that would align with professionalism and modern trends of warfare."

The COAS appreciated Pakistan Naval Academy for imparting quality education not only to Pakistani cadets but to the cadets of friendly countries. He advised young officers as

future leaders to lead by their conduct, character, professional acumen and foresight.

The Army Chief stated that Pakistan was passing through one of her most critical junctures and this required development of national consensus by all stakeholders to sail through the confronted challenges of economy and terrorism.

Later, the chief guest gave away awards to the prize winners. The prestigious Quaid-i-Azam Gold Medal was awarded to Lt Kashif Abdul Quyyom Pakistan Navy for his Overall Best Performance.

Midshipman Naufil Malik was awarded the coveted Sword of Honour for his overall best performance.

Later, the COAS visited Malir Garrison where he laid floral wreath at Martyr's Monument.

He also addressed the officers of Karachi Corps, Rangers and other CAFs at Malir Garrison. COAS underscored the need for focus on the profession and demands of modern warfare and directed information operations. Earlier, on arrival, COAS was received by Commander Karachi Corps, Lieutenant General Babar Iftikhar.

## Former pope Benedict XVI dies aged 95

VATICAN CITY (AFP/APP): Former pope Benedict XVI has died at the age of 95, the Vatican announced Saturday, almost a decade after he became the first pontiff to resign in six centuries.

His death brings to an end an unprecedented situation in which two "men in white" -- Benedict and his successor Pope Francis -- had co-existed within the walls of the tiny city state.

"With sorrow I inform you that the Pope Emeritus, Benedict XVI, passed away today at 9:34 in the Mater Ecclesiae Monastery in the Vatican," Vatican spokesman Matteo Brunni said in a statement.

His body will be displayed from Monday morning in the solemn setting of Saint Peter's Basilica, to allow the faithful to pay their respects.

The German pope emeritus, whose birth name was Joseph Ratzinger, had been living a quiet life in a former convent inside the Vatican grounds since his



shock decision to step down in February 2013.

His health had been declining for a long time, but the Vatican revealed on Wednesday that his situation had worsened, while Francis called for Catholics worldwide to pray for him.

While there is no rule-book for former popes, Benedict's funeral is expected to be at the Vatican, presided over by Francis. In 2005 the body of John Paul II, the last pope to die, lay in state before a funeral mass in St Peter's Square attended by one million people, including heads of state.

Benedict had almost

entirely withdrawn from public view, his health reported to be shaky and the few photographs that emerged of him exposing his frailty.

Back in 2013, he had cited his declining physical and mental health in his decision to become the first pope since 1415 to give up the job as head of the worldwide Catholic church.

Benedict was a brilliant theologian but his papacy was beset by Vatican infighting and a scandal over clerical sexual abuse of children that rocked the Catholic Church the world over, in which he was criticised for a lack of leadership.

## President, PM grieved over demise of ex-Pope Benedict

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Saturday expressed his grief over the demise of the Pope Emeritus, Benedict XVI.

The president said, "My thoughts go out to Catholics in Pakistan and around the world, bereaved by the departure of His Holiness Benedict XVI, who worked for a more fraternal world".

His powerful calls for solidarity with marginalized people everywhere and his urgent appeals to close the widening gap between rich and poor are more rel-

evant than ever, President Secretariat Press Wing, in a press release, quoted the president as saying "My thoughts are with the millions around the world who grieve his passing", he said.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday expressed his deep grief over the death of former Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI.

The prime minister, on his Twitter handle, said that the former pope's death would be mourned by millions around the world

including Pakistan.

"Deeply saddened to learn about the passing of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI. He would be mourned by millions around the world including in Pakistan. May his soul rest in eternal peace," he posted in a tweet.

According to media reports, former Pope Benedict XVI died on Saturday at the age of 95. He had led the Catholic Church for about eight years until, in 2013, he became the first Pope to resign since Gregory XII in 1415.

12 Covid cases confirmed

KARACHI (PPI): Pakistan on Saturday recorded 12 more Covid cases with no death during the last 24 hours. The number of confirmed positive cases surged to 1,575,785 while the country-wide death toll stood at 30,636 since the outbreak of the disease. According to the National Institute of Health (NIH) daily report, at least 12 people were tested positive for Covid across the country in the past 24 hours.

## Prices of petroleum products to remain unchanged: Dar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Ishaq Dar here on Saturday said that the government has decided to keep the existing prices of petroleum products unchanged for next 15 days to facilitate the masses in the country, particularly to provide relief to lower-income people during intense winters.

Addressing a press con-

ference, the minister said that these prices would be applicable from January 1, 2023 and would remain in force for next 15 days to January 15, 2023.

He said that the decision for keeping the existing prices of petroleum products unchanged in local market was taken under the special directives of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif to provide relief

to common man, particularly the lower income groups and ensure provision of fuel at household level on affordable prices to meet the winter requirements.

The price of diesel will remain unchanged at current level and it would be available on existing price of Rs227.80 per liter, petrol Rs214.80 per liter, kerosene oil Rs171.83 per liter and light diesel oil at Rs169.00

per liter, he added.

Due to movements of petroleum prices in the international markets, the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) has recommended Rs 8.76 per liter increase in kerosene oil and Rs 7.73 per liter of light diesel oil, however, the government has decided against to keep the existing prices of other oil products unchanged.





# Chairman NDMA calls on Punjab CM, discusses rehabilitation programmes

LAHORE (APP): Chairman National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) Lieutenant General Inam Haider Malik met with the Punjab Chief Minister Chaudhry Parvez Elahi at CM Office on Saturday.

Head of Punjab Ehsaas Programme Dr. Sania Nishtar participated via video link and gave a detailed briefing about the rehabilitation and aid programme of the flood affectees.

On the occasion, the CM said that the Punjab government was launching to undertake preventive measures in the wake of 7th Corona wave apprehension in Punjab. He added that a forewarning system to inform about floods, diseases and calamities would be installed, saying that early warning systems were being installed to provide prior indication of calamities at three places.

The CM maintained that the installation of early warning system would enable the concerned departments to take timely measures to save people, livestock, fields, properties etc from flood damages and destruction.

He apprised that rehabilitation work of the

flood-affected people was ongoing expeditiously in Punjab.

CM highlighted that the Punjab government disbursed aid among the flood affectees by its own resources and through the donations being collected by telethon. CM informed that more than five billion rupees were being distributed among the flood affectees and payments to 36 thousand affected families have been made, adding that financial assistance had also been provided to the flood affectees to build their own houses. CM underscored that the Punjab government had ensured settlement of the flood affectees by its own resources.

He revealed that construction work of more than 55 thousand complete and partially destroyed houses was ongoing, saying that he reached Rajanpur first of all when the flood arrived in Punjab and himself oversaw relief activities. He highlighted that the Punjab government allocated rupees one billion to help the flood affectees of Sindh.

CM intimated that special arrangements were being made for the facilitation of tourists in

Murree and at other tourist places during rain and snowfall. CM outlined that screening of passengers coming from abroad and especially from China would be done. NDMA Chairman Lieutenant General Inam Haider Malik said that the rescue and relief plan of Punjab government during flood was laudable, adding that the Rescue 1122 institution performed highly appreciable and exemplary services during flood.

Lt. General Inam Haider stated that to make a forecast prior to 30, 40 days about natural calamities was possible with the help of the latest technology.

He said "Climate change is adopting a permanent feature and we will have to make ourselves prepared to effectively cope up with its hazardous effects."

Principal Secretary to CM Muhammad Khan Bhatti, Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Captain (Retd) Asad Ullah Khan, Caretaker Senior Member Board of Revenue Naveed Shirazi, DG Emergency Services Dr. Rizwan Naseer, DG PDMA and officials concerned were also present on the occasion.

## PIA to fine staff for smoking during flights

KARACHI (NNI): The Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) has decided to impose a fine of Rs100,000 on employees caught smoking during flights.

The decision to impose fine was taken after an inspection by a European agency revealed that no-smoking policy was violated.

In a circular, the administration of the national flag carrier stated, "Recently one of our aircraft was subject to SAFA inspection, during the inspection cockpit crew were found violating the "NO SMOKING ON BOARD" policy." It stated that the airline had a zero-tolerance against smoking onboard.

"Any crew member found involved in violating the policy would be fined a sum of upto Rs100,000/- As per previous circulars, it is again reiterated that the other crew members are required to report such violations. Failure to do so, other crew member on such flights would also be considered as violators of company policy and would be fined the same amount."

## Election fear has driven PPP crazy: Zaidi

KARACHI (NNI): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Sindh chapter president and former federal minister Ali Zaidi has said that the entire Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP) including Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has gone crazy due to the fear of elections.

Reacting to FM Bilawal Bhutto's statement, he said that it is clear from PPP chairman's speech that the PPP has accepted its defeat in the election but the people of Sindh are cognizant and they won't listen to their words anymore.

Ali Zaidi said that the days of mischief of the PPP and MQM have gone, adding that Bilawal is facing failure on every forum and he will face the worst defeat in local body elections as well.

"Those who nurture terrorism are now they are throwing debris at PTI government." The former federal minister said that Imran Khan saved the country from terrorism, adding that the world has seen what they have done to Sindh. He said that Imran Khan had led the country on the path of development.

## 1062 injured in 1011 road mishaps

LAHORE (APP): At least 10 people were killed while 1062 sustained injuries in 1011 road traffic accidents in Punjab during last 24 hours. Out of the total injured, 568 people were seriously injured who were shifted to different hospitals, whereas, 494 minor injured victims were treated at the incident site by rescue medical teams, said a spokesman for Rescue 1122 here on Saturday.



LAHORE: Chairman NDMA calls on Punjab CM Pervaiz Elahi. —NNI Photo

# Sindh Governor, Farooq Sattar agree to work together for 'Karachi's progress'

KARACHI (NNI): Sindh Governor Kamran Tessori and former Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) convener Dr Farooq Sattar have agreed to move past all previous differences and progress forward on the political front for 'Karachi's progress.'

Talking to journalists after meeting Farooq Sattar at his residence, Sindh Governor Kamran Tessori said that his ultimate goal was to unite every faction Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) for prosperity of Karachi.

The Sindh Governor said

they have developed a consensus in playing their role to fill the "political vacuum" in Karachi and urban Sindh, and move past any differences that they may have had in the past.

He regretted over the 'lack of facilities' available in Karachi, saying that the residents of the provincial capital were still facing water shortage, power shutdowns, street crimes and other problems. "We have lost power due to our mistakes", Kamran Tessori said, pointing out that rights can only be obtained only through

power. "Today, the youth of Karachi are unemployed," he said, adding that due to unemployment and coercion, the youth are not even able to protest for their rights.

He noted that there were no differences in views of Farooq Sattar, PSP Chairman Mustafa Kamal and MQM Convener Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui. "They all want the development of Karachi", he added.

Taking over the presser, Farooq Sattar lauded Sindh Governor for his efforts to unite all MQM factions, vowing that they would work together in future for Karachi's progress. He noted that the party leaders started splitting in 2016 and he parted ways in 2018. The former convener said all factions have the same ideology, adding that he was trying to unite the party for past two and a half years.

"We are not going to unite just for the election, our goal is bigger than that", he said, adding that they were uniting for all the oppressed people of

Pakistan. He also regretted over the rising street crimes in Karachi, noting that hundreds of youths have lost their lives in robberies. "It has now become necessary to unite all for the development of the city," he reiterated. It is pertinent to mention here that efforts were underway for the unification of all Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) factions.

A day earlier, the leaders of Muttahida Qaumi Movement Pakistan (MQM-P) and Pak-Sarameen Party (PSP) agreed upon the top sharing position after the merger of both political parties.

According to sources, Dr Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui will be the head of MQM-P, while Dr Farooq Sattar would be appointed as the convener. Similarly, PSP chief Mustafa Kamal will be given the position of deputy convener and Anis Kaikhani will be the head of the party's organisational affairs. Sources said that the two political parties would be merged on Sunday for a joint political struggle.

# Pakistan at risk of default, warns Yasmin Rashid

LAHORE (NNI): Punjab Health Minister Dr Yasmin Rashid warned that the default risk of Pakistan was imminent amid dwindling foreign exchange reserves.

In a media talk, the senior PTI leader lashed out at the coalition government in the Centre, saying it had earned a bad name for the country. She said the PTI had launched a protest against rising inflation in the country and demanded that the government

decrease petroleum prices.

The health minister also took a dig at the coalition government for running away from the elections. The Punjab government was making effort to extend health facilities to public through the "Sehat Card Programme," she said, adding that all major cardiology hospitals in Sindh were facilitating the patients. She said PML-N vice president Maryam Nawaz was upset due to the PTI's health card initiative.

# Overseas Pakistanis playing key role in stability of country's economy

LAHORE (INP): Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rahman has said that overseas Pakistanis are our asset and playing an important role in the stability of the country's economy through remittances.

These views were expressed by him while talking to a five-member delegation led by Barrister Amjad Malik, Chief Coordinator of Overseas Pakistanis, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) UK who called on him at Governor House Lahore on Saturday.

Muhammad Balighur Rahman said that the PML-N has always given importance to the overseas business community and solved their problems. He said that the government is determined to get the country out of crisis despite many problems and less resources.

He said that Prime Minister of Pakistan Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and his entire eco-

omic team under the leadership of Finance Minister Ishaq Dar are working to stabilize the country's economy.

Governor Punjab said that Finance Minister Ishaq Dar and his experienced team had brought the country out of the economic crisis in the past as well and insha Allah we will succeed once again. He further said that instead of spreading despair in the nation, there is a need to give hope.

During the meeting, Chief Coordinator of Overseas Pakistanis Barrister Amjad Malik, while giving a briefing to the Governor of Punjab about the worldwide organization of Pakistan Muslim League (N) Overseas Pakistanis, said that our export quality goods have received many awards due to the best quality in the world.

Amjad Malik said that the export of Pakistani rice, mangoes, oranges and other products by the overseas Pakistani busi-

nessmen is having a good impact on the economy. He further said that the overseas Pakistani businessmen have always given priority to quality. This is why Pakistani products are valued all over the world, an example of which is the footballs and other products made in Pakistan used in the FIFA World Cup.

On this occasion, the delegation informed the Governor of Punjab about the various problems faced by the immigrants. Governor Punjab assured to convey the problems faced by the overseas Pakistanis to the Prime Minister of Pakistan and Finance Minister Ishaq Dar.

The delegation included Muhammad Arshad Malik, President of Legal Wing UK Chaudhry Nisar Mahmood Advocate, Chairman of Business Council UK Khalid Mahmood Chaudhry, Senior Vice President of Muslim League (N) Saudi Arabia Mahmoodul Haque Dogar.

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NTHP Application submission deadline	Mar 5 <sup>th</sup> , 2023
NTHP Assessment Test for the Orientation Program 2023	Mar 26 <sup>th</sup> , 2023
Shortlisted candidates' announcement	Apr 10 <sup>th</sup> , 2023
Telephonic Panel Interviews	April 17 <sup>th</sup> - 19 <sup>th</sup> , 2023
Shortlisted candidates' announcement	May 8 <sup>th</sup> , 2023
Orientation Program starts	June, 2023

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**PESHAWAR:** Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa inaugurating Resilience Centre in University of Peshawar.

## PDM led gov’t responsible for unprecedented inflation: Qureshi

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leader Zubair Qureshi said that during eight months, inflation has increased by 80%, while the situation of law and order has worsened by 100%. He said while discussing in the daily Aeen Forum that a 20 kg sack of flour will cost Rs 2,300 to Rs 2,300, while an 80 kg sack of flour will cost Rs 8,000, on Saturday.

It has become eleven thousand from rupees. However, the federal government has kept silent on inflation. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is responsible for terrorism. Inflation has increased by 80% during eight months. He said that Federal Finance Minister Ishaq Dar has come on a mission to bankrupt this country. His ship is ready and all the robbers, including Dar, will escape as soon as the country is declared bankrupt. Due to the worse economic conditions, after the textile industry, the automobile industry is also in decline.

Automobile manufacturing companies in Pakistan are closing down their plants. The fascist government tried every tactic against Tehreek-e-Insaf but still failed. He said that even after all the tactics of the imported government, Tehreek-e-Insaf is the most popular party in the country.

Today, the word "election" has become a joke of PDM all over the country. These people are running away from the election like this, the people will never accept the technocrat setup, this country will be run by the people. Due to the fear of Imran Khan's popularity, the municipal elections of Islamabad and Sindh have been postponed and now these people

are reluctant to hold national elections and want to escape. Without Imran Khan, Pakistan's politics is incomplete and meaningless. After Imran Khan announced the dissolution of the assembly, everyone is shaking.

PDM is afraid of the people, how long will they run away from the election? They don't want elections, we want elections, Imran Khan is speaking the truth and everyone feels bad. He said that he will fight till his last breath, he will not leave this country to thieves. All the fugitives are coming back, the last fugitive is also being called. At first, everyone said to dissolve the assemblies, when Imran Khan said that he is dissolving the assembly, they started shaking. Due to the wrong policies of the current imported government. It is going towards disaster, due to inflation, people's purchasing power is having negative effects on all kinds of businesses, the government has taken steps to increase the economic growth. Due to skyrocketing prices of petroleum products, electricity and gas, the problems of the poor are increasing. To give relief to the people by reducing the tax rate in petroleum products and utility bills.

The government is restricting business hours in such a situation when the economy needs to be boosted. Instead of flying solo, government officials should consult to find solutions to problems and not make decisions that start shrinking the economy. Due to the closure of industries in the country, unemployment is increasing and the country has become very weak economically. The textile processing sector is facing

problems due to lack of electricity and gas due to increase in taxes. The scope of export, import will be wide and exchange will come. How can foreign orders be fulfilled in such circumstances? From the people to the businessmen are caught in the financial vortex. The industrial sector is closing down across the country.

Unemployment is increasing. The people have lost their daily bread due to the cut off of Sui gas and low pressure, the commercial and domestic consumers are facing serious problems, the government has immediately declared an economic emergency. Imran Khan is the most popular leader of Pakistan, whenever elections are held, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf will achieve historic success.

Muslim League (N) and People's Party have been in power for many decades, but they are in power for the welfare of the people and They could not give any policy to bring prosperity in their lives, Nawaz Sharif does not want to return to the country but wishes to become the Prime Minister but now this time will never come. Tehreek-e-Insaf played a role in the development of this area.

What is it, if someone has done good to the people, they never forget it. Imran Khan is the national leader, due to the wrong policies of the current government, the economy is on the verge of collapse. Due to the wrong policies of the current government, the country is sinking into political and economic quagmire, the people of the country have been chained in the chains of slavery and poverty for 75 years. And Imran Khan is coming to break those chains.

## Experts suggest sustainable management of solid waste

PESHAWAR (APP): Environmentalists have suggested for promoting ideas and practices of transforming trash dumps into useful resources through recycling for better and sustainable management of solid waste in the country.

This suggestion was made during a webinar on 'Solid Waste Management in Pakistan' organized by Institute of Urbanization (IOU), an organization striving for making cities green. "Our waste is a valuable resource, providing multiple opportunities like conversion of trash into organic fertilizer, biogas, production of different products through recycling and generation of electricity," observed Babar Abbas, consultant Lahore Waste Management Company (LWMC).

"Promotion of the idea of waste to resource will not only create livelihood opportunities in the country but also resolve a serious environmental issues of lack of proper solid waste management system which is also an international obligation for us in regard with achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)," Babar observed. We need a lot of awareness for highlighting the potential of solid waste as a useful resource through which we can get useful soil conditioner and fertilizer by converting organic waste which can be utilized in different domains in term of promoting agriculture and vegetation patterns in both urban and rural areas, he opined.

Being an agriculture country most of our waste is organic coming from livestock and farm houses which can be easily converted into useful product of bio-gas, which need a very simple infrastructure and can help to some extent to cope with energy crisis in the country, he elaborates. "Through the prevailing practice of dumping of the solid waste we are also burying tons of useful resources that our trash contains including com-

bustible waste, non-combustible waste which is also called as organic and green waste," Babar explains.

The combustible waste includes plastic, glass, paper, board, metal and if these items are segregated properly we can utilize them in the production of a lot of useful products and create a lot of employment opportunities for people, he said. The biggest issue is mishandling of our solid waste which needs a lot of awareness to educate people about the potential of both combustible and non-combustible waste which if segregated in the initial state at household level or dumping sites can benefit us both financially and environmentally.

The developed countries have transformed their solid waste management through dumping to properly utilizing of resources, he added. Through the installation of large-size incinerators, the solid waste can not only be properly managed but electricity can also be generated, he went on to say.

For sustainable management of solid waste, we have to work over availing cooperation of citizens for proper handling of trash at household level through awareness. We can also take recycling industries on board by offering them subsidies and give them green points to enjoy favor in import and export. The waste management sector in the country should design and develop an infrastructure through which they can work and develop technologies which does not require much expenditure and expertise like composting, biogas etc, he advised.

"Improper solid waste management is a major issue of public health concern due to its impact on environment and need to be addressed by government and at individual level as well," observed Adeel Saeed, a Peshawar based journalist with focus on environmental issues. Around 50 to 60 percent of solid waste is not col-

lected properly from cities and villages and eventually causes environmental problem due to littering and by polluting irrigation channels through passage in canals, Adeel added.

Adeel also stressed on strict implementation of environmental laws which are enacted but are not obeyed by people by openly disposing off waste into irrigation canals. He appreciated the efforts of Institute of Urbanization (IOU) for raising this important issue and says such initiatives will help in promotion of innovative ideas for transforming solid waste as a useful resource.

Syed Hasnaian Raza, an Environmental Researcher concurred with suggestion of Babar Abbas and said waste can be turned into a resource but its needs awareness, commitment and implementation. Around one million plastic bottles are sold globally in every minutes and the size of plastic waste accumulation in seas is covering large portion of water which is a matter of serious concern.

Hsanaian Raza said in solid waste collection, smaller cities are ignored and major focus is being given on provincial metropolis and major cities. Whereas now, he continued, due to population bulge small cities have now turned into big one and the dwellers are facing a lot of environmental problems due to improper disposal of solid waste. He said innovative ideas about useful utilization of solid waste are being floated time and again but due to lack of proper attention these practices are not promoted.

"For creation of awareness we have to promote these ideas from homes, schools, universities and even by involving pulpit of mosques for education of masses about need of the hour for resolving a serious environmental issue by turning into as a source of earning," he recommended.

(PMLN) Engineer Amir Maqam, Central leader of Awami National Party (ANP) Ameer Haider Khan Hoti, Provincial President ANP Aimal Wali Khan, Provincial president PPP Najamuddin Khan and Faisal Karim Kundi and Fayaz Khan of JUP and others.

### School timings rescheduled

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: The Elementary and Secondary Education Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, in view of foggy weather in the province, the school timings have been rescheduled from January 2 to January 31, 2023.

The primary schools timings will be from 9:15am to 1:30 pm while timings of middle and higher secondary schools will be from 9am to 2:30 pm, said a notification issued here on Saturday.

### Healthcare inspects 710 units

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Healthcare Commission (KPHCC) sealed 126 healthcare units during the month of December over unavailability of registered practitioners and using substandard items besides.

In a statement issued here on Saturday, during the crackdown against quack doctors, the teams of KPHCC inspected a total of 710 clinics in 16 different districts in the province including Peshawar, Charsadda, Nowshera, Mardan, Swabi, Abbottabad, Mansehra, Haripur, Swat, Malakand, Dir Lower, Kohat, Bannu, Karak and Dikhan.

The teams also served show cause notices to 154 healthcare units for registration of their clinics with the KPHCC. In addition, KPHCC organized training sessions on Minimum Service Delivery Standards (MSDs) at the Postgraduate Medical Institute (PGMI) where a total of 22 doctors, paramedics, pharmacists and allied health workers were trained.

### Rescue 1122 responds to 285,000 cases

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Rescue1122 responded to more than 285,000 emergencies throughout the province in the year 2022 and shifted 236,440 patients and injured to hospitals.

In a yearly performance report issued by Director General Rescue1122, Dr Khatir Ahmad here Saturday, under referral health ambulance service, a total of 74,000 patients were shifted from hospitals to other institutions on the recommendation of concerned authorities.

Similarly, 4,421 people have lost their lives in different emergencies during the same period while 27,132 injured were provided first-aid facilities on the spot. He said the average responding time of the rescue teams was less than seven minutes adding that during last year, a total of 166,590 cases of medical, 5685 cases of fire eruption, 3591 cases of petty nature of crimes, 772 of drowning incidents, 334 cases of roof collapse, 161 gas cylinder blasts and 8227 cases of other emergencies were reported. Dr Khatir said that KP Rescue1122 was serving the people throughout the province and always ready to tackle all kinds of emergencies.

### CNG stations closed for one month

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: The district administrations of Peshawar and Mardan divisions on Saturday imposed bans on opening of all CNG stations in the districts from January 1 to January 31.

In separate notifications, the decision has been made on the recommendation of Sui-Northern Gas Pipeline Limited (SNGPL) and Home and Tribal Affairs Department.

All the CNG stations situated in both divisions would be closed to ensure a sufficient supply of gas to minimize the suffering of the domestic consumers. The ban has been imposed under section 144 of Cr.PC and strict action would be taken against those found guilty of flouting the order under section 188, said official statements.

## ATP argues national consensus on economy

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Amun Taraqqi Party (ATP) chairman Muhammad Faiyaz Shah termed 2022 as highly disappointing and difficult for economic and political situations for Pakistan and demanded national consensus to overcome deficit, on Saturday.

ATP Chairman further demanded the imposition of emergency in economy, agriculture and production without any further delay wherein all institutions should be united under a single platform. 70 % competent and skillful youth want to leave the country, he noted.

Furthermore, he observed industries have been shut down owing to the electricity, gas and oil crisis that has triggered unemployment as well as

enhanced purchasing power and poverty. Every year is becoming worse as compared to the preceding year, the ATP chief noticed.

He added that the country's export and investment dropped extremely low grade whereas the price of essential food items have surged by quadruplicate. Faiyaz was chairing a meeting of the analytical and review committee at the party's central secretariat on Saturday.

The party chairman observed the price of roti (bread) has reached at Rs25/- wherein how can the 80 per cent poor and poverty-stricken people be lifted up? Shah attributed that to the current situation because of not relying on own resources and political instability.

All political parties are part of the present ruling

coalition government, they are all intelligent and clever, and claimants and fortune changers are the rulers of the centre and provinces and everywhere, but no political party is like that, the ATP chief remarked. If it is not in the government, then why not solve these problems, everything was put at stake just for the sake of power, he added.

Faiyaz demanded to immediately formulate a durable and comprehensive policy on economy, political and national security. "We are ready to give strategy and action plan". Shah said a complete analysis and review of all situations should be thoroughly discussed in a meeting of the national security committee in order to fulfill all requirements of justice and public authority.

## 1.54m patients treated in KTH during 2022

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: As many as 1.54 million patients of different nature of diseases were treated in a major hospital of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Khyber Teaching Hospital Peshawar during the year 2022.

According to Spokesman of KTH, a total of 1,008,605 patients were brought to emergency department, 38,147 patients were operated on while 18,56,370 various types of laboratory tests were done in the hospital during this period. In the year 2022, Khyber Teaching Hospital became the only hospital in

Pakistan to be ISO certified.

Khyber Teaching Hospital is the second largest hospital in the province where various patients belonging to different parts of the province get treatment facilities every year. This hospital consists of 1300 beds and also give treatment facilities to neighboring country Afghanistan.

60,932 dengue cases were tested, 11,887 came positive and 469 dengue patients were treated after hospitalization in this year. At the same time, many development works were done, which happened for

the first time in the history of Khyber Teaching Hospital, in which 20 modern modular operation theaters were built for the first time in the province at a cost of 350 million, 338 million were allocated for the renovation of four old wards.

At the same time Doctors Hostel cost 121 million, from 447 million a modern 1050 ton HVAC air condition plant was installed in the hospital. Other projects that have been completed included the establishment of a new 25-bedded dialysis unit, a modern day care center for the children of hospital employees.

## Back-lock cases reduced 72% by district judiciary

**Humayun Khan**

PESHAWAR: As many as two lac 62 thousand and 864 cases are under proceeding at district judiciary while revealed in annual performance report from January to November 2023 issued.

According to details, during current year 99% cases were disposed off while total four lac 72 thou-

sand and 330 cases were filed before trial courts at district judiciary. However, trial four lac 72 thousand and 918 cases were concluded in the same timeframe.

Moreover, in the meantime as many as 21 thousand 181 cases were submitted at trial courts in districts of erstwhile Fata while decision ratio stands at 92% in which 19 thousand 399 petitions were

concluded from January to November.

Under five years plan back-lock cases are deciding on priority bases while 72% cases are concluded in half time of strategy to end the burden. In 2020 back-lock stand at two lac 19 thousand and 754 while now reduced to 47 thousand 299 which is 72% of the total pendency across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.



**PESHAWAR:** A voter casting his vote during Press Club elections. — F.P. photo

## Police officials helping tourists at different points

**Shafi Ullah**

PESHAWAR: Under the direct supervision of Deputy Commissioner Swat Junaid Khan, District Police Officer (DPO) Swat Shafiqullah Khan Gandapur has deployed Police officials at the entry points of Swat district including Landaki, Malam Jabba, Gabin Jabba besides establishing Tourist Facilitation Centers in Kalam and distribution of awareness pamphlets to help and guide the tourists.

Talking to media men here Saturday, the DC said that under the supervision of DPO, all steps had been taken for the promotion of tourism in Swat and other places of the region, as an important part of the vision of the Chief Minister

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mahmood Khan. He said, according to his orders, Swat police officers are fully mobilized to help tourists and provide them security.

In addition to these measures, he said, the Swat police has also prepared a security plan to provide all possible assistance to the tourists and a control room has also been set up for information about any possible accident.

All possible assistance is being given to the tourists, he said. He said that Police officers and youths were present on the roads in all the tourist areas of Swat to help the tourists so that there could be no problem of traffic jams and the tourists coming to Swat could not face any kind of

inconvenience. Junaid Khan said that hundreds of tourists had gone to the upper areas of Swat to enjoy the snow since yesterday and this process was still going on. Police should ensure presence on the roads and highways to provide all possible assistance to the tourists and not face any difficulties, he said while issuing a message to the tourists to check their vehicles before entering the snowy areas.

He advised the tourists to make sure use of tire chains in snowy places so that no untoward incident happens to them. He added that tourists should avoid spending the night in vehicles on the road and arrange a hotel or suitable accommodation for themselves.





## In brief

### Newborn among two found dead

FAISALABAD (APP): Bodies of two persons including a newborn were found from different parts of the city during past 12 hours. Police spokesman said here on Friday that some accused packed corpse of a newborn girl in a plastic bag and threw it on a garbage heap near Tayyab Hospital in Mansoorabad. The passersby informed the police and the corpse with the help of Rescue 1122 was shifted to the mortuary for post-mortem while further investigation was under progress. Meanwhile, some people informed Ghulam Muhammad Abad police about presence of a suspected sack in sewerage channel at Talianwala Road. The police with the help of Rescue 1122 dragged the sack out of sewerage channel and recovered body of a young man from it. Some unknown assailants killed him and threw his corpse in the sewerage channel to conceal evidence of the offence. The police dispatched the body to mortuary for postmortem and started investigation for his identification and arrest of the culprits involved in his murder, spokesman added.

### Aqeel group wins Press Club poll

HYDERABAD (APP): The joint panel of Democratic and Aqeel Ibrahim groups won the annual elections of Hyderabad Press Club, bagging all the seats. The candidates of Sahafi Dost and Workers Dost groups lost the election on all the seats, according to the results announced here Friday night. Lala Rehman Samo has been elected as President with 88 votes, Sajid Khanzada Vice President with 80 votes, Hameedur Rehman as General Secretary with 88 votes, Sardar Ahmed as Joint Secretary with 83 votes and Faheem Babbar as Treasurer with 80 votes. Ali Hassan, Altaf Koti, Fazil Channa, Haroon Arain, Iqbal Mallah, Irshad Channa, Jai Prakash, Khalid Essa Khokhar and Muhammad Hussain Khan have been elected as the MGB. On the single seat of associate class MGB Kashif Khan received 23 votes and Ghulam Qadir Tousifi 5 votes.

### Food Dept setup cheap flour stalls

NAWABSHAH (APP): On the directives of Sindh Government and under the supervision of district administration, the Food Department in cooperation with flour mills have set up cheap wheat flour stalls in different towns of District Shaheed Benazirabad where citizens are being provided wheat flour at Rs 65 per kilo. In this regard, Deputy Commissioner Shehryar Gul Memon appealed to the general public to purchase flour from these stalls at the government rate. He said that these stalls would be set up on a daily basis, adding the public can contact the district administration or food department in case of any complaint. On the other hand, Assistant Commissioners of all tehsils of the district are visiting cheap flour stalls to ensure flour availability at the government rate.

### Development projects

MULTAN (APP): Senior leader Pakistan Tehreek Insaf Aamir Dogar said that the work on sewerage and road projects was being done at a rapid pace in the city. PTI government gave approval of funds worth billions of rupees, said Dogar while inaugurating a road here on Saturday. Aamir Dogar criticized the incumbent government and stated that it did nothing to provide relief to masses.

# Students and youth take keen interest in cultural exhibition held

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The students of government and private institutions and other youth took keen interest in the old days' household items displayed at a two-day cultural exhibition arranged by the Al-Farooq Education Academy Samarbagh, a private educational institution that concluded here on Saturday.

The Samarbagh tehsil chairman Syed Saeed Ahmad Bacha was chief guest on the occasion. The tehsil chairman and the academy director Haji Hayatullah inaugurated the cultural exhibition and fun fair. The students, their parents and youth from different areas visited the exhibition and were excited to see household items used in the old days. The visitors took keen interest in the event and asked for more such exhibitions for their information and entertainment. Household items most of them unfamiliar to the new generation ranging from currency notes to old weapons, kitchen items and musical instruments were displayed which attracted a large number of the visitors.

Speaking at the concluding session the Samarbagh tehsil chairman Saeed Ahmad said that he would always encourage such positive events in the



area. He said the tehsil government within its limited resources would help arrange such an exhibition. The visiting youth termed the exhibition an important activity and said that they had come across with many things they had not seen in their lives.

**School facilities sought:** The residents of Kamar Tal on Saturday complained that a total of 140 students had no shelter and boundary wall. Talking to local journalists they said that the students of the lone govern-

ment community school in their village were reading under the open sky. They said that there was no school for boys or girls and the majority of the girls had to give up their education after passing their grade 5th examination. They said the students had to go home when it started raining. They demanded the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government to take notice of their issue and approve at least a government primary school for girls in their village.

# Arrangements for upcoming anti-polio drive from 2nd finalized

F.P. Report

LAKKI MARWAT: The authorities in Lakki Marwat and Bannu districts claimed to have finalised arrangements for the upcoming anti-polio drive commencing from Jan 2. In Lakki Marwat, deputy commissioner Fazal Akbar inaugurated the five day campaign against the deadly disease while Bannu deputy commissioner Aun Haidar Gondal has banned display of weapons as part of measures to provide foolproof security to vaccinators.

After administering several kids under the age of five with oral polio vaccine at his office in the District Headquarters Complex Tajazai, Mr Fazal said that his administration was committed to eliminate the crippling disease and save children from its hazardous effects.

He said that the goal to make Lakki Marwat polio-free would be achieved with the support of partners' organisations and other stakeholders. Additional AC Awais Khan, DHO Dr Abdulgul, Deputy DHO Dr Kifayat Betanni, Dr Isghfaq and other officials were present. On the occasion, the district health officer said that the health department had constituted 997 teams to vaccinate 193252 children below the age of five in 40 union councils of the district.

He said that 54 UPEC chairmen and 254 Area In charge Officers would be deployed for effective monitoring of the polio eradication campaign. The official said that the immunization of the targeted population would be achieved during door to door activity and in hospitals and health centres through 899 mobile and 53 fixed teams. "The health department will also deploy 37 transit and 11 roaming teams at public places, bus stands, border points and on busy roads and highways to administer anti polio drops to the children of nomad families and those travelling with their parents", he added.

The deputy commissioner reiterated that police would provide foolproof security to polio workers during the five day campaign. He called upon people from all walks of life, especially parents, to cooperate with polio workers so as to make anti-polio drive a success. Bannu deputy commissioner Aun Haidar Gondal banned display of weapons and pillion riding for ten days ahead of the polio eradication campaign.

"In wake of previous attacks on polio teams and recent threats received in connection with the anti-polio campaign, it is imperative to ban display of weapons, pillion riding and use of tinted glasses in vehi-

cles and unlawful assembly of five or more people", said an office order issued on Friday. It said that the government employees would be exempted from restriction on pillion riding during duty hours.

Meanwhile, chairing a meeting of the divisional task force at his office, Bannu division commissioner Matiullah Khan has asked the relevant authorities to identify deficiencies and slackness on part of government employees during anti polio drive with their concerned departments so as to initiate action against them.

Officials of civil administration, army, partners' organisations and health and other line departments were in attendance. The administration and health officials presented a briefing on arrangements for the forthcoming polio eradication campaign scheduled to be held from Jan 2 to Jan 6. They also submitted various proposals to overcome field issues and facilitate vaccinators.

The divisional commissioner asked the authorities to shun a traditional approach and formulate a workable mechanism to achieve set targets. He also directed the concerned authorities to ensure fool proof security of vaccinators and reduce possible threats to the lives of policemen by taking advantage of modern technology.

## Ban imposed on display of arms

F.P. Report

BANNU: District Administration Bannu under section 144 on Saturday imposed a ban on the display of arms within limits of the district in wake of anti-polio campaign.

Ban has also been imposed on the use of tinted glass vehicles, pillion riding and gathering of five or more persons as part of enhancing security measures during the anti-polio drive. The ban has been imposed till January 8, 2023 and violators would be dealt with accordingly, said an official statement issued here on Saturday.

## Two women suffocated to death

F.P. Report

ABBOTTABAD: At least two women on Saturday suffocated to death in the incident of gas leakage at Nawanshahr Abbottabad.

According to Rescue 1122 sources, two women died due to gas filling in the room, a medical team of Rescue 1122 along with the ambulance went to the accident site and recovered the dead bodies from the room.

The women were identified as Kaisar Parveen and Rafiq un Nisa. The rescue medical team shifted the dead bodies to District Headquarters Hospital, where the doctors confirmed their death, adding this was the third gas leakage incident in Abbottabad during the month of December 2022 where six people lost their lives.

Every year during the winter season several people lost their lives in the Hazara division owing to gas leakage but neither the SNGPL takes the precautionary measures nor the people bother to take steps for their safety.

## 2 coalminers suffocated to death

KALAYA (APP): Two labourers suffocated while another fell unconscious due to lack of oxygen in a coalmine situated in Kareez area of district Orakzai, police said on Saturday.

Station House Officer (SHO), Kareez Police Station Mohammad Shafeeq reached the spot soon after receiving the information about the trapping of three people in HonoSam Coalmine. Two of them suffocated to death while the third was rushed to hospital. The deceased were identified as Mohammad Alam and Rakhat Gul while the name of the injured was Saeed. The coalminers belonged to district Shangla.

## Arrangements reviewed

BAHAWALPUR (APP): A meeting was held to review the arrangements for the 7th National Census in the committee room of the Deputy Commissioner's office under the chairmanship of Additional Deputy Commissioner Headquarters Sumaira Rabani.

It was informed at the meeting that this will be the first digital census of the country and modern technology will be used for data collection. The Census and geo-tagging of buildings will be done through tablets and digital maps will be used for this process. It was informed that the training of master trainers has been completed and now the training of supervisors and enumerators will start from January 7 and continue till January 21.

Additional Deputy Commissioner Headquarters Sumaira Rabbani said that all the arrangements for the census should be completed and the presence of training staff should also be ensured. Deputy Director local government and Focal Person Population and Census Muhammad Khurshid told that the population census will be done through the digital method. Regular training is being given to the relevant staff. He said that all the arrangements for the census will be completed by March 4. He said laptops, power supply, sound system, and internet facility will be provided to the training staff so that the training can be completed in a better environment.

# Khan left country on brink of bankruptcy: Javed Latif

MULTAN (INP): Federal minister Mian Javed Latif said on Saturday that Imran Khan failed to deliver any productive initiative during his past four years period as he was busy to misguiding public in his gatherings.

Talking to a private media channel, the minister claimed that Imran Khan left the country on the brink of bankruptcy. Coalition government was correcting the economic direction of the country, he asserted.

He said that Imran led government did not initiate a single development project during four-years in office. All major projects of the country were on the credit of PML-N, he said. Countering the demand for general elections in the country, he said that it was erroneous to assume that the PML-N or coalition parties were avoiding elections, adding that the country was not in a position to hold general elections earlier.

**Govt offers Rs 5000/acre subsidy on sunflower cultivation:** Punjab Agriculture Department is offering Rs 5000/acre subsidy on cultivation sunflower in order to promote the crop across the province.

According to official sources, Pakistan used to import oil worth Rs 300 billion annually. Promotion of sunflowers is highly important to save expenditure on the import of oil.

The department suggested farmers hailing from districts Dera Ghazi Khan, Bahawalpur, Rajanpur, Rahim Yar Khan, Vehari, Multan, Bhakkar, Layyah, Lodhran, Khanewal, Bahawalnagar, Khushab, Mianwali, Jhang, Sialkot, Mandi Bahauddin, Kasur, Shiekhupura, Hafizabad, Nankana Sahib, Gujranwala, Chinot Faisalabad, Toba Tek Singh, Pakpattan, Okara Sahiwal and Muzaffargarh to complete sowing by January 31.

However, the farmers belonging to Northern Punjab including Narowal, Attock, Rawalpindi, Gujrat, Jhelum and Chakwal can cultivate sunflowers by February 15. The department suggested cultivation of recommended seed varieties only. The sources stated that government would provide Rs 15000 subsidy to owners of demonstration plots. For demonstration plots, the farmers could submit applications to the offices concerned.

# Large number of tourists reach Naran

NARAN (APP): After the recent snowfall in the tourist attractions of district Mansehra including Shogran, Kaghan and Naran, a large number of tourists have reached these places and enjoyed the clear and cold sunny weather with their families.

Following the orders of the provincial government, the chairman of Kaghan Development Authority (KDA) Dr. Amil Zaman Khan, Director General Tariq Khan and KDA staff along with machinery and equipment are present at various places of Kaghan Valley to provide a round-

the-clock response in case of any kind of emergency for the convenience of tourists.

Earlier, yesterday KDA staff cleared the snow from the Mansehra Naran Jalkhad (MNI) road by using heavy machinery and opened the road for tourists and local people. KDA staff also issued instructions to the tourists who were visiting Naran that owing to minus 5 temperatures in some of the areas there is a risk of slipping as ice could not melt, the tourists were also directed to drive carefully and slowly, use chains on the tires is recommended.

# Arrangement for census concluded

Hafiz Aziz-ur-Rehman

HAFIZABAD: All arrangements have been finalised to launch senses and training of survey teams and field staff will be started from January, 7 in the district Hafizabad while officers of all departments will be performed their responsibilities along with district administration.

This was stated by the Deputy Commissioner Hafizabad, Touqueer Ilyas Cheema, while addressing a meeting held to review arrangements for Census. ADC Abdul Rauf, AC Rab Nawaz Chadhar, DEO

Abdul Majeed, Director Local Government Asad Bhatti, Assistant Statistics Muzammal Naem and other officers attended the meeting.

DC Directed the officers to depute requisite staff for performing census duty and focus on their responsibilities with commitment to serve the nation. He warned the officers that any negligence regarding census duty would not be tolerated, at all and defaulters would be taken to task. The meeting was informed that training to staff would be imparted at Tehsil level which would be continued till 17 January.

# Wana Press club elects new cabinet

F.P. Report

WANA: District Press Club South Waziristan elected new cabinet at Wana in which Mujeer Rehman as president while Zardad Wazir was elected general secretary, on Saturday.

The cabinet comprised as Aala Khan Finance Secretary, Noor Ali Khan as Vice President, Zafar Khan as Senior Vice President, Qismatullah as Press Secretary and Meraj Khalid as Joint Secretary. Adam Khan Wazir, chairman of the Constitutional Election Committee of District Press Club Wana, announced the results in the presence of the district administration and said. There was no other candidate for the president ship and general secretary than Mujeer and Zardad Wazir, so both candidates have been successful unopposed.

On the special instructions of Assistant Commissioner

Wana, Tehsildar Wana Saifullah and Assistant Commissioner Wana, Steno Khalid Khan supervised the election. The representatives of the district administration and local political and social personalities congratulated the newly elected official cabinet of District Press Club Wana.

**Parachinar announces Press Club election for new cabinet:** Parachinar Press Club announced new elections with dissolution 2022 cabinet, on Saturday. At the end of the year, the Parachinar Press Club Cabinet was dissolved and new elections were announced. The General Secretary of Parachinar Press Club, Mehdi Hussain, dissolved the cabinet and formed a three-member election committee including Israr Hussain Bangash and Zahid Ali, who will supervise the arrangements according to the election schedule.

## Flour prices skyrocket in Sukkur

SUKKUR (PPI): The prices of flour have skyrocketed in Sukkur crisis, making the life of people miserable, as it is being sold at Rs140 per kg in the open market.

According to a report on Sunday, the prices of flour have skyrocketed in Sukkur. The price of flour in the open market has reached Rs140 per kg. Meanwhile, a 10-kg bag of flour was being sold for Rs1,1300 in the local market, which was being sold at Rs900 few days earlier. Masses are finding it hard and facing difficulties in buying flour as their purchasing power is already affected by the record-inflation.

On the other hand, the per kg flour price has reached Rs125 to 130 in Quetta, Balochistan. The prices of flour touched sky-high in Quetta and other parts of Balochistan while the commodity was not available in most shops across the province. The price of a 20-kg flour bag has reached Rs2,500. Meanwhile, a 50-kg bag of flour was being sold between Rs6,000 to 6,500 in the local market.

## Aerial firing at wedding claims life

KHANEWAL (APP): A man died during an aerial firing on the occasion of a marriage ceremony at Chak 7 Wanoi-Tibba in district Khanewal on Saturday.

According to Makhdumpur police, Saif Ullah and Jamshaid were doing aerial firing during the marriage ceremony of Qamar Nawaz son of Muhammad Nawaz. All of a sudden, a bullet hit another citizen namely Muhammad Sadiq resident of Chak 95/10R. Police registered the case and started an investigation.

# Landi Kotal Press Club gets new cabinet

F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: Khalil Khan Afridi was elected President while Umar Shinwari was chosen as General Secretary in the annual election of Landi Kotal Press Club held here on Saturday.

The five members election committee comprising by its chairman Rahat Shinwari, Sahid Khan, Aminul Haq, Ashrafuddin and Shahid Afridi conducted the election. Members of the Landi Kotal Press Club utilized their right of votes.

As per details provided by the chairman election committee Khalil Khan Afridi got 13 votes while nearest opponent, Imran Shinwari bagged 12 votes for the President slot. In the



same way for the post of General Secretary, mar Shinwari received 14 votes while Aman Ali Shinwari got 11 votes.

Total 35 votes were casted in the election. People from different walks of life and media persons from Jamrud and Landi Kotal press clubs attended the election process as observers carried out in

Landi Kotal press club. Tribal elites political, welfare and teachers association chiefs visited Landi Kotal press club and congratulated the new office bearers of the press club. The newly elected President pledged that he would leave no stone unturned to work for the welfare of the journalist community of Landi Kotal.

# Crackdown continues against beggars

SIALKOT (APP): Crackdown continued against beggars across the district here on Saturday in which 20 beggars were detained from different areas.

On the instructions of Deputy Commissioner Abdullah Khurram Niazi, a special committee headed by Assistant Commissioner (AC) Sialkot Sufian Dilawar, comprising officers and staff of the police, social welfare and other departments, took action in the areas of Kashmir Road, Clock Tower Chowk Cantt and Paris Road.

More than one dozen male and female beggars begging at various intersections were caught on the spot and shifted to Civil Lines police station. AC Sufian Dilawar said that the operation will continue in future for the prevention of begging, adding action will be taken against such elements as per law.

## Facilities at Dar-ul-Aman reviewed:

Chairman Public Facilitation Committee for Social Welfare and Bait-ul-Mal Rana Ejaz Ahmed visited Dar-ul-Aman and reviewed the facilities provided to women residing there.

On this occasion, Superintendent Asma Ahmed informed about the measures to be taken for the welfare of the women living in the center. Khawaja Saeed Butt was also present on this occasion. Chairman Public Facilitation Committee for Social Welfare and Bait-ul-Mal Rana Ejaz said that the Punjab government was determined for the betterment of women suffering from various social problems.

He said that the provision of quality food, medical treatment and the steps taken for respectful and

safe return of women living in Dar-ul-Aman to their families in accordance with the law were satisfactory.

## Cash, gold ornaments looted

BUREWALA (APP): Unknown armed outlaws looted cash, gold ornaments and mobile phones from transgenders in the limits of Jhal Siyal police station premises last night.

Central leader Shemal Association Ashi Chaudhary while holding a press conference, said that they were going in a hina party last night. When they reached near 485/EB Shahi Morr, unknown outlaws stopped our vehicle and looted Rs 1,25,000 cash, gold ornaments and mobile phones from us and fled away, she added.





## COVID travel curbs against Chinese visitors ‘discriminatory’

BEIJING/MADRID (Reuters): Chinese state-media have railed against the growing number of foreign governments imposing COVID tests on travellers from China, calling the measures “discriminatory.” Having kept its borders all but shut for three years, imposing a strict regime of lockdowns and relentless testing, Beijing abruptly reversed course toward living with the virus on Dec. 7, and infections have spread rapidly in recent weeks.

South Korea and Spain joined a growing list of countries, including the United States, India and others, which have imposed COVID tests for travellers from China over concerns about the scale of its COVID outbreak and scepticism over Beijing’s health statistics. Malaysia said it would screen all international arrivals for fever.

“The real intention is to sabotage China’s three years of COVID-19 control efforts and attack the country’s system,” state-run tabloid Global Times said in an article, calling the restrictions “unfounded” and “discriminatory.” China will stop requiring inbound travellers to go into quarantine from Jan. 8. But it will still demand a negative PCR test result within 48 hours before departure.

Senior Chinese health officials held a video conference with the World Health Organization and exchanged views the current epidemic situation, China’s National Health Commission said in a statement without elaborating further. WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said earlier in the day that the organization needed more information to assess the latest surge in infections in China, without taking a position on the issue of travel tests.

Not all countries are imposing tests. European Union members, in particular, are divided. Over the past days, officials in France, Germany and Portugal have said they saw no need for now for new restrictions, while Austria has stressed the economic benefits of Chinese tourists’ return to Europe. Global spending by Chinese visitors was worth more than \$250 billion a year before the pandemic.

Acting a day after EU health officials failed to agree on a joint course of action, Spain followed Italy’s lead



to become the second of the bloc’s 27 members to require tests for travellers from China. “At a national level, we will implement airport controls requiring all passengers coming from China to show a negative COVID-19 test or proof of a full vaccination course,” Health Minister Carolina Darias said.

EU health experts are expected to hold a crisis response meeting next week, according to an EU source. In the meantime, EU health chief Stella Kyriakides wrote to the bloc’s health ministers to suggest they immediately scale up genomic sequencing of COVID-19 infections and monitoring of waste water, including from airports, to detect any new variants given the virus surge in China. The US Center for Disease Control and Prevention is also considering sampling wastewater from international aircraft to track any emerging new variants, the agency told Reuters.

The United States has raised concerns about potential mutations of the virus as it sweeps through the world’s most populous country, as well as over China’s data transparency. Meanwhile, a COVID vaccination campaign for German nationals in China started its pilot phase, the German ambassador in Beijing, Patricia Flor said on Twitter. A shipment of 11,500 doses of the BioNTech vaccine arrived last week, enough to give one shot each to half of the 20,000 or so German nationals residing in China.

The lifting of restrictions in China, after widespread protests against them in November, has overwhelmed hospitals and funeral homes across the country, with scenes of people on intravenous drips by the roadside and lines of hearses outside crematoria fuelling public concern. Health experts say China has been caught ill-prepared by the U-turn in policies long championed by President Xi Jinping.

They say the elderly in rural areas may be particularly vulnerable because of inadequate medical resources. Next month’s Lunar New Year festival, when hundreds of millions travel to their home towns, will add to the risk. China, a country of 1.4 billion people, reported one new COVID death, same as the day before - numbers which do not match the experience of other countries after they reopened.

UK-based health data firm Airfinity said around 9,000 people in China are probably dying each day from COVID. Cumulative deaths in China since Dec. 1 have likely reached 100,000, with infections totalling 18.6 million, it said. China’s chief epidemiologist Wu Zunyou said that the difference between the number of deaths in the current wave of infections and the death rate for the same period in pandemic-free years would be studied to calculate the “excess mortality” and gauge any potential underestimate of deaths from COVID-19.

## Bolsonaro lands in Florida

BRASILIA (Reuters): Outgoing Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro landed in Florida, after delivering a teary message to his supporters less than two days before his fierce leftist rival Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva is set to take office. An official Brazilian plane landed in Orlando, Florida, flight tracking website FlightAware showed. Although Bolsonaro’s destination has not been officially confirmed, his security staff were already in place in Florida.

Bolsonaro’s exit from Brazil came after he repeatedly said he would not hand over the presidential sash to Lula at Sunday’s inauguration, breaking with Brazil’s democratic tradition. He may also face legal risks from remaining in Brazil as his presidential immunity expires when Lula takes office. His departure followed an emotional final address on social media, in which he ran through the highlights of his time in office, sought to defend his legacy, and tried to inspire his followers into keeping up the fight against Lula.

Vice President Hamilton Mourao is now acting president after Bolsonaro left the country, his press office said. But Mourao will not pass the presidential sash to Lula, a spokesperson noted, raising doubts about who will do the ceremonial handover. The presidential plane departed Brasilia shortly after 2 pm local time.

“I am in flight, back soon,” Bolsonaro was quoted as saying by CNN Brazil earlier in the day. His press office did not respond to a request for comment. The US State Department did not respond to a request for comment. The US embassy in Brasilia referred questions about Bolsonaro’s trip to the Brazilian president’s office. Bolsonaro’s exit follows weeks of silence, after he lost Brazil’s most fraught election in a generation.

Some of Bolsonaro’s supporters have refused to accept Lula’s victory, believing his baseless claims that the October election was stolen. That has contributed to a tense atmosphere in the capital Brasilia, with riots and a foiled bomb plot last week. In his social media address, Bolsonaro labeled the bomb plot a “terrorist act” for which there was no justification. He sought to distance himself from George Washington Sousa, the man who confessed to making the bomb, and who told police that Bolsonaro’s call to arms inspired him to build an arsenal of guns and explosives.

“The man had ideas that are not shared by any citizen, but now they classify him as a ‘Bolsonarista’,” the president said. Yet Bolsonaro also praised protesters who have been camping outside army barracks across the country, urging the military to stage a coup.

“I did not encourage anyone to enter confrontation,” he said, adding that his supporters had merely been seeking “freedom.” He said the protests had been “spontaneous,” with no leadership or coordination. Bolsonaro’s swift exit was a disappointment for many on the right, where his reputation has taken a beating for his post-election silence.

## Italy prison suicides spike as post-COVID misery lingers

ROME (Reuters): Suicides in Italian jails have jumped to a 10-year high, the national ombudsman for prisoners said, noting that three years of the COVID-19 pandemic had made inmates’ lives even more miserable. Prison overcrowding is a chronic problem in Italy and last year then-Prime Minister Mario Draghi promised a reform of the penitentiary system after the publication of a video showing guards beating inmates in a jail near Naples.

So far this year 84 prisoners have killed themselves, with the most recent case recorded, Ombudsman Mauro Palma told Reuters. “These are grim statistics,” he said. The latest figure compares with an annual average of around 50 suicides over the past 10 years, and around 60 in each of the COVID-plagued years of 2020 and 2021.

Italy’s prison suicide rate now stands at around 15.4 per 10,000 inmates, against a median of 5.2 among members of the 46-nation

Council of Europe, according to a 2020 report by the pan-European human rights watchdog. Palma said inmates who take their own lives are often young, with mental health or substance abuse issues, with no home to go to once released, and lacking a good lawyer who could win them an early release or a home-detention regime.

He said a lock-them-up-and-throw-away-the-key mentality was contributing to making prisons “lost places”. “COVID has exacerbated all of this,” Palma said, noting that the “theoretical and conceptual separation” of prisons from society had also become “a physical one” during the pandemic, when visiting rights were curtailed to contain the virus.

That decision was taken in early 2020, when the coronavirus first struck Italy. As a result, nationwide riots swept through penitentiaries, leaving at least 12 prisoners dead, many from drug overdoses after raiding prison medical

supplies. Palma said COVID-related restrictions on outside contacts had not yet been fully reversed, stressing it was critical for inmates to have interactions with volunteers, social workers and educators, as well as with visiting friends and family.

Time spent inside should be as useful and educational as possible, he added, adding that out of a total Italian prison population of around 55,000, 10% had left school before the age of 14 and 900 were illiterate. Palma also criticised curbs on the use of mobile phones, tablets and computers -- motivated by security reasons -- saying they condemned prisoners to living “in a world without technology, an unreal world”. Draghi’s promised prison reform has still not materialised, but this month Justice Minister Carlo Nordio told parliament he was saddened by the spike in suicides and pledged to strengthen support facilities for inmates deemed at risk of self-harm.

## Russia grants tax amnesty to encourage troops fighting

MOSCOW (Agencies): Russian authorities have announced that soldiers and state employees deployed to fight in Ukraine will be exempt from income tax, Moscow’s latest effort to encourage support for a military campaign against Kyiv that has suffered multiple setbacks and defeats.

The new tax measure concerns all Russian troops fighting in the four Ukrainian territories Moscow has declared as its own - Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhia - although it does not completely control the four regions. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov cited an exemption contained in an anti-corruption law, which the Russian authorities published the details.

Soldiers, police, members of the security services and other state employees serving in the four regions no longer have to supply information on “their income, their expenditure, their assets”, according to the decree, Russian forces in Ukraine also have the right, according to the decree, to receive “rewards and gifts” if they are of “a humanitarian character” and received as part of what Russia calls a “special military operation” in Ukraine. Tax relief also applies to the partners and children of those serving and is back-dated to February 24, 2022 - the date Russia launched its invasion of Ukraine.

The Moscow Times reported that Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a decree removing requirements for government officials to disclose their income tax returns for the duration of Russia’s war in Ukraine. “Prior to the decree, Russian law required civil servants to

publicly disclose income tax returns for themselves and their immediate family members in an effort to curtail endemic corruption. Military officers were also required to disclose their tax returns when being appointed or dismissed,” the Moscow Times reported.

“The decree also exempts soldiers fighting in Ukraine as well as members of the security services from releasing their tax returns, as well as officials who have travelled to Russian-annexed regions of Ukraine for work,” the Times reported. The Kremlin has rolled out a series of incentives for Russians who fight in Ukraine, offering cash bonuses and promising financial aid to families in the case of the death or injury of loved ones.

Earlier this week, it was announced that Russian soldiers fighting in Ukraine can have their sperm frozen for free in cryobanks. News the Russian state will fund sperm freezing for its armed forces follows reports in October that demand for sperm freezing had increased after Putin announced a partial mobilisation to funnel more troops to support Moscow’s war. Moscow’s mobilisation drive has prompted hundreds of thousands of Russians to flee the country to avoid being conscripted.

Thousands of Ukrainians have also fled to avoid joining the war, Germany’s DPA news agency reported. DPA said that “almost 12,000 men were caught trying to cross the border illegally, heading in the direction of Western countries”. Citing Ukrainian border troops, the news agency said 15 men had died while trying to flee the country to avoid military service,

including “two reportedly having frozen to death in the Carpathian Mountains on their way to Romania”.

Ukraine’s Defence minister Olexii Reznikov has said that, given the extent of Russia’s losses of equipment and troops in Ukraine, it would take Moscow’s army at least five years to recover its former strength. “According to NATO intelligence, the Russians have huge losses of tanks, artillery, armoured personnel carriers and soldiers,” Reznikov was quoted as saying by the media outlet Ukrainska Pravda. “The regular armed forces of the Russian Federation could be restored in five years at the earliest, perhaps not for 10 years,” he said.

## Mexico uncover human skulls

MEXICO CITY (Reuters): Four human skulls were discovered inside a package at a Mexican airport that was due to be sent by courier to the United States, local authorities said. The skulls were found wrapped in aluminum foil inside a cardboard box at Queretaro Intercontinental Airport in central Mexico, a statement from the National Guard said.

The package had been sent from the western coastal state of Michoacan - one of the most violent parts of the country - and was destined for an address in Manning, South Carolina, it said. The National Guard gave no further details on the age, identity or possible motive for the sending of the human remains.

## Biden pardons 6 convicted of murder, drug, alcohol crimes

KINGSHILL, US Virgin Islands (AP): President Joe Biden has pardoned six people who have served out sentences after convictions on a murder charge and drug- and alcohol-related crimes, including an 80-year-old woman convicted of killing her abusive husband about a half-century ago and a man who pleaded guilty to using a telephone for a cocaine transaction in the 1970s.

The pardons, announced, mean the criminal record of the crimes is now purged. They come a few months after the Democratic president pardoned thousands of people convicted of “simple possession” of marijuana under federal law. He also pardoned three people earlier this year and has commuted the sentences of 75 others.

Biden’s stance on low-level crimes, particularly low-level drug possession, and how those crimes can impact families and communities for decades to come has evolved over his 50 years in public service. In the 1990s, he supported crime legislation that increased arrest and incarceration rates for drug crimes, particularly for Black and Latino people. Biden has said people are right to question his stance on the bill, but he also has encouraged them to look at what he’s doing now on crime.

The pardons were announced while the president was spending time with his family on St. Croix, in the US Virgin Islands. The White House said those pardoned are peo-

ple who went on to serve their communities. It said the pardons reflect Biden’s view people deserve a second chance.

Those granted pardons are: Beverly Ann Ibn-Tamas, 80, of Columbus, Ohio. At age 33, Ibn-Tamas was convicted of killing her husband. She testified that her husband beat her, verbally abused her and threatened her. She told jurors that she shot him moments after he had assaulted her, while she was pregnant. The judge refused to allow expert testimony on battered woman syndrome, a psychological condition that can develop among victims of domestic violence. Ibn-Tamas got one to five years of incarceration with credit for time served. Her appeal was among the first by someone with battered woman syndrome, and her case has been studied by academics.

Charles Byrnes-Jackson, 77, of Swansea, South Carolina. Byrnes-Jackson pleaded guilty to possession and sale of spirits without tax stamps when he was 18, and it involved a single illegal whiskey transaction. He tried to enlist in the Marines but was rejected because of the conviction.

John Dix Nock III, 72, of St. Augustine, Florida. Nock pleaded guilty to using his property as a grow-house for marijuana 27 years ago. He didn’t cultivate the plants, but he got six months of community confinement. He now operates a general contracting business. Gary Parks

Davis, 66, of Yuma, Arizona. When Davis was 22, he admitted using a telephone for a cocaine transaction. He served a six-month sentence on nights and weekends in a county jail and completed probation in 1981. After the offense, the White House says, Davis earned a college degree and worked steadily, including owning a landscaping business and managing construction projects. He has volunteered at his children’s high school and in his community.

Edward Lincoln De Coito III, 50, of Dublin, California. De Coito pleaded guilty at age 23 to being involved in a marijuana trafficking conspiracy. He was released from prison in December 2000 after serving nearly two years. Before the offense, De Coito had served honorably in the US Army and the Army Reserves and had received numerous awards.

Vincente Ray Flores, 37, of Winters, California. As a 19-year-old, Flores consumed ecstasy and alcohol while serving in the Air Force, later pleading guilty at a special court-martial. He was sentenced to four months of confinement, loss of \$2,800 in pay and a reduction in rank. Flores participated in a six-month rehab program that gives select enlisted offenders a chance to return to duty after therapy and education. His reduction in rank was amended, and he remains on active duty, earning medals and other awards for his service.

here, though they left about 15 years ago. But when villagers returned, they found a plaque in the forest warning of mines. Mines found in nearby villages, and by the abandoned school on the other side of town, added to their fears.

“The forest has reclaimed 80 percent of the village,” said Bassere resident Therese Sagna. “This year, there was a lot of fruit in the woods that spoiled because no one could access it.” Liboire Sagna, the village chief, said uncertainty about what areas are safe is preventing the rest of the village from moving back and making it impossible to build a school or clinic.

While the total at risk of having mines is small - a bit less than 2 square kilometres (1.6 square miles) maximum, mostly in the Ziguinchor region, which covers 7,352sq km (4,568sq miles) - finding scattered pockets of mines in the region’s dense, isolated forests can be a bit like finding needles in a haystack. So far, the demining team, run by the nongovernment organisation Humanity and Inclusion, hasn’t found anything in Bassere besides sardine cans and old bullet shells, Charles Coly, the team leader, reckons it will take three months to clear the area.

Authorities in Dakar say the Casamance can be mine-free by 2026. But because demining teams can only safely work in areas without rebel presence, the success of that plan largely rests on the Senegalese mili-

tary snuffing out the elusive rebel camps that remain. The conflict is arguably Africa’s longest-running war, and total victory against a small group of ideologically-driven fighters across heavily forested borderlands is far from an easy task. Ba, now the community outreach leader at the ASVM, has contacted rebels to convince them to allow demining teams to come into their territory, as has Barham Thiam, director of CNAMS. But so far, both men say their overtures have been unsuccessful.

“I told the guy, OK, you want independence. If you get it, it would be hard for your budget to find money to destroy mines, and then to find money to rehabilitate the victims,” said Thiam. “I told him, somehow, we are working for you ... If the government brings you a road, take it. A bridge, OK, whatever. A demining programme - take it.” The continued rebel presence has been an existential threat to deminers too. Nine years ago, Fatou Diaw was kidnapped on a demining mission alongside a few colleagues. She was held in a rebel camp in the countryside for a month until government negotiations led to her and her female colleagues’ release. The men were held another month before being freed eventually.

“I [told them] we didn’t know [that area] was a red-line - otherwise, we wouldn’t have come to work there,” she says, suiting up for the demining

mission in Bassere, unfazed all these years later. “We don’t work for the military,” she recalled telling the rebels. “We work for the population.” Given the opportunity, she believes she can get the rebels to give up their mines - if not their other weapons or their cause - but “they’re not easy to convince”.

Meanwhile, recent peace agreements, like one signed in August with some of the rebel factions along Guinea-Bissau’s border, offer hope - but only applied to a few groups. So, the conflict simmers as rebels traffic illegal timber and cannabis far out in the countryside. But it still boils over from time to time.

Amid a renewed offensive by the Senegalese military earlier this year, some 6,000 refugees fled to neighbouring The Gambia. Earlier this month, three refugees were killed in a Senegalese drone strike. The Gambian government insists that while victims were registered as refugees, the strike happened on Senegalese territory, across the porous border. Gambian opposition politicians, meanwhile, have complained that the conflict is increasingly spilling out of Senegal. At home, the rebels are facing tough odds. The conditions that led to the revolt - land reform laws that tipped power into the hands of the Senegalese state, and an economic downturn - are ancient history to a population ground down by four decades of war.

## For Senegalese landmine victims, a forgotten conflict lives on

ZIGUINCHOR (Agencies): Night was falling, and Boubacar Ba was once again hunting in the forest outside his hometown of Mpak in southern Senegal. Then a crack rang out, not from his rifle or another hunter. Not the Senegalese army or even the rebels waging a war for secession in the area. It was a landmine, which blew off his right leg. Ba tied up a makeshift tourniquet, but when he hobbled up on his left leg, he quickly discovered it was broken, and crashed back onto the forest floor.

“When someone hears these mine accidents, an explosion, they can’t go adventuring to see what happened,” without putting themselves at risk, Ba told Al Jazeera. Alone, he ended up crawling on his elbows 10km (6.2km) to find help. That was in 2004. The mine he had stepped on had been forgotten at the start of Senegal’s simmering civil war two decades earlier. These days, Ba walks with a slight limp, his prosthetic leg deftly hidden under his boubou and pants.

The region of Ziguinchor, along the porous borders of The Gambia to the north and Guinea-Bissau to the south, contains the last fragments of the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC). The armed movement was born in 1982, pushing for the independence of Casamance, the collective of regions situated underneath The Gambia, which is enveloped by Senegal. Peace has

largely returned to the Casamance - comprising the regions of Ziguinchor, Sedhiou, and Kolda - since then. A few strongholds of fractured rebel groups hold out near the borderlands, but elsewhere, citizens mostly go about their day without a second thought, and tourists hit the beach in the resort town of Cap Skirring.

But in too many villages, mines remain. Estimates from the Senegalese National Mine Action Center (CNAMS), the government authority in charge of demining activities, put some 49 to 170 hectares (120 to 420 acres) of land, mostly all in the Ziguinchor region, as still at risk of being mined. In addition to the physical risk posed by the ordnance, the mines - planted by the Senegalese military and the rebels - often cut people off from roads, schools or farmland. “The socioeconomic impact is real,” Emmanuel Sauvage, Senegal country director at Humanity and Inclusion, an NGO contracted by CNAMS to carry out demining operations, told Al Jazeera. “It’s affecting the whole economy.”

Reports of civilian victims first appeared in the 1990s, more than a decade into the conflict. Estimates of how many people have been killed or injured are hard to pin down. The Senegalese Association of Mine Victims (ASVM) counts 482 members on its rolls - mostly people directly injured, but also including “indirect

victims”, like family members who sometimes struggle economically after a breadwinner is killed or disabled. CNAMS estimates 453 civilian injuries, and 157 deaths. Incidents are isolated, but pop up from time to time: Most recently, six people were killed by a mine returning.

In the village of Bassere, about 8km from the Guinea-Bissau border, Pierre Marie Badji slowly waves his metal detector across the barren, brown earth. Dressed in a sky-blue kevlar vest and a face shield, he’s scanning what used to be thick brush, chewed up by a tank-like demining machine whose rotating claws eat away at the bush, seeking explosives. Badji’s metal detector is silent, so he marks the area immediately in front of him as clear, and takes another step forward. A few dozen meters away, his colleague Papa Bourama Diedhiou is on his knees, slowly scraping away dirt. His metal detector went off, and now he’s inspecting further, hunched over what would be the blast zone if a mine indeed goes off.

It’s an old can of sardines. He tosses it away. “If I find a mine, I’m happy,” he said. “I’m saving lives.” Bassere, sitting under towering baobab and kapok trees deep in one of Ziguinchor’s lush forests, was completely abandoned in 1990, though residents have started to trickle back in recent years. For a time, the Senegalese military set up an outpost



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# A purview of Russo-China partnership

RECENTLY, Russian President Vladimir Putin has hailed the Sino-Russia joint efforts against western provocations and informed his Chinese Counterpart Xi Jinping about his desire to ramp up military cooperation between the two neighbors. According to Putin, the Sino-Russia strategic partnership is a stabilizing factor amid growing geopolitical tensions between Moscow, Beijing, and western nations. The Russian leader was of the view that Beijing and Moscow share the same views on the causes, course, and logic of the ongoing transformation of the global geopolitical landscape, and this great convergence of interest provides the basis for greater cooperation and joint action for the two nations.

Desperate Putin has a longstanding quest for a broad base Sino-Russia partnership after Western allies slapped unprecedented economic and trade sanctions against the Kremlin in a response to Moscow's blatant invasion of Ukraine. Although, Russia and China already completed two decades of their historic friendship treaty, Putin intends to forge a more comprehensive and wide-ranging relationship between the two neighbors that not only satisfies their economic and trade requirements but also set a coordinated and unanimous response to western allies who pose a common threat to both countries.

Interestingly, the Chinese have a bit different version regarding Sino-Russia cooperation and strategic partnership who advocate close cooperative relations between Beijing and Moscow to implement high-level strategic partnerships between the two countries to safeguard their common interests and promote a more just and rational International order that ensure global peace and protects the rights of vulnerable nations in the world. However, Xi and his aides need a conflict-free decade to fully realized China's economic and military growth besides an active pursuit of peaceful economic goals across multiple regions in the world.

China and Russia are common victims of the US trade war, technological ban, and western sanctions, while enhanced bilateral trade and defense ties are in the best interest of both countries. Recently, both nations have offered a collective resistance to western incursion in the Indo-Pacific region and demonstrated coordinated response on the Taiwan issue.

Previously, China has presented the idea of a Sino-Russia new world order as an alternative to the existing US-led unipolar world. However,

Chinese leaders are more careful in their approach, besides supporting Moscow's so-called special operation in Ukraine, Beijing remained at an arm length from Putin to protect its economic and trade interests in the west. The ongoing US-Russia rivalry and Washington's strategic competition with Beijing have paved the path for a bipolar or multi-polar world in the future. As a unipolar world largely remained chaotic and unstable while multiple centers of power are likely to create a balance in the geo-strategic and political affairs of the world. Although weak nations and people across the globe had always suffered coercion from the major powers, yet vulnerable communities find some space in a divided world.

## Civil liberties and anti-journo Pakistan

ACCORDING to a recent report of Washington-based Reporters without Borders, Pakistan is the fifth most dangerous country for journalists. As said, the South Asian nation occupies the fifth slot after Iraq, Syria, Mexico, and the Philippines with almost 93 deaths of truth seekers over the past twenty years.

The journalistic work has become more hazardous over the past two decades because of unprecedented development in communication and information technologies that not only brought the entire universe together but also exposed the powerful mafias, terrorist cells, trade cartels as well as corrupt government servants and political leaders across the world. Journalists and news seekers had always faced serious threats to their life, family, and profession during their search for truth and often paid with their lives for their passion for journalism and fact findings.

More journalists have been killed in 'zones at peace' than in 'zones at war' during the past two decades. In most cases reporters were investigating organized crime and corruption became a prey to criminal gangs while a few entrapped by the cartels and political influential. Currently, the Americas accounted for almost half of the journalist murders, many in Mexico, Brazil, Colombia, and Honduras. The figures suggest that America is nowadays the world's most dangerous continent for the media in the contemporary world.

Journalists and media persons feel unsecured and vulnerable in Pakistan, due to the weak writ of the state and no implementation of the law, usually through biased enforcement of the media regulatory measures by the state. Historically, Pakistani journalists and media anchors had faced state suppression and victimization by the ruling elite while reporters remain equally unsafe from terror groups, feudal, state institutions, and criminal gangs whenever they exposed their crimes and corruption.

Media, as the fourth pillar of society, always played a whistleblower and ombudsman role in the country through timely forecasts and positive criticism of the policies, however, truth seekers are still under threat and regularly being harassed on social and print media, tortured, and attacked by criminals and unfairly prosecuted by the influential. Apparently, media men never are not safe until and unless the state fully endorses and implements the rule of the law, which never fears criticism, nor feels guilty and biased.

### Quote of the day

All growth depends upon activity. There is no development physically or intellectually without effort, and effort means work.  
— Calvin Coolidge, American President [1923-1929]

THERE is no point in arguing about the outgoing year - it really was the most difficult since the nineties. Very difficult for Russia - and catastrophic for Ukraine.

The fact that our borders are conditional did not become clear on February 24: the fact that we are a single whole, temporarily separated by a dislocation in 1991, was understood, if not by everyone, but by very many. Including our common enemies, who pretended to be "friends of Ukraine" only in order to have time to take it as far away from Russia as possible, to separate it forever, and if it doesn't work out, then simply pit it against it. Well, now they can rejoice - they have succeeded in the latter.

The fact that the limited fratricidal war (which began in 2014 and then temporarily frozen) in the outgoing year acquired the character of a full-scale one is, of course, Russia's fault - it is to blame for the fact that it took too long to gather, and having gathered, did not calculate the force of impact and the resistance of the material of the Ukrainian pseudo-states. The state is artificial, but the army and the

state apparatus turned out to be absolutely real. And even more so with huge Western support. But in our house a lot of bad things were revealed, but let's say thank you for that too.

For the fact that the problems and weaknesses of our elite and the army were revealed now, and not "on June 22, at exactly four o'clock." We overestimated our own strength and underestimated the enemy - this has happened more

than once in our history. But it has never been the same as in the past year: a considerable part of our own people stood up for a real enemy. So it was in the Civil War and in the Time of Troubles at the beginning of the 17th century? No, there were completely different circumstances. And now part of our people is on the side of the West against Russia simply because they were brought up as non-Russians in non-Russia - if we talk about

the citizens of Ukraine. And the other part flees from Russia, because it does not need "this country", which has taken up the reunification of the Russian people, quarreled with the West, fell under sanctions, and simply demanded to pay her military duty. "What debts? We don't owe anything to anyone, it was our freedom and future that were stolen

Petr Akopov

*The fact that the limited fratricidal war (which began in 2014 and then temporarily frozen) in the outgoing year acquired the character of a full-scale one is, of course, Russia's fault - it is to blame for the fact that it took too long to gather, and having gathered, did not calculate the force of impact and the resistance of the material of the Ukrainian pseudo-states.*

from us," they shout from distant shores or from neighboring countries. Some of them consider themselves "recycled", some talk about "forced exile", and some are ready to work for the enemies of Russia in the hope, if not to return as a winner, then at least to take revenge on the "talentless country".

After all, they left completely highly gifted and highly spiritual, including a lot of stars.

The rich and famous "do

of a transitional period, construction begins, instead of impostors and rogues who are ready to betray at the first danger, those who do not separate themselves from the people will come, but are them.

This path will not be easy, but it was in the outgoing year that it became irreversible.

The new elite will rise not only on the battlefield - it is already growing in a country that has changed since February 24th. Yes, it

is still too early to say that a radical recovery of society has taken place, but the atmosphere itself is already becoming different - despite all the problems, including managerial, ideological and propaganda ones, with all attempts to imitate changes without changing anything, and give out instead of ideology its political technological simulacrum. All these are inevitable attempts to resist the outgoing (people,

layer, era), but in principle Russia has already made a choice, the direction of movement has been set. It, like the struggle for Ukraine, can be dragged out, complicated, but it can no longer be changed or chatted.

Because everything is as serious as possible: the time of relaxed hedonism, thoughtless consumerism, laxity, mental and spiritual weakness, fooling around and alienation, in which many of our "elite" spent

their post-Soviet "historical holidays", ended in 2022. And attempts to extend it even for a loved one, not to mention the whole country, are absolutely useless. Now we need to do everything to win - not close, but with no alternative, and everything important is just beginning with it. In any case, we will win, but this victory will be devalued if we fail to maintain the social cohesion achieved on the way to it and use it to create a new way of life, if at the same time we do not lay the foundation for a socio-economic structure that will meet the vital interests, ideals and values of our people.

A just, original, strong national way of life - on which Russia will stand. Not closed in on itself, not offended by the West (because it got rid of the pro-Western elite, which inspired everyone with its own secondary and inferiority complex), but actively involved in the construction of a new, post-Western world order, playing all possible games on all fields.

The outgoing year, which has revealed our weakness and strength, gives us every reason to believe in our capabilities.

# Poland may claim part of Belarusian lands

Daria Fedotova

THE new year will not bring anything good to Ukraine, and the military conflict will drag on and develop into a new phase, which may be followed by a number of interesting events. So says Russian political scientist Alexei Mukhin. The expert also predicted the possible joining of Belarus and NATO countries to the conflict in Ukraine and told how the emergence of new participants in the confrontation could end in the international arena.

Alexey Alekseevich, perhaps there is no person who would not ask the question: will the SVO end in 2023. Should we expect a fracture?

Turning points in the NWO will occur in the near future - this is February-March 2023. This is already clear to everyone, and many military experts from different countries adhere to this point of view.

Will the military conflict be over? Definitely - no. It will stretch for a long time. Because after the SVO, namely the protection of the Russian population in the territory of Donbass, Kherson and Zaporozhye regions, there will be a second

phase - this is the denazification of Ukraine and bringing it to a politically neutral state. Perhaps with the entry into the Union State - who knows? Such options are also being considered by the Russian leadership, as I understand it.

Some NATO member countries during this year, as they say, showed their teeth. Will they move to more active actions in the new year and will they be involved in this conflict?

NATO is already up to its neck in this conflict, so we are only talking about the fact that this involvement will be recognized officially. Most likely, this will happen in 2023. Although, if the Ukrainian side, as they say, breaks down much earlier, NATO will try to distance itself from this conflict, because NATO countries, especially the United States and Great Britain, as they say, are out of their hands to be in the camp of the defeated. And in this regard, they will do everything to shift all the blame on the mediocre Ukrainian leadership.

I think that Zelensky understands this in principle, which is why he was so sad during his trip to Washington. What makes

the situation worse for the United States is that they are very distracted by the confrontation with China.

By the way, how can the confrontation between the US and China affect the Ukrainian crisis?

Taiwan is one of their episodes, one of the fragments of a large geopolitical mosaic. The confrontation with China will take place primarily in economic terms. Despite the almost complete trade and economic affiliation of the United States and China, nevertheless, there will be confrontation between the countries. It's already coming.

Unfortunately for the American side, back in 2017, China formulated its own concept of geopolitical development. And it is just built on a direct confrontation with the United States. No wonder Donald Trump has declared a trade war on China. Because before that, China outlined its serious ambitions, which the United States considered unacceptable. China will contain the US. And in this regard, I have bad news for Ukraine, because significant resources of the United States, Britain and other

NATO member countries are switched to Ukraine, and it turns out that the United States is wasting time while China is building up its potential, including military, for the upcoming confrontation.

At the end of the year there were a lot of questions about Belarus - will it participate in a special military operation?

Belarus is already at the ready. The Belarusian case is completely dependent on the situation in western Ukraine. Back in 2020, Poland actually began mobilization, creating the so-called occupying army. That is, Poland is unlikely to fight with Russia. But it is likely that the occupying army, which is buying weapons, primarily offensive weapons, will most likely enter the territory of western Ukraine.

That is, Russia can collide with the NATO army in Ukraine? What should we expect in this case from the same ones from the USA and other countries of the bloc?

The United States has already announced that they will not have anything to do with this, and if the Polish

army enters into a military conflict with the Russian army on the trajectory of Ukraine, this will not be a conflict between NATO and Russia. This is an interesting point that the Polish military must take into account. But the fact that Poland, in the event of a complete defeat of Ukraine, will have territorial claims against it, and they will try to realize them - this, as they say, do not go to a fortuneteller.

This is almost openly discussed in the Polish expert community. And Belarus? The question remains open regarding Poland's claims to western Belarus. Therefore, military interaction between Russia and Belarus is now in full swing. Belarus perfectly understands the aspirations of Poland to the Western Belarusian lands. On the other hand, Belarus emphasizes in every possible way and pretends that it will not take part in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. But something tells me that sometimes circumstances can be higher than the decisions of political bosses...

In addition to Poland, the Baltic States are also behaving quite aggressively.

The Baltics are the second line, so to speak, of exchange countries that the US and Britain have in Europe. The first line is Ukraine, which is suffering now. When Ukraine finishes suffering after its complete defeat, the second group of countries will come into play, the interests of which the United States, let's say, will be ready to give up - this is Poland and just the Baltic countries.

The third group of countries is Germany. I remember an anecdote about a rabbi and chickens. A man came to the rabbi and said: "My chickens are dying." The rabbi answered - do this and that. He comes the next day and says: "I have a few more chickens died." The rabbi again advises something.

The unfortunate one comes again and again with bad news. As a result, all the chickens died. To which the rabbi: "It's a pity, I still had so many options."

The United States is behaving in much the same way. They are trying different things, and they have a lot of different options in order to keep the conflict in Europe. At the moment, this is what the picture looks like.

# Number of Black Americans made history in 2022 by breaking through glass ceilings

Cheyenne Daniels

BLACK political power was on full display over the last year as a record number of Black candidates ran up and down the ballot for both parties in the midterm elections.

Several of those candidates became the first Black Americans elected to their offices.

Here's a look at a few of the Black Americans who made history this year.

**Karine Jean-Pierre**  
Karine Jean-Pierre broke two glass ceilings with her appointment as the White House press secretary in May. Not only did she become the first Black woman to hold the position, she also became the first openly LGBTQ person to have the title.

"You can't understate how huge this is, how important it's going to be to so many people of color who have and are working so hard in the communications field to see a Black LGBTQ woman representing the president of the United States at the podium," Democratic strategist Rodell Mollineau told The Hill in May.

Jean-Pierre previously worked on President Biden's campaign and served as chief of staff for then-vice presidential nominee Kamala Harris. She was also a spokesperson for MoveOn, a progressive social justice organization, and an MSNBC commentator.

As press secretary, Jean-Pierre has faced questions about the Biden administration's COVID-19 pandemic response, supply chain issues, the Russian-Ukrainian war and record inflation, among other topics.

**Ketanji Brown Jackson**  
Biden fulfilled a campaign

promise to appoint a Black woman to the Supreme Court when he nominated Jackson to succeed Justice Stephen Breyer.

Jackson, a former public defender and former vice chair and commissioner on the United States Sentencing Commission, was confirmed in April in a 53-47 Senate vote. Harris, the first female and first Black vice president, presided over the vote.

Jackson was sworn in as the nation's first Black female Supreme Court Justice on June 30 in what was a monumental moment, especially for Black women.

Since taking her oath, Jackson has been vocal in the court's cases — with Insider reporting the new justice has spoken just over 11,000 words in the first eight oral arguments, more than any other justice. She cast her first vote as a justice in July and issued her first written opinion, a dissent, in November.

**Wes Moore**  
Democrat Wes Moore won Maryland's gubernatorial election on Nov. 8 and will become the state's first Black governor when he is sworn in. He will also become only the third Black governor ever elected in U.S. history.

An Army veteran, best-selling author and former CEO of one of the nation's largest anti-poverty organizations, Moore beat out 10 other candidates in the Democratic primary in July.

"It's humbling because I know the history of this state and I understand how completely improbable this journey is," Moore told The Grio's April Ryan after his election.

Moore, a husband and

father of two, will be inaugurated on Jan. 18 with Aruna Miller as his lieutenant governor. Miller is the first Asian American and the first immigrant elected lieutenant governor of Maryland.

**Rep. Hakeem Jeffries**  
Rep. Hakeem Jeffries (D-N.Y.) was elected in November to lead House Democrats, becoming the first Black politician to lead either party in Congress.

Jeffries succeeds Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), 82, as the leader of House Democrats. It's not just a cultural shift but a generational shift for House Democrats, as Jeffries is 52 years old.

"Together, this new generation of leaders reflects the vibrancy and diversity of our great nation — and they will reinvigorate our caucus with their new energy, ideas and perspective," Pelosi said after Jeffries's election.

His election has also been praised by members of the Congressional Black Caucus, who endorsed Jeffries in late November in a tweet that highlighted his accomplishments over the past five congressional terms.

Jeffries has a history of supporting social and economic justice legislation, including tackling policing and racial injustice.

Rep.-elect Maxwell Frost

Rep.-elect Maxwell Frost in November became the first Generation Z candidate to win election to the House.

Just 25 years old, Frost, an Afro Latino progressive, won the Florida district vacated by Rep. Val Demings (D) in her run for Senate.

While not officially sworn in yet, Frost has already made headlines. Not only is he now the first member of Gen Z in the House, but he is also the first Afro Cuban member of Congress.

He recently shared that he was denied an apartment in Washington, D.C., because of "really bad" credit. He's a self-described organizer and musician and a member of what he calls the "mass shooting generation."

These issues have become the backbone of his political platform. He spent the summer after the murder of George Floyd protesting police brutality, uses his social media to speak out on housing inequities and consistently promotes universal health care.

"Our generation has been through some of the modern challenges our country is going through, yet we don't have representation in Congress, and we deserve to be at the table," Frost told CNN before the election.

"I'm not here saying I represent the values and thoughts of every single member of Gen Z," he added. "We're like any other generation ... many different ideologies and everything like that. But I think I do holistically represent our lived experience as young people."

Claudine Gay

Since its founding 386 years ago, Harvard University had never had a Black president. That changed this year when Claudine Gay was selected as the Ivy League school's 30th president.

Gay, the daughter of Haitian immigrants, received her bachelor's

degree from Stanford University in 1992 and her Ph.D. from Harvard in 1998.

She has been a professor of government and of African and African American studies at Harvard since 2006. Since 2018, Gay has served as the Edgerley Family Dean of Harvard's Faculty of Arts and Sciences.

Now 52, Gay will take office in July. She will become only the second woman in the school's history to hold the title.

"Today, we are in a moment of remarkable and accelerating change — socially, politically, economically, and technologically," Gay said after her selection as Harvard's president was announced. "So many fundamental assumptions about how the world works and how we should relate to one another are being tested."

"There is an urgency for Harvard to be engaged with the world and to bring bold, brave, pioneering thinking to our greatest challenges," she added.

**Brittney Griner**

WNBA star Brittney Griner made history this year, though not for breaking through a glass ceiling.

Instead, the Phoenix Mercury center was arrested and held prisoner in Russia for 10 months. Her detainment ignited complicated discussions surrounding race, sexuality and equal pay.

Griner was detained in Russia for traveling with vape cartridges that allegedly included less than a gram of cannabis oil. She was seen as a political prisoner and was only released after the Biden administration agreed to free a notorious arms dealer.

Questions about whether

Griner would be treated poorly because of her gender, race and sexuality were a constant fear as her advocates lobbied the Biden administration to secure her freedom.

The saga also raised questions about equality, as Griner was in Russia to earn additional income as a pro basketball player. WNBA salaries max out at \$500,000 — much less than NBA salaries. The league average salary is much less — a little more than \$100,000, per NBC News.

Many Black women felt a sense of kinship to Griner, and across the country they banded together to secure Griner's freedom. Groups of Black women sent letters demanding Biden negotiate the freedom of an American who voted for him in 2020 — and to show he truly prioritized the concerns of a demographic that helped win him the White House.

Since her return, Griner and her wife, Cherelle Griner, have become advocates for others wrongfully detained by Moscow and have encouraged their own fans and supporters to join them in this advocacy. Both have stated support for securing the freedom of Americans like Paul Whelan, a former U.S. Marine still detained in Russia.

"There remain too many families with loved ones wrongfully detained," Brittney Griner wrote in a letter posted to her Instagram. "Those families stood alongside you and all who supported the WeAreBG Campaign to bring me home and it's our turn to support them. I hope you'll join me in writing to Paul Whelan and continuing to advocate for other Americans to be rescued and returned to their families."



# What if everything was the other way around?

“A little one was walking down the street, turning blue and trembling all over...” – in reserved times, not a single decent newspaper in many countries could do without such a Christmas and New Year publication. Then good people let the little one into the house, warmed and fed, and then it turned out that he was someone's lost brother or son - a classic.

Today in America the classics are different. Here is the story of a kind Catholic grandmother who sent her granddaughter a letter for Christmas saying she was praying for her. But the granddaughter, who

vatives (Republicans and others), the younger ones are liberals (progressives, leftists, and so on), and such grandfathers should not be allowed near their grandchildren. In addition, it got to the point that such families do not see each other for years.

Further, Prager denotes the difference between the two worldviews. For example, it is inconceivable that a conservative would keep someone away from their grandchildren simply because that someone voted for Biden. And for a liberal, this is the norm. Because the more to the left a person is in his convictions, the less he is inclined to think

Dmitry Kosyrev

moral arrogance, make you think that you are a permanent victim of something and someone, and as a result, cruelty to people. And this happens in the USA for the most part with graduates of colleges and universities: they are taught this way. In the early USSR, if you look closely at our revolutionaries, there was something very similar.

And then Prager wrote a second column on the same topic, because he received the full program from the liberals. He was simply flooded with responses to the first column - and in the

country is rather a sign of the older generation, the one that grew up on the dreams of the Soviet Union joining the beautiful civilized West. The fact that only Ukraine entered there (with well-known consequences) upsets them, and the same vicious tantrums arise, like the girl named Michael.

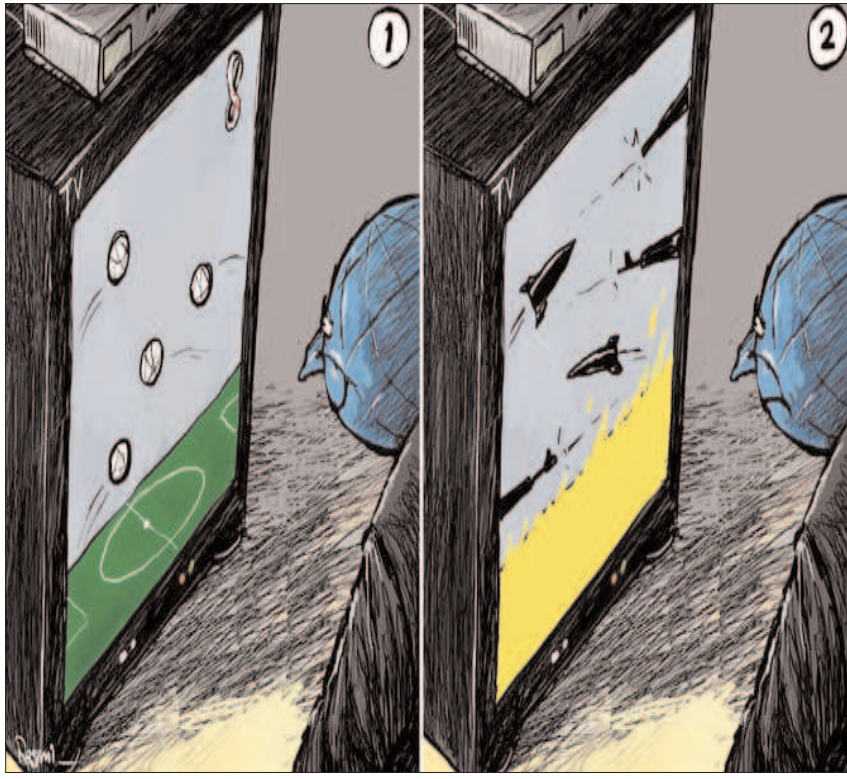
But younger generations - here we have the phenomenon of sociological "stripping", approximately like the Soviet puff marmalade. There is also a layer of classical and very Western liberals of 30-40 years old, but it strongly depends on the place of residence (for example, a big city) and

therefore believe in a fairy tale about a kind society of mutual assistance, where everything was free, the poor and destitute were not seen, and all the little ones were allowed into the houses.

And here it is appropriate to recall the anecdote about how a teacher instills all sorts of values in children.

Teacher: Hello, today we will talk about political beliefs. Let's build a lesson like this. To begin with, let everyone introduce themselves, approximately as I will do now: I am Pavel Stepanovich - and I am a liberal.

Voices in the class: I'm



## Parade of Premiers

THE year of the blue water tiger has become fatal for many ruling elites in the West. The economic crisis caused by the pandemic was exacerbated by the sanctions war and soaring energy prices. The UK had the hardest time, but Italy, Israel and Brazil also attracted the attention of the world media. About what has changed in these countries - in the material of RIA Novosti.

In the outgoing year, Great Britain became the undisputed leader in the resignations of heads of state. From July to October, there were three prime ministers. Moreover, the political crisis is far from over.

Boris Johnson was the first to quit — after all, he could not survive a series of scandals related to his personnel policy and parties during the coronavirus pandemic. The resignation was supported by almost 70 percent of the British. The last straw was the story connected with the deputy chief organizer of the Conservative Party in the House of Commons, Chris Pincher. He made a drunken brawl in the elite Carlton club and harassed men. Moreover, the journalists found out that Pincher had already been in such stories. Johnson knew about this, but still decided to employ a fellow party member and even called him a "cool guy."

A couple of days after the disclosure of information about the scandal, more than 50 ministers left the Johnson government. Publicly, only Foreign Minister Liz Truss, who became his successor, declared her loyalty to the prime minister.

However, she lasted only 45 days, setting the record for the shortest tenure. The desire to be like Margaret Thatcher did not play into her hands. Following the

Southwest Asian parties will continue to seek strategic assurance through a collective approach with extra-regional partners while maintaining buoyant and economics-driven relations with China. This may induce caution from Beijing in managing its dynamics with its SCS rivals. Indeed, China's coercive behaviour in the SCS, while remaining consistent, has also displayed some signs of restraint — in May the China Coast Guard did not intervene when its Filipino counterpart placed navigational buoys in a part of the Philippine Exclusive Economic Zone claimed by Beijing.

That might well be cold comfort since Beijing's actions in the SCS remain fraught with uncertainty well into 2023. Nonetheless, the diplomatic efforts undertaken by concerned parties — both regional and extra-regional — in the SCS should provide some space for greater cooperation as countries in the region cope with more pressing socioeconomic challenges at home.

Mikhail Katkov

some believe that he is pursuing too left-wing policies, including avoiding radical steps against migrants.

As noted by The Guardian, the Conservative Party may face a split. At the same time, some donors have already frozen funding for the organization. Peer Peter Cruddas, who has donated over £3.5 million to the Tories, says he won't give a penny more as they are no longer centre-right.

Campaign to Rome

Unable to cope with the economic crisis caused by the pandemic, Italy's centre-left government collapsed. And at the end of September, the right-wing coalition led by Giorgi Meloni, who was dubbed "Mussolini's successor", won the parliamentary elections. From a young age, she was a member of the ultra-right movement and is going to pursue a tough policy to combat illegal migration.

In addition, as prime minister, Meloni hopes to reform the EU into a "free economic union." In turn, the head of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, said: if the Italian behaves like the authorities of Poland or Hungary, zealously protecting traditional values, Rome risks falling under sanctions.

Meloni also has problems with the coalition. The leaders of the "League of the North" and "Forward Italy" Matteo Salvini and Silvio Berlusconi are clearly unhappy that the triad was headed by a woman who until recently was considered a junior partner. All three divided ministerial portfolios with such bitterness that some observers did not even rule out re-elections to parliament.

In particular, Berlusconi

the political Olympus.

Now he and his supporters are hoping the government will be the most resilient in five years. They want to allow Parliament to overturn High Court rulings and are going to revise many of Israel's basic laws, including those relating to gay rights and repatriation rules. In this regard, Israeli President Yitzhak Herzog called on the government not to split society.

Netanyahu is a staunch supporter of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, occupied after the 1967 Middle East war. The international community considers them illegal. At the same time, Netanyahu opposes the creation of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, although most UN member countries, including the United States, support this option for resolving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. In addition, the newly minted prime minister is accused of bribery, fraud and breach of trust. True, the members of the winning coalition are promising reforms that will put an end to the prosecution of their leader.

Red October

In Brazil, Luis Inacio Lula da Silva returned to power 11 years later. In the presidential elections, he overtook Jair Bolsonaro by 1.8 percent. The country split in two after this, but on the whole, Latin America accepted the victory of the socialist da Silva with joy. No wonder: along with Brazil, 13 states on the continent fell under the rule of the left.

"We are ready to work hard for the strengthening of Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as for the economic and social development of our peoples," said the head of Venezuela, Nicolas Maduro. "Your victory will strengthen democracy and

**Boris Johnson was the first to quit — after all, he could not survive a series of scandals related to his personnel policy and parties during the coronavirus pandemic. The resignation was supported by almost 70 percent of the British. The last straw was the story connected with the deputy chief organizer of the Conservative Party in the House of Commons, Chris Pincher.**

precepts of the idol, Truss decided that the economy should be saved by the rich (those who earn more than 150 thousand pounds a year), so they need to reduce the income tax rate for them from 45 percent to 40. To compensate for the shortfall in funds, London wanted to borrow from international financial institutions 45 billion pounds, and in the long term, investment should have poured into the country.

However, the IMF said: in this way, Truss will increase the socio-economic gap between the poor and the rich. A mere declaration of intent was enough for the British currency to equalize with the dollar, which has not happened since 1985. At the same time, 75 percent of the British felt that the government had lost control over the economic situation in the country.

The next prime minister was former Finance Minister Rishi Sunak. Despite his attempts to bring the country out of the economic crisis, in December, according to an Opinion poll, only 29 percent of respondents were ready to vote for the Conservative Party, and 44 percent would have chosen Labor. Moreover, dissatisfaction with Sunak is brewing among conservatives -

called Meloni "powerful, arrogant and unwilling to change." She, in turn, said that in her team there is no place for those who do not see Italy in NATO and the European Union - and this despite the fact that Salvini and Berlusconi never hid warm feelings for Russia. The League of the North even sent an observer to a referendum in Crimea. On average, Italian governments live from one to two years, about the same experts expect from the Meloni cabinet.

Promised land

In Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu has returned to the post of prime minister. The coalition of right-wing, far-right and ultra-Orthodox parties headed by him took 64 seats out of 120 in parliament. The previous head of government, Yair Lapid, said that he would not be able to work with these people under any circumstances and went into opposition.

Netanyahu has led Israel for 12 years and enjoys significant support among ordinary citizens. However, in 2021 he had to resign - the opposition, including representatives of the Arabs, united and opposed him with a united front. True, this alliance lasted a little over a year and again opened the way for Bibi to

integration in Latin America," said Bolivian President Luis Arce. "Lula. Joy!" - Chilean leader Gabriel Borich did not hide his emotions. "Long live Lula!" Colombian President Gustavo Petro wrote on social media.

Da Silva's rival was a man who was often called a fascist by the left in Brazil itself, and compared by the liberal media to Donald Trump. Jair Bolsonaro was remembered by the general public for cutting down the rainforests of the Amazon, the fight against socialists and LGBT people. At the same time, he did not want to leave the presidency so much that observers did not rule out armed clashes after the elections. However, da Silva was supported by many world leaders, including Russia, the United States and the EU countries.

In turn, the new head of state for foreign policy does not plan to choose between Moscow and Washington. According to him, the actions of not only Russia, but also the West led to the special operation. In domestic politics, da Silva has even more problems than Sunak or Meloni. Despite winning the presidential election, his supporters failed to win a majority in parliament.

### Important Notice

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considers herself a boy and demands to be called Michael, threw a vicious tantrum about this. What you just need to see - especially since she was hysterical on the video: based on maximum publicity. In response, the grandmother humbly said that she would pray even harder for her granddaughter.

This is not a case, but a system. Religious publicist Dennis Prager wrote a column about the fact that now in all of the United States, but primarily in democratic territories, there are hundreds of thousands of grandparents whom children will not invite to the festive table and who will not be allowed to see their grandchildren. Because the older generation are conser-

that for him there is some kind of moral code (that is, decency) - and especially a religious code.

There is such a verdict here: liberals suffer from inadequacy of conscience precisely because they hate religions - any, except their own liberal one. The leftist, no matter what filth he does to other people, has a clear conscience. Add: pristine. They do not need any gods, because if you answer only to your conscience, then you can somehow deal with it. But a person, even an unchurched one, but with religious thinking and values - he would never do this to his parents, even if they have different political convictions.

Further: leftist beliefs give rise to ingratitude,

second he quotes them en masse. Just one example: "Conservatives are whining mean people, and kids don't want to listen to their racist, homophobic, sexist and other speeches, much less let their children have any contact with this rubbish."

In America, this is a specificity - the age factor. Prager, as if by default, assumes that we have a generation gap, that is, always all the older ones are conservatives, and the younger ones are liberals. And he expresses one interesting thought: what if everything was the other way around?

There is such a country on the contrary: it is called Russia. It is very noticeable that liberalism and other pro-Westernism in our

profession. Basically, in our middle and very young groups of the population, conservatism prevails. This, we recall, is the ideology of rejection of mass social experiments on entire societies for the sake of making them happy, that is, rejection of what the American left is doing today.

And in this our "marmalade" there is a struggle between shades of conservatism and patriotism. Some patriots are such "conservatives" that there is nowhere to the left: they would break the whole society through the knee for the sake of its conservatism. There are many young Stalinists among them. These are people who did not live in the USSR and

Masha - I'm a liberal... I'm Seryozha - I'm a liberal... I'm Vovochka - and I'm a Stalinist.

Teacher: Vovochka, how is it and why did this happen?

Vovochka: Yes, it's very simple. My father is a Stalinist, my mother is a Stalinist, all my friends are Stalinists, and I am also a Stalinist.

Teacher: Vovochka, well, it's also impossible, you must be able to develop independent thinking in yourself. Just imagine if your father was a criminal, your mother was a prostitute, and all your friends were gay. And who would you be then?

Vovochka: Well, then I would probably be a liberal.

# China and its ASEAN counterparts will push talks and tout achievements

ATTENTION shifted away from the South China Sea (SCS) in 2022 as the world confronted the Ukraine War and the Taiwan Strait crisis in February and August. Fears that a Ukraine-inspired conflict would erupt in the Taiwan Strait have not eventuated. Domestic economic and political concerns, such as inflationary pressures on the economy and the 20th Party Congress have seized much of Beijing's attention.

Still, China's maritime coercion against its Southeast Asian and extra-regional rivals have continued in the SCS throughout 2022, with widely-reported incidents involving Indonesia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Australia. Various claimants, including China and the Philippines, have continued to engage in construction activities on their existing Spratly Islands outposts. Vietnam has been observed to have undertaken significant dredging and landfill work since early this year.

Yet there could be reason for optimism. Late 2022 caps off a flurry of regional summits. The first in-person summit between the Chinese and US presidents on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in Bali should have

created some respite for regional countries holding their breath over a China-US conflict.

How China and the United States manage their geostrategic competition in 2023 will strongly affect the geopolitical dynamics in the SCS.

The Biden Administration has sought to balance pushing back against China's intransigence in the SCS while preventing the rivalry from spiralling out of control. Recent follow-ups from the Biden-Xi Bali meeting, such as the latest senior US delegation visit to China and a planned trip by Secretary of State Anthony Blinken, bode well for a less tense 2023.

On the ground, US Navy freedom of navigation operations (FONOPs) in the SCS declined from the record high 10 instances in 2020, to five in 2021 and five in 2022 up to the mission by USS Chancellorsville in late November. While the US military maintains a regular presence in Southeast Asia and the SCS through its routine naval and air missions, the tapering down of FONOP frequency seems to reflect the desire to implement 'guardrails' with Beijing.

The strategic priorities of ASEAN countries

Collin Koh

remain skewed towards addressing economic woes such as inflationary pressures and even a potential global recession. Renewed attention will need to be placed on diplomacy to build on the momentum of this year's summits to stabilise competition in the region. Relaxation of curbs on international travel will also help reinvigorate in-person diplomatic initiatives such as the ASEAN-China negotiations on the proposed Code of Conduct (COC) in the SCS. The negotiations look set to regain momentum with the second draft negotiating text currently being discussed. But it also has become clear that the parties concerned have walked back from a definite timeline and much of the differences among the 11 parties to the COC that stymied progress in negotiations pre-COVID-19 will continue to be contentious.

China and its ASEAN counterparts will push talks and tout achievements, such as readings of the draft negotiating text, for different yet convergent reasons. Beijing needs to showcase its negotiations as reflecting its desire for peace and stability to fend off what it perceives to be foreign meddling in its disputes.

Meanwhile, ASEAN has been stung by a lacklustre progress in tackling the Myanmar crisis. With ASEAN credibility and relevance further questioned, the bloc needs a new rallying point and self-validation.

There is unlikely to be a new breakthrough in the COC process in 2023 as the region remains largely invested in domestic socioeconomic priorities. In parallel, the SCS is likely to face twin dynamics of both competition and cooperation. Washington will still conduct FONOPs in the SCS and looks set to continue working with close regional allies to project and sustain a military presence in the SCS. The spate of 'mini lateral' exercises involving the United States and allied militaries sets this pattern of engagement, facilitated by the enhancement of defence postures by some of these allies, such as Japan.

Expanded military engagements by extra-regional powers in Southeast Asia are expected in the coming new year. Indonesia is keen to further expand the scope of Exercise Super Garuda Shield in 2023 to include more foreign militaries. The Philippines and the United States are tipped to build on the momentum

from the later months of the Duterte administration by expanding their institutional military links as Manila also explores a Visiting Forces Agreement with Japan.

Southwest Asian parties will continue to seek strategic assurance through a collective approach with extra-regional partners while maintaining buoyant and economics-driven relations with China. This may induce caution from Beijing in managing its dynamics with its SCS rivals. Indeed, China's coercive behaviour in the SCS, while remaining consistent, has also displayed some signs of restraint — in May the China Coast Guard did not intervene when its Filipino counterpart placed navigational buoys in a part of the Philippine Exclusive Economic Zone claimed by Beijing.

That might well be cold comfort since Beijing's actions in the SCS remain fraught with uncertainty well into 2023. Nonetheless, the diplomatic efforts undertaken by concerned parties — both regional and extra-regional — in the SCS should provide some space for greater cooperation as countries in the region cope with more pressing socioeconomic challenges at home.

# The ‘ongoing destabilizing activities’

IN 2020, Palau encouraged the US to build a military base on the island to deter China, which the Pacific nation accused of "ongoing destabilizing activities."

The construction of the US Air Force's advanced Tactical Mobile Over-the-Horizon Radar (TAC-MOR), which is underway on the Pacific island of Palau, reflects Washington's "growing vigilance" in the Pacific, and could be critical for monitoring "Chinese activities", according to the American press.

The report cited FY2023 Air Force budget documents as saying that "development, test and evaluation, and acquisition of the

system and associated components will provide warfighters with the capability to close gaps in surveillance coverage in key regions of the Pacific area of interest to the United States and our Allies."

According to the outlet, the \$17 billion project underscores the Pentagon's push to provide "a persistent US military presence in the Indo-Pacific as of late."

"Palau itself is becoming especially strategic as the United States focuses on preparing for a potential high-end future conflict in the area against Chinese forces, but also on addressing the threats posed by the missile arsenals of adversaries like North Korea," the outlet added.

Oleg Burunov

In September 2020, the government of Palau reportedly told then-US Secretary of Defense Mark Esper that the Pacific archipelago nation is completely open to the Pentagon's construction of a military base on the island. Palau, which is one of a few countries that do not have armed forces, has an agreement with the US, which obliges Washington to defend the island.

Over-the-Horizon (OTH) radars are capable of detecting targets located beyond the range limit of ordinary radars. They operate in the HF frequency range from 5 to 30 MHz and can spot targets typical-

ly hundreds to thousands of kilometers away.

These radars use powerful radio signals which are transmitted with the help of a large antenna or an array of them. Those signals get reflected by the ionosphere to reach the target.

OTH radars are mainly used as early warning and threat detection systems. They are also used for navigation and surveillance in commercial and military ships.

The radars help Washington expand its regional clout as Washington and Beijing remain at odds over a slew of issues, including those related to Taiwan, seen by China as an essential part of the mainland. Beijing is

frustrated over Washington's growing arms sales to Taipei as well as US President Joe Biden's pledges to "defend" the island in the event of an "invasion" by Beijing. Tensions were further escalated after then-US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited Taiwan in August, a trip that was followed by Beijing launching large-scale military drills near the island in a retaliation move.

Adding fuel to the fire, the US has boosted deployments of military assets to the Asia-Pacific region, including so-called "freedom of navigation" missions through the South China Sea, where Beijing claims territories including Taiwan.





# USC to provide essential commodities on subsidized rates

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Utility Stores Corporation (USC) under Prime Minister Relief Package would provide subsidized essential food items from January 1, 2023 across the country through its countrywide network to provide maximum relief to common man.

A press release issued by the corporation on Saturday reaffirmed its resolve to facilitate the nation in providing more efficient and transparent subsidies to the people under the Prime Minister Relief Package to reduce their hardships and provide them maximum relief.

Keeping in mind the difficulties and problems faced by the people, the Prime Minister Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif has announced to provide tar-

geted subsidies on basic food items through Utility Stores Corporation. These items include flour, sugar, ghee, rice, and pulses.

The subsidy will be available from the 1st of January 2023 and consumers who are enrolled in the Benazir Income support Program (BISP) and whose poverty index score is equal to or below PMT-32 will be provided the special targeted subsidies on food items including flour, rice, pulses, sugar and ghee.

For the registered consumers with BISP, the flour will be available at Rs 400 per 10 kg bag, ghee Rs300 per kg and sugar for Rs 70 per kg, Rs15 to Rs20 will be saved on rice and pulses per kg, however, the monthly purchase limit for the consumers also fixed.

According to the purchase limits, a consumer could able to purchase 40 kg of flour, 5 kg sugar and 5 kg of ghee monthly, besides, all other consumers of Utility Stores Corporation will also be provided subsidies on these five food items under the Prime Minister Relief Package.

For the other consumers, flour will be provided at Rs648 per 10 kg bag, ghee Rs375 per kg and sugar at Rs 89 per kg, where as Rs 15 to 20 per kg discount on the purchase of pulses and rice will also be provided to consumers other then registered with BISP.

The monthly purchase limit for these consumers is also set according to which they can buy 20 kg of flour, 3 kg of sugar, and 3 kg of

ghee.

For the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the flour will be provided for Rs 400 per 10 kg bag at all the sales points and mobile stores established on the instruction of the prime minister.

The USC has asked its all consumers and customers to SMS their Computerized National Identity Card (CNIC) numbers from their mobile phones to 5566 and they will receive a one-time password (OTP) after which they can avail subsidy and can purchase items.

This OTP is applicable at all Utility Stores and this new system will facilitate the consumers in buying the subsidized items in a very transparent manner and will also save their time.

## Cake, sweets sellers expect roaring business this new year season

ISLAMABAD (APP): As the eve of new year is around the corner, the sweet and cake sellers in the federal capital have finalized special preparations, expecting huge business during the festive season.

Keeping in view the new trends and demands, the bakeries have designed and displayed a variety of cakes decorated with images and themes related to new year celebration to attract buyers.

A huge crowd was witnessed at the sweet shops and bakeries for placing orders for the customized cakes and sweets for the friends and family.

Aslam Khan, a bakery owner said while talking to APP, "We are expecting huge business this year as, during the last few years, the Covid-19 pandemic

has affected the festivity as well as the business activity."

He said customized new year cakes were on the trend in the town as many people had and booked their orders much prior to the event. "We are already having so many orders and stopped new bookings of customized cakes since 20th December."

Saleh Muhammad, another sweet shop owner, said cakes and sweets are the most sold items on new year as everyone likes to celebrate this event with cakes and sweets. People also take them along while visiting their relatives and friends on Christmas, he added.

He said cakes, cupcakes, and other delights decorated with new year themes,

are the most favorite choice of the people, especially children and we have displayed special designs which are highly appreciated by customers.

"The recipe for the cakes remains the same but we create different decorations in accordance with the festivity. We decorate the cakes with bells, edible glitter and other decorations related to new year", he added.

Kahir-un-Nisa, who was booking customized cakes and cupcakes with a new year theme at a famous bakery, told APP that it was a daunting task of finding the perfect theme for the new year cake but "finally, my children have selected a design and now we are booking it for the new year celebration"

Atiqa ali, another buyer, said there was no celebration without cakes and sweets, "For me, new year celebrations are synonymous with cakes and sweets. I am not only booking cakes for my family, but also for my friends and relatives, as this is our tradition to gift cakes and sweets."

Alia fatima, a buyer at a local bakery, was of the view that due to the inflation, the rates of the cakes have increased manifold, affecting our celebrations.

She said children demand customized -themed cakes, which are more expensive than normal cakes. "I cannot fulfill their demands and will purchase normal cakes instead of customized ones," she said in a dismal tone.

## PIAF for practical steps to win investors' confidence

### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Raising grave concern over the falling trend of foreign direct investment the Pakistan Industrial and Traders Associations Front (PIAF) on Saturday said that the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into Pakistan has plunged by 47 percent to \$253 million during the first quarter (1Q) of the current fiscal year, indicating that the government has failed to win the confidence of foreign investors due to continued rupee depreciation and uncertainty.

PIAF Chairman Faheem ur Rehman Saigol, in a joint statement along with senior vice chairman Nasrullah Mughal and vice chairman Tahir Manzoor Ch, observed that the inflows under the FDI recorded 31.7 percent decline to \$395 million during the quarter under review as compared with \$579 million in the same quarter of the last year.

Quoting the data,

Faheem ur Rehman Saigol said that the total foreign private investment into the country fell by 36.3 per cent to \$241.3 million during the quarter under review when compared with \$379 million in the corresponding quarter of the last fiscal year.

The portfolio investment in the capital market registered massive decline in outflow during the quarter under review.

The outflow of portfolio investment recorded \$12.1 million during the first quarter of the current fiscal year as compared with the outflow of \$100.5 million in the same quarter of the last year. The foreign public investment under the head of debt securities recorded an outflow of \$18.2 million during the first quarter of the fiscal year 2022/2023 as compare with inflow of \$980 million in the same quarter of the last fiscal year.

The total foreign investment including private and public recorded a decline of 83.6 per cent to \$223 mil-

lion during the first quarter of the current fiscal year as compared with \$1.36 billion in the same quarter of the last fiscal year.

The PIAF Chairman said that China has been the leading investor in Pakistan for few years and was a major contributor to the increase in the size of FDI. However, the new fiscal FY23 may drag down the inflows from elsewhere due to slowdown of economies in the developed countries, he warned.

He said that Pakistan has remained a potential market for foreign investors, who still have plans to make fresh investment in the country, but they have continued to wait for the return of economic stability.

He highlighted uncertainty in the rupee-dollar parity as one of the major concerns of foreign investors. He said a slowdown in the economy had badly impacted business confidence. It is must for the authorities concerned to first create an enabling environment for the local

businessmen desiring to make new investment.

He advocated the need for raising the country's tax base so that tax-to-GDP ratio improves from current poor level. He urged the trade officers to explore opportunities to diversify exports of goods and services in their respective areas, asking them to meet the challenges faced by Pakistan in European markets.

He also suggested the ministry to devise strategies for promotion of Pakistani products, calling upon trade officers to take advantage of opportunities offered by China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

He said that previously, foreign investors mostly poured money into the sectors which did not pose a risk to their profit margins due to rupee depreciation such as the power sector. It is hoped that Pakistan's economy will now gain growth momentum, which should encourage foreign investors to invest in new projects, he added.



LAHORE: People purchasing dry fruits from roadside vendor.

## Shoe industry has great potential to grow: RCCI

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry on Saturday said that the shoe manufacturing industry has great potential and the government must provide incentives to this sector.

Addressing the prize distribution ceremony of the catwalk show at a local hotel, RCCI President Saqib Rafiq said that the Chamber platform was available to bring local brands forward. "Footwear contributes less than one percent to Pakistan's global exports. However, despite of low contribution to the international footwear market, Pakistan is the seventh largest producer, manufacturing more than 2.0 per cent of all footwear produced worldwide."

The RCCI President said shoe manufacturing was a significant part of Small and Medium Enterprises.

He informed that Pakistan exported footwear to more than 60 countries on five continents and recently registered a high growth rate. Saqib further added that the government should focus on sectors that require minimum infrastructure and investment.

Later, motorcycles, mobile phones and other prizes were distributed during the ceremony. Representatives of shoe market association were also present on the occasion.

## Zenseact becomes fully owned subsidiary of Volvo Cars

NEW JERSEY, US (Reuters): Sweden-based Volvo Car AB said on Saturday it had taken 100% ownership of its autonomous driving (AD) software development subsidiary Zenseact.

Volvo Cars acquired 13.5% of shares in Zenseact from ECARX, which made the AD software company a fully owned subsidiary of the Swedish automaker. Zenseact will continue to remain and operate as a standalone company, Volvo Cars said.

## US stocks fall as WS wraps up its worst year since 2008

NEW YORK (APP): US stocks dipped on Friday to end a tumultuous year as market participants remain concerned about the economic and profitability landscape.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 73.55 points, or 0.22 percent, to 33,147.25. The S&P 500 sank 9.78 points, or 0.25 percent, to 3,839.5. The Nasdaq Composite Index dipped 11.60 points, or 0.11 percent, to 10,466.48.

Ten of the 11 primary S&P 500 sectors ended in red, with real estate and utilities down 1 percent and 0.96 percent, respectively, leading the laggards. Energy rose 0.76 percent, the lone gaining group.

Friday marked the final trading day of 2022, a brutal year for equities as aggressive Federal Reserve policy tightening to curb inflation triggered worries about a potential US recession.

All the three major benchmarks suffered their worst year since 2008. The Dow dropped 8.8 percent in 2022, while the S&P 500 tanked 19.4 percent and the technology-heavy Nasdaq slumped 33.1 percent.

**US dollar slips as euro, yen climb**

The US dollar fell in late trading on Friday, amid a momentum in the euro and the Japanese yen.

The dollar index, which measures the greenback against six major peers, dipped 0.32 percent to 103.5250. In late New York trading, the euro rose to 1.0699 US dollars from 1.0676 dollars in the previous session, and the British pound traded flat at 1.2068 US dollars.

The US dollar bought 131.05 Japanese yen, lower than 132.96 Japanese yen of the previous session. The greenback rose to 0.9249 Swiss francs from 0.9220

Swiss francs. The US dollar decreased to 1.3533 Canadian dollars from 1.3539 Canadian dollars, and it weakened to 10.4338 Swedish Kronor from 10.4446 Swedish Kronor.

**Oil prices rise as US rig count dips**

Oil prices climbed on Friday after data showed a fall in the weekly US oil rig count.

The West Texas Intermediate for February delivery rose 1.86 US dollars, or 2.4 percent, to settle at 80.26 dollars a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange. Brent crude for March delivery added 2.45 dollars, or 2.9 percent, to settle at 85.91 dollars a barrel on the London ICE Futures Exchange.

The number of active US rigs drilling for oil dropped by one to 621 this week, Houston-based oilfield services company Baker Hughes reported Friday.

## China's manufacturing activity drops despite lifted Covid restrictions

BEIJING (AFP): China's manufacturing activity contracted sharply in December for the third month in a row, according to official figures released Saturday, despite Beijing's loosening of Covid restrictions at the beginning of the month.

The Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) -- a key gauge of manufacturing in the world's second-biggest economy -- came in at 47 points, down from November's 48, and well below the 50-point mark separating growth from contraction, according to data from the National Bureau of Statistics.

For more than two years, China had insisted on a zero-Covid strategy of stamping out outbreaks with strict quarantines, lockdowns and mass test-

ing -- a hardline policy that reverberated across the global economy.

On December 7, Beijing abruptly loosened pandemic restrictions, but despite that, the country is still struggling to recover due to a surge in Covid patients.

"China's economic prosperity has generally declined," the NBS said in a statement.

NBS senior statistician Zhao Qinghe said: "The epidemic has had a significant impact on business production and demand, staff presence, logistics and distribution".

The index has not been in positive territory since September.

China's zero-Covid strategy was based on widespread testing, strict monitoring of movement,

and quarantine for those testing positive.

Those measures, which led to unannounced plant closures, disrupted supply chains and forced some companies to close permanently.

For its part, the non-manufacturing PMI -- which includes the services and construction sectors -- also contracted further this month, to 41.6 points from 46.7 in November.

The government has set a growth target of about 5.5 percent this year, after reaching its goal of more than 8 percent in 2021.

But many economists now consider the 2022 target unrealistic.

China will unveil its gross domestic product (GDP) performance for the year in January.

## Drugmakers to raise prices on at least 350 drugs in US in January

NEW YORK (Reuters): Drugmakers including Pfizer Inc (PFE.N), GlaxoSmithKline PLC (GSK.L), Bristol Myers Squibb (BMY.N), AstraZeneca PLC (AZN.L) and Sanofi SA (SASY.PA) plan to raise prices in the United States on more than 350 unique drugs in early January, according to data analyzed by healthcare research firm 3 Axis Advisors.

The increases are expected to come as the pharmaceutical industry prepares for the Biden Administration's Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), which allows the government's Medicare health program to negotiate prices directly for some drugs starting in 2026.

The industry is also contending with inflation and supply chain constraints that have led to higher manufacturing costs.

In 2022, drugmakers raised prices on more than 1,400 drugs according to data published by 46brooklyn, a drug pricing nonprofit that is related to 3 Axis. That is the most

increases since 2015.

The median drug price increase was 4.9% last year, while the average increase was 6.4%, according to 46brooklyn. Both figures are lower than inflation rates in the United States.

Drugmakers largely have kept increases at 10% or below - an industry practice followed by many big drugmakers since they came under fire for too many price hikes in the middle of the last decade.

Antonio Ciaccia, president of 3 Axis, said that drugmakers have focused on launching their drugs at higher prices because of the attention paid to annual price increases. The IRA should further this dynamic, he said.

"Drug makers have to take a harder look at calibrating those launch prices out of the gate... so they don't box themselves into the point where in the future, they can't price increase their way back into profitability," he said.

More drug prices are likely to be announced over

the course of January - historically the biggest month for drugmakers to raise prices.

To date, Pfizer announced the most increases, with prices rising on 89 unique drug brands, and an additional increase on 10 drug brands at its Hospira arm.

That was followed by GSK, with planned increases so far on 26 unique drugs, including nearly a 7% increase on its popular shingles vaccine Shingrix.

GSK was not immediately available for comment.

Notable increases expected include 9% price hikes on Bristol Myers Squibb's (BMY.N) personalized CAR-T cell therapies Abecma and Breyanzi, both of which were already more than \$400,000 for the blood cancer treatments.

A company spokesperson said there were several driving factors in increasing the list price of the two CAR-T cell therapies, including the rate of inflation, the value of the therapies, and the personalized

nature of the CAR-T manufacturing process.

Increases for Pfizer include a 6% rise on the cost of Xeljanz, a treatment for autoimmune diseases including rheumatoid arthritis and ulcerative colitis, and 7.9% increases on cancer drugs Ibrance and Xalkori.

A Pfizer spokesperson said in an email that the company's average list prices for drugs and vaccines in 2023 are well below overall inflation at approximately 3.6%, noting that the increases are needed to support investments in drug discovery.

Pfizer noted that net prices - those the company actually receives for its drugs - have fallen in the past four years because of higher rebates and discounts paid to insurance companies and pharmacy benefit managers.

AstraZeneca is set to raise prices in the 3% range on blood cancer treatment Calquence, non-small cell lung cancer drug Tagrisso and asthma treatment Fasenra.





## In brief

## Shoaib, Barkatullah seal doubles tennis title

ISLAMABAD (APP): The duo of Muhammad Shoaib and Barkatullah battled back to beat Muhammad Abid and Mudassar Murtaza in the final to lift men's doubles title of the the 7th Serena Hotels National Ranking Tennis Tournament 2022 at PITF-SDA Tennis Complex Islamabad on Saturday. They won the exciting contest 4-6, 6-3 (10-7). Contests in other categories were also held on Saturday. Results:- Men's Singles Semi-Finals: Muhammad Shoaib bt Yousaf Khalil 6-1, 4-6, 6-4; Aqeel Khan bt Muhammad Abid 6-2, 6-3 Ladies Singles Semi-Finals: Sarah Mahboob bt Meheq Khokhar 6-1, 6-0; Esha Jawad bt Noor Malik? 6-0, 6-0? Boys Singles 18 & Semi-Finals: Sami Zeb Khan bt Bilal Asim 7-5, 2-6, 6-1; Mahatir Muhammad bt Hamid Israr 6-2, 3-6, 6-3 Boys Singles 14 & Semi-Finals: Abdul Basit bt S. Hamza Hussain 6-4, 2-6, 7-5; Abubakar Talha bt Amir Mazar 6-3, 6-1.

## DC Kohat Football League begins

PESHAWAR (APP): Under the leadership of Deputy Commissioner Kohat, with the support of Kohat Cement Company Limited, a football league was organized in District Sports Complex Kohat on Saturday. The tournament's main moto was 'say no to drugs' wherein Deputy Commissioner Kohat Furqan Ashraf, Manager and Administrator of Kohat Cement Company Limited, Security Officer Col. Ejaz Hussain, former International Football Referee Khurram Shehzad, CSR Mahir Kifayatullah, DSO Sports Sajid Afridi and a large number of spectators were also present. The opening match was played between Hangu League and Kohat League, after a tough competition, Kohat League won by 1-0. Ejaz Hussain said that the main objective of the tournament was to educate the youth about the harmful effects of drugs. He said through the tournament an awareness campaign has also been launched to engage the youth in healthy activities by protecting them from the scourge of drugs. At the end of the match, DC Kohat Furqan Ashraf said that activities such as sports keep a person sufficiently energetic. The youth is saved by involving them in sports activities and such events would be organized on a regular basis so that the youth on one side would engage in healthy activities while on the other side they would get opportunities to show their skills at national and international level. He said steps have been taken to keep the culture of the region alive in today's era is a very difficult process and those who are keeping the culture like sports alive. Sports kits were also distributed to all the players by Kohat Cement Company.

## Sindh Ranking Tennis concluded

KARACHI (APP): The 4th Afeef Beach View Sindh Ranking Tennis Championship concluded at Beach View Club here on Sunday. Farhan Altaf, Laraib Shamsi and Eschelle Asif earned double crowns beating their opponents in the finals of different events. Farhan Altaf, former Sindh Number One beat Nadir Bachani (defending Champion from Hyderabad) and beat Aris Tariq and Saifullah in Men's Doubles Final. Farhan's Doubles Partner was Ali Mansoor Zaidi.

## Shahid Afridi floats idea of two national cricket teams

KARACHI (NNI): Interim Chief of PCB Selection Committee Shahid Afridi has floated the idea of two cricket squads of Pakistan aimed at relieving stress on players.

Talking to newsmen in Karachi on Saturday, Shahid Afridi spoke enthusiastically about his two teams proposal saying through it players' workload will be managed. Afridi said he wanted to create two teams before he leaves this post, while laying focus on the communication gap among the players.

Responding to a question, Afridi said he thinks the chief selector should be in contact with every player directly. "I spoke to Fakhar Zaman and Haris Sohail personally, and learned that a clear picture about the players' issues," he remarked.

Shahid Afridi said "The major problem that I've observed here is the communication gap among the management, doctors and selection committee. It is important for a chief selector

to be it me or someone else - to stay in direct contact with players." However, Afridi made it clear that he is not running a one-man show and instead believes in consultations.

Afridi said that having experienced individuals like Haroon Rashid is helpful for him along with people like Abdul Razzaq and Rao Iftikhar Anjum who are involved in domestic cricket.

Afridi said that the wicket for second cricket Test against New Zealand in Multan will be a better one. "It will be something where bowlers will get some support and batters will also enjoy their stay, there will be some bounce on wicket," Afridi said.

He further said "We cannot become a top team by playing on these dead wickets. The wickets on which we've been playing are injurious to our bowlers, pacers will start having fitness problems and spinners will get their fingers injured." Afridi said "Who

says we cannot produce better wickets in Pakistan. We certainly can if we are allowed to do so."

Replying to a question, Afridi said he will try to do justice with all the performers as long as he is working as chief selector. He added if squad was of 25 players, he would've surely added Mohammad Huraire in the list of probables. He praised the youngster and said he has a good future ahead.

"One thing is that our academies are not working for last eight months, it is important that we keep them running for our domestic and under-19 performers. I will try to start a camp there for all such youngsters," the chief selector added. He said Babar Azam is backbone of Pakistan team and selection committee is there to support him so that he can get more stronger in field. "I really his decision to give a target to New Zealand in the first Test," he added.



SYDNEY: Rafael Nadal of Spain competes against Cameron Norrie of Britain during day three of the 2023 United Cup.

## Usama Mir's five-fer takes Central Punjab into Pakistan Cup final

LAHORE (APP): An incredible display of leg-spin bowling from Usama Mir took Central Punjab to the final of the Pakistan Cup 2022-23 with a thumping 82-run win over Southern Punjab at Karachis State Bank Stadium.

According to information made available here by the Pakistan Cricket Board, Usama, who became the leading wicket-taker of the tournament in the process, took five wickets for only 23 runs in 5.1 overs with one of them being a maiden.

Southern Punjab were set 232 to win as Tayyab Tahir and Bilawal Bhatti scored fighting half-centuries, but the Usman Salahuddin-led side crumbled in the chase and were bowled out for 149 in 32.1 overs with teenager Arafat

Minhas being the top-scorer with 39 off 26. Central Punjab captain Aamer Yamin and Zafar Gohar took two wickets each.

Earlier, Central Punjab had a wobbly start as both their openers were sent back to the pavilion with just 12 on board, but a crucial 62-run partnership between Junaid Ali, who made 23 off 33, and Tayyab (58 off 56, four sixes and two fours) took them out of trouble.

Zafar scored 37 off 54 and Muhammad Irfan Khan made 32 off 51, before Bilawal smashed 51 not out off 48 in an innings that included four fours and two sixes.

Central Punjab were bowled out for 231 with four balls spare as Sharoon Siraj, Faisal Akram, Hassan Khan and Mohammad Ilyas

took two wickets each and Mohammad Ismail accounted for a batter.

Central Punjab's opponents for the 3 January final will be decided on Sunday when Balochistan - the defending champions - take on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Scores in brief: Central Punjab 231 all out, 49.2 overs (Tayyab Tahir 58, Bilawal Bhatti 51 not out, Zafar Gohar 37, Muhammad Irfan Khan 32, Junaid Ali 23; Sharoon Siraj 2-28, Hassan Khan 2-31, Mohammad Ilyas 2-35, Faisal Akram 2-50)

Southern Punjab 149 all out, 32.1 overs (Arafat Minhas 39, Yousuf Babar 28, Mohammad Umair 20; Usama Mir 5-23, Aamer Yamin 2-15, Zafar Gohar 2-19)

Player of the match - Usama Mir (Central Punjab).

## NBA: James scores 47 points in Los Angeles Lakers win over Atlanta Hawks



ATLANTA (Agencies): LeBron James scored a season-high 47 points on his 38th birthday as the Los Angeles Lakers beat the Atlanta Hawks 130-121.

He also made 10 rebounds and nine assists at the State Farm Arena in Atlanta.

The Hawks led by 15 points at half-time, but James scored 13 in the third quarter and 16 in the fourth for a Lakers side missing Anthony Davis.

James said he promised

his team-mates 40 points before the game.

"I called it," he said after completing his third game in four nights.

"I told them before the game. I had to make it happen. I didn't even know it was three in four nights. I just knew I had to get my mind and body ready to go.

"It's a treat to have my family here and support me on the road, on my birthday. It's very important to me because they are the rock of everything I do -

my mom and my wife and my family."

James scored 48 points against the Hawks on his 25th birthday in 2009.

The Lakers remain third from bottom of the NBA Western Conference, while the Hawks are ninth in the Eastern.

Friday's other NBA results

Orlando Magic 100-119 Washington Wizards  
Toronto Raptors 113-104 Phoenix Suns  
Milwaukee Bucks 123-114 Minnesota Timberwolves

Chicago Bulls 132-118 Detroit Pistons  
New Orleans Pelicans 127-116 Philadelphia 76ers 116

Denver Nuggets 124-119 Miami Heat

Sacramento Kings 126-125 Utah Jazz

Golden State Warriors 118-112 Portland Trail Blazers.



LAHORE: Chairman PCB Najam Sethi chairing second meeting of cricket management committee.

## United Cup: Norrie beats Nadal as Britain go 2-0 up over Spain

SYDNEY (Agencies): Cameron Norrie beat Rafael Nadal for the first time and Katie Swan saw off Nuria Parrizas-Diaz to put Great Britain 2-0 up over Spain in their United Cup group stage encounter.

Norrie came from a set down to beat the 22-time Grand Slam champion 3-6 6-3 6-4 at the Ken Rosewall Arena in Sydney.

The 27-year-old had lost his four previous meetings with Nadal.

"He bet me easily the last few times, so it's a great way to end the year for me," said Norrie.

"I was thinking I'd never won a set before against him and I came out firstly wanting to do that.

"I had to stay super patient. It was a super physical match and I enjoyed it. It was huge to get through that one and

finally beat him. It was a crazy match."

Australian Open champion Nadal, 36, cruised through the first set, but Norrie broke Nadal's serve in the sixth game of the second set and held his own to level the contest.

World number 14 Norrie broke early in the deciding set and saved two break points while leading 3-2 before serving out for victory. Nadal will attempt to defend his Australian Open title when the first Grand Slam of the year begins in Melbourne on 16 January.

"All credit to him that he did a lot of things very well," said Nadal. "There's a way to improve but I have time before the Australian Open starts in two weeks." Swan, 23, also came from a set down as she beat Parrizas-Diaz 3-6 6-1 6-2.

It was a confident per-

formance from the world number 145 Swan, who is ranked 75 places below the 31-year-old Parrizas-Diaz.

After a 3-0 victory over Australia in their opening group stage content, Britain need one win from their remaining three matches against Spain to reach the knockout stages.

World number 13 Paula Badosa will face Harriet Dart in the first match on Sunday before Dan Evans plays Pablo Carreno Busta, with the deciding mixed doubles to follow if required.

The inaugural mixed-team tournament involves six round-robin groups of three teams. Great Britain, Spain and Australia are competing for a chance to play the United States, Germany or the Czech Republic in a play-off to reach the semi-finals.

## Super-sub Marcus Rashford grabs late Man United winner at Wolves

WOLVES (Agencies): Marcus Rashford came off the bench to score a late winner in Manchester United's 1-0 victory at Wolves on Saturday.

The forward was dropped from the starting lineup for unspecified "internal disciplinary" reasons, according to manager Erik ten Hag.

However, the England international was brought on after half-time and his strike earned a crucial win for United.

The result sees United climb into fourth place in the Premier League while Wolves remain in the relegation zone.

"He [Rashford] was bright, he was lively and he scored a goal to give a good reaction," Ten Hag told BT Sport. "Everyone has to adhere to the rules and if you react like this, it is the right answer.

"We were not that good in the first half. In my opinion the second half was better. I was not happy at half-time and I told them with this attitude they will not win this game and everyone had to give 10% more."

Alejandro Garnacho, who was brought in to



replace the bench Rashford, had a big chance after 17 minutes when he pounced on Nelson Semedo's mistake but saw his effort saved by Jose Sa.

United posed the greater threat in the first half and should have led going into the break but Anthony Martial couldn't connect with a header from close range.

Rashford was brought on for Garnacho at half time and United's performance began to improve.

Sa was called into action again early in the second half as he smothered Antony's shot inside the box. Moments later, David de Gea pulled out his first meaningful save of the game from Ruben Neves' long-range free kick.

United managed to break the deadlock after 76 minutes when Rashford played a one-two with Bruno Fernandes before smashing the ball past Sa. Rashford thought he grabbed a second with five minutes remaining but his effort was ruled out by VAR for handball.

Raul Jimenez thought he grabbed a late equaliser but his header was brilliantly saved by De Gea as United held on for the win.

The goals are coming after good work and we are working as a team in and out of possession," Julien Lopetegui said. "Maybe we didn't have the best decision making in the box. We had five or six good situations to damage them but we had good chances."

## Amir given permission to practice in National High-Performance Center

LAHORE (Web Desk): The unexpected return of fast bowler Mohammad Amir, who was previously discarded by the Pakistan national team, to the National High Performance Centre (NHPC) in Pakistan on Friday has raised questions about a possible return to the national team.

In a viral video, Amir can be seen saying he requested Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman Najam Sethi "who was kind enough" to allow him to train at the NHPC in

Lafore.

Amir's appearance at the facility was the first after he fell apart with the PCB's administration under former chairman Ehsan Mani.

He had also failed to get along with Ehsan's successor Ramiz Raja - who was removed from office last week along with his Board of Governors for an interim Management Committee, led by Najam Sethi, to take over the board's affairs in line with instructions from Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

Amir also admitted he was eyeing a return to international cricket.

The pacer, who was tainted in a spot-fixing saga that struck Pakistan during their tour of England in 2010, said he was currently focused on preparing for the upcoming Bangladesh Premier League.

Earlier, the 30-year-old also expressed happiness after Sethi took over the Ramiz-led PCB. "...Right man for the right job congratulations to @najam-sethi sir," he had tweeted.

## PCB Management Committee meeting held

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Mr Najam Sethi chaired the second meeting of the Pakistan Cricket Board's Management Committee at the National High Performance Centre on Saturday. The following are the key decisions taken at the meeting:

Regional Cricket Associations and Departments

The PCB Management Committee held an extensive discussion on the restoration of the Regional and District Cricket Associations and Departments/Service Organisations in line with the PCB Constitution 2014.

Following detailed discussions, it was announced Regional and District Cricket Associations and Departments/Service Organisations stand restored and a strategic plan will now be prepared to include them formally in the domestic cricket structure, including participation in the PCB Board of Governors in due course.

PCB Committees: The Management Committee approved the constitution of 12 PCB Committees and agreed that their compositions will be announced in due course.

The following committees will be constituted: Domestic Restructuring Committee, Domestic Restoration Committee for Region, Department Cricket Restoration Committee, NHPC Remodeling Committee, Restructuring of Women's Cricket Committee, Cricket Infrastructure Committee, Audit Committee, Finance and Commercial Affairs Committee, Human Resource Committee, Legal Affairs Committee, National Selection Committees and Benevolent Fund Committee

Other matters: The PCB Management Committee confirmed that it will honour and fulfil all Domestic Player Contracts, which are valid until August 2023. The PCB Management Committee, as part of its strategy to continue to invest in women's cricket, expressed its enthusiasm and commitment to launch The Women's League, which has been renamed as Pakistan Women's League.

The PCB Management Committee agreed to discontinue the Pakistan Junior League. However, to ensure there is a pathway for the high-performing teenagers and the country continues to produce talented cricketers across all age gaps, it was agreed to revive junior series on a home and away basis. It was also agreed to hold discussions with the HBL Pakistan Super League franchises to include an Under-19 player under their Emerging Categories in the playing line-ups.

## 20-K Cup T20 cricket tournament from Jan 5

LAHORE (APP): 20-K Cup T20 cricket tournament will roll into action here from January 5 at five different grounds. For years, this event was played under the title of Col (retd) Fateh Sher Khan Memorial T20 Cup but this year it has been given a new title, said Nabeel Ahmad, patron and sponsor of the competition while talking to APP on Saturday.





## In brief

### One killed in Karachi on enmity

ISLAMABAD (APP): At least one person was killed in a shooting incident that occurred on Saturday near Sarjani when an armed motorcycle-rider suspect opened fire indiscriminately. The incident of firing took place near Surjani Football Ground, where an unknown motorcyclist shot and killed a person and managed to escape from the scene, a private TV channel reported. Police sources said 35 years old deceased has been identified as Amir Khalid Masih, a resident of Lyari, whose dead body was shifted to a hospital. The incident appears to be a personal enmity. Police registered the case and started an investigation into the matter.

### Passenger bus catches fire on Motorway M3

ISLAMABAD (APP): A passenger bus carrying 49 travelers caught fire near Pirmahal Interchange on Pirmahal Motorway M3. National Highways and Motorway Police reached the spot quickly and evacuated the bus by moving the passengers, said the spokesperson. All the onboard passengers were reported safe. Inspector General of National Highways and Motorway Police, Khalid Mahmood encouraged the officers for their rapid response. Long queues of vehicles were formed on the highway.

### IRSA releases 28,500 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Saturday released 28,500 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 38,800 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1490.75 feet and was 92.75 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 17,400 cusecs while outflow as 10,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1118.15 feet, which was 68.15 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 6,900 cusecs and 4,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded 15,900, 11,100, 15,100 and 500 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 9,000 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 5,500 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

### One wheelers arrested during crackdown

RAWALPINDI (APP): City Traffic Police (CTP) has finalized arrangements to control one-wheeling and car stunts by youngsters on eve of New Year's night and seven special squads have been formed. According to a CTP spokesman, CTP had decided to take strict action against traffic rules violators. During the crackdown, the City Police station arrested the accused Abdul Jabbar on charges of one wheeling. Similarly, Waris Khan police held Maheeb Kausar and confiscated the motorcycle from the accused involved in one-wheeling during the crackdown. Meanwhile, One wheeling was going unnoticed on various roads of the garrison city of Rawalpindi as motorbikers, mostly teenagers, continued to perform wheelie and stunts putting their and others' lives in danger.

# Sherry Rehman hopes country to overcome crises in 2023

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Climate Change Senator Sherry Rehman on Saturday in her new year's message expressed the hope that in 2023 the country would completely come out of the crises caused by the previous government.

In a statement issued here, the federal minister wished Happy New Year to everyone.

Sherry said the year 2022 was a very difficult year for Pakistan.

"Pakistan has been at the center of world attention due to historic floods and the worst effects of climate

change. A quarter of the country and more than 33 million people were affected due to rain and river floods," the minister said.

She added that more than 1,700 people died, houses, roads and infrastructure were severely damaged. Such devastation caused by the environmental crisis was unprecedented in recent history, the minister said.

Due to the previous incompetent and failed government, the coalition government had to take difficult and unpopular economic decisions to save the country from default as

soon as it came to power, Sherry Rehman said.

"Millions of our brothers and sisters are still living homeless in these winters. My message to people on the New Year is to support the flood affected people in their full recovery. Their complete restoration is a shared responsibility of all of us. We should all be hopeful for the year 2023," the minister said.

She concluded with her prayer, "We pray to Allah Almighty that the new year will be a year of stability, progress, prosperity and happiness for the country and the nation."

## India turns strife-torn Kashmir valley into military garrison: Mushaal

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairperson of Peace and Culture Organization, Mushaal Hussein Mullick Saturday hailed Kashmir Institute of International Relations to the United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres regarding Indian ploy to de-internationalize the Kashmir issue as India virtually turned the strife-torn valley into a military garrison where all basic rights of the people have been usurped.

Mushaal, the wife of Yasin Malik, in a statement, said that Kashmir dispute was one of the oldest unresolved disputes pending on the UN agenda, as now even the fascist Indian government was questioning the role of United Nations Military Observer Group (UNMOGIP) in the region.

She said Kashmir Institute of International Relations in its letter to UNGS rightly raised the

point that India has since long was trying to make UNMOGIP's presence in the region controversial saying that the mandate of the mission had lapsed since it related specially to the ceasefire line under the Karachi Agreement.

Since 1972, India has adopted a non-recognition policy towards third parties in their bilateral exchanges with Pakistan over the question regarding the state of Jammu and Kashmir, she added.

However, Mushaal stated that Kashmir dispute was constant source of tension between two nuclear countries Pakistan and India for the last over seven-decades, which resulted in multiple wars and conflicts over the years.

She alarmed the hindutva regime continued state terrorism and unabated human rights violations could flare up another war between Pakistan and India, which could not

only endanger the regional peace but could also risk the world peace since both the countries were nuclear powers.

Mushaal reminded the UN should honour its long-forgotten unfulfilled promise of holding plebiscite in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) so as Kashmiris could make decision about their own fate.

The Chairperson called upon the international community to take action on the well-documented human rights violations being committed with impunity by the Indian occupation forces against innocent Kashmiri men, women and children.

She said it was time for the world to ensure that the Kashmiris get their long-denied right to self-determination, which was the only viable and agreed solution to the decades-long dispute.



ISLAMABAD: Construction work of Margalla Road being carried out during development work. —APP Photo

## Safe city project successfully operating to serve citizens

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Under the leadership of Inspector General of Police Islamabad, Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, Safe City Islamabad is playing a key role in maintaining the law and order situation in the federal capital and against criminal elements.

According to the police public relations officer, more than 100 kilometers of optical cable including damaged cameras were repaired and made functional on a priority basis.

At the same time the process of installing 750 new cameras was 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 applications to tests.

Flashlight and radar system has been repaired and reactivated on roads while 48 CDA cameras installed at various locations to maintain law and order situation in Islamabad and further improve surveillance including metro-bus service were also connected with Safe City.

Furthermore, F-10, Shifa International Hospital, Jinnah Supermarket, DHA, various private

institutions, shopping malls including toll plazas of National Highway including 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.

Islamabad Capital Police Helpline Pukar-15 and Eagle Squad have been linked with Safe City's centralized system while outdated data sharing cables were repaired and connected to the data center. Islamabad Capital Police FM Radio 92.4 has been shifted to the Safe City while SOPs have been issued to improve the performance of all wings of Safe City. Around 3800 controller servers have been connected with POC with the help of Huawei.

He said that OMC of Safe City identified 999 suspicious persons, 16,470 unregistered motorcycles, 5658 vehicles with black glasses and 3968 professional beggars with the help of modern cameras and sent information to the concerned police for immediate action. Likewise, surveillance of 563 protests, rallies in Islamabad was ensured and maintained the law and order situation.

More than 9, 42,000 calls were received on the helpline of Islamabad Capital Police during this year in which more than 90 thousand calls were related to the police, 12 thousand were important calls while 98 percent of the total calls were unnecessary.

A complaint management system

was launched which is fully operational and working efficiently. This system received more than 1, 36,000 citizen's complaints and more than 1, 32,000 complaints have been redressed while the rest of the applications are being processed on a priority basis. Around

507 hotels, guest houses and shelter homes in Islamabad are connected with the Safe City Hotel-Eye software in which the data of more than 81 thousand citizens have been registered. After the encryption of the registered data, 88 suspects have been locked up in different police stations.

Similarly, the Islamabad Capital Police Traffic Division ensured compliance with the law by taking indiscriminate actions against drivers who violated traffic laws in 2022. Traffic Wing issued 77,820 learner permits to the citizens for driving license while 82,739 licenses were renewed after their expiry. Similarly, 2183 lost licenses were re-issued and Islamabad Capital Police Traffic Division issued a total of 2586 professional licenses and 31,452 non-professional licenses this year. As many as 3484 issued licenses were converted, 37,522 new licenses were issued and 3788 license categories were upgraded.

In order to maintain a coordinated traffic system across the city, Islamabad Capital Police enforced traffic rules against traffic rules. Indiscriminate actions were taken against the violating drivers and more than 10, 07, 000 challan tickets were issued in 2022 which is 17% more than the year 2019 and 07% more than the year 2021.

## Saudi Arabia bans air travellers from carrying Zamzam water

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Saudi Arabia has slapped a complete ban on carrying holy Zamzam water bottles by air passengers including from Pakistan.

Saudi authorities at Jeddah International Airport has issued a circular to all private airlines including Pakistan's PIA. Only passengers travelling for Umrah or Hajj pilgrimages are allowed to carry only one five-litre bottle of Zamzam water.

The other passengers travelling on visit or business visas, tourists or other purposes are not allowed to carry Zamzam water to homeland. According to the Saudi directive, the pilgrims will be provided Zamzam water bottles produced under King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz Zamzam Water Project.

Administrations of all the airlines have been directed to ensure the order while checking travellers' luggage. Passengers coming to Pakistan must undergo complete screening, the circular added.

## Police reunites missing woman with family

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Islamabad capital Shams Colony police team reunited a special woman with her family, a Police Public Relation Officer said.

He said that, a Shams Colony police station team found a 60 years old special woman and shifted her to the police station and used technical and human resources and succeeded in tracing the family of the missing woman.

The police team reunited her with his family safely. The family members appreciated the police team's efforts and thanked the Islamabad capital police for immediate action.

## SSP Operations orders foolproof security in the city

ISLAMABAD (NNI): SSP Operations Malik Jameel Zafar directed zonal officers to beef up security in their respective areas to tackle any untoward incidents and protect lives and property of the public.

He asked the police officers to not overlook the possible security threats and remain vigilant in their respective areas. He issued these instructions during a meeting which was also attended by Zonal DPOs,

SDPOs and SHOs. Malik Jameel Zafar directed that extra police force should be deployed to shield the city adding that search and combing operations should be carried out throughout the city.

He emphasized that the zonal DPOs should make a comprehensive strategy to combat crime from their respective areas. "Snap checking should be done besides activating the Eagle Squads to catch the criminals and suspects," he added.

He reiterated to initiate strict action against those involved in aerial firing and one wheeling on roads "No laxity would be tolerated in this regard, he said.

SSP Operations further said that a special crackdown should also be launched to arrest the hardcore criminals and proclaimed offenders to combat criminal activities and to save the lives and property of the citizens.

## As first winter rain amid winter delights demand on rise

ISLAMABAD (APP): The demand of the traditional winter delights has registered an increase soon after the cold wave gripped different parts of the country with the onset of the first rain of this winter season.

According to a private news channel reported, food outlets and markets of the federal capital can be seen jam packed with the food lovers were buying the popular winter items like Chicken

Corn Soup, Doodh Jalebi, Gajar ka Halwa, Kashmiri Tea, Samosas, Pakoras, fried fish and dry fruits etc especially during the rainy day.

A number of stalls carrying these delights at various markets including Melody Market, Karachi Company, Jinnah Super Market, Super Market, Aabpara Market and F-10 Markaz are attracting a large number of customers.

The increased prices of the fish has although

impacted purchasing capacity of the buyers but cannot imagine the winter season without fish.

Public like to have fish barbecue parties or go for enjoying fried fish, however, my children prefer to eat finger fish. The purpose of buying such items is mainly to have a family time in which all of the family members can have discussions over the cup of tea and such food items.

## PMD predicts cold, dry weather in most parts of country

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Meteorological Department has forecast cold and dry weather in most parts of the country, while very cold in upper parts and north Balochistan.

Foggy conditions are likely to prevail over Punjab's upper Sindh and plain areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. During the last twenty-four hours, cold and dry weather prevailed over most parts of

the country, while very cold in the upper parts and north Balochistan. However, light rain/snowfall occurred at isolated places in Gilgit-Baltistan.

Very cold and dry weather is expected in Murree, Galliat, Abbottabad, Nathiagali, Naran, Muzaffarabad, Neelam Valley, Rawalakot, Kaghan, Chitral, Dir, Swat, Gilgit, Skardu, Astore and

Hunza Valley from Saturday to Wednesday.

Frost is likely during morning hours while very cold and dry weather is likely in Ziarat and Adjoining areas during the next few days.

Lowest minimum temperatures recorded were Leh -14, Astore 10, Kalam, Gupis -08, Kalat -07, Ziarat -06, Hunza, Malamjappa and Parachinar -05 centigrade.

## More than two lac bikers fined without helmets

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Islamabad Capital Police issued 2,13,826 fine tickets to motorcyclists driving bikes without helmets during the ongoing year, a police public relations officer said.

He said that, the Islamabad Capital Police is endeavoring to maintain an exemplary traffic system in the city and check those involved in negligence on roads.

Chief Traffic Officer Islamabad said that a vigorous campaign of Islamabad

capital police had been launched as per the directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad, in order to create awareness among citizens about the traffic rules.

He said that all the officials have been directed to ensure the implementation of traffic rules and regulation irrespective of status and rank and demonstrate patience and politeness while issuing traffic violation tickets to the road users.

Islamabad capital police is utilizing all available resources to facilitate the general public adding that the parents are also requested not to allow their underage children to drive bikes or cars till age of maturity, CTO maintained. The Chief Traffic Officer said that issuing traffic violation tickets is not as a punitive measure but the purpose is to ensure a safe road environment in the Capital and secure the lives of the people.



RAWALPINDI: Punjab Revenue Authority seals restaurant in Rawalpindi Phase-7 over non-payment of taxes. —NNI Photo



Artists face lack of market

KABUL (Tolo News): A group of artists in Paktia province in the east of the country said they are faced with a lack of market for their artworks while it was better in the past. They said that the market for the sale of their artworks has declined lately. The artists called on the IEA to help them in this regard. "Previously, the market for our artworks was very good, but it has been a year since there hasn't been a decent market and I haven't sold a single piece," said Bahae Jan Naib Khail, an artist in Paktia.

China interested in investment

KABUL (Tolo News): Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat (DABS), the country's power distributor, said Chinese investors have expressed willingness to invest in coal-fired power in Afghanistan. The investment will produce 500 megawatts of electricity. "The technical delegations of DABS and China through joint meetings will discuss all issues on how to produce electricity from coal and the result of the meetings will be shared with the leaders of the Islamic Emirate," the statement said.

Asia is comparable to a living body composed of soil and water. The heart that beats inside the body is Afghanistan. The destruction of Afghanistan would be the destruction of Asia. And in its progress and prosperity lies the well-being of Asia. - Allama Iqbal

Islamic Emirate backs media in Afghanistan

KABUL (Tolo News): The deputy minister of information and culture for publications, Hayatullah Muhajir Farahi, said that the issues facing the media will be resolved. In a special interview with TOLONews, Farahi noted that the directorate has replaced the commission for access to information.

"The Islamic Emirate and especially the Ministry of Information and Culture support the media in every way, and we continue our efforts to support the media," he told TOLONews. Farahi said the situation for foreign journalists has improved, and that more than 700 journalists have visited Afghanistan in the past year. "700 journalists have visited Afghanistan in the past year and have prepared reports for their relevant institutions," Farahi said. Meanwhile, media supporting organizations said the Islamic Emirate and the world should pay greater attention to the challenges facing the media in Afghanistan.

"The Islamic Emirate should provide ways for access to information and it



should pay attention to the safety of journalists," said Farhad Behroz, deputy head of Afghanistan Independent Journalists Association (AIJA). This comes as, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) said in a report said that 1,668 journalists were killed in war zones in the past 20 years. "During the past two decades, 80% of the media fatalities have occurred in 15 countries. The two countries with the highest death tolls are Iraq and Syria,

with a combined total of 578 journalists killed in the past 20 years, or more than a third of the worldwide total. They are followed by Afghanistan, Yemen and Palestine. Africa has not been spared, with Somalia coming next," according to the RSF report. In its yearly report, Afghanistan Journalists Center said that 260 cases of violence against journalists and media outlets as well as arrests and other forms of violent treatment have been reported in 2022.

Chamtal residents want construction of key bridge

MAZAR-i-SHARIF (Pajhwok): The residents of Chamtal district in northern Balkh province have demanded the construction of a bridge between Alizaio and Arzan Kar villages.

They said none-existence of a bridge forced them to transfer their vehicles and other equipment by boats from one side of the river to another side. Abdul Ghafoor, the resident of Alizaio village told Pajhwok Afghan News that the Alizaio and Arzan Kar areas connected Chahar Boluk and Chamtal districts and people are facing huge problems due to the non-existence of bridge.

"We use boats to transfer livestock and vehicles. There is no boat available during the night and most of the time livestock and vehicle plunge in the water from boat," he said. Mawlawi Mohammad Qasim, the resident of Chamtal's new township, said most of the time patients are not reached to the doctor in time and lost their lives on their way to the hospital.

Mullah Ahmad Jan, another resident of Chamtal district, said none-existence of the bridge is a huge issue and needed more attention. Chamtal District Chief Mawlawi Noorullah Humam told Pajhwok Afghan News besides the non-existence of bridge there were several other issues that needed serious attention to be resolved.

He called on government officials to take necessary steps for the resolution of problems faced by the residents of Chamtal. This comes that one bridge was constructed in the area but people say that it was away from them and its use was time-consuming.

This would avoid any disruption and allow the continuation of all humanitarian operations of international and national NGOs. It is worth mentioning here that many bridges were destroyed in Afghanistan since long wars.

UN experts want ban on women education, work lifted

KABUL (Pajhwok): UN experts have denounced and called for an immediate reversal of the 'Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan' (IEA) recent order barring women from working in international and national non-governmental organisations (NGOs), according to a statement.

UN experts supported a unified effort of the international community to take a stand against this latest human rights violation, further banishing women from the workplace, preventing delivery of life-saving aid and crippling the work of NGOs which will have a terrible impact on the entire country, the statement added.

Just 4 days after the Taliban banned women and girls from attending universities, on 24 December, the acting Minister of Economy issued a letter barring women from working in international and national NGOs, a further outrageous violation of women's rights with the double blow of preventing the delivery of vital life-saving services and denying many women of their livelihood.

"The ban on women working in NGOs not only deprives women workers of their fundamental rights and livelihood, but also prevents them from supporting their communities. It will further push women out of jobs and completely erase them from the public sphere," said the experts.

The ban will have a dire impact on local NGOs, particularly women-led NGOs, which have provided services and support for women, children and marginalized groups. Many national civil society organizations will be dealt a grievous blow by this cruel and unlawful decision. The ban will

have catastrophic effects on tens of millions of Afghan people in need of humanitarian assistance, especially women and children, as women aid workers play a critical role in needs assessment, planning and implementing the humanitarian response.

It is a clear violation of the non-discriminatory practice that should guide all humanitarian aid. Without female humanitarian workers, women and girls as well as boys will not have access to food, education, child protection, gender-responsive legal aid, livelihoods support and essential healthcare services.

International and national NGOs that are the main service-providers delivering a large proportion of international aid in Afghanistan and have expanded their operations since August 2021, including through the employment of more female staff.

These NGOs are also the target of this extremely harmful and discriminatory measure by the Taliban. Following the decision, some major humanitarian organisations have suspended or reduced their operations both because their services depend on their female workers and because, as a matter of human rights principle, they will not accept the gender composition of their staff being dictated to them, and we agree.

The experts said, "We have been observing with deepening concern the volatile situation of humanitarian workers and their operations in the country. The de facto authorities have been routinely interfering in humanitarian operations by requesting excessive information on humanitarian workers and beneficiaries and restricting their activities in ways that

are contrary to humanitarian principles.

The barring of women employees is the last straw, and a unified response is required. We express our full solidarity and support with those humanitarian agencies that have refused to work under this unconscionable prohibition that is seeking to push women and girls in Afghanistan into oblivion.

The UN Inter-Agency Standing Committee has noted that while agencies will endeavour to continue to deliver time critical lifesaving aid, many activities will be paused as they cannot deliver principled humanitarian assistance without female aid workers. We call on all organisations to continue to pay their female staff their full salaries and for donors to support this.

Having already denied women and girls their rights to education and limited their freedom of movement, expression, and dress as well as public participation, further denying women's right to work in NGOs in the middle of winter when the country is grappling with a humanitarian emergency shows the Taliban have no regard for women's rights or their wellbeing and will stop at nothing.

In this case, they are instrumentalising and victimising women and the recipients of critical aid, apparently in a power struggle over control of this sector. This may well be a case of gender persecution, a crime against humanity, and those responsible should be held to account. "We call on the de facto authorities to immediately lift the ban on women working with national and international NGOs."

Senior UN official to visit Afghanistan

KABUL (Tolo News): Following the Islamic Emirate's ban on female aid workers, UN aid chief Martin Griffiths will travel to Afghanistan in the coming weeks and will seek to meet with the high-ranking officials, a senior UN official said.

Ramiz Alakbarov, UN aid coordinator in Afghanistan, told a press conference as quoted by Reuters that the official of the UN will closely discuss the ban on women's work in Afghanistan with the leaders of Kabul.

"The UN emergency and relive coordinator will conduct a visit to Afghanistan, there will be several our visits which we are planning to make at the senior level in order to prevail upon the inter locaters upon the de facto authorities side to resolve this situation and this will be taking place in the course of few coming weeks as we are assessing the implications of what is happening" Alakbarov said. Alakbarov added that women made up roughly 30% of aid workers and that they would not be replaced with men.

"Humanitarian needs of the people are absolutely enormous and it's important that we continue to stay and deliver. As we do so, it is equally important that the rights of women and girls...are talking so much these absolutely preserved and protected," he said. The Islamic Emirate praised the high-ranking UN official's visit to Afghanistan and

urged the United Nations to continue providing help to the Afghan people.

"It will be better if their representative visits Kabul because we will closely discuss the issues that have come up. We will jointly share thoughts to fill the gap that has been created and will resolve the issues," said Zabiullah Mujahid, the spokesman of the Islamic Emirate. Meanwhile, Turkey's Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said that his country is against the recent decision of the current government of Afghanistan and that they are trying to address the issue on the sidelines of the meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

"Unfortunately, the latest decision adopted by the Taliban cannot be accepted. We are against the isolation of women in society. This has nothing to do with Islam. We are still indeed showing a lot of efforts to reverse those decisions adopted by the Taliban," Cavusoglu said. "This issue needs to be resolved as quickly as possible or the pause in aid will exacerbate the humanitarian crisis in the country," said Azerakhsh Hafizi, an analyst.

The US special envoy for women, girls and human rights in Afghanistan, Rina Amiri, the international health non-governmental organization Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF), or Doctors Without Borders,

the UN Human Rights Council's special rapporteur to Afghanistan, Richard Bennett, and EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell criticized the recent decision by the Islamic Emirate to ban women employees in non-governmental organizations in the country.

Afghans gets responsibility

KABUL (Agencies): Afghanistan Railway Authority has announced that it will take responsibility for the railway between Hairatan border town and Mazar-e-Sharif from the Uzbek company, Sogdiana Trans.

The authority said that an Afghan delegation held talks with Uzbekistan's railway officials in Uzbekistan and both sides agreed that responsibilities related to Hairatan-Mazar railway should be handed over to Afghanistan Railway Authority. The Uzbek company Sogdiana Trans has been in charge of the railway for 11 years.

Based on the agreement, the railway responsibilities will be handed over according to a schedule, and transport of commercial goods will continue as per normal. Afghanistan Railway Authority said that it is ready to manage the affairs related to the railway line, and will seek to provide better facilities for traders.

Shun biases, forge unity: Speakers

FAIZABAD (Pajhwok): A gathering in northeastern Badakhshan province has called for peaceful coexistence among people, linking decades of war in the country to different kinds of biases. The Information and Culture Department organised the gathering, which was attended by religious scholars, elders and local officials.

Director of Information Maazuddin Ahmadi urged youth to pay heed to Islamic teachings and national values and work to prevent divisions and prejudices. Over the last 20 years, thoughts of youth and the general public had been influenced negatively, the official alleged, suggesting such events should be held to promote unity and discourage biases.

Mujib Rahman Akhundzada, chief prosecutor, likened prejudice to cancer that claimed lives of thousands of civilians. He believed religious, ethnic and racial differences caused Afghanistan's handover to the US and NATO in the wake of mujahidin's victory. Abdul Basir Haqjo, head of the Journalists Council, told the audience the Afghan must equip themselves with modern technology and information. The Afghans must strive to gain knowledge and embrace mutual acceptance. Stoking prejudices among Afghans, regional intelligence networks and colonial forces had been trying over the last 43 years to keep the pot boiling in Afghanistan, he concluded.

KABUL (Pajhwok): None-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) will be unable to reach the most vulnerable people in Afghanistan to provide food, medicine, winterization and other materials and services without women workforce, according to a statement from the US State Department.

"Women are absolutely central to humanitarian and basic needs operations. Unless they participate in aid delivery in Afghanistan, NGOs will be unable to reach the country's most vulnerable people to provide food, medicine, winterization, and other materials and services they need to live." This would also affect the humanitarian assistance provided by international organizations, as international organizations utilize NGOs to deliver such materials and services.

The Foreign Ministers of Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Malta, Norway, Spain, Switzerland, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States and the High Representative of the European Union are gravely concerned that the Taliban's reckless and dangerous order barring female employees of national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from the workplace puts at risk millions

of Afghans who depend on humanitarian assistance for their survival. We call on the Taliban to urgently reverse this decision.

We support the Afghan people's calls for girls and women to return to work, school, and university, and for women to continue to play essential roles in humanitarian and basic needs assistance delivery, and we urge the Taliban to respect the political, economic, social, and cultural rights of women and girls in Afghanistan.

To this end, we are in close contact with the United Nations, who are urging, also on behalf of all international donors, that the Taliban reverse this decision immediately.

KABUL (Pajhwok): Last week, the ban on women higher education made headlines and sparked strong reaction at home and abroad, former President Hamid Karzai met some Afghan politicians in Turkey and discussed the importance of intra Afghan talks.

Eight people were killed in Afghanistan last week in different incidents of violence. Zabiullah Mujahid, spokesperson for the 'Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan' (IEA), said three Daesh insurgents were killed and one held during security force operation. He did not say where the operation was conducted.

A group leader was killed in Faryab province, robbers killed one person in samangan and unknown gunmen have axed one person in Ghazni. According to officials two armed Daesh rebels were killed in Kuna.

Casualties figures are based on reports available with Pajhwok Afghan News. It is possible that some reports about some incidents might not be received or sources may not have provided the exact casualties figure. Eight people were killed and 34 others injured in different inci-

dents of violence the previous week in the country

This comes that last year before regime change in the country, hundreds of civilians and people from conflicting sides were killed and injured in violent incidents and clashes. Higher education ministry has postponed women higher education in Afghanistan till further notice. In a statement, The Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE), said: "All public and private universities in the country are informed that based on the cabinet decision No. 28 women higher education is postponed till the next order." It added universities should take immediate step in this regard. The move comes at a time when girls schools above class 6th are already closed nationwide. Government move to ban women higher education sparket strong reaction at home and abroad.

The Organisation of Islamic Countreits (OIC), UN, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, Qatar, UAE and Saudi Arabia have condemned the acting Afghan government decision to postpone women higher education. Australia, Canada, France, Turkey, Germany, Italy,

Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Switzerland, UK, and US foreign ministers in a joint statement condemned the acting Afghan government decision to postpone women higher education and ban girls education above class 6th.

They asked Afghan government to reverse its decision and US warned against consequences and added the move will further complicate the recognition issue of the IEA.

G7 foreign ministers asked the Taliban authorities to reverse the ban on women attending university, saying the move may amount to "a crime against humanity." "Taliban policies designed to erase women from public life will have consequences for how our countries engage with the Taliban," the ministers of the club of rich nations said in a statement, after holding virtual talks.

The head of Al-Azhar University, Sheikh Ahmad Al-Tayeb, has expressed his concern about the ban on women's university education in Afghanistan and asked the Afghan authorities to reconsider their decision. The Ministry of Higher Education announced that higher education for girls in the country had

been suspended until further notice.

According to reports former President Hamid Karzai, former President Ashraf Gani, former Peace Council Head Abdullah Abdullah, Jihad leaders Abdul Rab Rasoul Sayyaf, Hizb-e-Islami Afghanistan Head Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, some cricket stars and some former officials contradicted the Taliban decision to ban women higher education. In reaction to this decision, some university teachers rendered resignation but higher education ministry said no teacher had resigned.

The Afghanistan National Olympic Committee Head Nazar Mohammad Motmain, Economic Affairs Head of the Foreign Minister Shafi Azam, Foreign Ministry Information Technology Head Khairullah Shinwari and some other IEA officials also criticised the move. Political affairs experts in the country last week also demanded the postponement decision to be reversed and said the decision had no religious justification and would have consequences for the country.

In Kabul, Nangarhar and Takhar provinces some students raised objection over the Higher Education Ministry decision to postpone women

higher education. Report showed that a group of women sent a letter to the UN asking for pressure on acting Afghan government to let women access higher education in the country.

But Higher Education Minister Mawlawi Nida Mohammad Nadim during a television talk show said without a Moharram family member grils traveling from one province to another, violation of Hijab, co-education and some higher education disciplines not suitable for women were the main reasons behind immediate postponement of women higher education in the country. He said they have no issue with Afghan women and their right to education, adding that efforts were on a solution in the light of Sharia law would find to address the issue.

After the fall of past government, former President Hamid Karzai travelled to the UAE on December 04 and from there he went to Germany and Turkey. Earlier there were reports that Hamid Karzai was not allowed by the acting government to travel abroad. During Karzai's trip to the UAE, Acting Defence Minister Mullah Mohammad Yaqoub Mujahid and US Special Representative for

Afghanistan Thomas West also travelled to the AE.

In Turkey, Karzai met with Karim Khalili, head of the Wahdat-i-Islami Party, Mohammad Mohaqiq, head of the Wahdat Islami Mardum Afghanistan party head and some other individuals. They discussed currently issues and termed talks the only way to resolve differences among the people of Afghanistan. Karza also met Turkey Foreign Minister Mevlüt Cavusoglu who pledged continued support to peace and stability in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan Embassy in Pakistan said that 2,000 Afghans had been arrested in the past three months in which 500 had been freed. Pakistani officials assured that issues pertaining to the arrested of Afghan citizens would be resolved. According to reports some Afghans had been arrested in Pakistan due to the lack of documents and sent to jail. Reports showed that the Amnesty International had expressed concern over the situation of Afghan migrants in Pakistan and asked the Pakistani government to issue visa regulations to Afghan so they could have access to essential services.

Eight people killed in Afghanista last week



