

3-day physical remand of Swati

KARACHI (NNI): The judicial magistrate in Qambar remanded PTI Senator Azam Swati in police custody for three days. Azam Swati is facing a number of cases after he posted objectionable statements against institutions on the social media site Twitter. Police presented Swati before the judicial magistrate and civil judge and pleaded for physical remand of the PTI leader upon which the judicial magistrate granted three-day physical remand.

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Six Pakistanis killed in Afghan forces firing

RAWALPINDI (NNI): At least six Pakistani civilians were martyred and 17 others sustained injuries in cross-border shelling by Afghan forces near Pak-Afghan Border in Chaman, Balochistan, the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in a statement that on Sunday (11 December 22), Afghan Border Forces opened unprovoked and indiscriminate fire of heavy weapons including artillery/mortar onto the

were martyred in firing from the Afghan side of the border.

The Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in a statement that on Sunday (11 December 22), Afghan Border Forces opened unprovoked and indiscriminate fire of heavy weapons including artillery/mortar onto the

Civilian population in Chaman, Balochistan causing Shahadat of 6 x Civilians with another 17 x individuals being injured. The statement said Pakistani border troops have given a befitting albeit measured response against the uncalled for aggression, but avoided targeting

innocent Civilians in the area. Shells fired by Afghan forces fell near Baghicha Guldar, Border Road and Mall Road. The injured people have been shifted to a nearby hospital for medical treatment. Meanwhile, the police and Rangers have cordoned off the area.

The ISPR further stated that Pakistan has also approached Afghan authorities at Kabul to highlight the severity of the situation and demanded strict action to obviate any such recurrence of the incident in the future. On the other hand, the Chaman district administration has imposed an emergency in all hospitals to treat injured persons.

While Levies Balochistan officials said that the Afghan Taliban made a target of the civilian area of Pakistan in which many innocent people were killed and injured badly. The Levies Balochistan officials said the Afghan Taliban hit the Pakistani residential area with mortar shells.



LAHORE: Governor Punjab Baligh ur Rehman calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

Every crook getting dry-cleaned under NRO-2: IK reacts to Suleman return

LAHORE (NNI): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman and former prime minister Imran Khan on Sunday said that the cabal of crooks was reaping the benefits of NRO-2 as every criminal was getting dry-cleaned. "Senator Azam Khan Swati had been badly tortured, while proclaimed offenders like Suleman Shehbaz was brought back through NRO-2," said Imran.

"An absconder responsible for billions in corruption and money laundering, Salman Shahbaz, is drycleaned and returns to Pakistan," he said. Khan posted on Twitter, saying, "If anyone wants to understand why Pakistan's economy is on the verge of collapsing, only two events are enough: Senator Swati was arrested and beaten in custody, and even in front of his grandchildren, a part of his house was torn away and locks were installed there forcibly."

He continued by saying that because Mr. Swati was the subject of multiple cases based on which he was being moved from one state to another, even human rights were disregarded in his situation.

"75-year-old Senator Azam Swati has been subjected to custodial torture, beaten up in front of his grandchildren, his house vandalised and sealed, and he is being dragged from one [province] to another under multiple false FIRs against him in total violation of all laws and basic human rights enshrined in our Constitution," he noted. Taking a jibe at PDM led government and allies, Khan said "Suleman Shehbaz, a proclaimed offender who was involved in money laundering cases was brought back to Pakistan by NRO-2."

He said that Pakistan was rising economically when the regime-

PTI calls parliamentary parties' meeting before Senate session today

ISLAMABAD (NNI): The coalition parties of the opposition led by Pakistan Tehreek Insaf (PTI) of Imran Khan in the Senate called for a meeting of the joint parliamentary party before the senate session on Monday. The meeting of the opposition's parliamentary parties will be held tomorrow afternoon at 1 o'clock in the Parliament House.

The sources said that Leader of the Opposition Dr Shahzad Waseem in the Senate will preside over the parliamentary parties meeting.

The sources said that in the meet-

ing, the strategy of the opposition regarding the Senate session will be formulated. President Dr Arif Alvi has called the Senate session at 3 o'clock on Monday.

It is also worth mentioning here that the PTI's senator Azam Swati has been arrested and granted physical remand by the Sindh police after his release from Balochistan police station. And, there are chances that the PTI with its coalition parties in the Senate made a strategy of highlighting the issue of the arrest of Senator Azam Swati in the Senate session on Monday.

PM Shehbaz Sharif, Punjab Governor discuss political situation

LAHORE (NNI): Governor of Punjab Muhammad Baligh Ur Rehman called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday.

During the meeting, they discussed the overall political and economic situation in the country.

Earlier, Punjab Governor

Muhammad Baligh ur Rehman also held a meeting with Finance Minister Muhammad Ishaq Dar in Lahore. During the meeting, current political and economic situation of the country came under discussion.

Ishaq Dar regretted that coalition government inherited a record deficit

and huge debt of previous government which led to economic crisis. He said that PML-N government is committed to put the country on the path of development.

Muhammad Baligh ur Rehman said that there will be economic stability in the country soon.

'Political terrorist' Imran symbol of country's degradation: Marriyum

RAWALPINDI (APP): Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb, while terming PTI chairman Imran Khan 'a political terrorist' said he was a symbol of the country's degradation.

Addressing the Muslim League-Nawaz workers' convention here, the minister said all the allegations levelled by the 'Toshakhana thief' against the PML-N leadership proved wrong.

She said it was ironic that a person, who did not start a single development project when in power, was blaming those who brought investments worth billions of rupees to the country. The minister said the Daily Mail's apology to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif was actually an apology to the 220 million people of Pakistan. Imran Khan, in animosity of Shehbaz Sharif, used David Rose to publish a baseless news story against the PM, she added.

She said that in 2016 when Nawaz Sharif was holding office, Pakistan's GDP growth rate was 6.2 percent whereas inflation was only 2.3 percent. During Nawaz's era, she added, the IMF programme was rolled back, CPEC projects were started, employment opportunities were provided to the youth, and 14,000 megawatts of electricity were added to the national grid. The minister said at that time, a

conspirator, incompetent, inefficient and 'Toshkhana thief' was waiting for the finger of the umpire and holding sit-ins. She said Nawaz Sharif made the country a nuclear power but Imran Khan ruined the development process. Marriyum said Nawaz Sharif, in his tenure, eradicated the scourge of terrorism, but when Imran Khan came to power, terrorism rose its head again.

She said 'the Toshakhana thief' alleged that the PML-N leadership was involved in money laundering, but he could not give any evidence in the courts of Pakistan and the United Kingdom. On the contrary, he himself was caught doing money laundering. Marriyum Aurangzeb asked when will Imran Khan give an account of his theft?

Imran Khan made the country's treasury a 'retail shop' during his time, whereas Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif was striving for the betterment of the people.

She congratulated Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah, and Federal Minister Ahsan Iqbal for emerging victorious in the court cases.

She said Hanif Abbasi was sentenced to 25-years imprisonment in Imran's tenure but he stood firm and even now standing firm like a lion.

Imran took false oaths and put a hero in case on Rana Sanaullah, who stood strong like a rock and still standing like a lion with Nawaz Sharif.

She said Imran embezzled the BRT money and abused the Chief Election Commissioner when it decided the case against him on merit. He used to offer an extension to the army chief in closed rooms but campaigned against the martyrs outside. Imran Khan, she said, appointed an incompetent and inefficient person as the chief minister of Punjab who damaged the province.

Taking a jibe at the PTI chairman, she said, after 4 years in power, Imran claimed that he had no power, whereas he had Farah Gogi and Pinki with him. She said Imran Khan even sold a gifted watch carrying the image of the Holy Kaaba.

She said, in Imran Khan's era, Nawaz Sharif used to come to courts along with his daughter and presented documents from the past 40 years in accountability courts to clear his name. She said when Imran Khan was asked to answer for his wrongdoings, he got worried and appeared in public on the wheelchair. During the address, the slogans in favour of the PML-N leadership were raised by the party workers, who came in large numbers to attend the rally.

Govt established a model of sustainable development in the province: CM KP

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mahmood Khan has said that the incumbent provincial government has established a model of sustainable development in the province to make it financially self-sustainable and enable it to contribute to the national exchequer.

In a statement issued here from the Chief Minister's Secretariat, Mahmood Khan stated that Pakistan Tehrik e Insaf believes in the empowerment of institutions instead of depending on personalities adding that institutional empowerment is the only way to ensure sustainable development and the establishment of a welfare state. Owing to the long term planning, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province has been set on the track of development which will make the province a role model for national development.

The Chief Minister reiterated that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has worked tirelessly for promotion of tourism as an industry which has made the province a tourist destination not only at national but also at international level. In order to exploit the natural resources available

in the province, various initiatives have been undertaken in which the wheeling model deserves special attention. Provision of cheap electricity has made Khyber Pakhtunkhwa an attractive spot for national and international investors seeking establishment of small and large industrial units.

The Chief Minister maintained that despite various constraints and challenges, the provincial government has successfully completed the integration of erstwhile FATA into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province which was a daunting task. He added that a number of initiatives have been undertaken in newly merged districts under a well-planned strategy with the sole purpose of addressing their longstanding deprivations.

He clarified that the incumbent government has also invested significantly on preservation of our moral, cultural and Islamic values adding that these initiatives will strengthen our national identity among the international community. The introduction of Islamic teaching by translation of the Holy Quran in schools and provision of honorarium to Aima Masajid and religious leaders of minorities, deserve special mention-

ing here which has ensured their financial independence.

Touching upon the initiatives taken in education and health sectors, the Chief Minister said that deficiencies of staff and other resources in government schools and hospitals has been addressed due to which services delivery has improved significantly. Some initiatives in these sectors include recruitment of new doctors and paramedical staff, extension of Sehat card scheme, revamping and upgrading health care facilities across the province, establishment of new medical colleges, recruitment of thousands of new teachers, launching second shift in selected schools, launching education card, provision of scholarships to students, establishment and upgradation of schools and colleges, establishment of Pak-Austria Fachhochschule institute of Applied Sciences, establishment of Shangla University and many more.

The Chief Minister concluded that we can never succeed as a nation without ensuring uniform development of every segment of society. He made it clear that Pakistan Tehrik e Insaf is working sincerely towards the establishment of an Islamic welfare state as per the expectations of the general public.

OIC Secretary-General lays wreath at J&K Monument in Muzaffarabad

MUZAFFARABAD

(INP): The Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Hissein Ibrahim Taha, today, laid a wreath at the Jammu and Kashmir Monument in Muzaffarabad, built in memory of the Kashmiri martyrs and their struggle.

The OIC chief, who was on a visit to Azad Jammu and Kashmir along with his delegation, paid his respects and offered Fateha for the martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the Kashmir cause. This is the first country visit of the OIC Secretary-General, Hissein Ibrahim Taha, since assuming office in November 2021.

The Muslim world body always raised voice against the Indian atrocities in IIOJK and supported the right to self-determination of Kashmiris as per UN resolutions.

In the 48th session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) held in Islamabad in March this year, the Muslim world body had adopted a joint action plan on Kashmir issue. Under the plan, the OIC countries agreed to raise the Kashmir dispute in their bilateral engage-

ments with India and underscore respect for the fundamental human rights of the Kashmiri people, as well as lend support to monitor human rights violations in the IIOJK. On May 16, 2022, the OIC Secretariat expressed deep concern over India's attempts to redraw the electoral boundaries of the IIOJK altering the demographic structure of the territory and violating the rights of the Kashmiri people.

OIC SG assures to submit comprehensive assessment report on Kashmir to member countries: The Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC), Hissein Ibrahim Taha, has said that Kashmir is on the top priority of the OIC's agenda and he will submit a comprehensive assessment report on the human rights situation in Kashmir to member countries.

According to Kashmir Media Service, Hissein Ibrahim Tahamade stated this during a joint press conference with Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) President Barrister Sultan Mehmood Chaudhry here in Muzaffarabad, today, at the Presidency after meeting with the AJK President and Prime Minister and a brief visit to the Line of Control (LoC) and refugee camps.

He said that he was visiting AJK under the resolutions passed by the OIC Contact Group on Kashmir to assess the situation and will submit a comprehensive report to the group and Foreign Ministers' Council of the member countries and would like to seek permission from India to visit the other side of the LoC.

He said that the second purpose of his visit was to express solidarity with the people of Kashmir who had been suffering for long time and assured them that OIC, being a Muslim community, was making constant efforts to find a solution to their issue in consultation with the world community. He said during his day-long visit to AJK, he met with people affected by Indian firing across LoC and refugees migrated from the Indian side of Kashmir due to atrocities to assess their problems and sufferings as to make part of his assessment report.

Imran implanted through proper plan: Khawaja

SIALKOT (NNI): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) stalwart and Defence Minister Khawaja Asif Sunday said that former prime minister Imran Khan did not come into power suddenly, adding that he was implanted by a proper plan.

While addressing the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) workers' convention in Sialkot, the minister said that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan has ruined the economy of the country. He said the PML-N government is striving to bring the economy back to track. "We will put the country back on the way leading to flourishing," he added.

The minister said that the PTI's campaign against PML-N was nothing more than a plot to defame them. He mentioned that the British publication "Daily Mail" apologized to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif over its fake news story against the premier.

Asif recalled that when Imran Khan was at the helm, his wife had to make rounds to the courts. He said, "Imran Khan was merely pursuing his personal vendetta against PML-N." The minister said that a fake case was lodged against Rana Sanaullah and he faced the hardships of detention but finally he was declared innocent.

No one can deny importance of media: Tesori

KARACHI (PPI): Sindh Governor Kamran Khan Tesori has said that no one can deny the importance of media, as it is the eyes and ears of the society.

The media draws attention towards correcting the problems by identifying them, he expressed these views while speaking at a reception hosted at the Governor's House in honor of the Bureau Chiefs of Electronic Media. Administrator Karachi Dr Syed Saifur Rehman was also present on this occasion. In the meeting, the overall political situation, construction and development measures in the Sindh province, health and sanitation situation in Karachi and expectations from the new administrator were discussed.

The meeting also discussed relations between the federal and Sindh governments, the responsibilities of the governor as the representative of the federation, and the role of the media in spreading awareness among the people.

The Governor Sindh said that Karachi belongs to all of us and we have to take steps together for its improvement. He said that Alladin Park would soon provide recreational facilities to the citizens with new name as Jinnah Park.

The Governor Sindh said that orders had been issued to the Additional IGP to control street crimes. Bureau Chiefs of Electronic Media welcomed the views of Sindh Governor and assured him of full cooperation.

11,000 candidates appear in KU entrance test

KARACHI (APP): Over 11,000 candidates participated in the entrance test conducted for the admission to University of Karachi for the year 2023.

The test was organized for admission in Doctor of Pharmacy, Doctor of Physical Therapy, BE, BS and BEd (Hons) program.

Students and their parents were transported from the entrance gates to the examination centers through points buses.

As many as 28 examination centers have been established in various departments of the University of Karachi for the entrance test.

Vice-Chancellor Prof. Dr. Khalid Mahmood-Iraqi visited various examination centers and expressed satisfaction over the arrangements. Help desks have been set up at various spots in the university to guide the candidates and their parents appearing for the entrance test. Watch and Ward staff posted around entrances and faculties.

Dengue virus cases decrease

LAHORE (APP): With the change of weather, the number of dengue virus cases has decreased and 11 new cases were reported in Punjab on Sunday.

According to the Health Department, a total of 18,916 dengue virus cases were reported during the current year, while 49 people had died of the virus so far. As many as 137 patients are under treatment in different hospitals of the province, according to the data shared by the Punjab Primary and Secondary Healthcare Department, here on Sunday.

NA Speaker for all political parties to get united for resolution of national issues

LAHORE (APP): Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervaiz Ashraf on Sunday urged all political parties to get united at a platform to resolve the issues being faced by the country.

Talking to media after having breakfast at the residence of Pakistan Peoples Party Central Punjab General Secretary Syed Hassan Murtaza here, he said that unity was the only way to move the country ahead. He said that only parliament could provide solution to the problems of nation, adding that uncertainty developed in case of neglecting the parliament, so all members should come into the parliament to represent their constituencies.

He said the incumbent government should complete its constitutional tenure like the previous governments did.

He said it was responsibility of all political parties to be united to tackle the challenges being faced by the country and the parliament was the only forum where solutions to the issues of the country could be discussed and finalized.

"All parties should play their role to support the economy," he said. The

Speaker said that like legislation, the implementation of laws was also responsibility of the parties.

To a question, he said that stability was also important in the national politics. He said there were some rules and regulations for accepting the resignations in the assembly as the law said a resignation should not be accepted if it was presented in pressure.

Raja Pervaiz Ashraf said that Imran Khan should participate in the legislation, if he wanted transparent elections in the country. He said the opposition was equally important for the country, adding that assemblies should complete their constitutional tenure.

On the occasion, Hassan Murtaza said that everyone was discussing the stories of corruption by the PTI during its four-year tenure. "Crops of farmers have been destroyed on the name of new city near Lahore," he said. Imran Khan wanted presidential system in the country instead of the parliamentary system, he added.

He said the PTI set records in corruption during its four years of rule.

KMC to build new Council Hall with 500 seats

KARACHI (PPI): Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) has decided to build a new council hall with 500 seating capacity for the members in Karachi and four different places have been chosen to build it.

The Engineering Department has been directed to immediately survey these sites and submit the final report and prepare the beautiful design of the council hall along with detailed maps so that the construction can be started immediately.

This was decided in a meeting chaired by Administrator Karachi Dr. Syed Saifur Rahman with the officers in his office on Sunday. Municipal Commissioner Syed Shujaat Hussain and other relevant officers were also present on this occasion.

The Administrator Karachi said that the new council hall with 500 seats along with offices of mayor, deputy mayor, municipal commissioner, chairman of various committees, media and council will be built.

Media gallery, cafeteria, parking area, modern sound system, internet, direct coverage facilities for TV channels from council hall will also be provided. The council hall will be centrally air-conditioned. The sites selected for the council hall include the Aladin Park, the site behind the Safari Park, the USSR Academy on the Super Highway and a site at Clifton.

Dr Saifur Rehman said that the council hall located in the KMC building current-

ly has a seating capacity of 310 members, but as a result of the municipal elections, the council that will come into existence will have 367 members, which in any case cannot sit in the council hall.

He said that due to its location in the Old City, the council members face difficulties in reaching the KMC building and there is a traffic jam around it. While the vehicles of the council members and officers are parked in the building. There is also less space, in previous meetings many members could not reach the meeting due to traffic jam.

He said that in view of the future needs of the KMC, the new council hall will also have the capacity to add more seats. The Administrator Karachi said that funds will be allocated for the construction of a new council hall in the budget of the next financial year and the government of Sindh will also be requested to provide special funds in this regard.

He said that no walls of any kind shall be erected around the building and the citizens will also be able to use the cafeterias. He directed the engineering department to prepare the design of the building worthy of the council hall which is not only attractive but also a symbol of Karachi.

Dr Saifur Rehman said that he will also take the Governor Sindh and the Chief Minister of Sindh into confidence in this regard so that better decisions can be taken with their consultation.

Book Fair being considered identity of Karachi

KARACHI (NNI): Senior politician Dr Farooq Sattar said that he saluted the organizers of the book fair from the bottom of his heart that they have been organizing the book fair for 17 years.

While talking to journalists during the visit to the ongoing five-day 17th Karachi International Book Fair at Karachi Expo Center, Sattar said things have become the hallmark of Karachi, this book fair is also being considered identity of Karachi.

Dr Farooq Sattar said that the trend of studying among female students had increased so much and they are studying in such a large number that even the general universities looked like of it as a girls' university. President Korangi Association of Trade and Industry (KATI) Farazur Rahman said that due to the increase in the value of the US dollar, the prices of the paper have increased and this issue will be raised on any platform. "Book fairs should be held 3 to 4 times a year," he added.

President Korangi Association of Trade and Industry (KATI) Farazur Rahman said that in this modern era where it was considered that the trend of books has decreased, but coming to the book fair, it

did not seem that books have become less important. He further said that it was true that books had the biggest role in our values and civilization. Even if a man goes to the moon, the importance of books is remained the same.

He also congratulated the Publishers and Booksellers Association for organizing a successful book fair. Farazur Rahman further said that three to four such book fairs must be organized every year for book lovers.

In response to a question, President KATI said that the publisher played the role of a bridge between the writer and the readers. In this way, the business community is proving to be helpful in spreading knowledge. "A nation that turns away from the Book is destroyed. After coming here, I am surprised that children, elders, women, people of all ages are showing interest in books," he added.

In response to a question, Farazur Rahman said that due to the increase in the value of the dollar, the effects of inflation have affected all sectors and commodities, similarly, books have also become expensive and are becoming out of the reach of the common man.



LAHORE: Finance Minister Ishaq Dar is meeting with Economists based in Lahore.

Govt committed to save heritage in next rehabilitation plan: CM

KARACHI (APP): Chief Minister Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah Saturday said that we are the inheritors of the Indus Valley Civilisation but now we are doomed due to severe patterns of climate change, which should be studied by researchers and scholars for further guidelines on policymaking and addressing the climate change and its adverse effects.

This he said while speaking at a Conference 'New Challenges to Sindh Heritage & Sculpture & Paintings Exhibition on Centenary Excavations' of Mohenjodaro Excavations' convened by Culture dept here at Arts Council.

Shah appreciated Minister Culture & education, Syed Sardar Shah, to have taken this initiative, and has begun the discussion on this very important matter of 'Challenges of Climate Change to the Cultural Heritage'. He said that the recent calamity has affected us greatly and his government has tried its level best to rise to the crises. "It is a fact that our monuments and ancient properties suffered a great deal and I have personally been to a few such places and have observed the effects on the World Heritage Mohenjodaro," he said and added it was sufficient to convince anyone of the importance of measures to be taken to minimize the impact of climate-related afflictions.

"When United Nations Secretary-General visited Pakistan in the first week of September 2022 and especially went to Mohenjodaro to personally witness and assess the damages to this one of two UNESCO-declared World Heritage Sites in Sindh, I led the team on behalf of the Sindh Government and briefed him in detail over severe damages to hundreds of our heritage sites in the province and requested him for saving and securing at least World

Heritage sites," the CM disclosed and went on saying that he had assured him his full support at that time.

The CM said that the recent years have been very fruitful as the Earth Summits, and conferences on Climate issues have inched forward to reach some level of consensus.

He said that the recent Sharm el-Sheikh Climate Change Conference (COP 27) also achieved some level of success, and Pakistan actively participated in it.

"Our case with a call for climate justice was passionately advocated by Chairman PPP and Foreign Minister in Egypt, as a result, the world now has agreed to create The Loss and Damage Fund, whereby developing countries like us would be financially incentivized rather than compensated – as they take the burden of carbon emissions of the developed world, which are the key reasons for changed and severed patterns of the climate change," Murad Shah said.

He said that now UNESCO teams with experts have visited the Mohenjodaro and closely working with Culture and Antiquities Dept over a detailed and long-term plan for the conservation and promotion of Mohenjodaro on its 100th anniversary of excavations.

The CM said that the Endowment Fund Trust (ETF) has started work on Ranikot to restore its walls damaged by rain and flood. "A French team has surveyed Sehwan city and Fort this month and an International conference is to be held on Sehwan, (Alexander) in February 2023 where 10 eminent Scholars are likely to participate," he disclosed and said this would help create an understanding of the cause.

The chief minister proposed to set up a monitoring committee to study, document, and initiate restoration

works and be a watchdog to control and anticipate damage control. He added that the Committee would be an independent body with academics, stakeholders, and Eminent experts.

The planning & Development Board shall be advised to include the requirement of the Archaeological Impact Assessment while processing the Public Sector Development Projects, Mr Shah said. He agreed with the recommendation that the standard site stabilizing measures to be observed as a calendar requirement for the Culture dept because emergencies may occur at any moment. Shah assured that his government would support to replenish of the losses and take preventive measures at all sites, to avoid the damages becoming a reality.

Murad Ali Shah disclosed that in January 2023, the Sindh Government was going to the Davos, Switzerland at World Economic Forum with a Case Study of Sindh which was the worst hit in the aftermath of devastating rains and floods earlier this year. "Its decades and centuries-old heritage sites are also the worst hit, and we with our limited resources are trying to protect and preserve them," he said and added that his government was fully committed to raising and integrating the domain of saving the heritage in any next rehabilitation plan with the support and guidance of UNESCO and other leading heritage bodies and experts.

Those who spoke on the occasion include Minister Culture Syed Sardar Shah, Archeologist Dr Kareem Lashari, Italian Archeologist Dr Valeria Piacenti and others.

Earlier, the CM inaugurated the Sculpture & Paintings Exhibition on Centenary Celebrations of Mohenjodaro Excavations. He visited the exhibition where he was briefed about the pairings and sculpture.

PBF for multi-pronged approach to overcome climate challenges

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Businesses Forum (PBF) has called for adopting a multi-pronged approach to overcome the challenges posed by climatic changes and global warming.

Pakistan has suffered climate-induced damages up to US \$14.9 billion, therefore effective and viable strategy is inevitable to cope with the challenges due to global warming.

PBF Additional Secretary General for the Case Studies And Research Unit, Dr Urwa Elahi expressed these views while talking to APP here Sunday. Dr Urwa Elahi added that a recent Post-Disaster Needs Assessment

(PDNA) of the 2022 floods estimated total damage in excess of US\$ 14.9 billion and total economic losses of around US \$15.2 billion, a near knock-out blow to economic growth.

She mentioned that according to a World Bank Report titled 'Country Climate Development', issued last month, "The estimated financial needs for post-floods rehabilitation and reconstruction amount to at least US\$ 16.3 billion. And this does not include the much-needed new investments required to support Pakistan's adaptation to climate change and build resilience to protect

the country from future climate shocks." As a direct consequence of the floods, she added, the national poverty rate was projected to increase by 3.7 to 4 percent, pushing an additional 8.4 to 9.1 million people into poverty. Dr. Urwa Elahi said that climate change had placed Pakistan at a cross-road; the country faced the challenge of encompassing the third biggest ice mass in the world and simultaneously, confronting temperatures that were surging sharply as a result of global warming.

The PBF Additional Secretary General noted that around 30 million people had been affected in Pakistan and the potential damage was consistently on the rise. "It is a sight of misery to see people, livestock and infrastructure drowned under 10 or more feet of water.

Havoc has been wrought by collapsing bridges, falling roofs and walls that cave-in because it is not able to withstand the influx and magnitude of the gushing water that carries in it all forms of materials from stones, woods to heavy metals," she expounded.



KARACHI: Families are busy in buying books of their interests from stalls in 17th Karachi International Book Fair organized by Pakistan publishers and booksellers association at Expo center.

Rs 12,422,643 fine impose, 3,069 FIRs registered

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Administration had imposed Rs 12,422,643 fine and registered as many as 3,069 FIRs on violations of anti-dengue SOPs from January 1 to date in various areas of the Rawalpindi district. This was stated by the District Coordinator of Epidemics Prevention and Control, Dr. Sajjad Mehmood, here Sunday.

Giving details of the punitive actions, the health officer told APP that the district administration, in collaboration with allied departments, had sealed 697 premises, issued Challans to 7,940, notices to 16,683 on violations of dengue SOPs this year.

Court Notice

In the Court of Qaisar Khan Afridi Additional District Judge II/Azafi Zila Qazi Buner at Daggar. Appeal No.14/13. Institution 125/12/2020/14/9/2021. Date of hearing. 19/12/2022. Mutabar Khan etc VS Hidayat Khan etc. Notice to no.2/4/2. Hamedullah son of Raza Khan resident of Daggar tehsel Daggar district Buner. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendant can not be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendant will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8.30 am dated 19/12/2022 the proceeding will be taken ex- parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

RASM-E-QUL

Quran khawani for Aisal e Sawab of late **Raja Mukhtar Hamid** son of **Raja Kamran Hamid** of Shakarparian, Islamabad will be held after Asar prayers (4:00 PM) on **Tuesday, 13 December 2022 at Farm No 5, Scheme 4, Orchard Road, off Murree Road (near Faizabad) Islamabad.**

All are requested to join in for the Dua. Please also inform all other family members & friends accordingly.

Contact:
Raja Kaiwan Hamid Cell: 0332 5141917

اشعار نیلام

بہارِ محترمہ جبرین نورین عیاضہ ڈسٹرکٹ اینڈ سیشن جج ایچ بی بیگنگ کورٹ نمبر 1-خیبر پختونخوا پشاور
فیڈرل جج ایچ بی بیگنگ کورٹ نمبر 7-جیات آباد پشاور
ZTBL مردان پراجیکٹ ڈیگر پشاور

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PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mahmood Khan chairing a meeting regarding development projects in different sectors.

CPEC to take trade cooperation to optimal level: SCCI

PESHAWAR (APP): President Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) Muhammad Ishaq has said that CPEC is an important agreement between Pakistan and China that would take trade and cooperation to the optimal level.

Similarly, it will help the population of China and Pakistan to upgrade their lives by taking advantage of the project.

He expressed these views during his visit to China Window, a Chinese cultural and information center established in Peshawar. He visited various galleries of the center and expressed deep interest especially in the gallery related to CPEC.

Muhammad Ishaq signed the friendship wall and also recorded his comments in the guest book. Speaking to the media, the President Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry said that the businessmen of the province have seen very difficult times, but if the provincial and federal governments provide facilities, the business community of Peshawar and KP will continue to play a positive role in the development of the country.

Muhammad Ishaq said that the CPEC project will start a new era of development and prosperity in the country, but Chinese investors have to prioritize investments in Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa and Peshawar. He said that Peshawar is the gateway of Central Asia. He believes that Rashakai Economic Zone will not only provide employment to the local people but Pakistan will also get valuable foreign exchange from exports.

Muhammad Ishaq expected that a delegation of businessmen from Peshawar would soon meet Chinese Ambassador Nong Rong and invite him to visit the Chamber of Commerce and Industry. He also expressed his belief that the China Window will play a positive and constructive role in strengthening people to people contact between two brotherly countries.

Agriculture officers trained on Drip Irrigation System

PESHAWAR (APP): On Farm Water Management Wing of Agriculture Department, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in collaboration with World Bank organized a three-day training workshop on Design Installation & Operation of Drip Irrigation System for district directors and officers of the department, said an official handout issued here on Sunday.

The training workshop organized under KP Irrigated Agriculture Improvement Project at Agricultural University

Peshawar was participated by 30 directors and officers from across the province.

Director Mohammad Sarwar of the Water Resource Management Department, Agricultural University gave a detailed lecture to the participants on Drip Irrigation System and highlighted its practical and theoretical aspects.

The participants were also briefed in detail on the CROPWAT software of FAO.

Addressing the participants of the workshop, the Director General (DG) On

Farm Water Management, Javed Iqbal Khattak stressed for the adoption of the Drip Irrigation System and termed its only solution to get rid of food insecurity, triggered by the growing population and scarcity of water.

He was hopeful that the participants will utilize the training in their fieldwork and will prove beneficial for agricultural development.

In the end, the chief guest distributed certificates among the participants of the training workshop.

Police arrests accused of triple murder cases

PESHAWAR (APP): The police have arrested a proclaimed offender (PO), who was allegedly wanted in a triple murder case in the Jandrai area of Upper Dir and recovered a weapon from his possession here on Sunday.

On the directives of Regional Police Officer (RPO) Malakand, Sajjad Khan, the police have arrested an accused namely Samtar in a triple murder case, said a press release issued here.

In this connection,

under the supervision of District Police Officer Dir Bala Tariq Sohail Marwat, SDPO Kohistan and SHO Thal Police Station took action to arrest the accused killer Samtar son of Mali Khan resident of Jandrai Dir Upper, in the alleged honour killing.

It is to mention here that the police have received a tip about the murder of three people killed for honour at village Jandrai, wherein the police took timely action, resultingly,

it was found by police that the accused had killed Aurangzeb son of Jamshed, resident of Jandrai, Mrs Naseeb Baigum wife of Samtar and daughter of Muhammad Jamil and Zubeida Bibi, daughter of Muhammad Jameel, resident of Jandrai allegedly in the name of honour.

The RPO appreciated the timely action by the concerned police officers and officials for the speedy arrest of the accused in the case.

Man commits suicide over unknown reason

PESHAWAR (APP): A man committed suicide in Shalobar Qambar Khel area of tehsil Bara, district Khyber, police said on Sunday.

A man identified as Sartaj was present in his house and fired him from a pistol over unknown reasons. He sustained critical wounds however succumbed to his injuries.

It said that the deceased was drug addicted and discharged from a drug rehabilitation center a week ago. Case has been registered and further investigation is underway.

Grenade attack on Javed's house

PESHAWAR (INP): Unidentified men have hurled a hand grenade on former provincial minister Haji Javed's house in Peshawar.

Police told the media that a grenade was hurled by unidentified men on the rooftop of former minister Haji Javed's house in the Gulbahar. Assailants managed to flee from the scene.

Fortunately, the grenade did not blow on the rooftop. The Bomb Disposal Squad (BDS) was summoned to the scene whose personnel defused the grenade.

Police said a search operation was started in the area to arrest the culprits.

Police foil timber smuggling bid

PESHAWAR (APP): police here on Sunday foiled a bid of timber smuggling and recovered 53 sleepers of expensive wood from a truck and handed over to KP Forest Department.

District Police Officer Shafiullah Gandapur in a statement said that KP Forest Department has imposed a fine of Rs1,226,400 and taken the smuggled wood into custody. Police recovered 53 sleepers from a truck during checking at Kabal checkpoint.

The wood sleepers were concealed in secret cavities underneath body of the truck and driver compartment. Case has been registered against smugglers identified as Rehman Hussain, Zakir and Saifur Rehman and further investigation was underway.

Imran Khan destroyed economy, social values, says Amir Muqam

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Adviser to the Prime Minister for Political and Public Affairs and National Heritage, Engr Amir Muqam here Sunday said that Daily Mail has tendered apology to the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif over its false allegations of corruption against him and declared it victory of truth.

Addressing PMLN workers convention at Sher Garh here, Amir Muqam that the ugly faces of all those elements, who filed fake cases against PMNL leaders were exposed before masses after Daily Mail's apology and acquittal of Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah in a false narcotics case.

He said that even courts and investigations agencies in the foreign countries have endorsed that all members of Sharif Family including Nawaz Sharif were "Sadiq and Ameen." Despite two years long investigations, he said that UK National Crimes Agency did not prove a single penny of corruption against any member of the Sharif family.

He said that Imran Khan was a certified lair as his corrupt practices and lies based politics were exposed in



Tosha Khana and PTI foreign funding cases by the Election Commission of Pakistan.

He said Imran Khan had tried to drag state institutions into politics by levelling baseless allegations against its leadership after his alleged loot and plunder were exposed before public.

He said Imran Khan has deceived masses especially youth through hal-low catchy slogans, adding instead to take resignation from the Prime Minister during his flopped long-march, the PTI Chairman announced to dissolve KP and Punjab assemblies where his party was in power.

He said Imran's announcement of assemblies dissolution were also proved a lie.

He gave credit to CM Punjab for

foil the ill designs of Imran Khan.

Amir Muqam questioned that if a three times Prime Minister can be disqualified for not taking salary from his son under Articles 62 and 63 then why not Imran who was found guilty of corrupt practices in Tosha Khana case can be disqualified under the same articles.

He said billion trees project was taken over by the NAB that was big question mark on its transparency.

He said contest of by election from different constituencies by Imran signified that he has no trust in the party workers and feared that Imran may likely to write his name on the reserved women and minorities seats in next general election.

Muqam said Imran Khan had made tall claims to file cases against Financial Times but this slogan was also proved as a lie.

Muqam said that former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had faced all problems with bravery and under his leadership all the problems of Pakistan would be addressed.

He said Nawaz Sharif made Pakistan an atomic power, established network of motorways, added 12000MW electricity to the national grid and restored dignity and prestige of the country abroad.

WAPDA issues water position in rivers and dams

PESHAWAR (APP): Water & Power Development Authority (WAPDA) issued the position of river inflows and outflows at Tarbela, Mangla and Chashma along with the reservoirs levels and the barrages on Sunday Morning.

According to a spokesperson of the authority inflows and outflows in the Indus River at Tarbela were 20800 cusecs and 42000 cusecs while in Kabul River at Nowshera, the inflows and outflows was 8500 cusecs and 8500 cusecs while at Khairabad Bridge, inflows and outflows in Kabul River was 16800 cusecs and 16800 cusecs respectively.

Similarly, inflows and outflows in Jhelum River at Mangla was 8500 cusecs and 22000 cusecs while inflows and outflows in Chenab at Marala was 5100 cusec and 2000 cusecs.

In Jinnah Barrage inflows and outflows was 52200 cusecs and 47200 cusecs, Chashma (inflows 55200 cusecs and outflows 47000 cusecs), Taunsa (inflows 45400 cusecs and outflows 40700 cusecs), Guddu (inflows 39500 cusecs and outflows 33500 cusecs), Sukkur (inflows 31700 cusecs and outflows 13800 cusecs), Kotri (inflows 16600 cusecs and outflows 5400 cusecs), Trimmu (inflows 5800

cusecs and outflow Nil cusecs) while inflows and outflows in Panjnad 4400 cusecs and Nil cusecs.

Meanwhile, Tarbela Dam was operating at 1498.45 feet against the maximum conservation level of 1550 feet and minimum operating level 1398 feet, Live storage was 3.121 million acre feet (MAF).

Mangla: Minimum operating level 1050 feet, present level 1127.50 feet, maximum conservation level 1242 feet, live storage today 0.997 MAF.

Chashma: Minimum operating level 638.15 feet, present level 641.40 feet, maximum conservation level 649 feet, live storage today 0.047 MAF.

The inflows and outflows of River Indus at Tarbela, Jinnah and Chashma, River Kabul at Nowshera and River Jhelum at Mangla have been reflected as mean flows of 24 hours, whereas the other flows have been gauged at 6.00 a.m.

Panel discussion held on Indus River

PESHAWAR (APP): A Panel discussion on "Indus River: A Confluence of Economy and Culture" was organized by CCRD, COMSATS University, in collaboration with FNF, Pakistan at the Library Auditorium, COMSATS.

Opening remarks were given by Dean Faculty of Sciences Dr Sajid Qamar, while Chairman Federal Flood Commission, Ministry of Water Resources Ahmed Kamal graced the occasion with his presence.

During his welcoming remarks, Ahmed Kamal stressed the collaboration between the government and educational institutions for joint ventures in addressing the problems of Pakistan.

He further informed about the contribution of the government of Pakistan in achieving sustainability.

His talk was followed by a very brief expedition movie entitled "Director Cut Screening on River Indus" by Wajahat Malik.

The expedition movie depicted the present condition of the Indus River from the Himalayas up to the Arabian sea and socio-economic problems.

The panel comprised of Film Maker and Explorer Wajahat Malik, Hydrology and Water Resource Expert Dr Hassan Abbas, PCRWR Secretary Dr Hifza Rasheed.

The panelists discussed the issues that arise as River Indus passes through different cities in Pakistan.

The problems highlighted included the deteriorating water quality of the river and the decrease in river flow due to dams.



PESHAWAR: Delegation of Kohat Chamber of Commerce and Industry meeting Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mahmood Khan Haji Ghulam Ali.

Poverty eradication: A major challenge for socio-economic development, crimes free society

PESHAWAR (APP): Inspite of an enormous natural resources and climate diversity, Pakistan having a population of over 220 million with a stagnant 1.9pc annual growth rate, was confronted to the monster challenges of rising poverty and inflation due to recent devastated floods and COVID-19 pandemic.

The August-September 2022 record-breaking floods and COVID-19 had severely jolted the country's economy, social, educational, health, communication, energy, irrigation and agriculture sectors, resulting an upward increase in the national poverty rate, price-hike and inflation affecting common man.

Muhammad Naeem, Assistant Professor Economics Department, University of Swabi while citing a report of the World Bank said that about six to nine million Pakistanis were likely to be dragged into poverty as a result of recent monsoon flooding that killed around 1,700 people including women and children,

destroyed over two million houses and displaced eight million people besides inflicting around USD 40billion economic losses and put a third of the nation underwater.

He said the poverty rate was expected to rise between 2.5 and four percentage points as a direct consequence of floods, which caused loss of jobs, livestock, agriculture's harvests, houses, spread of waterborne diseases and increase in food costs in the country where inflation was likely to stand at 23pc during financial year 2023.

He said about 20pc people were reportedly living below the poverty line in the country mostly in the underdeveloped districts including merged areas.

In the prevailing shabby economic situation, he said "we need to make a cut on an unnecessary expenditures, development budget and import bill on luxury goods to tackle poverty, price hike and inflation."

Dr Naeem said focus should be made to promote

technical and vocational education in those districts where poverty ratio was high especially in the merged tribal districts.

Former Provincial Minister, Wajid Ali Khan said that poverty leads to criminal activities such as robbery, theft, kidnapping for ransom and murder. Besides malnutrition and illiteracy, poverty also gives rise to the issue of overpopulation, corruption and delay in justice. The ANP leader linked increase in poverty and inflation to the poor economic and financial policies of the previous PTI government and foreign loans burden.

He said an absence of quality research, outdated and conventional teaching methods and the divide between teachers' tenure track and basic pay scale were adversely affecting the quality of education in KP.

"The PTI government needs to focus on sustainability and economic empowerment of existing universities, technical colleges and avoid opening new uni-

versities for political point scoring," he maintained.

He suggested establishment of campuses of different universities instead of separate universities of medical, engineering, agriculture, law etc to save the financial resources of KP that was already facing great financial problems.

Wajid said internationally many renowned universities have established their schools of medicine, engineering, business, and other disciplines under one roof to combat poverty and illiteracy through better economic management and good governance.

Ikhtiar Wali Khan, Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz KP spokesman and Member Provincial Assembly said the federal government was focusing on the uplift of less developed districts of the country through an effective utilization of financial resources to eradicate poverty.

He said the federal government's allocation of Rs40 billion as umbrella fund for marginalized and

vulnerable population would help ensure sufficient domestic financing commitments for achieving multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Wali claimed that Imran Khan government had overlooked the economy and took heavy foreign loans on high interest rates due to his poor governance that resulted rise in poverty and inflation in the country's today.

Muhammad Islam Khan, Senior Planning Officer, Higher Education Department told APP that approximately, Rs20 billion development projects were in progress in merged tribal areas under the accelerated implementation program (AIP 2019-23) by the government focusing on all key sectors including education, health, infrastructure and agriculture in a bid to alleviate poverty.

The gigantic projects include establishment of 12 new colleges, rehabilitation, provision of missing facilities to existing colleges, commencement of BS programme, scholarships to

students, solarization of colleges and educational institutes, recruitment of teaching faculty and provision of transport facility to facilitate students especially girls in erstwhile Fata.

Besides construction of 12 new colleges, five government degree colleges for girls were being established in merged areas where classes in the newly established government degree colleges for boys at Bara and Landi Kotal in Khyber tribal district and government boys degree college at Penk in former Frontier Region Tank has also been started. Out of these 12 new colleges, he said four colleges were being established in Bajaur, two in Khyber, one each in Kurram and Bakakhel (former FR Bannu), three each in North Waziristan and South Waziristan.

He said one each library was being established in Khyber, Mohmand, Bajaur, Kurram, Orakzai, North Waziristan and South Waziristan.

Besides strengthening

Fata University near Dara Adamkhel, he said the Government has decided to establish Bajaur University at Khar with an estimated cost of Rs one billion under AIP. He said Bajaur University would help save time and money of tribal students who mostly come to Peshawar for higher education.

Islam Khan said that 10 new colleges were completed in merged areas raising its total number to 55, adding 300 new lecturers and subject specialists were recruited for 45 colleges in tribal districts.

To address challenges of poverty, energy shortfall and improve literacy rate, he said work on solarization of colleges costing Rs1.6 billion has been started in erstwhile Fata. New vehicles were recently provided to the principals of 45 colleges including 24 boys, 15 girls and six commerce colleges of merged areas to provide pick and drop to all students.

The government would spend Rs1.18 on the trans-

port project that would benefit around 25,000 tribal students. Similarly, 10 more transport vehicles and buses would be provided to the newly established colleges.

Medical colleges and Engineering universities are planned in all merged districts while work on an Education City in South Waziristan is underway. The government has also planned to establish the campus of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University (SBBWU) in tribal areas to provide quality education to girls students at their doorsteps.

To encourage talented tribal students to continue their studies without facing financial constraints, Rs. 1.399 billion were earmarked to provide 5,500 internships to the tribal students.

These education projects on completion would not only decrease poverty rate in merged areas but jobs opportunities would also be created for youth in the country and abroad.



In brief

Three of a family killed

MARDAN (INP): At least three members of a family were killed and an elderly person injured in firing here on Sunday, Rescue 1122 sources said. According to details, unidentified persons opened fire at four people of same family in Par Hoti area of Mardan. As a result of firing, three family members including Faizan 30, Haider 14, and Rifque 55, were killed on the spot while Rafique 60, was injured. The bodies and injured were shifted to District Headquarter Hospital for medico-legal formalities.

Terrorist killed in encounter

D.I.KHAN (INP): A terrorist has been gunned down during an exchange of fire between terrorists and security forces in Dera Ismail Khan on Sunday. The identity of the slain terrorist has not been confirmed yet. The encounter was occurred at Rori in tehsil Kalachi.

Three held with narcotics

SARGODHA (INP): Police claimed on Sunday to have arrested three drug peddlers and recovered narcotics from their possession. Urban Area police conducted a raid at Jutt Colony and arrested a bootlegger Nasir Masih with 60 liters liquor. Cantt police nabbed Amjad Ali and Muhammad Afzal and recovered 1.5 kg hashish and 50 liters liquor from them. Further investigation was underway.

AJK covered in blanket of snow

MUZAFFARABAD (INP): Snow blanketed many valleys of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) on Sunday causing the temperature to plummet. Rain and snow continued for a second consecutive day with the scenic Neelum Valley and its adjoining areas receiving intermittent rain on Saturday, due to which the intensity of cold increased. In many areas of the autonomous region, the temperatures fell below the freezing point, forcing people to take out their warm clothes. The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has predicted that Muzaffarabad, the capital of AJK will receive snowfall at different times, while other upper areas may get light showers during the day.

Police arrest 20 suspects

KHAIRPUR (INP): During an operation against the dacoits of Kacha area, Khairpur police arrested 20 suspects, including the alleged facilitators of the dacoits, and shifted them to an unknown location on Sunday. The police of Babarloi, Priyalu and Pir Goth participated in the Khairpur operation. "An operation has been carried out against the criminals and robbers in Kacha area," Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Rohal Khoso said. "There are hideouts of dacoits in Kacha area of Khairpur," he said. "The Kacha area will be cleared from the dacoits," he vowed.

Three held with narcotics

SARGODHA (INP): Police claimed on Sunday to have arrested three drug peddlers and recovered narcotics from their possession. Urban Area police conducted a raid at Jutt Colony and arrested a bootlegger Nasir Masih with 60 liters liquor. Cantt police nabbed Amjad Ali and Muhammad Afzal and recovered 1.5 kg hashish and 50 liters liquor from them. Further investigation was underway.

Int'l Mountain Day celebrated

F.P. Report

CHITRAL: UNDP Pakistan celebrated International Mountain Day here on Sunday to honor the majestic mountain ranges and glaciers of Northern Pakistan while also observing this year's theme of 'Women Move Mountains!' Held under the auspices of UNDP's GLOF-II project to acknowledge mountain women and their resilience in the face of disasters especially GLOFs the event also raised awareness amongst school and college students about climate change and subsequent impacts.

The event brought together environmental experts, government representatives, academia, and community members to show their commitment to the efforts needed in addressing climate change-relevant issues in the province.

It also acknowledged women as custodians of local culture who play a significant role in implementing indigenous prac-

tices and harnessing the knowledge for future generations. Speech, painting, and drawing competitions were also held and winners were awarded prizes and souvenirs.

The event concluded with a mock drill conducted by the KP Rescue 1122 department which focused on providing first aid relief in case of disasters.

Additional secretary Environment department of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Minhas-ud-Din addressing the occasion as chief guest, said that mountains are ecological hotspots and provide innumerable natural resources for the survival of our communities.

He said that Climate Change poses a serious threat to these mountains and affects freshwater supplies downstream for millions of people, especially women who are at the forefront of facing the brunt of climate change. Women are particularly affected, as their vulnerability increases manifold.

The provincial coordina-

tor of GLOF-II project, Shahzada Iqtidarul Mulk highlighted the working of the project in eight different valleys in the five districts of the KP for scaling up of glacial lakes outburst floods.

He said that GLOF-II is a flagship project of UNDP and the Ministry of Climate Change supported by Green Climate Fund.

Ms. Fatima, a community member of the Community Based Disaster Risk Management Committee (CBDPMC) established by the GLOF-II Project acknowledged the efforts made by the project in empowering them.

She said, "I represent my community here today and am thankful to the GLOF-II project for conducting such informative sessions for us. We play a crucial role in mountain habitats and would like to be made part of the decision-making process and have greater access to resources. We would feel motivated if our concerns are addressed by the government as well."

District Admn, FC North held free medical camp



F.P. Report

LOI SHALMAN, Khyber: Efforts are being made by the District Administration and Security Forces to provide basic health facilities to the people in Khyber district. In this regard, District Administration and Frontier Corps North organized a free medical camp in Loi Shalman, Yusuf Khel area of Khyber with the support of a local NGO.

In the free medical

camp, doctors and nursing staff conducted tests for malaria, skin diseases, dengue, hypertension and diabetes and conducted free check-up of more than 700 men, women and children of the local population and provided them with free medicines.

Along with this, the patients who needed further check-up were given awareness to get treatment in District Headquarters Hospital Landikotal and

Civil Hospital Jamrud.

On this occasion, the doctors also provided awareness to the public about prevention of seasonal diseases and skin diseases. The residents of the area expressed their gratitude to the District Administration and Frontier Corps North and said that by organizing free medical camps in the tribal districts, the people are getting basic health facilities easily.

70 shops sealed in fortnight over illegal gas decanting

FAISALABAD (APP): The Civil Defence Department sealed 70 shops during the last fortnight on the charge of illegal gas decanting and sale of loose petrol in the city.

According to Civil Defence Officer Rana Muhammad Abbas, the civil defence teams launched a campaign against illegal gas decanting and found dozens of shopkeepers involved in the illegal business.

Therefore, the teams sealed 70 shops after conducting challans of the shopkeepers. Cases were got registered against 24 shopkeepers over violation of the law and their challans were submitted in the court of judicial magistrate, who imposed Rs 145,000 fine on them, he added.

Body found

The Body of a man was

found from a roadside in the area of Kotwali police station.

A spokesman said here on Sunday that some passersby spotted the body of 40-year-old man lying along a road near Dhoi Ghat Ground and informed the area police.

The police took the body into custody and started investigation, he added.

Hawker hit to death by bus

A hawker was hit to death by a bus near General Bus Stand, in the area of Civil Lines police station.

The Rescue-1122 spokesman said here on Sunday that 52-year-old hawker Rafiq, son of Siraj Din of D-Type Colony, was trying to receive honorarium from a bus conductor when he reportedly slipped and the running bus ran him

down.

As a result, Rafiq received serious injuries and died on-the-spot before getting any medical assistance.

The police took body into custody and started investigation, he added.

7 tractor drivers held

Assistant Commissioner (AC) Tehsil Sammudri Madam Aleza Rehan got arrested seven tractor divers and challaned 210 others on the charge of overloading their trolleys with sugarcane produce.

A spokesman for the local administration said here on Sunday that the AC Sammudri, along with her team, checked various vehicles.

Separate cases were also registered against 7 drivers while further action was under progress, he added.

MP takes action against vehicles with weak tyres

KHANEWAL (APP): National Highways and Motorway Police launched crackdown against the vehicles sans back-lights and weak tyres.

According to Sector Commander M-4 Atif Chaudhary, the vehicles could cause accidents. The step is being taken to keep the road safe and secure from accidents. It is duty of

the police to maintain safety and security of the people traveling at Motorways, he stated.

The vehicles without back lights and weak tyres will not be allowed at Motorways, he maintained. Similarly, he also directed owners of vehicles to install fog lights in order to avoid accidents during mist. He also urged citizens to dial

130 (Help Line) in case of emergency situation at Motorways.

Police arrest 2 dacoits, recover valuables worth Rs440,000:

Khanewal police claimed to have arrested two dangerous dacoits of the notorious gang and recovered valuables worth Rs 440,000, here on Sunday.

According to police sources, the arrested dacoits are identified as Qamar Abbas son of Altaf Hussain and Muhammad Imran son of Haq Nawaz. The police recovered cash, two motorcycles, solar plates and some other articles. The police also recovered two pistols from their possession. The police solved five cases after arrest of the dacoits.



SHANGLA: Provincial Minister Shoukat Yousafzai addressing a public gathering.

Security arrangements of churches reviewed

KOHAT (APP): SP Operations Bilal Ahmad on Sunday visited various churches of the city where he reviewed the security arrangements and issued important instructions to the security personnel regarding SOPs.

On the special instructions of District Police Officer Abdul Rauf Babar Qaisrani, SP Operations Bilal visited various churches in the city, met the administrators of the churches and discussed security measures with them.

He visited the various sensitive areas of the city including all the churches of the Christian community located in different areas of the city and Cantt and reviewed the security arrangements.

He directed the police officers on duty to be alert and perform their duties according to the briefing given about the security duty.

Similarly, Bilal Ahmed reviewed the security arrangements to make the security of churches and sensitive places fool-proof.

DC chairs meeting of elected members

NAWABSHAH (APP): A meeting of elected chairman and vice-chairmen with regard to municipal services was held at Municipal Committee Hall here on Sunday, Deputy Commissioner Shehryar Gul Memon presided over the meeting. The meeting was attended by Municipal Commissioner, officials of the municipal committee, elected chairmen and vice-chairmen of different Union Councils attended the meeting.

During the meeting, DC collected information from the elected representatives regarding the provision of municipal services in their areas.

Chairmen of Old Nawabshah Town, Union Councils 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 9 expressed their satisfaction over the working of Baldia while chairman of Union Council 2, 3, 4, and 7 of H.M. Khoja Town also expressed their satisfaction.

However, chairmen of Union Councils 5, 8, and 10 expressed their dissatisfaction over the municipal service and demanded DC to instruct municipal administration to bring improvement in the situation.

DC instructed the Municipal Commissioner and Sanitary Inspector for immediate improvement in the sanitary situation in UCs of the city, especially in UC 5, 8 and 10.

Work on road to start soon

BUREWALA (APP): Chairman National Assembly Standing Committee for Science and Technology, Syed Sajid Mehdi Salim, said that the construction work on two way Burewala-Vehari road would be started from next month of January at a cost of over Rs one billion.

He said that the tenders regarding the project concerned have been issued. He expressed these views while talking to notables of the constituency on Sunday and added that the condition of the road was dilapidated from long time.

MNA further said that over Rs 1 billion road project had got approved in annual budget from roads development funds with the support of public partnership.

Police traces alleged culprits behind blind murder of student

Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: Police traced and arrested the blind murder case of 19-year-old student Zain ur Rehman who was killed five days ago in Manglawar area of Swat. The police got access to the accused five days later and arrested the main suspect involved in the murder.

DPO Swat Shafiullah Gandapur, while holding a press conference at Mingora police station along with DSP Badshah Hazrat and SHO Manglawar Hayat Khan, said that the slain body of

nineteen-year-old student Zain ur Rehman S/o Noor ur Rahman, a resident of Mingora, was found near the stream of Manglawar on 5th December.

Police registered a case against the unknown accused and worked on different angle to trace the blind murder. Investigation team has obtained the CCTV footages before the incident.

Evidence was found that the accused and the deceased were sitting in a rickshaw before the incident. The police detained the accused Asmat Ali, who

confessed the killing during the investigation.

DPO Shafi Ullah said that the Shafi Zain ur Rahman had kept Rs 22 lakh with the accused for pursuing higher education abroad. When the victim demanded the return of the money, Asmat Ali took him to the place of the incident and killed him on the pretext.

The DPO Shafiullah Gandapur said that 13 lakh rupees and a pistol have also been recovered from the possession of the accused and further investigation is progress.

Four outlaws arrested, weapons, drugs recovered

D.I.KHAN (APP): Paniala police during various operations, arrested four criminals while weapons and narcotics recovered and separate cases registered against the accused.

SHO Paniala Sardar Azimullah with police team while carrying out various operations, arrested accused Muhammad Firdous son of Abdul Sattar resident of Abdulkhel and recovered a pistol of 12 bore with 03 cartridges and 40 grams of hashish.

In another action, police arrested accused Noor Aslam son of Muhammad Hussain resident of Wanda Khani and recovered 1 pistol with 24 cartridges.

Similarly, in the third action accused Deen Muhammad son of Pir Muhammad resident of Paniala arrested and 60 grams of heroin recovered, while in the fourth action 445 grams of hashish recovered from Muhammad Khan s/o Muhammad Nawaz resident of village Mohmand.

Bike lifter held, stolen bike recovered

The Dera police on Sunday claimed to have arrested a bike lifter and recovered a stolen motorcycle from

om his possession in the limits of City Police Station.

According to a police spokesman, a police team led by SHO Khanzada Khan took action against the thieves under the supervision of DSP City Circle Iqbal Khan Baloch.

During the course of action, the police recovered a 70 cc motorcycle that was stolen from the city area almost a month ago.

The police traced and arrested the accused bike lifter, Waheed son of Aslam, a resident of Darazinda.

Meanwhile, the district police claimed to have recovered non-custom paid goods worth Rs 9.8 million

at the Khutti check post in the limits of Dera Town Police Station. According to a police spokesman, the police team foiled a bid to smuggle non-custom paid items being smuggled to Islamabad from Balochistan in a container.

The police stopped a container at the Khutti check post and during checking found non-custom paid products, including 200 sacks of dry milk, 29 sacks of almonds, 47 bundles of tyres, 87 bundles of small tyres, and 477 bundles of rope. The worth of these recovered goods was estimated as Rs 9.8 million.

IG Prison inaugurates library in Abbottabad

ABBOTTABAD (APP): Inspector General Prison Sadat Hassan on Sunday inaugurated the library and computer lab in Abbottabad prison. Jail Superintendent Muhammad Hamid, Deputy Superintendent Syed Zainul Arifeen Shah and Assistant Superintendent Malik Amaan received him and briefed about the jail facilities and environment. The IG was informed that tailoring course were given to 29 prisoners under the support of NAVTEC that was started from March 2022 to June 2022 in which 23 completed their course while the rest were released before completion of the course. The IG expressed satisfaction and asked the jail administration to provide the best facility to the prisoners.



SWAT: KP Minister Mohibullah Khan listening people problems.

DC reviews performance of price control magistrates

SARGODHA (APP): Deputy Commissioner Sargodha Capt (ret'd) Nadeem Nasir on Sunday directed the price control magistrates to gear up vigilance and activities to control artificial inflation created by hoarders in the district.

Chairing a meeting to review performance of price control magistrates, he directed them to regularly monitor prices of tomatoes, onions, garlic and potatoes in vegetable markets besides taking action against hoarders.

He said that each magistrate should ensure at least 20 inspections per day.

The meeting was briefed that Rs 205,000 fine was imposed during the last month by 35 magistrates in the district while a total of 12,729 inspections were conducted.

Twenty-eight FIRs were got registered, 51 shops were sealed and 185 profiteers were arrested during the last month.

The DC also directed to ensure the implementation of comprehensive plan to

keep smooth flow of traffic on the roads adjacent to the sugar mills during the crushing season.

Deputy Commissioner also ordered the Assistant Commissioners to speed up the operation against encroachments and continue operations against the brick kilns, factories and other units causing environmental pollution.

The ADCR Jawaria Maqbool, Assistant Commissioners and price magistrates of all tehsils attended the meeting.



More Iranians at imminent risk of execution: rights groups

PARIS (AFP/APP): Several Iranians were on Sunday at risk of imminent execution over protests that have rocked the country's clerical regime, rights groups warned, after an international backlash over Iran's first hanging linked to the movement.

The almost three-month protest movement was sparked by the death of Mahsa Amini, who had been arrested by the Islamic republic's morality police.

It is posing the biggest challenge to the regime since the shah's ousting in 1979.

Iran calls the protests "riots" and says they have been encouraged by its foreign foes.

Authorities are responding with a crackdown activists say aims to instill fear in the public.

Iran on Thursday executed Mohsen Shekari, 23, who had been convicted of attacking a member of the security forces. Rights groups said his legal process, which they described as a show trial, was marked by undue haste.

Iran's judiciary has reported that 11 people received death sentences so far in connection with the protests, but campaigners say around a dozen others are facing charges that could see them also receive the death penalty.

Unless foreign governments "significantly increase" the diplomatic

and economic costs to Iran, the world "is sending a green light to this carnage", said Hadi Ghaemi, executive director of the New York-based Center for Human Rights in Iran (CHRI).

Amnesty International said Iran was now "preparing to execute" Mahan Sadrat, 22, just a month after his "grossly unfair" trial. He was convicted of drawing a knife in the protests, accusations he strongly denied in court.

On Saturday Sadrat was transferred from Greater Tehran Prison to Rajai Shahr prison in the nearby city of Karaj, "sparking concerns that his execution may be carried out imminently", Amnesty said.

"Like all other death row prisoners, he was denied any access to his lawyer during the interrogations, proceedings and show trial," said another group, Oslo-based Iran Human Rights.

Amnesty warned the life of another young man arrested over the protests, Sahand Nourmohammadzadeh, was also at risk "after a fast-tracked proceeding which did not resemble a trial".

He was sentenced to death in November on accusations of "tearing down highway railings and setting fire to rubbish cans and tires", the group said.

Among others given the same sen-

tence is rapper Saman Seyedi, 24, from Iran's Kurdish minority. His mother pleaded for his life on social media in a video where she stated "my son is an artist not a rioter."

Another dissident rapper, Toomaj Salehi, who expressed support for anti-regime protests, is charged with "corruption on earth" and could face a death sentence, Iranian judicial authorities confirmed last month.

"We fear for the life of Iranian artists who have been indicted on charges carrying the death penalty," United Nations experts said in a statement, referring to the cases of Sayedi and Salehi.

Amnesty and IHR have also raised the case of Hamid Gharehasanlou, a medical doctor sentenced to death. They say he was tortured in custody and his wife was coerced into giving evidence against him which she later sought to retract.

"Protester executions can only be prevented by raising their political cost for the Islamic Republic," IHR director Mahmood Amiry-Moghaddam said, calling for a "stronger than ever" international response.

The US, European Union members and UK strongly condemned the execution of Shekari. German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said it showed a "boundless contempt for human life".

Iran on Saturday and Friday again summoned the British and German ambassadors to protest their countries' actions, marking the 15th time in less than three months Tehran has called in foreign envoys as the demonstrations continue.

Many activists want the foreign response to go further, extending even to severing diplomatic ties with Iran and expelling Tehran's envoys from European capitals.

After the widespread international outrage at Shekari's execution, Iran said it was exercising restraint, both in the response by security forces, and the "proportionality" of the judicial process.

Iran's use of the death penalty is part of a crackdown that IHR says has left at least 458 people killed by the security forces.

According to the UN, at least 14,000 have been arrested.



Taiwan premier slams China over fresh import bans

TAIPEI (AFP/APP): Taiwan's premier on Sunday accused China of violating international trade rules and "discriminating" against the island after it halted more Taiwanese imports.

According to Taiwan's finance ministry, Chinese customs authorities "suddenly suspended" imports of certain alcoholic beverages from the island on Friday.

It said the move was related to a regulation Beijing imposed on January 1 that requires all food and alcoholic beverage exporters to the mainland to be registered with Chinese customs. Some Taiwanese companies had still been under review.

Premier Su Tseng-chang accused Beijing of violating World Trade Organization (WTO) norms by "making its own rules" and "meddling in

trade through administrative means".

China "is especially tough on Taiwan and especially discriminates against Taiwan... They've asked Taiwan to do this and do that," he told reporters on Sunday.

Taiwan plans to appeal to the WTO and will assist the affected businesses, he added.

Beijing claims self-ruled democratic Taiwan as part of its territory to be taken one day, by force if necessary.

It has ramped up military, diplomatic and economic pressure on the island since the 2016 election of President Tsai Ing-wen, and has previously banned imports of other products from the island as relations deteriorated.

Heard that the #PRC is banning some products from #Taiwan again,

including our beer," Taiwanese foreign minister Joseph Wu tweeted on Sunday, using the hashtag "FreedomBeer".

"Economic coercion of course. But they don't know what they're missing: the great taste of freedom."

China slapped fresh bans on certain fruit and fish imports in retaliation for US Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taipei in August, which prompted a furious response from Beijing and a flurry of military drills.

A year earlier, pineapple imports were halted after Chinese authorities claimed to have discovered pests in shipments, just as the annual harvest was under way.

Taiwanese officials said some 2,400 registration applications from food, food processing,

fishery and alcohol companies could not be completed. Around 600 applications will be resubmitted, while the rest are expected to be dropped.

Taiwan's semi-official Central News Agency reported 11 out of 28 beer and distillery products registered by Taiwanese exporters had been suspended from Friday, citing Chinese customs.

The affected companies include state-run Taiwan Tobacco & Liquor Corp.

Shipments of 123 out of 354 other beverage items have also been halted, including those from Taiwanese food giant U n i - P r e s i d e n t Enterprises, the report said.

Taiwan sold \$250 million worth of beverages and \$43.4 million dollars in alcoholic products to China last year, official data showed.

Drought-hit Mandera county in northwestern Kenya struggles amid worst drought in decades

MANDERA, KENYA (AA/APP): The residents of Mandera, Kenya's north-eastern-most county bordering Ethiopia and Somalia, are struggling for the survival of their animals and themselves as the region continues to reel due to the worst drought in decades.

Home to approximately 1.2 million people who generally depend on their livestock and riverine farming, Mandera has lacked significant rainfall for the last six years.

Locals say that most of the rivers originating from the Ethiopian highlands have dried up and that adjacent basins that were used as farmland just half a decade ago have become completely unusable.

Manderans said that in addition to agricultural lands, pastures where animals graze have also suffered from the drought. The area has received no rainfall so far this rainy season, which ends in December, they have said, fearing that if conditions do not improve over the next few months, all their animals will perish.

Libehiya is one of the villages hit hardest by the drought. As life continues to get harder, locals are facing the stark reality that they may need to emigrate to other lands.

Animal carcasses dot pastures all around the village due to the lack of grass and ongoing severe drought. As the river that once flowed around their homes has completely dried up, villagers have started drawing both their cleaning and drinking water, as well as the water they give their animals, from the local well. Residents said that because there was no

grass left in the pastures, they started looking after their animals at home, feeding them the rice and maize they eat themselves, despite the unsustainable expense. All kinds of agricultural products were grown in the fertile soil of Mandera, which received normal rainfall until about five years ago.

Muhamad Ali, the county's water minister, told Anadolu Agency that while people did not want to leave their homes, they lost 11 billion Kenyan shillings (\$88 million) in herding over the past several years due to the drought.

"Of the 200 small lakes we use for livestock, 63 have dried up. Animals are dying, as you can see, there are animal carcasses everywhere. Just one of our neighbors here lost 500 goats," he said, adding that it was dangerous to drink water in some regions due to the difficult living conditions, with residents fearing the spread of new contagious diseases in addition to those already present in the region. Ali said that they hoped the Turkish government and people would extend a helping hand for dredging and the extraction of groundwater.



People in Mandera county, northwestern Kenya, struggle to find water for their animals during a severe drought.

Jersey explosion: No survivors found in search after blast

JERSEY (BBC): A search for people after an explosion at a block of flats in Jersey that left three dead has found no signs of life. Emergency service bosses said the search and rescue operation was now one of recovery. "We have been searching and we will not stop searching for people's loved ones," Chief Fire Officer Paul Brown told a press conference. It is understood there were nine known residents in the block before the blast in St Helier on Saturday morning. Three bodies have been found at the Pier Road scene and specialist teams are continuing to look for six more.

It is estimated there could be up to a dozen, as details on visitors remain unknown. The fire service had attended the flats just after 20:30 GMT on Friday after the smell of gas was reported, it has been confirmed.

The blast happened at about 04:00 GMT on Saturday.

Specialist teams and a search dog have been carrying out searches at the scene. Chief of Jersey Police Robin Smith described how there had been a "meticulous and painstaking search of the debris following the explosion, to start carefully identifying bodies when and if we find them."

He told the press conference: "That will take time. We are not going to be here for days we are likely to be here for weeks."

Mr Smith said it was "difficult to be precise" on the total number of fatalities. "The one area I can be precise on is we have three confirmed fatalities and it's fair to say we expect to find more," he said.

"Previously we have said in the region of a dozen but it's difficult to make that assessment. That's the number we hope we do not get to but that is the number we are working to." Mr Smith said "around 40" people had been displaced because of the blast and the damage it had caused to nearby buildings. None of the emergency leaders could confirm the cause, but Mr Smith was asked to comment on whether it was down to a gas explosion. "It looks likely that is the case," he said. "But as you often hear the police service say, we keep all our options open."

He added: "We will seek experts who are independent, as we would do with any investigation where there is particular specialisms - be reassured this will be an independent investigation." Stating whether criminal activity was suspected, he added: "We rule nothing in and we rule nothing out."



Paul Brown, Jersey chief fire officer, acknowledged something had gone "horribly wrong".

He told reporters the fire service would be "co-operating fully" with "honesty" and "transparency", but the main focus remained on the search operation. "The most important thing is to understand the absolute truth and also be seen to establish the absolute truth," he said. "We do not want any cloud around that at all."

Bailiff of Jersey Sir Timothy Le Cocq has announced the creation of a Bailiff's Island Appeal to support people affected by the blast.

Chief Minister Kristina Moore earlier told the BBC she was woken by the explosion. "It's unthinkable news, we're all absolutely devastated and really concerned for the people who are involved, for those whose lives have been lost," she said.

"Those families will get the answers they need."

"We're so grateful to the emergency services and everybody who is absolutely committed to searching through the rubble to find everybody." Specialist teams from the UK's Ministry of Defence and fire services have been supporting local crews. They include the South West Hazardous Area Response Team, alongside an Urban Search and Rescue Team from Hampshire & Isle of Wight Fire & Rescue Service.

Two people who were in hospital earlier have been released and one

other person is receiving treatment.

Jersey's gas supplier, Island Energy, said it was working with the fire service to understand what had happened. The three-storey building that collapsed is owned by Andium Homes, a state-owned but independent company that rents out properties.

It said it was focusing on supporting residents at the estate.

Ms Moore said residents displaced by the blast were being found somewhere to stay. "This is going to take some days and we will keep everyone updated and fully informed, and we will do our very best to ensure everybody is properly looked after," she added. The Town Church opened on Saturday evening for islanders to light candles and pay respects to those who had died.

The incident comes after three fishermen were reported missing following a collision at sea on Thursday, and those affected by this will also be supported through the bailiff's appeal.

On Monday, the flag of Jersey will fly at half mast on the island's official buildings "as a sign of respect" for those affected by the explosion, the Government of Jersey said. The flags will be lowered from 08:00 GMT until sunset on 23 December. A one-minute silence will also be held at 11:00 GMT on Monday to give islanders a moment to "reflect on the incidents that have resulted in loss of life", the government said.

Biden tries to reboot US brand in Africa amid China, Russia inroads

WASHINGTON (AFP/APP): When Barack Obama welcomed African leaders to Washington in 2014, many viewed the summit as historic, not just due to the US president's background but for the pledges to make the partnership deeper and such events routine.

The sequel took eight years -- the equivalent of two presidential terms -- but on Tuesday, Joe Biden will host a second US-Africa summit.

Since 2014, China -- viewed by Washington as its main long-term challenger -- has consistently outpaced the United States as the largest investor in Africa and Russia has increasingly flexed its muscle, sending mercenaries to hotspots and trying

to rally opinion to blunt Western pressure over Ukraine.

Biden's three-day summit will feature announcements of new US investment and highlight food security -- worsened by the invasion of Ukraine -- but, unlike China, also focus on values such as democracy and good governance, as well as fighting climate change.

But the biggest message from Biden, a lover of backslapping face-to-face diplomacy, will be that the United States cares.

Since defeating Donald Trump, who made no secret of his lack of interest in Africa, Biden has thrown his support behind an African seat on the Security Council and at the

Washington summit will call for the African Union to formally join the Group of 20 major economies, an aide said.

"We believe that this is a decisive decade. The way in which the world will be ordered will be determined in the coming years," said Biden's top Africa advisor, Judd Devermont.

Biden and Secretary of State Antony Blinken "believe strongly that African voices are going to be critical in this conversation," he said.

African leaders have already been holding summits every three years with China and also have regular meetings with several US allies -- France, Britain, Japan and the European Union.

Four suspects charged in probe into European Parliament bribery by Gulf state

BERLIN (BBC): Four people have been charged in an investigation into suspected bribery at the European Parliament by a Gulf state - reportedly Qatar. Greek MEP and European Parliament Vice President Eva Kaili was among those previously arrested in the case.

Prosecutors suspect the Gulf state tried to influence parliament decisions with donations of money or gifts. Local media have reported that the accused country is Qatar, which the Qatari government has denied.

Watchdogs and opposition MEPs have said it could be one of the biggest corruption scandals the European Parliament has ever seen.

Ms Kaili, one of 14 elected vice presidents, has been suspended from the parliament's Socialists and Democrats Group and expelled from the Greek centre-left Pasok party.

Cash worth about €600,000 (\$632,000; £515,000) was seized by Belgian police in 16 searches in Brussels on Friday. Computers and mobile phones were also taken in order to examine their contents.

A total of six people were detained for questioning, two of whom have been released. "Four individuals have been arrested by the Brussels investigating judge who is leading the investigation," the Belgian federal prosecutor's office said in a statement.

"They are charged with participation in a criminal organisation, money laundering and corruption. Two persons have been released by



the investigating judge."

The prosecutor said investigators had suspected that a Gulf state had been influencing economic and political decisions of the parliament for several months, especially by targeting aides. Local media has named the Gulf state under suspicion as Qatar.

A Qatari government spokesperson told AFP: "We are not aware of any details of an investigation. Any claims of misconduct by the State of Qatar are gravely misinformed."

The country "operates in full compliance with international laws and regulations", he added.

A spokesperson for the European Parliament told Reuters that it would not comment on an ongoing investigation, but would work together with the local authorities if needed.

Ms Kaili's responsibilities as a vice president include the Middle East.

She has been a defender of Qatar in the past. In a speech last month about human rights during the Fifa World Cup in Qatar, she called the country a "frontrunner in labour rights", for abolishing kafala, a legal framework used in several Gulf states which human rights organisations compare to modern slavery.

"The World Cup in Qatar is proof, actually, of how sports diplomacy can achieve a historical transformation of a country with reforms that inspired the Arab world," she said. She accused some MEPs of bullying and discriminating against Qatar, adding: "They accuse everyone that talks to them or engages of corruption." Qatar has previously been accused of corruption, including in its bid to host the 2022 football World Cup. The country denied the allegations and was cleared of corruption by Fifa.

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Kashmir dispute and the OIC

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is the second-largest world multilateral forum and is a collective voice of 57 Muslim countries around the globe. Since its inception in 1969, the OIC has played an adorable role in the restoration of peace and safeguarding of social, political, and economic interests of the Muslim ummah across the world. The OIC has extensively worked on the Jammu and Kashmir issue, Afghanistan, Palestine, the Muslim genocide in Bosnia Herzegovina, Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar, and other issues relating to the Muslim world, besides resolution of interstate rivalries and mobilization of Muslim states in case of natural disasters and calamities in member countries.

Over five decades ago, Muslim nations laid the foundation of the OIC, to raise collective voices and mobilize combined resources for the resolution of persistent problems faced by the Muslim Ummah including the most important Palestine and Kashmir disputes. Historically, the OIC had put forward an effective legacy to secure the joint interest of Muslim countries, however, its performance and effectiveness had largely been marred by the member nations, who cared more for their interest than instead of the entire Muslim Ummah. Presently, the multilateral forums including the UN, the OIC, and other interstate mechanisms have become helpless in front of the hegemonic agendas of belligerent states that not only interpret the international law in their way but continuously abuse decisions of the global forums in issues concerning them.

Historically, the OIC, as a representative body of Muslim Ummah, had always endeavored to help facilitate its member Countries in all odds but Arab nations weakened the Palestine cause because several powerful Muslim states have forged bilateral diplomatic, trade, and economic ties with the world's sole Jewish state by putting Palestinian cause on the back burner while the Palestine resistance movement fell prey to mutual disunity and enemies' conspiracies and lost their destination in the midway.

On the other hand, the Jeddah-based forum had actively supported Pakistan's stance over the Kashmir dispute and had constituted the OIC Contact Group and also appointed OIC Secretary General Special Envoy for Jammu and Kashmir to closely monitor the latest development and pursue the issue with the relevant countries and global forums.

In fact, Unity, joint action, and a time-bound and wholehearted approach of the entire Ummah are essential to resolve the longstanding issues of Palestine and Kashmir, otherwise, influential occupiers would continue to abuse the UN and OIC's resolutions on these two most important and longstanding issues forever.

Filipinos uprising and Marcos's legacies

According to the media, hundreds of people, civil society activists, and human rights defenders marched in the Philippine capital on Saturday protesting against the rising number of extrajudicial killings, illegal detention, torture, dubious prosecutions, and other injustices under the administration of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. The protesters gathered at a public square in connection with International Human Rights Day and marched toward the presidential palace to demand justice for victims of state oppression.

President Ferdinand Bongbong Romualdez Marcos Jr. commonly known as Bongbong or BBM assumed office in late June and vowed to bring a pivotal change in the country's social and economic life by lowering poverty to a single digit, ensuring civil liberties and the rule of law, and human rights, protecting freedom of expression in the country, along with putting a curb on drug trafficking, introducing reforms in law enforcement and judicial system and controlling an armed insurgency in Southern parts of Philippines. Interestingly, the so-called nation rescuer and son of a former dictator followed an entirely different scheme for image-building and white-washing of brutal deeds of his late father. Marcos imposed restrictions on media freedoms, bullied and prosecuted his critics while two journalists had been suspiciously killed who criticized his government's policies. Over the past few months, inflation and poverty had increased many folds, while the economy witnessed a continuous downturn. However, President Marcos recruited dozens of vloggers and social media content writers as part of the Presidential press crop who act as his media campaigners, portray him as a genius, and use erroneous language against his political opponents. The UN Human Rights Council and other human rights organizations had urged the Marcos administration to address the extrajudicial killings and other rights abuses in the country but the Philippines government relied on verbal assertions and did nothing practically to address the growing public concerns.

Presently, the public came to the streets to protect its fundamental rights and censure a selfish ruler who had forgotten the promise made to his voters during the electoral campaign. Earlier Marcos senior lost his authoritarian rule as a result of the political movement and BBM was fully aware of the consequences of the public uprising against the government. Hence, Marcos's policies and actions would decide the future of his rule in the Philippines.

Quote of the day

“There can be no faith in government if our highest offices are excused from scrutiny — they should be setting the example of transparency.”
— Edward Snowden.

December marks one hundred years since the creation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The state formation, which was based on the historical community of the united lands, was supposed to show the rest of the world an alternative path of development to the capitalist one, becoming a "showcase" of socialism. For the sake of this, some fundamental values had to be neglected, which ultimately led to the collapse of the USSR. On the problems of the formation of the Soviet Union - in the material of RIA Novosti.

Gathering lands

By 1921, during the Civil War, a dozen independent states arose on the territory of the already former Russian Empire, the largest of which was the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR).

The independence of the rest was ephemeral. The regions were closely connected by the historical past, the tradition of the distribution of labor (each territory was responsible for a particular production). Control centers were also concentrated in the RSFSR.

The Bolsheviks understood that this created the conditions for the "gathering of lands" and the revival of the Russian state in its multinational composition. Projects on this score were always on the table of Lenin and his associates. Suffice it to mention that the GOELO plan (1920), which assumed the formation of a unified energy network, actually included the entire collapsed empire.

However, the Civil War also exacerbated national contradictions. The policy of the tsarist government to plant Orthodoxy, the Russian language contributed to the emergence of underground nationalist movements. In an atmosphere of state disintegration, these forces made themselves known.

For the Bolsheviks, the situation was aggravated by the fact that they had no clear alternative to the

repressive national policy of tsarism.

The monarchists of the White movement insisted on a return to the familiar imperial model. Of course, this did not suit the regional nationalists, who felt the taste of independence.

The Bolsheviks eventually decided to unite the disparate regions on the basis of equality of ethnic groups and confessions. It helped that the West was in no hurry to delve into the intricacies of the collapse of the Russian Empire. Therefore, each entity that arose on its wreckage was a priori considered hostile abroad. The factor of a common enemy, coupled with economic interdependence, helped create a new multinational state.

Stalin-style autonomization

The local ruling elite did not want to submit to the whites and their imperial idea, but they were in no hurry to negotiate with Moscow either. Historians note that the Bolsheviks were in a relatively advantageous position. The republics on the fragments of the empire claimed to be self-sufficient, but in reality only the RSFSR had such opportunities. Other quasi-state formations simply would not have survived.

This was taken into account by Joseph Stalin, who was then People's Commissar for Nationalities. It was he who proposed a plan that was included in Russian historiography under the name "autonomization". According to this scenario, all were to become part of the RSFSR on the rights of autonomies.

There were reasons for this. The Russian population (or identified as such) dominated the former imperial territory. However, Stalin's ambitious plan did not please Lenin.

Federation in Leninist way

For the leader of the Bolsheviks, the paramount task was to outmaneuver the Whites ideologically. To do this, at least three problems had to be solved.

First, to prevent the repetition of the empire. The revolutionary Lenin was

Dmitry Ilyin

well aware that the ignorance of national interests by the tsarist government contributed to the sudden collapse of the state.

Secondly, for the success of foreign policy, it was necessary to create a world "showcase" of socialism.

Finally, the Bolsheviks relied on Marxist doctrine, which assumed that socialism on a global scale was impossible without the leading European countries. Consequently, in accordance with the idea of a "world revolution," Lenin wanted to form some kind of "statehood for growth," as some historians put it. Namely, a federation capable of accepting any country in the future. Stalinist autonomy did not allow this. If Ukraine and Belarus, as well as the Transcaucasian SFSR, could join the RSFSR "for old times sake", then, for example, European socialists would hardly agree to become part of another state.

That is why there is nothing national in the name of the USSR. Lenin's concept of federation put the political component at the forefront - socialism as an ideology and the Soviets as a form of power.

Pull up to the general level

Lenin sought to give (at least on a declarative level) more freedom to "small" nations. One of the first documents of the Soviet government, adopted by the Council of People's Commissars of the RSFSR in November 1917, was the Declaration of the Rights of the Peoples of Russia, which guaranteed national "equality and sovereignty."

This was discussed at the II Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP) in 1903. It was there that Lenin formulated the right of nations to self-determination, up to and including secession. This is also in the declaration of 1917.

Nikolai Borisov, Doctor of Historical Sciences, Professor of the Faculty of History of Moscow State University, notes that the republics that were part of

the USSR had rights in many respects only formally. Equality ended where all-union structures entered into action. Leaving the federation was almost impossible. The same Tatar ASSR, if it tried to secede, would simply find itself in the ring of a hostile state.

But on paper, the Soviet republics were really equal, so they managed to temporarily restrain centrifugal tendencies, weakening local nationalists. Lenin made concessions, political and territorial compromises. The borders of the republics were "cut" in accordance with their economic needs. Subsequently, this will become one of the causes of disputes already in the post-Soviet space.

There was another super-task: to pull up all the members of the Union to the general level. At the local level, power was delegated to national elites. But in an effort to unite the country, the center openly imposed its own (mainly Russian) culture. In those republics where grievances for the imperial past were strong, this had the opposite effect. The peoples were deprived of their own way, and the radicals used this to stir up nationalist sentiments. Ukraine, for example, constantly nurtured a proposal for a confederation.

Compromise between Stalin and Lenin

In August 1922, the Politburo of the Central Committee of the RCP (b) created a commission to consider the issue of interaction between the RSFSR and other republics. The decisive role in it was played by the former People's Commissar for Nationalities, Stalin, who in April of the same year became General Secretary of the Central Committee of the RCP (b). He developed a draft resolution "On the Relations of the RSFSR with the Independent Republics", implying the same autonomization.

Under pressure from Lenin, Stalin abandoned this project. He voiced a compromise concept in a report at the X All-Russian

Congress of Soviets on December 26, 1922.

"Soviet power is built in such a way that it, international in its inner essence, cultivates the idea of unification among the masses in every possible way, pushes them on the path of unification itself," Stalin said. "If capital, private property and exploitation divide people, breaking them into hostile to each other camps, as exemplified by Great Britain, France, and even such small multinational states as Poland and Yugoslavia, with their irreconcilable internal national contradictions corroding the very foundation of these states—if, I say, in the West, where capitalist democracy reigns and where states are based on private property, the very basis of the state is conducive to mutual national strife, conflicts and struggle, then here, in the world of Soviets, <...> the very nature of power is conducive toso that the working masses would naturally aspire to one socialist family." Stalin's speech evoked stormy applause.

The December First All-Union Congress of Soviets of 1922 adopted the Declaration and Treaty on the Formation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

It was a federation according to the Leninist model: "The restoration of the national economy turned out to be impossible with the separate existence of the republics. <...> The instability of the international situation and the danger of new attacks make it inevitable the creation of a united front of the Soviet republics in the face of a capitalist encirclement. Finally, the very structure of Soviet power, international in its class nature, pushes the working masses of the Soviet republics onto the path of unification into one socialist family.

Two years later, at the II All-Union Congress of Soviets of Workers', Peasants' and Soldiers' Deputies, the first constitution of the USSR was approved. In 1924, the Turkmen SSR entered the USSR, in 1925, the Uzbek SSR, in 1929, the Tajik efforts, but powerful conservative names have started to lambast the rebellion — like conservative Fox News host Mark Levin going after Biggs. In the middle is a swath of Freedom Caucus members who haven't yet said how they'll vote on Jan. 3 and have continued to push for rules changes to empower themselves and other rank-and-file members.

"The Freedom Caucus ... [is] not always going to agree and that's the way this place is supposed to function," Rep. Clay Higgins (R-La.) said.

SSR, and in 1936, the Kazakh and Kirghiz SSR. In 1940, three Baltic countries joined, the Moldavian SSR, and the Karelian-Finnish SSR was created. As a result, the USSR united 16 sovereign union republics, in which there were 20 autonomous republics, eight autonomous regions and ten national districts. However, the Stalinist idea of autonomization instead of the Leninist federation continued to live.

"For the Russian people!"

At a reception in honor of the commanders of the Red Army in the Kremlin on May 24, 1945, Stalin took the floor.

"I would like to raise a toast to the health of our Soviet people, and above all the Russian people," outstanding nation of all the nations that make up the Soviet Union," said the leader.

Candidate of Historical Sciences, Professor Gennady Bordyugov notes that earlier such a characteristic was not applied to an ethnic group. It was "a new strategy in the ethno-political sphere", opposing Russians to other peoples of the country, he believes.

However, the unfolding cold war again forced them to unite in front of a common enemy. Played a role and the death of Stalin in 1953, followed by the debunking of the cult of personality. The "new strategy in the ethno-political sphere" ended up in the background, the Soviet leaders returned to the Leninist concept of "statehood for growth", continuing to appease the republics. From this policy, as a result, the theses that are popular today about unfairly donated lands were born. When delineating the borders between the republics, the center did not allow that the USSR would one day cease to exist. The population of a single country was satisfied with the conditional division of territories, because all of them were formally a "common house". However, the nationalists systematically heated up the theme of the historical belonging of certain lands.

“There’s no diminishment of that”

There’s trouble brewing in the House GOP’s anti-Kevin McCarthy ranks.

The group of conservatives wreaking havoc in the House GOP conference with their challenge to McCarthy’s bid for speaker is facing internal indecision that may hurt its ability to stay united, according to two Republicans familiar with dynamics in the Freedom Caucus. Most of the Californian’s right-flank critics are members of that dozens-strong Donald Trump-aligned bloc.

At the heart of the struggle

us what we’re looking for, because they’re interested in being speaker.”

Other central players in these strategy meetings include Reps. Chip Roy (R-Texas) and Lauren Boebert (R-Colo.) as well as Freedom Caucus Chair Rep. Scott Perry (R-Pa.). Boebert, who said she has made up her mind about her vote but not publicly revealed it, has raised outgoing Rep. Lee Zeldin (R-N.Y.) in these closed-door showdowns as a potential alternative, according to these two people.

But Zeldin has signaled

Olivia Beavers, Jordain Carney

last month, Norman recently shifted to say he is a “no right now” and has four weeks to decide.

One member who’s already in leadership, current Minority Whip Steve Scalise (R-La.), has also been floated as a potential alternative speaker by McCarthy opponents, according to a Republican familiar with the talks. That’s despite Scalise’s personal avoidance of the prospect and statements that he is backing McCarthy, not to mention

duit for the right flank’s frustrations. And adamant opponents to the California Republican argue there’s little incentive for a “consensus” candidate to throw their hat into the ring right now. Such a move, they say, would only alienate the McCarthy supporters that a challenger would ultimately need to be elected — and put a target on their back.

“I think people realize ... if somebody were to come out now and we didn’t deliver enough votes to stop Mr. McCarthy, that

It’s hardly the first time the Freedom Caucus has publicly cracked. The group has been having a post-Trump identity crisis as it debates its future in a GOP-controlled House starting in January. But that crisis reached the point where some members have been excluded from anti-McCarthy strategy meetings, as Biggs and other opponents try to ascertain who is actually partaking in their challenge to the GOP leader. And despite the swirl of drama around the speaker fight, conservatives believe their tactics are at least partially paying off, leading to some rules concessions. Leadership has, however, shot down many of their more significant proposals that would have significantly curtailed McCarthy’s power. Some are making a re-newed push for those measures. Five Republicans who have not publicly said how they plan to vote — despite attending anti-McCarthy planning meetings as observers — have put forward a letter demanding the ability to move to depose the speaker without having a majority of the GOP conference, as well as other demands that include leadership staying out of primaries. The letter was signed by Perry and Roy, plus Reps. Dan Bishop (R-N.C.), Andrew Clyde (R-Ga.) and Paul Gosar (R-Ariz.) as well as two members-elect. But according to one member who attended a meeting Thursday with McCarthy and some members making this new push, the GOP leader already dismissed their demands, which led them to issue the letter publicly. Others say it is just a start: One McCarthy ally said the leader had worked “tirelessly” to address concerns about conference rules and committee assignments.

gles among McCarthy foes is their lack of a clear plan to take down the GOP leader when the House meets on Jan. 3 to choose its next speaker. Five members openly opposed to McCarthy claim that they have a list of 20-plus detractors set to publicly emerge. But the group has still not agreed on one specific alternative speaker candidate, a major problem that makes their plotting appear slapdash at a time when a show of force is important to maintain momentum in their efforts to topple McCarthy.

One chief McCarthy critic, Rep. Bob Good (R-Va.), denied any implication that McCarthy detractors were having trouble marshaling like-minded GOP lawmakers. “There’s no diminishment of that,” Good said in an interview. “There are more of those kinds of people coming to us and asking

support for McCarthy, saying that he believes the current minority leader is backed by an “overwhelming number” of House Republicans.

Also openly seeking an alternative speaker candidate is Rep. Ralph Norman (R-S.C.), who has indicated he has a name in mind but declined to share it, saying it wouldn’t be “fair” to the person. Some fellow Republicans suspect he is rallying around former Rep. Jim Bridenstine (R-Okla.), who led NASA during the Trump administration and, like Zeldin, has taken himself out of the running. Both Zeldin and Bridenstine would make history if they win any GOP floor votes for speaker, becoming two of a handful of non-sitting members to gain support.

Yet Norman also may be softening his previously stated hell-no stance on McCarthy for speaker. After taking a firm stance

the skepticism among some Freedom Caucus members that McCarthy’s No. 2 would give them anything different as speaker, according to a different Republican.

Meanwhile, Rep. Matt Gaetz (R-Fla.) has long pushed names like Rep. Jim Jordan (R-Ohio), a Freedom Caucus co-founder. But the Ohio Republican has repeatedly embraced McCarthy, his onetime opponent turned ally, and is even seen as working to help him behind the scenes. “I’m definitely talking to members about why I think it’s important for him to be speaker,” said Jordan, declining to specify if those discussions are one-on-one meetings or in group settings.

Conservatives admit that Rep. Andy Biggs (R-Ariz.), who lost to McCarthy in a conference-wide speaker nomination vote, isn’t a viable challenger but only a placeholder acting as a con-

there would be a real potential for blowback. So I think that people are interested, they’ve expressed it to some of us,” the Arizona Republican and Freedom Caucus member said.

He added that he didn’t see the lack of an alternative name as a “real issue” for colleagues who are on the fence about supporting McCarthy, and that members were “for sure” being cautious about declaring themselves a “hard no.”

McCarthy opponents are well aware of the spotlight they’ve put themselves under, and are planning accordingly. A fourth Republican said some of its members have practiced how they will answer questions if the press asks them questions about their speakership vote. And there is dueling pressure on the five McCarthy opponents. A grassroots base that is not keen on McCarthy has encouraged the group’s

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bers making this new push, the GOP leader already dismissed their demands, which led them to issue the letter publicly. Others say it is just a start: One McCarthy ally said the leader had worked “tirelessly” to address concerns about conference rules and committee assignments.

Additionally, Freedom Caucus members are closely watching the race for the top spot on the Homeland Security Committee, hoping a second member in their ranks will get a panel gavel. Freedom Caucus Rep. Mark Green (R-Tenn.) is running against Rep. Dan Crenshaw (R-Texas) for the role. “I got nothing against Mr. Crenshaw. He’s a great guy, too. But Mark is a member of the Freedom Caucus and he’s a great member, so yeah, I think that matters some,” said Jordan, who’s expected to lead the Judiciary Committee next year.

The “empire of lies”

They probably have a nest of characters in The New York Times who are honing the genre of media denunciation of intolerable immoral types or organizations that go against democratic religion. In this case, we are talking about ecological religion.

Here is another publicist showing us the classics of the genre, writing dryly, without emotions, holding back noble indignation with all his might - only facts!

What he writes about: an organization based in the main Republican state of the United States called the Texas Public Policy Foundation, which, imagine, protects oil. Also gas and coal. In general, something that should not have a place in human society if it wants to hopefully save the planet from terrible cataclysms.

The list of Texan crimes is impressive. They want to slow down America's move towards renewable and clean energy. They want all these corporations producing oil, gas and coal to continue to exist and make profits. They harm globally by claiming anywhere that US prosperity is based on these sources of energy and that other peoples have a right to hope for the same.

Further in the media denunciation, a picture emerges of the functioning of a terrible monster, whose tentacles are everywhere. The Texas behemoth helped draft a state law requiring its government to stop doing business with

banks or companies that take money out of oil and gas businesses. The law was passed, and exactly the same - through the efforts of the same organization - began to operate in West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee and Oklahoma.

Further, under the Republican presidency, the Texas Foundation people worked throughout the administration and promoted their agenda. Well, it is clear that this octopus is financed by all known suspects, primarily by the same oil, gas and coal miners.

Why do we say that they have a nest here, in these The New York Times: because just recently we were discussing exactly the same article from the same place, but it was about people who have the audacity to protect meat, not oil or gas. Although every decent person knows that cattle also have a bad effect on the well-being of the planet. It was even logical to look: is the author not one and the same? But no, they are different. Although in both cases the same denunciatory style of publication. And this style is what interests us. It is she - and not the fate of American oil, coal or gas.

There is a very typical thing here, these technologies for creating a big lie - not necessarily about oil and other "green transition" - for the entire planet. The brainwashing techniques are the same on any issue, from "gender" (i.e. LGBT) to anything else. And since they do not recognize bor-

Dmitry Kosyrev

ders, it is very useful, having seen another case of the use of such technologies already in our conditional territory, to know for sure that we are all dealing with the same scum and that the subject of their propaganda is false through and through.

And so let's look at the key points in the articles, at least about meat, at least about oil. For example, the statements of the head of the same Texas organization "go against the general scientific consensus" that burning these fuels makes the weather "more extreme" and will lead to more and more catastrophic consequences. And the article talks about this as if casually and in between times, since there is nothing to discuss - and so everything is clear.

Yes, there is no universal scientific consensus. Before us is a typical trick of these people - to put forward a crazy theory that is financially beneficial to some group of corporations, and immediately begin to say that behind this theory is not just science, but an iron consensus as such. For such purposes, they usually create their own, sectarian science, because of which a decent person today will not hesitate to call himself an ecologist without hesitation. And then they announce that there is a total consensus on the side of these falsifiers, and forever. But in fact, they sit and are afraid, and therefore they pretend

to be the winning majority.

In general, a typical sign of one of these campaigns is when it is unacceptable to argue with its theorists. And since there are as many arguing as you like, and even with facts in hand, it is very important to portray all those who disagree as corrupt and unprincipled scum. And here you go - David Michaels, an epidemiologist at the George Washington School of Public Health, speaks in the article: Texans are hired by the relevant industries, as with tobacco or opioids, and their task is to advance the interests of their sponsors who go against public health.

Well, when epidemiologists break through with their "saving of millions of lives", do not expect mercy. But let's decipher what we mean. That is, anyone who "protects oil" (or meat, or much more) is a person who says not what he thinks and knows, but what he is paid for. And such a person secretly understands well that the facts are against him, so he is terribly worried about this.

And if so, then the main tool, the main technology of such campaigns is to shame opponents. And here in the article, again, as if in passing, turns flicker - these Texans do not even "apologize for their activities."

By the way, with a tool called "shame", this whole audience failed terribly in Russia - we are talking about the withdrawal of some corporations and other brands from the

Russian market. The point was that we should have been ashamed, but the fact that people here experienced anything from contempt to slight annoyance was not expected. Another thing is that the departed were afraid that otherwise they would again be shamed by all the same characters at home.

And one more technology flashes in the article. The fact is that all these countless campaigns are in no way limited to the borders of the United States or its allied states. They immediately move to the international level and set the task of creating all sorts of binding international conventions, with the moral and physical twisting of the arms of everyone on the planet. And the publication about oil, gas and coal is accompanied by a link to other denunciations of the same newspaper, including this one: "despite the scientific consensus" (consensus again!) that the world should abandon these types of fuel, "Saudi Arabia is deploying a lobbying, research, financial and diplomatic campaigns to keep oil at the center of the global economy."

In general, hello to the Texas Rangers from the Saudi sheikhs. Let them both get ready for a raid of eco-activists who stain facades with ketchup. This is also one of those same technologies of the "empire of lies": a noble rebellion of the planet's defenders driven to despair.



Austria warns EU of consequences

Petr Akopov

While the German authorities are dealing with terrible conspirators led by Prince Reuss, neighbors and younger brothers, the Austrians, openly say terrible things. At a protest rally in Vienna on Saturday, they demanded the lifting of sanctions against Russia, and also called for the start of peace negotiations on Ukraine, maintaining the neutral status of Austria and strengthening the fight against illegal migration.

There were even Russian flags on the Viennese square (instead of Ukrainian ones, already familiar to Europe), and one of the most famous Austrian politicians, former Vice-Chancellor Heinz-Christian Strache, became the main speaker. He was the second person in Kurz's government for a short time, only a year and a half, but for almost fifteen years he headed the Austrian Freedom Party (APS), which in the last two decades was either the main opposition force or the ruling party.

In 2019, he was removed from the government after a scandal with a video in which he talked with a fake "niece of a Russian oligarch" (the whole story was a provocation by one of the Western intelligence services), and last year he was even sentenced to 15 months in prison on probation for corruption (allegedly he patronized one of the medical companies for donations to the party fund), thus trying to remove him from politics, but Strache does not give up. He was expelled from the APS, but he organized his own party and intends to participate in the elections.

And what he said on Saturday at a rally in Vienna will resonate with voters, because they themselves are talking about it more and more: "We've been through a lot lately, we're living through the sanctions that came with what later turned out to be a hoax promise that those sanctions would bring Russia to its knees. That didn't happen. Despite the sanctions, Russia doubled its oil and gas revenue this year from Europe. It has a positive trade balance, its income has grown from 100 billion last year to 220 billion this year. <...> Because of the need to participate in sanctions, Austria is hurting itself. We are paying for political mistakes, for this self-harm, we pay with the suffering of the population - with ever higher prices for gas and electricity.

Strache said that the worst is yet to come - a wave of bankruptcies will begin in March-April: "All this is devilishly dangerous. A threat to well-

being can have dire consequences in our country, where more and more people are at a loss, in despair. It can threaten social tension, which we do not want. All who bear political responsibility should prevent this. Everyone it threatens the very foundation of our society that is called the middle class."

At the same time, some Austrian politicians also offer to discuss the country's entry into NATO, that is, to abandon Austrian neutrality. Strache not only spoke out against this - "we must defend him, because we cannot allow them to speculate by selling piece by piece", but also criticized European policy (and Austria is part of the EU) on Ukraine :

"We do not justify all the actions of Russia in this war, which began with the Russian offensive. The law has been violated, and actions are being taken on both sides that simply cannot be justified. But this conflict had a long prehistory, which we often simply refuse to remember, which is washed away from people's memory.

We must not forget that the events of February 24 were preceded by the so-called revolution of 2014, which I would rather call a putsch. And the CIA, that is, the US intelligence service, took an active part in this coup. The result of this putsch was not the establishment of democracy in Ukraine. There has been a seizure of power that cannot be justified in terms of democratic politics.

The consequence of this coup was a civil war in Ukraine. As a result of this war, more than ten thousand people have died before this year, mostly residents of Eastern Ukraine - Donetsk, Luhansk. And all these long years Europe has turned away from this conflict, it has never acted as a mediator in resolving this situation.

And now we do not see such a development of the situation within the framework of which a reasonable policy would be pursued. We do not see something that European politicians have taken real steps, saying: we want peace, we want to bring both sides of the conflict to the negotiating table, we want to look for peaceful solutions, we want to find a way out of the conflict. All this is not happening. On the contrary, we see the supply of weapons, we see the sanctions policy, we see the escalation. There is no movement towards the negotiating table. In general, we are seeing a desire to exacerbate the situation instead of defusing it."

That is, the former Vice-Chancellor says what the governments of the EU countries do not want to recognize - and not only about Ukraine, but also about the situation in Europe itself. But what does such a frank statement mean? What do the Austrians have on their tongues, what do the Germans have on their minds?

Of course, it is easier for the Austrians - although they are members of the EU, they do not participate in NATO, and the neutral

status is enshrined in the constitution. And in general, Vienna remembers that it was the good will of our country that led to the restoration of sovereignty in 1955. After all, everything could have turned out differently after the Red Army took Vienna, and the new Chancellor Karl Renner (who created the Republic of Austria back in 1918) wrote to "Comrade Stalin" (as a Marxist to a Marxist) requests for additional supplies of flour. However, Austria did not go through not only the socialist camp, but also through the Anglo-Saxon reworking of the brains of the elite - and therefore pursued a fairly independent policy, including in the eastern direction (the legacy of the Habsburg empire affected)- and in the last half century, Vienna has been of paramount importance for European-Soviet, and then European-Russian relations.

Even having joined the EU in the 1990s, Austria followed its own, special path, not only in foreign but also in domestic policy. After all, it was in Austria that nationalists came to power for the first time in the modern history of Europe: in 2000, the Austrian Freedom Party (which was then led by Strache's predecessor Jörg Haider) joined the coalition government. After that, most of the EU countries announced a boycott of Austria - how is it that the ultra-right, even the Nazis, are in power!

A few years later, the APS lost votes in the elections, Haider left the party, she ceased to be the ruling one - although later, already under Strach, she began to gain weight again and was part of the government. In 2019, the story of the "niece of the Russian oligarch" (who turned out to be a Bosnian student) led not only to Strache's resignation from the post of vice-chancellor, but also to the fall of the entire government of Sebastian Kurz and the collapse of the coalition with the participation of the APS. By the way, the Minister of Foreign Affairs in that government was Karin Kneissl (she represented the APS, although she was not a member of the party), to whose wedding Vladimir Putin came.

Now Kneissl has left Austria - she was persecuted for "friendship with Putin", but Strache does not give up and continues to fight.

Now Vienna is ruled by a coalition of the People's Party (formally right, an analogue of the German CDU) and the "greens", but against the background of German politicians, their Austrian party colleagues, including the "green" President Van der Bellen, look much more sane and at least trying to be independent.

And Kneisl and Strache can even be called strategically minded politicians who know not only that without Russia there would be no present-day Austria, but also that the conflict with Moscow does not meet Austrian, German, and European interests. And in this sense, Europe should learn from Vienna - if, of course, she wants to determine her own future.

Remember, we don't get to walk away from the stain that we put on ourselves

The results of the 2022 midterms have not been good news for Donald Trump or the Republican Party. When the final loss came in last week — the defeat of Trump favorite Herschel Walker in Georgia's Senate runoff — the intraparty recriminations began immediately.

Rep. Lee Zeldin of New York, the GOP candidate who lost his race for New York governor, said "change is desperately needed." Laura Ingraham, the Fox News host, said she was "pissed."

"We don't change anything," Ingraham said. "We just keep doing the same thing over and over again."

The knives were especially out for Ronna McDaniel, the current Republican National Committee chair, a Trump uber-loyalist who has announced that she's running again for the party's top job. Internal communications obtained by POLITICO revealed the party's internal debate over her performance.

"No RNC Chair in the history of the whole party has lasted as long as Ronna McDaniel without seeing at least one winning election season," Erick Erickson, the conservative radio host, wrote on Twitter. "She took the job in 2017, and the GOP has lost every election cycle since."

McDaniel will draw at least some challenges when RNC members meet to determine the chairmanship at their meeting in California next month. Although Zeldin considered but has declined to run against her, Harnett Dhillon, a RNC committee member whose firm represents Trump, is going ahead with a challenge. So is Mike Lindell, the MyPillow CEO and election denier. But McDaniel is favored in Republican circles to win a fourth term; McDaniel has a letter endorsing her candidacy signed by more than half of the committee members, so the outcome, as Zeldin complained, may be "pre-baked."

Notably, however, all of McDaniel's potential challengers are Trump loyalists like her. More establishment types remain thoroughly sidelined in the party, despite the electoral failures of the former president and his allies.

To understand why Trump and McDaniel have such staying power, I called up Michael Steele, a former RNC chair and former Maryland lieutenant governor, who broke with Trump and endorsed President Joe Biden in 2020 but still is a Republican.

Steele explained that in

the years since Trump came on the political scene, MAGA loyalists have come to dominate the party apparatus, particularly at the state level. So even if some national politicians and party members want to go another direction, it's not so easy to change course.

"If you look at state party organizations, it's the MAGA strain of Republicanism that's become dominant," Steele explained. "And they're willing to change the rules, they're willing to ignore an insurrection, refer to it as just 'political discourse.' All of that stuff coming out of the national party is a reflection of what's happening inside the party across the states."

The post-midterm recriminations are a signal that dissent is growing, Steele said, but there's little sign that it's enough to loosen the former president's hold on the party. He puts the odds that Trump is the party's 2024 nominee at 80 percent. Which means that the Republican Party's fortunes are still firmly tied to Trump, for better or for worse.

"A party is not going to survive when it is fixated on the ramblings and musings of one person who, in the main, is not a Republican, is not a conservative, but has very effectively used both of those values to secure his political power," Steele said. "And there have been a lot of people inside the party willing to compromise those values in order for him to do that."

This transcript has been edited for length and clarity.

Siders: For all the criticism McDaniel has drawn for the party's performance during her tenure, it looks like it will be hard for anyone to dislodge her. Why is that?

Steele: Ronna's not stupid. She went out and secured 100 signatures of endorsement of the 168 RNC members. So now it becomes a question of, do any of those 100 people peel off of her for someone else, which is a very tough thing to do? The reality of it is she had the backing of the former president, she has the backing of at least 100 members in writing, and she has been able to pretty much provide the members what they've wanted.

So, when you look at this new effort around her potential reelection, to me it signals that at least a portion of the members are fed up with all the losing because they were promised a lot of winning. She has not been able to deliver on that.

Siders: So why does she

David Siders

still seem to have the support of a majority of the RNC?

Steele: Probably a lot of folks who are themselves very much anchored to Trump know that this is Trump's person. Trump hasn't come out and indicated that he thinks the party should go in a different direction, or that he has somebody else that he wants in that job. She has served well providing the cover that Trump has needed — paid his legal bills, paid personal bills for the Trump family out of RNC funds, which I've always found to be problematic.

The reality of it is the RNC changed the rules to help Trump to avoid primary challenges in the '20 cycle, or even in sort of gilding the lily to help him secure the nomination in '16, to prevent others, like Sen. Ted Cruz, who wanted to have a floor challenge, because people then still believed he was not the best candidate to go into the fall election.

Siders: McDaniel was hand-picked by Trump. But how did the RNC come to be so dominated by Trump loyalists in the first place?

Steele: Well, they were home grown. There were people inside the party who liked him, and then after that '16 cycle, they started taking over state parties. These MAGA heads started taking over state parties, which means that they became chair and national committeemen and committeewomen, which means they would get to sit on the committee. So, you have this process where, through the elections at the state level, Trump supporters were reinforced with other Trump supporters who were getting elected. And if you look at state party organizations, it's the MAGA strain of Republicanism that's become dominant. And they're willing to change the rules, they're willing to ignore an insurrection, refer to it as just "political discourse." All of that stuff coming out of the national party is a reflection of what's happening inside the party across the states. Ronna doesn't go on national television and refer to an insurrection of our government as typical political discourse unless there's a sentiment inside the party that supports that view.

Siders: It does seem that an increasing number of Republicans, after the midterms, are beginning to sour on Trump. Do you get any sense of a shift inside the RNC?

Steele: There's a little

bit. We're party people. Why are we in the party? To win elections. And when you're not winning, when you're putting up the kind of candidates that we're putting up, you begin to realize the limits that someone like Trump brings to the game. Yes, the base loves him. Yes, some of our major donors love him. But there comes a point where you've got to balance that against whether or not you're actually winning elections. And in the process of not winning, you're becoming less and less of a political factor, and you're becoming more and more marginalized by those types of candidates that we've seen in the last couple of cycles.

Siders: But the RNC itself is still Trump's, right?

Steele: As far as I can see, yes.

Siders: Why hasn't it been able to move away from him?

Steele: Because that hard, 30 percent of the Republican base doesn't want to, and when the state party operations are run by those very same people, they're not going to go away from Trump that easily. So, what does the national chairwoman do? How does she navigate that space? And a party is not going to survive when it is fixated on the ramblings and musings of one person who, in the main, is not a Republican, is not a conservative, but has very effectively used both of those values to secure his political power. And there have been a lot of people inside the party willing to compromise those values in order for him to do that. And so, for Ronna, the challenge for her is what do you do? Well, she answered that question for me when Donald Trump told her to stop using the Romney name. And she did. I knew then where this was going to go.

Siders: You think it's time for McDaniel to move on?

Steele: She's not winning elections. Shit, I got fired after getting the most seats we've ever gotten in almost 100 years. So, I don't know how you justify it. I mean, sure, you may not have liked my style or the way I talked about stuff, but damn, I know how to win campaigns, if that's your standard. OK, then she stays. To be clear, it's not just her, it's the state parties, as well. I mean, the 168 RNC members like to sit around and think they're blameless for a lot of the shit that goes on inside the party. But they're just as culpable and problematic in dealing with some of these things as anyone else. And so, you don't get to isolate

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Pakistan-China SEZ collaboration to boost Pak's economy: Chairman SEZA

ISLAMABAD (INP): At the critical moment when Pakistan's economy is passing through an era of stagflation, SEZs are significant for shaping Pakistan's new 'industrial identity', under which Pakistan is supposed to stand side by side with Chinese companies to embark on contemporary economic projects.

This was stated by S.M. Naveed, Chairman, Special Economic Zones Authority (SEZA), Punjab in an interview with China Economic Net (CEN).

The global experience suggests that SEZs are an important source for diversification of the economy, reduction in regional disparities, clustering of economic activities for complementarity generation with local industries, skill development of local labour force, transfer of technology and dissemination of know-how, attrac-

tion of local and foreign direct investment especially in the under-privileged regions, he said.

The chairman added that nine SEZs under CPEC would be a life-time opportunity for Pakistani companies to collaborate with Chinese companies for the development of export-oriented manufacturing sectors.

It will also enable firms to cluster and tap the benefits of external economies, and will thus provide an opportunity to put domestic industries on a higher learning curve.

He believes that SEZs under CPEC have the potential to enhance productivity, integrate Pakistan with global value chains and revive its manufacturing industry in the long run.

"The development of SEZs must be aimed at improving the overall business climate in the country. This can be done through

improved infrastructure and trade facilitation to attract investment from foreign and domestic firms in the zones," he further mentioned, "it is also important to note that Pakistan has a weak legal regime, which is also a major hurdle to attract foreign investment in the country. In this regard, Pakistan can learn from China to strengthen its security legislation."

Over the past few decades, China has experienced the largest economic expansion of any country in history, largely as a result of its efforts to launch and develop SEZs.

"China has made an incredible triumph in establishing SEZs to achieve remarkable economic growth. It is worth mentioning that China employed 30 million workforce in SEZs that have brought down inequalities and alleviated poverty," underscored S.M. Naveed.

China's SEZs have grown rapidly in cultural, economic and trade terms. The products from the SEZs are mainly sold to foreign countries.

By improving and promoting their own economic conditions and preferential policies, they attract foreign investment to set up factories in China to produce those products. S.M. Naveed said that Pakistan should focus on cluster-based industrialization, which is a key factor in China's progress.

Regarding the interaction between Pakistani and Chinese SEZs, the chairman concluded that they are contemplating arranging roadshows, conferences, and single-product exhibitions in China to impart first-hand knowledge about the special incentives given to SEZs in Punjab coupled with a peaceful and harmonious environment.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar presiding over meeting of Economic Coordination Committee of Cabinet virtually through zoon.

Furniture exports surge in 1st quarter

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chief Executive Officer Pakistan Furniture Council (PFC) Mian Kashif Ashfaq Sunday said that furniture exports from the country during first three months of current financial year witnessed about 93.61 percent growth as compared the exports of the corresponding period of last year.

Talking to a delegation of women furniture designers and manufacturers led by Ms Nida Ejaz he said now the volume of furniture exports has touched the figure of US\$ 5.386million compared to US\$ 2.782 million in the same period of corresponding year.

He said furniture industry had big potential to dominate global markets with innovative designs and could significantly contribute to exports. However, a package of incentives and facilitation was direly needed for further boosting exports, he added.

He said if the government extended full support, the volume of furniture exports could touch the figure of \$5 billion for the next five years.

Speaking on the occasion, Ms Nida Ejaz hoped the furniture sector would grow and flourish in the days to come. He said the business community had pinned high hopes on government for firm commitment to providing all facilities to businessmen to enhance the volume of exports.

Oil prices fall for 5th straight session

NEW YORK (APP): Oil prices declined on Saturday for a fifth consecutive day, with both benchmark finishing at their lowest in nearly a year. The WTI for January delivery lost 55 cents, or 0.8 percent, to settle at 71.46 US dollars a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange. That marked the lowest finish for front-month contract since Dec. 21, 2021, according to Dow Jones Market Data.

Brent crude for February delivery dropped 1.02 dollars, or 1.32 percent, to close at 76.15 dollars a barrel on the London ICE Futures Exchange, also the lowest settlement since last December.

The slide came as global growth fears gripped markets with sentiment shifting to a risk-off mode. Traders continued to digest data on US fuel stockpiles. The US EIA on reported that US total motor gasoline inventories increased by 5.3 million barrels during the week ending Dec. 2, and distillate fuel inventories jumped by 6.2 million barrels.

He believed the government needed to generate additional revenue of about Rs800 billion to get the next IMF tranche. However, the political cost of squeezing this extra revenue from citizens is too high for the present government, which is the main hurdle, he said.

He said that the demand for dollars remains high in the interbank market, while the open market offers no hard currency. The dollar rose 0.09pc to close at Rs224.37 in the interbank market during the week.

However, most market players don't trust the rates given by the State Bank, saying the deals were actually being done at higher prices. He said that it was a

UBG for acquiring latest knowledge in Sci-Tech

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman United Business Group (UBG) in Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) Shahzad Ali Malik Sunday said that no nation can progress leaps and bounds in the world in any sphere of life without acquiring latest knowledge in science and technology.

Talking to a delegation of industrialists and traders led by Jawad Hafeez, he said science and technology plays a crucial part in socio-economic development.

In this context, the promotion of science can help the business community

and public more easily acquire scientific knowledge, said a press release.

He said Pakistan in current worldwide scenario must adopt an innovation-driven development policy and become an important part of the global innovation system.

He said the reforms of the science and technology management system was an important for achieving the desired results of economic growth coupled with prosperity laced with development and progress for down trodden.

He said in China, the number of scientifically literate people rose from

1.44 percent in 2001 to 10.56 percent in 2020 which has created an environment conducive to innovation in the field of sci-tech sector.

He said that's why China has been vigorously promoting the popularization of sci-tech and taken measures to increase people's scientific knowledge and Pakistan must toe it's policy to bring industrial revolution in the country.

He said it's feasible to design programs that can be sustainable over time and even included in university curriculum to engage youngsters to promote scientific education.

Private sector urged for embracing new technologies

ISLAMABAD (APP): Coordinator to Federal Tax Ombudsman Meher Kashif Younis Sunday said that embracing new technologies and new forms of business was the need of the hour to grasp and explore new development opportunities to propel national economic growth besides boosting exports.

Talking to a delegation of exporters and importers led by Shahid Nazir, CEO Lahore Filter House, he said we must upgrade and transform traditional industries and promote industrial digitization and foreign trade as a top priority, adding that optimized measures and policy support also needed to ensure for private foreign trade

enterprises to continue to gear up national economic growth.

He said hit by COVID-induced lockdowns nationwide, many enterprises could only operate at a much lower capacity, with some even forced to close down. Quoting China he said many Chinese private enterprises have now embraced cross-border e-commerce as a means to increase competitiveness and sustain their growth momentum.

Over the past five years, foreign trade through cross-border e-commerce conducted by Chinese small and medium-sized private companies has increased nearly 10 times, he said adding that it is still growing

at a two-digit rate annually.

It is vital for the business community of Pakistan to equip with modern technology and tools to compete in global and local markets, especially e-commerce, he said and stressed the need for taking pragmatic initiatives to arrange on-job training and capacity building to enhance professional technical skills of human resource, workforce to meet mounting hovering challenges.

He also called for strengthening industry-academia linkage adding that educational institutions need to be focused on the development of students' technical skills to meet the requirements of market trends.

MCCI president stresses focus on flouriculture for economic stability

MULTAN (APP): President Multan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI), Mian Rashid Iqbal, stressed adopting modern flower cultivation techniques to enhance the production of the latest flower varieties by paying special focus on 'flouriculture' to bring economic stability to the country through its export.

While talking to APP here on Sunday, the Multan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) president said that the maximum cultivation of flowers was a big source of bringing revenue for the country after the

textile sector.

He said that the country's export of textiles was 26 billion dollars and added that as much could also be earned from flouriculture if we develop infrastructure and greenhouses.

He said that our country's environment was a favourite for the cultivation of flowers due to less snow falling in winter.

He said that the production of flowers used to stop in the entire world in the winter season and the demand for flowers reached on peak and it was a golden opportunity to avail of it.

Likewise, the demand for halal meat was also very high across the globe and we could earn lots of foreign exchange through halal meat export.

He said that it was a short-term business with less investment.

He said that increasing export and the balance of imports was necessary for economic stability in the country.

Mian Rashid Iqbal demanded of the incumbent government to allow the export of sugar as one million tons of sugar was lying in godowns.

He said that the sugarcane crushing season was

going to start and surplus sugar production also is expected this year due to the cultivation of crops on large scale.

He said that the chamber was playing its due role to highlight the issues about the industry at high-level forums and solutions to these problems to boost the industry.

To a question about Pak vs England test series, President Multan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) said that international events were vital to portray a soft image of the country globally and to attract the youth towards sports.

BMP calls for protecting trade and industry from default

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry's Businessmen Panel (BMP) has said the trade and industry has to be kept solvent and protected from default for which prudent measures would have to be taken, such as removing restriction on imports along with strict monitoring of the central bank of forex companies to help stabilize the local currency, as the country's total liquid foreign exchange reserves held by the State Bank have plunged by \$784 million to a nearly four-year low of \$6.72 billion.

FPCCI former president and BMP Chairman Mian Anjum Nisar pointed out that the strategy of curbing imports was not growth-friendly. He expressed concern about the country's ability to pay back the huge amount of foreign loans. The frequent concerns have depressed the market and the exchange rate remained unstable during the ongoing fiscal year.

He said that the foreign exchange reserves should remain the top agenda of the government. However, SBP's reserves have dropped by more than \$4 billion from around \$11 billion at the time when this government took the helm in April 2022.

BMP is in favor of export expansion and this is where we should plan to focus our efforts to take this forward for sustained economic growth. He said that our tax to GDP percentage is very low at 9.2 percent. We have to do better in order to achieve economic stability but we will undertake reforms in a gradual and orderly fashion in this regard.

Quoting the figures, the Businessmen Panel (BMP) Chief said that net foreign reserves held by commercial banks now stand at \$5.867bn, meaning the country's total liquid foreign reserves are now \$12.58 billion. Central bank currently holds

\$6.72bn, barely enough to cover over one month's worth of imports.

Anjum Nisar says the falling reserves may make it more difficult for the country to repay foreign loans; the remaining amount of over \$6.7bn is just to cover a month's imports.

He said that during the last five months, inflows remained just \$4 billion but the figure was expected to rise in the second half of the current fiscal year ending June 2023.

FPCCI former president attributed the fall in foreign exchange reserves to a payment of \$1 billion against the maturity of sukuk (Islamic bonds). However, he said the \$6.7 billion

reserves were not calculated after the payment for bonds.

He said that the SBP paid \$1 billion and another \$1.2 billion to two commercial banks, which have agreed to relend the same amount in a few days.

The country is now expecting another tranche from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), but the ninth-review talks have been delayed apparently due to Fund's criticism over an increased fiscal deficit. The government is unwilling to impose more taxes for higher revenues, while the IMF insists the government must consolidate the economy.

He believed the government

needed to generate additional revenue of about Rs800 billion to get the next IMF tranche. However, the political cost of squeezing this extra revenue from citizens is too high for the present government, which is the main hurdle, he said.

He said that the demand for dollars remains high in the interbank market, while the open market offers no hard currency. The dollar rose 0.09pc to close at Rs224.37 in the interbank market during the week.

However, most market players don't trust the rates given by the State Bank, saying the deals were actually being done at higher prices. He said that it was a

positive indication that the rupee had started to appreciate against greenback majorly due to less import and partially owing to the SBP's strict monitoring of the foreign exchange operations. He expected that with controlled import bill and lower trade deficit, the rupee is expected to gradually strengthen. He said that the rupee depreciation has been overdone and driven by only sentiments. The rupee has overshot due to concerns about domestic politics and the IMF program. The local currency had fallen by 23 percent in 2022 on fears of delay in the IMF program, falling FX reserves and increased political noise.

He said that Charter of Economy is imperative for the economic survival of Pakistan and all political parties must realize the gravity of the situation and sign it in greater interest of the nation and country. He said that the value of their capital had recorded a steep decline and their assets had now been reduced to almost nil. He said the government was playing a role of silent spectator while dollar appreciation coupled with heavy taxation, hike in interest rate, tariff of electricity, gas and patrol had further increased their cost of production and they had been forced to close down their businesses to save them from further losses.



In brief

Tennis C'ship from Monday

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 8th Benazir Bhutto Shaheed National Tennis Championship will roll into action at Islamabad Tennis Complex on Monday. Talking to media, chief organizer of the championship, Fazal-e-Subhan, said that all arrangements to hold the event had been finalized in the organizing committee meeting. Senator Taj Haider, who is the chairman of the committee, chaired the meeting. "The championship is taking place under the supervision of Islamabad Tennis Complex and in collaboration with Sindh sports board," he said. "Around 300 men and women players will participate in 13 different categories, including Men Singles, Men Doubles, Ladies Singles, Boys U18, Girls U18, Boys U14, Girls U14, Boys and Girls U12, Boys and Girls U10, Special Children, Senior doubles 45 plus, Senior doubles 60 plus and media open event," he added. The draws of the championship have been opened in the draws committee under the championship of Kamran Khalil. The qualifying rounds will be played on Monday, semi-finals will be held on December 17, while finals will take place on December 18.

Largest talent hunt programme

LAHORE (APP): Director General (DG) Sports board Punjab (SBP) Muhammad Tariq Qureshi said in a statement on Sunday that the Directorate General of Sports and Youth Affairs Punjab was currently conducting the largest talent hunt programme of the country at all public and private schools. He said that thousands of children had been selected in the talent hunt programme, in which school trials and games would be organised in the form of clusters. "The games of hockey, gymnastics, volleyball, athletics, table tennis, badminton, archery, handball, cricket, wrestling and martial arts are included in the first phase," he added. Tariq Qureshi said that it was for the first time in the history of Pakistan that the talent hunt campaign was being conducted at the school level. "In the school games, the competitions will be organised at tehsil, district, division and then at the provincial level," he explained. He said trials of lakhs of children would be conducted at tehsil, district and division level through talent hunt programme till January 10, 2023. "The school games, inter-division games and provincial competitions will be conducted at different stages of the revolutionary program. The most important component in the talent hunt program is the organization of coaching and training camps". The DG SBP informed that the expert coaches of the Directorate General of Sports will train the players at the academies established for different sports. "The mega talent hunt campaign has been linked with SBP's Olympic Vision Program.

Ben Stokes equals Brendon's Test record

MULTAN (Monitoring Desk): England Test captain Ben Stokes equalled his coach Brendon McCullum's famed record of hitting the most sixes in Test cricket amid his 41-run knock against Pakistan in the ongoing second Test. Stokes, who resumed England's second innings at 202/5 with Harry Brook, played an important knock of 41 runs in 51 balls and briefly carried his overnight partnership with the latter to set England to finish at a decent total.

Second Test in Multan poised for exciting finish

MULTAN (Monitoring Desk): The fans are all set to see another exciting result oriented Test match between Pakistan and England after the hosts finished day three of the Multan Test on 198 for four and need a further 157 to deny the tourists a second successive victory in the three-match series.

The hosts who are already 1-0 up in the three-match Test series, will look to win Test match tomorrow at the Multan Cricket Stadium and take an assailable lead. Meanwhile, the hosts will be eager to go all out to win this Test match and go into the Karachi Test with series levelled 1-1.

Pakistan lost the key wicket of half centurion Imam-ul-Haq late on the third day to give England hope in the second Test on Sunday. England, which held a 79-run first innings lead, had set up a target of 355 runs after it was bowled out for 275 in its second innings today.

England had defeated Pakistan by 74 runs in the first Test at the Pindi Cricket Stadium, which was also England's first test in Pakistan for 17 years.

The left-handed pair of Imam, who made 60, and Saud Shakeel (54 not out) had shared a 108-run stand and attacked the bowlers before Imam played a lose drive against Jack Leach and was caught in the slip late in the last session.

England had earlier missed an opportunity to dismiss Imam soon after he completed his half-century. Television replays showed a tiny spike on Imam's bat when he tried to glance Mark Wood down the legside delivery and was well caught by Ollie Pope. However, captain Ben Stokes didn't go

for the referral.

James Anderson, Ollie Robinson and Wood showed great display of seam and swing bowling in the middle session, claiming three wickets for 17 runs before Imam and Shakeel dug in and took Pakistan to 136-3 at tea.

Imam didn't open the innings after feeling discomfort in his right hamstring and went to hospital for MRI scans, but batted confidently at No. 5 though Will Jacks had a chance to end his innings but couldn't hold onto a sharp return. Harry Brook also couldn't grab a low one-handed catch at forward short leg when Shakeel was batting on just four.

Earlier in the day, Brook had hit his second successive century and made 108 off 149 balls before England were bowled out for 275. In the absence of Imam, Abdullah Shafique (45) and Mohammad Rizwan (30) batted fluently and provided a confident start of 66 before England's seamers started to pressure the home team after lunch.

Anderson dismissed Rizwan immediately after the break off a ball that left the right-hander just enough to knock back his off stump. Babar Azam (1) offered no shot to Robinson's sharp incoming delivery and was also clean bowled.

Wood switched ends and went through the defenses of Abdullah with a sharp fast delivery as Pakistan slumped to 83 for three.

Mystery spinner Abrar Ahmed prospered again and ended up with match figures of 11 for 234, becoming only the second Pakistani after Mohammad Zahid to take 10 wickets on a Test debut. Fast bowler Zahid took 11-130 against

New Zealand at the Pindi Cricket Stadium in 1996.

Resuming their second innings at the overnight score of 202 for five, with 281 runs ahead, Stokes (41) stretched the sixth wicket stand with Brook to 101 runs as England scored at a brisk pace before losing five wickets for just 19 runs.

Brook, 74 overnight, raised his second hundred with a pulled boundary from left-arm spinner Mohammad Nawaz before Stokes fell to a brilliant running catch by Mohammad Ali at deep mid-wicket.

Abrar, who took seven for 114 in the first innings, claimed his fourth second-innings wicket by having Robinson clean bowled off a googly before leg-spinner Zahid Mahmood (3-52) took the last two wickets in one over shortly after England's lead crossed the 350-run mark.

Brook, who hit 14 fours and a six, was caught in the outfield when he swept Mahmood to deep square leg and Anderson was trapped leg before wicket.

Scores in brief:

England 281 all out, 51.4 overs (Ben Duckett 63, Ollie Pope 60, Mark Wood 36 not out, Will Jacks 31, Ben Stokes 20; Abrar Ahmed 7-114, Zahid Mahmood 3-63) and 275 all out, 64.5 overs (Harry Brook 108, Ben Duckett 79, Ben Stokes 41, Joe Root 21; Abrar Ahmed 4-120, Zahid Mahmood 3-52)

Pakistan 202 all out, 62.5 overs (Babar Azam 75, Saud Shakeel 63, Faheem Ashraf 22; Jack Leach 4-98, Joe Root 2-23, Mark Wood 2-40) and 198-4, 64 overs (Imam-ul-Haq 60, Saud Shakeel 54 not out, Abdullah Shafique 45, Mohamad Rizwan 30).



MULTAN: James Anderson knocked back Mohammad Rizwan's off stump.

Morocco's coach describes his team 'Rocky of World Cup'

DOHA (Agencies): Morocco's coach Walid Regragui described his team as "the Rocky of this World Cup" after his team earned a historic victory over Portugal to become the first African team to reach the semi-finals.

"We have made our people and our continent so happy and proud. When you watch Rocky, you want to support Rocky Balboa and I think we are the Rocky of this World Cup. I think now the world is with Morocco," Regragui told a news conference after his team beat Portugal 1-0 in the quarter-finals.

The coach said his players, won their victories against Belgium, Spain, and Portugal, with the spirit of the iconic movie character boxer Rocky Balboa, played by actor Sylvester Stallone. Regragui, 47, said his team showed that it is possible for an African team to play in the semi-finals of the World Cup.

Injured Rohit out of India Test team against Bangladesh

NEW DELHI (Agencies): India skipper Rohit Sharma will miss the first of the two Tests against Bangladesh due to his thumb injury, the country's cricket board said on Saturday.

Fast bowler Mohammed Shami and Ravindra Jadeja have been ruled out of the series as they are yet to recover from their respective injuries.

"Rohit Sharma met with a specialist in Mumbai for his left thumb injury, which he sustained during the 2nd ODI against Bangladesh," the Board of Control for Cricket on India said in a statement.

"The BCCI Medical Team will take a call on his availability for the second and final Test at a later stage."

Bangladesh won the ODI series 2-1 but India did had a consolation victory in the third. KL Rahul, who skipped them in that game, will lead the team in the first Test with Cheteshwar Pujara as his deputy.

Uncapped batsman Abhimanyu Easwaran has been named Rohit's replacement for the opener starting December 14 in Chittagong.

The national selectors have named Navdeep Saini and Saurabh Kumar as replacements for Shami (shoulder injury) and Jadeja (knee injury).

Fast bowler Jaydev Unadkat has also been added to the 17-member squad for the matches, which will be part of the World Test Championship.

Unadkat, a left-arm quick, played his only Test in 2010 and last played a Twenty20 international for India in 2018.

Squad: KL Rahul (capt), Shubman Gill, Cheteshwar Pujara, Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer, Rishabh Pant (wk), KS Bharat (wk), Ravichandran Ashwin, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Shardul Thakur, Mohammed Siraj, Umesh Yadav, Abhimanyu Easwaran, Navdeep Saini, Saurabh Kumar, Jaydev Unadkat.

Corps Commander Polo Cup Remington Pharma clinch trophy

LAHORE (APP): Remington Pharma edged past Master Paints Black by a narrow margin of 4-4 in the main final of the Corps Commander Polo Cup, here at the Jinnah Polo Fields on Sunday.

A large number of spectators were present to enjoy the pleasant weather as well as the enthralling and exciting main final here. CEO of Diamond Paints Mir Shoaib Ahmed, Director Mir Huzafa Ahmed, Mir Khuzaima Ahmed, Club President Lt Col Shoaib Aftab (R), Secretary Major Babar Mehboob Awan (R) and players, their families and polo enthusiasts.

Master Paints Black started the match having a half-goal handicap advantage and dominated the first three chukkers in

great style but Remington Pharma then made a strong comeback in the dying moments of the third chukker and the fourth and last chukker to take a slight half-goal lead that helped them win the crucial match by 4-4.

From Remington Pharma, Basel Faisal Khokhar pumped in the winning goal while Ahmed Zubair Butt banged in a beautiful brace and Ahmed Bilal Riaz contributed with one goal.

From Master Paints Black, Manuel Carranza though played superb polo and hammered a hat-trick and Sufi Muhammad Haroon struck one goal yet their efforts proved fruitless in the end, as their side lost the final by just a half-goal margin.

Talking to media after registering the title triumph, Basel Faisal Khokhar, Captain of Remington Pharma, said: "The team worked very hard for this prestigious event and managed to earn a place in the main final.

Although we faced tough resistance from Master Paints Black in the final, yet we remained firm and played like a unit that helped us win the coveted trophy. This polo season is moving towards its peak and we will try to record more title victories in this season.

"Earlier, the subsidiary final between Remounts and Master Paints/Newage Cables also proved a nail-biting encounter and after a tough fight, Remounts emerged as winners by a close margin of 9-8.

France beat England 2-1 to reach World Cup semifinals

DOHA (Agencies): France edged England 2-1 to reach the World Cup semifinals on Saturday.

A header by French forward Olivier Giroud found the hands of England's goalie Jordan Pickford in the 11th minute.

Aurelien Tchouameni's hit a screamer to the left bottom corner of the net that gave the lead to France in the 17th minute.

England's Luke Shaw's free kick from dangerous range was held by France keeper Hugo Lloris in the 21st minute.

Lloris made another critical save in a one-on-one against Harry Kane in the 22nd minute. The Video Assistant Referee (VAR) called off a penalty for England in the 26th minute. Kane's excellent long-

range effort was saved superbly by his Tottenham teammate Lloris in the 29th minute and the first half ended 1-0.

England's Jude Bellingham's hard shot was denied by Lloris and the ensuing danger from the corner kick in the 48th minute.

Kane finally beat Lloris with a penalty kick in the 54th minute and joined Wayne Rooney atop England's list of goal-scorers with 53.

One minute later, Adrien Rabiot's attempt was denied by Pickford.

Lloris showed safe hands against Bukayo Saka's attempt in the 60th minute.

English defender Harry Maguire's header missed the mark above the left

crossbar in the 70th minute. Pickford made a clinical save against Giroud's close-range attempt in the 77th minute but one minute later, Giroud beat Pickford with a header, giving France the lead.

Kane, the English captain, missed an opportunity to level the match and become the Three Lions top scorer when he wasted a VAR penalty in the 83rd minute.

Marcus Rashford's free kick was inches from going in the French goal in the 101st minute.

Lloris became the player with the most appearances for the French National Team with 143 matches. He passed Lilian Thuram's 142 caps. France will take on Morocco in the semifinal Wednesday.

Axelsen and Yamaguchi win badminton World Tour Finals

BANGKOK (AFP): Men's badminton world number one Viktor Axelsen regained his mojo to claim his eighth title for 2022, steamrolling Indonesian ace Anthony Ginting at the season-ending World Tour Finals in Bangkok on Sunday.

Reigning world champion Akane Yamaguchi of Japan defeated Taiwanese powerhouse Tai Tzu Ying to claim the women's singles crown. The Badminton World Federation had moved its \$1.5 million flagship event to the Thai capital's Nimibutr Arena after original host China dropped the tournament due to its tough Covid restrictions.

Axelsen, the defending champion, appeared fresh, relaxed, energetic and in control as he cruised to a 21-13 victory in game one. His confidence had been shaky following a surprise loss to India's H.S. Prannoy on Friday -- only his third defeat this year -- but he appeared to be a different player on Sunday.

Ginting struggled in the second game too, and was down eight points at the interval. The world number seven put up a fight in the final few rallies but lacked stamina and patience as



Axelsen galloped to a 10-point advantage, ultimately triumphing 21-14.

"It feels absolutely amazing," Axelsen said post-match, after dancing across the court and thanking his wife and two young daughters in the crowd.

"I couldn't have wished for a better ending (to the year)." He attributed his solid recovery after two gruelling matches before the final to good rest and eating well. A disappointed Ginting said he was looking forward to a big 2023 and hoped to grow in confidence. "I cannot get any easy points from him," Ginting said.

Yamaguchi dominates

In the women's final, Yamaguchi was victorious in closely fought straight games -- 21-18, 22-20. Tai -- the Tokyo Olympic silver medalist -- made a number of unforced errors and struggled to match Yamaguchi's pace while

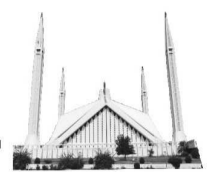
maintaining shot quality. Yamaguchi had a four-point advantage at the tail end of the first game and although Tai saved a couple of game points, the Japanese star was unstoppable. The second game was filled with impressive net exchanges and electric rallies, with Yamaguchi again dominating.

Tai showed moments of brilliance but grew visibly frustrated as Yamaguchi inched closer to the trophy and her second end-of-year championship title.

"My opponent was skilled and quite strong, on the second game I was trying to do my best -- use all my skills and power," Yamaguchi said post-match.

Tai praised her opponent's net play and said her own defence had been lacking.

"Her speed was faster than mine which resulted in her having (an) advantage in attack," Tai said.



In brief

IRSA releases 77,600 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Sunday released 77,600 cusecs of water from various rim stations with an inflow of 42,900 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1498.45 feet and was 100.445 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 20,800 cusecs while outflow as 42,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1127.50 feet, which was 77.50 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded at 8,500 cusecs and 22,000 cusecs, respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded at 44,200, 40,700, 33,500 and 13,800 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 8,500 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera and 2,000 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

46,388 coronavirus patients discharged

RAWALPINDI (APP): As many as 46,388 COVID-19 patients had been discharged after getting treatment from the district's health facilities, out of which, 42,756 were Rawalpindi residents and 3,632 were from other districts. According to district health authority data, 47,738 patients have tested positive since the pandemic, including 44,106 belonging to Rawalpindi and 3,632 from the outside district. It updated that 1,777 had lost their battle for life, with 1,341 belonging to Rawalpindi and 436 from other areas. The report said that presently, nine patients were quarantined at home and no one at any health facility. The health authority further updated that 7,006,011 people, including 44,790 health workers, had jabbed themselves against the lethal coronavirus.

ANF seizes over 21 kg drugs

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) Pakistan while conducting ten counter-narcotics operations throughout the country seized over 21kg of drugs and arrested nine accused including a woman, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Sunday. He informed in an operation here near Ayub Park, two drug pushers were arrested and ANF recovered 2.4 kg charas. ANF and ASF in a joint operation at Multan Airport recovered 1.9 kg charras from the possession of a passenger resident of Khyber going to Abu Dhabi. He informed that ANF recovered over 7.5 kg of liquid Ice drug from the trolley bag of a passenger resident of Mardan going to Jeddah at Karachi International Airport. In the fourth operation, a raid was conducted near Quetta Saniab road and ANF seized four kg charas and 700 grams of crystal heroin from the possession of a proclaimed offender accused resident of Quetta who was also wanted in another case. ANF arrested two accused from Shaheen Chowk near old airport Rawalpindi and recovered four kg Ice drug. In an operation, 22 grams of Ice drug was recovered from a parcel being sent to Australia, and intercepted at a private courier company in Islamabad. 42 heroin-filled capsules were recovered from the possession of a female passenger resident of Sahiwal, going to Colombo at Lahore International Airport. ANF in an operation at Bacha Khan International Airport Peshawar seized seven charras-filled capsules and netted an accused resident of Bannu.



ISLAMABAD: A painter busy in paintings on walls for the beautification of the Federal Capital.

Christmas to spread joy in cold wintry December

ISLAMABAD (APP): Christmas is around the corner to spread joy in the cold wintry December with majority of Christian community in the federal capital like across the globe having started the initial preparations for celebrating this festival in a passionate way.

The main markets and shops of the capital city have started displaying a variety of Christmas-related accessories for attracting the community while the sweet and flower shops are also ready to gain huge profits through selling their items on this occasion.

Every year, the Christian community with the advent of December starts their preparations by buying all the stuff including dresses, shoes and other accessories to mark the occasion in a befitting manner.

Those who cannot afford to shop for their family from the main markets and malls during the prevailing price hike situation are also visiting the flea markets to buy second-hand clothes to become a part of this festi-

val. Rizwana Masih, a mother of three school-going children said, "My husband is a cab driver and not earning much. We are hardly managing the educational expenses of our children and running the household affairs".

"Due to the price hike situation, it has become impossible to buy the new clothes and shoes of my children so I have decided to flea market for buying stuff for the occasion", she said. The festival proves to be a blessing for the shopkeepers who earn good business through selling the festival related essentials.

"Christmas is the main festival during this winter season through which we can earn good profits through selling decorative ornaments, chocolates, flowers and gift items in a bulk", Sajid Ali, a shop owner at F-7 Markaz said.

Talking to APP, he said, "We are expecting good sale on this years' Christmas as most of the people prefer to buy gifts

for their near ones to share the happiness of the festival". The festival would be marked through different activities ranging from community gatherings to cake cutting ceremonies while the main attraction of the Christmas celebrations is decoration of Christmas tree to welcome the arrival of Santa Claus, also known as Father Christmas.

The youngsters decorate the Christmas tree with different ornaments including baubles, small bells, painted gold or silver, stars of different shapes and sizes, pine cones, apples, candies, tinsel and balloons made from glass, metal, wood and ceramic. An angel and star is often placed at the top of the tree representing the host of angels.

"I always get excited to decorate the Christmas tree with different unique ornaments at my office, arrange a cake cutting ceremony and exchange gifts besides other celebrations", Asiya, a government employee said while talking to APP.

Authorities directed to complete development projects of Rwp division on fast track

RAWALPINDI (APP): Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, Saqib Manan has directed the authorities concerned to complete construction work on ongoing development projects of Rawalpindi division on fast track. According to a Commissioner Office spokesman, the Commissioner while reviewing the progress on the development schemes of the Division had directed the Deputy Commissioners (DCs) of the division to monitor the progress of different development schemes and ensure quality construction work in their respective districts.

He further said out of total 558 development schemes

across the division, 403 projects were ongoing while 155 new projects were also launched for which funds amounting to Rs 24,156 million had been released. The Commissioner said the welfare of the people was the first priority of the incumbent government and directed the authorities that no compromise should be made in the quality of construction work and regular monitoring should be ensured.

The officers concerned were directed to visit project sites on regular basis and update the Commissioner office about the progress of the schemes.

The officers should also regularly monitor the con-

struction work through the Smart Monitoring of Development Projects App and ensure that data of their concerned schemes are updated regularly.

All-out efforts should be made to complete development projects within the stipulated time frame and once completed these projects would bring relief to the general public.

According to the Director of Development, under the annual development program 2022-23, district Rawalpindi has 217 schemes, district Attock 47 schemes, district Chakwal 49 schemes, district Jhelum 57 schemes and 33 projects of district Talagang.

Health activists for banning innovative tobacco products

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Society for Protection of the Rights of the Child (SPARC) urged all the stakeholders to play their role in protecting Pakistani youth from harmful innovative tobacco products.

Health activists raised alarm on the recent attempts by the tobacco industry to get the heated tobacco products regularized. The activists mentioned that the potential harms of innovative products, such as nicotine pouches, e-cigarettes, and heated tobacco devices, must be recognized and their sales and promotion must be banned. Country Lead of Vital Strategies Dr Ziauddin Islam mentioned that contrary to the tobacco industry's claims, innovative products are harmful as they contain nicotine which serves as a gateway to many other forms of substance abuse and may cause serious health and mental health issues among youth.

He said these products are claimed as cessation products but in fact, are new forms of addiction. The so-called research studies which claim that they're less harmful than cigarettes are all funded by the tobacco industry, he said, adding that independent research studies warned about their harms. He appealed to the federal cabinet not to approve any move asking to legitimize novel products.

Country Head of Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids Malik Imran Ahmed said more and more countries are banning the sales of heated tobacco products due to the fact that they include tobacco and their

emissions have the same negative impact on health as cigarettes. However, he added, the tobacco industry in Pakistan is using various deceptive tactics to get these products regularized.

He said the tobacco industry has already misled the government by claiming that e-cigarettes and nicotine pouches are less harmful and only for smokers who want to quit. However, these products are openly promoted online and sold to young and new consumers. If heated tobacco products are allowed, the country will witness the same deception as before because the industry needs new consumers to maintain its profits.

Program Manager at SPARC Khalil Ahmed Dogar mentioned that due to cheap and easy affordability, nearly 1,200 children begin smoking every day in Pakistan. We can't afford any more getting addicted to these new products.

He requested the government to recognize this situation as a 'child rights emergency' because it is directly hurting their health, education, and future development. It is the responsibility of policymakers to ensure that no anti-child policy is implemented in the country. Pakistani children and youth have suffered various health issues in the last few years. It is the golden opportunity for our policymakers to reject HTPs and give a message to our young generation that they will be protected from all harm, he added.

CTP issues 15,003 challan tickets

RAWALPINDI (APP): On the directives of the chief traffic officer, the lifter squad of the CTP Rawalpindi took action against no parking, wrong parking and those obstructing the flow of traffic and issued 15,003 challan tickets to road users.

According to the City Traffic Police (CTP) spokesperson, during the last month 15,003 vehicles and motorcycles were issued challan tickets for parking and traffic rules violation. Following the directives of Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Taimur Khan, the CTP of Rawalpindi has taken action against vehicles creating hurdles in the smooth flow of traffic.

On this occasion, Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Taimur Khan issued special orders to the in-charge lifter squad to speed up the actions against the vehicles that violate the no parking zones and disrupt the flow of traffic.

All the sector and beat in-charges should ensure the parking of vehicles and motorcycles in the parking plazas so that the citizens did not face any kind of problem while driving, the Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Taimur Khan said.

He further said that the purpose of the challan was to reclaim the people and provide the rights to other road users as only by following orderly traffic and traffic rules in the city we could join civilized societies.

Flood-affected frontline Polio workers get govt's financial support

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination Abdul Qadir Patel on Sunday distributed cheques worth Rs 250 million among frontline Polioworkers whose homes were either washed away in the floods or partially damaged.

Addressing the occasion, the minister said that the government is grateful for the services of polio workers, who despite suffering losses in the catastrophic floods continued to assist with flood relief activities. "I salute your courage and passion. Despite suffering losses, you came to the aid of your fellow citizens and supported the government in flood relief operations," he said.

The Pakistan Polio Programme conducted a comprehensive assessment of the damages that polio workers suffered this summer when unprecedented rains and flooding affected 33 million people and left a third of the country under water. "I understand your pain and had there-

fore requested the authorities of the

National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) that our polio workers should be compensated as much as possible because we can't leave our people alone at this testing time," the minister said.

"Our first priority is always polio workers. Their services to Pakistan are immeasurable," said National Emergency Operations Centre Coordinator Dr. Shahzad Baig. "It was a huge task to identify the workers affected by the floods, complete their documentation and offer these cheques." There are over 350,000 frontline staff and we conducted an extensive exercise in all provinces to assess the impact of the floods on our teams, Dr. Baig added.

Nearly 12,500 polio health workers were affected by the floods, according to the polio programme's assessment, with a majority of them in Sindh and Balochistan. The government will be distributing cheques worth nearly Rs 250 million to polio health workers around the country.

PBM to expand network of WECs from district to tehsil level across country: Amir

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal (PBM) has decided to expand the network of Women Empowerment Centers (WECs) from district to tehsil level across the country in order to accommodate a maximum number of women for imparting vocational training and making them financially empowered.

Talking to APP, Managing Director PBM, Amir Fida Paracha said that presently around 163 WECs were operating across the country to provide free vocational training to widows, orphans and poor girls in modern trades like Dress Designing, Embroidery, Basic and Advance Computer Courses, Fabric Painting etc. with a stipend of Rs. 50/ per day on attendance basis through biometric system.

Considering the importance of this project for making the women self-sufficient, the MD PBM said that the scope of WECs, earlier established at the district level, will be expanded to the tehsil level.

Amir Fida Paracha pointed out that the PBM has also started a process of certification with the help of the National Vocational and Technical Training Commission so that the women who complete the courses and qualify for the test can get a proper certi-

cate for employment purposes. Through a public-private partnership, PBM is establishing a WEC in the suburb of Islamabad for which the land has been provided by one of the private donors while computers by another donor. "Now PBM will deploy its own employees in the center for the sustainability of this initiative", he said.

Through the support of a Turkish NGO, Amir Fida Paracha mentioned that a special course of Stone Cutting and Polishing is being added in the WEC of Gilgit Baltistan which would generate local earning source. About the PBM Sweet Homes project, Amir Fida Paracha announced to launch a pilot project to facilitate orphan children accommodated in the Sweet Homes across the country to pursue their education up to graduation level.

"Earlier, the PBM Sweet Homes (Orphanages) were catering to the educational needs of these orphan children till Matric level but now the pilot project is being launched to help them acquire education till graduation level", he said. Presently, 51 Sweet Homes operating across the country were catering the needs of 4355 orphans in terms of their accommodation, education and well-being through adopting a modern welfare approach.

Amir Fida Paracha also revealed that PBM has

planned to set up a technical school along with each Sweet Home so that those children who could not get education or lack the tendency to get formal education can be equipped with vocational and technical skills to become able to earn for themselves and their families.

To address the issue of increasing child labour in the country, the MD PBM said that 159 Schools for Rehabilitation of Child Labourers (SRCLs) across the country were working to withdraw children from their workplaces to bring them into the mainstream education through non-formal means of education.

The children passing out from SRCLs are admitted to the government schools for education up to Grade-VIII through a PBM grant of Rs. 4,100, he said.

About the Orphans and Widow Support Program (OWSP), the MD PBM said the program which is a Conditional Cash Transfer intervention was basically designed to provide financial assistance to widows with a focus on orphans, especially girl's education.

The OWSP provides Rs. 8000 per month and Rs. 16,000 per month to families having one child and more than one child respectively upon meeting compliance of 75 per cent school attendance.

Rising population put capital's health facilities under extreme pressure

ISLAMABAD (APP): With the federal capital's population growing three times during last 15 years, health facilities in Islamabad are falling short to fulfill medical needs of the ailing people especially the poor as rising population influx continues to aggravate the challenge.

Seeing the present infrastructure of health facilities within Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT), the few facilities built years back were quite insufficient for over two million people (2017 census) with population density per kilometer rising every passing day. Besides providing medical facilities to capital resident, the existing few hospitals also cater to the needs of patients arriving from Gilgit-Baltistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Azad Kashmir and adjacent rural areas falling within the Punjab province jurisdiction.

According to 2017 census, the population of ICT was recorded to be 2,006,572 residing in an area of 906 square kilometers. The population density of the area is around 2,214 per sq kilometer with the ICT having the highest average growth rate of 4.91 as compared to other parts of the country. The population in rural area was recorded to be 991,747 with an inter-censal rate of 6.95, while the population in the urban areas was 1,014,825 with a growth rate of 3.48. It is expected that soon the population in rural areas will exceed the urban areas with poor quality healthcare services while the high growth rate in Islamabad is mainly as a result of in-migration.

"Provision of health services, especially in rural areas were not scaled during last two decades, resulting in growth of quackery, unnecessary burden of providing primary healthcare by tertiary hospitals and dissatisfaction of citizens on quality of services," complained a medical practitioner Dr. Mazhar Naeem.

"Islamabad has emerged as the tenth largest district of Pakistan population-wise, with the highest growth

rate in the country, mainly as a result of in-migration, almost one million living in rural areas," he said.

Although he mentioned to a comparatively better situation at public sector hospitals in the capital as compared to other areas of the country yet there are disparities and challenges that need to be addressed in view of continued population influx and ever rising need of quality and specialized treatment of diseases.

The existing hospitals also need immediate restoration with extended facilities and state-of-the-art health services not only for locals but also referral specialized services for people patients pouring in from far-flung areas of Gilgit Baltistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Azad Kashmir and parts of Punjab.

"We have seen rampant growth of quacks busy in illegal medical practice owing to insufficient healthcare facilities in the capital. They are taking advantage of the limited number of public sector hospitals and increasing number of patients," remarked a citizen, Saleem Khalid. Demanding action against illegal practitioners, he said, the capital's public sector healthcare system should set some good examples for other cities in terms of providing better health facilities. "There is dire need of extended healthcare to facilitate poor patients as affluent can easily afford treatment at private hospitals."

Official statistics show 19 health facilities presently functional in rural areas including three RHCs, 15 BHUs and one dispensary under the control of ICT health department. There are three major hospitals (PIMS, Polyclinic and CDA hospital) functioning under the health department and Capital Development Authority besides 64 dispensaries and health centers. Moreover, setting up Islamabad General Hospital under the health department, with the financial assistance of the Saudi government has been approved.

"A plan has been devised to estab-

lish 13 more primary health centers within the ICT jurisdiction to cater healthcare needs of growing population and ease pressure on tertiary hospitals," said an official at Islamabad District Health Office (DHO).

"We have also sent a summary to Health Ministry seeking appointment of 358 medical officers for these health facilities to be set up mostly in far-flung and rural areas of the ICT," he stated. As the issue needs immediate attention of the authorities, Spokesperson of Ministry of National Health Services, Sajid Shah said sufficient allocation has been made under the Public Sector Development Program (PSDP) to ensure better health facilities for the capital residents. "The government has allocated Rs 250 million for establishment of a Cancer Hospital in Islamabad and Rs 100 million for Community Health Centre (CHC) at Bokra. An amount of Rs 170.318 has also been allocated for strengthening Mother and Child Health Services at Bhara Kahu," he informed.

He also mentioned to an allocation of Rs 250 million for extension of intensive care department of Mother and Child Health Center and Children Hospital and Rs 495 million for upgradation of Neurosurgery Department and provision of essential equipment in PIMS hospital Islamabad. He said the government has also allocated Rs 73.675 million for installation of machinery and other equipment in newly established OPD block of Federal General Hospital besides Rs 96.640 million for strengthening and upgradation of Diabetes and Endocrinology Department at Polyclinic hospital.

As mushroom growth of housing societies in Capital's vicinity and mass influx of people has emerged as a serious challenge for the capital administration and Ministry of Health Services, therefore they will have to evolve comprehensive strategy to ensure better healthcare for capital residents.

Drug trafficker arrested

NANGARHAR (Agencies): The anti-narcotics police arrested a drug trafficker in Surkh Rod district of Nangarhar. The Nangarhar police sources say that the anti-narcotics police discovered 30 kilograms of narcotics in Surkh Rod district of the province and arrested one person on the charge. Under the supreme leader of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, cultivation of opium, suing, and dealing drugs is banned across the country, the violators will be deal with legally.

The Frontier Post

Jamadi-ul-Awwal 17, 1444 — Monday, December 12, 2022

6 people injured in accident

KABUL (Agencies): Local officials of the public health of Maidan Wardak says, that a traffic accident injured 6 people on the Kabul Ghazni highway in the Dashti Tup area of Sayd Abad district of Maidan Wardak province. The Maidan Wardak public health department officials said, that the injured people are transported to the Dashti Tup health center. The Ghor security spokesman said that including two women 7 people are injured in a car accident in Mullah Ali village.

Drought, lack of water; a major concern

KABUL (Khaama Press): According to the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) survey, 79 percent of households in Afghanistan reported a lack of water.

The problem of lack of water caused by continued drought over the past couple of years in Afghanistan is a huge concern on different fronts. Providing clean and safe water for the people has been a great challenge, particularly, with climate change which is an addition to the existing problem.

"The problem of lack of water is serious and UNICEF would help Afghanistan in addressing the problem. Bringing clean,

safe water to 9 million people the following year is a priority for the organization," Salam Al-Janabi, UNICEF Afghanistan spokesperson, said.

Meanwhile, Afghan households also are concerned about the lack of water in the country. According to some residents in Kabul, the water level has seriously dropped down and most wells have dried, giving them fresh headaches to supply clean water.

Amid these difficult economic times, drought and lack of water have become a new challenge for ordinary people to deal with. Hunger, poverty, unemployment, security, and lack of access to proper

healthcare services and education have already had their adverse impacts on the people's lives.

Moreover, according to healthcare experts, failing to provide safe and hygienic drinking water would spread various diseases among people, particularly children in remote areas.

Global warming and climate change have resulted in water shortages in most parts of Afghanistan particularly Kabul, the capital. Therefore, UNICEF, NGOs and the current de facto regime of Afghanistan will have to work together to address the issue and come up with effective solutions to the water shortage issue in the country.

Female journalists ask to resume their work

KABUL (TOLOnews): In a gathering in the province of Farah, female journalists asked Islamic Emirate officials to let them resume their media activities.

"Women have not been allowed to continue their activities one hundred percent up to this point, but they have said that they will allow them. We will be happy if they allow us and truly abide by their promises," said Marzia Noorzai, a journalist.

The representatives of Naw-e-Zan radio said that in addition to receiving permission for media operations, they also need financial help in order to continue their media activities.

"Life safety is really essential, but so is financial support. We ask the Islamic Emirate to please allow women to work," said Homaira Mohammadi, Naw-e-Zan radio's director.

Officials of Farah Information and Culture department said that they support the media.

"We support all forms of media, whether it is Naw-e-Zan radio or other stations," said Abdulhai Sabawoon, director of the information and culture department of Farah.

There are presently seven active radio stations in the province of Farah. The directors of the halted media organizations say they hope they will be able to start again.

Railway transport increased

KABUL (Khaama Press): The increasing transportation of commercial goods by railways is a good alternative and a promising boost for the economy, stated interim government officials.

According to the Afghanistan Railway Authority (ARA), the country's railway transport reached a total of 109,808 tons of import and export items over the past week. These commercial goods have been transported by the railway via Hairatan, Aqina and Torghundi trail trucks. 10,830 tons were the import, and 1,498 tons of export goods, respectively.

As a landlocked country, Afghanistan has had critical challenges in transporting commercial goods to and from the regional and international markets. Normally, it took weeks and even months for the goods to reach overseas markets. However, with the establishment of new railways linking to the Central Asian countries, the problems have been mitigated to some extent. Besides, the commercial items can reach destinations in a timely manner, it is quite cost-effective. According to the country's Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Afghanistan's imports include oil, gas, wheat, flour and construction materials, and exports that are heading toward Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and China include dry fruit, rice, potatoes and minerals.

Moreover, the country's Chamber of Commerce and Investment (ACCI) has recently suggested that the formation of railways with Pakistan and India can pave the ground for increasing Afghan exports abroad.

Afghan FM discuss aid, economy with Japan envoy



KABUL (Khaama Press): Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaiqi, the acting foreign affairs minister, met with Takashi Okada, the Japanese ambassador, in the Afghan capital to discuss aid to Afghanistan and the resurrection of the Afghan economy.

The spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Abdul Qahar Balkhi, announced in a string of tweets on Sunday that the leadership of the ministry visited the Japanese envoy in a constructive meeting.

The Japanese diplomat, according to the ministry's statement, said that his country is in dialogue with the international community to set the stage for the reconstruction of the Afghan economy.

The Afghan side also lavished the Japanese side with gratitude for the generous assistance of \$106 million for Afghanistan and Japan's "positive diplomatic interactions" with the incumbent regime in Afghanistan, calling it a "roadmap" for the interna-

tional community.

"Japan will likely commence its duty as a member of the UN Security Council next year and will try to play a good role in the Security Council regarding Afghanistan," Balkhi wrote on his Twitter handle.

While myriad packages of \$40 million and \$32 million have reached the Afghan capital from an undisclosed address, Afghanistan yet struggles with a humanitarian crisis that is magnified by unrest, widespread poverty, and

perpetual unemployment.

The Japanese ambassador to Afghanistan also pledged that his country will step up the assistance to Afghanistan in response to the ongoing humanitarian crisis as the current administration in Afghanistan flounders in ameliorating the situation and aid distribution.

This meeting comes as Japan announced \$106 million in aid to Afghanistan after the US Special Representative visited Tokyo, and discussed the humanitarian needs in Afghanistan.

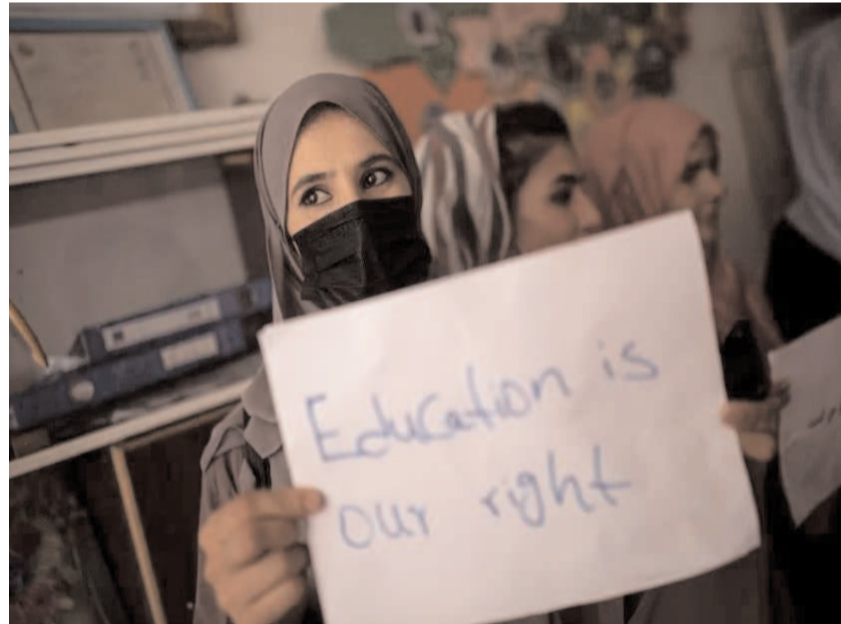
Women's rights, girls' education major challenge for Afghan govt

KABUL (Khaama Press): Violation of women's rights and girls' education has turned into a major challenge for the current de facto regime in Afghanistan, with the increasing pressure from the international community on the matter.

Since the current regime's takeover of power in August 2021, they have barred women from working in government organizations and banned girls above grade six to attend classes and get an education. Women's and girls' education have become one of the hottest topics to be discussed on the national and international levels.

Recently, a conference entitled "International Conference on Afghan Women's Education" co-chaired by Indonesia and Qatar, was held in Bali, Indonesia last week. Representatives from 38 countries, international organizations, NGOs and academics attended the meeting. The participants stressed the need for supporting women's education in Afghanistan and finding a comprehensive solution to the existing issues Afghan women are faced with.

"Getting an education is the natural right of every human being, including women and girls. Afghan women, therefore, should not be deprived of this very basic right," one participant said. Another speaker of the conference said 'female education is an investment for the future of the nation' and added that hundreds of Afghan women would be provided with scholarships to educate out of the country.



Meanwhile, the de facto authorities have not yet altered their strict policy toward women's rights and girls' education. Although respecting human rights

and freedom, particularly that of women is a major component of the Doha Agreement, the current regime emphasizes practicing their established poli-

cies regarding the aforementioned matters. Moreover, they label it something foreign, backed by Western thoughts and ideologies.

De facto leaders have 'immense responsibility' to every Afghan: UNAMA

KABUL (TOLOnews): Roza Otunbayeva, the UN's special representative for Afghanistan, on Human Rights Day urged the Islamic Emirate to stop restricting Afghans' basic rights, especially those of women and girls.

"As we mark Human Rights Day, we recall that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights, the United Nations in Afghanistan is urging the de facto authorities to stop restricting the basic rights of Afghans, especially those of women and girls, because those who govern have an immense responsibility as duty-bearers to every woman, man, girl and boy.

This year we also mark the countdown to the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights," Roza Otunbayeva said.

Some women's rights activists in the country on International Human Rights Day asked the Islamic Emirate for the right to work, travel, and to get an education.

"The Emirate gives no attention to the demands of women. We now ask the Islamic Emirate to open

dialogue with Afghan women... Afghan women have engaged in variety of activities during the previous 20 years," said Laila Basim, a women's rights defender.

"Cultural and educational institutions should be reopened, so that we women can continue our activities in many fields: politics, trade, and industry, and we can once again gain glory to our nation," said Sakina Rezaie, a women's rights defender.

The Chargé d'Affaires of the US Mission to Afghanistan, Karen Decker, said that Washington will advocate for the rights of all Afghans.

The US continues to advocate for the rights of all Afghans regardless of their gender, ethnicity, religion, and ability. We talked to Afghan human rights defenders yesterday, some of the bravest people I know. They are championing access to education, the right to work & the protection of Afghanistan's diverse population. I urge Kandahari leaders to support their efforts & join the int'l community's ongoing

efforts to deliver dignity, freedom & justice for all," Decker tweeted.

However, the Islamic Emirate said that it is committed to the rights of Afghan citizens based on Islam.

"Nearly 100 percent of our people are Muslim, and the rights of the Muslims are ensured in an Islamic country, the rights of all the citizens," said Bilal Karimi, deputy spokesman of the Islamic Emirate.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights places an emphasis on individual freedoms, basic and equal human rights, and freedom of speech and life. According to the UN, this year's Human Rights Day also marks the beginning of the countdown to the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted after a year-long consultation process involving thinkers from 60 countries. Afghanistan was among the original 48 nations to vote for the Declaration on 10 December 1948 at the UN General Assembly meeting in Paris.

Clothing factory opens in Kabul



KABUL (TOLOnews): A factory for making jackets was inaugurated in the Dasht-e-Barchi area of capital Kabul.

The owner of the factory said that \$100,000 has been invested in the project. The company is expected to provide job opportunities for at least 100 people, according to the owner.

"We have invested around \$100,000 and we will try to boost our investment and also increase our products," said Abdul

Wadod, the owner of the factory.

The Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Investment (ACCI) urged the citizens to support the domestic products.

"The jackets which are being sewn, will solve more than 50 percent of the need in the market. These jackets are both well-quality and with less price," said Khanjan Alokozai, a member of the ACCI.

The head of the Chamber of Commerce

and Investment of Ghazni, Qalandarzaei, called on the Islamic Emirate to support the Afghan entrepreneurs in various fields.

"I request the government to seriously support the domestic industries and investments," he said.

Based on the numbers of the Afghanistan Chamber of Industry and Mines, there are a total of nearly 5,000 factories, however due to shortage of power, some of these factories have halted their operations.

Afghan team visits Tehran for talks on refugees

KABUL (Khaama Press): A delegation from the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation visited Tehran, the capital of Iran, to participate in quadrilateral talks on the challenges and difficulties faced by Afghan refugees, Iranian media reported.

According to Iran's Mehr News Agency, the refugee and repatriation delegation from Afghanistan reached the Iranian capital to discuss the situation of Afghan refugees in Iran after reports of forced repatriation and ill-treatment surfaced.

The delegation representing the caretaker Afghan administration will engage in quadrilateral talks with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), Pakistan, and Iran to address the concerns and

challenges of Afghan refugees.

The meeting, according to representatives of the Afghan Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation, would discuss problems facing Afghan immigrants in Iran as well as potential remedies.

"We will reach an agreement with the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan on how to solve the problems so that the immigrants return to the country voluntarily," Mehr quoted the Deputy Minister of Refugees and Repatriation.

With the political unrest in Afghanistan, both the number of Afghans escaping potential persecution by the new administration and the number of forced deportations of Afghan refugees without legal status have increased.

A Wall Street Journal article previously reported that Iran deported between 2,500 and 4,000 Afghan refugees every day, totaling millions of Afghans this year.

Similarly, Pakistan detained many undocumented Afghan refugees in jails and sent them back to Afghanistan.

This comes after Amnesty International previously urged all countries to avoid deporting Afghan migrants to Turkey or Iran, where they risk incarceration, torture, and other ill-treatment before being refouled to Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, figures from the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation show that Afghanistan's neighbors to the east and west, Pakistan and Iran, host over 6 million Afghan migrants.

Journalists call for timely access to information

KABUL (Khaama Press): Afghan journalists at an event asked the Islamic Emirate to make it easy for them to access information.

At an event held by the

"National House of Journalists of Afghanistan" to honor the work of journalists, reporters said that some government spokespeople do not provide information to the media

on time, and in some cases they face restrictions.

"We ask the current government to respect freedom of speech and make information available to journalists on time," said Zaubullah Sharifi, a journalist.

"We ask the Islamic Emirate to pay attention to journalists, especially female journalists," said Rukhsar Hamidi, a journalist.

However, the deputy minister of Publications at the Ministry of Information and Culture acknowledged that there are issues with access to information, but he pledged that efforts will be made to address them.

"We are trying to end the problems facing journalists, and it is the indisputable right of journalists that they should have access to timely information," said Mahajir Farahi, publications deputy minister.

"They should avoid publishing

anything that may affect people's minds. Protection and the safety of journalists and the media are the primary responsibility of the government of the Islamic Emirate," said Abdullah Habib, deputy spokesman for the Interior Ministry.

"We are here to honor the achievements and the activities of our fellow professionals. I would want to do this unique task on behalf of the National House of Journalists," said Sayed Yasin Mateen, director of the National House of Journalists of Afghanistan.

Earlier, the Association of Independent Journalists of Afghanistan said that over 200 media outlets had halted operations in the last year and a half due to economic difficulties, and more than 6,000 media employees had lost their jobs.



ECC approves agenda items related to Reko Diq Project

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet on Sunday approved two important agenda items related to Reko Diq project, thus paving the way for early start of the Reko Diq Project.

Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar presided over the meeting virtually, where as the meeting was attended by the Minister for Power Khurram Dastgir Khan, Minister for Commerce Syed Naveed Qamar, Minister of State for Petroleum Musadik Masood Malik, Minister of State for Finance and Revenue Dr. Ayesha Ghous Pasha, said a press release.

Among others the meeting was also attended by Special Assistant of Prime Minister on Finance Tariq Bajwa, SAPM on Revenue Tariq Mehmood Pasha, federal secretaries, Chairman FBR and other senior officers.

Ministry of Energy (Petroleum Division) submitted a summary on accrued interest with respect to the amount held in an escrow account in connection with the Reko Diq Project dispute settlement.

It was presented that government of Pakistan and Provincial Government of Baluchistan entered into an out-of-court dispute settlement with M/s Tethyan Copper Company Pvt Limited- a consortium of Barrick Gold Corporation of Canada and M/s Antofagasta PLC of Chile, in respect of Reko Diq Copper-Gold

Project in Chaghai district of Baluchistan. As per settlement terms, Government of Pakistan has to clear liabilities to Antofagasta PLC. In the light of the terms of agreed settlement, the ECC allowed Finance Division to direct GHPL (for its own as well as GoB's share), OGDCL and PPL to deposit the aggregate amount of interest to the sum of US\$ 22,718,173/- in the escrow account from March 31, 2022 to December 15, 2022.

The ECC further allowed Finance Division to arrange the interest payable for Government of Balochistan share amounting to US\$ 8,519,314 from the loan of Rs 65 billion already raised by the GHPL with the Government of Pakistan guarantee. Further, the ECC allowed the concerned Divisions of government and the SOEs to act in such a manner to ensure that the deposited amount alongwith interest deposited by the state owned enterprises in the escrow account to form part of the consideration for share purchase of Reko Diq Mining Company Limited.

The ECC also considered and approved a proposal of Finance Division through a summary on funding plan of Government of Pakistan for share of Government of Baluchistan in Reko Diq Project.

As per proposal, overall funding commitment of US\$ 717 million over the period of 6 years by Government of Pakistan in respect of Government of Balochistan SPV Project Capital Commitment to be provided by the Government of Pakistan.

PML-N kicks off workers' conventions

LAHORE (NNI): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has decided to conduct workers' conventions across the country to charge the party workers.

Instructions regarding workers' conventions have been given to the provincial office-bearers of PML-N.

The schedule for the conventions has also been issued which starts on December 11 and will last till December 17.

The convention in Lahore will be held on December 14 and all arrangements in this regard would be made by PML-N General Secretary Khawaja Imran Nazeer.

The convention in Sheikhupura will be held on December 15 and all arrangements will be made by PML-N leader Javed Latif. The convention in Kasur will be held on December 16 and all arrangements will be completed by Malik Ahmad Khan.

The convention in Faisalabad will be held on December 17 and Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah will host the event.

On the directions of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, PML-N Khyber Pakhtunkhwa President Engineer Ameer Muqam will hold convention in Shergarh and Mardan today. Ameer Muqam will also address the party workers in Mardan at 3 PM.

Lockerbie bombing suspect in US custody

LONDON (BBC): A Libyan man accused of making the bomb which destroyed Pan Am flight 103 over Lockerbie 34 years ago is in United States custody, Scottish authorities have said.

The US announced charges against Abu Agila Masud two years ago, alleging that he played a key role in the bombing on 21 December 1988.

The blast on board the Boeing 747 left 270 people dead. It is the deadliest terrorist incident to have taken place on British soil.

All 259 passengers and crew on board the jumbo jet bound to New York from London died while another 11 people were killed in Lockerbie when wreckage destroyed their homes. Last month it was reported that Masud had been kidnapped by a militia group in Libya, leading to speculation that he was going to be handed over to the American authorities to stand trial.

A US Justice Department spokesperson told the Reuters news agency that Masud would make an initial appearance in a federal court in Washington.

Five years ago he was serving a prison sentence in Libya for bomb-making.

In 2001 Abdelbaset al-Megrahi was convicted of bombing Pan Am 103 after standing trial at a specially-convened Scottish court in the Netherlands.

He was the only man to be convicted over the attack.

Megrahi was jailed for life but was released on compassionate grounds by the Scottish government in 2009 after being diagnosed with cancer.



MUZAFFARABAD: OIC Secretary General Hussain Ibrahim offering dua after laying floral wreath at Yaadgar e Shuhada during his visit to Azad Kashmir.

Ukraine war: Odesa and Melitopol under attack

ODESA (BBC): Southern Ukraine has been hit by strikes from both sides in the war, with Russia launching drones at Odesa and Ukraine fighting back in Melitopol.

The Ukrainian army said it shot down 10 drones on Saturday but another five had hit energy facilities, leaving some 1.5 million people without power.

Later on, the exiled mayor of Melitopol said a Ukrainian strike had been carried out on the Russia-held city. Images shared by a Moscow-installed official there showed a big fire, Russia's drone attack on the Ukrainian port city of Odesa saw Moscow fire Iran-made drones at key infrastructure, Ukrainian officials said. "The situation in the Odesa region is very difficult," President Volodymyr Zelensky said in his nightly video address. "Unfortunately the hits were critical, so it takes more than just time to restore electricity. It doesn't take hours, but a few days."

Since October, Moscow has been

targeting Ukraine's energy infrastructure with large waves of missile and drone strikes.

In Melitopol, pro-Moscow authorities said a Ukrainian missile attack had killed two people and injured 10.

"Air defence systems destroyed two missiles, four reached their targets," Yevgeny Balitsky, the Russia-installed governor of the occupied part of the Zaporizhzhia region, said on the Telegram messaging app.

He added that a "recreation centre" where people were dining had been destroyed in the attack, and that Ukrainian forces had used US-supplied Himars rocket launchers.

This weapon has played a key role in Ukraine's counter-offensive, being used to target locations away from the frontlines, including Russia's command posts.

Ivan Fedorov, Melitopol's exiled mayor, said scores of "invaders" had been killed.

Melitopol has been under occupation since early March and is a

major logistics hub for the Russian forces in the south-east.

The city, in the Zaporizhzhia region, is strategically located between Mariupol to the east, Kherson and the Dnipro River to the west, and Crimea to the south.

Ukraine says its efforts to retake occupied territory are continuing, despite the arrival of winter.

In recent weeks, most of the fighting has taken place in the east of the country, especially around the city of Bakhmut in the Donetsk region.

But on Saturday night, Oleksiy Arestovych, an adviser to President Zelensky, indicated that Melitopol could be a main target of Ukrainian forces. "If Melitopol falls, the entire defence line all the way to Kherson collapses," he said in an interview.

If that happened, he added, "Ukrainian forces would gain a direct route to Crimea," the peninsula Russia invaded and annexed in 2014 and that the Ukrainians have vowed to retake.

Japanese startup launches historic Moon mission

WASHINGTON (AFP/APP): A Japanese startup's spacecraft was launched to the Moon on Sunday in the country's first-ever lunar mission and the first of its kind by a private company.

The launch was carried out by Elon Musk's SpaceX at Cape Canaveral in the US state of Florida after two postponements for additional pre-flight checks. The spacecraft, produced by Tokyo-based startup ispace and carrying a UAE-built rover, blasted off aboard a Falcon 9 rocket at 2:38 am (0738 GMT), live footage of the launch showed. "Our first mission will lay the groundwork for unleashing the Moon's potential and transforming it into a robust and vibrant economic system," the startup's CEO, Takeshi Hakamada, said in a statement.

So far only the United States, Russia and China have managed to put a robot on the lunar surface.

The ispace mission is the first of a program called Hakuto-R, which means

"white rabbit" in Japanese.

The company said its lunar lander was expected to touch down on the visible side of the Moon in April 2023 -- the Year of the Rabbit in the Japanese zodiac. Measuring just over two by 2.5 meters, the spacecraft has a payload that includes a 10-kilogram rover built by the United Arab Emirates.

The Gulf country is a newcomer to the space race but sent a probe into Mars' orbit last year. If the rover, named Rashid, successfully lands, it will be the Arab world's first Moon mission.

UAE Vice-President Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum celebrated the launch as "part of the UAE's ambitious space program" in a tweet on Sunday. "Our goal is to transfer knowledge, develop our capabilities, and leave a scientific footprint in human history," he said.

The UAE's Mohammed Bin Rashid Space Centre said a signal from the

spacecraft had successfully been received by ground control. Hakuto was one of five finalists in Google's Lunar XPrize competition to land a rover on the Moon before a 2018 deadline, which passed without a winner.

The ispace lunar lander is also carrying two robots produced by Japan's space agency and a disc with the song "SORATO" by Japanese rock band Sakanaction, which was originally written in support of the Google competition.

Israeli organization SpaceIL, another finalist in the contest, failed in April 2019 to become the first privately-funded mission to land on the Moon, after its lander crashed into the surface while attempting to land. ispace, which has just 200 employees, has said it "aims to extend the sphere of human life into space and create a sustainable world by providing high-frequency, low-cost transportation services to the Moon."

Imran 'victimized me, my family, and party': Suleman

LAHORE (NNI): Suleman Shahbaz, son of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, on Sunday said former Prime Minister Imran Khan victimized him, his family, and his party [Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N)].

Taking to Twitter, Mr Suleman wrote "You victimised me, my family and party (PML-N), but you lost. [You lost again] in England where you spent millions of [rupees from] national exchequer. [You also] got a slap of NCA on your right face [and] another slap of daily mail on your left face".

Earlier, Imran Khan said Senator Azam Khan

Swati had been "badly tortured", while proclaimed offenders like Suleman Shehbaz was brought back through NRO-2.

Khan posted on Twitter, saying, "If anyone wants to understand why Pakistan's economy is on the verge of collapsing, only two events are enough: Senator Swati was arrested and beaten in custody, and even in front of his grandchildren, a part of his house was torn away and locks were installed there forcibly.

He continued by saying that because Mr. Swati was the subject of multiple cases from which

he was being moved from one state to another, even human rights were disregarded in his situation.

Taking a jibe at PDM led government and allies, Mr Khan said "Suleman Shehbaz, a proclaimed offender who was involved in money laundering cases was brought back to Pakistan by NRO-2."

Mr Khan also shared a Hadees-e-Mubarak in addition to his tweet saying "The blessed hadith of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) should be kept in front of everyone, in which The Prophet (PBUH) warned how injustice brings destruction to nations."

'All bets off' if Iran gets nuclear weapon: Saudi FM

Saudi Arabia's foreign minister said on Sunday that Iran's Gulf Arab neighbours would act to shore up their security if Tehran were to obtain nuclear weapons.

Indirect US-Iranian talks to salvage a 2015 nuclear pact between global powers and Iran, which Washington exited in 2018, stalled in September. The UN nuclear chief has voiced concern over a recent announcement by Tehran that it was boosting enrichment capacity.

"If Iran gets an operational nuclear weapon, all bets are off," Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud said in an on-stage interview at the World Policy Conference in Abu Dhabi when asked about such a scenario.

"We are in a very dangerous space in the region ... you can expect that regional states will certainly look towards how they can ensure their own security."

The nuclear talks have stalled with Western powers accusing Iran of raising unreasonable demands and focus shifting to the Russia-Ukraine war as well as domestic unrest in Iran over the death in custody of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini.

Though Riyadh remained "sceptical" about the Iran nuclear deal, Prince Faisal said it supported efforts to revive the pact "on condition that it be a starting point, not an end point" for a stronger deal with Tehran.

Gulf Arab states have pressed for a stronger agreement that addresses their concerns about Iran's missiles, drones

programme and network of regional proxies.

"The signs right now are not very positive, unfortunately," Prince Faisal said.

"We hear from the Iranians that they have no interest in a nuclear weapons programme, it would be very comforting to be able to believe that. We need more assurance on that level."

Iran says its nuclear technology is solely for civil purposes.

A senior Emirati official said on Saturday that there was an opportunity to revisit "the whole concept" of the nuclear pact given the current spotlight on Tehran's weapons with Western states accusing Russia of using Iranian drones to attack targets in Ukraine. Iran and Russia deny the charges.

Fawad warns of assemblies dissolution

ISLAMABAD (PPI) PTI leader and former information minister Chaudhry Fawad Hussain said on Sunday that if the PDM failed to come up with the final formula for the general elections as of December 20, the assemblies of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa would be dissolved.

The incumbent rulers of the imported government wanted to avoid the general elections as they didn't know how to run the country's affairs, he said in a statement.

"Pakistan needs political stability and it's not possible without a stable government. The electoral process will be completed in both Punjab and KP before March 20, 2022," Fawad said. He said that the affairs of the state were not run merely by appointing ministers and conducting foreign tours as "this job is a herculean task".

Indian law makers, poets criticise Modi's barbaric policies

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Indian parliamentarians, poets, and columnists were criticising and mocking Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's atrocities and barbaric policies against minority communities, particularly Muslims in India. Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK). Indian revolutionary poet, Imran Pratapgarhi highlighted the Indian government's atrocities and tyranny against the oppressed Kashmiri people in his poetic verses such as 'I am Kashmir', he uploaded videos on YouTube and other social networking applications.

He said the fascist Modi government was perpetrating gruesome

human rights violations against minorities and Kashmiri Muslims. "Modi is a tea seller, who has no moral ethics or political norms," he maintained.

Imran Pratapgarhi further said the Indian prime minister was involved in the massacre of innocent Muslims in Gujrat and Kashmiris. "Kashmiri students are detained and made missing from various universities in India," he added.

All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) chief, Asaduddin Owaisi, slammed Narendra Modi for having violated all the constitutional norms by implementing hegemonic, auto-

cratic, and barbaric policies and laws to crush the voice raised against him.

He expressed his commitment, "I will always oppose Modi and his draconian laws till my last breath. Revoking article 370 moves a breach of the constitutional promise made by Nehru and Patel regarding Jammu and Kashmir."

Despite Modi's government sanctions and curbs on freedom of expression, several Indian columnists were valiantly criticizing the Indian government and its terrible policies against Kashmiri people to suppress their voice but he would not succeed in the nefarious motives.



RAWALPINDI: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb addressing PML-N's workers convention.