

Tajik President to arrive today

ISLAMABAD (INP): Tajikistan President Emomali Rahmon will arrive on a two-day official visit to Pakistan today Wednesday. During the visit, the two sides will exchange views on further strengthening bilateral cooperation in a wide range of areas. A number of bilateral agreements and MoUs are expected to be signed. The Tajik President's visit to Pakistan is expected to impart a renewed impetus to deepening cooperation between the two countries.

@thefrontierpost

First national English daily published from Peshawar, Islamabad, Lahore, Quetta, Karachi and Washington D.C

www.thefrontierpost.com

Vol. XXXIX

No. 326

Regd. No. 241

JAMADI-UL-AWAAL 19 1444 -- WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 14 2022

PESHAWAR EDITION

12 PAGES

Price. 20



HYDERABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif unveiling the plaque of Motorway M-6.

‘Efforts afoot to check gas load-shedding in country’

ISLAMABAD (INP): Parliamentary Secretary for Petroleum Hamid Hameed has said efforts are afoot to check gas load-shedding in the country.

Responding to a calling attention notice in the National Assembly on Tuesday, he said a gas load management plan is being implemented at present to ensure that the gas is available to the domestic consumers during cooking times. Alluding to the depletion of gas reserves, he said work is continuing to explore new oil and gas reserves.

The National Assembly today passed a resolution extending the Tax Laws Second Amendment Ordinance 2022 for a further period of one hundred and twenty days. At the outset, the house offered feteiha for the departed soul of former MNA Saeed Iqbal. The National Assembly was also informed that damage assessment survey has been carried out in the flood-affected areas in an

impartial manner with the involvement of all stakeholders.

Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Javed Abbasi while responding to a calling attention notice said the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) assisted the provincial disaster management authorities in this process. He said the government has effectively highlighted Pakistan's case regarding climate change impacts at the international level. Minister for Economic Affairs Sardar Ayaz Sadiq said that international partners including the World Bank were also involved in the survey of flood-affected areas.

He rejected the impression that the federal government is responsible for the lapse of Asian Development Bank's loan of two hundred million dollars for Greater Thal Canal project. He said this soft loan can still be secured if Punjab and Sindh develop consensus on this

important project. He said we are ready to facilitate this process.

Responding to a calling attention notice, Parliamentary Secretary for Petroleum Hamid Hameed said efforts are afoot to check gas load-shedding in the country. He said a gas load management plan is being implemented at present to ensure that the gas is available to the domestic consumers during cooking times. Alluding to the depletion of gas reserves, he said work is continuing to explore new oil and gas reserves.

The National Assembly on Tuesday also passed a resolution extending the Tax Laws Second Amendment Ordinance 2022 for a further period of one hundred and twenty days. At the outset, the House offered feteiha for the departed soul of former MNA Saeed Iqbal. The House has now been prorogued.

Mainstreaming disadvantaged areas through motorway network to ensure prosperity: PM

SUKKUR/HYDERABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday said the development of road infrastructure connecting all provinces, particularly the disadvantaged areas of the country, was crucial for strengthening the national economy. The prime minister, who twice performed the foundation-laying of M-6 motorway in Sukkur and Hyderabad cities of the Sindh province respectively, said connecting the deprived areas, including Balochistan and Sindh, would pave the way for economic and social development, besides creating new business opportunities.

With its ends in Sukkur and Hyderabad, the 306-km-long M-6 will be completed with Rs 307 billion within 30 months as per international standards. The M-6 portion will complete the North-South Motorway Corridor, also known as the Karachi-Peshawar Motorway, which will interconnect major cities of the country. The prime minister, in his address at the two events, said it was a matter of satisfaction for the coalition government to restore construction work of the M-6 motorway that faced a prolonged delay due to the inefficiency of the previous government.

He emphasized upon ensuring the quality and standard of the M-6 motorway not less than rest of the motorway network in the country.

He directed the relevant authorities to complete the public-private project within the stipulated time period.

The prime minister encouraged Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal to promote further projects on public-private projects so as to achieve the goals of development and prosperity.

He also called for improving road connectivity from Balochistan to the up-country in order to connect the all-important Gwadar Port and mainstream the province in the national economy. He announced the completion of the Sukkur-Rohri Bridge, which was earlier announced by former prime minister Nawaz Sharif and also directed improvement of Karachi-Hyderabad

Govt committed to eradicate all forms of polio from Pakistan: PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday reiterated that the government remained committed to ending all forms of polio in the country. The prime minister had a telephonic conversation with Co-Chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) Bill Gates and discussed the ongoing public health and social sector programmes supported by BMGF in Pakistan, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. While expressing concern over-reporting of new cases in 2022 after one year without any polio case, the prime minister noted that there had been a pause in polio cases since September 2022.

In light of the recent flooding which had adversely affected the

ongoing polio vaccination efforts due to large-scale displacements and destruction of healthcare infrastructure, the prime minister reaffirmed that the government was actively implementing the special emergency response plan and would continue to adapt and find ways to reach out to children in these challenging times.

He also appreciated the valuable support extended by the BMGF to Pakistan in polio eradication and improving immunisation, nutrition and financial inclusion in the country. The prime minister reaffirmed Pakistan's desire to further strengthen the fruitful partnership with the Foundation in all the ongoing areas of cooperation. Gates deeply regretted the loss of lives in the recent flooding in Pakistan.

Motorway to avoid traffic congestion and accidents. He also announced that the Federal Government would contribute Rs one billion to Sindh's development fund to mitigate the sufferings of flood-affected people and urged the provincial government to allocate the same amount from its exchequer. He mentioned that federal and provincial governments, national and provincial disaster management authorities, and international aid agencies were collaborating in the rehabilitation efforts. Shehbaz Sharif said Pakistan in the upcoming donors conference to be held in Geneva in January would urge the international community to provide assistance in the wake of massive life and infrastructure losses due to the recent flash floods.

He criticized former prime minister Imran Khan for instigating public for his personal gains, and said instead, he should have protested

over the manipulation of the cartels of sugar and wheat during his tenure. He hoped that the public would not fall prey to his negative campaign.

Sindh Chief Minister Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah regretted that the apathy of the previous government delayed the construction of M-6 for over three years and emphasized that 25,000 jobs related to the project needed to be given to the locals. He requested the prime minister to allocate an amount for the Sehwan Bypass in next budget. He highlighted the need for the dewatering of flood-hit areas and expressed confidence that the Federal Government would continue to extend assistance to Sindh in that regard. Federal Minister for Water Resources Syed Khurshid Shah said the M-6 motorway would prove to be a milestone in strengthening of the economy by promoting intra-country trade activities.

Amir Ahmad Siddiqui Media Awards ceremony held at CM House

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Amir Ahmad Siddiqui Media Awards ceremony was held here at the Chief Minister House, Peshawar in which Chief Minister Mahmood Khan distributed Awards and cash prizes among the journalists for their outstanding performance in various categories in the field of journalism.

He also gave life time achievement award to internationally acclaimed Journalist Rahim Ullah Yousafzai late, acknowledging his unprecedented services in journalism, which was received by his son Arshad Yousafzai.

The ceremony was attended by Special

Assistant to Chief Minister for Information and Public Relations Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif, Secretary Information Arshad Khan, Chairman Judges Committee of the Awards and Senior Journalist Ismail Khan, Chairman Department of Journalism and Mass Communication UoP Dr. Faiz Ullah Jan, President Peshawar Press Club M.Riaz and other senior journalists.

Addressing the ceremony, the Chief Minister termed the Amir Ahmad Siddiqui Media Awards as an encouraging initiative which is playing an important role in the promotion of ethical and competitive

journalism in the province.

The Chief Minister paid rich tribute to the services of late Amir Ahmed Siddiqui, Rahimullah Yousafzai and other senior journalists adding that Rahimullah Yousafzai not only had a key role in promoting positive journalism but was also considered an authority on Afghan Affairs.

"I consider late Rahimullah Yousafzai as my teacher and I used to consult him on various issues as a Chief Minister", Mahmood Khan. The Chief Minister urged upon younger journalists to follow the footsteps of legendary journalists like Rahimullah Yousafzai.

FM in New York

NEW YORK, Dec 13(APP): Foreign Minister Pakistan Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Tuesday arrived New York to host a special Ministerial meeting of the G-77 and China at the United Nations Headquarters. On 15-16 December, the foreign minister will host and chair the conference of the G-77 and China, the largest negotiating bloc of developing countries within the UN system.

The agenda of the conference includes a discussion on multiple challenges faced by developing countries in attaining sustainable development goals (SDGs) in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic, climate-induced disasters, and geopolitical developments. The foreign minister is undertaking an official visit to the United States from 14 to 21 December. The foreign

minister's program includes multiple multilateral and bilateral engagements in New York and Washington DC, the foreign office spokesperson said in an earlier press release.

The foreign minister will meet with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and participate in a high-level debate at the UN Security Council on the theme of "Maintenance of International Peace and Security: New Orientation for Reformed Multilateralism" to be held on 14 December.

He will travel to Washington DC on 19 December where he would hold meetings with high-level government officials, congressional leaders, Pakistani-American businessmen, and community members. He will also engage with the think tanks and the media.

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PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mahmood Khan chairing 84th meeting of Provincial Cabinet.

PHC to orders NAB for inquiry on favoritism in recruitment: CJ observed

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench comprising of Chief Justice Peshawar High Court (PHC) Justice Qaiser Rashid and Justice Shakeel Ahmad observed that if political favoritism were found during recruitment in Irrigation's department then court will order National Accountability Bureau (NAB) probe into matter and directed Secretary Irrigation to appear on next hearing, on Tuesday.

During hearing Chief Justice Qaiser Rashid remarked that various objections are raising on recruitment process in dif-

ferent department at Nowshera and added it looks like that vacant posts have been fulfilled on political affiliation.

The counsel for petitioner Shah Faisal Ilyas Advocate argued that 597 class-4 employees were recruited in Irrigation's department in which maximum are ghost employees and added that Rules were ignored because recruitment have been on nepotism and political favoritism by neglecting Employment Exchange enlisted candidates.

Justice Shakeel Ahmad inquired about their registration with Employment Exchange while Additional

Advocate General informed that of course they were registered but Justice Shakeel object that comments states some candidates were registered it means that remaining posts were fulfilled from general candidates.

In the meantime, Chief Justice Peshawar High Court Justice Qaiser Rashid remarked that such complaints are reporting from Nowshera and observed that if political favoritism proved in recruitment at Irrigation's department then court will direct NAB to conduct inquiry in this regard while adjourned further hearing.

Senate meeting approves reviewed ICU budgets

PESHAWAR (APP): The 15th Senate meeting of Islamia College University (ICU) chaired by Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Hajji Ghulam Ali here Tuesday approved reviewed budgets of the university for years 2019-20 and 2020-21.

On the occasion, senate meeting was told about details of inquiry report compiled by Governor Inspection Team regarding irregularities in appointments. The meeting also decided to refer proposed amendments for upgradation of employees scale to relative committee of Higher Education Commission for consideration. Participants of the meeting also discussed minutes of 10th, 11th and 12th senate meeting.

Speaking on the occasion, governor called for collective efforts to educate our youth in modern disciplines of science and technology. He said that all the universities including ICU should take steps to resolve their financial problems.

KP Governor said that significance of educational institutions could not be undermined in the existing scenario and added that our educational institutions must endeavor to produce youth that are capable to meet challenges of current world.

PHC directs Secretary, IGP to submit comments

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) Justice Rooh-ul-Amin and Justice Arshad Ali ordered Secretary Home along with Inspector General of police and Capital City Police Officer to submit comments in provision of security to student of law, on Tuesday.

The counsel Tariq Afghan Advocate informed that Taimoor Alam is student of Law at The Institute of Legal Studies (TILS) Peshawar affiliated with University of London. He added that the petitioner is receiving life threat calls and text messages while complaints were registered at respective times.

The petition stated that Taimoor Alam has informed concerned Station House Officer (SHO) regarding new consequences which was adopted by Special Branch in respect with security of petitioner and his family.

The divisional bench of PHC comprising of Justice Rooh-ul-Amin and Justice Arshad Ali ordered Secretary Home along with IGP, CCPO and other respondents to submit comments while adjourned further hearing.

Cold and dry weather to prevail in most KP

PESHAWAR (APP): The Provincial Meteorological Center Peshawar on Tuesday predicted the mainly cold and dry weather is expected in most districts of the province, while very cold in hilly areas and upper parts during the next 24 hours. It said that fog is also likely to occur over Swabi, Mardan, Nowshera, Charsadda, Peshawar and D.I.Khan districts, as well as over Peshawar to Swabi Motorway during night and morning hours. During the last 24 hours cold and partly cloudy weather occurred in the province. However, isolated rain occurred in Kurram, Chitral, Upper Dir, Peshawar, Nowshera, Khyber and Kohat districts.

Durrani slams CM for seeking support of Opp for rights of KP

PESHAWAR (APP): Leader of the Opposition in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Akram Khan Durrani on Tuesday slammed KP Chief Minister Mahmood Khan for his dual standard over the rights of the province. "On one side the CM was seeking support of opposition parties to stage a protest with them against the federation for rights of the province while on the other he was threatening to dissolve the assembly," he said while speaking on a point of order in the House.

Durrani said that the CM told a lie to the nation in his press conference at Islamabad the other day in which he claimed that the opposition was supporting his government for the protest, adding that despite

being the leader of opposition, KP CM never contacted him over the issue.

He said that it was beyond his understanding that the KP CM was threatening to dissolve assembly this month while at the same time warning to stage protest in Islamabad for rights of the province.

Durrani questioned why the PTI government did not attach priority to rights of KP province when it was in power in the federation as well. He said PTI failed to carry out even a single prominent development work in the province, adding during his tenure the province's debt decreased from 16 billion rupees to 8 billion rupees but today the loan volume has reached to Rs 791 billion.

He also diverted the

attention of the House to the deteriorating law and order situation in the province.

Meanwhile, the minority member of PTI Wilson Wazir in his call attention notice said that in the previous budget, Rs300 million was allocated under AIP program for construction and repair of minority places of worship in the tribal districts while Rs 50 million rupees were allocated for provision of scholarships to minority children.

He deplored that unfortunately both the schemes could not get approval of PDWP.

Advisor to Chief Minister on Minority Affairs Wazirzada replied that scholarships have been awarded to minority students of merged districts

from the last three years, adding that vocation and skilled training is being imparted to 1800 youth at a cost of Rs 250 million.

He said that construction work has been completed on a Church in Bajaur while work is in progress on construction of two churches in Landikotal Tehsil of district Khyber.

Meanwhile, the Deputy Speaker Mahmood Jan expressed his displeasure over the absence of legislators in the House and remarked that some members come to the House only to make their Tik Tok video.

The House proceedings were adjourned after ANP lawmaker Khushdil Khan Advocate pointed out quorum. The proceedings would resume on Friday at 10am.

Hefty amount being spend on information technology trainings

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Information Technology, Atif Khan Tuesday said that government is spending hefty amount of Rs 8 billion on various training of information technology aiming capacity building of youth.

Addressing a ceremony here, he said that huge amount has been spent on trainings keeping in view significance of information technology in contemporary world.

He said that government is giving special attention to develop information technology sector and added that goal of progress and prosperity could not be



achieved without making advancement in field of information technology.

He told that more than 100,000 youth are having advanced trainings of information technology that would enable them to compete in current world that is

full of challenges and opportunities.

He said that empowered and trained youth would be in a better position to explore growth opportunities for themselves.

Later, the minister inaugurated Khyber Pakhtun-

khwa Digital Internship Program, Health Management and Information System and Software Technology Park.

Minister for Information Technology, Atif Khan also distributed certificates among students of Establishment School of Technology Shalman District Khyber and those who have completed training under Dursah Govt and Community Innovation Program.

RTPSC hold Citizen Integration Forum

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Right to Public Services Commission (RTPSC) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa arranged Citizen Integration Forum for civil society members, students, right's activists, transgender community to ensure good governance via public participation, on Tuesday.

Chief Commissioner RTPSC Muhammad Salim Khan welcomed participants and thanked chief guest Member Provincial Assembly Ayesha Bano along with Chief Commissioner Right to Information Farah Hamid Khan for their participation. He said that the commission is committed to facilitate citizens while to ensure sense of accountability and good governance in public sector department.

Chief Commissioner claimed that District Monitoring Officers (DMOs) are posted in 35 districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to ensure maximum facilitation of public.

He argued the participants to play their role in awareness among public while stressed upon public's servants to ensure good governance in the government sector.

RTPSC Commissioner Muhammad Asim Imam briefed participants on

performance and working condition of the commission. He added that RTPSC has achieved several milestones including increase in notified services to 80 in public sector department.

Commissioner claimed that RTPSC law is placed for amendments before Provincial Assembly which is already approved by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's cabinet. He claimed that proposed amendments will improve operation and structure of the RTPS commission.

Chief Commissioner Right to Information Farah Hamid Khan also answered several questions of participants especially of tribal journalists regarding delaying tactics in provision of information by public sector department.

She claimed that RTI commission forum didn't completed after several months following retirement of members which

has caused delay in delivery of services.

Member Provincial Assembly and Chief Guest of the event Ayesha Bano appreciated commitment of RTPSC towards good governance and sense of accountability in public sector departments. She also assured that she will uphold issues regarding transgender community and women folk.

The chief guest requested Chief Commissioner RTPSC Muhammad Salim Khan to arrange awareness session for legislators at Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assembly for larger public interests.

Both chief commissioners of RTI and RTPSC addressed questions and grievances of participants regarding public sector's departments. They are hopeful for good governance and transparency in government's institutions which will ultimately lead to national development.

KPBC to observe strike

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Bar Council (KPBC) announced strike against murder of Ikram Khan Advocate along with his two sons in Swat.

KPBC chairman Muhammad Ali Jadoon and Chairman Executive Committee Muhammad Ilyas Khan condemned murderer of lawyer and announced strike.

KPBC argued competent authorities to pass Lawyer Protection Bill to ensure security of lawyers because legal fraternity are facing continuous threats in performing their duties.

2-day grand Peace Fair event organized



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A 2-day grand Peace Fair event jointly organized by the Department of International Relations and International Relations Student Association at Peshawar University kicked off today.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority (KPCTA) placed tourist information desk to aware the youth about the initiatives taken by the

tourism and culture authorities to facilitate visitors to tourist places.

Traditional and cultural programs including music will also be part of the event. The event is being jointly organized by Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), Department of Information and Public Relations, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Department of Youth Affairs and KPCTA.

The ongoing event called Peace Fair 2022

aims at providing orientation to the youth of the province through diversity; strengthening peace and harmony besides promoting a positive image of the province.

Different stalls have been set up by the youth displaying handicrafts, food, drinks and items relating to the local culture.

The Tourism Authority has been also established a Tourist Information desk for awareness of people regarding Tourism sites.

power shutdown schedule announces for Peshawar, Mansehra, D.I.Khan

PESHAWAR (APP): Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO) has announced a power shutdown schedule for different areas due to maintenance work on grid stations and power distribution lines. In a statement issued here Tuesday, power supply would remain suspended on 132KV Jamrud Grid Station from 09:00am to 03:00pm on December 14 and 17, as a result the residents of Kacha Ghari area would face inconvenience. Power supply would remain suspended on 132KV Peshawar University Grid Station on December 14 and 15 from 09:00am to 03:00pm affecting the population of Achini, Sufaid Dhari, Achini Mera, and Abdara feeders by power shutdown. Power supply

would remain suspended on 132KV Peshawar Industrial Grid Station on December 14 and 15 from 09:00am to 03:00pm, resultantly consumers of 11KV New Deh Bahadur, Dora Road, Shiekhaan, Sarband, Shahab Khel, Scheme Chowk, Bara, Pishtakhara, Shahidabad and Nodia Lower would face inconvenience. Power supply would remain suspended on 132KV Regi Model Town Grid Station on December 14 and 15 from 09:30am to 12:30pm, resultantly consumers of 11KV Safdarabad-II, Shahi Mera, Media Colony, RMT Badaizai feeds would face inconvenience. Power supply would remain suspended on 66KV PAF Base Grid Station on December

14, 15, 17 from 09:00am to 03:00pm, resultantly consumers of 11KV Badabair, Hassan Khel, Mashugagar, Saifan, and Zangali feeders would face inconvenience. Power supply would remain suspended on 220KV Mansehra Grid Station on December 14 from 09:00am to 04:00pm, resultantly consumers of 132KV Mansehra, Balakot, Muzafarabad Rampura, and Hattian feeders would face inconvenience. Power supply would remain suspended on 132KV DIKhan Grid Station on December 14 from 09:00am to 04:00pm, resultantly consumers of 132KV Kulachi, Tank, Daraban, Wana, Gomal Zam Dam, and 66KV Jandola feeders would face inconvenience.

VC, Registrar salaries attached on PHC direction

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court (PHC) ordered to attach salaries of Vice Chancellor (VC), Registrar Islamia College University and Principal Islamia Collegiate School for did not appear before court following several notices.

In this regard Additional Registrar Judicial issued direction to Treasurer Islamia College University for attachment of salaries of respective officials.

The decision of attachment of salaries were taken due to absence from court in Sharafat Ullah and others writ petition.



PESHAWAR: PPP's Secretary Information Malik Amjid Khan Afridi addressing PSF meeting. — F.P. photo by Ghulam Murtaza



In brief

Sindh face power shutdown

JAMSHORO (INP): Several districts in Sindh face power shutdown due to some technical fault in the Jamshoro power plant. According to details, Electricity supply to Hyderabad, Tando Jam, Jamshoro, Tando Allahyar, Mirpurkhas, Badin, and Tando Muhammad Khan has been suspended after the 500KV Jamshoro power plant developed a technical error. The Hyderabad Electric Supply Company (HESCO) spokesperson while responding to the power blackout said that the power would be restored in a while. A 500KV transformer has tripped due to a technical fault in Jamshoro Grid Station, some grid stations and districts may face power outages for a while, he added. The National Transmission and Despatch Company (NTDC) teams are working to resolve the technical problems.

Six power pilferers held

SARGODHA (INP): Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (FESCO), Circle office Sargodha on Tuesday during the ongoing crack down nabbed six power pilferers across the district. A spokesperson said here on Tuesday that in line with special directives of Superintendent Engineer (S.E.) circle office Sargodha, special task team nabbed six power pilferers who were stealing electricity through main wires, meter tampering etc.

House looted in Nowshera Kalan

NOWSHERA: The residents of Nowshera Kalan requested Inspector General of Police (IGP) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to ensure security of property and livelihood of locals because incidents of robbery along house-thieves increased in the area. The residents argued that in last one week two house-thieves are reported within few hundred meters of diameter of Nowshera Kalan Town police Chowki including Monday late-night robbery. The residents claimed that police patrolling is negligible in the areas which caused increases in the reported crimes. Monday late night unknown thieves broke into house of Aziz and looted Rs6 lac cash, six tola ornaments, one pistol and other precious elements on gun point while escaped from the scene.

Two brick kilns sealed

FAISALABAD (APP): Assistant Commissioner Jaranwala Numan Ali Dogar on Tuesday sealed two brick kilns over polluting environment. A spokesman for the district administration said the AC checked installation of zigzag technologies at brick kilns and found two brick kilns in Chak No 145-GB and Chak No 651/23-GB running without technology and causing pollution.

Crackdown launched

F.P. Report

UPPER DIR: District administration Dir Upper has sealed several illegal saw machines during a crackdown launched on the directives of Deputy Commissioner (DC) Akmal Khan Khattak on Tuesday. District administration Dir Upper has warned the owners of illegal saw machines to stop their activities with immediate and follow the directives of the government, otherwise stern action would be taken against them and no leniency would be shown with anyone in this regard.



LOWER DIR: Adviser to Prime Minister, Amir Muqam addressing audience at workers' convention held at Chakdara.

Balochistan will reap benefits from Reko Diq pact: Bizenjo

QUETTA (PPI): Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Abdul Quddus Bizenjo said on Tuesday no one would be allowed to politicise the Reko Diq project, days after the Supreme Court declared a new deal with a foreign company legal.

Bizenjo in a media talk made it clear that the provincial taxes on the copper and gold mine project would go to Balochistan. He vowed not to give in the powers granted to the province after the 18th amendment to the Constitution.

The mega foreign investment of \$8 billion would not only help revive the national economy but also have a

positive impact on the provincial economy. Balochistan will reap financial benefits from the accord signed with the Canadian company, he assured. Mr Bizenjo said all stakeholders, including the political parties, were taken on board prior to the Reko Diq agreement. He pledged to go to any length to satisfy the opposition about the project.

Last week, the apex court declared a new deal between a Canadian firm and the Pakistani government on the Reko Diq project legal. A five-member bench of the apex court, headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan Justice Umar Ata Bandial, and comprising

Justice Ijazul Ahsan, Justice Muneeb Akhtar, Justice Yahya Afridi and Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhel shared their opinion on a reference sent by President Arif Alvi.

Canadian company Barrick Gold, which ended a long-standing dispute with Pakistan in March last to strike a new agreement, earlier asked the federal government to get clearance from parliament and the country's top court to make its investment in the project save. In its short verdict, the apex court observed that the government had signed the agreement after taking the Balochistan Assembly into confidence and consulting experts.

Preparation for upcoming census reviewed

Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: A reviewed meeting on upcoming census held chaired by Commissioner Malakand Shaukat Ali Yousafzai reviewed preparation for the upcoming national census in which Divisional In-charge of Pakistan Bureau of Statistics Shaukat Ali Khan, Deputy Commissioner Swat Junaid Khan, Deputy Commissioner Shangla Ziaur Rehman, Secretary-to-Commissioner Muhammad Ali Khan, and other Deputy Commissioners from across the division, on Tuesday.

The divisional in charge of the National Census gave a detailed briefing

about different preparations in the meeting. He said that the 7th census would be the first digital census in the history of Pakistan in which complete data of citizens will be obtained from the field and collected through an online system. He said that Commissioner has been nominated as Divisional Census Coordinator, DCs as District Census Coordinators for districts, and Assistant Commissioners for tehsils. He said that the training of trainers will start on December 19, that of enumerators on January 7 and then the field operation of the regular census will start on February 1st.

On the occasion,

Commissioner Malakand Division said that conducting a census is an essential national duty on which the future planning of the country depends. He directed the divisional and district administrations to provide full support to the census staff so that this important phase of the national duty could be carried out smoothly. In view of the possible problems in the supply of personnel in the snow-affected areas of some districts, the Commissioner suggested a change in the given timeline, on which the Divisional In-charge of Census assured to take the matter into consideration from the higher authorities.

S Waziristan receives first snowfall

F.P. Report

WANA: The district of South Waziristan received the first snowfall of the current season as the areas of Angoor Adda, Shakai and Naizi Narai were covered with the white blanket.

Local people said the area's mountains have been blanketed with the white snow and a severe cold weather was prevailing in the area. The shortage of firewood and closure of some roads have aggravated the problems of locals who have mostly been confined to their homes.

Meanwhile, the areas of Swat including Malam Jabba, Kalam, Atror, Gabral and Mahu Dhand have also received snowfall and rain after which the chilly condition in these areas has further intensified. The local people said it was the start of the snowfall season and predicted that these areas would witness heavy snowfall in days to come.

Dog stuck in pipeline for 3 days rescued

F.P. Report

MALAKAND: The disaster management team of Rescue 1122 Malakand on Tuesday safely pulled out a dog that was stuck in a sewerage line for the last three days. Rescue 1122 Malakand informed that a call was received that a dog had somehow stuck itself in a sewerage pipeline and was screaming for the last three days from agony.

Rescue workers reached the spot and after breaking the concrete floor and cutting the pipeline, succeeded in pulling out the dog safely. Rescue staff said the dog was in good shape and was given some food before its release. The area people highly appreciated the professional efforts and capabilities of the Rescue 1122 staff in saving a stranded animal.

Farmers concerned

MUZAFFARGARH (APP): Farmers demanded the government to ensure supply of canal water for wheat crop as it would surely help reduce input cost on wheat crop. The farmers have to spend big amounts to run tubewell for irrigating the wheat crop.

Different farmers namely Naseer Bukash, Allah Yar Khan, Abdul Ghaffor, Malik Liaquat and some others talking to APP stated that canal water was essential to get enhanced production of golden grains (wheat). They stated that the farming community was worried due to lack of canal water.

KP people now looking towards PML-N for change

Legislation on helicopter use 'blanket immunity for exploiters of public resources': Muqam

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Adviser to the Prime Minister on Political & Public Affairs and National Heritage Engr Amir Muqam here on Tuesday said that the legislation on helicopter use by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government was meant to provide blanket immunity to all those who illicitly exploited public resources in the past.

Addressing a PML-N workers convention attended by a large number of the party workers and people of Lower Dir district, Muqam said it was so embarrassing that after this legislation there would be no audit or inquiry against those, who brought the KP government's helicopter in personal use.

Engr Amir Muqam claimed that on one side employees of KP government were protesting for their basic rights, allowances and payment of salaries, while on other hand Rs 50,000 per month was being paid to about 10,000 media influencers for personal projection, after they failed to deliver during their nine-year rule in KP.

The PTI chief had failed to keep his promises, including construction of five million houses for poor and provision of jobs to 10 million youths, he said, adding Imran Khan's claims were nothing but lies. His (Imran) corrupt practices were exposed before the masses in the Tosha Khana and the PTI's foreign funding cases. He said the claims of the KP chief minister regarding dissolution of the assembly on the orders of Imran Khan were also exposed as the CM was reluctant to do so.

He said people of KP were now looking towards the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) for change as it was the only party that could address their prob-

lems and take the country out of existing challenges. "I am foreseeing a big political change in KP in 2023 as the participation of a large number of people in the PML-N's recent public gatherings in Peshawar, Mardan and Chakdara on a short notice, are a testimony that the people have lost confidence in the PTI government", he added.

The PML-N leader said that fake cases were registered against his leadership in the past, and acquittal of Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah, PML-N Vice President Maryam Nawaz Sharif in Avenfield reference and Daily Mail's apology to PM Shehbaz Sharif has clearly showed that the PML-N leaders were politically victimized.

Talking about former premier Nawaz Sharif, the PML-N KP president said, "No one can separate the people of Pakistan and Nawaz Sharif, as he (Nawaz) was the one who made the country's defense impregnable, constructed network of motorways and enhanced dignity of Pakistan." On the other hand, he said Imran Niazi had tarnished the country's image abroad with repeated false accusations against political opponents.

He alleged that the rampage of corruption continued in the province, where the vacant seats were being sold, while eligible candidates were being deprived of employment. He questioned that how sugar, flour and Tosha Khana thieves would provide jobs to people on merit when they were themselves involved in corrupt practices. Amir Muqam said Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had taken up the issue of all those prisoners, who were arrested by the Saudi authorities in connection with chanting unnecessary slogans against the PML-N leadership at Masjid-e-Nabi (SAW), and requested for their pardon.

Will again go to people's court, says Moonis

GUJRAT (INP): Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q leader) and former federal minister Moonis Elahi has said that if he remains in the assemblies, he will serve the people and if the assemblies are dissolved, he will again go to the people's court.

"Politics is our family mission, Muslim League is the representative party of the people. Whenever we get an opportunity, we leave no stone unturned to serve the public," Moonis quoted experts, saying:

"The country has defaulted economically and the Shabbaz government failed to fix the economy."

The PML-Q leader said, "We were with Imran Khan yesterday, we are today, and we will be in the future." Earlier, the younger Elahi said, "There is no conflict between the PTI and PML-Q on the dissolution of the Punjab Assembly and we have conveyed this message to the PTI chairman loud and clear: the assembly will be dissolved in the blink of an

eye, if he can ensure elections in Punjab soon afterwards."

Moonis, the son of Punjab CM Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi, said, "The decision to dissolve the Punjab Assembly should be prudent [and take into consideration] the prevailing ground realities." He said that this apprehension had been conveyed to Imran when CM Elahi, him and Hussain Elahi called on the former at his Zaman Park residence on Dec 1.



MINGORA: KP Minister for Housing Dr. Amjad Ali inaugurating Scouts Centre at Barkot.

Teachers to stage sit-in in Islamabad

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The All Pakistan Universities BPS Teachers' Association (APUBTA) has announced a boycott of classes in public sector universities across the country against the Higher Education Commission for not heeding to its demand. It has planned a protest sit-in in front of the HEC office in Islamabad on December 14, which will continue until the demands are resolved.

The announcement was made by the Central President of the Association

Dr. Samiur Rehman along with General Secretary Dr. Imtiaz Khan, Dr. Hidayatur Rehman, Dr. Salman Zeib and Dr. Zahid Khan in a press conference at the Chakdara Press Club here on Monday. They said the representative organization of more than 40 thousand BPS teachers posted in the universities had used every forum to solve their legitimate demands, from the National Assembly to the Senate and from universities to the Higher Education Commission.

They said that meetings were held but every time the demand was turned

down and the problem remained unsolved.

The central president said that till date they tried not to disturb the educational activities during their struggle, continued the classes and performed administrative duties. He said that they were demanding equal opportunity of promotion and upgradation like their fellows working on the tenure track system. "Now we have no option than to boycott classes and stage a sit-in at Islamabad," he said, adding the protest would continue until the demands were met.

10 people mauled by wondering dogs

LARKANA (PPI): At least 10 people were mauled by stray dogs in and around Larkana on Tuesday as the menace continued to hit the residents very hard.

The injured include 1-year Bashir, 11-year Moomal, 55-year Ghulam Muhammad, 10-year Fatah and others.

All the affected persons were brought to the Anti-Rabies Vaccination Center working at the Casualty of Chandka Medical College Hospital for vaccination of anti-rabies and dressing of their wounds to save their precious lives and after which all were discharged and allowed to go home.



BRISBANE: Police work near the scene of a fatal shooting in Wieambilla, Australia.

Supporters of Brazil's defeated Bolsonaro attack police HQs

BRASILIA (Reuters): Supporters of far-right Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro attempted to invade the federal police headquarters in the capital Brasilia, in a flash of post-election violence on the day the president's electoral defeat was certified. Reuters witnesses saw Bolsonaro supporters, many in their trademark yellow national soccer jerseys or draped in Brazilian flags, confronting security forces at police headquarters. Police fired stun grenades and tear gas to disperse the crowd. Nearby buses and cars were set on fire.

Federal police said "disturbances" near the headquarters were being handled with support from capital security forces. The violence unfolded after a Bolsonaro supporter was detained for allegedly organizing violent "anti-democratic acts," according to the judge who ordered his arrest.

Earlier, the federal electoral court (TSE) certified the Oct. 30 election victory of Bolsonaro's leftist rival, Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva,

as president. After months of baseless suggestions that Brazil's voting system is vulnerable to fraud, Bolsonaro has neither conceded defeat to Lula nor has he formally blocked the handover of power.

But some of the president's most diehard supporters have blocked highways in protest and camped out in front of army barracks, calling for a military coup to bar Lula from office. Hundreds of Bolsonaro supporters gathered outside the presidential residence with banners calling for "military intervention." The president joined them for a public prayer but did not address the crowd.

"There's not going to be an inauguration," said Jose Trindade, 58, one of the Bolsonaro supporters in the crowd. "Bolsonaro was re-elected, but they stole it. So only the army can put things in order." The conspiracy theories and subsequent violence have rekindled memories of the January 2021 invasion of the US Capitol by supporters of former US President Donald Trump. It also raises

security concerns about Jan. 1, when Lula takes office in a public ceremony in Brasilia.

Senator Randolfe Rodrigues, a key Lula aide, said there were concerns about the physical safety of Lula and Vice President-elect Geraldo Alckmin, as protesters had surrounded the hotel where he is staying in Brasilia. Lula's team denied reports that Lula would be removed from the hotel by helicopter. Brasilia's public security officials said they had secured the area around Lula's hotel, and urged motorists to avoid the center of the city where many roads had been closed.

The violence in Brasilia came after Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes, who has led probes into Bolsonaro and his allies, ordered the temporary arrest of José Acácio Serere Xavante for allegedly carrying out anti-democratic acts. Xavante, an indigenous leader, is among the Bolsonaro supporters who have protested in defiance of the Oct. 30 election result.

"I cannot accept criminals reigning in Brasil," Xavante tweeted last month. "Lula cannot be certified." Last week, Bolsonaro broke weeks of post-election silence to say that his situation "hurts my soul." "Who decides where I go are you. Who decides which way the armed forces go are you," Bolsonaro told his supporters at the gates of the presidential residence on Friday.

In a statement, the Supreme Court said Moraes "decreed the temporary arrest, for 10 days, of the indigenous José Acácio Serere Xavante, due to evidence of the commission of crimes of threat, persecution and violent abolition of the Democratic State of Law." It said Xavante had led protests across Brasilia and had used "his position as chief of the Xavante people to enlist indigenous and non-indigenous people to commit crimes," threatening Lula and Supreme Court justices. Xavante had "expressly summoned armed people to prevent the certification of elected" politicians, the statement added.

WHO: Haiti receives first shipments of cholera vaccines

GENEVA (Reuters): Haiti has received more than 1 million doses of oral cholera vaccines as it battles a worsening cholera outbreak that has been particularly deadly for children, the World Health Organization said on Tuesday.

Cholera reemerged in the Caribbean island nation in early October after around three years without reported cases, and so far 280 people have died. A significant number of them have been children.

The health crisis has come amid shortages of food and clean drinking water triggered by a gang blockade of its main fuel port.

The WHO said the vaccination campaign was set to start in the next few days and would initially target children from one-year old in the worst-hit areas of the Ouest and Centre Departments. "We hope this first shipment will be followed by others so that the vaccine is available to all populations at risk in Haiti," said Lauré Adrien, Director General of Haiti's Ministry of Public Health and Population in the same statement.

The 1.17 million doses of the vaccine Evichol were provided by the International Coordinating Group on vaccine provision which manages an emergency stockpile. Another 500,000 doses are expected in the next few weeks.

Gunmen attack electoral office in Nigeria, kill policeman

ANAMBRA (Reuters): Gunmen bombed the headquarters of the electoral commission in Nigeria's southeastern Imo state and killed a policeman during a gunfight, police spokesman Michael Abattam said. Elections have in the past been marred by violence in Nigeria, which holds a presidential vote in February to elect a successor to President Muhammadu Buhari, now in his second and final term.

Imo is one of the states in the southeast where gunmen have attacked electoral officials, killed politicians and security agents this year. The government blames the separatist group Indigenous People of Biafra, which has denied the charge. Abattam said the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) office in the state capital Owerri was attacked at about 3 a.m. (0200 GMT).

"They threw bombs on the roof of the INEC building but unfortunately for them, they were resisted by our men who were guarding the place," Abattam said. He said the police repelled the attack after receiving reinforcements. "Fortunately, we neutralised three of them. Others escaped with bullet wound injuries," he said, adding that a policeman was killed and another injured.

Two other gunmen were arrested and police recovered explosives, phones and five rifles. INEC said in a statement no critical election materials were damaged. It added that this was the third attack on its facilities in Imo state this month.

Maduro to fully open border with Colombia

CARACAS (AP): Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro announced his intention to fully open the border crossings with Colombia starting Jan. 1, a measure repeatedly postponed following the restoration of diplomatic and commercial ties between the South American neighbors.

Relations between the countries were broken off in 2019, but Maduro has said the environment is conducive to improved ties with the election of Gustavo Petro as Colombia's first leftist president. The neighbors resumed diplomatic relations in September.

6 killed in Australian ambush, siege

BRISBANE (AP): Six people, including two young police officers, were shot and killed at a property in rural Australia after officers who arrived to investigate reports of a missing person were ambushed, authorities said Tuesday. Police said the violence began when four officers arrived at a remote property in Queensland state.

At least two heavily armed shooters opened fire on the officers at the rural property in Wieambilla, authorities said. Police returned fire but two officers were critically injured and died at the scene, and a neighbor was also killed during the fire-fight, police said. In that initial confrontation, a third officer was grazed by a bullet while the fourth escaped, Queensland Police Commissioner Katarina Carroll said. She said it was a miracle that two officers had survived and that one was able to raise the alarm.

"In my view, the officers didn't stand a chance, and I don't know how two got out alive," Carroll said after visiting the scene. She said the officers were shot in an exposed area in front of the house. Police identified the officers who were killed as Constables Matthew Arnold, 26, and Rachel McCrow, 29. Arnold was sworn in as an officer in 2020 and McCrow in 2021.

Ian Leavers, the president of the Queensland Police Union, said the officers walked into a hail of gunshots. He said that as one officer took cover in long grass, the offenders lit a fire to try and coax her out. "She actually believed that she was either going to be shot or she was going to be burned alive," Leavers told the Australian Broadcasting Corp.

After the officer was able to raise the alarm, authorities said a siege situation then developed at the property, with specialised police officers and air support called in. Carroll said 16 officers risked their lives retrieving the bodies of the killed officers, not knowing at that point if their colleagues were dead or alive. Just after 10:30 p.m., two men and a woman were killed in second major confrontation with police, bringing the violence to an end, police said. Carroll said all three of those killed were considered offenders. The commissioner fought back tears as she spoke to media. "It is an unimaginable tragedy," Carroll said. "This has been incredibly distressing and tragic for every-

one, particularly family, officers involved, colleagues, the organization and the community."

She said it had been many years since there had been multiple police officers from the Queensland service killed during a single call out. "To lose two officers in one incident is absolutely devastating," she said. Carroll said local police had acted upon a request from authorities in neighboring New South Wales state to check on a person who had been reported missing as long as 12 months ago, but who had been in contact with people until recent days.

She said the investigation was continuing and it was too early to say if police were lured to the property. She said the 58-year-old neighbor may have come over after seeing a fire at the property or hearing gunshots. Leavers said the killings amounted to an execution. "What happened yesterday is two police officers were murdered in cold blood," he told reporters.

Carroll said the two killed officers were highly respected and much loved. "They were both committed and courageous young people who had a passion for policing, and for serving their community," Carroll said. "Both under 30 years of age. Both had wonderful careers and lives ahead of them." Prime Minister Anthony Albanese told reporters in Sydney that the country mourned with those affected. "This is, indeed, a devastating day for everyone who loved these Australians, and our hearts go out to those in the grip of terrible grief," he said. "We know that this news has fallen hard on a close-knit and caring Queensland community. As well as, of course, the community to which all police officers belong."

He said officers across the nation know the risks they face, yet do their duty. "And today and every day I pay tribute to each and every one of the police officers who serve their local communities and who serve their nation," Albanese said. "This is not a price that anyone who puts on the uniform should ever pay." An emergency declaration remained in place Tuesday for the Wieambilla area and a crime scene had been established at the property. The area is sparsely populated and has several large properties and gas fields.

Raft with US flag caught in plain view off Havana coast

HAVANA (AP): Onlookers scratched their heads at a peculiar scene just off the coast of Havana — Cuba's coast guard intercepted nearly a dozen passengers from a scrappy blue hand-made raft with an American flag painted along the bow. Handmade rafts are hardly out of the ordinary in Cuba, where innumerable vessels set off in attempts to reach Florida's shores. Growing waves of migrants have abandoned the Caribbean island in the past year by land, air and sea, an exodus fueled by a complex mix of deepening and compounding crises in Cuba.

Many such migrants — often referred to as balseros — usually set off in rafts from remote parts of the island, shrouded by darkness to avoid being intercepted. The Associated Press — amid a pack of journalists scrambling to decipher what was happening — watched as the passengers

were taken from the raft in broad daylight, not 500 meters from the American Embassy, just off the city's iconic Malecón seawall.

The coast guard then dragged the craft, journalists running in tow, along the Malecón and into a port as one Spanish-speaking onlooker screamed "Let them leave!" Many more Cuban onlookers seemed confused.

Cuba's International Press Center acknowledged in a text message that the event had happened but said it could not more provide more details. Basic access to information is rare and reality can bend the imagination in Cuba. But the incident happened at a notable time.

Last month, the government strenuously denied causing the deaths of seven people, including a two-year-old girl, when its coast guard collided with the boat of a group of migrants traveling by night, further off shore. Some survivors accused the government of repeatedly ramming the boat. Most emigrants seek to enter the United States through the US-Mexico border, where Cubans were stopped nearly 221,000 times this fiscal year, a 471% increase from the year before, according to US Customs and Border Protection data. That migration, combined with the reopening of US visa and consular services on the island, has accelerated talks between the two governments, which share a historically tense relationship. The latest came this weekend, as three visiting Democratic congressmen met with Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel and other Cuban leaders. The lawmakers left the island, American officials told the AP. US authorities also noted that migration was among the topics discussed.

'Syrians face dire winter if aid from Turkey is cut'

UNITED NATIONS (AP): The UN chief warned in a new report that the already dire humanitarian situation in Syria is worsening and if aid deliveries from Turkey to the rebel-held northwest aren't renewed next month millions of Syrians may not survive the winter. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said in the report to the UN Security Council obtained by The Associated Press that cross-border aid to the northwest remains "an indispensable part" of humanitarian operations to reach all people in need.

Deliveries across conflict lines within the country, which Syria's close ally Russia has pressed for, have increased but Guterres said they cannot substitute for "the size or scope of the massive cross-border United Nations operation." Russia has also pushed for early recovery projects in Syria and Guterres said at least 374 have taken place throughout the country since January, directly benefiting over 665,000 people, but he said "further expansion" is needed.

The council asked for a report from the secretary-general on Syria's humanitarian needs in the July resolution that extended the delivery of food, medicine and other desperately need aid through the Bab al-Hawa crossing from Turkey to northwest Idlib for six months until Jan. 10.

Russia has sought to reduce cross-border aid, with the aim of eliminating it.

In July 2020, China and Russia vetoed a UN resolution that would have maintained two border crossing points from Turkey for humanitarian aid to north-west Idlib. Days later, the delivery of aid was reduced to just the Bab al-Hawa crossing for a year as they demanded. In July 2021, Russia pressed for a further reduction, finally agreeing to a six-month extension with another six-months contingent on a report from the secretary-general on progress in cross-line deliveries. But in July this year, Russia insisted on UN authorization for just six months.

Strongly appealing for Bab al-Hawa to remain open for UN assistance, Guterres warned that "a halt to cross-border deliveries in the midst of winter months would risk leaving millions of Syrians without the aid needed to endure harsh weather conditions." He said cross-border aid "remains a lifeline for millions of people" and Security Council renewal of the resolution authorizing continued deliveries is not only "critical" but "a moral and humanitarian imperative."

According to his report, 7.5 million people live in areas not under Syrian government control, mainly

across the north with a small number in Rukban in the southeast, and 6.8 million of them need humanitarian assistance due to hostilities and widespread displacement. More broadly, Guterres said, "after 11 years of conflict, the country still has the largest number of internally displaced people in the world, drives one of the world's largest refugee crises, and the humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate." The already dire situation is compounded by cholera spreading across the country, the COVID-19 pandemic, a worsening economy and climate and other human-caused shocks, he said.

"As a result of these challenges, in 2023, 15.3 million people, out of a total population of 22.1 million, are estimated to require humanitarian assistance, compared to 14.6 million people in 2022," the secretary-general said. "This is the highest level of people in need since the start of the conflict in 2011. Data on humanitarian needs collected by the UN and its partners from over 34,000 households in July and August found that 85% of households were completely unable or insufficiently able to meet their basic needs, an increase from 75% in 2021, according to the report."

Hong Kong publisher's security trial further delayed

HONG KONG (AP): The national security trial of a Hong Kong pro-democracy publisher was further postponed Tuesday to next September as the city awaits Beijing's ruling that could effectively block him from hiring a British defense lawyer.

Jimmy Lai, who was arrested in August 2020 during a crackdown on the city's pro-democracy movement, is fighting charges of endangering national security. The 75-year-old founder of the now-defunct pro-democracy newspaper Apple Daily faces up to life in prison if convicted under a sweeping National Security Law imposed by Beijing.

His high-profile trial, which was originally scheduled to begin on Dec. 1, was already delayed earlier this month after Hong Kong leader John Lee asked China's top legislative body to decide whether foreign lawyers who don't normally practice in Hong Kong could be involved in national security cases. Lee

made the request hours after the city's highest court approved Lai's plan to employ Timothy Owen, a veteran human rights lawyer.

If Beijing intervenes, that would mark the sixth time the Communist-ruled government has stepped in despite its promise to respect Hong Kong's judicial independence and civil liberties for at least 50 years after China took over from Britain in 1997. Members of China's top lawmaking body are expected to meet in late December. But the law's interpretation was not part of the meeting's agendas reported by China's official Xinhua News Agency last Friday. Hong Kong's sole delegate to the body said that in some previous events, new agendas were only being added during the meeting. But Tam Yiu-chung could not tell how the committee would handle Lee's request.

Judge Esther Toh scheduled the trial to begin Sept. 25, 2023, in light of the latest

development and taking the schedules of the court and lawyers into account. It is expected to end Nov. 21. Owen left Hong Kong after the immigration department denied his visa extension while the authorities were still waiting on Beijing's decision, Lai's lawyer said.

Lai is accused of conspiring with others in hostile activities against Hong Kong or China, such as calling for sanctions. He also faces a charge of collusion with foreign forces to endanger national security, and a separate sedition charge under a colonial-era law that is increasingly used to crush dissent. He was sentenced to five years and nine months in jail over fraud, after completing a 20-month jail term for his role in unauthorized assemblies.

The US Department of State spokesperson Ned Price condemned the latest sentencing on Twitter, calling on China's authorities to respect Hong Kong's freedom of expression, including for the press. In

response, the Hong Kong government said the statement was political interference in the city's judicial system, adding the fraud case had nothing to do with press or speech freedoms.

Meanwhile, former Stand News editor-in-chief Chung Pui-ken, who was accused of conspiring to publish seditious materials, secured bail Tuesday in a separate court hearing after being held in custody for almost a year. The now-shuttered Stand News was one of the city's last news media that openly criticized the government after the closure of Apple Daily. Chung and his former colleague Patrick Lam were charged under a colonial-era sedition law that has been used increasingly to silence critical voices in the city. Lam was granted bail last month. Hong Kong fell more than 60 places to 148th place in Reporters Without Borders' World Press Freedom Index released in May. The global media watchdog cited the closure of the two outlets in its rating.

Mexico's president likely to leave big projects unfinished

MEXICO CITY (AP): Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador loves big projects and hates to leave them unfinished, but that is likely what he will do when he leaves office late in 2024. The president pledges his big construction projects will be done by then. But one — a tourist train line in the Yucatan peninsula — will have to be jacked up on stilts for 50 miles to run over some of the most fragile and environmentally sensitive geography in the world.

Meanwhile, an oil refinery — and a string of planned industrial parks — don't have a natural gas supply. And a government internet-for-all scheme has spent hundreds of millions of dollars without even matching private service coverage. López Obrador has completed one of his top projects, building a new Mexico City airport. But because it was rushed into operation more

than a year before rail and road links will be finished, it is little used. He cancelled another airport project his predecessor wasn't able to finish, thus his rush.

López Obrador admits the government is unwieldy — he often calls it a "rheumatic elephant" that must be pushed. He also blames delays on what he calls a broad conspiracy of conservatives, businessmen and US-funded non-governmental organizations. "Pseudo environmentalists come from Mexico City and other parts of the country, financed by the government of the United States, and they file these injunctions against us," the president complained.

Few disagree with his desire to bring jobs, development, banking services, internet and decent health care to Mexico's poor and the remote countryside. But his big plans have been

stymied, in large part by his own belief in a few central rules. López Obrador has relied almost exclusively on state-owned companies of the kind that dominated Mexico's economy in the 1970s, most of which were sold off by his predecessors.

Some he has recently created, like the government mining company he gave a monopoly over lithium deposits to hoping to jump on the US electric car boom, touting its reserves of the key battery component. But the company has no experience in producing or refining lithium and hasn't yet turned a shovelful of dirt. The president also wants to revive some state companies, like a small government-owned bank for which he envisions building thousands of branch offices, and Mexicana, the defunct state-owned airline. Elsewhere, countries are walking away from such nationalized com-

sumer companies.

Perhaps less controversial is López Obrador's "internet for all" program. While Mexico's private and foreign telecoms already offer coverage on about 85% of Mexico's territory, Mexico's poorest citizens live in communities so small or remote that it is not profitable to serve them. López Obrador entrusted the task to the state-owned electrical utility, which has no experience in the field, and a small, cash-strapped telecom firm that the government bailed out and took over. Gerardo Flores Ramirez of the Mexican think tank Telecommunications Law Institute notes that despite spending almost \$900 million from 2020 to 2023, the government system has coverage of only about 70% of the country, and won't reach even modest, reduced goals of 92% until 2028.

The Frontier Post

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Printed and published by Mahmood Afridi at Moraka's Printers, 27 Abdara Road, University Town, Peshawar.
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An ever deepening political division

CHIEF Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mahmood Khan held a press conference in Islamabad along with Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Khalid Khurshid Khan and the Finance Ministers of Azad Kashmir, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab and leveled serious charges against the federal government. The Chief Minister said that the provincial kitty ran out of funds and the province had been facing financial constraints after the regime change in the center. According to him,

the Federal Government owes Rs 189 billion to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province while various development funds are reserved for the newly merged districts, and KP's net hydel share worth Rs. 61 billion is withheld by the coalition government. Similarly, the Chief Minister of the opposition ruled Gilgit Baltistan, and Finance Ministers of PTT's governed Azad Kashmir and Punjab also expressed dismay over the conduct and financial hurdles being offered to the federating units of the country by the PDM-led coalition government in the center.

Over the past seven and a half decades of independence, our nation has witnessed a high degree of social depletion, selfishness, and moral corruption of political leaders and degradation of national and state institutions which not only seriously damaged the core fabric of our society but also introduced regretful politics and immorality in the country. Historically, the post-Zia era politics had defamed and weakened democracy ruined institutions, and paralyzed local governments across the country.

Earlier, PML-N and the PPP promoted their party's politics by exploiting public issues and igniting rivalry between the federation and provinces, Punjab and Sindh respectively during the 90s and early 2000s. Presently, a similar battle is continuing between the PTI-ruled territories and the PDM-led coalition government in Islamabad and both sides are using facts and tools to fail and antagonize each other.

The Federal government has put a curb on Sehat Card Scheme in Erstwhile FATA, and reduced share in developed funds for opposition-ruled provinces while PTI leadership considers its faithfulness to oppose foreign investment and revival of the national economy through the hands of their staunch opponents. Thus a war of words, disinformation, and accusations had been initiated by both parties while people are unable to differentiate facts from fiction and truth from lies.

Realistically, a lot of slime had drained away through the lanes across Pakistan while the world has touched the other planets over the past decades, but Pakistani leaders from all casts and creeds are still pursuing 20th-century politics. Such self-centered doctrines and trading with national unity and public interest must be paused by the warring groups while resorting to principled politics, pro-public governance and respectful opposition as the country can not afford further social division and economic turmoil anymore.

Presently, the entire nation including the intelligentsia, civil society, and the business community is extremely worried about the current state of affairs, political and economic viability, and intolerant behavior of the leaders that continuously undermine national interest. There is a dire need for a wide-ranging political dialogue between all political groups to forge a nationwide consensus regarding General elections.

Qatar-EU trembling ties

BELGIAN Police have arrested four European Parliamentarians on the charges of corruption and allegedly taking bribes from Qatari officials just a few days before the European Parliament was scheduled to vote on starting negotiations to grant visa-free travel to citizens of Qatar and three other countries. According to the details, Police authorities recovered 600,000 euros stashed from the house of European Parliament Vice President, Eva Kiali and sent her to jail along with a parliamentary adviser, who was also accused of money laundering and participation in a criminal organization.

Interestingly, EU Vice President and Greek Politician Eva Kiali gave a lengthy sermon to fellow parliamentarians a few days back and supported Qatar's case for visa-free travel in the bloc. Kiali told their fellow MPs that today's Qataris are not old typical Arabs but their generation is very intelligent, highly educated, and peace negotiators. Modern-day Qataris are good businessmen, polite neighbors, and reliable partners. Thus, a few praising words rendered her corrupt and a lobbying agent for a foreign nation. She had been kicked out of her political party in Greece and had been suspended from her vice presidential duties.

Historically, lobbying on behalf of private businesses, foreign governments, and entities are lawful in Europe and America, while countless advocacy and public relations firms and individuals are registered with the EU government as lobbying agents, and European Commission permits those firms to protect their client's interest at the top EU level. Every nation including India, Israel, China, and Russia mostly hires lobbying firms to influence the EU's trade and economic policies in their favor. However, an anti-Muslim and anti-Arab wind is blowing across Europe and North America amid the ongoing FIFA World Cup in a tiny Muslim Nation in the Middle East. Earlier, the west vehemently displayed its anger over Qatar for hosting the food ball world Cup and now hatched a bogus story to malign the Arab nation.

Presently, the western world has utmost animosity toward Saudi Arabia and other Arab nations who had displayed a cold shoulder during the war in Ukraine and refused to increase oil production, while Qatar also did not agree with their desires for long-term gas supplies on the west's terms and conditions. Hence, the west forgot Qatari services during the Afghan Peace process and Arabs appeared to them indecent and illiterate. In fact, Western priorities revolve around their monetary interests, their ideals change daily, hopefully, soon the EU will reset its compass as Khalifa heads to Brussels.

Quote of the day

My choice early in life was either to be a piano player in a warehouse or a politician. And to tell the truth, there's hardly any difference.
— Harry Truman, American President [1945-1953]

UNITED Arab Emirates President Mohammed bin Zayed, widely known as MbZ, and Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman, or MbS, met with the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim, during the World Cup in Doha. Their presence in Qatar illustrated the Gulf region's new environment as a convivial meeting in Doha between these three leaders would have been inconceivable amid the Gulf Cooperation Council's 2017-21 crisis.

Only five-and-a-half years ago, the United States was worried about possible Saudi military operations against Qatar, prompting then-Secretary of State Rex Tillerson to call MbS (in a phone conversation that "didn't go very well") to warn him against taking such military action. Washington officials were so concerned that they even sent drones to the Qatari-Saudi border to monitor the tense situation.

Last month, the sight of MbS sporting a scarf with the colors of the Qatari flag and the Qatari leader carrying a Saudi flag during Saudi Arabia's match against Argentina was remarkable, to say the least.

Although the problems that Qatar had with some of its fellow GCC states have not been entirely resolved, intra-Gulf relations are now much warmer. There is real

potential for the GCC to start a new chapter based on brotherly ties which the World Cup appears to have accelerated.

"It is clear that it has strengthened bonds between people across the six countries—or at least, revitalized bonds, following a period of tension," said Neil Quilliam, an associate fellow in the Middle East and North Africa program at the London-based think tank Chatham House, in an interview with Responsible Statecraft. "Sport is very good at generating the sentiment of belonging — at club, country, and even regional levels. The World Cup in Qatar has certainly spurred on a shared sense of belonging amongst my Khaleeji friends and colleagues and pride in the region's success at staging the competition."

The International Media

Negative Western media coverage of Qatar, both before and during the global event, led to a united response from GCC governments and their people.

"There is a lot of resentment among the public [in GCC countries] to the way that certain Western media have dealt with [issues pertaining to the World Cup being held in Qatar] and ignored the other human rights issues—whether it is migrants coming from the Middle East to Europe, their treatment in Europe, the Palestinian issue or

Giorgio Cafiero

other human rights issues...They ignored all of that and they focused all their attention on Qatar. That was seen as totally unfair and a double standard from many people within Qatar and the region," Abdullah Baabood, an Omani scholar and visiting professor at Waseda University in Tokyo, told Responsible Statecraft.

Last month, the GCC's six members unanimously rejected what they called a "malicious" media campaign against Qatar. "Given that the criticism levied against Qatar points to violations that are widespread among — and common to all GCC states, it was only natural that Gulf states would choose to support Qatar," Mira Al Hussein, an Emirati postdoctoral researcher at Oxford University, told Responsible Statecraft.

"After all, other Gulf states will be hosting global events, too, and they would surely not want to be subject to the same level of scrutiny and criticism. That said, witnessing the overwhelming and unsolicited support that Qatar has received from Arabs and Muslims worldwide will have certainly triggered some reflection on how to maximize state popularity and garner support," added Al Hussein.

Quilliam explained that this uniform response constituted an "outright rejection

of Western media coverage as orientalist, colonialist, and former powers rueing their loss of influence." As Doha's fellow GCC capitals see it, "Qatar has gained much credit for unashamedly sticking to its values, celebrating its culture and demonstrating its capability of running a major world sporting event."

State-to-State Relations

The political consequences of Qatar hosting the World Cup along with its attendance by MbZ and MbS are difficult, if not impossible, to predict at this stage. Although, from the standpoint of GCC unity and cohesion, this global event and such visits are positive, one must consider that intra-GCC relations have historically been in constant flux.

In an interview with Responsible Statecraft, David Roberts, an associate professor at King's College London, warned against reading too much into the photos of Tamim with MbZ and MbS. "You need to have a historical lobotomy to think that therefore now everything is fine. GCC unity has been a constant ebb and flow for decades if not centuries. So, while things are comparatively quiet now, that's well and good. But if history's any guide, you don't know how long it'll last."

To be sure, there remains

significant tension between Bahrain and Qatar notwithstanding the al-Ula summit of January 2021 which officially ended the second GCC crisis. The absence of the Bahraini leadership at the global event underscored this point.

"The World Cup seems to have broken down any unremaining invisible barriers between the leaders of the two countries. MbS' wearing of the Qatari scarf at the tournament sent a strong signal to Saudis that the rift is over, and reconciliation is more or less complete. However, a few issues still separate Doha and Riyadh," explained Quilliam.

Indeed, Doha is far from being on the same page as Abu Dhabi and Riyadh when it comes to numerous questions in the region. "There are still some lingering issues between [the UAE and Qatar] that have been resolved despite the signing of the al-Ula agreement and there are also some deep suspicions between the two countries," according to Baabood. "This will take some time though one can say that the relationship is much warmer than before. There have been exchanges of visits between the leaders of both countries. We've seen recently MbZ visiting Qatar and meeting with the Emir. So that's really an indication that this relationship is warming up."

"MbZ's visit to Doha

was more symbolic than substantive," noted Quilliam, "and while a step in the right direction, the two leaders continue to share different visions for the region's future."

Al Hussein shares a sense of cautious optimism about what the World Cup can do for the future of GCC unity. "I don't think that the World Cup has necessarily strengthened the GCC internally as a cooperative bloc; rather it has projected an image of unity that could potentially work in the region's favor."

Given the World Cup's global significance and the pride that Qatar's hosting engendered across the Gulf, there appears to be a real opportunity for the region's leaders, in addition to healing past wounds, to promote greater integration, coordination, and solidarity under a shared Gulf Arab identity.

Bader al-Saif, an assistant professor of history at Kuwait University, told Responsible Statecraft that the World Cup is a reminder to GCC leaders that strength lies in unity. "A pan-Gulf identity precedes the creation of the GCC. It is anchored in shared blood and destiny that has long tied the people of the region together. A Khaleeji identity is here to stay and evolve. Bringing together the best of all Gulf states will achieve what no one state can accomplish on its own."

Who provokes and who restrains the conflict

A full-scale conflict is brewing on the border between Serbia and the partially recognized Republic of Kosovo. Explosions and shots sounded here last weekend. Belgrade intends to deploy a thousand security officials to the region. And Pristina, backed by the West, is raising the stakes. About the situation and prospects - in the material RIA Novosti.

Origins of the problem
In August, Pristina demanded that Kosovo Serbs re-register their cars and obtain local license plates under threat of fines. With international mediation, this was postponed several times.

Belgrade is now outraged by the detention of former Kosovo policeman Dejan Pantic. Serb by nationality, he resigned from the service in November - just because of Pristina's plans to fine for Serbian license plates.

On December 10, Kosovo's security services arrested Pantic on suspicion of terrorism: he allegedly participated in attacks on police stations and the election commission. They tried to deliver him to the capital of the republic. In response, the Serbs, who live mainly in the north, began to build barricades, blocking the highways leading to

Pristina with trucks. The Kosovo police say the officers were shot at.

The reaction of the parties

Prime Minister Albin Kurti asked the NATO military from KFOR (Kosovo Force) to demolish the barricades and unblock the roads, and expressed his readiness to do it on his own.

A stun grenade flew into the building of the EULEX (European Union Rule of Law Mission). EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell said that this was unacceptable and that the barricades "should be dismantled immediately."

Locals also reported other explosions and gunshots. Aleksandar Vucic called an emergency meeting of the Serbian Security Council. "Today is the most difficult day since I became president. I urge you not to succumb to provocations," he said after the meeting.

The head of the office for Kosovo and Metohija under the Serbian government, Petar Petkovic, warned that Belgrade would request an international mission under the auspices of NATO about the possibility of deploying its security forces in the Kosovo north.

Collision hazard
According to UN Security Council

Renat Abdullin

Resolution 1244, this is permissible. Serbia has the right to send up to a thousand military personnel, police officers and customs officers to the region.

As Oleg Bondarenko, director of the Progressive Policy Foundation and founder of the Balkanist.ru project, noted in an interview with RIA Novosti, the fact that Petkovich referred to resolution 1244 is a sign of an unprecedented aggravation of the situation. Previously, Belgrade did not resort to such arguments. At the same time, Serbia's application to an international mission is a gesture of goodwill, because it is not necessary to coordinate such a thing.

"The last thing Vucic would like is a military confrontation," the expert stressed. "After the deployment of troops and police to Kosovo, clashes are likely not only with the military of Pristina, but also with KFOR, that is, NATO."

German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock, on the contrary, regarded Petkovic's statement as aggressive. Serbian Prime Minister Ana Brnabic, in turn, called the position of Germany absurd, stressing that Belgrade only acts within the rights granted by the

UN. According to her, the crisis is the result of the "inaction" of the EU.

The official representative of the Russian Foreign Ministry, Maria Zakharova, commented on the correspondence dispute between Burbock and Brnabic with irony. "Well, why 'inaction'? This is exactly the situation that the European Union, in fact, has been modeling for years," she responded.

Failure of agreements

Kurti is really actively playing the European Union card. Kosovo will apply to the EU any day now.

Vucic considers this a violation of the 2020 Washington Accords. Then Pristina pledged not to join any international structures.

"Kosovo is not a European state. We will continue to fight," he said. "Pristina has completely trampled on the Washington agreements."

According to Bondarenko, Kurti has no chance of success: "At least five EU countries are against the accession of Pristina - Greece, Cyprus, Spain, Slovakia, and Romania. Each has its own territorial problems," potential Kosovo. The Spaniards have Catalonia, the Romanians have Transylvania, the Slovaks have lands disputed by the

Hungarians."

But Kosovo's First Deputy Prime Minister Besnik Bislimi is optimistic. "Those who did not recognize our independence will not create problems," he is sure. "Entry is a long-term process, we will have time to settle everything."

At the same time, Pristina's bid will untie Belgrade's hands. Serbia, in exchange for not joining Kosovo, promised not to require third countries to withdraw recognition of the independence of the republic. "Pristina violates the agreement, so Belgrade will continue the recall campaign. And after all, many are not connected with Kosovo by close relations, so there are chances," the expert believes.

Who provokes and who restrains the conflict

But in general, the situation is not in favor of the Serbs. The West, which mimicked peace efforts in the fall, now openly supports Kosovo. Evidence of this is the statements of Burbock, who topped the rating of German politicians in September.

The US will not be left out either. Formally calling both Belgrade and Pristina for a settlement, the Americans are demanding: "Those who set up illegal checkpoints must immediately dismantle them. We

expect an end to threats and intimidation."

"The whole situation, absolutely everything - and the attitude of Pristina towards the Serbs in Kosovo - naturally, on a smaller scale, resembles what happened and is happening in Ukraine. The same schemes, the same behavior of the West," the Russian ambassador emphasized on television. Serbia Alexander Botsan-Kharchenko.

According to Oleg Bondarenko, the West is provoking the Serbs in many respects because of Ukraine.

"In the event of an escalation, Russia will not help the Serbs militarily in any way," the expert says. "Even if the plane with Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov could not fly to Belgrade (Bulgaria, Montenegro and North Macedonia did not let the plane through in June. — Approx. ed.), then no weapons can be delivered. The West uses this."

The Serbian army's own resources will not be enough to fight the Kosovo military, and even more so the NATO forces. Therefore, Vucic is the only one who is truly interested in overcoming the crisis, inflated by Kurti with the connivance and even instigation of foreign partners.

The consequences can be extremely unexpected

THE West is increasingly shaken by a wave of strikes and protests. This movement is clearly gaining momentum and is starting to worry the establishment more and more. This is confirmed by the sharp increase in the already harsh anti-strike measures resorted to by the governments of various countries. The fact that this phenomenon is becoming ubiquitous highlights the universality of the growing problem for the global West.

The news feeds are literally crammed with reports of strikes all over the world. One gets the impression that everyone is on strike everywhere, from civil servants to undertakers. Yes, yes, this is not an exaggeration: in Scotland, employees of the only coffin factory in Britain have periodically gone on strike since the beginning of November, which creates serious problems for the funeral industry in the country.

Particular suffering to the townsfolk is caused by widespread strikes by employees of the transport industry - both passenger and freight. This becomes a real misfortune for many on the eve of the Christmas holidays. It would take a very long time to list the Western countries where transport workers are now protesting. Here are just a few examples.

In the capital of Lithuania, Vilnius, an indefinite strike of bus drivers has been going on since last week. Local authorities did not find anything better than to encourage residents to work from home during the protest period. They are trying to

ban the action through the courts.

In France, almost ten thousand railway conductors have gone on strike, which has already led to the paralysis of passenger transport. A week ago, up to 60 percent of international and intercity train trips were cancelled. Moreover, the strikers promised not to stop the protests even on the eve of the Christmas weekend, when the workload is especially high. The next strike is scheduled for this Wednesday. And if the crews of French airlines join them, as they threaten to do (from December 22 to January 2), it will turn into a uniform disaster for passengers.

But the crews of the Portuguese airline TAP held a two-day strike over the weekend, which led to the cancellation of 360 flights. And they warned that this was only the beginning, declaring their intention to strike for five days during the holiday period.

The struggle of the employees of the Spanish airline Ryanair lasts for several months. It has already caused disruptions in the work of 22 airports in the country, and the organizers promise to further strengthen the action during the holidays - until January inclusive. True, the Spanish government (even though it is made up of socialists and the Podemos bloc, positioning itself as a leftist movement in defense of workers' rights) is actively intervening in this strike, trying to ban or limit it. And also in every possible way prevents mass strike actions of truck drivers and employees of the railway. Recently, Madrid has thrown up to

50,000 policemen against striking drivers. Authorities justify their actions providing "minimum service" for critical industries.

On the same basis, US President Biden recently signed a law banning a nationwide railroad strike. It was supposed to start on December 4, and even opponents recognized the legitimacy of the workers' demands. All that the railroad workers wanted was the elementary right to receive sick leave for at least a week of illness. Now they do not have a guaranteed right to sick leave even for one day. Despite such dire circumstances, Congress was miraculously in passing a law blocking the strike. Biden immediately signed it, although he always called himself "the most union-oriented president in US history" and personally promised to legislate the right to sick leave for all citizens.

Surely everyone remembers how the liberal government of Canada suppressed the truck drivers' protests earlier this year in a "liberal" way: with arrests, water cannons, gas, and even the seizure of protesters' bank accounts. But the struggle between the Canadian authorities and the activists did not end there, it has now moved to the regional level. Thus, legislators in the province of New Brunswick are now introducing a rule that gives the authorities the right to send strikebreakers to "vital" enterprises, limit the number of pickets, and complicate the process of deciding on strikes within unions. But the provincial government of Ontario

went furthest, imposing fines on striking public sector employees in November. Moreover, the fines are draconian: for each day of the strike, the worker must pay four thousand Canadian dollars (almost three thousand US dollars), that is, the average monthly salary. We repeat: this penalty is imposed on the employee for each day! And unions that organize such a strike should be fined \$500,000 a day. That is, with one stroke of the pen, Ontario Premier Doug Ford not only de facto banned the strike movement - he turned any union member and striker into an eternal bankrupt, deprived of property.

Under pressure from the public and personally from the Prime Minister of Canada, Ford withdrew his bill. But the most striking thing is that when appointing such a measure (and this was recognized by all parties), he acted within the framework of his constitutional powers. In principle, after the state of emergency introduced by Pierre Trudeau earlier this year to crack down on chauffeur actions, anything can be expected in Canada.

However, the absolute leader in the number of strikes was Great Britain. Nurses and ambulance doctors, teachers and university professors, bus drivers, metro and railway employees, airport employees, road builders, customs officers and even experts in taking exams for issuing car licenses are now on strike there at various intervals and on various days. Last Friday, postal workers solemnly joined

the strikes, which is especially painful for the British, who are trying to send gifts and congratulations to their relatives and friends. Some have already been warned that parcels sent now, on the eve of Christmas, may reach the addressee sometime in February.

This number of strikes in Britain has not been since the early 1990s. Rishi Sunak's government is reacting accordingly by urgently drafting tough anti-strike legislation. True, lawyers prove to the government that in Britain the laws that restrict the rights of strikers are already very severe. The unions, on the other hand, insist that the UK is already the absolute leader of the repressive regime in suppressing strikes. They express their readiness to fight resolutely against any attempt to toughen the legislation. But already now, without waiting for legal changes, the British government is developing plans to involve the army as a collective strikebreaker. Soldiers are being trained to replace passport control officers at the borders, ambulance drivers and other categories of striking workers in the midst of strikes. True, the servicemen are not very happy about the prospect of losing the Christmas holidays they planned to spend with their families.

Sunak's government even tried to make strikebreakers out of policemen, urging them to replace ambulance drivers during the strikes. But the law enforcement officers politely refused, reminding the authorities that they also had other important duties, such as catching criminals. The fact that the

governments of the developed countries of the West, one after another, are tightening existing laws and sanctions for strikes, clearly indicates the fear of the growing strike movement. In the first half of this year, The Economist drew up a formula for coming food riots, predicting them in the near future in developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. However, the trends of recent months show that the public's anger over the sharp deterioration in the quality of life is growing rapidly in the developed West.

Of course, the public is asked to tighten their belts. Of course, they are trying to blame the causes of all problems on Russia and the "war in Ukraine." Of course, they appeal to conscience and the need to abandon demands for higher wages for the sake of "fighting Putin," as the head of the Conservative Party of Britain, Nadeem Zahavi, did the other day. But such clumsy attempts at power only anger the strikers even more.

As the protest movements grow, the anti-strike measures of the authorities in the West will invariably tighten. But this will cause an even more violent confrontation, increase the degree of tension in the already red-hot internal discontent in the societies of various countries. Apparently, the Western establishment, over the past decades of relative social stability, has so forgotten about this inevitable reaction that it decided to take the risk of going to open war against the trade union and labor movement. The consequences can be extremely unexpected.

Russia-China: Both countries have long eschewed Cold War-style blocs and alliances

AT the end of November, reports that Russia and China had secretly signed a defense agreement started to appear.

A November article on the website of Russia Matters of the Harvard Kennedy School's Belfer Center reported that, when Putin went to Beijing on February 4, prior to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, he and Chinese President Xi Jinping secretly signed an agreement "that their countries would come to each other's aid militarily, but only in the case of a foreign invasion." The article cites "long-time Russia watcher Owen Matthews."

Matthews subsequently reported in a November 26 article that, in a "confidential annex" to their February 4 agreement, was "a mutual security guarantee that Russia had sought from China for decades but hitherto been unable to obtain. . . . Like Nato's Article 5 — that an attack on one member is an attack on all — Beijing and Moscow pledged to come to each other's aid militarily in the case of a foreign invasion of their territory and if special conditions were satisfied concerning the cause of such an invasion." Matthews cited "a source with longstanding close ties to the top levels of China's political and military leadership."

The Washington Post amplified that story a bit by including it parenthetically in a December 2 opinion piece by Robert Wright. The article said that "every day there is some risk of a fluke turning this into a wider war, featuring direct NATO involvement. Even if such a war didn't go nuclear, the devastation could be vast. 'World War III' might be an overstate-

ment — but it might not (especially in light of a recent report that China and Russia have a secret mutual defense agreement)." The Post oped linked to the same story by Matthews.

The existence of such a confidential agreement would be an unexpected development in the relationship between the two countries, which have long eschewed Cold War-style alliances and blocs.

And it may not be true. Alexander Lukin, a leading expert on Russia-China relations, told RS that "There is no proof. It's probably mere gossip, and, as any gossip, it may be true or false." He said that some Chinese authors have argued for such an alliance. But he added that they do not claim it is "an official posting" of the Chinese government. Lukin has, in the past, been critical of western analysts who do not sufficiently differentiate "between the official and dominant views that both reflect and determine [China's] foreign policies, and the unofficial and even marginal opinions that have little influence on official policy."

Lukin says the idea may have come from a May interview given by Yan Xuetong, a well-known Chinese foreign policy expert who has supported forming an alliance with Russia, but who, Lukin adds, "does not represent an official position." Yan told the South China Morning Post that "China should consider providing security guarantees for neighbouring countries. This is not to help them invade others, but to provide security guarantees when others invade them."

In a portion of the interview that was not included in the English translation,

Ted Snider

Yan went on to explain that "there is a misinterpretation of the concept of alliance in society. Many people think that alliance is when your allies go to war, you automatically participate in the war. This is wrong. 'Alliance' means that when your ally is invaded by others and he conducts an anti-aggression war, you are automatically involved in the war. The alliance treaty is 'I help you protect you', not 'I help you invade others.'"

But he did not say that there was such a treaty.

The distinction made by Matthews and Yan between an obligation that is triggered by being invaded but not by invading is consistent in tone with other Chinese partnerships. Even before China cemented its close partnership with Russia, it had an exceptionally close relationship with Pakistan. But while Pakistan has more than once been at war with India, China has not once intervened with troops.

The reason is because China drew the very distinction Yan emphasizes. According to Andrew Small in "The China-Pakistan Axis," China would never rescue Pakistan from conflicts it brought on itself. But, according to Small, Chairman Mao Zedong (ruled from 1949-76) said China could intervene. Sources interviewed by Small said that China could intervene if India attacked Pakistan. In other words, China might come to the aid of its partner if its own existence was threatened by a foreign invasion; China would not come to the aid of its partner if it was the cause of the crisis.

In the case of the Ukraine crisis, China has

not blamed Russia for causing it but rather has consistently pointed the finger at the U.S. and NATO. Xi told Biden personally that "the crux of the Ukraine crisis" included "the security concerns of both Russia and Ukraine." He told Biden that, U.S. provocation had caused the problem. On June 23, Xi again stressed the need to "reject the Cold War mentality and bloc confrontation" as well as "hegemonism."

Nevertheless, both Russia and China have disavowed Cold War-style alliances. Though their extraordinarily close strategic partnership approaches a quasi-alliance relationship, it falls importantly short of a military alliance.

Only weeks before the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Xi said that the relationship between Russia and China "even exceeds an alliance in its closeness and effectiveness." A February 4 joint statement issued by Putin and Xi asserted, perhaps for the first time officially, that "Friendship between the two States has no limits, there are no 'forbidden' areas of cooperation." The statement adds that it is "a new kind of relationship" that is "superior to political and military alliances of the Cold War."

This "ironclad" friendship has included Russia and China carrying out military exercises that have employed a joint command and control system that gave each other levels of access that are unprecedented for either country, indicating a very high level of strategic and military coordination.

As recently as October 27, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said that "China will firmly support the Russian side, with the leadership of President

Putin, to unify Russian people to overcome difficulties and interruptions, to realize the strategic goal of development, and to further reinforce the status of Russia as a major power." He promised that "China and Russia will deepen exchanges at all levels."

But, as far as is known, there is still no mutual defense obligations.

The question of the existence of a confidential mutual security guarantee may not, in practice, change much. An attack on Russian territory that existentially threatened Russia could trigger China's own security interests: China has no desire to face a U.S. and NATO challenge stripped of Russia. China could be motivated to come to Russia's aid in the event of an invasion, not by an agreement with Russia, but out of concern for its own security interests.

And, importantly, there is the little-discussed Article 9 of the Sino-Russian Treaty of 2001 known as the Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation. It states that "When a situation arises in which one of the contracting parties deems that peace is being threatened and undermined or its security interests are involved or when it is confronted with the threat of aggression, the contracting parties shall immediately hold contacts and consultations in order to eliminate such threats."

Whether or not there is a confidential mutual security guarantee between Russia and China, there is a close and still evolving quasi-alliance relationship that has "no limits" and that already has a treaty to aid each other in eliminating threats to each other's security interests.



Laws existed, but they were absurd

Marcos Falcone

ARGENINA is notorious for its economic calamities, but for decades it has also been deeply immersed in a different kind of crisis: a legal one. Indeed, the relationship between most Argentines and the law is so contentious that politicians and journalists regularly cite disregard for the rule of law as a cause of economic backwardness. If people just followed the rules, the argument goes, then they would prosper. Everyone would pay their fair share of taxes, and the state would have enough money to provide basic services and assist the poor.

In popular culture, lawlessness is presented as one of the main characteristics of Argentine society. Perhaps the most important symbol of that is the country's most famous poem, the Martín Fierro (1872), which tells the story of a gaucho who gets drafted, deserts the military, and then becomes an outlaw who is pursued by the police. But decades later, Jorge Luis Borges, perhaps Argentina's most important writer in the 20th century, would still write that: The Argentine, unlike Americans and almost all Europeans, does not identify with the state. This may be attributable to the circumstance that governments in this country tend to be awful, or to the general fact that the state is an inconceivable abstraction, but one thing is certain: An Argentine is an individual, not a citizen. ('Nuestro pobre individualismo,' 1946.)

Today, the main academic source for anyone who discusses lawlessness in Argentina, and particularly the theory that it causes economic backwardness, is the book Un país al margen de la ley, written by legal philosopher Carlos Nino. In the document, Nino coined the concept of anomia boba or 'silly anomie' to explain the country's 'tendency towards illegality.' His main argument is that Argentines refuse to follow specific sets of rules in daily life because they believe they personally will be better off defying them, with the result that everyone is in the end worse off than they would have been had the rules been followed. According to Nino, it is the attitude toward the law, rather than the law itself, which is problematic. And since the resulting state of anomie is silly, he concludes that it must be changed. But what if there is something amiss in that equation?

In terms of social cooperation, abiding by the rules may lead to improved economic outcomes for most people, but the opposite could also be true. In fact, if following the law causes a majority to be worse off than they would have been by breaking it, then it is reasonable to expect people to disregard the law. And it is at this point that an alternative hypothesis arises to explain Argentines' apparent disregard for the rules: What if there is something in the law that hinders individual progress and thus incentivizes people to disregard it? What if a relaxed

attitude toward law, far from condemning society to backwardness, is actually an Argentine survival strategy? And what if the solution to that problem is to change the content of laws rather than the people's attitude towards them?

To explain the evolution of Argentine law, it is useful to examine constitutional changes, and particularly those that were made to the 1853 Constitution, which is still active today. Juan B. Alberdi, who had the most influence at the time of writing, purposefully followed the model set by the American Founding Fathers so as to establish the kind of rule of law that a classically liberal society would need. Argentina declared, in the 19th century, that everyone in the world who wished to do business in the country could do so; that internal, bureaucratic barriers to free trade were to disappear; that no privileges would be extended by the government to anyone; and that private property was an inviolable right. As Isaiah Berlin might say, the document considered liberty in a negative way. The state's role was simply to set rules for individuals to act and flourish.

Ever since its inception, though, the Argentine Constitution has suffered from several changes that have modified its spirit. In many instances throughout the 20th century, new articles incorporated into the Argentine Constitution have recognized social and collective 'rights,' the enforcement of which depends on increased government intervention. The 1949 reform, for example, instituted a 'social use' of property that directly paved the way for the state to violate property rights. That change, though later overturned, would serve as the basis for Article 14 bis of the Constitution, which was added in 1957 and is still active. This section, among other things, guarantees the existence of a minimum wage, mandates 'fair' salaries for workers, demands that they get a share of whatever capital gains exist, and effectively bans the state from dismissing public employees.

Further reforms solidified the increasingly interventionist spirit of the Constitution. The 1994 Convention, for example, added the concept of 'environmental rights' in a way that implies proactive government intervention. This and other third and fourth-generation 'rights,' particularly those that demand affirmative action for various groups to ensure the 'true' enforcement of other constitutional rights, show that the concept of liberty embedded in the document is no longer negative, but has become positive: The state is to actively intervene in order to bring about specific results.

Unsurprisingly, Argentine law has become more and more interventionist. Congress has, at various times in the past, nationalized private businesses and pension funds, and it has established and increased dozens of different taxes

with the result that effective total tax rates are over 100%. But bureaucracy has also increased so dramatically that complying with legislation costs small and medium businesses 500% more time than their counterparts in neighboring countries such as Brazil. And even though the evolution of bureaucratic stringency is difficult to measure over time, available evidence for the past decades suggests the situation has gotten worse: According to the Fraser Institute's Economic Freedom Ranking, Argentina ranked 36th in 1970 but ranks 151st out of 165 countries today in terms of regulation, which means it has become more and more bureaucratic. It is no wonder, then, that informal employment now accounts for as much as 45% of the total workforce. The 'tendency towards illegality' that Nino identified in the Argentine society seems to be caused by the state itself.

Lawlessness is not a random feature of Argentine society. The normative problem with the Argentine economy is not lawlessness at all, but rather overregulation on the part of the state. What is needed is not better enforcement or the creation of new laws, as Nino would suggest, but less and better legislation, which would enable people to comply without driving their businesses into the ground.

However, the chaos that results from reacting to overregulation goes beyond the economy. In 2020, for example, during the Covid-19 pandemic, Argentina had the longest quarantine in the world, and the government imposed such strict measures that people eventually started massively disobeying them. Businesses were striving to survive, of course, but regular citizens were also just trying to exercise fundamental human rights like the ability to leave their homes without a permit or meet whomever they wanted to meet. By making it impossible for people to enjoy basic freedoms, the Argentine government forced everyone to disobey. Laws existed, but they were absurd, which in practice meant that spontaneous order ensued.

The problem with Argentine law, in the end, seems to be that it has gone astray. Instead of allowing law-abiding citizens to do business as they see fit, it has turned into a mixture of suffocating regulations and outcomes-based legislation that forces people to remain outside of its boundaries in order to survive. In this regard Borges, who sensed something was wrong almost a century ago, expressed with clarity not just the source of this problem, but also the coping mechanism that Argentine society continues to embrace decades later:

The most urgent problem of our time... is the gradual interference of the state in the acts of the individual. In the battle with this evil... Argentine individualism, though perhaps useless or harmful until now, will find its justification and its duties. ('Nuestro pobre individualismo,' 1946.)

Waiting until it's too late

ONCE again, Congress is facing a tight deadline to keep the government open. Just a few days remain before the current short-term Continuing Resolution, which temporarily extends the FY2022 budget into FY2023, runs out on Dec 16.

With talks between Democrats and Republicans on the now-overdue FY2023 budget agreement ongoing, congressional leadership and the House and Senate Appropriations Committees are once again looking for a way forward on a diverse pool of funding priorities. These priorities include several contentious matters, such as funding for reproductive healthcare, the Border Wall, and Guantánamo Bay.

But there's one funding priority that should not be controversial: peacebuilding and conflict prevention. We know that peacebuilding and conflict prevention reduce violent conflict and human suffering while saving taxpayer dollars. However, U.S. support for this work has been persistently underfunded.

Too often, the United States responds to conflicts only after violence and forced displacement have begun, waiting until the

fallout is too great to ignore. By this point, the consequences of violent conflict and war are well underway, including the direct loss of life and human suffering, mass displacement, the growth of non-state armed groups and criminal networks, the destruction of communities and infrastructure, and harm to the environment.

These costs don't just come at a moral and social price, but at an economic one, too. In fact, the Institute of Economics and Peace found that in 2021, before the war in Ukraine began, the global economic impact of violence, including armed conflict and military expenditure, was \$16.5 trillion in purchasing power parity terms, or roughly 10 percent of global GDP.

Additionally, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs 2023 Global Humanitarian Overview, the most expensive humanitarian appeals have been prompted by war. These include humanitarian crises in Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen, Ukraine and Ethiopia, amounting to tens of billions of dollars in vitally needed humanitarian aid.

Waiting to respond to violent conflict leaves the

Ursala Knudsen-Latta

United States with fewer, less effective, and more expensive foreign policy tools available. Rather than investing in conflict prevention, the United States all too often relies instead on militarized crisis management and costly humanitarian aid. These tactics act like band-aids and fail to resolve the underlying drivers of conflict and violence.

But Congress remains stuck in an endless cycle of funding these militarized crisis-response tools, rather than investing in peacebuilding and conflict prevention.

While Congressional appropriators have made steady, if somewhat meager, increases in funding for peacebuilding and conflict prevention over the last several years in the State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs (SFOPs) Appropriations bills, these increases pale in comparison to the growth of defense appropriations.

From FY2014 to FY2022, the Defense Appropriations bill increased by about \$163 billion, reaching a staggering \$728.5 billion in FY22. Meanwhile SFOPs appropriations grew by just \$35 billion over the same period, reaching \$85.4 billion

in FY22. Importantly, of that \$85.4 billion, 33 percent was emergency one-off funding for the war in Ukraine and COVID-19. Only about 4.5 percent was specifically focused on peacebuilding and conflict prevention.

To put it in more straightforwardly last year, Congress appropriated the equivalent of just half of one percent of the Pentagon budget to peacebuilding and non-violent conflict prevention.

The ongoing budget negotiations are a chance to address this discrepancy. Specifically, Congress should retain text from the Senate SFOPs appropriations bill (S. 4662) that provides \$6 million for Atrocities Prevention (Sec. 7034 (e)). This vital funding would allow the Department of State to support efforts to prevent genocide and mass atrocities around the world and implement the Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act (P.L. 115-441).

Additionally, congressional negotiators should retain the Senate's inclusion of funding for Atrocity Prevention training at both USAID and the State Department to help American diplomats and development professionals

identify and respond to the early warning signs of mass atrocities.

Congress would also be wise to retain language from the House SFOPs appropriations bill (H.R. 8282) that would provide \$150 million for the Prevention and Stabilization Fund (Sec. 7066 (a)). This fund offers critical resources to implement the Global Fragility Act (P.L. 116-94), which aims to reduce and address the drivers of conflict and fragility, and to promote accountability for mass atrocities, crimes against humanity, and war crimes.

Lastly, Congress should include the House's \$30 million for Reconciliation Programs, which aims to bring together individuals of different groups and backgrounds in areas of civil strife and war to strengthen inter-community relationships and uproot seeds of conflict.

Promoting peacebuilding and preventing violent conflict is a moral, financial, and strategic imperative. As Congress works to finalize appropriations for FY23, it must seize this opportunity to begin breaking the costly cycles of conflict response by investing in these essential programs instead of waiting until it's too late.

Sergey Savchuk

believes that even the passing of the current winter is a big question.

Just last week, the European press burst into a series of devastating publications in which Germany was directly accused of Olaf Scholz's team buying large volumes of Russian LNG and, after the corresponding documentary magic, reselling it further west, including the UK. Some sources even directly pointed to Belgium, from where natural gas is supplied to Germany under gray schemes, but Berlin carefully avoided provocative questions, along the way emphasizing that it would receive its first own LNG terminal in the very near future.

The reality, however, slightly diverged from the promises. According to the project mentioned above, the cost of which, like a dog from a poem by Samuil Marshak, doubled during the journey, a floating terminal in the

port of Lubmin was to be put into operation in December. However, it turned out that, despite the infusion of rivers of money, a number of key permits have not yet been received, and therefore commissioning has been postponed indefinitely. The management of Deutsche Regas laughs off all questions: they say, there are thirty-one days in December, leave me alone.

The fact that Olaf the master does not have a gas flower in any way is hinted at by passing trends.

As soon as the thermometers outside the windows of the burghers dropped to a terrible minus three degrees Celsius, the cost of electricity shot up sharply. According to the energy exchange, the cost of one megawatt-hour increased immediately by 33 percent and amounted to 434 euros. Similar processes were also observed in

France and Britain, and the jump was so significant, and the generation deficit was so palpable, that in Paris and London there was talk of introducing trial schemes in which consumers would be paid extra for reducing or completely eliminating electricity consumption. This is not subsidizing, as various anti-Russian publications will present. The point is that it may be cheaper for European countries to refuse to purchase electricity from private traders at an unbearable price and simply compensate the population for staying in the cool and twilight with some amounts of cash. In addition, Africa struck the German back without warning.

South African Ambassador to Russia Mzuvukile Maketuka recently stunned everyone with a statement that Brussels, and in particular Berlin, are actually

demanding that his country return to coal mining. Private owners of mines are secretly reopening and draining coal mines on the territory of the Republic of South Africa at an accelerated pace in order to restore production in the interests of the EU countries.

Naturally, this is taking place against the backdrop of a pseudo-environmental carnival with incessant calls to abandon coal and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Official Cape Town's diplomat warns that if this trend continues, South Africa will consider exiting the environmental deal and return to coal mining in its own interests, since its reserves will last at least the next two hundred years.

At the moment, when

hydrometeorological centers promise cooling in Scandinavia to minus twenty-three, in Hamburg to minus eight, and generating companies are mentally estimating the amount of excess profits based on the results of exchange trading, the Germans have little tangible success in replacing Russian pipeline gas with LNG.

It is only known for sure that the regasification terminal Høegh Esperanza with 170,000 cubic meters of liquefied gas on board was chartered in Norway. However, no one has yet seen the floating plant in the port of Wilhelmshaven, and a Uniper representative refers to some weather conditions that have delayed the vital facility on the way.

In total, in the first half

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Europeans prepare to receive money for the cold and darkness

WITH each torn off sheet of the winter calendar, more and more amazing news comes from the world of European energy, and sometimes only careful reading can be quite amusing.

Let's start with a statement from the German Ministry of Economy. The office of Robert Habeck, well known for his comical statements, such as the fact that he began to wash less often and voluntarily lowered the temperature at home, just the other day published data according to which Berlinby 2038 will spend a little less than ten billion euros on the construction of floating terminals for the reception of liquefied natural gas. In more detail, the German government is going to allocate 9.7 billion euros for the purchase and maintenance of floating regasification terminals, while a representative of the ministry immediately indicates that this

amount is very preliminary and may change during the implementation of the project. In which direction financial indicators will be transformed, German power engineers and economists are silent - apparently so as not to injure the already shattered psyche of fellow citizens. True, the publication Der Spiegel immediately comes to the rescue, which directly reports that the previous program, under the terms of which it was planned to purchase two similar floating terminals by 2022, has now crossed the financial mark of 6.

The publication does not calm down and continues, so to speak, to pour a full shovel of hot coals down the collar of the government. Journalists, citing a leading specialized company (namely, the gas construction company Deutsche Regas), question the very algorithm of rescue by increasing the LNG fleet - moreover, the tabloid



PSX's 100-index turns around, gains 173 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) turned around to bullish trend on Tuesday, gaining 173.75, a positive change of 0.42 percent, closing at 41,714.30 against 41,540.55 points on the previous day.

A total of 144,845,613 shares were traded during the day as compared to 133,556,497 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs3.756 billion against Rs3.236 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 321 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 122 of them recorded gains and 170 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 29 companies remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were PTCL with 15,371,000 shares at

Rs6.60 per share, Dewan Motors with 9,589,000 shares at Rs17.70 per share and WorldCall Telecom with 8,634,825 shares at Rs1.34 per share.

Pak Services witnessed a maximum increase of Rs84.53 per share price, closing at Rs1211.93, whereas the runner-up was Indus Sapphire Fiber with a Rs78.75 rise in its per share price to Rs1128.75.

Bata (Pak) witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs49.92 per share closing at Rs1650.08 followed by Premier Sugar with a Rs19.17 decline to close at Rs560.00.

Rupee sheds 5 paisa against dollar

The exchange rate of the Pakistan rupee depreciated by 05 paisa against the US dollar in the interbank trading on Tuesday and closed at Rs224.69 against the previous day's closing of

Rs224.64.

According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs231.7 and Rs234 respectively.

The price of the euro was increased by 68 paisa and closed at Rs237.16 against the previous day's closing of Rs236.48, according to State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese Yen lost one paisa to close at Rs1.63, whereas an increase of 81 paisa was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs275.84 as compared to its last closing of Rs275.03.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and Saudi Riyal increased by 02 paisa each to close at Rs61.17 and Rs59.75 respectively.

Gold price dips by Rs850 to Rs168,800 per tola

The price of 24 karats per tola decreased by Rs850 and was sold at Rs168,800 on Tuesday compared to its sale at Rs169,650 on last trading day.

The price of 10 gram 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs729 and was sold at Rs144,719 compared to Rs145,448 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold went down to Rs132,660 against its sale at Rs133,327, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola and ten gram silver remained constant at Rs1970 and Rs1688.95 respectively.

Price of gold in the international market decreased by US\$ 7 and was traded at US\$ 1,787 against its sale at US\$ 1,794 the previous day, the association reported.

ICCI Housing & Property Expo 2022: Agency21 International draws record-breaking crowd



F.P. Report

KARACHI: Agency21 International, Pakistan's largest agency network, featured in the ICCI Housing & Property Expo 2022 from the 8th to the 11th of December. The event focused particularly on the largest national real estate professionals and investors in the country, making it the top-weekend destination for everyone.

Agency21 International's stall undeniably stole the show by present-

ing the finest investment options to its prospective clients. A special event-only offer of bookings at only 5% was used to market the prestigious projects of the IMARAT Group, including IMARAT Residences, Grand Bazar, and Golf Floras (2).

Esteemed senior representatives from the company, including CEO & Chairman Shafiq Akbar and Director Agency21 International Sharjeel A. Ehmer, were present.

As per the official fig-

ures, over 6000 people took to Agency21 International's stall; making it a not-so-secret fact that the event was a huge success for the brand, producing ground-breaking sales with exceptional once-in-a-lifetime offers. It does not end here; along with attractive deals, the event featured scrumptious food, kids play, and endless entertainment.

On the occasion, Director Agency21 International Sharjeel A. Ehmer stated, "I am thrilled to see the residents of the twin

cities coming out in such large numbers. I believe in the economic strength of real estate; needless to say, real estate is finally experiencing consistent growth in Pakistan."

"This large turnout is evidence that Pakistan's real estate sector is significantly growing," he added. "Agency21 International seeks to build trust with its clients, and our team strives to achieve this goal by inculcating maximum transparency in its real estate procedures."

The event drew hundreds of participants, with a large number of people engaging in the Agency21 International Lucky Draw contest as well.

As a result, several individuals received exciting prizes and various giveaways.

The 4-day long event was an astounding success, blending lucrative investment offers with limitless entertainment to engage the massive crowd pouring in.

MCCI advises to adopt digital marketing through E-exhibitions

MULTAN (APP): Multan Chamber of Commerce & Industry (MCCI) President Mian Rashid Iqbal advised women entrepreneurs on Tuesday to adopt digital marketing through E-exhibitions for their products as it was a dire need of the hour.

Chairing a meeting of the MCCI sub-committee on functions, fairs, and

exhibitions, here, he stated that businessmen had to focus the digital marketing as their economic survival lies with it.

He informed that MCCI would upload women entrepreneurs' products at its website after making its E-catalogues, adding that they were in contact with Trade Development Autho-

rity of Pakistan (TDAP), Small and Medium Enterprise Development Authority (SMEIDA) and Punjab Small Business Corporation for taking Multan pavilion in upcoming exhibitions under TDAP.

He ensured chambers full cooperation with the entrepreneurs in this connection and get them stalls

on subsidized rates in the exhibitions just like Karachi and Lahore entrepreneurs for level playing field.

Among others, Khalil, Aurangzaib Alamgir, Secretary General MCCI Muhammad Shafiq, Shah Jehan Begum, Nusrat Sultana, Rehana Kausar, Mamoon Fayyaz, and others were present.

Delegation of Pakistan Institute of Management visited SCCI

SIALKOT (APP): A delegation of inland study tour of 35nd Mid-Career Management Course from Pakistan Institute of Management visited Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) here on Tuesday.

A meeting was held with SCCI executive committee members including President Chamber Abdul Ghafoor Malik, Senior Vice President (SVP) SCCI Wahub Jahangir and Vice President (VP) SCCI Amir Majeed Sheikh.

While addressing,

President SCCI Abdul Ghafoor Malik said that through export, Sialkot based small and medium industries earned foreign exchange amounting over US 4 billion dollars last year and strengthening the national exchequer.

He said that the exporters of Sialkot made the name of the country all over the world by exporting the products globally.

"It is the only export city of Pakistan where 99% of manufactured goods are exported", he highlighted.

SCCI President said that the Sialkot represents an industrial setup, producing specialized products that were supplied to top brands and buyers all over the world.

"We produce Sports Goods, Surgical Instruments, Leather Products, and Gloves of all sorts, Textiles Items, Sports Wear, Martial Arts Uniforms & Accessories, Musical Instruments, Kitchen Ware & Table ware, Hollow Ware, Hunting Knives, Table Cutlery/Flatware, and

Military Uniform Badges".

He said that the international prominent athletes felt pride in using Sialkot manufactured sports gears. Apart from this, surgical instruments manufactured by Sialkot were being used in hospitals of more than 140 countries around the world.

The footballs being played in Qatar FIFA Football World Cup were produced by a Sialkot company. Their footballs were being played in three FIFA World Cups, he concluded.



ISLAMABAD: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali addressing a 38 SAARC CHARTAR DAY function arranged by SAARC Chamber of Commerce & Industries (SCCI) in Marriot hotel.



PESHAWAR: Management of Tourism Promotion Services offering prayers after formal takeover of Pearl Continental Peshawar by Serena Hotels Pakistan.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Four ships namely, Lana, MSC Ermina, FSM and Sea fortune carrying Containers, LPG and Chemicals, called at the Port on Monday, berthed at Container Terminal, Sui Southern Terminal and Engro Terminal respectively.

Meanwhile two more ships, Nord Vancouver and Ifestos scheduled to load/offload Rice and Canola seeds also arrived at outer anchorage of the Port Qasim during the same day.

PQA berths were engaged by nine ships during the last 24 hours, out of them, two ships, Coronet and Lana left the port on Tuesday morning and four more ships, MSC Ermina, Port Limnioni, FSM and Bochem Brussels are expected to sail on today in the afternoon.

A cargo volume of 78,756 tonnes comprising 50,123 tonnes imports cargo and 28,633 tonnes export cargo including containerized cargo carried in 1,741 Containers (535 TEUs Imports and 1,206 TEUs export) was handled at the Port during last 24 hours.

There are eleven ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them, three ships, AMI, Sereno and MSC Litezia & three more ships, Maersk Sentosa, Malha Rass Laffan Osprey, carrying Palm oil, Gas oil, Containers and LNG are expected to take berths at LCT, QICT, PGPC and PIBT respectively on Tuesday.

Cars' sale decreases 38% in 5 months

ISLAMABAD (APP): The sale of cars during the first five months of current fiscal year 2022-23, has dropped by 38.93 percent as compared to the same months of last year, a latest data released by Pakistan Automobile Manufacturing Association (PAMA).

According to the data, as many as 55,144 cars were sold during July-November 2022-23 as opposed to 90,303 units during July-November 2021-22.

The breakup figures showed that 7,925 units of Honda Civic and City were sold during the corresponding period of the year 2022-23 as compared to the sale of 13,215 units last year, thus showing a dip of 40.03 percent.

Toyota Corolla and Yaris cars' sale also decreased by 57.51 percent as it went down to 10,186 units current year from 23,975 units in the same period of previous year. However, Suzuki Swift's sale went up by 1053.93 percent as its sale increased to 5,712 units from 495 units last year.

Sale of Suzuki Cultus decreased to 4,088 units during current year, whereas during same period last year, the sale was recorded at 13,105 units while the sale of Suzuki WagonR also decreased to 2,899 units from 8,768 units in same period of last year.

Suzuki Alto's sale also witnessed a sharp decline of 10.66 percent from 23,193 units to 20,719 units during the months under review, whereas the sale of Suzuki Bolan decreased to 1,973 units as opposed to sale of 5,201 units in same period of last year.

Serena Hotels takes over PC Hotel Peshawar

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Tourism Promotion Services (Limited) Pakistan, the owners and managers of Serena Hotels in Pakistan announces the takeover of Pearl Continental Hotel Peshawar. This will be the ninth Serena Hotel property in Pakistan.

The addition of Serena Hotels in Peshawar, the oldest city of Pakistan with a rich cultural heritage, will not only help in extending the tourist circuit in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, but will also allow regional connectivity for tourists and business travelers through its vast portfolio of hotels in Islamabad, Peshawar, Kabul, and Dushanbe. The Hotel shall serve as a gateway to Central Asia, taking the brand portfolio to a

whole new level.

Serena Hotels, a brand associated with unique destinations globally, will be renovating and refurbishing the centrally located Hotel building as all Serena Hotel properties' stand as a reflection of its vision and brand values. Continuing our legacy of giving back to society and benefitting the communities where we operate, the company intends to exploit the untapped, rich potential in the tourism sector of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This will be the second Serena Hotel in the KP province after the Swat Serena Hotel, enabling the brand to connect the diverse tourist communities to the rustic areas of the province.

The upgradation of Peshawar Serena Hotel including the new construc-

tion will enhance the quality and comfort of the guest rooms, restaurants, banqueting and meeting rooms, public areas and Maisha Spa & Health Club. The Company has rigorous training plans for its Associates to ensure service delivery, bringing it in line with Serena Hotels' standards.

Serena Hotels' properties in Pakistan are currently located in Islamabad, Faisalabad, Quetta, Gilgit, Shigar, Khaplu, Altit, Hunza and Sost. In addition, two new Hotels are under construction in Gilgit-Baltistan; the Hunza Serena Hotel with 85 rooms, expected to be commissioned towards the end of 2023, and Sost Serena Hotel with 56 rooms, expected to be commission in 2024.

FPPCI to hold conference on economy next month

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPPCI) will hold a conference on the charter of economy and a conference on exports in January 2023 to develop proposals for improving the economy and exports.

This was stated by Irfan Iqbal Sheikh, President FPPCI, while addressing the business community at Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Irfan Iqbal Sheikh said that Pakistan is doing exports with only 10-12 countries and it urged to tap new markets to increase exports.

He urged to focus on engineering products for

exports as their share in the global market is 19% while the share of textile products is only 6%.

He stressed that the business community should develop strong unity to influence the government for making business friendly policies and assured that FPPCI would continue to play a role to resolve the issues of the business community and improve the economy.

Speaking at the occasion, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President ICCI said that LCs of the business community are not opening due to which production activities are suffering and if this situation continues, many industries

would face closure.

He said that consignments of imports including soybean are stuck up at ports as banks are not retiring LCs due to which the poultry industry would face a crisis and urged that FPPCI to take up this issue with the government for early solution.

He urged the government to bring down policy interest rate to single digit level to facilitate the growth of investment and businesses.

He urged the government to cooperate with the private sector in boosting exports to China, Africa, Central Asia and ASEAN countries to improve forex reserves.

Markets extend US rally ahead of inflation

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Asian markets mostly rose Tuesday, with nervous investors sitting tight ahead of key US inflation data and a Federal Reserve policy decision but fresh pledges by China to open up from zero-Covid offering support.

The gains across the region came after Wall Street's three main indexes raced out of the traps Monday, with analysts citing a survey by the central bank that showed inflation expectations falling.

The November consumer price index figures later in the day follow Friday's forecast-beating print on wholesale inflation, which dented hopes the Fed could take a more dovish tilt in its monetary-tightening campaign.

The central bank is then widely expected to lift interest rates 50 basis points on Wednesday -- a slowdown from the previous four 75-point hikes -- but its post-meeting statement and comments from boss Jerome Powell will be closely followed.

While the general view is that policymakers will stop increasing borrowing costs next year, there is debate about how high they will end and when

they will start to come down.

"It's all going to depend on CPI numbers, whether the Fed is going to pivot or not," Xi Qiao, at UBS Group AG, told Bloomberg Television.

"With the current inflation situation, a lot of the fundamental challenges that we have right now are going to go into 2023."

But the Wall Street Journal reported that there were disagreements within the policy board about the way forward, with doves trying to limit the economic pain as they bring inflation down, while hawks want a tougher line on fighting prices by weakening the jobs market.

"In this light, don't expect clearcut signals from the Fed... on what they expect to be doing at early 2023 (policy) meetings after a widely expected 50 basis points fund rate hike this week," said National Australia Bank's Ray Attrill.

In early Asian business, Hong Kong, Tokyo, Shanghai, Sydney, Seoul, Wellington, Taipei, Manila and Jakarta were all well up.

China's shift away from its economically damaging zero-Covid policy contin-

ued to lift sentiment as the world's number two economy opens up.

And on Monday, the country's ambassador to the United States said: "In the near future I believe that measures will be further relaxed and international travel will become easier."

Meanwhile, top Chinese officials are meeting this week to draw up their economic blueprint for re-emerging from Covid, with observers predicting more stimulus measures and pledges of support for the troubled property sector.

But there is also a worry among investors that the quick relaxation of containment measures such as mass testing and lockdowns might lead to a massive surge in infections that could overwhelm the healthcare system and weigh on the economy.

Still, the expected pick-up in demand in China boosted oil prices further, with both main contracts extending Monday's strong gains.

"China's reopening is coming, it won't happen overnight, but it will provide a major boost to demand in the outlook next quarter," said OANDA's Edward Moya.



In brief

Messi 'fool' taunt spawns mugs, T-shirts

DOHA (Agencies): "What are you looking at, fool? Get lost!" Lionel Messi's World Cup taunt of Dutch player Wout Weghorst has delighted Argentina, where the phrase has made its way onto mugs, shirts and other products. In a viral video online, soccer superstar Messi is shown being interviewed after Friday's stormy quarter-final clash with the Netherlands, when his eyes drift off camera. He then launches his words in the direction of the Dutch substitute — whose two late goals pushed the two teams into penalties — while the reporter struggles to get his attention. Argentina emerged victorious, but Messi fumed after the fractious match at the referee who gave Weghorst a free kick. The sport's world governing body FIFA has opened disciplinary proceedings against both teams after a World Cup record of 18 yellow cards and multiple mass confrontations during the game. But in Argentina, a saltier Lionel Messi has drawn comparisons with Diego Maradona, a troubled genius known for fiery moments both on and off the field. Businesses wasted no time plastering the slogan on a variety of products, with mugs selling for 1,600 pesos (\$9), T-shirts for 2,900 pesos, and caps for 3,900 pesos. "We made the T-shirts right away. The phrase went viral because in another stage, Messi had a calm, low profile. But people wanted him to have a bit of Diego (Maradona) spiciness," said clothing designer Tony Molfese, 31. For many in Argentina, the language Messi used is far milder than what can be heard on the streets.

Thunder beat Stars

CANBERRA (Agencies): Sydney Thunder beat Melbourne Stars by one wicket in a thrilling last-ball finish to a low-scoring Big Bash League opener. Set 123 to win, Thunder needed eight from the last over with three wickets in hand but Beau Webster took two wickets in consecutive balls, including substitute fielder Brody Couch's stunning one-handed catch at long off to remove Chris Green. Gurinder Sandhu then smashed the fourth ball of the over for six to level the scores, leaving Thunder needing one from two balls. A dot ball followed and Sandhu played and missed at the final delivery, only for English wicketkeeper Joe Clarke to fail to gather and allow Thunder a bye to clinch victory in a remarkable curtain-raiser at Canberra's Manuka Oval. The bowlers were on top throughout on a two-paced track and the Stars were soon under pressure after being asked to bat first as they lost both openers inside five overs. Joe Burns and Marcus Stoinis were cleared to play despite both testing positive for Covid-19 before the game but the former was forced to retire hurt after appearing to pull his hamstring, while the latter was dismissed for a golden duck. After scrambling to 122-8, the Stars made the ideal start with the ball when their new overseas signing Trent Boult removed Matthew Gilkes and Rilee Rossouw for ducks in his first over. Wickets continued to fall at regular intervals through the innings, three of them to Nathan Coulter-Nile, but despite slumping to 57-5 and then 89-7, the Thunder snuck home.



CANBERRA: Adam Zampa of the Stars celebrates taking a wicket during the Men's Big Bash League match between the Sydney Thunder and the Melbourne Stars at Manuka Oval.

ICC gives flat wicket in Rawalpindi another demerit point

ISLAMABAD (AP): The flat wicket at Pindi Cricket Stadium has received another demerit point within nine months from the International Cricket Council after England recorded an historic 74-run victory over Pakistan in the first test at Rawalpindi last week.

The ICC on Tuesday said match referee Andy Pycroft rated the pitch "below average" as England plundered a world-record 506-4 on Day 1 with four of its batters scoring centuries.

England went on to

score 657 in 101 overs before Pakistan also replied with 579, with three batters from the home team scoring hundreds.

"It was a very flat pitch which gave almost no assistance to any type of bowler," Pycroft said in an ICC statement. "That was the main reason why batters scored very fast and both sides posted huge totals. The pitch hardly deteriorated during the course of the match."

England went on to win its first test in Pakistan in 17 years after Pakistan lost

its last five wickets for nine runs and got bowled out for 268 in dimming light on the last day. England has since clinched the series with a narrow win in the second cricket test at Multan.

In March, a similar type of wicket at the same venue received a demerit point from the ICC when only 14 wickets fell over five days in a test match between Pakistan and Australia.

A venue can be suspended from hosting international cricket if it accumulates five demerit points within five years.

'Cricket still in denial' says Rafiq after racism scandal

LONDON (Agencies): Azeem Rafiq claims cricket is still "in denial" over the racism scandal that forced the former Yorkshire spinner to leave England after he lifted the lid on abuse in the domestic game.

Rafiq appeared before the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport select committee on Tuesday for the first time since November 2021 when he gave harrowing evidence about the racism he faced during his time at Yorkshire.

The 31-year-old used his latest appearance in front of the committee to highlight the abuse he and his family have endured since he blew the whistle.

"If I was to look at 13 months on from me opening my heart out, all that's changed really is that me and my family have been driven out of the country. And that's a sad element of it," he said. Karachi-born Rafiq, who moved with his immediate family to Pakistan last month, recounted incidents of abuse to the committee, including a man defecating outside his parents' house.

"I would love to come here and tell you how much cricket has changed, but unfortunately what it feels like is that cricket is very much in denial," he said.

"There are still a group of people out there who feel like cricket is the victim in this. 'The way I've been attacked and abused, why would you speak out? I've got a little hope in the new (ECB) leadership, but it's very little at the minute.'"

"Nothing was done" - The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) charged a number of individuals in relation to Rafiq's allegations of abuse in June, along with Yorkshire for the county's handling of those allegations.

However, the Cricket Discipline Commission has yet to hear the case after a dispute over whether it should take place in public or private.

Earlier in the DCMS hearing, Yorkshire chair Kamlesh Patel accused the former ECB leadership of failing to support him when he faced criticism over the reforms he led at the county. Patel took over at Yorkshire in November 2021 after the county had been stripped of hosting rights for international matches over their handling of Rafiq's allegations.

Patel was tasked by the ECB with implementing governance reforms at Headingley in order to get the county back on track, but faced criticism from the club's former leadership.

"If I was attacked in the press or if cricket leaders or previous cricket leaders made unsubstantiated statements, nothing was done," Patel said.

"I have email after email, letter after letter, saying 'you asked me to do this, I've done this, please support me' and I have no response to any of those letters and emails. So it was very distressing. 'I'm looking forward to the new leadership of Richard Thompson. The few meetings I've had with him have been positive and it feels like it's going forward, but these last 12 months, the answer (to the question of whether he has felt supported by the ECB) has to be 'no'."

was paying special attention to the welfare of the youth.

He that the whole province had been divided in 10 zones for the games, teams from all zone would participate in provincial level games in the second phase.

"Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is leading in sports facilities, players must use their energies and show skills at all level", he added and said that the province had a lot of talent which needed to be streamlined.

He informed that same like event would be organized for the teams of women MPs, which will include cricket and badminton competitions.

RABAT (Agencies): On the eve of their face-off against France in the FIFA World Cup semi-finals, Morocco is aspiring to make history by advancing to the final of the global tournament.

Addressing a press conference in the Qatari capital, Doha, Moroccan coach Walid Regragui said his team will seek to eliminate France from the competition during their Wednesday's World Cup summit.

"Every time, people expected that our team will be eliminated, but we are still here," Regragui said. "We dream of winning the World Cup." Regragui described his team's match against France in the semi-



finals as a "tough" game.

"We will continue to play with ambition and will continue to make surprises," the defiant coach said. "Why don't we qualify for the World Cup final?"

The 47-year-old coach said his Atlas Lions team seeks to change the mentality of the Africans

towards the World Cup, adding that the Moroccan team has showed to the whole world that an African football team can reach the semi-finals of the World Cup.

"We came here to change the prejudices surrounding the African continent," he said. "Many believe that we have had enough by reaching the semi-finals, but this is not our opinion."

Morocco became the third team from outside Europe and South America to qualify for the semi-finals of the World Cup, after the United States in 1930 and South Korea in 2002.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Inter Constituencies Peshawar region Games 2022 commenced



Shahid Khan Afridi

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Inter Constituencies Peshawar region Games 2022 commenced in a colorful ceremony at Tahamas Khan Stadium on Tuesday, in which more than 600 players from 14 constituencies of Peshawar zone participating in cricket, football and volleyball competitions.

Secretary Sports and Youth Affairs Captain (Rtd) Mushtaq Ahmed while addressing the ceremony said that the purpose of organizing such sports Members Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Faheem Ahmed, Arbab Jahandad, Malik Wajidullah, Director Sports

Female Games Ms. Rashida Ghaznavi, Director Sports Operations Azizullah Jan, Director Sports merged areas Pir Abdullah Shah, Deputy Director Salim Raza, RSO Peshawar Zakirullah and District Sports Officer Peshawar Miss Gul Rah Yasir were also present on the occasion.

Secretary Sports and Youth Affairs Captain (Rtd) Mushtaq Ahmed while addressing the ceremony said that the purpose of organizing such sports Members Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Faheem Ahmed, Arbab Jahandad, Malik Wajidullah, Director Sports

PCB advances New Zealand tour of Pakistan by a day

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan Cricket Board on Tuesday announced to bring forward the home series against New Zealand, originally set to commence on December 27, by one day.

New Zealand are due to visit Pakistan in the last week of December for two Tests and three One-Day international matches.

PCB confirmed that the decision has been taken with the mutual consent of the

New Zealand Cricket Board.

"The first Test of the two-match series will now commence on 26 December at the National Bank Cricket Arena Karachi and the second will be played in Multan from 3 January," said PCB in a media release.

The three ODIs will be played on 10, 12 and 14 January in Karachi, it added.

Complete Schedule of New Zealand's tour of Pakistan:

First Test — 26-30 December at National Bank Cricket Arena Karachi

Second Test — 3-7 January at Multan Cricket Stadium

First ODI — 10 January at National Bank Cricket Arena Karachi

Second ODI — 12 January at National Bank Cricket Arena Karachi

Third ODI — 14 January at National Bank Cricket Arena Karachi

Diamond Paints, DG/Din win openers in Lahore Open Polo Championship

LAHORE (APP): Diamond Paints and FG/Din Polo won the opening day matches of the Coca-Cola Lahore Open Polo Championship 2022 here at the Lahore Polo Club Tuesday

In the first match of the day, Diamond Paints team defeated Barry's team by 8-5. Lt Col Omer Minhas (R) played hero's role in Diamond Paints' triumph as he fired in a fabulous four goals while his teammates Ahmed Ali Tiwana banged in a brace and Mir Shoaib Ahmed and substitute player Hamza Ejaz converted one goal apiece. From team Barry's, Rulo Trotz smashed in four goals and

Daniyal Sheikh struck one.

The second match of the day saw dominance of FG/Din Polo, who overpowered Remington Pharma team by a good margin of 9-4. Tomas Marin Moreno did the magic with mallet and polo pony and thrashed in three tremendous goals while he was also ably assisted by his teammates Shah Shamil Alam, Mian Abbas Mukhtar and Raffay Shaikh, who hammered a brace each from the winning side. For Remington Pharma, all the four goals were converted by Hamza Mawaz Khan.

A good number of polo enthusiasts, including

Lahore Polo Club executive committee members, players and their families, were present on the occasion to witness the exciting matches at the historic Lahore Polo Club ground. The prestigious event is being conducted by Lahore Polo Club with the support of Coca-Cola while the co-sponsors are Century Ventures Limited.

Two more matches will be played today (Wednesday). Guard Rice will take on Salam Polo in the first match of the day at 1:30 pm while Newage Cables/Master Paints will vie against Master Paints Black in the second match of the day at 2:30 pm.

Inter Colleges Girls Tchoukball tournament starts Frontier College

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Inter-college girls Tchoukball tournament has started in Peshawar.

The students of Frontier College, Girls College Zaryab Colony, Girls College Hayatabad No. 1, Girls College Nahqi and Girls College Bacha Khan are participating in this event organized at Frontier College for Women.

Under the Higher Education Department of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Organized Like every year, the inter-college sports competitions are going on this year as well.

In this regard, the Tchoukball competition started in Frontier College for Women. In the first match, the team of City Girls Degree College Gulbehar defeated the team



of Girls College Zaryab Colony by 24-4. While Bacha Khan Girls College defeated Girls' College Hayatabad No. 1 by 12-10. Likewise, Girls' College Nahqi got a walkover against Girls' College Dagri.

Organizer of the tournament and Director of Sports of Girls' Degree College Zaryab Colony Miss

Rohina Tabasim said that women sports should be promoted. Our women are as talented as men. Special attention should be given to sports in women's schools and colleges.

He said that the Higher Education Department is organizing regular games in women's colleges in the province.

Neymar cleared of corruption over Barcelona transfer

BARCELONA (Agencies): Brazilian football superstar Neymar was cleared of corruption charges on Tuesday related to his transfer to Barcelona from Santos in 2013. A court in Spain acquitted all nine defendants in the trial.

In addition to Neymar, this included his parents, FC Barcelona and former club presidents Josep Maria Bartomeu and Sandro Rosell. Santos FC and former president Odilio Rodrigues Filho, and N&N -- the company founded by Neymar's parents to manage his career.

Brazilian company DIS had argued they lost out financially on Neymar's transfer because they owned 40 percent of Neymar's sporting rights at Santos and believed the true value of the deal had been obscured by those involved.

"According to the court it has not been proved there was a false contract or that DIS was intended to be harmed," said the court in a statement. Neymar's high-profile trial got underway in mid-October in Barcelona, just a month before the start of the World Cup in Qatar.

The 30-year-old -- who now plays for French champions Paris Saint-Germain -- and Brazil crashed out after a penalty shootout against Croatia in the quarter-finals.

Prosecutors had initially



sought a two-year jail term and a 10-million-euro (\$10.5 million) fine for Neymar but in a surprise move they dropped corruption and fraud charges against all the accused at the end of October.

Brazilian sports investment firm DIS filed a lawsuit in 2015 alleging it had been defrauded during the player's transfer to Barcelona. It claimed Neymar, Barcelona and the Brazilian club colluded to mask the true cost of his transfer thereby cheating it of its proper share of the player's transfer.

DIS also argued that it was not informed of the existence of an exclusivity contract in 2011 between Neymar and Barcelona.

But Spanish prosecutors, which initially shared DIS' view, later said the firm's allegations were not based on "evidence". They concluded the case was a matter of civil rather than criminal justice.

- DIS indictment - Even though prosecutors dropped their charges the case continued because the court

was also considering a separate indictment filed by DIS as it is allowed by Spanish law. DIS was seeking to recover 35 million euros it claims it was cheated of.

Barca said the transfer cost 57.1 million euros, with 40 million euros paid to N&N and 17.1 million to Santos, of which 6.8 million was given to DIS. Spanish prosecutors initially said they believed the actual value was at least 83 million euros.

During the trial Neymar said he didn't remember if he took part in the transfer negotiations, saying he only signed documents presented to him by his father.

All of the other defendants, including former Barcelona presidents Bartomeu and Rosell, denied any wrongdoing.

DIS, which owns a chain of supermarkets in Brazil's Sao Paulo region, initially asked for a five-year prison sentence for Neymar and his father who is also the player's agent. But at the end of the trial it called for a revised prison sentence of two and a half years for Neymar and four years for Neymar's father, but the defendants were acquitted.

Neymar, who won the Champions League with Barcelona in 2015, left for PSG in 2017 for a world-record 222 million euro (\$234 million) transfer fee, with the Parisian side activating his release clause.



In brief

IRSA releases 76,200 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Tuesday released 76,200 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 43,400 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1496.60 feet and was 98.60 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow in the dam was recorded as 21,300 cusecs while outflow was 42,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1125.70 feet, which was 75.70 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water were recorded at 7,900 cusecs and 20,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 52,900, 40,700, 30,300 and 13,800 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 8,600 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera and 2,000 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

ICT admin seals 2 illegal petrol

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration on Tuesday sealed two illegal petrol-selling agencies and arrested two violators over corrupt practices. Following the crackdown against illegal filling stations, one illegal LPG filling station was also sealed and violators were arrested, said ICT press release. Meanwhile, in a surprise inspection by assistant commissioners at 155 different points, the ICT teams arrested seven profiteers, sealed one shop, and fined 18,500 rupees for violation, whereas, FIR was also filed against one violator. Following the ban on the use of polythene bags in ICT, the administration during the inspection confiscated 19 kg of polythene bags and directed the shopkeepers to adhere to the ban on polythene bags in the future. During the crackdown, the administration also arrested 10 professional beggars.

Ten gamblers arrested

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested ten gamblers and recovered stake money of Rs 20,860, 03 mobile phones, snooker sticks and balls from their possession during an operation here on Tuesday, informed a police spokesman. Those arrested were identified as Umar, Kamran, Shehbaz, Zubair, Shehryar, Imran, Vishal, Samir, Asher and Adil. Bani police have registered separate cases against all of them and further investigation was in progress. SP Rawal appreciated the performance of police team adding that gambling is the root cause of crime and strict action will be continued against anti-social elements. Rawalpindi Police on Tuesday arrested 38 professional beggars in its ongoing crackdown raids conducted on the direction of City Police Officer CPO Syed Shahzad Nadeem Bukhari.

Mushaira held at PAC

RAWALPINDI (APP): A mushaira was organized at the Punjab Arts Council in honour of the well-known Karachi-based poet, Neel Ahmed. The famous poet, fiction writer and columnist Farkhunda Shamim presided over the event while Nasir Ali Nasir performed the host duties. Speaking on the occasion, Farkhunda said that establishing the Punjab Tea House by Director of Arts Council Waqar Ahmed was a unique gift to poets. She added that tea house would be a new chapter in promoting literature.



ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Religious Harmony Maulana Tahir Ashrafi addressing a press conference at his office.

FSC holds state responsible to protect rights of transgender children

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Federal Shariat Court (FSC) on Tuesday held the state responsible to protect the rights of transgender children. A full bench of the Federal Shariat Court comprising Honourable Chief Justice Dr Syed Muhammad Anwer and Justice Khadim Hussain Shaikh heard the petition regarding Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2018.

Representatives from transgender community also attended the hearing. During the course of hearing a person from khawaja sira community showed concerns over worse situation of the community.

Justice Syed Muhammad Anwer inquired regarding the same from the representatives of Ministry of Human Rights, however, they could not

provide a plausible explanation. He expressed his concern over the matter and was dissatisfied with their explanation.

He held that unfortunately, these children have abandoned by their own families, as a result whereof they are abused by the criminals and fall prey to pedophiles and other predators in our society, which is a scar on the face of this society. Similarly, the lives of same category of persons become more miserable as they turn old.

The FSC Chief Justice further remarked that Section 6(a) of the impugned Law bounds the Government and Ministry of Human Rights to ensure the rescue, protection and rehabilitation of transgender persons in addition to providing medical facilities, psychological care,

counseling, etc.

The Hon'ble Bench further said that Allah Almighty has bestowed dignity on every human being and this is our believe as stated in the Holy Quran, even it has also been enshrined in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1973. Therefore, there should be exclusive protection homes for such children, who are intersex and are abandoned by their families, as well as for the older persons falling under the category of intersex (Khusra) as defined in section 2(n)(i) of the impugned Law. The Ministry of Human Rights was directed to submit a report positively by 15.12.2022 showing whether there is any facility for the protection of children born with some defects in their sexual organs.

14 new primary healthcare facilities being established in capital

ISLAMABAD (APP): Cognizant of the basic health needs of the rural population, the District Health Department is working on a comprehensive plan of extending all-possible services to the ailing humanity under which 14 new Community Health Centers (CHCs) and Basic Health Units (BHUs) would be made operational during the next year.

"Around 11 new CHCs and three BHUs, having 515 indoor-bed capacity, are in the final phase of their construction that will be functional during the next year," Project Director of Health Department Islamabad Sardar Shabbir Ahmed told APP on Tuesday.

Sharing details, he said the new initiatives having indoor facilities included 200-bed King Salman bin Abdulaziz Hospital at

Tarlai, 30-bed CHC at Bari Imam, 40-bed CHC at G-13, 25-bed Mother & Neonatal Child Health Centre at I-14 (Badhana Kalan), 20-bed Mother & Child Health Centre at Gohra Shahan, 60-bed Mother & Neonatal Child Health Centre at Bhara Kahu, 40-bed CHC at Bokra (Proposed) to be built in I-12 sector, while four BHUs at Tarno, Kirpa, Shah Allah Diitta and Rawat were being upgraded to CHCs with 25-bed capacity each.

Besides, the construction of three new BHUs, with outpatient department (OPD) facility only, are being constructed at Jhangi Syedan, Sara-e-Kharboosa and Golra Sharif.

The project director said the existing BHU at Sohan had been reconstructed with added facilities for mother and child, adding the department also estab-

lished eight "Well Baby Clinics" at its existing BHUs to facilitate the mother and child.

Sardar Shabbir said the department had also moved a summary for the creation of 359 additional posts of various cadres of health-care professionals. "The summary is in the last stages of approval. With the joining of these professionals, the department will be able to operate all these facilities round the clock," he remarked.

Answering a question, he said, currently, the overall all-bed capacity of the existing three Rural Health Centers (RHCs) was 60 only, adding that with the establishment of new health facilities, the indoor bed capacity would reach 575, and patients would be able to get treatment round-the-clock.

Railways retrieved 961 acres land from land grabbers

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways has retrieved as many as 961 acres of its land worth Rs19, 603 million during various anti-encroachment operations across the country from the land grabbers.

"Around 474 acres retrieved in Punjab, 135 acres in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 329 acres in Sindh and only 23 acres in Balochistan acres land had been retrieved by the Pakistan Railways," an official in the Ministry of Railways told APP.

He said that about 3,287 acres in Punjab, 832 acres in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 5,180 acres in Sindh, and 687 acres of land in Balochistan were being encroached.

The official said that in the light of orders of the Supreme Court, the anti-encroachment operations for retrieval of encroached railway land all over the Railway network were initiated and a joint procedure order was issued to all Divisional Superintendents for retrieval of Railways land from encroachment.

"The anti-encroachment schedules, on a three months basis, are being prepared and sent to all concerned in line with the joint procedure order," the official added.

He said Pakistan Railways had also decided to accelerate its ongoing anti-encroachment operation against land grabbers across the country to recoup its land from different individuals, groups, and even business organizations who were

using it for residential, commercial, and agriculture purposes for decades.

"The encroachment operation will be launched with the assistance of Railway Police and district administrations of the relevant provincial governments," he added. He said the government was taking several steps to retrieve encroached land from the land grabbers including a detailed survey being carried out to identify the encroached land, occupied by the individuals and under illegal occupation by various government departments.

The official said that First Information Reports (FIRs) were being lodged and cases were registered and sent to PR Judicial Magistrates for expeditious trial.

The issue regarding illegal occupation and possession of PR's land by government departments and institutions has also been taken up with the concerned departments, he added.

The official said PR owned 167,690 acres of land across the country, of which 90,326-acre was in Punjab, 39,428-acre in Sindh, 28,228-acre in Balochistan, and 9,708-acre in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

To a question, he said Pakistan Railways' major portion of around 9,986 acres of land worth billion of rupees were found under illegal occupation of private, individual, and different government departments across the country.

Islamabad police devise mechanism

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad police have devised a mechanism to check attitude of officials with public in police stations and to record views of complainants for further improvement.

Following the directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, feedback of complainants would be recorded and maximum efforts to be made for relief to them.

Police source said that Islamabad Police is taking all possible steps to provide maximum relief to the citizens. He said that IGP has directed the officials to ensure quality investigation into crime cases and provide relief to people through resolving their matters.

He said that free registration of crime, quality investigation and prevention of crime are among top priorities of police and no compromise would be made on it.

He said that the performance of investigation officers would be reviewed on continuous basis and those showing good performance would be encouraged.

The source said that IGP Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan has also directed all police officials to listen the complainants themselves and check the quality of investigation besides satisfaction of the complainants.

He said that safety and security of the citizens is our prime responsibility and no stone would be returned in this regard.

Justice Siddique seeks early SC hearing of his challenge to removal

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Former Islamabad High Court judge Shaukat Aziz Siddiqui has filed an application in the Supreme Court of Pakistan seeking early hearing of his case. The deposed judge requested the apex court to fix hearing of his case in the first week of January 2023.

Siddiqui stated that the last hearing of his petition challenging the decision of the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) was held in June 2022.

The former IHC judge had submitted the appeal against an opinion of the Supreme Judicial Commission (SJC), as well as an Oct 11, 2018, notification under

which he was removed as a superior court judge for his speech at the District Bar Association, Rawalpindi, in July 2018.

In his speech, Siddiqui alleged that certain officers of an agency were interfering in the judiciary's affairs and were trying to "manipulate the formation of benches of the high court".

In its suggestions, the SJC had ruled that Justice Siddiqui had not only violated certain provisions of the code of conduct, but had also displayed conduct unbecoming of his stature and thus violated the traditional requirements of behaviour expected of a superior court judge.

‘Govt putting great emphasis on promotion of quality education’

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training Rana Tanveer Hussain met with a delegation of the Oxford Pakistan Programme on Tuesday.

Chairman Higher Education Commission (HEC) Dr Mukhtar Ahmed. The Minister said the Government of Pakistan is putting great emphasis on promotion of quality education including higher education in the country.

He said there is a great potential in Pakistani students. He said for exceptional Pakistani students to study at Oxford, there is need to establish a number

of scholarships, especially women at Lady Margret Hall which is traditionally a women's college.

The Minister said that there should be faculty and student exchange, scholarships for students, sharing of information and experiences about each other's academic's policies and initiatives, organization of seminars and conferences, short term trainings, capacity building of staff and reciprocal visits of officials.

Rana Tanveer was briefed that OPP has three core objectives: to address the underrepresentation of Pakistani and British Pakistani students at the

University of Oxford; to promote academic exchange between Oxford University and Pakistan's institutions of higher learning and to broaden academic conversations on Pakistan beyond the narrow remits of security and geopolitics.

The Minister said that Pakistan has around 64% youth with substantial potential to support all key sectors of economy by developing human capital. He said Government of Pakistan realizes that it is imperative to provide quality education and opportunities to youth for the socioeconomic development of Pakistan.

ANF seizes 3076.902 kg drugs, arrests 19 drug peddlers

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) seized 3076.902 kg drugs, 26,800 kg suspected substances and 1181 Ltr HCL worth US\$ 46.11 million internationally, arrested 19 persons, including 2 Women and impounded 4 vehicles while conducting 26 counter-narcotics operations throughout the country.

According to a spokesperson of ANF, the seized drugs comprised 2431.700 Kg Opium, 23,527 Kg Heroin, 583.677 Kg Hashish, 27.11 Kg crystal methamphetamine (Ice), 3,500 Kg Ketamine, 0.388 Kg Ecstasy Tablets (634 x Tabs) and 7 Kg bhang. In Balochistan, the force recovered 2959.7 Kg of drugs and 1181 Ltr HCL in 6 operations, arrested 2 persons in drug smuggling, and seized one vehicle. The seized drugs comprised 2423 Kg of Opium, 20.7 Kg of Heroin, 502 Kg Hashish and 14 Kg crystal methamphetamine (Ice). The ANF in Punjab recovered 2,616 Kg of drugs in 3 operations while arresting 3 persons, including a woman involved in drug smuggling. The seized drugs comprised 0.690 kg Heroin and

1,926 Kg Hashish. The force in KPK recovered 19,839 Kg of drugs in 4 operations and arrested a person in drug smuggling. The seized drugs comprised 19,451 Kg Hashish and 0.388 kg Ecstasy Tablets (634 x Tabs).

Meanwhile, the ANF in Sindh recovered 38,047 Kg of drugs and 26,800 Kg of suspected substance in 8 operations while 4 persons including a woman were arrested in drug smuggling, besides one vehicle was seized. The recovered drugs comprised 1.5 Kg Opium, 2,137 Kg Heroin, 14,800 Kg Hashish, 9,110 Kg crystal methamphetamine (Ice), 3.5 Kg Ketamine and 7 Kg bhang.

The force in ANF North recovered 56,700 Kg of drugs in 5 operations and arrested 9 persons, besides seizing two vehicles. The seized drugs comprised 7,200 Kg Opium, 45,500 Kg Hashish and 4 Kg crystal methamphetamine (Ice).

All cases have been registered at respective ANF Police Stations under CNS Act 1997 (Amended 2022) and further investigations are under process.

HEC asks students to take admission only in recognised HEC institutions

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Higher Education Commission (HEC) has asked the students seeking admission in higher educational institutions of the country to only choose HEC recognised institution.

According to official sources from HEC, it is notified for information of the students, parents and the general public that the HEC has been empowered, by virtue of its 2022 Ordinance under which Institutions including those that are not part of the State educational system may be opened and operated across the country.

Therefore, HEC, in exercising its delegated powers, recognises degrees from accredited universities/institutions in the public and private sector of Pakistan and degrees from their approved campuses, including Transnational Educational Institutions imparting foreign qualification in

Pakistan as mentioned on HEC website on the following web links:

Link of Recognized Universities/Institutions: www.hec.gov.pk/site/HEIs.

Link of Recognized Campuses of Public and Private Sector Institutions: www.hec.gov.pk/site/recognizedCampuses.

Link of Recognized Institutions Imparting Foreign Qualification in Pakistan through Collaboration: www.hec.gov.pk/site/FCL. Any other University/Institution which is not listed in HEC Recognised Universities/ Institutions/Campuses available at our website will not be considered/ recognised by HEC.

Further, a separate list of Fake, Illegal, Unlawful and Unrecognized Institutions is also being maintained at following web link for awareness of public and all relevant stakeholders:

List of Illegal/Fake Institutions: www.hec.gov.pk/site/Illegal-DALs.

In the larger interest of general public and forthcoming admission season, students and their parents are cautioned to verify legal status of the University/Institution, its campus and transnational education (TNE) provider from the above-mentioned links before seeking admission. Further, the status of affiliated colleges can be verified from respective public sector universities/institutions and HEC.

The students are strictly advised not to take admissions in those Institutions which are not listed on HEC website in the recognised list of Universities/ Institutions/Campus(es).

Degrees obtained from un-recognized Institutions/ Campuses will not be recognized by HEC.



ISLAMABAD: A group of youngsters playing cricket in a local park along Islamabad Highway in Federal Capital.

DAB Auction \$13m today

KABUL (Agencies): Da Afghanistan Bank will auction 13 million USA dollars today (Wednesday) to keep the local currency rate stable in the market. ADB in a statement asked all eligible commercial banks, and money exchangers to participate in the auction. It is mentioned in the newsletter that partial transaction is not allowed and the winner of the auction is obligated to deliver the amount in cash at a specific time to DAB.

The Frontier Post AFGHANISTAN

Jamadi-ul-Awwal 19, 1444 — Wednesday, December 14, 2022

Road accident killed two

BAGHLAN (Agencies): Two people lost their lives and five others were injured in a car accident in the Khajah Alwan area on the Baghlan Mazar-e-Sharif highway. A spokesman Mawlawi Shair Ahmad Burhani for Baghlan police said that the accident happened in collision of a car, he said that the injured persons were transported to the Baghlan public health hospital. Meanwhile, five people were injured in a car accident in the Aayd Abad district of Maidan Wardak.

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

Thousands of Afghan refugees return from Iran, Turkey



HERAT CITY (Pajhwok): More than 10,000 Afghan refugees return from Iran and Turkey on a monthly basis, the Refugees and Repatriation Department of western Herat province said on Tuesday.

Mawlawi Ezatullah, director of the department, told Pajhwok Afghan News the majority of these refugees enter the country through Islam Qala port and they are forcibly deported from Iran.

While appreciating the

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for meeting essential needs and providing immediate support to the returnees, he asked neighboring countries, especially Iran, to treat the Afghan refugees well and prevent their forced deportation.

Meanwhile, a number of people deported from Iran said if job opportunities were created, no one would be willing to leave the country.

Hidayatullah Joya, a resident of Ghorian district, who has just been forcibly deported from Iran with a group of young people, said they were mistreated and humiliated by the Iranian police.

According to Joya, the situation in Afghanistan has changed and poverty increased, forcing hundreds of people like him to leave legally or illegally for foreign countries, including Iran and Turkey.

Maulvi Hafez Mirza Abu

Muhammad Mansour, head of labor and social affairs of Herat, says the process of sending workers abroad is based on an understanding and that thousands of people will be sent abroad from Herat.

Maulvi Sher Ahmad Ammar, head of Herat's foreign relations, also said the caretaker government had initiated a program to find job opportunities abroad and soon thousands of Afghan workers will be sent to Arab countries for work.

UNHCR provides shelter to victims

KHOST (Khaama Press): United Nations High Commission for Refugees' 'housing and shelter' project for the earthquake-affected villages in Afghanistan's southern Khost and Paktika provinces is in its final stages.

The newly-built, well-insulated houses equipped with Bukhari heaters, expansive windows, strong doors, and solar energy will provide enduring shelter for some 7,000 people following June's devastating earthquake that ravaged Afghanistan's long-neglected southeast region, the UNHCR said in a tweet.

According to the UNHCR, UN Refugee Agency, some US\$14 million has been allocated for the community-based construction efforts to build some 2,300 earthquake-resilient houses in Southern Khost and Paktika provinces devastated by the deadly June 22, earthquake.

"This initiative demonstrates UNHCR's sustained solidarity and support to people affected by the disaster — in the coming months 2,300 families will have new, resilient, winterized homes," said UNHCR Representative Leonard Zulu during an assessment mission in Barmal, Paktika Province.

Recently, the UNHCR teams have met with communities, and intensified the construction work of the so-called shelter initiative to finalize the winterized houses which soon be handed over to local residents in Khost and Paktika province, before the cold winter reaches them.

Over the past years, natural disasters such as drought, floods, landslides, and earthquakes, have harshly affected villages across the country. Hundreds of people lost their crops, livestock, and even their near and dear ones, and faced displacement with no provision to continue a normal life.

Meanwhile, the initiation of similar housing schemes funded by the UNHCR, UN Development Programme, NGOs, governments and other organizations is of paramount importance to help ordinary people resettle and continue their lives, amid these challenging times.

2nd death anniversary Azam marked

KABUL (TOLONews): The second anniversary of the death of well-known novelist, journalist and literary scholar Mohammad Azam Rahnaward Zaryab marked, the well-known novelist who died in 1399.

He spent over 50 years of his life writing about Persian and Afghan culture and wrote acclaimed novels and other works. He wrote a dozen literary works.

Zaryab worked as a print and TV journalist and editor throughout his career and worked as an editor for TOLO TV/TOLONews in Kabul for over 10 years.

"The books he wrote, the novels he wrote, were fantastic and people love them," said Noor Ahmad Khalidi, a writer.

"His name is not only in our country's literature but it is also in the literature of Tajikistan, Iran and India," said Yahya Chawoshi, a member of the Poets and Writers Union.

Zaryab had many fans, not only in Afghanistan but also in Persian-speaking countries, and he won several national and international awards.

His novel "Chahar Gerd Qala Gashitam" won the Jalal Al-e Ahmad Literary Award in Iran in 1395.

Zaryab's most famous novels include Gulnara and Ayeena, Shahr-e-Telism, and Dokhter Shah Pariyan.

Zaryab studied for his bachelor's in journalism at Kabul University and took his master's degree in Great Britain. Zaryab was born in 1323 and died in 1399 from Covid-19 at the age of seventy-six.

Afghan needs considered on UN's Int'l Universal Health Coverage Day

KABUL (TOLONews): On the UN's International Universal Health Coverage Day, some citizens of the country said that they don't have access to health services, especially in remote villages.

Ahmad Shah is a resident of Khas district in Urugzan and he said that due to a lack of health services in this province they must bring their patients to Kabul.

"We don't have health facilities in our village, like clinics, to take our patients to," said Ahmad Shah, a patient.

"Clinics have to be made for us in the remote districts so we can take our patients there so people are not forced to take their patients to foreign countries," said Ziaulhaq a relative of a patient.

Meanwhile, officials of the Ministry of Public Health called on the World Health Organization and other organizations to cooperate with the health sector in Afghanistan.

"We ask that organizations work on the health sector and try make progress in the health system," said Sayed Rasul

Mangal, head of health financing at the Ministry of Public Health.

"We can make great achievements on the domestic and international level for the Islamic Emirate health system, one of these achievements is to improve the health of families and society," said Abdul Latif Nazari, deputy of the Ministry of Economy.

According to information from the Public Health Ministry, nearly 70 percent have access to health services, and more than 20 percent receive mobile health services.

Deputy PM to chair Procurement Commission

KABUL (Khaama Press): The current administration in Afghanistan established the National Procurement Commission at the decree of the group's supreme leader, Mullah Hibatullah Akhundzada, state-run media reported.

The National Procurement Commission had its inaugural meeting on Tuesday, according to the state news agency Bakhtar. Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, the deputy prime minister for economic affairs, presided over the meeting.

The National Procurement Commission, led by Deputy Prime Minister Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, seeks to maintain transparency, offer efficient services, resolve procurement-related issues, and coordinate procurement operations.

The deputy ministers of finance and the economy as well as the head of the office of administrative affairs are members of the



newly formed commission, albeit its organizational composition has not been brought to light.

This comes as the ousted government of Afghanistan also had a similar agency, the National Procurement Authority (NPA), based on a decree of the then-president Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai, under the Administrative Office of the President (AOP).

While floundering with

the economic meltdown in Afghanistan, the de facto ruling body in Afghanistan dissolved several ministries and institutions at the beginning of the fiscal year.

Some of the key dissolved institutions of the US-backed government were the Independent Human Rights Commission, National Security Council, High Council for National Reconciliation, and many more.

FMIC to receive level 5 Safe-Care Certification

KABUL (Khaama Press): French Medical Institute for Children (FMIC) is the first hospital in Afghanistan to receive the level 5 SafeCare Certificate for the high-quality healthcare services it offers.

FMIC is managed by Aga Khan University (AKU), an Agency of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN).

An initiative of PharmAccess, Joint Commission International (JCI), and Council for Health Service Accreditation of Southern Africa (COHSASA), SafeCare is a methodology with internationally accredited standards, aiming to improve quality care in low- and middle-income countries, where 3.6 million people die every year because of low-quality care. Level 5 status is given

to institutions that demonstrate high-quality standards across the SafeCare Service Elements.

FMIC has been the pioneer hospital in Afghanistan's healthcare industry to offer quality services to its patients including adults, women, and children over the past 16 years. "The SafeCare certification the hospital receives is the outcome of the innovation, the hard work and commitment the FMIC has had to raise the healthcare standards in Afghanistan," CEO Aziz Ahmad said.

Meanwhile, PharmAccess CEO Nicole Spieker welcomed the first ever SafeCare-certified hospital in Afghanistan and expressed his optimism that PharmAccess will extend its continued cooperation

with healthcare agencies offering primary, secondary and tertiary healthcare in different regions.

This professional achievement highlights the high-quality healthcare services being offered by FMIC at a time when the country's healthcare system is currently faced with massive economic challenges and a lack of professional doctors. It also sparks hope in the thousands of Afghan patients who travel to neighboring countries such as Pakistan and Iran for better treatment. The availability of such standardized hospitals equipped with the latest cut-edge technologies will help people benefit from their services and avoid the massive challenges they face will going abroad.

Kabul delegates to discuss refugee situation

KABUL (TOLONews): A delegation of the Islamic Emirate traveled to Iran on Saturday to attend a "quadrilateral meeting" on Afghan refugees.

The meeting will be attended by delegations from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

The delegation of the Islamic Emirate is led by the deputy Minister of Refugees and Repatriation, Abdul Rahman Rashid.

"We will sign agreements with Iran and Pakistan, where our Afghans are based, so the problems of Afghan refugees will be solved and that they return to the country voluntarily," he said.

Afghan refugees living in regional countries expressed frustration over their situation, saying that they are facing severe difficulties.

"Those refugees who come here illegally, they are facing inappropriate treatment by the countries' military," said Ahmad



Faisal Nizami, an Afghan refugee.

"The Iran government has ensured very strict measures. The military of this country opens fire on Afghan refugees," said Wahidullah Amini, an Afghan refugee.

This comes as some people complain over the economic hardship in the country, saying that they are obliged to leave the country to make ends meet.

"I want to go to Iran for work because there is no work in Afghanistan," said Mohammad Sabir, a resident of Kabul.

The owner of one of the transportation companies, Naseer Ahmad Arghandab, said that more than 500 people are traveling abroad by land each day.

"Whenever the borders are opened, then at least 500 people are going to Iran on daily basis," said Naseer Ahmad Arghandab, the owner of one of the transportation companies.

According to the numbers of the Refugees Ministry, more than six million Afghans are living in Iran and Pakistan.

Lack of electric power causing significant loss to productivity

KABUL (TOLONews): The Chamber of Industry and Mines said that electricity blackouts have caused factories to decrease output by 60 percent.

According to this chamber, 600 factories are active in Kabul city and if the problem of power outages is not solved, most of these factories will be closed.

One factory started work with a \$7 million investment but now it is facing a reduction in production due to a lack of electricity.

Officials of this factory said that they only have electricity for three days per week and just 8 hours per day and that is not enough.

"Problems are too much

about electricity, in one week we have electricity just three days," said Abdul Basir Faisal, head of one of the factories.

If we work 24 hours, we can produce twenty-one thousand packages of milk, but now due to a lack of electricity we can just produce 3,000 packages of milk," said Abdul Shah, deputy of a factory.

The Chamber of Industry and Mines of Afghanistan said that currently, the shortage of electricity exists in all provinces of the country and if this problem is not addressed most of the factories will face a reduction in production.

"This year, unfortunate-

ly, we have problems with electricity in some provinces and we have a lack of electricity and we had to divide the factories into two work shifts," said Rahimullah Samandari, head of the chamber.

"Before we had 1,700 factories, but now due to electricity shortages, only 500 or 600 factories are active," said Mohammad Karim Azimi, a member of ACIM.

Meanwhile, some residents of Kabul have complained about the electricity blackouts in the capital.

"In 24 hours for four hours we have electricity at night and we cannot study," said Ahmad Siyar, a Kabul resident.

Da Afghanistan Breshna

Sherkat said that the amount of electricity imported from Uzbekistan has decreased, and the company is trying to increase electricity imports from Turkmenistan and regional countries.

"The only reason is the imported electricity that Uzbekistan brings to Kabul, there is a problem in their electricity generation network, and they cannot provide Afghanistan with the electricity required according to the contract," said Hekmatullah Maiwandi, a spokesman for DABS.

Afghanistan imports 80 percent of its needed electricity from Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Iran.

Exhibition of women's paintings opened in Kabul city



KABUL (TOLONews): The exhibition is aimed at drawing attention to the closing of schools for girls above grade six.

The organizers said the

pieces speak about the story of Afghan women.

"We wanted to pave the way for further engagement of women and their social activities by holding this

exhibition," said Sayed Mohammad Naseer Hosseini, an organizer of the exhibition.

"We wanted to display these pictures today and to

display the talents of the women," said Hakim Hekmatyar, an organizer.

Many girls with art being displayed in the exhibition are prevented from going to school.

"We aimed to draw the suffering and pain of the people of Afghanistan, particularly women and girls, who cannot go to school and must do other activities because of the restrictions," said Huma, an artist.

"It has been a year since the schools have been closed to us. We cannot go to school and thus we turn to the arts so we can explain the pain of our hearts through painting," said Fatima, an artist.

Visitors expressed happiness over the exhibition.

"We came here and visited the artistic pieces. I think such an exhibition be held in the future as well," said Khatara, a visitor.

Humanitarian crisis, deportation of refugees to Afghanistan

KABUL (Khaama Press): Since the return of the Taliban to power in August 2021, thousands of Afghans have fled to the neighboring countries either legally or illegally and now face forceful deportation.

Over the past year, Afghanistan witnessed major internal displacement and mass migration mostly due to the recent regime change and economic reasons.

Thousands of Afghans migrate to the neighboring countries including Pakistan, Iran and Turkey

through illegal pathways on daily basis. In search of safety and a better life, they definitely face overwhelming challenges throughout this risky journey. Some even died on the way before reaching the final destination, others go through serious mistreatment and humiliation.

Besides all these challenges, Afghan refugees with no legal status in the host countries including Iran, Pakistan and Turkey face the danger of forceful deportation. More than 10,000 Afghan refugees

return from Iran and Turkey on a monthly basis, according to the Refugees and Repatriation Department of western Herat province.

Meanwhile, the government of Pakistan in a statement announced last month that Afghan refugees with no legal status from UNHCR or the interior ministry of Pakistan beyond December 2022 will face imprisonment and deportation. Pakistan hosts the largest number of Afghan refugees in the region for nearly the past three decades.

"If employment opportunities are created in a safe and secure environment, no one would dare to leave the country and face the humiliation and mistreatment in the neighboring countries," a returnee from Iran said.

On the other hand, Maulvi Hafez Mirza Abu Muhammad Mansour, head of labor and social affairs of Herat, said that the caretaker government is working on a comprehensive plan to find employment opportunities overseas and send Afghan employees to Gulf countries.

Pakistan, Kazakhstan to further improve economic ties: President

ISLAMABAD (INP): President Dr. Arif Alvi has said there is a great potential of diversifying trade relations and entering into joint ventures in the areas of agriculture, IT, textile, energy, logistics, housing and construction between Pakistan and Kazakhstan.

Talking to Chairman of Lower House of the Kazakh Parliament Koshanov Yerlan Zhakanovich in Islamabad on Tuesday, he said the existing trade level of 219.12 million dollars needed to be substantially increased keeping in view the immense potential that existed between the two countries by building new and improving existing linkages through roads and railway networks. He said trade by Kazakhstan and other Central Asian Republics through Karachi and Gwadar is an important element of the Vision Central Asia Policy. The President said the international community should take a strong exception to the atrocities being perpetually committed by the Indian Security Forces against innocent Kashmiris who are demanding their legitimate right to self-determination as promised to them by various UNSC resolutions.

President Alvi visits HIT, briefed on technical capabilities, production activities: President of the Islamic Republic of

Pakistan, Doctor Arif Alvi on Tuesday visited Heavy Industries Taxila (HIT).

On the occasion, the President was briefed on HIT's technical capabilities, production activities, indigenization efforts, major Research and Development (R&D) projects and recently undertaken initiatives to improve efficiency of HIT.

President Alvi visited various factories and witnessed work on ongoing projects. He took keen interest in ongoing R&D projects including Bullet Proofing and IED protection of Military Vehicles and manufacturing of tank and Artillery Gun barrels and systems.

He applauded HIT's efforts to attain self-reliance through indigenization and acquisition of modern technologies for combat vehicles and systems.

President Alvi expressed his full confidence in capabilities of HIT and appreciated commitment of HIT to transform the organization into a modern defence production establishment so as to adequately meet the requirements of Armed Forces and Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) in line with international standards.

Earlier on arrival, Lieutenant General Syed Aamer Raza, Chairman HIT, received the President.

Minor girl gang-raped, killed in Karachi

KARACHI (PPI): Another minor girl was allegedly gang-raped and later killed in Karachi on Tuesday. According to a report, a six-year-old girl went missing from outside her house and the family frantically searched her but to no avail.

Later, the girl's body was recovered from a deserted house near Gulshan-e-Maymar Afghan camp police check post. Police shifted her body to the Abbasi Shaheed Hospital for an autopsy and other legal formalities. Pehlwan Khan, a resident of the area, told police that the whole area was in complete darkness due to loadshedding.

They searched for the six-year-old using torches and found the body in a room at an abandoned house a few miles away from her residence. Suspects gang-raped the little girl and murdered her. The victim family have demanded justice and appealed to police to arrest of the suspects and give exemplary punishment to them. The victim had six siblings and was the fourth child of her parents. She lived in the Afghan camp with her family. Her father was differently abled after losing his leg in an incident six months ago. Initial investigation showed that it was a case of murder after alleged gang rape, said police. The officials added that they could share any further details after the post-mortem. Police have launched a probe and summoned the crime scene unit to gather evidence.

IHC adjourns hearing of Khan's petition against disqualification

ISLAMABAD (TLTP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) has adjourned the hearing in a case related to the disqualification of former prime minister Imran Khan in the Toshakhana reference by the Election Commission of Pakistan.

Imran Khan's lawyer Ali Zafar, the Election Commission of Pakistan's counsel and others appeared before the IHC for a hearing presided over by IHC Chief Justice Aamer Farooq, PML-N leader, Mohsin Shah Nawaz Ranjha's counsel told the court that the Toshakhana reference was sent to the National Assembly against Imran Khan.

The TLTP learnt that Imran Khan's counsel, Ali Zafar in his arguments before the IHC said NA Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf declared Imran Khan disqualified on the assets details of 2018-19 and forwarded a reference to the ECP. He said, "Speaker should have forwarded supporting documents to the ECP for Imran Khan's disqualification under Article 63, 1(P)."

Zafar further said that the ECP was only supposed to give its take on the issue of Imran Khan's disqualification under Article 63, 1(P). As per SC, the ECP is not a court of law but it disqualifies his client, Ali Zafar added. He said as per law, the ECP can only disqualify any member of the assembly when a trial court rules against him or her. He also gave the example of Faisal Vawda's disqualification case in Imran Khan's case. Barrister Zafar further argued that ECP is not a Court of Law and there are many judgements of the Supreme Court of Pakistan in which it has been decided that under Article 62(1)(f) no declaration can be made by ECP at all.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman of the Mazhili (Lower House) of the Parliament of the Kazakhstan, Mr. Koshanov Yerian Zhakonovich, along with his delegation, called on President Dr. Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Corruption couldn't be eradicated due to weaknesses in system: CJP

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chief Justice of Pakistan Justice Umar Ata Bandial on Tuesday remarked that the corruption in the country couldn't be eradicated, despite the court decisions, due to the weaknesses in the system.

The CJP gave these remarks during the hearing of a petition filed by Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf (PTI) chief Imran Khan challenging amendments in the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Ordinance.

The CJP remarked that no efforts had been ever made to remove the weaknesses in the system.

It was the responsibility of the Parliament to introduce legislation for bringing betterment in the system and ensure implementation of it, he said. The top court CJ remarked that IGs in provinces used to be changed after every five months while SHOs

of police stations used to be replaced within three months.

The CJP remarked that the apex court had decided the Pakistan Steel Mills and Reko Diq cases in the past with good intentions. The government couldn't fix corruption in the projects due to weaknesses in the system, he said. The chief justice remarked that the businesses of many people had been destroyed due to the misuse of NAB law in the country. However, no one should be forgiven for committing corruption. The CJP further said that the court couldn't find the relevant law which clarifies the point that whether an incomplete assembly could introduce legislation or not. More than a half assembly had boycotted the house as a political strategy, he observed.

He said that it was a good omen

that there was free media in the country which was highlighting the truth. Justice Ijaz ul Ahsan remarked that the NAB amendments had benefited only a few people.

Whether the judiciary should just see this situation as a spectator, he asked, and observed that the NAB law was approved in haste without any debate. Justice Mansoor Ali Shah remarked that there shouldn't be corruption in the system but who would take steps to curb it.

The judiciary had to interfere when the system was being destroyed, he said, adding that country's ranking in corruption would have gone down internationally after amendments in NAB law.

The bench questioned under what law it could terminate the NAB amendments on conflicts of interest.

Zelensky calls for 50 million lightbulbs

KYIV (BBC): Millions of energy-efficient lightbulbs are needed to help Ukraine cope with Russian attacks on the country's energy system, President Zelensky

has said. Speaking at a conference in Paris, he argued that one of the keys to stopping Russian aggression was to guarantee Ukraine's energy stability.

Generators are now "as necessary in Ukraine as armoured vehicles and bulletproof vests", he said.

Russian strikes on Ukraine's energy grid have left millions without power.

With winter temperatures in parts of the country often below zero for weeks on end, Ukraine has accused Russia of using the cold weather as a weapon against its civilian population. Many parts of the country now only have electricity for a few hours a day. The damage to Ukraine's energy infrastructure has caused an average shortfall of about two-and-a-half gigawatts of power, Volodymyr Zelensky told an international aid conference on Tuesday.

But supplying the country with 50 million LED lightbulbs, which use less energy than older varieties,

would save around one gigawatt of power - reducing the shortfall by about 40%. The EU has already committed to sending 30 million bulbs.

"In these times of suffering and darkness, it is so important to bring light to Ukraine," European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said.

Around 12 million people in Ukraine are now disconnected from the electricity grid, President Zelensky told the Paris conference, which was organised to help Ukraine get through winter and to plan the country's reconstruction. "Unfortunately, this is a typical situation for us. And we expect new Russian strikes every day, which can dramatically increase the number of shutdowns." Blackouts, both scheduled and unscheduled, have affected almost every region of the country, some lasting days at a time.

Many critical services are relying on generators to keep the lights on, including hospitals and other medical facilities which are forced to limit the number of patients they treat.

"We are prioritising emergencies, trauma injuries, anything related to the war. We understand the consequences," Ukraine's Health Minister Viktor Liashko told the BBC.

President Zelensky said more generators were urgently needed, as well as specialist equipment to repair the energy infrastructure. Restoring Ukraine's power grid would cost about £1.5bn (£1.3bn), he said. Pledges at the conference totalled a little over £1bn, France's foreign minister said, with £415m allocated to energy.

French President Emmanuel Macron, who hosted Tuesday's conference, described Russia's strikes on Ukraine's power grid as "cynical" and "cowardly". "They violate without any doubt the most basic principles of humanitarian law. These acts are intolerable and will not go unpunished." Experts have told the BBC that Russia's strategy of targeting Ukraine's infrastructure almost certainly violates international law, because of the disproportionate harm done to civilians.

IHC approves 14-day protective bail of Suleman

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Islamabad High Court (IHC) Chief Justice Amir Farooq has granted protective bail to Suleman Shehbaz, son of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, for 14 days. The court on Tuesday also directed Suleman Shehbaz to appear before the relevant court within two weeks.

The court also ordered National Accountability Bureau (NAB) and Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) not to arrest Shehbaz Sharif. Suleman Shehbaz earlier reached Islamabad High Court (IHC) to surrender before the court and to attend the hearing of his plea seeking protective bail. On December 8 last, the IHC ordered Suleman Shehbaz to surrender himself before the court by December 13. It is pertinent to mention here that a court had declared Salman Shehbaz and Tahir Naqvi absconders in July this year in a money laundering case against them.

Pertinent to note that the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) had written a letter to the UK government to hand over Salman, who was wanted by the accountability watchdog under money laundering charges and the Telegraphic Transfer scandal. An accountability court in 2019 also issued non-bailable warrants for the arrest of Salman in a money laundering case. He went abroad in 2018. The Federal Investigation Agency's (FIA) banking crime circle had claimed to have unearthed billions of rupees stashed money in the bank accounts of his employees.

ECP summons Imran on Jan 3 in contempt case

ISLAMABAD (NNI): The Election Commission of Pakistan has summoned PTI Chairman Imran Khan, Asad Umar and Fawad Chaudhry during its next hearing on January 3. A three-member ECP bench led by Sindh member Nisar Durrani heard the contempt case against the top PTI trio on Tuesday.

Faisal Chaudhry, counsel for Imran and Fawad Ch, told the bench that the PTI chairman was still unable to travel. The Balochistan member asked where was Imran's medical certificate. Faisal Ch replied that he would present Imran's medical certificate 'but first let the Supreme Court release its written verdict on the ECP appeal'.

Pakistan has 'irrefutable evidence' of India's involvement in Johar Town blast: Rana Sana

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Interior Rana Sanaullah on Tuesday said Pakistan had "irrefutable evidence" of the involvement of Indian agency RAW in the blast at Johar Town, Lahore last year.

"India was not only behind the Johar Town blast, but also found involved in fanning terrorism in Pakistan," he said while addressing a news conference here along with Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) Additional Inspector General (IG) Punjab Imran Mehmud. "This is a matter of internal security and we are initiating the process to take it up at the international level. The Secretary Foreign Affairs will highlight the issue at different world forums while Minister for Foreign Affairs Bilawal Bhutto Zardari will raise the matter of Indian

involvement in terror financing and subversive activities in Pakistan at the United Nations," the minister added.

Rana Sanaullah said Pakistanis had given innumerable sacrifices in wiping out terrorism from the country. "Pakistan has been facing terrorism for several decades, and Pakistanis including citizens, personnel of armed forces, police, Rangers and agencies, journalists, and politicians have either lost their lives in this war or became its victims." He said gatherings at mosques, Imambargahs, important buildings and else where were targeted. India had remained involved in every form of terrorism in Pakistan.

India was acting just like an enemy and at the same time trying to conceal its brutalities in the occupied Kashmir, he added. The

minister said the arrest of spy Kulbhushan Yadev and his statement was sufficient to prove that India was involved in every act of terrorism in Pakistan and was adopting different ways for the purpose. He said they had "undeniable evidence" that could establish India and its premier spy agency (Research and Analysis Wing) were involved in different terror incidents.

He said the Foreign Ministry would raise the issue of Indian involvement in terrorism in Pakistan and also expose it before the world. "After investigation it transpires that India is involved in the Johar Town terror act and its own narrative also tells about its involvement," he added.

He said India had transferred more than \$0.8 million to the terrorists to carry out the task.

Fazl, Mengal concerned at being ignored over Reko Diq legislation

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) chairman and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman and Balochistan National Party (BNP) chief Sardar Akhtar Mengal on Tuesday expressed reservations for not taking them in confidence over legislation regarding Reko Diq.

According to sources, the PDM chairman met BNP chief in which matters pertaining to overall political situation of the country and Balochistan came under discussion. In this regard, sources said that both leaders while expressing concern for not being taken into confidence over Reko Diq legislation, agreed on adopting joint political strategy. Both the leaders called the Foreign Investment Protection and Promotion Bill against the 18th Amendment.

Earlier today, the BNP-M

chief, a key ally of the Centre's ruling alliance, was reportedly displeased with the government over recent legislation in connection with the Reko Diq project. Sources claimed that Mr Mengal, who was considering parting ways with the ruling coalition, had summoned a meeting of BNP-M's core committee to discuss the recent developments and future plan of action.

The former CM Balochistan had also refused to support the Foreign Investment (Promotion and Protection) Bill, 2022 in the lower house of the parliament. However, the ruling alliance, while apparently bulldozing the concerns raised by the allies, managed to take the parliament's nod on the bill.

Meanwhile, Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Abdul Qudus Bizenjo on Tuesday

said no one would be allowed to politicise the Reko Diq project, days after the Supreme Court declared a new deal with a foreign company legal.

Mr Bizenjo in a media talk made it clear that the provincial taxes on the copper and gold mine project would go to Balochistan. He vowed not to give in the powers granted to the province after the 18th amendment to the constitution. Last week, the apex court declared a new deal between a Canadian firm and the Pakistani government on the Reko Diq project legal. A five-member bench of the apex court, headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan Justice Umar Ata Bandial, and comprising Justice Ijazul Ahsan, Justice Muneeb Akhtar, Justice Yahya Afridi and Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhel shared their opinion on a reference sent by President Arif Alvi.

Country needs stability, not elections: Saad Rafique

LAHORE (APP): Federal Minister for Railways Khawaja Saad Rafique said on Tuesday that the country needed stability in the current circumstances, and not elections. Talking to the media outside an accountability court here, he said that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) was in power in two provinces besides Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Kashmir and now the party should focus on welfare of the masses. But, instead of doing the welfare works for the masses, the PTI was demanding elections, he added.

He said that if elections started to be held on demand of a party then no assembly would complete its tenure. He questioned whether it was a play to make and break the assemblies, adding that billions of rupees were spent on the elections.

He said that elections should be held on time and Imran Khan should serve the

masses in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Kashmir instead of plunder. He said that Usman Buzdar plundered in Punjab first and now the present provincial government was also indulged in it, adding that 1.5 billion rupees were being given to members of assembly despite the fact that the national kitty was empty and no donor was ready to give the loan.

He said that political opponents were crushed for success of 'project Imran'. "Political opponents were made target of character assassination and defamation to present PTI chairman as a fake Mahatma", he added. He said that during those days, everything looked alright to Imran Khan and now he had started crying whereas nothing had been done against him.

While criticising the PTI chairman for leveling allegations of corruption against

the opponent political leaders, he said that Imran Khan should have proven the corruption. "Imran should have brought evidence of corruption in the courts as he remained the ruler for four years and all institutions were under him", he added. He said that only lies were spread and a section of the media was also part of it.

Saad Rafique termed Imran Khan's tenure as a dark era, adding that it had come to an end. He said that Imran Khan was alone today and now all his steps backfired, adding that the nation witnessed the landing of a long march in Nala Lai.

To a question, he said that the government was firefighting for the last eight months and dealing with the problems created by the PTI government, adding that the PTI government created a mess and every year billions of dollars had to be returned.

Arshad Sharif's murder JIT decides to list witnesses

ISLAMABAD (INP): The joint investigation team (JIT) constituted to probe the killing of senior journalist Arshad Sharif has decided to make a list of witnesses, who recorded their testimonies other than the family.

According to media reports, the decision was taken during the joint investigation team's second meeting, which was held at CPO Headquarters in Islamabad. During the meeting, the JIT instructed the Superintendent of Police (SP) Saddar to immediately contact his family members and arrange a meeting.

The team also decided to make a list of witnesses other than Arshad Sharif's family who recorded other testimonies. Apart from this, the investigation team decided to hold meetings on the daily basis, wherein the performance related to the case will be reviewed.