

#### Adviser met PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Adviser to the Prime Minister on National Heritage, Culture, Political, and Public Affairs Engineer Amir Muqam called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif here Friday and discussed matters related to the promotion of national heritage. The meeting discussed issues pertaining to the National Heritage and Culture Division. The overall political situation also came under discussion.



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#### ECP ban transfers

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Election Commission has frozen the administrative units and announced the ban on the transfer of members and conveners of constituency committees. ECP instructed to freeze the administrative units across the Punjab province after that no changes can be made in the existing administrative units. Meanwhile, the delimitation of the Metropolitan Corporation and District Council was also frozen.

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## APS Martyrs' Day observed: Nation to be one voice against terror: PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday said December 16, when terrorists committed barbarity against the children of Army Public School (APS) eight years ago, is a reminder for the entire nation to be one voice against terrorism.

"The Pakistani nation will never forget the sacrifices of its martyrs," the prime minister said in a tweet.

Prime Minister Sharif said the day is to pay respect to the martyrs of APS tragedy and share the grief of their families.

"This day is a message to the whole world that Pakistan has made great sacrifices to eradicate terrorism," he said.

The prime minister vowed to continue fight against terrorism and extremism.

"Our fight against terror-

ism will continue with the same strong resolve and perseverance until the complete elimination of this menace," he said.

PM for housing societies, residential buildings for overseas Pakistanis in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday directed the authorities concerned to develop housing societies and modern residential buildings for overseas Pakistanis in the federal capital.

The prime minister, chairing a high-level meeting on the investment of overseas Pakistanis in the housing sector of Islamabad, said the experienced and well-reputed firms should be engaged for the construction of residential buildings for the expatriates.

The senior officers of the Capital Development

Authority (CDA) briefed the prime minister on the prospects of investment by overseas Pakistanis in the housing sector.

The prime minister also directed for proper marketing of the CDA's projects which had the potential to attract investment.

He said the government would make no compromise on the quality of development projects in federal capital and called for projects' completion before the deadline.

Federal ministers Ishaq Dar and Azam Nazeer Tarar, Advisor Ahad Cheema, Special Assistant to PM Tariq Bajwa and senior CDA officers attended the meeting.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday said the government would extend facilitation to foreign investors in a bid to promote investment in the

country.

He was talking to Naguib Sawiris, a prominent businessman from Egypt, who called on him along with a delegation here at the PM House.

The prime minister said Pakistan was following investor-friendly policies to encourage the foreign businessmen explore the investment opportunities. In this regard, he mentioned the fields of information technology, telecommunication, energy, agriculture, food processing, livestock, tourism and natural resources.

Sawiris expressed his interest in investing in more sectors in Pakistan, especially in the mining sector.

The business group of Naguib Sawiris has made successful investments in telecommunication and real estate sectors in Pakistan.



ISLAMABAD: Businessman from Egypt Naguib Sawiris meeting with Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

### 'Imran to announce dissolution of PA soon'

LAHORE (INP): Pakistan Muslim League- Quaid-e-Azam (PML-Q) leader and son of CM Punjab Pervaiz Elahi reportedly persuaded several Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders to delay the dissolution of Punjab Assembly.

PTI, which enjoys majority in Punjab Assembly, had announced that the party chief Imran Khan will announce dissolution of provincial assembly this month but now sources have told ARY News that the party's main ally and CM Punjab's son Moonis Elahi has convinced several PTI leaders to delay the decision for "PML-N will benefit from such a move".

The former premier Imran Khan agreed with Moonis's stance but didn't give his final decision regarding the dissolution of the Punjab Assembly.

A total of five out of three leaders agreed with Moonis Elahi's point of view, meanwhile, president is also against the decision of immediate dissolution of assemblies, however, the final call will be made by Imran Khan soon.

## No more sacred cows, rule of law important: Imran

LAHORE (INP): Former premier and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief Imran Khan said Friday that there should be no sacred cow and the rule of law is important in the country.

While addressing lawyers' convention in Lahore via video link, Imran Khan stressed the rule of law in the country. He said that there is only one solution to end the crisis in the country which is the rule of law.

He said that there is a rule of power in the country instead of law. He added that the rule of law gives a level playing field to all citizens while the country would not achieve prosperity and development goals due to the rule of power.

The former premier was of the view that it is unfortunate to see around 750,000 skilled persons leaving the country during the last seven months.

The PTI chief alleged that the current rulers were

given NRO 2 and cases against the 'big thieves' were dissolved. He vowed to continue his struggle against the corrupt elements in the country.

"Date for dissolution of assemblies to be announced tomorrow"

PTI Vice President Fawad Chaudhry clarified on Friday that there is no ambiguity in Imran Khan's decision as he is going to announce the date for the dissolution of the assemblies tomorrow.

Addressing a press conference in Lahore on Friday, Fawad Chaudhry said Punjab Chief Minister Pervaiz Elahi and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) CM Mahmood Khan will participate in tomorrow's historical rally on Lahore's Liberty Chowk.

He added that the date for the dissolution of the assemblies will be announced in the presence of the Punjab and KP chief

ministers. He also revealed that KP CM Mahmood Khan has recently held conservation with Imran Khan.

Chaudhry reiterated that fresh election is only solution to bring political and economic stability to the country.

The PTI VP said that Imran Khan completed consultations with the lawyers and decided to challenge the acquittal of Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz top leaders Maryam Nawaz and Hamza Shehbaz in different cases.

To a question, Fawad Chaudhry lashed out at the political opponents of the PTI and said that purported audio conversation of the former first lady Bushra Bibi was 'fake' and all other leaked audios are 'doctored'.

He asked the political rivals to end their misconception about denting political reputation of Imran Khan via such audio leaks.

## Dec 16 always to be remembered for great sacrifice of APS martyrs

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Information and Broadcasting Mariyum Aurangzeb said on Friday that the day of December 16 will always be remembered for the great sacrifices of the martyrs of Army Public School, Peshawar.

In her message on the 8th anniversary of APS martyrs, the minister said that martyrs of APS tragedy united the nation against terrorism.

She said despite the passage of eight years, even today the nation could not forget the tragedy of APS of 2014.

The minister said that cowardly evil elements attacked the future of the nation, the young children and martyred them.

"As a nation we have come a long



way to defeat terrorism, we are moving towards lasting peace and development in Pakistan", she remarked.

Mariyum Aurangzeb prayed to Allah Almighty to rest the departed souls of the martyrs of Army Public School in eternal peace and grant courage to the bereaved families to bear this loss with fortitude.

PML-N workers' conventions in Kasur, Sheikhupura, Swat today

Minister for Information and Broadcasting Mariyum Aurangzeb said on Friday that Pakistan Muslim League (N) workers' conventions will be held today in Kasur, Sheikhupura and Swat.

In a tweet, she said that Minister for Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal, Minister for Railways Khawaja Saad Rafiq and Malik Ahmad Khan would address at Children's Park, Khadian Khas at Kasur at 3 pm.

She said Federal Minister Mian Javed Latif would address the workers at Chitti Kothi, Sheikhupura at 4 pm.

Mariyum Aurangzeb said Prime Minister's Adviser Amir Muqam will address the workers' convention in Swat at 320 pm.

## Dar chairs inter-ministerial meeting on anti-smuggling steps

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar chaired an inter-ministerial follow-up meeting on anti-smuggling measures.

Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar, SAPM on Finance Tariq Bajwa, SAPM on Revenue Tariq Pasha, Governor SBP, Secretary Finance, Secretary Interior, DG I&I Customs, Member Customs, ADG FIA, and senior officers from Finance Division participated in the meeting, said a press release issued here.

The meeting reviewed the progress on anti-smuggling measures and roadmap to strengthen anti-smuggling regime in the country.

The meeting was apprised that strict and vigilant operations have been initiated against the illegal cross border movement of foreign currency, urea, wheat and other items by the Customs, law enforcement and intel-



ligence agencies.

It was informed that large quantity of foreign currency and other valuable items have been confiscated at various points between 9 to 15 December, 2022 period due to these strict measures.

The representatives of Pakistan Customs, FIA and Interior have updated the meeting on their progress and suggested pragmatic measures to curb the menace of smuggling.

The finance minister highlighted the necessity to stop the cross border smuggling of foreign currency and

other valuable items affecting the economic growth in the country and expressed satisfaction on the progress of concerned agencies.

He further stressed upon the need of coordination among all the concerned agencies for this purpose and directed them to take comprehensive and combined action against those involved in the smuggling activities and currency speculation.

Dar directed the relevant authorities to speed up their operations to curb cross-border smuggling.

It was also decided that a regular review meeting on anti-smuggling operations will be held on weekly basis.

In conclusion, the participants thanked and appreciated the Finance Minister for taking appropriate and active measures for tackling the current economic situation and ensured their support for ensuring smooth and sustainable economic growth.

## People's prosperity, country's development govt's top priorities

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister of State for Petroleum Musadik Malik on Friday reaffirmed that the prosperity of people and the development of country were top priorities of the incumbent government.

All policies of the government were aimed at providing maximum relief to the poor people and creating employment opportunities, which, however, was linked with the growth of gross domestic products (GDP) and running of industries, he said while addressing here a press conference.

The minister said there was dire need of energy for achieving 5-6 per cent GDP growth and for which Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had directed to devise a comprehensive development strategy. The new energy policy would be presented in the cabinet for approval, which would also be shared with the media.

He said more gas was provided to the consumers

in October, November and December this year so far as compared to the corresponding months of last year despite 10 percent annual depletion in its reserves in the country.

Additional 20,000 to 30,000 tons liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) was being brought in the country every month, he said, adding they were grateful to Qatar for providing one additional cargo in January and February.

He said more LPG distribution points were set up in areas where gas infrastructure was not available.

Musadik Malik said Pakistan was about to sign a trade agreement with Azerbaijan on LNG (liquefied natural gas), which would enhance its capacity to buy any distressed cargo throughout the world at cheap rates.

He said during his recent visit to Russia, it was clearly told that they would provide crude oil to Pakistan on discounted

rate or at prices even lower than other countries.

Russia had eight types of crude oil, two of the light ones could be used by refineries in Pakistan, he added.

He said before his Russia's visit he had met the officials of Pakistani refineries. It was informed that the Pakistan Refinery Ltd (PRL) and Pak-Arab Refinery Limited (PARCO) could refine only two types of the Russian crude oil upto 50 percent and 30 percent respectively, while Cerngycio could use all the eight types.

The supply of Russian crude oil at discounted rates would help reduce energy prices in the country, he said, adding Russia would also provide finished products, including petrol and diesel.

He said the TAPI gas pipeline project had also been revived with Turkmenistan for bringing 1.3 billion cubic gas. A special strategic cell had been set up at the ministry

that would be responsible for ensuring implementation of any agreements, he said.

The minister said a visit of inter-governmental commission (IGC) led by the Russian energy minister was scheduled for the second week of January. The strategic cell was making efforts to fulfill all requirements before the visit of IGC so that "we can start getting Russian crude oil by the end of first quarter."

Musadik said Pakistan was also trying to sign a government-to-agreement with the United Arab Emirates, under which it would get finished petroleum products.

To a question about Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's press conference a day earlier, he said it was correct that Pakistan was not currently buying any oil from Russia. His ministry would share the details with the Foreign Ministry to clear confusion, he added.

### UNGA adopts Pak resolution

UNITED NATIONS (INP): The United Nations General Assembly has stamped its approval on a Pakistan-sponsored resolution that reaffirms the right to self-determination for peoples who are subjected to colonial, foreign and alien occupation such as those in Jammu and Kashmir.

The text, which was adopted by consensus, was recommended last month by the 193-member Assembly's Third Committee, which deals with social, humanitarian and cultural issues. Pakistan has been tabling this resolution since 1981 in an effort to focus the world's attention on the peoples still struggling for their malenable right to self-determination, including those in Kashmir and Palestine.

Co-sponsored by 72 countries, the resolution calls upon countries to immediately cease their foreign military intervention in and occupation of foreign countries and territories, as well as acts of repression, discrimination and maltreatment.

The resolution also declared the General Assembly's firm opposition to acts of foreign military intervention, aggression and occupation, since these have resulted in the suppression of the right of peoples to self-determination and other human rights in certain parts of the world.

The Assembly also deplored the plight of millions of refugees and displaced persons who have been uprooted as a result of these acts and reaffirms their right to return to their homes voluntarily in safety and honour. It urges the Human Rights Council to give special attention to the violation of human rights, especially the right to self-determination, resulting from foreign military intervention, aggression or occupation.

UNITED NATIONS (APP): Pakistan on Friday said that it would not tolerate cross-border terrorism by the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) or other terrorist groups and that the country reserved the right to take direct action against them.

"Pakistan will not tolerate such cross-border terrorism by the TTP or other terrorist groups, like the BLA, which are also receiving financial and other support from hostile quarters. We reserve the right to take direct action against them," the foreign minister said addressing an event to commemorate the 8th anniversary of the terrorist attack on Army Public School in Peshawar held here at the UN Headquarters.

Hosted by Pakistan, the event was held as part of the UN's Office of Counter Terrorism's "Remembrance of the Victims of Terrorism" campaign.

Started with one-minute silence, the commemorative event brought together the UN member states, victims, experts, academics, civil society organizations and representative of law enforcement agencies.

In his address, the foreign minister said 132 children and eight teachers and staff at the School had died in that attack and several others were injured.

The attack was claimed by the so-called Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), an entity listed as a terrorist organization by the Security Council and many Member States, he added.

"This terrorist attack was particularly heinous because the clear aim of the terrorists was to kill children. In this sense, it was a targeted attack designed to deal a grievous blow to the morale of the people of Pakistan."

He told the gathering that instead, the shock of the APS massacre mobilized the Pakistani nation and motivated it to eliminate all terrorists from their soil as massive military operations were undertaken to cleanse the frontiers of the TTP and associated ter-

rorist groups.

"Pakistan's operations were successful. Our territory was cleared of terrorists. We paid a heavy price - 80,000 civilians and soldiers killed or injured and the economy set back by \$120 billion," he remarked.

However, Foreign Minister Bilawal said unfortunately the TTP and some other terrorist groups found "safe havens" and even more frequent attacks have been conducted against Pakistan's military and civilian targets.

He said the brutal nature of the TTP, and its callous targeting of children in the APS attack, and other crimes should also reinforce the world community's determination to combat and defeat the TTP, along with other terrorist organizations, like ISIL-K, operating in Afghanistan.

He told the participants that Pakistan's intelligence agencies had "solid proof" of financial and organizational support and direction

(Continued on Back Page)



ISLAMABAD: Civil society members lighting candles in remembrance of martyrs of Army Public School Peshawar incident.









## Anti-corruption court acquits four officials

**Humayun Khan**

PESHAWAR: Anti-corruption court Judge Babar Ali Khan acquitted four persons including two officials of Health's department and all accused appear before court while already obtained bail in the case.

The accused namely Syed Shahzad Ali Shah Manager E.P.I, Zahid Ali, Hashmat Ali and Khizar Hayat were acquitted from the charges leveled against them by anti-corruption establishment.

According to prosecution, EPI Manager has alleged made embezzlement of Rs7.7 million

while releasing cheques and a case was registered against him by Anti-corruption establishment.

Public Prosecutor Zia-ul-Qamar Safi appeared on behalf of state while the judgment stated that they are on bail and their sureties are relieved from their liabilities of sureties' bond. The case property be dealt in accordance with law and instant file consigned to the record room after completion and compilation.

The judgement further added that main accused Shahzad Ali Shah was not beneficiary of these cheques because the cheques were

issued in the name of contractor neither it is proved that cheques were prepared by EPI Manager Department of Health Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The counsel argued that it does not made any losses to public's exchequer while contractor is also accused in the cases to whom cross-cheque of National Bank of Pakistan issued. He added that it is premature cases because cheques didn't cash by contractor. Anti-corruption court judge Babar Ali Khan after conclusion of trial and arguments acquitted four accused while dispose-off the petition.

## Drug addict father and son kill each other

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: A drug addict father and his son allegedly killed each other by firing inside a hujra in the Academy Town area here on Friday.

According to police, the incident took place in the vicinity of Pishtakhara police station where a man identified as Ehsan Ullah and his son Najibullah had some verbal clash and later resorted to firing at each other. Police said the father and son died on the scene.

The father and son had been taking drugs for a long time and used to exchange harsh words time and again, police said. The wife of the deceased, Najibullah did not blame anyone for the incident, saying the frequent scuffles between the father and son today led to their deaths. However, police have collected evidence from the crime scene to ascertain the real cause of the unfortunate incident. Bodies of both the deceased were shifted to KMC for medico legal procedure.



PESHAWAR: Activists of Aman Jirga holding banner during a protest against use of drugs. — F.P. photo

## KP underlines need to facilitate industries for development

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ghulam Ali on Friday underscored the need for facilitating the industries for prosperity and development of the country.

He noted that development of industries is development of the country's economy, adding that the present era was an era of trade and it was imperative to strengthen the national economy by facilitating the domestic industry as well as the industrialists to achieve a unique identity among comity of nations.

Talking to a delegation of Industrialist Association Peshawar here at the Governor house, he said that it was his top most priority to resolve the issues and problems being faced by the industrialists. The delegation was led by President Industrialist Association Malik Imran Ishaq, while the delegation included Group Leader Ghazanfar Bilour, SDP Ayub Zakuri, Dr. Maqbool, Haji

Afzal, Muqtasid Ahsan, Haris Mufti, Junaid Afzal, Saad Zahid, Ahmed Mustafa, Malik Mohsin, Malik Nauman and Malik Adnan and other officials were also present.

In the meeting of the Industrialist Association delegation with the Governor, Arbab Saqib, Senior General Manager of Sui Gas Department, GM Peshawar Taj Ali Khan, Chief Pesco Engineer Syed Nabi Gul and Regional Head EOB. I Ashfaq Ahmed also participated specially. During the meeting, President IAP apprised the governor about issues like RLNG price, gas load management policy, low pressure of gas and poor supply system.

The governor assured that he would take up the matter with the federal government and standing committee on petroleum, adding that KP province was producing excess gas and the industries of the province should not face such problems. In the meeting, the replacement of the rotten gas pipelines and transmission sys-

tem was also discussed., The Sui Gas department officials assured the industrialists that the work would be completed soon.

Adjustment, fuel price adjustment, peak hours tariff and other issues related to PESCO and TESCO were also brought to the notice of the Governor. The Governor said that issues like fixed billing, fuel price adjustment and power supply during peak consumption hours were under the control of Federal Government, concerned Standing Committee and Nepra.

On the issues related to EOBI, the Governor said that EOBI should ensure the collection of fees as per the court decision. On this occasion, the delegation of the Industrialist Association thanked the Governor for his cooperation and assurances. Ghulam Ali said that people associated with the industry not only hold a very prestigious position for him, but were a valuable asset for the country.

## APS survivor shines despite horrific terror attack eight year ago

PESHAWAR (APP): The survivor of horrific attack on the Army Public School (APS) Peshawar eight years had inspired many due to his indomitable courage, willpower and professional commitment by earning great name for the country's within and abroad.

Ahmad Nawaz, a brave son of Peshawar, who survived APS massacre on December 16, 2014, has inspired many after becoming the youngest President of the prestigious Oxford University's Union with a history going back to 1825. Born at the resident of Muhammad Nawaz at Peshawar, Ahmad Nawaz, who received multiple bullets wounds during APS horrific terrorist attack that claimed lives of around 150 students and teachers including its Principal Tahira Qazi, has recently comfortably won the Oxford University's Union election after defeating his two opponents. Ahmad Nawaz brother Haris Nawaz was also killed in the deadly attack.

Ahmad Nawaz, who is a second-year Philosophy and Theology student from Lady Margaret Hall of the Oxford University, has secured 517 votes against Anjali Ramanathan 422 votes and Rachel Ojo 187 votes.

"Ahmad Nawaz is a symbol of indomitable courage, willpower and brave son of Pakistan. His success in the oxford university's union election

showed that every goal can be achieved with a strong determination, belief in own abilities and willpower," said Manzoorul Haq, former Ambassador of Pakistan while talking to APP.

Despite brutal killing of his younger brother Haris Nawaz in the APS's horrific incident, he said the 23-years-old Peshawari son had stood up and continued his inspirational journey fueled by great mental strength and character, which led to his great achievement in a very young age. Following appeal of his father Muhammad Nawaz, the critically injured Ahmad was shifted to Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham, London by the then Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif on February 12, 2015.

The then PMLN Government had also provided Rs 30.6 million to his father for abroad treatment of his son. Following successful surgeries at Lady Reading Hospital Peshawar and London based hospital, Ahmad's obtained admission at historic Oxford University where he presently studied at Philosophy and Theology and quickly made their mark.

Ambassador Manzoor, who served as Deputy High Commissioner of Pakistan at UK said Ahmad has earned great name for Pakistan and set a unique example of indomitable courage, willpower and determina-

tion not only for the entire youth of Pakistan but also abroad. He said "we need to focus on character of our students in educational institutions so that they can meet any challenge."

Ikhtiar Wali Khan, member provincial assembly said election of Ahmad Nawaz as President of the Oxford's university union was a great honour for Pakistan especially for Peshawar. Ahmad was a role model for students of Pakistan. He said his spirited courage showed that everything can be achieved in life if someone's his a willpower, motivation, belief in own abilities and stick to his goals.

Ikhtiar Wali Khan said that Nawaz's historic win had impressed people of all walks of life in Pakistan and overseas. He said that former Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif also deserved credit and appreciation for providing a substantial financial assistance to the tune of over Rs30.6 million for treatment of Ahmad's and issued passports to his family to accompany him in London on emergency basis, thus saving his life. He said Ahmad's success showed that Pakistanis was a strong nation and can come out of every difficult situation. He expressed the hope that Ahmad Nawaz would fulfill his new assignment with best of his abilities and in a professional way.



PESHAWAR: A student Muhammad Hamza receiving degree of electrical engineering from Chief Guest MNA, Chairman of Pakistan Engineering Council, Engineer Najeeb Harron during convocation of CECOS University. — F.P. photo

## WAPDA issues inflows, outflows position of dams

**F.P. Report**

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

According to the authority, inflows and outflows in Indus River at Tarbela was 20100 cusecs and 42000 cusecs while inflows and outflows in Kabul River at Nowshera was 8300 cusecs and 8300 cusecs while inflows and outflows in Kabul River at Khairabad Bridge was 16800 cusecs and 16800 cusecs.

Similarly, inflows and outflows in Jhelum River at Mangla 7200 cusecs and 20000 cusecs while in Chenab at Marala, inflows and outflows was 6400 cusecs and 2000 cusecs respectively.

Meanwhile, inflows and outflows in Jinnah Barrage was 51500 cusecs and

Outflows 46500 cusecs, Chashma (inflows: 47700 cusecs and outflows 39000 cusecs), Taunsa (inflows 41800 cusecs and outflows 31800 cusecs), Guddu (inflows 37400 cusecs and outflows 30300 cusecs), Sukkur (inflows 30100 cusecs and outflows 12800 cusecs), Kotri (inflows 11300 cusecs and outflows 700 cusecs) Trimmu (inflows 6000 cusecs and outflow Nil cusecs), while in Panjnad the inflows was 5900 cusecs and outflows was recorded Nil cusecs.

Tarbela Dam was operating at level of 1493.81 feet against minimum operating level 1398 feet and maximum conservation level 1550 feet, live storage on Friday morning was recorded 2.910 million acre feet (MAF).

Mangla (minimum operating level 1050 feet, present level 1123.05 feet, maximum conservation level 1242 feet, live storage today (Friday) 0.871 MAF.

Similarly, Chashma was operating at level of 640.90

feet against the minimum operating level 638.15 feet and maximum conservation level 649 feet, live storage was recorded 0.038 MAF.

## Cold weather to prevail

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: The Provincial Meteorological Center Peshawar on Friday predicted that 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 shallow fog in isolated pockets is also likely to occur over Peshawar to Swabi Motorway during late night and morning hours. During the last 24 hours, mainly cold and dry weather occurred in most districts of the province, while very cold in hilly areas and upper parts.

## IWMI organizes seminar

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: International Water Management Institute (IWMI) with the assistance of USAID organized a one-day seminar regarding challenges faced by the agriculture land due to climate change here in Crop Reporting Services on Friday.

The purpose of the seminar chaired by the Secretary Agriculture & Livestock, Dr Mohammad Israr was to search out modern techniques for combating the impacts of climate change on agriculture land and increase in agriculture production. Besides, all Director Generals (DGs) of all sectors of agriculture and livestock and representatives of IWMI, USAID and experts and researchers of the agriculture sector attended the seminar at large.

Speakers of the seminar highlighted the climate change affecting saline soil and soil health of the fertile land in detail and presented their recommendations for increase in production of agricultural land and arresting the impacts of climate change. Researchers' also pinpointed that devastation occurred due to floods, impacts on agricultural land and their control.

## Focus on to provide health facilities to masses

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Efforts are being made by the District Administration and Security Forces to provide basic health facilities to the people in Mohmand district. In this regard, a free medical camp was organized in Tehsil Halimzai with the collaboration of

the District Administration and Frontier Corps North. In the free medical camp, doctors and nursing staff conducted free check-up of more than 700 men, women and children suffering from various diseases and provided them with free medicines. On this occasion, the doctors also give awareness to the pub-

lic about prevention of seasonal diseases. The residents of the area thanked the District Administration and Frontier Corps North and said that, by organizing free medical camps in various areas of the tribal districts, the people are getting basic health facilities easily and they don't have to go to other areas for treatment.



PESHAWAR: Activists of Pukhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party holding a protest for acceptance of their demands. — F.P. photo

## Drug free Peshawar drive from 19th

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: The third phase of drug free Peshawar drive would start from December 19 to make the provincial capital free from all the drug addicts, said Commissioner Peshawar division Riaz Khan Mehsood here on Friday.

Presiding over a meeting here to review and finalise arrangements for the campaign, he sought daily progress report about the arrest and shifting of the remaining drug addicts in the city to rehabilitation centres. He said that 470 more recovered drug addicts would soon be united with their families after completing three months' rehabilitation and treatment process.

He directed the concerned quarters to take affidavits from the families of recovered drug addicts that they would fully take care of the recovered persons from indulging again in drug addiction. DC Peshawar Shafiqullah Khan instructed the assistant commissioners to find out the number of drug addicts on the streets of Peshawar in two-day.





## In brief

### RPO appreciates Lower Dir police F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The regional police officer Malakand Sajjad Khan on Friday announced a reward for an under training police constable Subhanullah belonging to Lower Dir for winning a gold medal in his BS political science examination of the University of Malakand. A press release issued here said the RPO also congratulated the cop for his brilliant performance. The RPO invited the young police cop to his office in Saidu Sharif, Swat wished him all the best for his bright future. The RPO also awarded him an appreciation certificate and cash to encourage the police personnel. He said that such police personnel who earned an honour and dignity for the force were of great value.

### Trip to Khanpur Dam arranged F.P. Report

KHANPUR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority arranged an excursion trip to Khanpur Dam for Sarhad Women Chamber of Commerce (SWCC), where they were briefed about various aspects of tourism industry. Officials of tourism authority, President SWCC, Azra Jamshed, Vice President, Anila Khalid were also present on the occasion. The Tourist participated in various recreational activities including boating and tug of war competition during the visit. An awareness session for women entrepreneurs was also held where Nighat Haider briefed them about operational matters needed to run tourist spots in a successful way. Narrating her success story, Nighat Haider told that she and her husband started a setup with very meagre resources and turned it into a very attraction tourist destination by calculated planning and target oriented strategy. She said that women can start successful business setup with the help of their husbands. Addressing the event, President Women Chamber, Azra Jamshed suggested women to venture into online business alongside their household activities.

### Martyrs of APS remembered F.P. Report

KOHAT: The martyrs of most unfortunate and tragic terrorist attack on Army Public School (APS) in Peshawar on December 16, 2014 were remembered and tributes were paid to innocent school children, teachers and faculty members through different programmes and events at Government Higher Secondary School Bilitang here. Principal of the school Laeese Khan, Khalid Mehmood, teachers and students prayed eternal peace for the departed souls and expressed solidarity with the bereaved families and paid salute to courage and patience of parents of martyred children. The students presented the national anthem and songs, delivered speeches and remembered the sacrifices of the tragic incident.

### Awareness walk held F.P. Report

BUNER: Tehsil Municipal Administration (TMA) Khudokhel arranged awareness walk on the eve launching cleanliness week drive in the area. The assistant commissioner tehsil nazim and tehsil municipal officer leads the walk. The walk was started from the office of assistant commissioner and ended at the office of tehsil nazim. The local elders and youth participated in the walk.

# Public rally demand district status for Pindi Gheb

F.P. Report

ATTOCK: A grand Pindi Gheb District Banao rally was organized from Government Boys High School Chowke to Committee Chowk on behalf of Central Anjuman e Tajran, Electronic Media, Press Club and Ahlians of Pindi Gheb from the platform of Aida Wafa Zilla Banao Pindi Gheb Tehreek.

In the Pledge of Allegiance Rally, the participants were carrying banners and placards of Pindi Gheb District Banau. Foolproof security arrangements were made by the local administration, City Chowke Police and Traffic Police in the rally.

In the Pledge of Allegiance rally, Chairman Central Association of Traders and President of Sarafa Union Alhaj Seth Nisar Ahmed, President of Central Association of Traders Malik Nazakat, Tehsil President of Pakistan Awami Tehreek Hakeem Muhammad Jameel Yousefi, Central Leader of Khanda Group Malik Abdullah Khan, Nawabzada Malik Umar Khan, Ex. Councilor and local leader of PTI Haji Munir Ahmed, Bar Association senior lawyer Kazi Afzal Hussain Advocate, Malik Naushirwan Haider Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf youth leader Coordinator.

Focal Person Climate Change and Environment Rescue Punjab Government, Khanda Group spokesperson Sajid Chauhan Sardar Waqar Hussain, Special Assistant to the former Provincial Minister. District President of Pakistan Sunni Tehreek Allama Ghulam Jilani, Tehsil President of Anjuman Gujran Chaudhry Mehmood, Tehsil President of Sunni Tehreek Shakeel Ahmed Chishti, Former Tehsil President All Pakistan Private Schools Association Sahibzada Raheel Ahmad, Tehsil President of Pakistan People's Party Sheikh Aftab Advocate, Former Tehsil President of Pakistan Awami Tehreek Haji Yakub Awan, Former Councilor Haji Abdul

Ghaffar, Former Councilor Haji Abdul Rahman, Former Councilor Khalil ur Rehman, Former President Bar and Senior Jurist Malik Ghulam Mustafa Advocate, Quaid Hussain Awan of Tehreek-e-Aid-Wafa, President Press Club Malik Faisal Munir, Mudassar Advocate, Faisal Shehzad Advocate, Syed Sohan Bukhari Gharibwal.

Leader of Tehreek-i-Labaik Pakistan Qari Sakawat, Sardar Anub Singh Jaggi, Advocate, Numdar Zafar Iqbal, Leader of Sunni Movement Dr. Syed Hasan Mahmood Shah Hamdani, Mufti Umar Hayat Naqshbandi, Atta-ul-Mustafi Jameel, In-charge Tiger Force Idris Ahmed, Sardar Azmat Attari, Qaiser Mushtaq Advocate, Nouman Mushtaq, Former Councilor Shakeel Ghorri, Sardar Khurram Jafari, Amir Hussain Mirvi, Akhtar Hussain Azad Khor, Social Worker Haji Gulab Niaz Khor, Political Leader Malik Naseem Awan, officials of Anjuman Tajran Noori Pathan, Adil Qayyum, social worker Chaudhry Abid, senior journalist Malik Ijaz, Malik Naveed, Haji Muhammad Maskeen, social worker Haji Muhammad Saleem, besides the business community, lawyers community, representatives of civil society, social personalities, media.

Representatives, And the people of Pindi Gheb participated in large numbers. Addressing the Pindi Gheb District Banao Rally, speakers said that Pindi Gheb Tehsil should be given the status of a district. We will all try our best to make Pindi Gheb a district and raise our voices on every platform. We appeal to our government authority to make Pindi Gheb a district. They said that All the political parties should unite and raise the voice of Zilla Banao Pindi Gheb for the development of their region. The speakers further said that until Pindi Gheb is made a district, the pledge to make Pindi Gheb Zilla movement will continue.

## Control room for framers' grievances established

Hafiz Aziz-ur-Rehman

HAFIZABAD: District administration is taking result-oriented measures for ensuring provision of fertilizers to farmers in the district while district administration and officers of agriculture department are monitoring on daily basis supplied by the fertilizers companies to dealers in the district Hafizabad whereas lists of fertilizer dealers with their stock are being issued on social media so that farmers can get Urea fertilizer on the prices of Rs.

2250 per bag fixed by the government.

While sharing details of steps taken by the district administration to protect farmers' rights, Deputy Commissioner Hafizabad Touqeer Ilyas Cheema warned fertilizer dealers that if any dealer found to involve in violating government price, the district administration would initiate strict action against profiteers and hoarders. He also directed the district officers of fertilizer companies to ensure clearance of pending supply orders of the dealers

in the district in the earliest so that farmers have not faced shortage of Urea.

DC further said that special control room has been established for addressing complaints and problems of the farmers. Deputy Director Agriculture Hafizabad Faiz Rasul told that one lakh and five thousand rupees fine was received from fertilizer dealers while a case was also get register against a fertilizer shopkeeper during this month who were found involve in violating price list.



QUETTA: Federal Minister for Science and Technology Agha Hassan Baloch inaugurating Comsats University Campus.

## PhD holder schools' teachers demand quota in higher posts

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The PhD degree holder teachers working against various posts at government schools have demanded the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government to allocate a special quota for them in appointment on higher posts and also announce a special allowance for such teachers. The demand was made during an emergency meeting held in Talash here the other day with provincial president of the PhD degree holders' teachers Dr Muhammad Islam in the chair.

The meeting was addressed also by provincial senior vice president Dr Muhammad Shuiab from Swabi, vice president Dr Fazal Aghad from Malakand and general secretary Dr Ibrarullah from Swabi. They said that more than 200 PhD degree holders were performing teaching duties in various government schools of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

below grade 17. The speakers said that so far separate meetings of the PhD doctors had been held with the provincial minister for education Mr Shahram Khan Tarkai, the secretary education and the director of elementary and secondary education department.

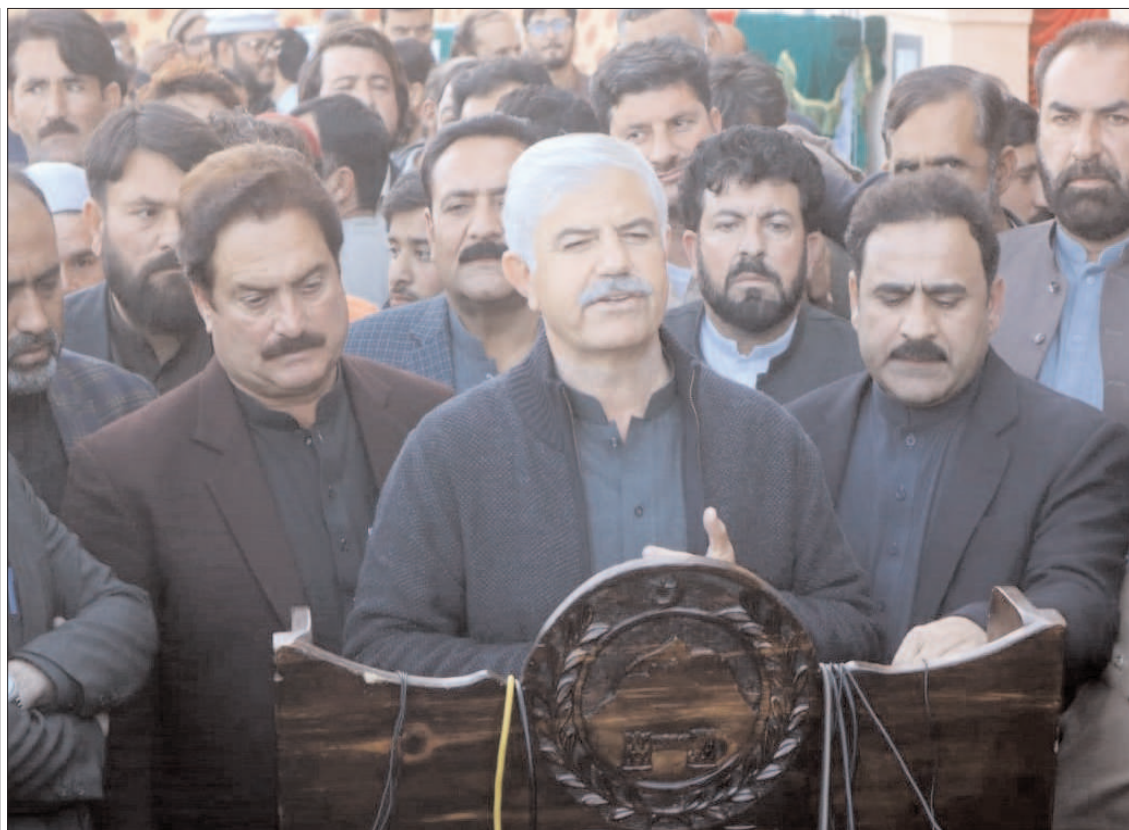
They said the PhD degree holder teachers were facing various problems as they did not have the privileges and facilities available to them in colleges and universities. They said their experience of teaching in schools was not counted, they were not entitled to become the HEC supervisors and job opportunities were not available to them in the textbook board. They demanded the provincial government that the PhD doctors and teachers working on less than 17 scales should be promoted to the higher posts and quota should be allocated for them in the subject specialist (SS) and college lecturer posts. The meeting also demanded

the PhD allowance to be increased to 25 thousand rupees per month.

### Bizenjo pays tribute to APS martyrs F.P. Report

QUETTA: Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Abdul Quddus Bizenjo, has said that nation had rendered great sacrifices for peace.

In his message issued here on Friday on the eve of Army Public School's tragedy, he said, "On account of sacrifices rendered for peace, we are dwelling in a peaceful environment". Presenting salute to the innocent martyrs of APS and his families, he said that the tragedy of APS had united the whole nation against terrorism, adding that the whole nation was standing shoulder to shoulder with security forces to root out terrorism.



MATTA: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mahmood Khan talking to media persons during his visit to Swat.

## Residents on Pak-Afghan border needs govt attention

F.P. Report

CHITRAL: Union council Arundu situated on Pak Afghan border areas where 25000 people living still in stone age period. There is no communication, health, education, potable drinking water or other facility in this backward and neglected area. Hundreds of people of Arando held a public meeting for their rights, which was presided over by Abdul Majeed Nazim Village Council Arundu.

The meeting was attended by all leaders of political and religious parties without any political affiliation, whose one-point agenda was to do justice with the people of Arundu and also to develop them. Arando consists on five village councils. People of seven tribes live here but residents of this neglected area are still forced to live like the stone age period. This valley was sometimes bombed by the Russians army during Afghanistan war and sometimes by the American forces.

Speakers on the occasion said that Russian warships plans also bombed and shelling on this town in which many people were martyred and many houses were destroyed. The people of the valley have played the role of a front line force and front to save Chitral.

The speakers said that the construction of Arundu road had started some years ago but it was left incomplete and still 32 km of the road is earthen. The speakers said that there is only one river between Afghanistan and Pakistan and on both sides of the river, people of the same community, tribe live in both countries. In the past, the people of this country had relations across the border, and for centuries, the people of both countries have been living a life of brotherhood with each other, but recently we cannot meet each other.

The speakers said that patients from across the border used to come to this valley for treatment, but a Basic Health Unit has been upgraded in 2009 and given the status of RHC i.e. rural health center, but there is no doctor in this RHC since long. The speakers said that the doctor belongs to the lower districts and he comes back after two months after making all his attendances while in this RHC only one local medical technician Sher Ghani son of Mehrab Gul runs

the entire hospital as well as examining the patients. In this regard, our correspondent repeatedly called the District Health Officer Dr. Fayyaz Rumi and sent him a message asking him to give his version as to why the doctor comes after two months and goes back with all his attendance, but he has not yet respond However, by calling his office, Deputy DHO Dr. Ziaullah Khan said that there is no truth in these allegations, there are two doctors who are on duty for fifteen days alternately, but the son of Dr. Fayyaz who was on duty yesterday fell ill and had to leave suddenly. Because of this, doctor was not found present when hospital visited by elected Nazims.

The speakers said that the number of teachers in the high school of Arundu is very less, while the higher secondary school has been closed for a long time and there is neither a teacher nor a student in it. The building of this school is of no benefit to the students here. Now, first year and second year students study in the high school building. In this regard, when District Education Officer Mehmood Ghaznavi was contacted, he had gone to Peshawar for some official work, while Deputy Education Officer Shahid Hussain said that there are only 244 students in Arundu High School with fifteen teachers. About the Higher Secondary School, he said that there are only 34 students studying in the Higher secondary School as 9 vacancies are vacant in the Higher Secondary portion which can only be filled by the Secretary Education.

The speakers said that there is neither mobile phone nor internet in the whole of Arundu and even in this modern era where students study online, they are deprived of basic need and facility like internet. They said that there is a regular mobile phone tower in Afghanistan area across Arundu and not only the people living here but also government employees use the cellular phone SIM of Afghanistan due to which millions of rupees of income goes to Afghanistan. They said that people in other areas, especially students, are getting a lot of benefit from the internet because the world is a global village, but our students don't even know what is happening in Chitral beyond Arundu. How will we know

about other parts of Pakistan? Speakers criticized the Department of Public Health Engineering and said that PHE had embezzled million of rupees and brought drinking water schemes but all of them failed. They mentioned a water tank which is probably the eighth wonder of the world. The tank was built for water, for which former provincial minister Saleem Khan Chitrali provided funds, but the water pipe has been passed through the tank and instead of collecting the water in the tank, to be distributed to the public through the pipe. A water tank has been made just for show and the water pipe is passes straight out from the middle of the tank and this tank is completely empty. In this regard, Arshad Iqbal, Executive Engineer of the Department of Public Health Engineering was contacted and asked what was the need to spend such a large amount of money on this tank when water is not poured or collected in it and the pipeline is not connected to it. He said that he would inquire about it. On this occasion, the speakers also thanked the Pakistan Army, who had built a children park at Arando and continues to cooperate with people in other works.

The speakers also criticized the forest department for not recruiting on merit basis. Arundu is a forest area and it will be difficult to protect the forest unless the local people are not recruited in the forest department who deserve it. That a regular quota should be approved for this backward area in Levies, Forest and other departments because the quality of education here is very weak and the candidates here cannot compete with the candidates from other areas in the field of education.

VC Nazim Abdul Majeed, Haji Ghulam Yusuf Inspector Retired, Mulla Udina Shah Retired Headmaster, Qari Ali Akbar, Maulana Samiul Haq, Gulzada, Hazrat Ali, Shireen Muhammad etc. expressed their views during the public meeting. The speakers also demanded from the provincial and federal government that Arundu was deliberately neglected in past and was treated like a step-mother, that education, health, communication and other facilities should be provided here and that these people should not be forced to live in stone age.

### Fatimid D I Khan centre to help patients F.P. Report

D I KHAN: Commissioner Amir Afaq laid foundation stone of Fatimid Foundation D I Khan center which shall be established with the help of Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL), on Friday.

Commissioner D I Khan Division Amir Afaq was chief guest of the ceremony while Member National Assembly Sheikh Yaqub along with OGDCL's staff and local participated in large number.

Fatimid Foundation Peshawar trustee Dr. Tufail Muhammad Khan welcomed the guest and said that large number children facing thalassemia across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He added that establishment of Fatimid center at DI Khan will benefit children at their doorsteps to obtain treatment.

The land provided by Dr. Baz Muhammad Khan claimed that his well is completed after laid downing of foundation stone of Fatimid Foundation and added that thalassemia is increasing with percentage 6% in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Commissioner DI Khan claimed that administration will ensure their support for establishment and operationalization of Fatimid Foundation center to ensure provision of treatment children facing thalassemia at their doorsteps.

## Officials briefed on Solid Waste Management Project

F.P. Report

HARIPUR: Deputy Commissioner Haripur Muhammad Fawad called on a briefing on Solid Waste Management Project of Swat District to assess the feasibility of its replication at Haripur District. Additional Deputy Commissioner (Finance and Planning), Assistant Commissioner Haripur (Headquarters) and representative of TMA Haripur also attended the meeting. The Sub National Governance (SNG)

Programme funded by the Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office (FCDO) UK, briefed the chair regarding its initiative of "End-to-End Service Delivery Pilot Project" of solid waste management in Swat. This project is piloted in Tehsil Bahrain and Tehsil Babuzai in Swat. Under this pilot project the planning process and governance structure of solid waste management are first assessed, and after identification of weak links, solutions for improvement are

worked out. These solutions has exhibited visible improved results.

The pilot in TMA Bahrain was started with 100 households and is now expanded to 4,000 households. The SNG team is assisting the administration of Haripur in planning to replicate the same successful model in TMA Haripur. The Deputy Commissioner thanked the SNG Programme, for choosing Haripur district for orientation about this pilot project. He also assured all possible support from his office.



CHARSADDA: Justice Peshawar High Court, Justice Roohul Amin inaugurating Women Facilitation Desk at Judicial Complex.





# China sends ships into Pacific amid Japan security moves

**BELJING (AP):** A squadron of Chinese Navy ships sailed through straits near Japan into the Western Pacific this week, while Beijing on Friday blasted Tokyo's adoption of a new national security strategy putting itself on a more offensive footing — largely as a result of the perceived threat from China.

The destroyers Lhasa and Kaifeng, and a replenishment ship, sailed through the Osumi Strait in southern Japan, while a Dongdiao-class surveillance ship with the hull number 796 sailed through the Miyako Strait south of Okinawa, all arriving in the Western Pacific. Japan's Defense Ministry said the craft were closely shadowed by Japanese ships and planes throughout.

The Communist Party newspaper Global Times on Friday cited unidentified experts saying the mission "sent a signal amid Japan's recent militaristic moves" that will display the People's Liberation Army's "capabilities in safeguarding China's national sovereignty, territorial integrity and development interests." China routinely sends war-

ships through straits between Japanese islands, even while it vehemently objects to the presence of foreign navy ships in the Taiwan Strait. All are classified as international waters.

Late last month, Russian and Chinese strategic bombers also flew over the Sea of Japan and the East China Sea during an eight-hour mission in a show of increasingly close defense ties between the two countries. Facing challenges from North Korea, China and Russia, Japan on Friday adopted a national security strategy declaring plans to possess preemptive strike capability and cruise missiles within years. The strategy named China "the biggest strategic challenge" to Japan's effort toward ensuring peace, safety and stability for itself and international society.

Japan's post-World War II policy prioritized economic growth while keeping its security light by relying on American troops stationed in Japan under their bilateral security agreement. But experts say China's growing influence, Russia's invasion of

Ukraine and fear of Taiwan emergency prompted many Japanese to support increased capability and spending. China also says a group of tiny, uninhabited East China Sea islands controlled by Japan and Beijing regularly stokes resentment over Japan's brutal occupation of much of China more than 75 years ago.

Japan plans to spend 5 trillion yen (\$37 billion) to deploy foreign-developed standoff missiles as early as 2026, including Lockheed Martin's Tomahawk and Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missile, while Japan's Mitsubishi Heavy Industry develops a surface-to-ship guided missile. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin reiterated accusations Japan was "ignoring facts, deviating from its commitment to China-Japan relations and the common understandings between the two countries, and groundlessly discrediting China." "Hyping up the so-called China threat to find an excuse for its military build-up is doomed to fail," Wang said at a daily news briefing.

# Serbia seeks return of its troops to Kosovo

**BELGRADE (AP):** Serbia formally demanded that its security forces return to the breakaway former Serbian province of Kosovo, despite warnings from the West that such calls are unlikely to be accepted and only add to tensions in that part of the Balkans. Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic told state RTS television that the government asked the commander of NATO-led peacekeepers stationed in Kosovo since 1999, when the Western alliance pushed out Serb troops from the region, to allow the return of up to 1,000 Serbian army and police officers to the Serb-populated north of the country.

"The request says that a certain number of (Serbian troops), from one hundred to up to 1,000, return to Kosovo," Vucic said. He said that despite the fact that it is "almost certain that this will not be granted," the request will be put on the record. Serbian officials claim a United Nations resolution that formally ended the Kosovo war allows for Serbian troops to return to Kosovo. NATO bombed Serbia to stop the war, end its bloody crackdown against ethnic Albanian separatists and civilians and order its troops out of Kosovo.

Serbian officials claim that the NATO and

European Union-led peace-keeping missions are unable to protect the minority Serbs in Kosovo from harassment by majority Kosovo Albanians and that their security forces can do the job. The return of Serbian troops is unlikely to be granted because it would de facto mean handing over security of Kosovo's ethnic Serb-populated northern regions to Serbian forces — a move that would dramatically increase tensions in the Balkans.

German and US officials have vehemently rejected any idea of the return of Serbian security forces to the region. Tensions between Serbia and Kosovo flared anew during the past week after Serbs erected barricades on the main roads in the north of the province to protest the arrest of a former Kosovo Serb police officer. Shots were fired from the barricades. Serbia raised combat readiness of its troops on the border with Kosovo and warned it would not stand by if Serbs in Kosovo, who make up less than 10% of Kosovo's population, are attacked.

Kosovo's statehood has been accepted by the US and much of the West. Serbia and its allies Russia and China have rejected it and have blocked Kosovo

from joining the UN and other international institutions. There are fears that Russia could push Serbia into another military intervention in Kosovo to try to shift at least some of the world attention from its invasion in Ukraine. Under Vucic's populist leadership, Serbia has steadily been shifting away from its proclaimed EU membership goal and toward a close political and military alliance with Moscow.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said that "the Russian Ambassador to Serbia, who is in close contact with the Serbian leadership, has received instructions from the center (Moscow) to take concrete steps of support (to Serbia) which include normalizing or proposing ways to normalize the situation" in Kosovo.

Meanwhile, Kosovo's prime minister formally tabled his country's application to be granted candidacy status for membership in the European Union, a first step in what looks set to be a very long path to eventual membership.

Prime Minister Albin Kurti submitted the application to Czech Minister for European Affairs Mikulas Bek, whose country currently holds the rotating EU presidency.

# Burkina Faso contracts Russian mercenaries

**DAKAR (AP):** Burkina Faso has allegedly made an agreement with Russia's Wagner Group in which the shadowy mercenary outfit will help the West African country deal with surging jihadi violence in exchange for a mine. Ghana's President Nana Akufo-Addo made that claim about neighboring Burkina Faso during his visit to the United States where he's attending the US-Africa summit.

Speaking about the growing violence linked to al-Qaida and the Islamic State group in the West African region, Akufo-Addo said Burkina Faso allocated a mine to the Wagner Group as a form of payment for its deployment of fighters in the country. "To have (Wagner) operating on our northern border is particularly distressing for us in Ghana," said Akufo-Addo, at the summit.

For six years Burkina Faso has been struggling to stem jihadi violence that's killed thousands, displaced nearly 2 million people and made swaths of land inaccessible. Lack of faith in the Burkina Faso government's ability to contain the jihadi insurgency has led to two coups this year. After the latest coup in September, the Wagner Group was among the first

to congratulate the new junta leader, Ibrahim Traore, raising questions about his relationship with Russia and how big a role it played in catapulting him to power. People with close ties to Burkina Faso's ruling junta said pressure had been mounting on the leader of the first coup, Lt. Col. Paul Henri Sandaogo Damiba, for months to work more closely with Russia but he had refused.

The Associated Press cannot independently verify Ghana's allegations and Burkina Faso's government did not immediately respond to questions about the claim made by Ghana's president. Akufo-Addo's comments came on the heels of a trip to Moscow by Burkina Faso's Prime Minister, Apollinaire Joachim Kyelem de Tambela, to further strengthen Russia-Burkina relations. The visit was planned to "consolidate the international community's efforts in combating the terrorist threat" in the region, said a statement by Russia's ministry of foreign affairs.

Earlier this month a new mining concession was given to Nordgold, a Russian mining company, which has been operating in Burkina Faso for more than a decade. A permit for industrial exploration was granted to the Nordgold

Yimiougou SA company in Sanmatenga province in the Center North region, said a statement from Burkina Faso's Council of Ministers. The four-year agreement is estimated to contribute some \$8 billion to the state budget. Burkina Faso is one of the largest gold producers on the continent. Both Nordgold and the Wagner Group are Russian companies, although there is no known connection between them.

The pace of Islamic extremist violence is increasing in Burkina Faso and getting closer to the capital, Ouagadougou, which could make the desperate junta welcome support from the Russian mercenaries, said Laith Alkhouri, CEO of Intelonyx Intelligence Advisory. "This could have significant negative implications for Burkina Faso and the region," he said. "Wagner mercenaries have operated with impunity and they are unlikely to be held accountable for any human rights violations," Wagner Group mercenaries already have established footholds for Russia in at least half a dozen African countries, including in Central African Republic, Sudan and Mali. The group has been accused of committing human rights abuses in Mali.

## Former Kosovo rebel commander convicted

**THE HAGUE (AP):** A former commander in the Kosovo Liberation Army was found guilty Friday of arbitrarily detaining and torturing prisoners perceived as supporters of Serbia during the country's conflict to break away from Serbia, and murdering one of them. It is a "milestone" first war crimes conviction by a special court based in the Netherlands.

The commander, Salih Mustafa, was sentenced to 26 years' imprisonment for the crimes committed at a KLA compound in Zllash, Kosovo, in April 1999. He was acquitted of one charge of mistreating detainees. He had pleaded not guilty to all charges. Friday's judgment comes at a time of tense relations between Kosovo and its neighbor Serbia, with Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic demanding that Serb security forces return to the breakaway former Serbian province, despite warnings from the West that such calls are unlikely to be accepted and will only stoke tensions in that part of the Balkans.

Mustafa was arrested in 2020 in Kosovo and sent to the Netherlands to stand trial at the European Union-backed Kosovo Specialist Chambers, a branch of the country's legal system set up specifically to deal with allegations of war crimes committed as ethnic Albanian rebels united in the Kosovo Liberation Army fought a bloody conflict to break away from Serbia in 1998-99. Presiding judge Mappie Veldt-Foglia called the judgment a "milestone for the specialist chambers" that could lead to "further reconciliation among communities in Kosovo." The victims were accused by KLA fighters of collaborating with Serbs or not supporting the KLA.

## Pilot ejects from fighter jet in Texas in failed landing

**FORT WORTH (AP):** A pilot safely ejected from a plane after a failed landing that was caught on video at a North Texas military base, officials said. The Marine Corps variant of a fighter jet, known as a F-35B, took a nose dive and spiraled after its wheels briefly touched down on the shared runway at Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base in Fort Worth. Video taken by people who were watching the plane come in show it slowly descending in a straight line as smoke appears in the rear of the aircraft before the nose digs into the runway and the jet spins to a stop.

The F-35B has special modifications that allow it to take off and land vertically like a helicopter. At the Pentagon, a spokesman said that the aircraft was being flown at the time of the crash by a US government pilot, although it had not been transferred to the military yet by manufacturer Lockheed Martin. The pilot safely ejected from the airplane, according to Pentagon spokesman Air Force Gen. Pat Ryder. The condition of the pilot is not known.

About a dozen local officers responded to the base, where first responders and base personnel were already on site following the incident, said Chris Cook, police chief for the nearby city of White Settlement. Officers helped keep away a growing crowd of people who had stopped on a roadway or walked over after the plane went down. "You never want to get that call that there is an aircraft down," Cook said. "We have a very fond spot in our community for the military. White Settlement is a military community." A spokesman for the Navy referred all questions to Lockheed Martin, the aerospace and defense company that manufactures the plane involved.

Officials from Lockheed Martin said in a statement that they were aware of the crash and were under the impression the pilot was safe. "Safety is our priority, and we will follow appropriate investigation protocol," the company said in the statement. The failed landing came just over a month after two historic military aircraft collided during an airshow 40 miles (64 kilometers) away at the Dallas Executive Airport, killing six people.

# Journalists' Covid deaths reported in China

**BEIJING/SHANGHAI (Reuters):** Two veteran Chinese state media journalists have died from COVID-19 in the capital Beijing in recent days, media said on Friday, among the first reported deaths since the government abandoned its strict "zero-COVID" policy of curbs and lockdowns. Yang Lianghua, 74, a former People's Daily reporter, died, while Zhou Zhichun, 77, a former China Youth Daily editor, died a week earlier, financial magazine Caixin said, citing their families.

China's national health authority has not reported any official COVID deaths since dismantling some of the world's toughest domestic epidemic control policies on Dec. 7. The last official deaths were reported on Dec. 3, in Shandong and Sichuan provinces. Reports of the deaths came as China set out urgent plans on Friday to protect rural communities from the virus as millions of city-dwellers planned their Lunar New Year holidays, starting on Jan. 22, for the first time in years. China's move last week to start aligning with a world that has largely opened up to live with the virus followed unprecedented protests against President Xi Jinping's signature "zero-COVID" policies designed to stamp out COVID.

But the excitement that met this dramatic U-turn has cooled amid concerns that China is unprepared for the coming wave of infections, and the blow it could deliver to the world's second-largest economy. China reported 2,157 new symptomatic COVID-19 infections, compared with 2,000 the previous day. The official figures, however, do not capture the whole picture as testing has dropped and are at odds with signs of a wider spread in cities where long queues outside fever clinics and empty pharmacy shelves have become a common sight.

Concern is mounting over China's hinterland in the run-up to the Lunar New Year when rural areas are likely to be inundated with travellers returning to their home towns and villages, which have had little exposure to the virus during the three years since the pandemic erupted. China's National Health Commission said on Friday it was ramping up vaccinations and building stocks of ventilators, essential drugs and test kits in rural areas. It also advised travellers to reduce contact with elderly relatives. A day after the White



House said the United States was ready to help if China requested it, a spokesperson for Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade said on Friday that Australia "stands ready" to continue COVID-19 collaboration that has so far included the supply of medical equipment and joint research work.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin did not respond directly to questions about the U.S. offer but said that China had "institutional advantages" to fight COVID. Mainland China's international borders remain largely shut, but recent decisions to abandon testing prior to domestic travel and disable apps that track people's journey history have freed up people to move around the country. One of China's most populous provinces, Henan, cancelled all holidays for healthcare staff until the end of March to ensure "a smooth transition" as COVID restrictions ease, state media reported.

Multiple cities across the country of 1.4 billion people also opened new vaccination sites to encourage the public to take booster shots, the state-run Global Times newspaper reported. Hong Kong said on Friday its adult residents could get a fifth shot, with infections there on the rise in recent months. "Go all out" was the message from China's state asset regulator in a statement that urged government-owned drugmakers to ensure supplies of COVID-related medicines to meet "the rapid increase" in demand.

Thanks to the government's previously uncompromising controls, China got off lightly compared with

many other countries during the pandemic over the past three years, but now many Chinese are resigned to catching the virus at some point. "Everyone will get it, I guess," a 29-year-old Beijing resident who requested to be identified by her surname Du, told Reuters on the streets of Beijing. Analysts fear China will pay a price for letting the virus rapidly rip through a population that lacks "herd immunity" and has low vaccination rates among the elderly.

That has dented prospects for near-term growth, even if the opening up should eventually revive China's battered economy. JPMorgan on Friday revised down its expectations for China's 2022 growth to 2.8%, which is well below the country's official target of 5.5% and would mark one of its worst performances in almost half a century. China is bracing for "a transitional pain period", analysts at the bank said, adding they expected infections to spike after the Lunar New Year before the economy starts to recover in mid-2023.

President Xi, his ruling Politburo and senior government officials are holding their annual Central Economic Work Conference this week, sources told Reuters. China's top state planning body, the National Development and Reform Commission, said "arduous efforts" are needed to sustain the recovery in growth due to an adverse external environment and the global economy's loss of momentum. China's yuan firmed on Friday as traders remained optimistic that more measures to support the economy would emerge from the conference.

# M23 rebels tighten economic vice around east Congo city

**DR CONGO (AFP):** M23 rebels have cut major supply routes to Goma, eastern DR Congo, sending prices in the city surging and sparking fears that a future offensive will cripple its economy. A Tutsi-led group that lay dormant for years, the M23 took up arms again late last year, seizing swaths of territory in North Kivu province.

Last month, the rebels came within several dozen kilometres of Goma, a commercial hub of over one million people, on the border with Rwanda. Their advance has cut off the RN2 highway, which leads to Goma from the north, and with it access to farm produce from North Kivu's Rutshuru region. Goods from nearby Uganda also provisioned Goma from the RN2, before the conflict erupted. Charcoal trader Pascaline Kahongya, 40, said prices had recently soared for the fuel commonly used to cook in the impoverished Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

"When you tell people the price, they go home," said Kahongya, sheltering from the rain in her store-room in a Goma market. Charcoal sourced from Rutshuru must now take a

long road through militia-riddled areas to reach Goma from the west. "The kids aren't going to school at the moment, we can't pay the fees," said Kahongya, a mother of eight. Boats can also reach Goma from Bukavu, a city on the other side of Lake Kivu. And goods can still enter from Rwanda.

But inside the DRC, only the road leading to the city from the west remains viable, slashing trade volumes and driving up prices. Some fear M23 rebels plan to block this artery too in order to exert pressure on the government. Onesphore Sematumba, a DRC analyst for the International Crisis Group (ICG), said the rebels aim to sweep into Masisi territory -- west of Goma -- to this end. "If we can't negotiate a humanitarian corridor for the city, it will be a catastrophe," he said.

The M23 first leapt to prominence ago when it captured Goma in 2012, before being driven out and going to ground. It re-emerged late last year, claiming the DRC had failed to honour a pledge to integrate its fighters into the army, among other grievances. In June, the rebels

seized Bunagana, a strategic town on the border with Uganda. After a period of calm, the rebels went on the offensive again in October, forcing hundreds of thousands to flee. Lieutenant-Colonel Guillaume Ndjike, the DRC's army spokesman in North Kivu, also said the M23 planned to strangle Goma.

The military were making sure Goma "was not totally asphyxiated," he added, explaining that it was "inconceivable" the army would let goods pass through the RN2, for security reasons. An M23 spokesman did not respond to questions. The DRC accuses its smaller central African neighbour Rwanda of backing the rebels, something US officials and United Nations experts agree with, but which is strongly denied by Kigali. Prices for basic items such as soap surged 20 percent in some Goma markets between October and November, according to a food security group led by the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and World Food Programme (WFP).

Several people interviewed by AFP also said the cost of a cup of beans

had tripled from the equivalent of about \$0.5 to \$1.5. About 70 percent of Congolese survive on under \$2 a day, according to the World Bank. Sitting in front of buckets of soya and sorghum flour in a nearly empty Goma market, Adela Lubala said clients had disappeared. Her small business survived the pandemic and the 2021 eruption of the Mount Nyiragongo volcano, which looms over Goma.

But the current crisis is the worst yet, Lubala said, adding that five of her nine children are no longer studying due to lack of money. "What you see here is our old stock," said the 53-year-old, gesturing to her wares. "When we run out, there's no where else to buy." Claudia Ngowa, 36, said she had had to shutter her small soap factory and furlough four employees because she imported raw materials from Uganda along the RN2. The entrepreneur also owns a farm in Masisi, but said rampant insecurity makes it difficult to transport goods despite the road remaining untouched by the M23.

"We can't go on without selling," she said. "It's really precarious for everyone."

# China urges action as ministers meet at UN nature summit

**MONTREAL (Reuters):** Chinese President Xi Jinping urged the world to take action on preventing nature loss in a video message to ministers from more than 120 countries assembled in Montreal for the UN biodiversity summit, of which China holds the presidency. "We need to push forward the global process of biodiversity protection," Xi said via a translator. "All living things should flourish without harming each other."

Countries are attempting to reach a new global deal on protecting nature through 2030, guided by 23 targets. But progress has been slow. The talks among delegates began on Dec. 7, however countries have been unable to find agreement on aspects such as funding and how best to protect land and waters,

with hundreds of unresolved items in a draft deal. China designated six ministers to carry out consultations on outstanding issues, including finance mobilization and three key targets on conservation and restoration, in hopes of reaching a deal by the Dec. 19 deadline.

The Mexican negotiating party in a meeting promised a bottle of tequila to delegates for each item resolved in a draft target. The transition team for incoming Brazilian president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva struck a more serious note, sending a letter to the UN biodiversity secretariat pushing for more movement on money.

"The current impasse in negotiations places this agenda at risk," wrote Jorge Viana, who is leading Lula's transition working group on

the environment. Developing country delegates walked out of a finance meeting to protest the reluctance by wealthy nations at the summit to discuss new funds. "Without financial resources commensurate with the level of ambition of the goals and targets in the framework, it will not be possible to implement," the Brazilian letter read.

Developing countries have called for developed nations to deliver \$100 billion per year in funding for biodiversity protection in their territories. Experts say around \$700 billion per year is needed for nature. But developed nations said they want to see ambition levels match financing. "There will be no funding if we don't have an ambition level,"

Norway's climate and environment minister Espen Barth Eide told Reuters. Referencing the loss and damage fund outcome at climate talks in Sharm el-Sheikh in Egypt last month, he noted that although some progress has been made there, there was not enough ambition on mitigating climate change. "All of us who are on the high ambition side have basically vowed that we don't want that to be a repeat of Sharm (el-Sheikh)," he said.

Some banks and other financial services firms attending the summit are supporting a target in the draft deal which would oblige companies to analyse and report more information about how their operations affect, and are affected by, nature loss.



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# Civil unrest in Iran

**RECENTLY, a hard-line Iranian newspaper has suggested the authorities close the Strait of Hormuz, a crucial waterway for global energy supplies, in response to alleged foreign support for the nationwide protests in the country. According to the details, the Kayhan newspaper, whose top management has close nexus with the Iranian government said that closing the Strait of Hormuz to Western countries’ oil tankers and commercial vessels is Iran’s legal right, and Iran can even seize a part of their commercial cargo as compensation for the financial damage they have done to our country.**

Iran’s political violence has unprecedentedly got intensified at a large scale and unbelievably spread across the nation over the few weeks. Ironically, the cleric regime responded to the protests by only using brutal force to suppress public sentiments and elite Iranian police and IRGC Crop failed to halt demonstrations and could not disrupt social media communication among the protestors and ongoing anti-government campaigns on the internet.

The continued violence cost the lives of more than 365 people while dozens of security personnel had been killed in the clashes. The government has detained thousands of protesters and executed several people on the charges of treason and working on behalf of foreign Intelligence. The protests which started to get justice for a Kurdish young girl had turned into a popular regime change movement, that shattered the foundation of Iran’s revolutionary government just in months. Surprisingly, the Iranian government neither engage the protestors in negotiation nor used other available options including necessary legislation and administrative measures including the abolishment of morality police to address the public sentiments. Currently, hawkish Iranian strategists and media urging the government to convert a domestic issue into a major global tension by choking the Strait of Hormuz and halting the busiest cargo route in the world.

The territorial jurisdiction and sovereign rights of the states over the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) along with the exploration and exploitation of natural reserves are governed by the United Nations Convention on the law of the Sea (UNCLOS) adopted by the global body in 1982. Although, global law might give complete sovereignty to the Iranian government to block the passage of foreign vessels from its waters. But, this issue would bring Iran’s sensitive internal problem to the global forum that is already critical of Iran’s poor record of human rights, state suppression, and curbs on civil liberties. Apparently, this move would facilitate the UN’s intervention in Iran’s domestic affairs.

# Maritime challenges and Pakistan Navy

**PRESIDENT Dr. Arif Alvi has admired Pakistan Navy for playing a commendable role in safeguarding and protecting Pakistan’s naval and maritime interests, despite resource constraints in a challenging maritime security paradigm and overall security situation. His highness also appreciated Pakistan Navy’s role in assisting the flood victims during recent climate-induced super floods, providing them with medical services and relief supplies. While addressing the Closing Ceremony of the 5th Maritime Security Workshop at Naval War College, President said that India’s belligerence and self-professed role as the aspiring hegemon would create instability in the region. Pakistan’s defense forces must be prepared against all traditional and non-traditional threats to the country.**

Pakistan Navy is the guardian of Pakistan’s territorial waters, Coastal Creeks, and Economic Continent Shelves in the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea. This sufficiently equipped and potent Naval Force had always been actively involved in protecting Pakistan’s territorial sovereignty, economic interest, and marine life along with guarding against international piracy, and transnational drug and human trafficking.

Although Pakistan Navy is doing well yet it needs to harness itself with the latest maritime warfare and cyber technologies to effectively counter growing challenges in the region and beyond.

## Quote of the day

*The great enemy of the truth is very often not the lie – deliberate, contrived, and dishonest – but the myth – persistent, persuasive, and unrealistic.*  
— John Kennedy, American President [1961-1963]

**ENCOURAGED by the legal victory achi-eved, the Chinese authorities struck a second blow this week : once again suing the US ad-ministration - more precisely, the WTO, the W-orld Trade Organization, its dispute resolution body.**

And last week, the same body already ruled in a similar case in favor of Beijing, setting a good precedent. We will talk about the previous decision, but for now, about what unites the Chinese lawsuits - the former and the current one. They are both about sanctions. That is, about the use of trade restrictions by one country against another, which are explained by any political pretext. In this case, the Americans designate the pretext as "national security considerations." A recent Chinese lawsuit asks: what is security? What exactly do these same considerations mean, don't the Americans interpret them too broadly?

We repeat, there is already one solution in favor of China. It applies to steel and aluminum. It was in 2018, when the Donald Trump administration launched a trade war against China (for the sake of, of course, saving America from sliding into second place in the list of world economies). It was then that the most incredible

accusations began to pile up against Beijing, mainly about its domestic politics. And they used these accusations to justify the sanctions. But what does steel and aluminum (from China or elsewhere) have to do with China's domestic politics, which have been subject to hefty import duties ever since?

You can explain as much as you like that the WTO will never provide equal rules for world trade for all, because everyone wants to protect their industries from an aggressive foreign competitor. But still, there is the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (signed by the United States as well) (the legal basis of the WTO), and there is its 21st paragraph - the very security considerations. So the unfortunate Americans turned to him, defending themselves from the accusations of China, as well as Norway, Turkey and Switzerland because the lawsuit was joint. The aforementioned WTO litigation body has been tormented for four years and delivered a verdict: guys, your decision to import metals was not made during a war against you or "another emergency in international relations." Therefore, what else is there national security, we recommend that you bring your actions in line with international rules.

Dmitry Kosyrev

How applicable is this precedent to sanctions against Russia : well, there is, of course, an emergency military situation. But what if boring WTO lawyers ask you to explain specifically and in grams: how does this very situation threaten the security of the United States and what does this particular product range have to do with it? Because here, in the WTO, we are simple people, we do without a high philosophy on the topics of "undermining values and other things", but we speak from the point of view of the economy - since we are talking about the measures of one country that destroy world trade. In general, the conversation can turn out to be interesting.

The current, second Chinese lawsuit against the United States is a twin of the previous one, but concerns the direction of America's main attack on Beijing, that is, attempts to deprive China of the ability to produce high-end semiconductors. The goal is to undermine the increasingly obvious technological superiority of the Celestial Empire over the United States. To do this, not only have bans been adopted on the import of such semiconductors into Chinese territory - it is also impossible to import equipment for their production there, and

for this the hands of the allies (Japan, the Netherlands and others) are being twisted, and at the same time, the corresponding production from Taiwan is gradually being brought to America.

But here the question arises again. What explains such a ban: is there a war going on between China and the United States? That is, it is a personal matter for American thinkers to say that their country must be the first power in the world, otherwise there is an undermining of national security. However, the WTO is not a political science conference; everything is simple and concrete there. Sanctions as an instrument of competition are prohibited by the rules of international trade.

It is clear that the recommendation and terribly slow decisions of the WTO for the former sole superpower are not a decree. So we can only talk about the propaganda victory of Beijing. But this is not a trifle either.

The Chinese are winning back the already achieved victory in the first lawsuit in full. They are happy to record the enemy's ugly reaction to defeat when US government officials declare the decision "flawed" and say that there is a good reason to com-

pletely reform the entire WTO dispute settlement system. You say that there should be "an order based on rules" in the world, the Beijing propagandists sarcastically remind. And the rules are such a thing that is the same for everyone, or have we not understood something?

Speaking of aluminum and steel. Before getting hit by the relevant WTO body, the Americans imposed additional duties on these metals, explaining this in a new way - the need to fight against climate change. I wonder what article of the agreement on trade and tariffs justifies this?

Here it makes sense to recall two internal disputes in two powers, the US and Russia, about this same WTO. Just in 2017-2018, the Americans began to call the admission of China there a tragic mistake that helped this competitor of the United States overtake them, becoming the first trading power in the world. Everything was formulated as follows: China uses the rules of the WTO in its own interests (and in whose else?).

And in Russia there was another dispute, back in the 90s: about the fact that putting foreign products on the domestic market without heavy duties meant killing the few remaining, albeit frail, Soviet production that still existed. By the way,

that's how it happened. And not only with Russia - a lot was killed. Nevertheless, today in the world, up to 98 percent of all trade is carried out according to the rules of the WTO, although, as we can see, they are "recommendatory" and toothless when you need to bite great America.

But now the disputes over the rules of world trade have taken a completely different plane. The WTO was created in the mid-90s for the global world, where there was a developed center - the Western system - and the periphery, which, in order to survive, needed at least some rules or at least a platform where one could speak out. And now all the current cataclysms are built around the birth of a completely different world - with several centers of power. And everything that is at hand is used in the form of weapons, including economic methods of causing damage to the enemy (that is, sanctions). So the old rules don't work, of course. But at the same time, everyone understands that sooner or later they will have to return to the rules. It does not matter to which, it is important that to the same for all. And the first of these rules will be the inadmissibility of sanctions, that is, the use of the economy in the form of weapons.

# ‘When a truth is not given complete freedom, freedom is not complete’

Roy Mathews

**BEFORE he peacefully helped throw off the yoke of Soviet control over Czechoslovakia, Václav Havel’s plays needed the Socialist authorities’ dreary conformity to Marxist-Leninist ideology. The Garden Party, a 1963 play by Havel uses the absurd experience of a young Czech, Hugo Pludek, to ridicule the empty facade of the drones employed by the Soviet bureaucracy in Hugo’s encounters with members of the government’s Liquidation Office.**

Hugo’s journey through the Liquidation Office’s garden party serves as a lesson on bureaucracies’ mind-numbing stifling of an individual’s true character. The empty-headed opinions, one-liners, and observations made by the party-goers expose the audience to the depths of self-delusion that members of the bureaucracy will display to square the circle of their world. In Hugo’s case, the bureaucrats reflected the very conformity expressed by Czechoslovak citizens under Soviet rule. The Garden Party was not an in-your-face, slapstick indictment of the regime. It was a dry, ironic, and subtle impersonation of the soulless Czechs who played their parts like puppets in the Communist government’s theater.

The Garden Party evokes a familiar phenomenon. When a societal narrative becomes deeply ingrained in a culture, it is up to the arts to drag it back into the limelight for examination. No artist does a better job of exposing the absurdity of societal narratives than comedians. In Havel’s time, thumbing one’s nose at the Communist Party might mean deriding the layers of departments, committees,

commissions, and other institutions placed between leadership and those tasked with carrying out leadership’s will. Bureaucrats in the play act as preprogrammed cogs, whose sole purpose is to carry out another’s orders. The bureaucrats recoiled in outrage at Hugo’s dismissal of Committee Statements when he sought to use his reason to understand how the bureaucracy functions. The bureaucrats’ reaction to Hugo’s suggestion showcases the extent to which Czechoslovak citizens became absorbed by the Communist Party’s social regulations. That sounds familiar.

There is no plot or major conflict in The Garden Party. Rather, Hugo moves from encounter to encounter within the garden party, learning and observing the mannerisms of the different bureaucrats. He begins his encounters using his logic, reason, and individual experiences to try and connect with the bureaucrats. However, his ambition pushes him to adopt the speech and style of each circle of bureaucrats he encounters, climbing the ladder as he becomes a more effective copycat. Eventually, through his skill in mimicry, Hugo browbeats the director of the Liquidation Office and is made the head of his own bureaucracy. The protagonist Hugo’s transformation from a one-time sloth resigned to playing chess against himself into a powerful bureaucratic leader at the cost of his own identity parallels today’s comedians. When Dave Chappelle or Joe Rogan points out the absurdity of grown men competing against women in mixed martial arts, the public square recoils with the same fervor as Liquidation Office bureaucrats. For a few days or

weeks, Dave or Joe become pariahs in the national media, until the next controversy grabs the media’s attention. The reactions to Dave Chappelle or Joe Rogan’s pointed observations range from bewilderment to anger.

Ironically, this was the same fate that awaited The Garden Party’s Hugo: people do not recognize the person they thought they knew. After sacrificing his own identity to easily move among the bureaucrats and rise to the top of the Liquidation Office hierarchy, Hugo returns home to parents that do not recognize him. However, The Garden Party takes this cognitive dissonance to the next level as Hugo does not recognize his own parents. His absorption into the Liquidation Office’s bureaucracy is complete, with his existence being defined by the system he inhabits.

The comedian’s skill at pointing out the way in which social narratives capture individuals parallels the erosion of Hugo’s own individuality in pursuit of his career. The phenomenon of comedians being “canceled” for their own jokes today is a subtler form of artistic repression than what Havel faced. Nevertheless, the retaliations against Havel—the banning of his plays in his home country and eventual total ban from theater in all of Czechoslovakia—lead us to question how close American comedians are to operating in similar climates. Uproar ensued when Chappelle’s alma mater dared to dedicate their theater in his name. Much like Liquidation Office bureaucrats lampooning Hugo for employing common sense in office matters, students regurgitated that

Chappelle’s jokes were akin to endangering lives.

Chappelle’s retort to art students engaged in artistic oppression echoed Havel’s observation that “when a truth is not given complete freedom, freedom is not complete.” When comedians do not have complete freedom to express themselves and their skills, comedy itself suffers. The Garden Party showcases how the government’s restriction of speech and regulation of acceptable behavior leaves Hugo’s life as soulless and empty as the same bourgeois that party apparatchiks rail against.

Purely simply, The Garden Party is a glimpse into a reality where comedy is nonexistent. Comedians like Chapelle, who remarked that “the more you say I can’t say something, the more urgent it is for me to say it,” would, in this dystopia, be relegated to skits and jokes that lack true substance. By the end of The Garden Party, Hugo’s character has become this kind of empty vessel. He’s able to engage with any Communist Party official, and he exhibits the epitome of success. But, just like woke comedians who tip-toe around narratives that provide the richest sources of laughs, Hugo never really says anything at all for the rest of the play.

Ultimately, The Garden Party illustrates the conflict within comedy to determine what is considered “acceptable” language. Hugo’s constant adaptation to whatever situation he finds himself in throughout the play is exaggerated in his use of particular lingo and the speed at which he speaks. The equivalent would be comedians and other artists angling their talent and works, not to

whatever they truly want to express, but to what they think the audience will approve of. Hugo makes his way through the Liquidation Office’s garden party and encounters antagonists in the form of different secretaries and directors, allowing the viewer to see the hilarity of each official’s efforts to conform to the acceptable party line.

For example, the Office Secretary’s lines are extremely literary, as though she is reading a prepared statement, to ridicule how lower-level Czech officials regurgitate Party talking points in a rigid, inflexible tone. When greeting Hugo at the door, the Secretary drones that “you can buy here a general admission c-card, which will provide you the right of free movement throughout the entire topographical extent of the garden as well as with the right of visitation to all attractions organized within the framework of the garden party of the Liquidation Office.” The Secretary’s lo-gewindedness is contrasted later in the play with the office’s Director, who only speaks using four different phrases, like a programmed computer. The sheer variety of different tones, volumes, verbiage, and accents coming from the bureaucracy is meant to show just how little substance is behind their words.

Comedians like Dave Chappelle, Ricky Gervais, Ryan Long, and Andrew Schulz shatter the performative opinions, actions, and attitudes of accepted societal narratives, and this is what makes them so magnetic. Havel’s mockery of the facade of freedom in Czechoslovakia resulted in his work being banned and him serving prison time. At a time when the state was so powerful that openly mocking it would have resulted in a visit from the

secret police, Havel used the theater to subtly shine a light on the Communist regime. American comedians may not face those sorts of consequences. But they may see their stand-up routines de-platformed, or even face physical assault by those that purport to be the righteous majority. Havel’s plays serve as a measuring stick of just how encompassing some illiberal behavior and narratives have become in America.

Viewers of The Garden Party are meant to see how suffocating mob-enforced conformity is on an individual. In Soviet Czechoslovakia, the State Security agents shackled artists into producing works that glorified socialism or served the regime, ensuring that Czechoslovaks remained powerless. Comedy, unsurprisingly, was sorely lacking in the Eastern Bloc. Today in the United States, comedy faces challenges from illiberal mobs, thin-skinned audience members, and technology companies that can make or break a comic’s ability to get their material to audiences.

The bureaucrats in The Garden Party could easily be replaced by the mob that practices the heckler’s veto today, as the same empty platitudes expressed by students on college campuses or administrators in positions of power are the same as Soviet bureaucrats. Sloganeering is a stand-in for solutions, the collective muzzles the individual into the system. The Garden Party might serve as a reminder for comics to continue to step outside the boundaries of acceptable language, tone, and styles. That way the cheap conformity that The Garden Party derides is a little weaker throughout America’s comedy scene.

# The ‘leftovers’ from the Asian ‘table’ may well go to the Europeans

Natalia Dembinskaya

**AFTER the introduction of the price ceiling in Europe and the United States are waiting for the decline in oil prices. However, analysts predict a deficit. The market already feels an imbalance: supply is shrinking, demand, primarily from China, is growing. According to the experts of the largest investment banks, raw materials will not fall in price, but will approach \$110 per barrel.**

**Self-restraint**  
The ban on the transportation of Russian oil by sea came into force on 5 December. In addition, the EU, the G7 and Australia have agreed on a cap price of \$60 per barrel. Moscow has shifted its focus to

India, China and Turkey. In fact, the countdown of the complete cessation of the supply of Russian energy resources to the West has started. OPEC+ is extremely concerned about direct political interference in market mechanisms. Moreover, analysts emphasize, Moscow's position is win-win. In particular, Russia may demand an additional premium for raw materials for the EU, including transit from other countries.

The Europeans are trying to fill the deficit with imports from the US, North Africa, and the Middle East. However, no supplier is able to dramatically increase production for the EU market.

**Up to 110 per barrel**  
The initiators of the

price ceiling, it seems, themselves understand that they will not succeed. This "will not affect stock prices," admitted John Kirby, coordinator for strategic communications at the White House National Security Council. "Such actions of the G7, despite the cunning logic, will reduce Russian revenues minimally, but they will provide shocks to world energy markets," The National Interest notes. For the West, this is fraught with serious troubles. And of course, oil prices will rise.

Goldman Sachs estimates that a barrel will cost \$90 in the first quarter and \$95 in the second.

Bank of America pre-

dicts \$110 for Brent in the second half of the year. Much depends on demand in China and India. Everything points to him growing up.

"Sanctions against Russia, low inventories, the opening up of the Chinese economy and OPEC's readiness to cut production if demand weakens will support high energy prices," analysts at the bank said in the report.

At a meeting on December 4, the OPEC+ countries confirmed an earlier decision to reduce production by two million barrels per day. BofA believes that in 2023 the cartel will only tighten its policy.

This fully meets the

interests of Moscow and other key exporters. What can not be said about the United States, the European Union and other importers. Traders expect India and China to replace the EU as the largest consumers of hydrocarbons from Russia.

Beijing recently announced sweeping changes to its "zero tolerance" policy for COVID-19, with testing requirements and travel restrictions eased. This means that China will need more fuel. The EU is constantly experiencing "energy hunger". Competition between the Asian and European markets will intensify and clearly will not help reduce prices.

**"Shadow Fleet"**

In the meantime, the industry is talking about the

expansion of the Russian "shadow fleet". Companies are allegedly returning mothballed tankers to service, and EU shipowners are transferring assets to non-G7 operators.

According to the Financial Times, exports from Russia have increased in the last week, with tankers taking 3.5 million barrels a day out of ports. To Asia - 500 thousand more (16 percent). The overall figure is at a six-month high.

However, as Aleksey Chepa, First Deputy Chairman of the State Duma Committee on International Affairs, stressed, Russia does not need a "shadow fleet." There are enough buyers.

"Many oil-producing countries have been and

have been under sanctions for a long time, today this is not a big problem," Chepa explained.

**Soften the effects**

Losses, of course, can not be avoided. Income from the sale of raw materials began to fall in November.

According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), Russian businesses received \$15.8 billion, \$700 million less than in October.

According to the Ministry of Finance, in November the country earned 90 billion rubles less from oil and gas than planned. However, as the head of the department Anton Siluanov emphasized, it is premature to assess the impact of price restrictions on the budget -

after all, Moscow will take retaliatory measures.

Be that as it may, what the EU and the US were counting on will not happen. The ceiling is not low enough.

"European officials talked about how they would "starve out the Russian war machine." In fact, would-be planners did their best to prevent the Kremlin from drastically reducing production and collapsing the market," Bloomberg notes.

The response has not yet been announced. But it is clear that the main supplies will be redirected to China and India. And the "leftovers" from the Asian "table" may well go to the Europeans, but already at exorbitant prices.



# A ‘restrained pessimism’

**P**RESIDENT Joe Biden’s historic nomination of Ambassador Ly-nne Tracy to serve as the first woman ambassador to the Russian Federation has flown mostly under the media’s radar. And with her late-November confirmation hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee out of the way, Tracy’s final confirmation by the full Senate is the next step.

And so: Who is Ambassador Tracy?

For one, she is a well regarded member of the senior foreign service who was awarded by former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton for courage under (literal) fire in Pakistan. She is currently Chief of Mission in Yerevan, Arm-enia, where she has recei-ved mixed grades by some critics for her handling of Azerbaijan’s war on that country.

As for her appointment to Moscow, Peitro Shakarian, an Armenian-American scholar of Soviet and Russian history, says he “would not be too optimistic about this appointment, if we are looking for a dramatic improvement in U.S.-Russian relations. Tracy is essentially a typical State Department career diplomat whose views on

Russia and the region reflect those of the Washington Beltway consensus since the 1990s.”

And, indeed, during her confirmation hearing November 30, Tracy, in keeping with recent diplomatic fashion, decried the Putin regime’s “intensifying repression against civil society, independent media, human rights activists, pro-democracy advocates.” Yet if Tracy’s tenure in Moscow is to have any chance at success, she might consider abandoning the activist mindset that has become de rigueur among the diplomatic corps in recent years and return to the traditional practice of diplomacy as exemplified by a coterie of distinguished Cold war-era U.S. envoys to the Soviet Union in the 1950s and 1960s.

It is perhaps useful to recall the series of crises between the United States and the Soviet Union that were an all-too-regular feature of those first two decades of the Cold War. Helping U.S. presidents navigate that perilous period were a number of remarkable diplomats, including Ambassador Charles ‘Chip’ Bohlen, who served as U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union from 1953 to 1957. Looking back, the

James Carden

period now seems to be something of a “Golden Age” of American diplomacy, at least as far as the Soviet Union was concerned. The approach taken by Bohlen and his colleagues is instructive and remains relevant to the current period of East-West confrontation.

U.S. diplomacy as carried out in those days was marked by pragmatism and an understanding of the hard calculus of national interest. American diplomats back then would perhaps have been puzzled by the recent fashion of seeking to impose American “values” as a condition for diplomacy — or even legitimacy.

Bohlen served as U.S. ambassador to Russia from 1953 to 1957 and remained a valued adviser on Soviet affairs during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. His time in Moscow coincided with the release of Khrushchev’s “Secret Speech”condemning the excesses of Stalin (1956); the creation of the Warsaw and Baghdad Pacts (1955); the Hungarian revolution and October uprisings in Poland (1956).

Bohlen’s approach was marked by what the histori-

an T. Michael Ruddy has described as a “restrained pessimism.” The secretary of state under whom Bohlen served during his time as ambassador, John Foster Dulles, was, like the current one, an evangelist for American primacy and Bohlen was often put in the position of having to advise Washington against overreacting to Soviet provocations. Testifying before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 1957, Bohlen saw, despite the Soviet crackdown in Hungary, ways to work with the Soviets, particularly in the area of arms control. Whether dealing with Khrushchev’s Soviet Union or Putin’s Russia, it would seem a mistake to link progress in one area (such as human rights) with progress in others (such as disarmament).

Bohlen swam against the tide of conventional wisdom which then prevailed in the Washington of the 1950s by asserting that the United States should approach the Soviet Union as a traditional nation-state not merely as the embodiment of communist ideology —accommodation, limited and pragmatic, was possible.

As his biographer Ruddy put it, Bohlen “never doubted that the Soviet Union

presented a threat, a threat created by a unique combination of ideology and national interest. But he especially saw it as a nation, leading him to believe that limited accommodations were possible.” As Bohlen’s successor in Moscow, Llewellyn Thompson once observed, “The trouble with Americans is that we see everything in black or white, but there’s a lot of gray in diplomacy.”

There’s a lesson in that. Today, Russia’s security interests are viewed as illegitimate because of the widespread belief that Putin is, among other things, the leader of a global authoritarian movement, if not the embodiment of evil itself. But what Bohlen and his illustrious cohort understood is that, for Russia, it is interests that matter.

And so, as Tracy prepares to take up her position in Moscow, one can only wish her well and hope she takes a page from Bohlen who understood that the hard calculus of national security interests, rather than ideology, was what drove the Kremlin to act the way it did on the world stage. Today, the pursuit of a purely pragmatic relationship with Putin’s Russia seems the right course.



# Yemen’s conflict is complex and mostly out of the news

Katherine Zimmerman

**THE Committee on Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Middle East, North Africa and Global Counterterrorism recently held a hearing on the situation in Yemen, a chance to ask the right questions about what the U.S. is doing to advance its interests in the region. Yemen — a country that always seems to be in crisis but never topping the list of crises affecting American national security — rarely gets floor time in Congress. Mostly, discussion of Yemen surfaces in the context of Saudi Arabia’s role in the war, which has dragged on for eight years, and the U.S.-Saudi Arabia relationship. While the hearing was valuable generally, Congress missed the opportunity to push the Biden administration on its theory of success in Yemen.**

Yemen’s conflict is complex and mostly out of the news, making it difficult to follow and even more difficult to evaluate the administration’s messaging on the conflict. Not to add that for most Americans, Yemen and its issues have again fallen off the map. Yemen’s location south of Saudi Arabia along the Bab al Mandab, a strategic maritime choke point, means the United States has a permanent interest in ensuring that developments within

extracted concessions, the Houthis have yet to follow through on terms to which they agreed. Still, UN and U.S. officials continue to hope that they can translate ongoing talks into a viable resolution to the conflict. What no one has articulated is how negotiations today, when the Houthis have the upper hand, would lead to any semblance of an acceptable resolution for the Yemeni people and for U.S. interests.

Here are the questions that Congress should have asked of Special Envoy to Yemen Tim Lenderking and USAID’s Sarah Charles:

What is the prospect that a Yemeni-led political process today results in a settlement that protects U.S. interests in Yemen? U.S. policy is to support and enhance the UN-led effort to negotiate a resolution to the war in Yemen. It’s clear that the ceasefire provided much-needed relief to Yemenis across the country and that Yemenis want an end to the conflict. But the balance of power on the ground favors the Houthis, whose interests diverge from U.S. interests in Yemen, especially over Iranian influence in Yemen and the protection of basic civil liberties. If the most likely negotiated settlement locks in place conditions unacceptable to the U.S. — IRGC officers with long-range weaponry based in Yemen, for example —

concessions for peace.

Who in the U.S. government is responsible for negotiating the release of U.S. citizens and current and former U.S. embassy employees still detained by the Houthis and what is being done to free these individuals? When the Houthis seized control of Yemen’s capital, Sana’a, they also detained Americans caught in the city along with Yemeni opposition figures, civil rights activists and journalists. Some were freed but others died from injuries sustained during torture sessions. The Houthis held Americans hostage to leverage the release of Houthis detained outside of Yemen, and still hold U.S. embassy staff they detained last year.

What actions could the U.S. take to prevent the Houthis from further reducing civil liberties and committing human rights violations? The Houthis’ efforts to transform Yemeni society under a fundamentalist Zaydi ideology accelerated after the Taliban returned to power in Afghanistan. They already had made significant changes to Yemen’s education system to indoctrinate, rather than educate, children. In the past year, the Houthis have taken measures to remove women from the public space, not only dimming prospects for Yemeni women’s futures but also hindering the female staff of NGOs from

***The Biden administration has leaned heavily into diplomacy to help end Yemen’s war. Stopping the fighting to set conditions for the United Nations to negotiate a resolution have been key aims. US efforts were key to the diplomatic breakthrough in April that yielded a UN-brokered truce, but that truce has only bought the Houthis time to further consolidate power in northeast Yemen.***

the country do not threaten maritime security or the stability of the Gulf. The playing out of the Iranian-Saudi conflict — Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) backs the Houthis and a Saudi-led coalition backs the internationally recognized Yemeni government — further complicates ending the civil war. An active al Qaeda group — the one that has tried to strike the U.S. multiple times in the past — remains present in Yemen’s southeast. And finally, the conflict exacerbates Yemen’s humanitarian crisis, one of the world’s worst.

The Biden administration has leaned heavily into diplomacy to help end Yemen’s war. Stopping the fighting to set conditions for the United Nations to negotiate a resolution have been key aims. U.S. efforts were key to the diplomatic breakthrough in April that yielded a UN-brokered truce, but that truce has only bought the Houthis time to further consolidate power in northeast Yemen. Moreover, while they have

shouldn’t the U.S. seek ways to foster conditions that are more favorable to its interests?

What sources of leverage short of armed force does the U.S. hold over the Houthis to encourage them to negotiate in good faith? The Houthis remain empowered in Yemen, allowing them to make maximalist demands. They are militarily strong. Even should Iran stop supplying the Houthis with weapons — and there are no signs of this occurring — the Houthis have an enormous stockpile, which Iran continued to add to during the six-month truce period, that ensures they can carry on their fight. The Houthis are further emboldened by messaging from Congress against Saudi Arabia and mixed signals from the international community demanding they back down from their current positions but criticizing any resumption of fighting that might weaken the Houthis. Sanctions have had little impact, as have public exhortations for the Houthis to make necessary

doing their jobs.

How is USAID balancing emergency assistance to Yemen with investing in Yemenis’ futures with long-term development work? The U.S. has been the largest single donor to Yemen for years, providing emergency humanitarian relief. But one of the most significant long-term threats to Yemenis is the weakening and near-collapse of state infrastructure and institutions necessary to provide basic services such as clean water and health care. Yes, Congress should ensure that other partners, especially Gulf states, are pulling their weight. But the value of U.S. assistance is not just in staving off imminent famine but also in rebuilding and strengthening the necessary infrastructure and institutions to prevent further deterioration in conditions.

These questions are the start to the hard conversation that the U.S. must have about whether the status quo in Yemen will yield an acceptable resolution to the Yemeni conflict.

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# Do not underestimate Poland

**I**N Europe in general, and in Russia in particular, Poland is often perceived as a state whose unbridled geopolitical ambitions and great power phantom pains lead it to catastrophe over and over again. The current policy of Warsaw is usually interpreted in the same vein, which is generally understandable: in the Ukrainian crisis and anti-Russian attacks, Poland is fiercely active and acts as a gag in any Russophobic barrel. For example, the day before yesterday, the Polish Sejm once again dug up a stew-ardess, blaming Moscow for the plane crash near Smolensk, and recognized Russia as a “state that supports terrorism.”

However, the scornful and mocking attitude towards Poland at the moment is a delusion, since the Polish authorities, who are really frank revenge-seekers and set themselves very serious geopolitical goals, demonstrate a well-thought-out and promising strategy. Of course, risks - and considerable ones - hang over Warsaw, this time, too, it may end in the collapse of all its hopes, but this is an integral part of this process. In the same way, dozens of other countries, from Japan to Turkey, are trying to take advantage of the opened window of geopolitical opportunities (with depressing prospects in case of failure). And for Russia in the current events, its fate is at stake.

In general, the Poles act skillfully, flexibly and wittily, and it would be a big mistake to underestimate them. They made their

main military-political bet on the United States, but, unlike most of their Eastern European neighbors, they did not surrender their sovereignty to the Americans at all - on the contrary, in this way they are trying to strengthen it as much as possible. On the one hand, thanks to the choice they have made, they receive significant, and in some places critically important, support from Washington. On the other hand, the United States is too far away, and they are objectively weakening, so their ability to put pressure on their junior partners is noticeably reduced, which also increases the freedom of maneuver for Warsaw.

And she really needs this freedom, especially in the growing friction with Western Europe and the EU. Yesterday it became known that Poland blocked the 18-billion-dollar program of financing Ukraine by the European Union for the next year. And no, the reason is not at all in Kiev. It's all about the minimum corporate tax rate that Brussels pushes at the level of 15 percent, but Warsaw is not satisfied with this. European diplomats complain that the Poles are engaged in “hostage-taking” and in general “it’s like an unhealthy relationship: they keep promising that next time will be different, but deep down we know that we will be hurt again and again.” However, Poland continues to consistently bend its line, bargaining hard and focusing primarily on its own interests.

Western European capitals are forced to endure such impudence, moreover,

Irina Alksnis

they have fewer and fewer tools to put the Poles in their place, given both the importance of Poland in the current regional layouts and their own problems. The current picture, in which Paris and Berlin geopolitically look more insignificant than Warsaw, is simply epic.

Of course, there are enough cassanders who predict that Poland, in its ambitions, has cut off a piece too large for itself, which it will choke on. That, they say, despite all the Polish cunning, the Americans will just throw the Poles without any profit for them into the furnace of war with Russia.

There are enough arguments in favor of this point of view. Studies show that among the foreign mercenaries fighting in Ukraine, most of all Poles - respectively, they bear the heaviest losses. A couple of weeks ago, a mini-scandal erupted when the Polish government took the initiative to create “American style” military cemeteries. Naturally, the question arose about the expectation by the authorities of the country of the mass death of the Polish military in some kind of conflict. Well, the other day, Warsaw’s plans were made public to attract up to 200 thousand people to participate in military exercises next year, including “persons who have not yet completed active military service, and persons transferred to the reserve who are not reserve military personnel (persons with military qualification). And this despite the fact

that the number of Polish armed forces at the moment is 160 thousand military personnel (together with the fighters of the territorial defense).

In general, it is not surprising that the alarmists see in what is happening the accelerated preparation of Warsaw for a big war. Well, with whom can there be such a war? It is clear that only with Russia.

However, whether there will be a direct conflict between NATO and Russia is another grandmother said in two, given the inevitability of its transition to a global nuclear apocalypse. There are not so many frostitben suicides in the Pentagon and other general staffs of the West. On the other hand, Poland faces much more urgent goals, for which all the above-mentioned preparation will also be very useful. We are talking about the return of the territory of Western Ukraine.

Warsaw’s desire and plans to regain lost territories in the east are an open secret, to the extent that the head of Russian intelligence shares the details of the ongoing work in an interview. And among political analysts and experts, this is often a commonplace in their reasoning, and one can often already hear bewilderment about the fact that the Poles are slowing down and not speeding up the solution of the issue.

Meanwhile, they are not in a hurry because the task is extremely difficult, and the point is not at all a possible condemnation of the world community.

Ukraine, including its

Ben Armbruster

“repugnant.”

The Guardian’s Patrick Wintour noted this week that Johnson’s op-ed last Friday was “little noticed” and “startling,” noting that Henry Kissinger “made a similar proposal, arguing Russia should only be required to disgorge territory gained since February this year. Land occupied nearly a decade ago, including Crimea, “could be the subject of a negotiation after a ceasefire.”

Wintour adds that “Johnson was making an admission made in private by many diplomats that a militarily enforced return of the Crimean peninsula — which was annexed by Russia in 2014 in a move rejected by the UN — to full Ukrainian control is fraught with risk.”

Meanwhile, a new poll this week conducted by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs and the Moscow-based Levada Center found that 53 percent of Russians favor starting negotiations with Ukraine to end the war. That number jumps to 62 percent when respondents were provided with costs Russia has endured.

Regarding specific outcomes of any future talks,

the survey found that 78 percent of Russians said that returning Crimea to Ukraine would be unacceptable and 66 percent said the same for the eastern Donbas region.

The Washington Post called the Levada Center “one of Russia’s most widely respected independent polling companies” and that “the survey’s authors said earlier this year they found no evidence that respondents were unwilling to share their true feelings with interviewers.”

\*\*\* In other diplomatic news related to the war in Ukraine:

Turkey’s President Tayyip Erdogan spoke with both Zelensky and Putin this week regarding the Black Sea grain export agreement, Reuters reported. Russia is reportedly seeking better guarantees on its exports while Ukraine wants more ports open for shipping.

French President Emmanuel Macron hosted a conference in Paris this week, according to the Associated Press, where allied countries and other international organizations pledged to provide Ukraine with more than \$1 billion in aid to help the war torn

# ‘Could be the subject of a negotiation after a ceasefire’

**U**KRAINIAN President Volodymyr Zelensky in a video conference on Monday urged the leaders of the G7 countries — Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States — to back his proposal for a “special summit” aimed at implementing his 10-point plan for peace.

“I suggest that you, like other conscientious states, show your leadership — in the implementation of the peace formula as a whole or its specific points,” Zelensky said.

While the G7 leaders made no specific commitments on Zelensky’s proposal, his idea that it be based on his 10-point plan is notable considering that one of its specific points reiterates Zelensky’s stance that the war will end only when Russia withdraws its forces from all of Ukraine, perhaps including Crimea, a region the plan refers to as “temporarily occupied.”

While Ukraine’s backers in the West often defer to Zelensky and Ukrainian officials on what the war’s ultimate outcomes might be, it appears that some slight cracks are beginning to emerge.

For example, former British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has been one of Zelensky’s biggest supporters (and vice versa), but on Friday it appears that Johnson quietly amended his Zelensky-aligned vision for the Ukraine war’s end game.

In a Wall Street Journal op-ed calling for more military and economic support for Ukraine, Johnson said the only way the war can end is “with Vladimir Putin’s defeat.” That means, he wrote, that “Russian forces must be pushed back to the de facto boundary of Feb. 24. There is no way Volodymyr Zelensky or the Ukrainian people could conceivably accept another outcome....”

Before the February 24, 2022 Russian invasion, Ukraine’s “de facto boundary” not only did not include Crimea, but it also did not include parts of the Donbas region in the east on Ukraine’s border with Russia.

But this is a clear shift in Johnson’s thinking. Just last month, also in a Journal op-ed, the former prime minister — who reportedly worked to scuttle a deal back in April similar to the one he proposed on Friday — called the idea of Putin keeping parts of the Donbas





# SCCI demands pragmatic steps for simplifying tax-system

**F.P. Report**

**PESHAWAR:** Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) demanded the government and Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) to take pragmatic steps for broadening the existing tax-base and simplifying the tax-system.

The chamber also asked to frame business-friendly policies to facilitate and provide relief to the business community.

The SCCI also emphasized the need to eliminate the additional burden of taxes, illegal/unnecessary actions, issuance of notices and multiple tax-audits, which are becoming the cause of harassment of the business community.

These remarks made by SCCI senior vice president Shahid Hussain while chairing a meeting during a visit of Member Public Relations (PRs), Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) Islamabad, Sardar Ali Khawaja here at the chamber house, said in a press release issued on Friday.

Businessmen have played a vital role in the economic development of the country through pay-

ment of various taxes so they should be facilitated and ensure every kind of relief to them, says SCCI senior office bearer.

The meeting was attended by SCCI's vice president Ejaz Khan Afridi, Chief Commissioner Inland Revenue, Regional Tax Office (RTO) Peshawar Aqeel Ahmad Siddique, former presidents Haji Muhammad Afzal, Sherbaz Ilyas Ghazanfar Bilour, former senior vice president Ziaul Haq Sarhadi, former vice presidents Javed Akhtar, Abidullah Yousafzai, executive members S.Minhajuddin, Abdul Hakim Shinwari, Hafaf Ali Khan, Hamza Ibrahim Butt, Laal Badshah, Munawar Khurshid, Kashif Amin, Qurtul Ain, Waqar Ahmad, Zahoor Khan, Fazal Muqem, Mujeeb Rehman, Ihsanullah, Nadeem Rauf, Saddar Gul, Rashid Iqbal Siddique, Ishtiaq Muhammad, Aqil Ismail, Fahad Amin, traders, manufacturers and others.

Sardar Ali Khawaja while responding to various queries assured the traders' community for taking proactive measures for resolution of all issues.

Similarly, the senior FBR officer said the issues pertaining to Pakistan Railways and Customs would also take up senior officers of these departments.

Sardar Khawaja mentioned his department's main purpose to establish a strong liaison and coordination with the business community and resolve their issues by taking up with relevant quarters and authorities. The senior officer furthermore assured the measures would be taken to remove double-taxation.

Sardar Khawaja on the occasion revealed that despite extending dates, tax-returns filing has decreased this year as compared to the last years, which is a matter of grave concern.

The FBR is taking pragmatic steps for bringing reforms and broadening of existing tax-base, the senior officer said.

Sardar Ali Khawaja hoped the tax-system would be simplified and easier to taxpayers through these reforms. He added FBR is striving to provide relief to taxpayers, which have played a major role in economic development of the

country.

The FBR senior officer suggested the nomination of a focal person to timely resolve issues of the business community.

Regarding apprehensions and issues of business community belonging to ex-Fata and PATA region, Sardar Khawaja said misuse of laws/regulations and policies is very high in erstwhile federally administered tribal areas and provincial tribal areas.

He, however, assured the matters of the business community belonging to ex-Fata and PATA would also be resolved on priority basis.

Earlier, SCCI senior vice president Shahid Hussain elaborated the FBR senior officer regarding a number of issues of business community, especially problems in filling online tax-returns, timely payment of taxes, illegal notices, actions and harassment etc.

Haji Muhammad Afzal, Sherbaz Bilour, Ziaul Haq Sarhadi, executive members and others also spoke on the occasion and highlighted the issues of business community comprehensively.



**PESHAWAR:** Secretary General Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Sajjad Uzair addressing a press conference.

## Dar urges SECP to ensure regulatory oversight

**ISLAMABAD (APP):** Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar here on Friday appointed the newly appointed team of the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) to ensure consistent, transparent and focused regulatory oversight across sectors for achieving high economic growth and social harmony in the country.

During a meeting with SECP management, the minister extended full support to the commission and emphasized the SECP team to work with dedicated focus and zeal.

Among others, the meeting was attended by Special Assistant to Prime Minister (SAPM) on Finance, Tariq Bajwa; SAPM on Revenue, Tariq Pasha, Secretary Finance, Hamed Yaqoob Sheikh, Chairman SECP, Amir Khan, SECP Commissioners, Akif Saeed, Mrs. Sadia Khan, Abdul Rehman Warraich, Mujtaba A. Lodhi and senior officers from finance division.

Finance Minister Senator Ishaq Dar extended felicitations to the newly appointed SECP commissioners and highlighted the role of SECP as a regulator of the corporate sector, capital market, insurance and investment sectors for the betterment and progress of Pakistan's economy.

The Finance Minister further appreciated SECP's work as a contributor to the financial and economic development in Pakistan by taking a number of regulatory measures in restoring and maintaining the confidence of domestic as well as foreign investors.

On the occasion, Chairman and SECP commissioners apprised the minister of various regulatory initiatives being taken for mitigating systemic problems and building investors' confidence and further ensured their full support and cooperation.

## Denmark ambassador visits SCCI

**SIALKOT (APP):** Denmark Ambassador to Pakistan Jakob Linulf visited the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) to interact with the business community on Friday.

According to a press release, the ambassador was welcomed by President SCCI Abdul Ghafoor Malik.

Addressing the participants, the president SCCI said the both countries should ensure dedicated efforts to further improve two-way trade under the light of GSP+ status.

Ghafoor Malik said that Pakistan could also learn from Denmark regarding its robust employment generating SME sector.

He mentioned that Pakistan could follow Denmark by investing into projects relating to clean energy, artificial intelligence and skill development of its youth.

On this occasion, Jacob Linulf praised achievements of the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry and said the both sides needed to collaborate to enhance trade.

The ambassador added that Denmark was committed to help Pakistan in combating issues related to climate changes.

## PSX witnesses bullish trend, loses 121 points

**ISLAMABAD (APP):** The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bullish trend on Friday, gaining 121.72 points, a positive change of 0.30 percent, closing at 41,301.48 against 41,179.76 points on the previous day.

A total of 139,659,870 shares were traded during the day as compared to 245,017,196 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 4.167 billion against Rs 7.595 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 330 companies witnessed their shares in the stock market; 124 of them recorded gains and 185 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 21 companies remained unchanged. The three top-trading companies were Bank Al-Falah with 17,468,556 shares at Rs 30.75 per share, WorldCall Telecom with 12,449,827 shares at Rs 1.27 per share and Dewan Motors with 8,107,500 shares at Rs 14.55 per share.

Unilever Foods witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 1000 per share price, closing at Rs 25000, whereas the runner-up was Pak Services with a Rs 100 rise in its per share price to Rs 1450. Mehmood Textile witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 28 per share closing at Rs 860 followed by Bhanero Textile with a Rs 17.72 decline to close at Rs 1125.

**Rupee loses 23 paise against dollar**

The exchange rate of the Pakistan rupee depreciated by 23 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading on Friday and closed at Rs 224.93 against the previous day's closing of Rs 224.70.

According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 231.8 and Rs 234.1 respectively.

The price of the euro was increased by 07 paise and closed at Rs 239.19 against the previous day's closing of Rs 239.12, according to State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese Yen lost two paise to close at Rs1.63, whereas a decrease

of Rs 4.00 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs 274.02 as compared to its last closing of Rs 278.02.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and Saudi Riyal increased by 07 paise each to close at Rs 61.24 and Rs 59.80.

**Gold price up by Rs500 per tola**

The prices of per tola 24 karat gold increased by Rs500 to Rs171,900 on Friday against its sale at Rs 171,400 during the previous day. The rates of 10 gram 24 karat gold also increased by Rs428 to Rs147,376 from Rs146,948 whereas as the price of ten gram 22 karat gold went up to Rs135,095 from Rs134,702, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association said.

The price of per tola silver declined by Rs30 to Rs1960 whereas that of ten gram silver decreased by Rs25.72 to Rs1680.38.

The price of gold in the international market increased by \$4 to \$1782 compared to its sale at \$1778, the association reported.

## FWCCI to be helped for promotion of women-led businesses: Envoy

**FAISALABAD (APP):** Bulgarian embassy would work with Faisalabad Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FWCCI) to promote women empowerment and women-led businesses for export venture in addition to facilitate for B2B meetings and interaction with the chambers of commerce in Bulgaria.

Ms. Irena Gendaieva Gancheva, Ambassador of Republic of Bulgaria said this while addressing the meeting of FWCCI members, here on Friday.

She said that there were ample opportunities for improving the volume of bilateral trade between Bulgaria and Pakistan. In this regard, women entrepreneurs could contribute a lot with export to Bulgarian markets.

She said that Bulgaria was member of European Union (EU) and Pakistan was also enjoying GSP Plus status under which a lot of export opportunities were

available for Pakistani businesswomen particularly in the field of textile products. She said that Bulgaria was a cross road country in South Eastern Europe. Therefore, the Pakistani businesswomen should avail this opportunity and capture market potential in Bulgaria and adjacent countries. She said that Embassy of Bulgaria in Islamabad would be more than happy to organize events for development of women entrepreneurs and B2B meetings in various areas of women products would also be arranged.

She also asked the FWCCI members to participate in various trade fairs held in Bulgaria and said that tourism development was a potential area between both the countries. She was hopeful for promotion of youth exchange program for students' higher education in Bulgaria. She also expressed sympathy with the flood affectees in Pakistan.

Earlier in her welcome address, Rubina Amjad President FWCCI said that FWCCI had provided a vibrant platform to female entrepreneurs where they were facilitated to get their business problems resolved.

She said that Pakistan and Bulgaria were enjoying friendly relations which could be further cemented through exchange of bilateral trade delegations.

She said that FWCCI had first-ever established 'Women Incubation Centre' whereas establishment of 'Women Cluster' over 100 acres and 'Technical Training Centre' at M-3 Allama Iqbal Industrial Estate was in progress.

A question-answer session was held in which Dr. Najma Afzal, Cristena Peter, Shazia Sharif and others took part whereas a large number of women were also present at the occasion in addition to Vice President FWCCI Abiha Hamid.

## Shipping activity at Port Qasim

**KARACHI (APP):** Shipping activities reported at the Port on Thursday, where four ships namely, OOCL Australia, Albatros Trader, Al-Utouria and Sun Rise carrying Containers, Palm oil, LNG and Gas oil, berthed at Qasim International Container, Liquid Cargo Terminal, Engro Elengy Terminal and FOTCO Oil Terminal respectively.

Meanwhile five more ships, Milos, Long Beach Express, Al-Soor, Liberia and Fairfield Eagle scheduled to load/offload Rice, Containers, Palm oil, Wheat and Coal also arrived at outer anchorage of the port during the last 24 hour.

A total of 08 ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them two ships, CMA CGM Ivanhoe and OOCL Australia left the Port on Friday morning is expected to sail on today in the afternoon.

A Cargo volume of 92,813 tonnes, comprising 64,810 tonnes imports cargo and 28,003 tonnes export cargo, including containerized cargo carried in 2,072 Containers (1,003 TEUs Imports and 1,069 TEUs export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

There are 15 ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them, 03 ships, Liberia, Long Beach Express and Fairfield Eagle & 03 more ships, CD Huelva, Kanha and MT Chemroad Zenith carrying Wheat, Containers, Coal, LPG and Chemicals are expected to take berths at FAP, QICT, PQEPT, PIBT, SSGC and EVTL on Friday.

## Weekly inflation slides down by 0.40 per cent

**ISLAMABAD (APP):** The weekly inflation, measured by Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), witnessed a decrease of 0.40 percent for combined consumption group during the week ended on December 15, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported Friday.

The SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 217.64 points as compared to 218.51 points during the past week, according to PBS data.

As compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 29.42 percent. The weekly SPI with base year 2015-16=100 is covering 17 urban centres and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups.

The SPI for the lowest consumption group up to Rs 17,732 witnessed 0.77

percent decrease and went down to 225.69 points from last week's 227.45 points. Meanwhile, the SPI for the consumption groups from Rs 17,732-22,888; Rs 22,889-29,517; Rs 29,518-44,175 and above Rs 44,175 witnessed decrease of 0.65 percent, 0.51 percent, 0.44 percent and 0.29 percent respectively.

During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 22 (43.14%) items increased, 09 (17.65%) items decreased and 20 (39.21%) items remained stable. The items which recorded a decrease in their average prices on a week-on-week (wow) basis included tomatoes (28.71%), potatoes (16.63%), eggs (2.64%), vegetable ghee 1 kg (0.91%), vegetable ghee 2.5 kg (0.65%), pulse masoor (0.61%), pulse mash (0.44%), cooking oil 5 litre (0.32%) and pulse gram (0.22%).

The commodities which recorded an increase in their average prices included chicken (5.89%), onions (4.45%), washing soap (2.30%), wheat flour (2.17%), rice basmati broken (2.04%), rice irri-6/9 (1.74%), sugar (1.31%), firewood (1.27%) and salt powdered (1.08%). On a year-on-year (YoY) basis, the commodities that witnessed a decrease in prices included chillies powdered (40.56%), electricity for q1 (11.81%) and gur (3.42%).

The commodities that witnessed an increase in prices on YOY basis included onions (468.21%), diesel (70.51%), tea lipton (62.61%), petrol (59.27%), eggs (53.77%), salt powdered (53.38%), chicken (52.92%), gents sponge chappal (52.21%), bananas (49.45%), pulse moong (46.71%), pulse gram (44.72%) and mustard oil (41.08%).

## Tokyo shares close lower

**TOKYO (AFP/APP):** Tokyo stocks closed lower on Friday, extending sharp falls on Wall Street driven by lacklustre US retail sales data and fears of a global recession. The benchmark Nikkei 225 index dropped 1.87 percent, or 524.58 points, to end at 27,527.12, while the broader Topix index fell 1.20 percent, or 23.69 points, to 1,950.21.

With the US Federal Reserve and the European Central Bank "suggesting they have more work to tame inflation, hiking interest rates into a dimming macro environment will

undoubtedly trigger a recession," said Stephen Innes, managing partner of SPI Asset Management.

"Forget inflation; Asia traders are now worried about a global recession which could prove highly economically damaging through the contracting export channel," he warned, also describing the fall in US retail sales as worrying.

The dollar fetched 137.32 yen in Asian trade, against 137.80 yen in New York late Thursday.

Chip-making equipment manufacturer Tokyo Electron plunged 4.47 percent to

43,780 yen. Sony Group lost 1.72 percent to 10,855 yen after a report said the company is considering building a component plant in southern Japan near a new Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company semiconductor factory.

SoftBank Group tanked 3.79 percent to 6,052 yen while Uniqlo operator Fast Retailing dropped 3.51 percent to 81,600 yen.

Shipping companies were higher, with Kawasaki Kisen jumping 2.58 percent to 2,700 yen and Nippon Yusen rising 0.40 percent to 3,214 yen.

## Dinner in honor of Ambassador of Algeria hosted by PCFR



**F.P. Reort**

**KARACHI:** Pakistan Council on Foreign Relations (PCFR)- Karachi based registered think tank- hosted a Dinner in honor of Mr. Ibrahim Romani Ambassador of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria to Pakistan at Karachi. Ibrahim Romani visited PCFR on his first visit to Karachi after assuming the office of the Ambassador of Algeria to

Pakistan. Mr. Ahsan Mukhtar Zubair Secretary General of PCFR presented souvenir to the honorable ambassador.

Ambassador Shahid M. Amin (Retd.) Chairman Pakistan Council on Foreign Relations (PCFR) greeted the worthy guests in his welcome address. Ambassador Amin highlighted that Algeria and Pakistan has been enjoying excellent relations for many decades as Pakistan played an important role in Algeria's independence.

Ambassador Amin emphasized on the need of promotion of trade activities between the two brotherly countries and making visa process more simplified for business community.

While addressing the gathering Mr. Ibrahim Romani appreciated the role of PCFR which serves as a bridge between the diplomatic corps and business community of Pakistan. Ambassador Romani highlighted that Pakistan and Algeria have been engaged in mutually beneficial political and diplomatic ties but there is lot of potential of economic relations which needs to be tapped.

While commenting on the efforts for promotion of economic relations between the two brotherly countries he said that Algerian mission appreciate the business related trips to Algeria and has quick visa process for members of commerce chambers of Pakistan.

Ambassador Romani assured the audience that he will do everything possible to facilitate the trading relations between the two countries. The event was attended by members of diplomatic corps based in Karachi, government officials, serving and former judges, business community, academics, and the elite of the city.





## In brief

## FIFA confirms new format for 32-team Club World Cup

DOHA (Agencies): FIFA on Friday announced a new expanded format for the Club World Cup with 32 teams from 2025. "For men's football, an expanded 32-team FIFA Club World Cup is set to begin in June 2025 (following the postponement of the original 24-team tournament planned for 2021) and will take place every four years," FIFA said in a statement. Founded in 2000, the FIFA Club World Cup is generally played in Northern Hemisphere winter with six or seven teams from six confederations. Alongside the host nation's national champions, the reigning champions of Asia, Africa, North, and Central America, South America, Oceania, and Europe join to play a straight knockout tournament in every Club World Cup. The current 2021 champions are Chelsea. Real Madrid won the Club World Cup four times to be the record holder. Morocco will host the 2022 edition in February 2023.

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## Kalisto, Sam Gradwell to wrestle in Multan

MULTAN (Monitoring Desk): Former World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) superstars Kalisto and Sam Gradwell will wrestle here on December 17 and 18 for the Ring of Pakistan Heavyweight Championship. According to the details, local wrestler Badshah Khan will be defending his heavyweight title in a Fatal-Four way match, which will feature Kalisto, Sam Gradwell and an Austrian wrestler. Notably, Kalisto had been linked with the American sports entertainment firm WWE and won several prestigious titles including the United States Championship. Whereas, Gradwell was linked with the WWE franchise NXT where he participated in United Kingdom Championship in 2018 and WWE's The Bump a year later. Meanwhile, besides them, several notable names in the wrestling industry will also feature in the wrestling event here at DHA Multan Sports Complex.

## Rafael Nadal to launch brand

MADRID (Agencies): Spanish tennis superstar Rafael Nadal, who is still an active player, has now another endeavor as the 22 time-Grand Slam champion has recently invested in the hotel industry. A publicity was held in Madrid on Thursday as Nadal collaborated with Melia Hotels International, agreeing with the group's chair Gabriel Escarrer to launch "Zel" chain. On Thursday, Escarrer and Nadal were said to work on the project for a long while as the venture's first hotel will open in 2023 in Spain's Mallorca in the Balearic Islands where the 36-year-old athlete was born. In the next four or five years, 20 "Zel" hotels are planned to be opened in many cities including Madrid, Paris and London. "Zel" means "sky" in Catalan language, which is spoken in Mallorca as well. Nadal said that he was thrilled to be in the hotel business. "As a Spaniard, a Mallorcan, and a global traveler, the launch of our hotel brand is a project I have had in mind for a long time," Nadal said. "... I'm confident that Zel will be a great success and will achieve considerable growth and be enjoyed by all of our guests, which is why we are creating it," he added. Nadal also said he was not ending his sports career.

## Azhar announces retirement from Test cricket

## Bababr Azam hopes Karachi pitch to help spinners

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan's injury problems grew with opening batsman Imrul-Haq ruled out of the third and final Test against England starting in Karachi on Saturday. The 26-year-old aggravated a hamstring injury on Friday, making Pakistan's task of avoiding a first home 3-0 Test whitewash all the tougher.



Veteran batsman Azhar Ali is likely to replace Haq, having announced that this will be his last Test. Bespectacled left-hander Haq batted at number five in the second Test in Multan, scoring 60, as Pakistan lost by 26 runs.

"Imam has a hamstring problem so he will not play tomorrow's match," said skipper Babar Azam on Friday.

Azam said injuries had cost Pakistan dearly in the series. They lost the pace spearhead Shaheen

Shah Afridi before the series with a knee injury and Haris Rauf damaged his quad muscle in the first Test in Rawalpindi.

Another fast bowler, Naseem Shah, has failed to recover from a shoulder strain that forced him to miss the second Test, also ruling him out of the final match.

"We have played continuous cricket and there was no rest, so that is why we are having so many injuries," said Azam on the eve of the Karachi showdown against a confident England.

"It's not that we are relaxed on fitness but we have to address fitness issues. If we are playing continuous cricket we have to plan that accordingly." Azam hopes the Karachi pitch will help the spinners.

"The wicket looks dry and it's a typical Karachi pitch," he said. "We will try to have a good result for us. We committed mistakes and matches were in our hands, so we must not repeat them."

Pakistan are likely to hand a Test debut to fast bowler Mohammad Wasim Junior in place of Mohammad Ali, who went wicketless in the Multan Test.



KARACHI (APP): Azhar Ali, Pakistan's one of the most successful batters, will hang his boots following the third Test against England, which begins on Saturday. With 7,097 runs in 96 matches at an average of 42.49, Azhar is Pakistan's fifth leading Test run-getter behind Yousuf (7,530).

In 2010, Azhar, as a 25-year-old, made his Test debut in England against Australia at Lord's and scored his maiden Test half-century in only his second match. He would score 34 more half-centuries and went past the 100-run mark on 19 instances.

Azhar, 37, is the only Pakistan batter to score a triple-century in a pink-ball Test – a feat that he achieved against the West Indies in Dubai in 2016. That unbeaten 302 remains his highest score in Test cricket.

Over the course of his 12-year career, Azhar also made two double-centuries – 226 against Bangladesh in Dhaka (May 2015) and 205 not out

against Australia in Melbourne (December 2016) – and has, at least, one century in Australia, Bangladesh, England, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, United Arab Emirates, the West Indies and Zimbabwe. Against Australia in Abu Dhabi in 2014, Azhar scored a century in each inning (109 and 100 not out) to help Pakistan win the second Test by 356 runs and the two-Test series 2-0.

Azhar captained Pakistan in nine Tests in two separate tenures from 2016 to 2020.

He retired from One-Day Internationals in 2018 – a year after helping Pakistan win the ICC Champions Trophy 2017. In that tournament, Azhar had scores of 50 (v India), 9 (v South Africa), 34 (v Sri Lanka), 76 (v England in semi-final) and 59 (v India in final).

Azhar Ali said, "It has been a great honour and privilege for me to represent my country at the highest level. Deciding on when to call it a day is always tough, but, after contemplating deeply, I realised that this is the right time for me to retire from Test cricket."

"There are many people who I am grateful to in this strenuous, yet beautiful journey. I want to make a special mention of my family without whose sacrifices; I would not have been where I am today. My parents, wife, siblings, and children have been my strength throughout."

"I have been blessed to share the dressing room with some of the most outstanding cricketers with whom I share a strong bond. I feel much richer by calling these people my friends. I am also blessed to have played under some wonderful coaches to whom I will always remain grateful."

"I retire from international cricket as a fulfilled cricketer who ticked most of the goals he had set for himself. Not many cricketers go on to lead their countries, and that I was able to captain Pakistan is a matter of great pride for me. From being a kid who started as a leg-spinner to becoming a mainstay in the Test batting line-up, I had the loveliest moments of my life that I will cherish forever."

PCB Chairman Ramiz Raja said, "Azhar Ali has been one of the most committed and loyal servants of Pakistan cricket. His grit and determination have been an inspiration for many young cricketers and he is a role model for up-and-coming cricketers."

"While it is sad that Pakistan will not have a player of his experience in the dressing room to draw upon, it only reflects the circle of life. I hope to see Azhar continuing to play a role in the development of Pakistan cricket and sharing his vast knowledge and experience with budding cricketers."

## England eyeing historic clean sweep in Pakistan: Stokes

KARACHI (INP): England have already sealed their three-match series with a game to spare but captain Ben Stokes says they will press to become the first Test team to complete a 3-0 whitewash in Pakistan.

The third and final Test will begin in Karachi on Saturday. England won the first Test by 74 runs before grabbing a 26-run victory in the second to register their first series win in Pakistan since 2000-01. Pointing to England's 3-0 series win in Sri Lanka in 2018, Stokes said his side would not take the foot off the pedal.

"We won that series before the last Test and there was even more put on to it, knowing that we could become the only English team to register a whitewash in Sri Lanka," Stokes told reporters.

"So, although the series here is done and we'll still lift the trophy at the end regardless of the result, there's still an extra bit knowing that we could be one of the very few teams that could walk away from Pakistan with a whitewash series."

Stokes added that they are considering handing a debut to 18-year-old all-rounder Rehan Ahmed, who would become England's youngest men's Test player if he plays in the third match in Karachi, beginning on Saturday. "We picked Rehan in the squad not just because of his talent and to integrate him, but because it would be a good opportunity to play him if we thought it was necessary," Stokes said.

"I'm struggling to work out what he is, whether he's a batter or a leg-spinner, which is good I guess, because it shows how much talent he's got. "Having a wrist-spinner is always exciting, especially for England, but it's not getting too carried away with the potential that he has. Because he is only young, and you've still got to nurture talent, no matter how exciting it is."



## Lahore Open Polo Championship Newage Cables/MP, Master Paints Black triumphant

LAHORE (APP): Newage Cables/Master Paints and Master Paints Black emerged triumphant in the Coca-Cola Lahore Open Polo Championship 2022 matches here at the Lahore Polo Club on Friday.

Juan Cruz Gregual shone in the first match of the day as he hammered a double hat-trick in Newage Cables/Master Paints' convincing 9-3 victory over Barry's/DS Polo. Besides Juan Cruz Gregual's heroics, Farooq Amin Sufi contributed with a beautiful brace and Adnan Jilil Azam converted one goal. Rulo Trotz thrashed in two goals and Usman Haye struck one for Barry's/DS Polo.

Newage Cables/Master Paints were off to a flying start as they cracked a classic quartet of goals to gain a 4-0 lead in the first chukker. Barry's/DS Polo made a good comeback in the second chukker by banging in a brace to reduce the margin to 4-2. The third chukker was once again dominated by Newage/Master Paints as they hammered an impressive hat-trick to further

enhance their lead to 7-2.

Barry's/DS Polo started the fourth and last chukker well by converting a 30-yard penalty successfully that helped them reduce the margin to 7-3 but it was all that they could get from the match as Newage/Master Paints thrashed in two more goals to win the match by a huge margin of 9-3. Jhon Fisher and Nicolas Ruiz Guinazu supervised the match as field umpires.

Manuel Carranza's carnage carried the glory for Master Paints Black, who edged past Diamond Points by a narrow margin of 7-6 in the second match of the day. Manuel Carranza did the magic with mallet and polo pony and fired in fabulous four goals for Master Paints Black while sensational Syed Aun Mohammad Rizvi slammed in a beautiful brace and Sufi Mohammad Amir converted one goal. Ahmed Ali Tawana pumped in four goals and Hamza Ejaz and Lt Col Umar Minhas (R) converted one goal apiece for Diamond Points but their efforts proved futile

in the end.

Master Paints Black dominated the match right from the word go as they fired in four fabulous goals to gain a healthy 4-0 lead. Diamond Points made their presence felt just before the end of the first chukker by scoring a field goal to make it 4-1.

The only goal of the second chukker was also struck by Diamond Points that helped them further reduce the margin to 4-2. Master Paints Black started the third chukker well by converting a 60-yard penalty to stretch their lead to 5-2 but Diamond Points once again showed their class and converted two back-to-back goals to further reduce the deficit to 5-4.

The highly-charged fourth and last chukker saw both the sides matching fire-with-fire and then managed to score two goals each with Master Paints Black winning the thrilling encounter by a slight margin of 7-6. Jhon Fisher and Agha Musa officiated the match as field umpires. After a break tomorrow (Saturday), three important matches will be played on Sunday.

## World Cup 2022 Fifa to reconsider format of 2026 World Cup after 'best ever' tournament

DOHA (Agencies): Fifa is to reconsider the format of the 2026 World Cup in the United States, Mexico and Canada, says president Gianni Infantino.

The teams will increase from 32 to 48 for the competition and were set to be divided into 16 groups of three, with the top two progressing to the last 32.

Infantino said that would be looked at after the "success" of the four-team groups at the 2022 World Cup in Qatar. "Here the groups of four have been absolutely incredible," said Infantino.

"Until the last minute of the last match you would not know who goes through. "We have to revisit or at least re-discuss the format. This is something that will certainly be on the agenda in the next meeting."

The group stages in Qatar included some exciting final games as countries tried to secure a top-two place to qualify for the last 16. The four-team group format, with



the top two going through to the knockout stages, has been used since the men's World Cup expanded to 32 teams in 1998.

The best World Cup ever - Infantino

Infantino was speaking at a news conference in Qatar after attending a Fifa council meeting. With the third-place play-off and final to go, he said 3.27 million spectators had attended the games compared with an overall 3.3 million at the 2018 World Cup in Russia.

"Thanks to everyone involved, Qatar, all the volunteers to make this the best World Cup ever," said Infantino. "Matches have been played without inci-

dents. It has been a very joyful atmosphere."

"There is something happening when we talk about football becoming truly global, with an African team [Morocco] reaching the semi-final for the first time. "We also had a woman [Stephanie Frappart] referee a match for the first time."

"It has been an incredible success, approaching five billion in terms of viewing figures. The fans meeting the Arab world, it has been very important for the future of all of us." A number of European nations planned to wear a OneLove armband during matches to promote diversity and inclusion but did not do so because of possible sanctions from world football governing body Fifa.

Germany manager Hansi Flick said his players covered their mouths during the team photograph before their World Cup opener against Japan "to convey the message that Fifa is silencing" teams.

## Dahani's six-fer guides Sindh to second successive win

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan international fast bowler Shah Nawaz Dahani and Test fast bowler Mir Hamza shared 10 wickets between them to dismiss Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for a paltry 40 runs – the lowest in Pakistan Cup history, helping Sindh to a four-wicket win in the fourth round match of the Pakistan Cup at the NBP Sports Complex on Friday.

In other fourth round matches, defending champions Balochistan defeated Central Punjab by 28 runs, while Northern overcame Southern Punjab by 10 runs.

## Sindh v Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, NBP Sports Complex

After being put into bat by Sindh's captain Omair Bin Yousaf, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa batters never got the chance to occupy the crease as the pair of Hamza and Dahani went berserk with the new ball at both ends. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were bundled out for 40 in 20 overs and only one batter managed to enter double figures.

Dahani, who completed his quota of 10 overs, went for only 19 runs and took six wickets, registering four maidens. Hamza, with his left-arm pace, bowled eight overs and gave away only 12 runs, taking four wickets. He too bowled four maiden overs during his fiery spell.

Chasing a modest 41-run target, Sindh lost six wickets, before achieving the target in the 14th over. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's captain and spinner Sajid Khan took three wickets for 14 runs, while Khalid Usman bagged two wickets for four runs from five overs.

Northern v Southern Punjab, State Bank Stadium Test cricketers Usman Salahuddin's unbeaten 81 and Hasan Ali's all-round performance went in vain as Southern Punjab fell 11 runs short of the 216-run target set by Northern.

Batting first, Northern's Umar Akmal was amongst the runs again as the middle-order batter scored a 46-ball 49 – the highest score for his side, which included five fours and two sixes. He was equally supported by wicketkeeper-batter Rohail Nazir – who coming into bat at number six – scored 40 off 58 balls, hitting two sixes and one four. The pair added 50 runs for the sixth wicket after half of Northern's side were sent back to the pavilion with 123 runs on the board.

Northern were eventually bowled out for 215 in the 50th over. Hassan Khan grabbed four wickets for 31, while Hasan Ali took two for 48 in 9.3 overs. Mohammad Ilyas with his right-arm fast took three wickets and gave away 27



runs from seven overs.

In reply, Southern Punjab had a poor start and were reeling at 43 for five, when Muhammad Imran, coming into bat at number seven joined opening batter Usman. The pair added 64 runs for the sixth wicket, before Imran was run out, scoring 33 off 62 balls, hitting one four and a six.

The top wicket-taker in the first innings Hassan soon followed Imran back to the hut but not before hitting two boundaries during his 22-ball 19. Captain Hasan joined Usman and the two stitched an important 41-run partnership for the eighth wicket, but Hasan while playing too many shots was out caught by Muhammad Huraira off Aamir Jamal for a quick-

fire 33 off 19 balls, stroking four towering sixes. Usman stayed at one end, while Southern Punjab lost the remaining two wickets adding 21 runs to the total.

Usman's unbeaten knock included four fours and one six which came off 126 balls. For the winning team, Athar Mehmood took four scalps for 46, while Aamir took two for 53 from his 10 overs.

## Central Punjab v Balochistan, UBL Sports Complex

Centuries by Haseebullah and Hussain Talat helped Balochistan beat Central Punjab by 28 runs. This was Balochistan's second win, while Central Punjab crashed to their first loss in the tournament.

The decision to put

Balochistan into bat by Central Punjab's captain Aamer Yamin backfired, as Balochistan scored 331 for five in their allotted 50 overs.

The left-handed young wicketkeeper-batter Haseebullah scored a 138-ball 123, smashing 13 fours and two sixes. He was ably supported by another south-paw Hussain, who returned undefeated on 141 off 122 balls, studded with 12 fours and five sixes. The pair knitted a 211-run partnership for the third wicket.

Central Punjab's Qasim Akram, with his right-arm off-spin took two wickets for 52 from nine overs.

In return, Central Punjab were all out for 303 in 47 overs. Opening batter Muhammad Faizan top-scored for his side, scoring a 72-ball 94, striking 10 fours and four sixes. In Faizan's support came Junaid Ali, who coming into bat at number three struck nine fours and two sixes and played a 58-ball 75. Junaid was involved in a 166-run partnership with Faizan.

Down the order, Usama Mir, batting at number nine scored 42 off 26 balls, but after his departure Central Punjab were bowled out with three overs to spare. Balochistan's Khuram Shahzad and Mohammad Junaid took three wickets apiece, while Amad Butt took two for 75 from nine overs.

## Scores in brief: Sindh beat Khyber Pakhtunkhwa by four wickets

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa 40 all out, 20 overs (Ishanullah 10; Shahnawaz Dahani 6-19; Mir Hamza 4-12)

Sindh 41-6, 13.4 overs (Saim Ayub 14; Sajid Khan 3-14; Khalid Usman 2-4)

Player of the match – Shah Nawaz Dahani (Sindh)

## Balochistan beat Central Punjab by 28 runs

Balochistan 331-5, 50 overs (Hussain Talat 141 not out, Haseebullah 123; Qasim Akram 2-52)

Central Punjab 303 all out, 47 overs (Muhammad Faizan 94, Junaid Ali 75, Usama Mir 42; Mohammad Junaid 3-47, Khuram Shahzad 3-53, Amad Butt 2-75)

Player of the match – Hussain Talat (Balochistan)

## Northern beat Southern Punjab by 10 runs

Northern 215 all out, 49.3 overs (Umar Akmal 49, Rohail Nazir 40, Umar Amin 32, Zeeshan Malik 30; Hassan Khan 4-31, Mohammad Ilyas 3-27, Hasan Ali 2-48)

Southern Punjab 205 all out, 48.2 overs (Usman Salahuddin 81 not out, Hasan Ali 33, Khuram Imran 33; Athar Mehmood 4-46, Aamir Jamal 2-53)

Player of the match – Athar Mehmood (Northern)

## Argentina fans protest over WC final tickets

DOHA (Agencies): Argentina fans staged a second day of demonstrations Friday outside a Doha hotel demanding that their country's national federation help them to get tickets for the World Cup final.

Amid a growing frenzy ahead of Sunday's game against defending champions France, supporters said the cheapest official tickets are selling on underground markets for more than \$4,000.

Scores of fans gathered outside the Doha hotel where the Argentina Football Association is based.

On Thursday night there were angry exchanges with officials outside the hotel. Some fans carried placards reading "AFA give us tickets".

The federation finally agreed to a meeting with a delegation of three fans.

Each country that qualified for the quarter-finals was given an extra allocation of tickets for matches they reached.

But with even more fans arriving from Argentina and France for the game, no announcement was made on whether more tickets will be made available.

The Lusail Iconic Stadium holds about 88,900 people but more than 30,000 Argentines are reported to be in Qatar. Many have taken out loans to be in the Gulf state to see Lionel Messi's last bid to win a World Cup title.

Ticket negotiations are being held on a multitude of WhatsApp groups.

Some Argentinian fans showed AFP messages requesting more than \$4,000 for final tickets with a face value of \$750.

The most expensive tickets, which FIFA says should cost \$5,850, are being offered for more than \$14,000.

Roberto Bascuro, 53, who has been in Qatar since the start of the tournament, said he had bought tickets for every Argentina match from unofficial sources.

"Whoever was selling outside the stadium had at least 15-20 tickets," Cintia Echanis, 51, said the protesters wanted access to tickets at the official price.

"What happens is that the resale is about \$5,000, and it is a lot for those of us who have been here since the beginning and who have paid for many tickets."

"We don't want problems. What we want are Argentinians is to have the chance cheer for Argentina again," she added.

The Argentina association did not immediately comment on the availability of tickets.





## In brief

### ANF seizes over 11 kg drugs

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) Pakistan while conducting three counter-narcotics operations throughout the country seized over 11 kg drugs and arrested three accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Friday. He informed in a raid at a private courier office in Islamabad, ANF recovered 152 grams weed from a parcel received from America. In another operation, ANF foiled a bid to smuggle drugs from Peshawar to Punjab and recovered 9.6 kg charras from secret cavities of a truck and arrested an accused resident of Swat. ANF and FC conducted a joint operation and recovered 4.8 kg charras from the possession of two accused, residents of Khyber who were trying to smuggle narcotics from Kurram to Peshawar. Separate cases have been registered at respective ANF Police Stations and further investigations are under process.

### Two more diagnosed with dengue virus

RAWALPINDI (APP): Two more dengue cases were reported in Rawalpindi during the last 24 hours, raising the tally of confirmed cases to 4,767. District Coordinator Epidemics Prevention and Control (DCEPC), Dr. Sajjad Mehmood, Friday said that both patients were admitted to the city Benazir Bhutto Hospital. He informed that one of each patient had arrived from Rawalpindi and Islamabad area. In collaboration with allied departments, the health officer added that the district administration had registered three FIRs, sealed seven premises, issued tickets to 20, notices to 339, and a fine of Rs 14,500 imposed on violations of anti-dengue SOPs from December 9 to date. During indoor surveillance, Dr. Sajjad informed that 1,261 anti-dengue teams checked 34,146 houses in the last 24 hours and found dengue larvae at 24 homes. Similarly, he added that 512 teams, during outdoor surveillance, inspected 15,441 spots and detected larvae at no place.

### IRSA releases 76,100 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Friday released 76,100 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 41,400 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1493.81 feet and was 95.81 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 20,100 cusecs while outflow as 42,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1123.05 feet, which was 73.05 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 7,200 cusecs and 20,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded 46,700, 31,800, 30,300 and 12,800 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 8,300 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 2,000 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

### Seven arrested on cock fight gambling

RAWALPINDI (APP): In a crackdown against the anti-social elements, Police on Friday arrested seven gamblers besides recovering bet money of Rs 38,710 and two motorcycles, nine mobile phones and other items from their possession, a police spokesman said.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman NDMA, Lt General Inam Haider Malik chairing meeting of NEOC at NDMA Main Hall.

## Electoral reforms, vibrant democratic nurseries critical for political system: Speakers

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Improving the electoral system, empowering local governments, and revitalizing democratic nurseries – local governments, student and trade unions, etc. – are imperative to ensure the quality of representation and efficient working of legislators in parliament.

This would lead to better governance, provided the instructions and guidelines given by the Constitution of Pakistan are followed in letter and spirit at higher as well as grassroots levels.

These insights emerged during the third phase of the Grand National Dialogue on 'Pakistan's Political System and Governance', held with students at the National University of Sciences & Technology (NUST), Islamabad, by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), Islamabad, in collaboration with Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI) and NUST's Department of Government & Public Policy.

The youth interaction session was addressed by Khalid Rahman, chairman, IPS, Dr. Syed Tahir Hijazi, former vice-chancellor, Muslim Youth University, and former member (gov-

ernance), Planning Commission of Pakistan, and Farzana Yaqoob, co-founder, Mantaq, and former minister of AJ&K, while Sana Maqbool, broadcast journalist at PTV World, moderated the session.

Khalid Rahman pointed out that political system and governance are related terms; however, it is difficult to sequence them as cause and effect because each seems to equally depend on the other. This chicken-and-egg situation depicts that work is needed to be done in every dimension of governance and legislation by adopting reformative measures and the correct mindset.

He further mentioned that, in order to bring reformative changes for better governance, it is significant to dispense clarity to four fundamental questions: Who has the power? Who makes the decisions and how? To what extent the stakeholders are taken on board? How effective is the system of accountability, i.e. reward and punishment?

Particularly significant to this is introducing reforms to the electoral

process and legislative system of the country with an aim to ensure proportionate representation in parliament, competent decision-makers in the legislature, inclusivity of all stakeholders, and accountability for decisions and actions.

Pointing out the flaws of inherited policies and governance models, Tahir Hijazi stressed that in order to fast-track the delivery of services, the need of the hour is to redefine the roles of people in governance, bring proficient and skillful people as decision-makers, and hold everyone answerable through a system of accountability.

In this regard, he argued that the youth have to play a prominent role in the future and, as an asset, they must be trained and schooled in politics, electoral procedures, and decision-making. This way the future leadership of Pakistan will originate from these educated, informed, and cognizant youth.

In addition to these aspects, there is also the context of culture behind every governance success and failure, stated Farzana Yaqoob.

## Fall of Dhaka, APS tragedy teach unity, brotherhood, love: Ashrafi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister's Special Representative for Interfaith Harmony and Middle East Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi on Friday said the fall of Dhaka and Army Public School (APS) tragedy which coincidentally occurred on the same date, December 16, gave the lesson of unity, brotherhood and love.

He said the mishap of East Pakistan happened because of personal interests and egoism while the sorrowful incident of APS united the whole nation at one platform to counter enemy's nefarious designs with collective efforts.

Ashrafi who is also the chairman of Pakistan Ulama Council told APP

that the enemy was engaged in conspiracies against Pakistan in a bid to create division between the nation and Pakistan Army. Some elements working on foreign agenda were spreading negative propaganda against Pakistan, he added.

Paying tribute to the sacrifices of Pakistan Army, martyrs, Ghazis and people in the tragedy of East Pakistan, he said the survival and security of any nation and its homeland was possible only with the mutual understanding between the nation, army and defense forces.

He said the culprits hatching conspiracies against Pakistan created a division between the people and army in East Pakistan, which unluckily caused separation between the East

and West Pakistan.

Ashrafi said if the political and military leadership of the time had attempted to address the issues through mutual consultation and unification and had recognized the enemy's plots, Pakistan would not have been divided.

He said even today certain elements were burning midnight oil to create division in the nation and army to weaken Pakistan, but they had failed and would be so in the future.

He said sacrifices of the nation brought positive results by eliminating terrorism from the country.

He proposed the religious and political parties to ink an accord to improve the social and economic conditions of the country on the permanent basis.

## RPO, Commissioner direct Murree admin to facilitate tourists by all means

RAWALPINDI (APP): Regional Police Officer (RPO) Nasir Mehmood Satti and Commissioner Saqib Manan have directed the authorities concerned of Murree district to utilize all available resources to facilitate tourists during snowfall season.

The RPO and the commissioner during a visit reviewed arrangements finalized for snowfall season in Murree district.

Deputy Commissioner Murree, Ahmed Hasan Ranjha, Senior Superintendent Police, Operations Rawalpindi, Wasim Riaz Khan, SDPO Murree, DSP Traffic Murree, In-charge Rescue 1122, representatives of Forest Department, Cantonment Board Murree, Highway, Motorway, IESCO, and departments concerned were present on the occasion.

The officers gave a detailed briefing to the RPO and the commissioner about the final arrangements. They also visited different points to review traffic arrangements and issued instructions to the officers concerned. All institutions should finalize best possible arrangements and measures to facilitate visitors, the RPO said and

also instructed to ensure provision of all possible services to tourists. All the departments should perform their duties with commitment and dedication and promote mutual cooperation.

It was informed that a special control room had been set up at the assistant commissioner office, Murree which was working round the clock to guide and assist the tourists.

The Tourism Police and special squads should make coordinated efforts to provide the best facilities to the tourists, the RPO said.

The SDPO Murree was directed to keep the tourism police personnel alert during the snowfall season and organize special briefings for them. The RPO said banners should be displayed at all important points to guide the tourists. All the departments should review their available resources and all the arrangements so that timely assistance could be given in case of any emergency, he added.

Special teams should be formed besides measures for a quick response system in all areas. The administration should hold a meeting with the representatives of the hotel association to resolve the problems being

faced by the tourists. All necessary steps should be taken utilizing all available resources to ensure a safe and pleasant journey of the tourists, they added.

### IESCO issues power suspension programme

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Friday issued a power suspension programme for Sunday for various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work. According to IESCO Spokesman, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period from 08:00 AM to 04:00 PM, 132KV Grid Station Kotli Sattian, from 09:00 AM to 02:00 PM, Rawalpindi-3, Pindi Board, VIP Feeders, from 09:00 AM to 04:00 PM, M. Tower, F-11/ 2,3 & 4, F-10/2, F-11 Center, F-10/4, G-11 Markaz, F-11 Tower Feeders, Consumer Grid Station, 132KV GSS NDC-2 Consumer Grid and surroundings.

## Nation will never forget sacrifices of APS martyrs: Alvi

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr. Arif Alvi on Friday said the tragic memory of the Army Public School attack was still fresh in the hearts of the nation, which would never forget the sacrifices of the martyred children.

"December 16 will always be a reminder of the great sacrifices of the martyrs of the Army Public School," he said in his statement on the eighth

anniversary of the APS incident.

President Alvi recalled that the militants committed extreme barbarity by targeting innocent young children in 2014.

He said the APS tragedy brought the nation together to get united in a decisive war against terrorism.

He said the entire nation was firm in finally eradicating the remnants of terrorism and expressed the com-

mitment that no attempt could weaken the resolve against this fight.

The president prayed for the elevation of ranks of the martyrs of Army Public School.

He said the day was also a reminder to the international community that terrorism was a common problem of humanity and required intensified efforts for its eradication at the global level.

## Chairman NDMA for comprehensive plans to address possible water shortage

### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: National Emergency Operation Centre (NEOC) session was held at NDMA today, Chairman NDMA, Lieutenant General Inam Haider Malik presided the Session with representatives of Ministry of Food Security, Ministry of Railways, Pakistan Meteorology Department (PMD), Federal Flood Commission (FFC), National Highway Authority (NHA), National Institute of Health (NIH) and National Information Technology Board (NITB) in attendance.

Federal departments briefed the house on recovery and rehabilitation progress in their respective fields after Floods 2022. Chairman NDMA asked the relevant departments to draw comprehensive plans

for initiating necessary measures on account of possible shortage of water due to low rainfall in this season.

He also requested PR & NHA to ensure development of sustainable and Disaster Resilience structures keeping in view vulnerabilities for natural calamities in the country.

During the meeting, PMD briefed the forum on weather outlook for this winter season and stated that less than normal rainfall is expected during December 2022 and normal rainfall spell would likely to be experienced in January 2023. NIH briefed the session on remedial measures and observed the declining trajectory in spread of epidemic diseases in flood-affected areas.

Representative of Ministry of Food Security

and NITB informed NEOC about progress of digital application for registration and provision of relief to farmers. NHA and Pakistan Railways gave briefing on current status of communication infrastructure in flood-ravaged areas and reconstruction plans.

Chairman NDMA explained to the participants on need of further and closer integration of all departments and briefed on his vision to expand the NEOC and make it live interfaced with all departments to remodel NDMA from a response oriented entity to a proactive mode.

The meeting adjourned with principal directions and guidance for each department in view of futuristic disaster mitigation planning for future and lessons learnt during the recent floods.

## Swiss Ambassador Georg Steiner calls on Minister Qadir Patel

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador of Switzerland to Pakistan Georg Steiner on Friday called on Federal Minister for National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination Abdul Qadir Patel.

During the meeting, issues of mutual interest were discussed including further promotion of bilateral cooperation in various fields, especially in the health sector. The minister said that Pakistan faced a tough time due to floods across the country as it affected major parts of Balochistan, Sindh, Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He added massive dam-

age had occurred which caused destruction of infrastructure, animal livestock and precious human lives. In many areas, fields crops were ready to reap were destroyed, especially women and children were affected the most, he added.

He said that Pakistan never faced such a natural disaster and added that the primary and basic health units were completely devastated, which immediately needed the help of the world to restore the health system.

He said that the government was utilizing all resources to restore the health system. He thanked the

Government of Switzerland for its support to flood victims. Ambassador of Switzerland to Pakistan Georg Steiner said that their government was fully supporting the Government of Pakistan for the rehabilitation of flood victims.

He expressed deep sympathies over the current floods in Pakistan and the loss of lives and property and assured that the Government of Switzerland would continue its support for the flood victims in Pakistan. He invited the minister to join Patients' Safety Conference being held in Switzerland in February next year.

## LHC uphold decision of PMC on alculuation of elective subject marks

### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Honorable Lahore High Court has upheld the decision of the Pakistan Medical Commission on the calculation of elective subject marks for 2021 candidates for the purpose of admission in medical and dental colleges.

Fresh candidates along with students who had completed their FSc in 2020 had challenged the PMC public notice which stated that: "Candidates who passed their FSc pre medical /HSSC or equivalent exam in the year 2021 and now are applying for admission in medical

/dental college for session 2022-23 are informed that only their elective subjects marks and percentage will be considered for merit calculation for admission in medical and dental colleges for session 2022-23."

As per PMC Regulations the admission process for medical education is based on a prescribed weightage formula in which MDCAT holds 50% weightage FSc (Pre-Medical)/HSSC/Equivalent holds 40% weightage and SSC/Matriculation/Equivalent holds 10% weightage.

The PMC notice was contested on the grounds that the decision to only count elec-

tive subjects for candidates who completed their FSc in 2021 was discriminatory towards the candidates who had completed their FSc in 2020 and or post 2021.

The Honorable Lahore High Court, in dismissing the petition held that: "The policy decision of PMC to the extent represented by the Public Notice as such fully stands to reason and suffer from no inherent or illegal discriminatory feature being based on tenable classification and, therefore, warrants no interference in extraordinary Constitutional and discretionary jurisdiction of this Court."

## 10 criminals arrested; drugs & weapons recovered

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Islamabad capital police apprehended 10 criminals from different areas and recovered drugs and weapons with ammunition from their possession, a police public relations officer said.

He said that, following the special directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, Islamabad capital police has intensified crackdown against the criminal elements in order to eliminate the crime from the city.

Following these directives, Industrial Area police team arrested an accused namely Muhammad Waseem involved in drug peddling

and recovered 655 gram hashish from his possession.

Similarly, the LohiBher police team arrested two accused namely Muhammad Ali and Mohsin Raza involved in drug peddling and recovered 1040 gram heroin from their possession. Khanna police team arrested two accused namely Muhammad Salman and Muhammad Zeeshan involved in drug peddling and recovered 2303 gram opium from their possession.

Moreover, the Tarnol police arrested an accused namely Muhammad Saeed involved in drug peddling and recovered 1240 gram heroin from his pos-

sessions. Secretariat police team arrested an accused namely Ahmad Khitab involved in illegal petrol selling.

During the crackdown against proclaimed offenders and court absconder police teams arrested three accused from various areas of the city. Cases have been registered against the nabbed accused and further investigation is underway.

IGP Islamabad directed all senior officials for effective crackdown against the accused involved in drug peddling and possessing illegal weapons. The performance of police officials in this regard would be reviewed on a continuous basis, he maintained.



#### Five drug dealers arrested

KABUL (Agencies): The Kabul police reported arresting five drug dealers in Kubul. The spokesperson of Kabul police commander, Khalid Zadran, said that the officers of the Kabul anti-narcotics police department have arrested five people with drugs in the last 24 hours. 118 bottles of liquors, weed, and “K” tablets and an amount of dollars and Afghanis were discovered from the detainees Zadran added.

## The Frontier Post

Jamadi-ul-Awwal 22, 1444 — Saturday, December 17, 2022

#### 24kg of drugs discovered

NIMROZ (Agencies): local police officials of Nimroz says that 24kg of drugs discovered by their police in Nimroz. The provincial head of the anti-narcotics department of Nimroz Police Department, Mollah Mohammad Mahajer said that a person has been arrested on charges of trafficking 24kgs of drugs in that province. According to him, the arrested person intended to transfer these drugs to the city of Zaranj.

# MoFA: Afghanistan will not be arena for foreign powers



KABUL (TOLONews): The acting minister of Foreign Affairs said that the Islamic Emirate will never allow Afghanistan to be a competitive field of foreign countries.

Amir Khan Muttaqi in a meeting “unveiling the

book of one-year achievements of MoFA” asked the international community to have positive interactions with Afghanistan.

“It’s Islamic Emirate politics. They will never allow Afghanistan to change to a competitive

field of a powerful country, if there is competition here, it will be positive competition,” said Amir Khan Muttaqi.

The acting minister of Foreign Affairs said the Islamic Emirate is responsible for providing education

and creating work opportunities for the people.

“The government is responsible for providing jobs for the citizens to work, opportunities for students to study.... In that condition a country can progress,” said Amir Khan Muttaqi.

## Needy family received food aid in Logar

KABUL (Agencies): Local officials of the Rural Rehabilitation and Development Department of Logar, announced the distribution of food aid to 3,400 needy families in two districts of this province.

The series of aid for the needy from the World Food Programme for 3400 needy and deserving families in Charkh and Khushi districts is the result of the coordination and cooperation of the Department of Rural Rehabilitation and Development told Sibghatullah Naib Khel.

The local officials of the Department of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock of Jawzjan say that they have commissioned an agricultural irrigation canal with a length of 835 meters in the village of Ali Abad, Faiz Abad District.

The canal was built at a cost of more than 12 million afghanis and the canal is able to irrigate more than 800 hectares of farmland.

In other news, Local officials of Balkh distributed chemical fertilizers and in another measure, 106 tons of food have been distributed in the Kaldar district of this province.

## Athletes are ambassadors of peace: Officials

KABUL (Agencies): The administration affairs of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, organized a joint meeting to assess the problems of Afghan athletes.

A meeting held by the Department of Cultural and Social Affairs of Sports in order to listen to the problems of athletes.

The head of cultural and social affairs of Mawlawi Abdul Baqi Mansoor, called the athletes ambassadors of peace in this meeting and said that sports are valuable for the health and education of the people.

Rohullah Maroof, the head of two karate federations and Kungfu federation president Habibullah Fayezi and the representatives of these federations spoke on behalf of the other participants and shared the achievements of the players and the problems of the federations with the head of cultural and social affairs.

Meanwhile, the head of cultural and social affairs of the Ministry of Affairs, Maulvi Abdul Baqi Mansoor assured that the players.

# NEPA: Air pollution increasing in Kabul

KABUL (TOLONews):

Officials at the National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA) said that in the past month air pollution has increased in the capital.

The agency added that efforts are going to reduce air pollution in Kabul.

The burning of coal, plastic, and other cheap fuels as well as the exhaust emissions from old vehicles are the main sources of air pollution in Kabul.

“To see the level of air pollution we just have one station that is in our department and for this reason we can’t check the level of air pollution all over Kabul,” said Mohammad Basir Amin, head of the Directorate of Regulation and Control of Air and

Garbage Pollution.

Meanwhile, Kabul municipality said that they have started installing filters to prevent pollution in Kabul.

“We have 2,800 buildings, among them just 500 have filters,” said Nematullah Barekzai, a representative of Kabul Municipality.

“Because of poverty, coal is acceptable to poor people. Consumption of it creates air pollution,” said Sayed Qayom Hashimi, an analyst at the National Environmental Protection Agency.

Air pollution in the capital is one of the issues that increases every year on the eve of the cold season.

But some Kabul resi-

dents expressed concern over the air pollution and said that due to the increase in air pollution, the number of patients in the capital has increased.

“Air is so polluted and it’s creating a lot of diseases,” said Mohammad, a Kabul resident.

“Our people are not able to buy fuel and they use material that creates more pollution to warm their houses,” said Jawad, a Kabul resident.

“Our people become sick and we call on the government to pay attention to this issue,” said Shoyeb, a Kabul resident.

According to international experts, Kabul is among the most polluted cities in the world.

# Ghani’s ethnicisation of forces pushed collapse of Afghan state: AAN



KABUL (Khaama Press): Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN) accused ex-Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and his inner circle of politicizing and ethnicizing the security forces, saying that it ultimately resulted in the fall of the republic regime.

The collapse of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and the collapse of the Afghan state were attributed to Ghani’s strategy of “ethnicisation” and “politicization” of the security forces, according to a paper by the AAN published.

According to the paper,

the fall of the security forces was caused by a number of factors, including rampant corruption, an absence of a combat strategy, poor war planning, the departure of US-funded logistics and maintenance contractors, and the morale-damaging impacts of the US’s “peace” strategy and subsequent decision to withdraw swiftly.

The “last-minute restructuring” of the top leadership at the Ministry of Interior and other security organizations is cited as one of the factors, with the article claiming that the restructuring was shown as

making reforms, while the intended outcome remained cleaning the security institutions of non-Pashtuns.

The paper made a specific example of how Massoud Andarabi, former Minister of Interior was forced to resign by President Ghani and sacked for the Hayatullah Hayat.

The paper comes as the Afghan government and significant portions of the state, especially the army and police, collapsed on August 15, 2021, much like a “house of cards,” raising considerable concerns about the abrupt disintegration of Afghan security forces.

# Millions of Afghans counting on assistance: EU

KABUL (TOLONews): The European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations in a report expressed concerns over the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan, saying that half of the population remains dependent on humanitarian aid, including 6 million living on the edge of famine.

According to the report, the debt has racked up as food prices have been ris-

ing and that the drought, warming temperatures and lack of money to buy seeds and agriculture tools put another harvest in jeopardy.

“Having struggled through a year of unprecedented economic hardship and environmental disasters, including earthquakes and flooding, families have little left to get through this winter,” the report reads.

Speaking at a press con-

ference at the UN, Pakistan Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that it was important to support the functioning of Afghanistan’s economy. Zardari cited economic challenges as the reason for early marriages in Afghanistan.

“When the economic times are tough... I don’t believe that with the Afghan money frozen, with the banking channels shut, we would see progress on this and other issues,” Zardari said in response to a question by Al-Jazeera.

The Ministry of Economy (MoE) said that there is a need for infrastructure projects to provide job opportunities for the citizens.

“In addition to humanitarian aid, the development aid is continuing. Second, launching major projects that can create jobs, and third is supporting small

and micro industries, which can alleviate economic challenges,” said Abdul Latif Nazari, deputy minister of Economy.

Economists gave various opinions in this regard.

“The aid of the international community has not been able to reduce the level of poverty and solve the economic challenges due to lack of transparency and a general mechanism in Afghanistan,” said Seyar Qureshi, an economist.

“The Afghan government needs to engage with the world to attract humanitarian aid, and with aid that can be invested in infrastructure as well as in development projects,” said Darya Khan Baheer, an economist.

Earlier, the International Organization of Migration (IOM) said that 97 percent of the population is living below the poverty line in the country.

## IEA receives any constructive criticism, advice

KABUL (Agencies): The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan Deputy Prime Minister, Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, met with a number of politicians and ethnic elders at Sepadar Palace.

The elders and politicians shared their advice and views on the current political situation with Deputy Prime Minister for political affairs Kabir, according to statement.

In the history of Afghanistan, a strong and organized government like the Islamic Emirate unprecedented and maintaining joint responsibility of the people and they said.

## 129 cadets graduated from Harbi School

KABUL (Agencies): 129 cadets of the Military School of the Ministry of National Defense (Harbi Shavzi) graduated after completing the specified period of training in the professional, military and intellectual sectors.

A ceremony held on the occasion, Abdul Jabbar Sadiqi the commander of education and training and doctrine of the Ministry of National Defense, spoke on the role of youth in the defense of the homeland and national and Islamic values, and encouraged the distinguished students by awarding the cadets.

## Medical equipment contributed

PAKTIA (Agencies): Local health officials of Paktia say that the CARE organization contributed kinds of medical equipment worth 350, 000 US dollars to Zermat district health clinics.

Officials at Public Health Department of Paktia said that these donations include 57 different medical equipments, which delivered to the health clinics of Paktia Zermat district.

# 1,172 families received cash aid in Maidan Wardak



WARDAK (Agencies): 34 million Afghanis distributed to 1,172 families in cash assistance in Maidan Wardak.

Local officials of the province said that 34 million Afghanis distributed to 1,172 needy families with the assistance provided by

DRC organization in Behsood district of Maidan Wardak province.

Each needy family received 29,000 Afghanis.

# Cold storage facilities established in Logar

LOGAR (TOLONews): Eight cold storage facilities intended to hold agricultural products have been built by the World Food Program in Pul-e Alam and two other districts of Logar, which cost 59 million Afghanis.

“These cold rooms will be made by 60 percent of the government budget and 40 percent budget of the farmers,” said Sayed Aminullah Hashimi, head of the agriculture and livestock department In Logar.

Officials of the agricultural and livestock department in Logar said there are

a number of other projects aimed at planting trees (both fruit-bearing and not) and increasing groundwater levels, which has provided work for about two thousand people.

“In this project, 2,000 workers are working in three districts, and we pay salaries for them monthly,” said Esmatullah Atal, head of the provincial manager of the human resources development department in Logar.

Meanwhile, some Logar residents are happy with the construction and operation of these agricultural proj-

ects.

“This project has lots of benefits, the first one is to control our water and the second one is to make the area green,” said Agha Mohammad Sediqi, a Logar resident.

“They pay us 8,500 afghanis monthly and we are happy with this project,” said Yaar Mohammad, a Logar resident.

Meanwhile, to increase the productivity of farmers and gardeners, last week, the work of the water supply project, worth more than \$60,000 also started in the province.

## Turkmenistan power reconnected

KABUL (Agencies): Da Afghan Breshna Sherkat announced the reconnection of electricity from Turkmenistan to Herat.

After consecutive efforts, DABS were able to connect the transmission power line from Turkmenistan to Herat by installing temporary foundations, and work is underway for the basic restoration of these foundations.

The two power poles imported from Turkmenistan to Herat were destroyed, lately, due to a storm and severe frost in Rabat Sangi district of Herat.

## No cases against HR violations

BAMYAN (Agencies): The representative of the UNAMA office met with the head of martyrs and disabled affairs in Bamyan.

In a meeting, the head of the Martyrs and Disabled department of Bamyan, Ali Khan Ahmadi, shared details on the operations of the local administration of that province in various sectors. The UNAMA Office representative stated that their investigations show that no cases against human rights have happened in this province.

He said UNAMA Office seeks to ensure that the assistance delivered through charitable institutions, reaches the disabled, orphans, and the homeless equally.

# Drug addicts received treatment in Baghlan



BAGHLAN (Agencies): 28 drug addicted received medical treatment in Baghlan, and reunited with their families after, says local officials of the province. Baghlan (Zindab Daw Darba), he added. The collection and treatment of drug addicts is will continue in the province he said.

the anti-narcotics police from different parts of the province. They received medical treatment by a charity foundation called (Zindab Daw Darba), he added. The collection and treatment of drug addicts is will continue in the province he said.



# President Alvi terms IT sector game-changer for country's economy

LAHORE (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi has said that the Information and Communications Technology sector is a game-changer for the national economy.

He stressed the need to bring about a paradigm shift in ideas, attitudes besides improving intellectual and innovation abilities among the youth.

Addressing the launching ceremony of Web 3.0 here at the Punjab Information Technology Board here on Friday, he said that there was a need to accelerate speed manifold for making solid policies. He said such policies should not be rolled back by any change in government. He stressed finding out-of-the-box solutions to the existing and emerging issues and challenges.

He said: "We can earn US\$15 billion per year in the IT sector in two to three years".

The president said: "There is a pressing need for our political, administrative and intellectual capital to fully focus on artificial intelligence in public and private sectors while adopting a much faster pace than the current one, technologies such as block chain, cloud computing, internet of things, cyber security and cyber defence, virtual and augmented reality and quantum computing to bring delivery of services and quality of products and services at par with the international standards."

He said that the world was entering into the next level of defence system, which was cyber security and cyber defence, adding that currently Russia-Ukraine war had amply demonstrated the power of cyber security and cyber defence to paralyse the public services delivery and communication and connectivity of the rivals territory.

He said in terms of generating new and creative ideas, Pakistan was second to none, but the need of the hour was information and data sources.

Dr Arif Alvi said the cur-

rent level of human resources and technology was unable to handle the immense data being generated around the world, adding that "Around 80 million trained human resource is required only in the cyber field if we are able to train our human resource in this sector alone. We can overcome the unemployment issue in the country and provide high paying jobs to our youth".

He said: "This can be achieved by rethinking and resetting our entire education system in a mode, which is capable of providing quality education and skills in shortest possible time to our youth by the use of online and hybrid mode and by extending its reach to masses in such a manner that no candidate was refused or denied his right to get education and skills."

The president said that the entire world was looking towards Pakistan because of our youth bulge; trained and skilled youth was needed to fuel the rapidly developing world of Information Technology, empowered by artificial intelligence and quantum computers to leapfrog in the fourth industrial revolution to the next level.

He said, "If we failed to develop this precious human resource in an accelerated manner, it is feared that the untrained youth bulge will become a burden on the national economy."

The president said: "We have been producing doctors, engineers and other professional by spending scarce national resources but, unfortunately, these highly educated and quality human resource was exported to other countries, where they contributed immensely to growth and development of their host countries and at the same time deprived our country of this precious human resource resulting in an acute shortage in almost all sector of national life".

He said this trend needed to be reversed by creating enabling conditions in the

country for their willing retention by promoting online sale and marketing of the talent of our human resource and products and services, which would eventually improve current status of our standing in the comity of the nations.

Dr Alvi said that Prime Minister's digital skills development programme and such programmes could be replicated as fast as possible to exponentially increase the number of skilled professionals and imparting digital skills to the youth.

He said: "There is a pressing urgency to fully develop our ICT sector and multiply our IT exports by overcoming the dearth of educated and trained human resources, improving the overall ease of doing business and the IT eco-system of the country, embracing innovation, and adopting forward looking policies".

The world was fast moving toward quantum computing which were million times faster than our existing most advance super computers, he added.

He said, "We should set up a board to create a system to take up research and develop quantum computing and forging alliances and linkages with the R&D institutions for its adopting on fast-track basis."

He said that the IT and artificial intelligence could bring about revolution in the health sector by creating chat bots, online and web based-help services, using conventional and social media to educate masses regarding nature and spread of communicable and non-communicable diseases and promoting preventive mode of treatment to reduce the disease burden as Pakistan, with its scarce resources, was not in a position to provide curative treatment to its entire population.

The president called for improving cooperation and coordination among the federation and its constituent units to patronise

and promote start-up ecosystem, bringing women workforce and differently-abled persons into productive economic stream to fully exploit the enormous business opportunities in national, regional and global markets through physical and online marketing.

He said that almost 2.2 million people had already benefited from the Prime Minister's digital skills development programme and such programmes could be replicated and expanded easily to increase the number of skilled professionals and imparting digital skills to Pakistani youth.

Special Advisor to CM on Information Technology Dr Arslan Khalid said that Pakistan could overcome its financial problems by focusing on human resource development and IT sector. He said that a reference policy document was being prepared to provide a roadmap for the development of the IT sector, particularly in the Web 3.0 domain.

Chairman PITB Syed Bilal Haider briefed the participants about the achievements of the PITB, and its role in the development of the country's IT sector. He said that almost 500 startups had already started functioning. He informed that Rs 137 billion had been collected in lieu of various taxes in Punjab through the digitalization of various services. He said that Punjab had planned to undertake Rs 450 billion worth of procurements annually through the e-procurement system in the future.

Earlier, the president distributed shields and certificates among companies and the IT professionals who had performed exceptionally well in the field of Web 3.0 technology in Pakistan. Punjab Finance Minister Muhammad Mohsin Khan Leghari, Information Technology University, Lahore Vice Chancellor Dr Sarfraz Khurshid, IT professionals and entrepreneurs attended the event.



LAHORE: President Dr. Arif Alvi addressing launching ceremony of Digital Punjab Web 3.0 organized by Punjab Information Technology Board.

## Senate passes foreign investment amend bill

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Senate on Friday passed "The Foreign Investment (Promotion and Protection) Amendment Bill, 2022".

The bill was laid by Finance Minister Ishaq Dar. Chairman Sadiq Sanjrani said the bill will help bring foreign investment in the country especially in Balochistan.

He felicitated the present and previous governments for their work towards this end. The House unanimously adopted a resolution felicitating Qatar's Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani and its people for successfully holding football World Cup in the country.

The resolution moved by Senator Sarfraz Bugti said arrangements for the world cup are exemplary. It further said Qatar has ensured best available facilities to visitors and all teams.

It said that the House condemned all deliberate, malicious and negative propaganda instigated against Qatar for holding this successful event. It said people of Pakistan are proud of the people and the State of Qatar as being first Muslim and Gulf state for successfully holding the World Cup. The House has now been prorogued.

## APS tragedy united nation

SWAT (INP): Adviser to the Prime Minister for Political and Public Affairs, National Heritage and Culture, Engr Amir Muqam here Friday said that horrific terror attack on the Army Public School (APS) Peshawar eight years ago had united the entire nation against menace of terrorism.

He said the massacre of over 150 innocent students and teachers at APS had exposed the brutality and barbaric acts of the enemy.

Addressing the party workers convention at Charbagh Swat, he said soon after the brutal terror incident, the then Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif had rushed to Peshawar and united all the religious and political forces against terrorism. He said Nawaz Sharif had convened an important meeting of the All Parties Conference and formulated an inclusive national action plan to wipe out terrorism.

Engr Amir Muqam said that Nawaz Sharif government took decisive action against terrorists and established durable peace in the country including KP and Karachi. He said the people of Swat have faced all difficult situation with bravery and steadfastness and gave every sacrifice for their motherland. He reiterated to render all kind of sacrifices for Pakistan.

Commenting on the existing situation, Engr Amir Muqam said the incompetent rulers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have failed to deliver and address the people problems in their nine years long rule. He said that Imran Khan's corrupt practices and lies based policies were exposed in Tosha Khana and PTI foreign funding cases.

Imran Khan has tried to drag the state institutions into politics and leveled baseless allegations against political opponents and leadership of the national institutions besides defame Pakistanis abroad, he expressed.

He said that the KP government employees were protesting for allowances and payment of salaries while the taxpayers money was wasted on the flopped long march of Imran Khan.

## CM warns central govt for protest

F.P. Report

SWAT: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mahmood Khan has regretted that the imported rulers who came into power by raising slogans against inflation and poverty are actually wiping out the poor. The imported conglomerate has no concern with national development or the welfare of common citizens; these people have come into power through regime change conspiracy. Their sole aim is to abolish corruption cases against them and serve alien interests. To succeed in their nefarious intentions, they have jeopardized the credibility of accountability institutions and have put its role at stake.

Addressing media persons and a public gathering during his visit to district Swat and Malakand, the Chief Minister has warned the incumbent Federal Government of a protest in front of the national assembly adding that the imported federal government owes Rs. 189 billion in arrears to the province. We will not come back until the due funds of the province are paid, he added and said that the federal government wants to sabotage the ongoing development process in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa by withholding the rights of the province, which is no doubt a non-democratic and heinous action. He maintained that since the regime change at center, law & order situation in the country has deteriorated.

The Chief Minister paid a day long visit to district Swat and Malakand on Friday where he inaugurated sub campus of the University of Swat at Dargai along with performing the ground breaking of seven development projects in Swat and Malakand which would be completed at an estimated cost of Rs.11 billion, cumulatively. According to details, the Chief Minister formally performed the ground breaking of 23 km long Mankyal-Bada Sarai road which would be rehabilitated at an estimated cost of Rs. 5.70 billion. The project also includes the construction of four bridges and two rest areas at different sites. The Chief Minister termed this project of vital importance for the area and said that the provincial government is going to establish an Integrated Tourism Zone at Mankyal which, on completion, will promote tourism activities and generate livelihood opportunities for the locals. The Chief Minister also laid the foundation stone of 2.5 Km long Chaprial Bypass road and 10 Km long Baryam to Wanai road project. Both the roads would be rehabilitated at an estimated cost of Rs. 1.16 billion cumulatively. Similarly, the formal ground breaking of 57 Km long Shomozai-Kabal-Kanju-Matta-Bagh Dheri road was performed which will incur at an estimated cost of Rs. 3.94 billion.

Later on the Chief Minister during his visit to Dargai, district Malakand, has formally inaugurated a University Campus at Dargai. The Chief Minister also laid the foundation stone for the upgradation of Government Technical Vocational Centre Dargai to the level of Government

Polytechnic Institute and the establishment of Rescue Services 1122 Station at Dargai. Both the projects will be completed at a total cost of Rs. 60 million.

Talking to the media persons at Swat, the Chief Minister made it clear that they will oppose the imposition of taxes on Malakand division adding that the newly merged tribal districts and Malakand division should be declared as tax free zone for the next 10 years. He said that presently, people of these areas are unable to afford the burden of taxes.

Touching upon the self-centered policies of the political figures related with PDM, the Chief Minister regretted politicising of development projects adding that PDM leaders should come up with new projects in the larger interest of the people.

Addressing the public gathering at Dargai, the Chief Minister said that the incumbent provincial government has presented an historic budget of Rs. 1300 billion for the current fiscal year. Revolutionary initiatives like Sehat Card, Education Card and Monthly Honorarium for Aaima Karam have been reflected in the budget. Mahmood Khan said that PTI government believes in the investment on human capital. The welfare initiatives taken by his government during the last four years have now started yielding positive results, he concluded. The Chief Minister on the occasion also announced a new Tehsil "Utmanzai" in district Malakand which was the long standing demand of the people.

## IHC rejects Swati's plea seeking FIRs details

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) Friday rejected petition of PTI's leader Azam Khan Swati seeking details FIRs registered against him across the country.

The court said that it could not issue such directives of the interior min-

istry, adding that the petitioner could approach the high courts of Sindh and Balochistan in that regard.

Chief Justice Aamer Farooq announced the verdict which was reserved on December 2, after listening arguments from the lawyers.

The petitioner had

prayed the court to sought details of FIR from interior ministry against him. The court disposed of the case.

It may be mentioned here that FIRs were registered against Azam Khan Swati in various provinces on his controversial tweets about the state institutions.

## Indonesia quake death toll jumps to 602

JAKARTA (AFP/APP): The death toll from an earthquake that hit Indonesia's main island Java last month has jumped by hundreds to 602, a local administration official said Friday, after authorities verified unreported casualties across the worst-hit town.

The shallow 5.6-magnitude earthquake hit the town of Cianjur in Indonesia's most populous province West Java on November 21, with most of the victims killed as buildings collapsed or landslides were triggered.

Cianjur local administration spokesman Adam, who like many Indonesians goes by one name, told AFP the new toll -- up from a previously reported figure of 334 -- was based on data collected from residents across the town.

He said many people had rushed to bury their relatives after the disaster without reporting their deaths to authorities.

"If someone dies, residents in Cianjur often immediately bury them. Because of the panicked situation, those who died

were immediately buried by relatives without notifying the local health agency," he said.

"It was later revealed that around 600 people died, when it is officially counted," he added, citing the administration's new figure of 602.

The local rescue agency, known as the BPBD, posted the new death toll on social media. An official from the agency, Wawan Setiawan, confirmed the new toll to AFP.

State news agency Antara on Friday cited Cianjur district head Herman Suherman as giving a new death toll of 602.

National disaster mitigation agency spokesman Abdul Muhari told AFP it was still sticking with a lower death toll of 335 but was working to verify the new figure.

"Because they were immediately buried and were not reported, their names were not included in the missing people list," he said.

"The district head said they already have the data, regardless we still need to

verify."

To claim government aid, relatives must remove victims from their family registry and receive a death certificate from local authorities, he said.

The tremor was the deadliest in the archipelago nation since a 2018 quake and resulting tsunami killed more than 4,000 people on the island of Sulawesi.

Many were found buried under rubble in the days following the quake, with only several successful rescues reported, including an operation to free a six-year-old boy that was described as a "miracle" by emergency workers.

The quake damaged more than 62,000 houses and forced more than 73,000 people to evacuate to at least 325 shelters, officials said.

Indonesia experiences frequent seismic and volcanic activity due to its position on the Pacific "Ring of Fire", where tectonic plates collide.

A 6.2-magnitude quake that shook Sulawesi island in January 2021 killed more than 100 people and left thousands homeless.

## Not regularizing teachers working in FDE on daily wages for 2 to 3 decades Criminal Act: Chairman

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chairman Senate Standing Committee on Federal Education and Professional Training, Senator Irfan Siddique has said that not regularizing the teachers working in Federal Directorate of Education (FDE) on daily wages for 10 to 14 years is a Criminal Act.

Chairing the meeting of the Senate Body held at Parliament House on Friday, he expressed displeasure over absence of Minister, Secretary of Ministry of Federal Education and DG FDE.

Regarding the appointment and posting of junior lady teachers at Islamabad Model Colleges, an affectee apprised the committee that they were appointed on daily wages and after 10 to 14 years of service instead of regularizing the service, FDE decided that the destiny of

employees from BPS 1 to 15 will be decided by the Cabinet and referred the cases of employees from BS 16 and above to Federal Public Service Commission. She further added that instead of regularizing the daily wages teachers the government has recently announced 525 posts in different grades.

Senator Irfan Siddiqui observed that regularization is basic right of these teachers, who have been in service from the 10 to 15 years. He advised the affectees to provide all the relevant documents to the committee and directed the ministry to come up with definite answer to this pertinent issue in the next meeting. Chairman Committee directed that Secretary and Relevant Minister must ensure their presence in the next meeting of the committee.

While discussing the

point of public importance raised by Senator Bahramand Khan Tangi relating to delay in examination faced by students of Law in Bahauddin Zakariya University, Senator Irfan Siddiqui questioned that as to why didn't the university conduct examination of law students despite clear recommendation by the committee in its previous meeting. In reply to that, Mansoor Akbar Kundi, VC of Bahauddin Zakariya University, stated that Supreme Court in its last hearing has restricted the university from the conducting the examination. However, Senator Irfan Siddiqui maintained that there is nothing of this sort mentioned in the Supreme Court's 25th November order. The Senate Committee recommended the university to conduct the examination of law students

within week and report back to the committee.

Furthermore, the senate committee deliberated on the Bill titled "The Right to Free and Compulsory Education (Amendment) Bill, 2022". Senator Fawzia Arshad, mover of the bill, stated that the bill aimed at making Subject "Computer Science" compulsory for one to twelve standards. Officials of HEC apprised the committee that the Subject "Computer Science" is already been made mandatory by the Government and it is also incorporated in National Curriculum. Senator Irfan Siddiqui opined that there is no harm in passing the bill and it will provide further strength to HEC in enhancing the scope of computer science in national curriculum. The committee deferred the deliberations on the bill till the next meeting.

## Pakistan not to tolerate terrorism

(Cont: from Front Page)

provided to the TTP.

"We have shared a comprehensive dossier with the Secretary-General and the Security Council containing concrete evidence of such external support to the TTP and other terrorist groups operating against Pakistan."

The foreign minister said Pakistan had expected that the new authorities in Kabul would be able to convince or constrain the TTP from conducting cross-border terrorist attacks against Pakistan as they had promised to do in the Doha Agreement and in subsequent policy declarations.

"However, endeavours towards this end appear to have failed. The TTP seems to have been emboldened to declare a "war" against Pakistan. Its attacks have intensified."

He expressed the hope that the remembrance of the APS attack would serve to mobilize the UN's counter-terrorism machinery to address the threat of terror-

ism which presently emanated from Afghanistan and adjacent regions in a comprehensive and effective manner.

"We need to eliminate the "safe havens" of these terrorists; to cut off the sources of their financing and sponsorship; and to target and hold accountable individuals and entities responsible for the terrorist attacks or for sponsoring and financing such attacks," he commented and assured Pakistan's support to the UN and the international community in realizing the said objectives.

The foreign minister also read out the last word of APS Principal Tahira Qazi "They are my children and I am their mother" she uttered before being burnt alive by the terrorists in front of her pupils as she struggled to protect them.

He also showed the picture of a student Sher Shah Khattak who sacrificed his life while trying to save his classmates.

The foreign minister told

the gathering that he had also lost his mother in a terrorist attack carried out by the same terrorist organisation. Deputy Under-Secretary-General and Representative of United Nations Office of Counter Terrorism Raffi Gregorian said the APS attack had shocked the world.

He said there was no justification of attacking children particularly when they were there to learn.

He said the United Nations stood in solidarity with the victims and families whose lives were changed after the terror attacks.

He said the UN took multiple measures for the rights of terror victims like the observance of an annual day and adoption of two UN Assembly resolutions.

He said the member states needed to be more inclusive and make the victims' associations part of the anti-terror efforts and strategies.

Among notable speakers included Ahmed Nawaz, a survivor of the APS terror-

ist attack, President of Oxford Union, Dr. Fatima Ali Haider, a therapist whose husband and son were killed in a sectarian incident in 2013. In the aftermath of Peshawar's Army Public School massacre in December 2014, she co-founded The Grief Directory in 2015.

Other speakers included Sallie Lynch, Consultant for Tuesday's Children and Muhammad Khalid Khan Khattak, Member-Policy on Counter Terrorism Extremism and Financial Terrorism of NACTA.

A short video was also played developed by the Pakistan Mission. Brochures were also distributed amongst the member states to apprise them of the horrific incident.

Ambassador Munir Akram, the Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the UN gave his concluding remarks and thanked the member states and other representatives for showing solidarity to the terror victims.