

Punjab MPA calls on PM
F.P. Report

LAHORE: Khawaja Imran Nazeer, a member of Punjab provincial assembly on Sunday called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. During the meeting, Khawaja Imran Nazeer discussed the overall political situation of the country with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Prime Minister's Office Media Wing said in a press release.

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LAHORE: Member Provincial Assembly of the Punjab Khawaja Imran Nazeer meeting with Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

Four cops martyred in terrorists' attack in Lakki

F.P. Report

LAKKI MARWAT: Four policemen were martyred and four others were wounded when terrorists attacked a police station in Bargai village late on Saturday night. A police official said on Sunday that the attackers used rocket launchers and automatic weapons and tried to enter the police station building. He said that the cops engaged the terrorists in exchange of fire which continued for half an hour. He said that four policemen including head constable Ibrahim and constables Imran, Khairul Rahman and Sabz Ali accepted martyrdom while ASI Gul Sahib Khan and constables Balqiaz, Amir Nawaz and Farmanullah were injured in the attack. The official said that reinforcements were sent to the area after the attack on the police station and a search operation was

launched for the attackers. Funeral prayers of martyred policemen were held at the police lines in the District Headquarters Complex Tajazai. RPO Bannu Syed Ashfaq Anwar, Lt Col Mehmood, additional DC Dr Tariqullah, DPO Ziauddin Ahmed, SP Murad Khan and people from different walks of life attended it. A police contingent presented a salute to the martyred cops while civil administration, police and military officials placed flowers on their coffins wrapped in the national flag. Later the deceased were buried at the graveyards in their native villages. **President, Prime Minister reaffirm to continue efforts for complete terrorism elimination** President Dr. Arif Alvi and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharf have expressed resolve to continue efforts to completely eliminate the remnants of

terrorism in the country. In a statement, the President condemned terrorists' attack on Bargai police station in district Laki Marwat resulting martyrdom of four policemen. The president also expressed sympathies with the bereaved families and prayed for the high ranks of the departed souls and for the early recovery of the injured. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also strongly condemned the terrorist attack on police station Bargai in Laki Marwat district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The Prime Minister paid tribute to the four martyred policemen and expressed sympathy to the families. He said Police officers and jawans have made great sacrifices against terrorism and the nation salutes them. He further said eliminating terrorists, their supporters and facilitators is a top national priority. **KP CM grieves over killing of policemen in**

Lakki Marwat All the political parties in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Sunday expressed grief and sorrow over the killing of four policemen in a militant attack that took place in district Lakki Marwat. Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mahmood Khan in a statement expressed profound grief over the loss of policemen in Lakki Marwat and marked the attack as a cowardly act of anti-state elements. He directed paramedics to provide the best healthcare facilities to injured victims. Similarly, Advisor to CM KP on Home and Tribal Affairs, Babar Saleem Swati expressed sorrow over the incident and said that culprits involved in this inhuman act would be brought to the court of justice. He said no one would be allowed to sabotage the peace in the region and terrorists would be dealt with iron hands.

KP govt takes steps to enhance quality of agricultural produce: CM

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mahmood Khan has said that the provincial government has taken concrete steps to enhance quality agricultural produce to ensure food security in the province. Presiding over a meeting regarding Agricultural University Swat here on Sunday, he termed the establishment of agriculture university in Swat, a flagship project of the provincial government, which will not only promote modern education and research in the agricultural sector, but will also increase the value and quality of agricultural products in the region and create employment opportunities for the people. He added that Chashma

Right Bank Lift Canal project is also an important achievement of the incumbent government, which on completion will bring hundreds of thousands acres of barren land under cultivation in the southern districts. The Chief Minister directed the quarters concerned to transfer all the assets of Agriculture University Peshawar's sub-campus Swat to the newly established University of Agriculture Swat without any delay and said that concerted efforts be made for its operationalization. The meeting also made a threadbare discussion on the procedure for the transfer of assets from one university to another. Addressing the participants, the chief minister said that agriculture university Swat is of great importance not only for Swat but

for the entire Malakand division, which will help to promote agriculture, horticulture, fisheries and other sectors in the region through modern education and research. The Chief Minister further said that the establishment of this university is the need of the hour to make the province self-sufficient in agriculture. It is pertinent to mention here that 94 projects of agriculture and livestock sector have been reflected in the current annual development program including 72 ongoing and 22 new projects. The total cost of these projects is over 1 trillion and 15 billion rupees. Some of these projects include agriculture transformation plan, establishment of seed industry in the province, enhancement of wheat pro-

duction in the province, establishment of agriculture complex, development of Gomal Zam Dam Command Area, provision of interest-free loans to farmers under Gomal Zam Dam Command Area Project, upgradation of Agricultural Research Institutes into Centers of Excellence etc. The chief minister said that food security is one of the priority areas of the government and projects worth billions of rupees have been launched to this end. Secretary Agriculture Israr Khan, Secretary Higher Education Daud Khan, Commissioner Malakand Division Shaukat Ali Yousafzai, Vice Chancellor University of Agriculture Peshawar Professor Dr. Jahan Bakht and other relevant officials attended the meeting.

Argentina win World Cup final on penalties

LUSAIL, Qatar (AP): Lionel Messi finally achieved his World Cup dream as Argentina won their third crown on penalties following one of the greatest finals in the tournament's history at Lusail Stadium. Argentina won the shootout 4-2 after a spectacular game which developed into the much-anticipated confrontation between the 35-year-old maestro Messi and his France opposite number Kylian Mbappe, who scored a hat-trick - the first in a World Cup final since 1966 - but still ended up on the losing side. Messi looked to be securing the one major honour missing from his glittering collection in comfort as Argentina cruised into a

two-goal lead, only for an explosive intervention from Mbappe to turn a spectacular encounter on its head with two goals inside two minutes late on. Messi had given Argentina lead from the penalty spot in the 23rd minute following Ousmane Dembele's foul on Angel Di Maria. It made him the first player in World Cup history to score in the group stage, last 16, quarter-final, semi-final and final of a single tournament. He then contributed a delicate touch within a magnificent counter-attack that ended with Brighton's Alexis Mac Allister setting up Di Maria for the second 13 minutes later. Argentina were untroubled until the closing stages, only for Mbappe to

give France a lifeline from the penalty spot with nine minutes left - then restore equality with a magnificent volley moments later. Messi bundled Argentina back in front in extra time, but Mbappe completed his treble from the spot two minutes from the end of a frantic, chaotic added spell. And so it went to penalties, with the two greats opening the scoring. But Argentina and Aston Villa goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez saved from Kingsley Coman, before Aurelien Tchouameni missed, leaving Gonzalo Montiel to win the World Cup. Messi, a World Cup winner at last, collapsed to his knees in the centre circle and was engulfed by jubilant Argentina teammates.

Rashid rules out governor's rule, no-trust motion

RAWALPINDI (INP): Awami Muslim League (AML) Chief Sheikh Rashid on Sunday ruled out possibility of governor's rule and no-confidence motion against chief ministers of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Taking to Twitter, Sheikh Rashid said the nation should prepare for elections and asked the government to have 'mercy' on the masses and not to create obstacles. The former interior minister said PTI has two-third in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He said people who claimed that PTI would not dissolve assemblies have been proven wrong by Imran Khan, who single handedly knocked out all politicians of the country.

Pakistan can't uplift without eliminating corruption

LAHORE (INP): Former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan has asserted that Pakistan cannot develop without eliminating corruption and mafia. According to details, the former premier made these remarks during a meeting with a delegation of Council of Pakistan Newspaper Editors. Speaking on the occasion, Imran Khan said that if elections are not held in next 90 days after assemblies' dissolution, it means no one is 'neutral'. "The announcement of dissolving Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab Assemblies has exposed many people," he said, without naming anyone. "I don't understand what happened to General (ret'd) Qamar Javed Bajwa", he said, adding that he told Gen Bajwa that if they held 10-12 powerful corrupt people, everything would get better. "We had a good relationship with Gen Bajwa, but I don't know what happened then", the former premier added. He noted that the dissolution of assemblies would force elections in 66% of Pakistan and the government would latch on. The PTI chief further said that it would be a gross violation of Constitution if elections are not held in the stipulated period. He regretted that mafia exists in every institution, reiterating that Pakistan cannot develop without eliminating corruption and mafia.

Moonis takes Imran in confidence

LAHORE (INP): Pakistan Muslim League Quaid (PML-Q) leader Moonis Elahi has met Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief Imran Khan to take him in confidence over Punjab Chief Minister Pervaiz Elahi's recent statement. Moonis Elahi visited Imran Khan's Zaman Park residence in Lahore and held a 30-minute meeting. During the meeting, Moonish took Khan in confidence over Pervaiz Elahi's statement. The PTI chief expressed concerns over the Punjab CM's statement. Both leaders reaffirmed working on a joint political strategy as strong coalition partners. After holding a meeting with Imran Khan, Moonis Elahi departed from Zaman Park's residence. In a Twitter message, Moonis said that he met Imran Khan a few minutes ago and the alliance between PTI and PML-Q is still alive. He said that the ruling Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) should continue mourning after finding a strong partnership between PTI and PML-Q.

Shehbaz, Zardari discuss 'possible' dissolution of Punjab Assembly

LAHORE (INP): Former president and Pakistan People's Party (PPP) co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari visited Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif at his residence in Lahore and discussed country's political situation and 'possible' dissolution of Punjab Assembly. According to details, the former president called on PM Shehbaz Sharif at his residence in Lahore's Zaman Park and discussed 'possible' dissolution of Punjab Assembly. During the meeting, the prime minister apprised Asif Zardari of the former's meeting with Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) President Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain. Meanwhile, sources said that PM Shehbaz Sharif and Asif Zardari agreed to increase cooperation with Chaudhry Shujaat. Both the leaders also agreed to task Chaudhry Shujaat for stopping dissolution of Punjab Assembly, sources added. Sources claimed that the two leaders also decided not to approach Punjab Chief Minister Pervaiz Elahi directly till a 'green signal' from PML-Q president. They also decided to keep a close eye on the current political situation, sources added. **PM Shehbaz Sharif, Chaudhry Shujaat discuss political situation** Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif called

on Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid President Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain at his residence in Lahore and discussed country's 'political and economic situation'. According to a statement, PM Shehbaz Sharif - during his meeting with the PML-Q President - enquired about his health and presented him with a bouquet of flowers. During the meeting, the two leaders discussed the prevailing political and economic situation in the country. The prime minister apprised Chaudhry Shujaat of the measures taken by the government to restore economy and provide relief to the public. The PML-Q president acknowledged the efforts of PM Shehbaz Sharif to rid the country and its people of the problems being faced. Moreover, Chaudhry Shujaat and the premier agreed to strengthen their mutual cooperation in the future. Both the leaders agreed that political stability and close cooperation were essential to get the country out of the problems it is facing, the press release added. The meeting came a day after Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan announced that his governments in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will dissolve their assemblies on December 23 (Friday) to pave the way for fresh elections.

'Imran sets horrendous record of corruption'

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Sunday said that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman Imran Khan set a horrendous record of corruption during his government's three and half years tenure, but ironically failed to prove a single allegation levelled against his political opponents. "Imran Khan will come to his sense once he starts answering about his corruption," she said in a news statement. She also clarified that

the country had not defaulted, but Imran Khan had in every way. "Leave the institutions aside, tell about the thefts and corruption done by you and your spouse while heading the previous government," she said while rejecting the PTI's chief undue criticism of the heads of different institutions. The minister believed that Imran Khan would not dissolve the provincial assemblies of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa at any cost. She alleged that Imran

Khan was desperately seeking an NRO-like concession from the incumbent Chief Election Commissioner. She further asked Imran Khan to get ready to answer before the court which would hear the cases of his alleged corruption in the foreign funding and Toshakhana scams. The minister said Imran Khan, who was a foreign agent, was found involved in looting Toshakhana and receiving prohibited funding from abroad. "Imran Khan is incompetent and will never come to power again," she remarked.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb addressing a press conference.

PML-N decides to finish reorganization of party in Lahore

LAHORE (INP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) has decided to complete reorganization of party in Lahore for which it has started consultation of senior party leaders. Sources said on Sunday, the PML-N leadership has decided to motivate all sub-organization of the party regarding next general elections. For the PML-N Lahore's seat which got vacant after death of Pervaiz Malik, names of Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, Saiful Malook Khokhar, Raja Mashood, Khawaja Imran Nazir and Hafiz Noman were under consideration. Sources said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has also directed to complete the reorganization of party in Lahore at earliest.

Rallies staged in Bilawal's support and against Modi govt

KARACHI (PPI): Pakistan Peoples Party took out rallies across the country to support Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari for calling Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi "butcher of Gujrat" while delivering a speech at the United Nations. In Karachi, a rally was staged at Karachi Press Club in the leadership of PPP leaders Saeed Ghani, Waqar Mehdi and Javed Nagri. The leaders strongly condemned India's Modi government for committing atrocities against Muslims in India and Kashmir. In Hyderabad, a large number of PPP activists took out a rally and held a protest demonstration in the city press club where leaders supported narrative of Bilawal Bhutto Zardari against the Modi government. The leaders called for end to atrocities against

Muslims in India and Kashmir. The party also staged rallies in Sukkur, Khairpur, Dadu, Nawabshah, Tandojam and other cities of Pakistan to support Bilawal and condemn Modi government's atrocities against Muslims. Similarly, a rally was also took out in Larkana during which the public raised slogans against the anti-Muslim policies of India. The rally was also joined by the Pakistani Hindu community which was led by PPP city president Muhammad Sheikh and Ejaz Laghari. The PPP also staged a rally in Umer Kot which was joined by a large number of people from different walks of life. The public raised slogans against India and praised Bilawal for his outstanding speech at the UN. Speakig on the occasion,

the leaders of the rally said that Indian extremists are afraid as they know that Bilawal will be the future prime minister of Pakistan. Similarly, a rally was also held in Gujranwala to show solidarity with Bilawal. PPP workers raised slogans in front of the press club while holding the party flags and placards. The participants also burnt the effigy of Modi. **PPP Lahore organises rally to express solidarity with Bilawal** The Pakistan People's Party organised a rally to express solidarity with Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari over his statement against Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, outside the Lahore Press Club, here on Sunday. PPP Lahore President Chaudhry Aslam Gill led the rally while workers

from all four districts of Lahore, 30 zones, and sister organisations participated in the rally. The PPP workers raised slogans against Narendra Modi and burnt the Indian PM in effigy. Ch Aslam Gill, in his address, said that Bilawal Bhutto courageously exposed the 'butcher of Gujarat' (India), adding that the Pakistani foreign minister was following in the footsteps of his grandfather Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, mother Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Shaheed and his father former president Asif Ali Zardari. Acting President PPP Central Punjab Rana Farooq Saeed also spoke. PPP leaders Shehzad Saeed Cheema, Ahmad Jawad Farooq Rana, Faisal Muneer, Haji Azizur Rehman Chan and thousands of workers were present at the rally.

Punjab CM approves 300 new hybrid buses for Lahore

LAHORE (PPI): Punjab Chief Minister Pervaiz Elahi on Sunday approved the procurement of 300 new hybrid buses for the provincial capital Lahore.

Chairing the meeting of the Punjab Mass transit Authority at his office, the

chief minister ordered to the procurement of new hybrid buses for Lahore city and establishment of more bus stations.

The CM ordered the revival of the Punjab Transport Company and approved the repair and

maintenance of buses of the Pakistan Metro Bus System in Rawalpindi/Islamabad along with the procurement of new buses.

The meeting decided to acquire the services of NRTC for automatic fare collection.

PPP behind marginalized communities to protect their rights: Sherry Rehman

KARACHI (APP): Federal Minister for Climate Change, Senator Sherry Rehman has said that PPP is always at the back of marginalized communities for the protection of their rights and it is making all-out efforts to protect them at all levels.

She said this while addressing a seminar titled 'Rights of Marginalized Communities- Issues and Challenges' on the occasion of Minorities Rights Day organized by Forum for Rights of Marginalized Communities at Arts Council of Pakistan here on Sunday.

She said that Non-Muslims were part of their manifesto. Sherry Rehman said that the father of the nation Quaid-e-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah had

said that non-Muslims were free to go to their worship places in Pakistan. She said that making of law was vital and those would be enacted.

The minister said that women were more marginalized within the marginalized communities. She said that PPP did not welcome any sort of differences created on the basis of religion.

Sherry Rehman said that all Pakistanis were equal and their rights were same. She said that there were gaps, which must be filled.

While stressing the need for making aware people of climate change, she said that climate change occurred for a long period of time. She said that almost 20 million people were alive on humanitarian

aid, who were affected due to recent floods.

The federal minister said that Sindh was 80 per cent affected due to the floods and 0.4 million women were still living in tents. She also appreciated philanthropists in the trying times.

While speaking on extremism, she said that dark clouds of extremism and hatred were hovering over the world. She said that they would not allow fascism in the country.

PPP Sindh President Nisar Ahmed Khuhro and Sindh education and Culture Minister Syed Sardar Shah also addressed the seminar among others.

Earlier, school children presented tableaux.

Chohan challenges rivals to hold polls to prove their public reputation

LAHORE (INP): Spokesperson to Punjab Chief Minister, Fayyaz ul Hassan Chohan has challenged the political rivals to hold general election to prove their public reputation.

In a statement issued on Sunday, he said that announcement of Chairman Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)

Imran Khan to dissolve assemblies has taken away the night sleep of the 'imported government'.

Fayyaz ul Hassan Chohan said that illogical statements of the PMD leaders reveal that they were mentally disturbed.

He said that the political opponents instead of making statements should conduct election and contest

election against PTI and give public opportunity to decide about their future.

The CM's spokesman paid tributes to CM Pervaiz Elahi for his support to Imran Khan.

CM Punjab has proved him a brave and faithful person and PTI would lay rivals flat if they contest election against it, he concluded.

Transgenders' inclusion in BISP reflects commitment to equal rights

ISLAMABAD (APP): By Shumaila Noreen After a decades' long struggle for their rights, the transgender community in the country finally sees a ray of hope for welfare with their inclusion in the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) beneficiaries list.

Although many steps were taken during last few years for ensuring social inclusion and gender equality for the vulnerable transgender community, yet the recent initiative of making them a part of the biggest social protection program is another milestone towards providing them economic relief.

The decision of including transgenders in the BISP would not only make them eligible to register for Benazir Kafalat initiative providing quarterly assistance of Rs. 7,000 but enable them to get benefit from the other schemes also.

Nayyab Ali, Human Rights Defender and Transgender Rights Activist, termed the inclusion of transgenders in Benazir Kafalat program as an excellent step towards ensuring financial independence of this marginalized community.

"Transgender community had never been included in any of the social protection program at the government level in the past," Nayyab said adding, but, this initiative will help us meet our financial needs to some extent.

She pointed out that there were number of challenges associated with this initiative including transparent registration process, to be addressed on priority basis to benefit the genuine community.

"Engaging transgender community member in the monitoring of registration process can pave way for smooth and transparent implementation of this program," Nayyab Ali stated.

"On behalf of the whole community, I must appreciate the incumbent government for taking this much-needed relief measure at the time when the Transgender Act is under-threat", she said.

Nayyab Ali also described this policy initiative, a step towards ensuring gender equality and equal citizen's rights. "The time has come when the transgender community will not be considered as a marginalized section".

Most often the transgenders are seen begging at busy roads and earning living by dancing at functions. Sometimes they are also molested due to their economic compulsions and fall victims to exploitation and with commonly facing charges of adultery.

"We are happy with this initiative. At least, we may have some amount of money to survive," said another Transgender Activist, Nadeem Kashish. "Our inclusion in the BISP network is a positive step. It will provide transgender community social safety and economic relief."

She also emphasized to ensure transparency in adopting the procedure for selection of the beneficiaries. "The authorities must ensure that the benefits of this program should reach to the deserving and genuine transgenders".

As the society used to see them with an eye of scorn, their inclusion in the government programs and job opportunities had been a far cry. But, this recent decision has been seen as positive not only by the community but also the human rights activists in the country.

"Transgenders being a marginalized community are not integrated in the society and face lack of opportunities in getting education and learn skills for earning their livelihoods," said prominent human

rights activist, Farzana Bari. "Decision to include them in the social safety program is appreciable."

She said their inclusion in Benazir Kafalat program would ensure their financial uplift as this decision also reflects the present government's vision of providing equal opportunities to all the citizens.

Since the transgender community faces a lot of hurdles in securing jobs and other earning opportunities at homes, offices and other settlements, therefore there is dire need to provide them opportunities for dignified earnings.

"I would desire the government to move another step forward and provide them skill-based education to enhance their employability and ensure social integration," Farzana Bari emphasized. "If we ensure it, then besides providing income support, we may make them self-sufficient over the time."

Farzana Bari also termed the Transgender law passed in the recent past as a very progressive law and said, "it has improved Pakistan's image internationally."

Seeing from the perspective of human needs to survive socially and economically, this segment had often been a victim of sheer criticism instead of positive societal attitude for them helping them out to earn their bread and butter.

"As providing congenial atmosphere to all human beings in the country is deemed responsibility of the state, therefore approval of Transgender Policy can be considered as a landmark achievement of the present government," remarked Federal Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety, Shazia Marri.

"Transgenders are also a part of our society like us and it is our shared responsibility to take care of them" she said.

Basharat Raja inaugurates Ratta Bridge repair project

RAWALPINDI (APP): Provincial Minister for Environment Protection and Parliamentary Affairs Punjab Muhammad Basharat Raja has inaugurated the construction and repair project of Ratta Bridge which would be completed at a cost of Rs 40 million. Basharat Raja, on the occasion, said that under the leadership of Chief Minister Punjab Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi the province was on the path of development.

The manifesto of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government was to improve the lives of the common people, he added.

The journey of public service would continue and all available resources were being utilized to provide relief to the citizens, he said and informed that different projects worth Rs 2 billion had been started for the welfare of the people of the constituency. "I am grateful to CM Punjab for providing development funds," Raja said. He also asked the authorities concerned to swiftly complete the rehabilitation work of the Rattaamral Railway Bridge to facilitate the citizens.

Dolphin Squad arrests 44 accused in theft, robbery cases

LAHORE (APP): SP Toqeer Naeem said on Sunday that the Dolphin Squad and Police Response Unit immediately responded to 1,680 calls received on the helpline during the last one week and arrested 44 people involved in theft and robbery cases.

He said that during this period, stop-and-search operations were carried out and over 275,000 people were checked and body-searched. Six motorcycles, five mobile-phones and thousands of rupees in cash were recovered from the accused.

The special squads of the police also recovered 15 pistols, two rifles, magazines and several bullets during a crackdown on illegal weapons. Drugs, alcohol, hashish and heroin were also recovered during the anti-narcotics operation.

The squads, during patrolling, arrested 35 proclaimed offenders, 29 habitual criminals and 72 court absconders. Legal action was taken against 234 persons over non-verification of information, the SP said, adding that 32 persons were arrested; 12 over wheeledoing and 20 for resorting to jubilant firing.

PML-N decides to finish reorganization of party in Lahore

LAHORE (INP): Pakistan League-Nawaz (PML-N) has decided to complete reorganization of party in Lahore for which it has started consultation of senior party leaders.

Sources said on Sunday, the PML-N leadership has decided to motivate all sub-organization of the party regarding next general elections. For the PML-N Lahore's seat which got vacant after death of Pervaiz Malik, names of Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, Saiful Malook Khokhar, Raja Mashood, Khawaja Imran Nazir and Hafiz Noman were under consideration.

Sources said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has also directed to complete the reorganization of party in Lahore at earliest.

Man kills pedlar, accused held

LAHORE (INP): A man killed a pedlar after exchange of hot words. Police arrested the culprit and recovered arms here on Sunday. According to details, accused Shahid exchanged hot words with pedlar Umer Daraz in Mughalpur area of Lahore. The verbal clash turned violent after which accused gunned down pedlar and hid in basemen of his home. The culprit to save himself of arrest took his own children hostage at gunpoint. Headed by DSP Mughalpur Malik Rashid, the police and special teams of Dolphin managed to rescue the children taken hostage and arrested the culprit along with weapons.



KARACHI: Activists of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) hold protest against Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi Front of KPC. —INP Photo

Educated youth are asset: Governor tells convocation

KARACHI (PPI): Sindh Governor Kamran Khan Tessori said Sunday that educated youth are an asset for the society and the country and are also a guarantee for the bright future of Pakistan.

"The graduates can play an important role in the prosperity of Pakistan, he said while speaking at the fourth convocation of Jinnah Sindh Medical University. Provincial Minister for Universities and Boards Muhammad Ismail Raho, Vice Chancellor Professor Amjad Siraj Memon and faculty members were also present in the ceremony.

The Sindh governor said that Jinnah Sindh Medical University had made significant progress in a short period of time, while the addition of new fields in the university would provide better and modern education opportunities to the students.

Tessori said that today is

a day of joy and pride for all students and parents too, because the convocation is the fruit of the hard work of the students and the reward of the sacrifices of the parents.

The Governor Sindh said that he wanted to enter your hearts with his work. He further said that we should make our children doctors and engineers as well as good human beings. Tessori said that he was trying hard to add new universities in Karachi, while an official mobile application was being made for the youth so that he could do something at the official level for their employment.

Address to Function at Governor's House

Sindh Governor Kamran Khan Tessori has said that the development of technology is happening very fast all over the world, so it is necessary to learn it and work on it in the current era; otherwise,

we will be left behind in this revolutionary era.

He expressed these views while addressing a function held at the Governor's House regarding the future of Pakistan in Information Technology. JDC Chairman Zafar Abbas, Administrator Karachi Dr Syed Saifur Rehman and a large number of people from the IT department participated in the event.

The Governor Sindh said that the revolution going on in the world at the moment is known as "Technological Revolution", so we have to be a part of it, because every month a new technology is introduced in some industry. "Artificial Intelligence", "Blockchain Technology" and "Internet of Things" are making everyday things smart, he observed and said that marketing is no longer marketing on billboards but it is now on digital and social media.

Suspended patwari refuses to relinquish his charge

LAHORE (NNI): The Lahore district administration has failed to maintain its writ as a patwari who has been suspended two weeks ago over his alleged corruption is yet occupying the post.

According to the sources, Mouza Niaz Baig patwari namely Bashir Ahmad was suspended by Deputy Commissioner Lahore Muhammad Ali to investigate him in some corruption cases on Dec 2. Simultaneously, the DC Lahore posted another patwari, Khadim Hussain, in

Mouza Niaz Baig and Shahpur in his place. However, the influential Bashir Ahmad refused to comply with the orders of suspension. He was ordered to relinquish the charge on Dec 6 but he has not yet left the charge. Bashir Ahmed first went into hiding, now instead of charging, he imposed a condition to pass the transfer of the properties, which he did. He is not willing to surrender his charge to the newly posted patwari despite the repeated efforts made by Khadim Hussain.

The sources further dis-

closed said that the revenue record of Mouza Niaz Baig is with Bashir Ahmad and he is issuing far d both in the back as well as present dates besides transferring the properties without any fear. The concerned Revenue Officer sent a factual report to the Additional Deputy Commissioner of Revenue regarding Mouza Niaz Baig. The report added that Patwari Bashir Ahmed had refused to release the charge. Even the higher officials seemed helpless on the illegal actions of Patwari.

Rift found among PTI leaders on assemblies' dissolution: Jaffar

ISLAMABAD, Dec 18 (NNI): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) central leader Chaudhry Jaffar Iqbal on Sunday said that difference of opinion had been found among the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders over the dissolution of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assemblies.

In a statement issued here, he said that the dissolution of two provincial assemblies would be a last blackmailing tactics of

Imran Khan, assured that he would not dissolve both the assemblies and only playing a reprehensible politics on the issue for his political survival.

Terming the Imran Khan's narrative false and baseless, he said that former prime minister had faced defeat on every front and now playing a game of dissolving the two assemblies for point scoring. He said, "Imran Niazi is doing disgraceful politics to destabilize the country as

he has already hatched conspiracies to default and isolated Pakistan internationally during his previous regime."

The PML-N leader further said Imran Khan is not a well-wisher of the country and reiterated that his politics was surrounding on lies and U-turns. To a query, he said the coalition government was committed to stabilize the national and revamping the institutions through prudent policies.

191 modern cameras installed at entry, exit points of Islamabad

ISLAMABAD (APP): A total of 191 artificial intelligence enabled cameras equipped with advanced technology have been installed at the entry and exit points of Islamabad.

Following the directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad, the Islamabad capital police is in the process of installing modern cameras equipped with Artificial Intelligence to make security and surveillance more effective in the

federal capital. Police spokesman said that Safe City Islamabad is performing the surveillance and monitoring duties in a fully operational and effective manner and playing an important role in the elimination of criminal elements in the federal capital Islamabad.

Due to these cameras, a taxi driver involved in sexual harassment was also arrested as a woman registered a complaint of sexual harassment on the helpline of Islamabad Capital Police

"Pukar-15". Upon receiving the complaint, the Safe City Islamabad staff took immediate action and traced the vehicle and shared the information with the concerned police officials. The accused was arrested and a case was registered against him in Secretariat Police Station. Capital Police Officer (CPO) Safe City said that Islamabad Capital Police is utilizing all resources to strengthen the security of the federal capital.

CM's political assistant visits Gujrat jail

LAHORE (APP): Political Assistant to Chief Minister Punjab for Human Rights Robinson Aziz Francis paid a surprise visit to Gujrat jail and reviewed the facilities being provided to the prisoners.

He inspected different sections of the jail, along with Superintendent Jail Ghulam Sarwar Langriyal, said a handout issued here on Sunday.

Robinson Aziz reviewed the arrangements of cleanliness and kitchen in the jail. He also inspected the medical facilities being provided to prisoners, along with the medicines. He also met relatives of prisoners and inquired about the obstacles faced by them.

He directed the jail administration to take special care of the prisoners; they were serving their sentence, but if they were treated with good manners, they would become good citizens after completing their sentence, he added. He said that violation of the fundamental rights of any citizen could not be accepted in any way. Jail Superintendent Gujrat, Director Human Rights Muhammad Yusuf, Assistant Director Mian Umar Hayat and other relevant persons were also present.

Lahore police arrest 280 for violating Kite Flying Act

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore police arrested 280 accused for violating the Kite Flying Act and recovered 2,329 kites, 273 string wheels from the accused during the current month.

The police arrested 6,588 accused over violation of the Kite Flying Act and recovered more than 64,000 kites, 8,914 string wheels from the accused during this year.

Capital City Police Officer (CCPO) Lahore Ghulam Mehmood Dogar instructed the anti-kite flying teams to speed up operations against persons involved in such activities. He said that loss of precious human lives due to kite flying would not be tolerated.

Motorway reopens for traffic after 9 hours of closure

The motorway, which was closed due to heavy fog, was opened after nine and a half hours of closure.

The Motorway Police said due to heavy fog in Lahore and Punjab, visibility was affected so some sections of major highways were closed.

KP speaker backs Imran Khan’s call over assemblies’ fate

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Assembly Speaker Mushtaq Ahmed Ghani while responding to PTI’s chief decision over the fate of assemblies said that, the assembly would be dissolved on Friday as per Imran Khan’s call.

He said the country would default in case of delaying of elections and PTI would win the polls even if the Election Commission did not play fair. Talking about the current government he said: “The country is ruled by thieves and plunderers who are looting the country.”

Meanwhile, Speaker

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Mushtaq Ahmad Ghani on Sunday said the country was passing through testing times, and the only solution to save Pakistan is holding free, fair, and transparent elections.

He expressed these views while addressing the inauguration ceremony held in connection with the completion of the Astro turf and other related works at the Abbottabad Hockey Stadium. Mushtaq Ghani said that on the directives of Imran Khan the assemblies of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab would be dissolved before the next Saturday, the peo-

ple also want to get rid of these imported governments.

Ghani said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government started many mega projects in the province, especially in Abbottabad. Speaker KP assembly said that three Kanals of land have been acquired for the sports complex in Abbottabad, for which PC-I has been prepared. Similarly, he said, a sports complex was being built near the commissioner’s office for boys and girls. Another mega project was also being made in Dhodial while efforts were being made to promote sports activities in the region, he added.



PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mahmood Khan chairing a meeting regarding Agriculture University Swat.

CM grieves over killing of policemen

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: All the political parties in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Sunday expressed grief and sorrow over the killing of four policemen in a militant attack that took place in district Lakki Marwat.

Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mahmood Khan in a statement expressed profound grief over the loss of policemen in Lakki Marwat and marked the attack as a cowardly act of anti-state elements. He directed paramedics to provide the best healthcare facilities to injured victims.

Similarly, Advisor to CM KP on Home and Tribal Affairs, Babar Saleem Swati expressed sorrow over the incident and said that culprits involved in this inhuman act would be brought to the court of justice. He said no one would be allowed to sabotage the peace in the region and terrorists would be dealt with iron hands.

Meanwhile, Provincial President Awami National Party, Aimal Wali Khan here on Sunday expressed grief over the killing of four policemen in terrorists attack in district Lakki Marwat.

In a press statement Aimal Wali said that target killing in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has reached its peak this year and as many as 105 police jawans embraced martyrdom.

He criticized PTI government in KP and said that the ruling party failed to save precious human lives. He demanded provincial government to take pragmatic security measures to combat the militancy in Pashtun belt rather than taking part in conspiracies for power settlement.

Anti-state elements would not be allowed to sabotage peace: Advisor to KP CM on Home & Tribal Affairs, Babar Saleem Swati has said that anti-state elements would not be allowed to sabotage peace in the province at any cost.

In a statement issued here on Sunday, he expressed profound grief and sorrow over the martyrdom of police personnel in a terrorists’ attack on a station in district Lakki Marwat and termed the incident as sorrowful.

He said that the sacrifices of police force will not go to waste, saying that the perpetrators would be brought to justice. He termed the incident a cowardice act and highly condemnable. Babar Saleem Swati said that police is a frontline force and rendering the sacrifices of their lives for the cause of peace. The Advisor on Home Affairs directed for provision of best medical facilities to injured police personnel and also prayed for their early recovery.

QWP condemns Lakki attack: Provincial Vice Chairman, Qoumi Watan Party (QWP), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Dr Faiza Rasheed has condemned terrorists attack on police in district Lakki Marwat and prayed for the eternal peace of the martyred police personnel.

In a condemnation statement issued here on Sunday, the woman political activist said that the police force of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is playing a crucial role in maintaining law and order and rendering the sacrifice of their lives for the restoration of peace in the region. She said that QWP is standing by the families of the police martyrs.

Imran govt’s policies plunged country into energy, gas crisis

PESHAWAR (APP): The poor energy and economic policies of the former Prime Minister Imran Khan has plunged the country into energy and gas crisis affecting consumers, said Ikhtiar Wali Khan, PMLN KP spokesman and member Provincial Assembly on Sunday.

Talking to APP, he said that work on Mohmand dam with capacity of 800MW and Diamir Bhasha dams with 4500MW capacity was unnecessary delayed by the previous government that resulted an increase in the demand-supply gap of electricity today.

He said had Diamir Bhasha and Mohmand dams been constructed in the past, Pakistan would have achieved 50,000MW electricity. The MPA said around 6,000MW were being obtained from hydel resources having power generation cost of about Rs 63 billion against 50,000 MW potential including 30,000MW in KP.

He claimed that over 100 mini macro hydel power stations constructed by PTI led government with help of NGOs in northern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were either destroyed or damaged by the recent floods due to improper selection of sites and planning. “We have inherited a feeble economy while the energy import bill has exorbitantly touched \$27billion due to poor energy policies of Imran Khan Government.”

Wali said the country’s energy import bill would not have increased to 27billion dollars today had the PTI government not wasted time on negative politicking and character assassination of the opposition leaders rather focused on construction of new dams and develop alternate energy resources. He said energy shortfall was one of the major challenges currently being confronted to the coalition government and we need an inexpensive electricity and gas to cater peoples’ and industries’ growing requirements during winter season.

In Chitral, Upper Dir, Lower Dir, Swat, Malakand, Bajaur, Mohmand, Abbottabad, Batagram, Manshera, Buner, Torghar, and Shangla districts,

he said the temperature has dropped to a great extent especially at night due to which people mostly rely on electrical and LPG appliances for preparation of indoor meal and keeping their rooms warm for children and senior citizens.

Besides Peshawar and Nowshera’s rural areas, the Dir Upper’s Tormang, Pindakhel and Karo Dara, DI Khan, Bannu, Tank, merged districts, Batagram, Lakki Marwat and Chitral are facing brunt of load shedding where over 10 hours power outages were observed, adversely affecting domestic, commercial and industrial consumers. As a result of prolonged power outages and unavailability of gas, the people use timber as firewood for cooking and heating purposes in hilly districts where price of 40 kg firewood had swelled to Rs 800 to Rs1,000 making negative effects on the already depleting forest resources in the province.

He said that National Water Policy (NWP) 2018 has revealed that Pakistan was heading towards a situation of water shortage due to lack of dams, which may lead to food insecurity for all living creatures in next few years if not addressed on priority basis in the wake of climate change challenges. The policy disclosed that per capita surface water availability has declined from 5,260 cubic meters per year in 1951 to around 1,000 cubic meters in 2016 and this quantity would likely to further drop to 860 cubic meters by 2025.

It said groundwater situation was expected to further drop in the country mostly in Punjab and Sindh where one million tube-wells were currently pumping about 55 million acres feet (MAF) of underground water for irrigation, which is 20pc more than that available from canals. Ikhtiar Wali said Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif soon after assuming office has visited the under-construction dam of Mohmand dam and reviewed the project besides flood damages. He said that 1.2MAF water would be stored on completion on Mohmand dam.

He said that Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif has recently inaugu-

rated a refurbishment project of units 5 and 6 of the Mangla dam hydro-electric power plant that was a major step forward to address the problem of energy shortfall. Ikhtiar Wali while terming the recent visit of Minister of State for Petroleum, Dr Musadik Malik to Russia was highly successful, said that Moscow would provide crude and refined oil besides diesel to energy starved Pakistan at a discounted rate.

He welcomed initiation of negotiations with Russians private companies for procurement of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) and long term contracts with public sector companies of Russia to get LNG from their new plants. Wali said fruitful discussions were held on gas pipeline projects including establishing of Pakistan Stream Gas Pipeline (PSGP), commonly known North-South (Lahore-Karachi) Gas Pipeline, and another ‘big gas pipeline’ to get the commodity from Russian hydrocarbon deposits on discounted rates for domestic and industrial consumption.

PMLN leader said an inter-governmental delegation of Russia to be headed by its Energy Minister would visit Pakistan by January next month to make progress on oil and gas sale-purchase agreements. Gas companies were directed by the government to ensure gas supply, especially during ‘breakfast, lunch and dinner’ preparation timings i.e. 6 to 9 am, 12 to 2 pm and 6 to 9 pm to facilitate domestic consumers.

The coalition government was providing extra gas to consumers as compared to last year and was monitoring its supply situation regularly. The gas companies are providing more than 20,000 million tons Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) per month in the areas where gas-pressure issue and shortage prevailed to bridge gas demand and supply gap. He said Iran had also announced to give LPG worth two million pounds to Pakistan for which all formalities were completed and the additional LPG would help ensure better gas supply to domestic consumers in December and January.

Jirga demands special package for Malakand

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Malakand Grand Jirga on Sunday while rejecting the imposition of any sort of taxes in the region, threatened to observe complete shutter down strike and wheel jam in all districts of the region if the government tried to bring the area in its tax net. A meeting of the jirga in this regard was held at a local hotel in Timergara with the Jamaat-i-Islami parliamentary leader and former senior minister MPA Inayatullah Khan in the chair. Divisional and district leadership of various political parties, representatives of civil society and local governments attended the meeting.

The Jirga president and former MNA Sahibzada Yaqub Khan, Ji district chief Izazul Mulk, former MPAs Malik Behram Khan, Saeed Gul, former provincial minister and PPP district president Mehmood Zeb Khan, ANP’s central vice president Hussain Shah Yousafzai, Dir qaumi Pason chief Malik Jehan Alam, PML-N’s Malik Farooq Iqbal, JUI-F’s Haji Khurshid Khan, president Anjuman Tajiran Timergara Haji Anwarud Din, social activist Ebrash Pasha, government contractors’ association president Ikramullah, Imran Takur and others spoke on the occasion.

In a joint declaration issued at the end the Malakand Grand Jirga also demanded the bifurcation of Malakand into two separate divisions. It said that Malakand was stretched on 29872 square kilometers with a populations of 8.6 million people. It said the area elders would not let anyone sabotage the peaceful environment in the

region. The Jirga also expressed anger and displeasure on the administration’s action of razing plazas, shops and houses at the Timergara Khwar (dry stream). It demanded royalty for local masses and land owners from the Koto Hydro power station.

The participants were of the views that Malakand had been the worst affected region from militancy, floods, earth quakes and military operation, so the government should not impose any tax in Malakand. They demanded the federal government to announce a special package for its residents like the one announced for the merged districts of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. They said the government had not taken the elected representatives from the region while taking the decision of imposition of taxes.

Rescue 1122 reports 137 incidents

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Emergency service Rescue 1122 reported 137 incidents of different types took place in Peshawar city and its suburbs during the last 24 hours.

Rescue 1122 spokesman said that 27 people were injured in 22 traffic accidents. It took place at Khazana road, Kohati Gate, Warsak road, Sarki Gate, Darmangi, Peepal stop, Charsadda road, Tarnab Farm, Northern Bypass, Tehkal and various places. One incident of fire occurred in the kitchen of Bahadur Kali in which Rescue 1122 firefighters controlled the fire by doing professional rescue activities in 30 minutes, and a fire injured incident took place at Bara road.

CTD arrests 768 terrorists

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has arrested 768 terrorists and foiled dozens of terrorist activities during the outgoing calendar year 2022.

According to a press release issued here on Sunday, the department has prepared an annual report 2022 in this regard. The out of the total arrested terrorists 90 were carrying head money. During the year, the department carried out more than 2597 operations across the province including in the newly merged districts. These operations were also included intelligence based actions against terrorists and taken 1960 suspects.

Police recover stolen equipment of PESCO

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Charsadda Police has recovered stolen equipment of Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO) worth millions of rupees during a raid on a private godown in the jurisdiction of Khan Mahi Police Station on Sunday.

Three arrested accused also include a retired official of Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO), said a press

release issued here. On a tip, District Police Officer (DPO) Charsadda, Sohail Khalid directed Station House Officer (SHO) Khan Mahi, Bismillah for conducting raid on the godown and a team of police under the supervision of DSP Sardheri a raid and recovered stolen precious machinery worth millions of rupees.

Three bundles of several kilometer long aluminum wire, two small bundles,

two disc, fan associators, 175 shagle D sets, 650 common D sets, 40 boks and several other pieces of equipment.

Police has also recovered a cash amount of Rs.38000/- and six mobile phone sets including one I Phone from their possession. The accused and stolen equipment have been shifted to the Police Station, Khan Mahi and further investigations are in progress.



PESHAWAR: Bishop of Pakistan Hamfree Sarfaraz, Peter leading a rally at Saddar Road in connection with Christmas. - F.P. photo

Civil dispensary, closed from last 10 years

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Civil Dispensary Arkroi could not functioned in 10 years since its establishment. Thousands of residents of Arkroi village on Arundu Road in the very south of Drosh Tehsil are deprived of health, education, communication, basic human rights and other facilities. In this area, the former Provincial Minister of Population Welfare Saleem Khan Chitrali had provided funds for a civil dispensary and constructed a building, but this civil dispensary locally known as hospitals is still closed for the last 10 years.

Qari Muhammad Daim, Nazim village council Arkroi Langur Butt told our correspondent that a civil dispensary was established at Arkroi in 2011 but unfortunately this dispensary is still closed. He said that we have repeatedly requested the District Health Officer Chitral and the district administration to open it, but in response they said that, the owner of the land asks for his

employment, but this issue has not been resolved yet.

Qari Muhammad Daim, Nazim of Village Council Arkroi Langurbat, offered that if the owner of the land does not object, we are ready to give him alternate land in return as substitute or compensation of his land, but our problem should be solved. He said that if the Health Department want to solve our problems we are also ready to give them alternative land, either by sending staff to this dispensary and opening it, or else we are ready to give land to its owner in exchange for this land. Another land should be given and a hospital should be built on it.

He said that Arkroi is a backward area where there are no health facilities. He said that men can go to Drosh or Chitral Hospital by climbing on a wood-carrying Datsun, but women are facing great difficulties in terms of medical treatment. Women have to be taken to Drosh or Chitral Hospital in delivery cases, but the condition of the road is so bad that

these women either give birth or die on the way before reaching hospital. It takes four to five hours while transporting female patients to hospital and it is very dangerous for their life and health. During this time, their lives can also be lost.

Shan Bibi, the only unopposed elected woman councillor of Arundu Village Council, said that I represent women from Mirkhani to the farthest part of Pakistan, i.e. Arundu, but our women are facing many difficulties in terms of treatment and education. She said that there is no female doctor in this land. Another land should be given and a hospital should be built on it.



In brief

Bizrnjo on Reko Diq deal

QUETTA (APP): Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Abdul Qudous Bizenjo on Saturday said that we should work for the development of the province and the country instead of the playing politics on non-issues. Balochistan's interests have been well protected in Reko Diq project and 25 percent shares of the province have been secured in the project without any investment, he added. He expressed these views while addressing the participants of the closing ceremony of the 10th National Workshop of Balochistan. Provincial Minister of Finance and food Engineer Zamrik Khan Achakzai was also present in the ceremony. Addressing the ceremony, the chief minister said that the mining sector is the future of Balochistan and we have signed a historic agreement with Reko Diq in which the world's largest mining company Barrick Gold is investing in same project, which will initially give to the province Rs 300 billion annually in the form of royalty saying that apart from this, the province will be economically self-sufficient. Balochistan has 25 percent shares in this deal while the project will create 8000 to 12000 jobs, he added.

PDM afraid of elections: Asad

QUETTA (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Asad Umar said on Sunday that country was heading towards elections but the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) was afraid of dissolution of assemblies. The PTI leader also claimed that prominent personalities were going to join the party in the coming days. Speaking to the media in Quetta he stated that enforced disappearances in Balochistan are against the constitution and unacceptable. Asad Umar said PTI, during its tenure, allocated more funds for Balochistan compared to Punjab, and a development package of more than Rs600 billion was announced for the province.

Groom among three killed

KHUSHAB (PPI): A groom among three persons were killed and eight other persons of a marriage party, including bride, injured in a traffic accident on Sargodha Road near Khushab on Sunday. According to rescue sources, a collision occurred between a trolley and a van in which the groom and two others, including his sister-in-law, died on the spot. The groom was identified as Umar Farooq belonging to Khushab while the bride belonged to Mandi Bahauddin. The marriage party was going to Mandi Bahauddin after taking the bride from Khushab. The bodies and injured were shifted to District Headquarters (DHQ) Hospital for medico-legal formalities and treatment. A mourning atmosphere prevailed in the houses of the groom and the bride. Police have started a probe into the incident.

3 killed, 2 injured in road accident

GILGIT (APP): At least three people including a girl were killed, while two others sustained serious injuries when a tractor-trolley and a motorcycle collided near Gilgit Skwer Degree College here on Saturday. According to Rescue-1122, the bodies and injured have been shifted to City Hospital Gilgit. Police have registered a case. Further probe was underway.

Police failed to establish its writ in Shikarpur

MADEJI (PPI): Shikarpur police have failed to establish its writ as they could not arrest the attackers and killers of three innocent women villagers three days ago in the riverine area of Madeji, PPI learnt here on Sunday.

District police of various police stations conducted a searching operation led by DSP headquarter against the attackers but the criminals had already left after receiving advance information but police nabbed four people who were on their way to their villages including a mentally disturbed man to prove their working along with three motorcycles were also taken from the houses and the cattle of the villagers were also whisked away.

The wheat crop sown on villagers lands was also damaged by the APC worth millions. The case of the murdered women has not been filed as yet.

The police of different police stations of Shikarpur district along with APC chain vehicles went for the arrest of the accused involved in the murder of three young women, Hasina Khatoon, Bashiran

Khatoon and Amna Junejo, who were gunned down by gunmen due to the blood feud between the Kalhoro and Junejo communities in Darghpur village.

DSP Headquarters Badruddin Bhutto, DSP Tajudero Imam Bakhsh Brohi and others led the police party which raided various katcha villages of Ramzan Kalhoro, Meeral Ji Wandh and other villages, but they found none as the accused had already emptied the villages on receipt of prior information. Police demolished their makeshift houses while the officials took the food items in the houses and more than 20 cattle were also captured.

On the way back, the same police raided the Arab village and searched the houses of the Mirbahar community without any crime and ransacked their houses. After that, they took away their three motorcycles and other goods parked in the houses and also the police took away four laborers working on the land including mentally disturbed Wali Muhammad.

The police surrounded the wheat crop lands and

trampled the crops planted by the villagers worth millions of rupees without any cause of action. Arab villagers cried against the police brutality that the police have taken away our bikes which are properly documented for which they urged DIGP and SSP to take notice and order them to return.

Police said that they conducted raids for the arrest of the accused involved in the heinous and brutal murder of three women of Junejo community three days ago, but the accused had fled the house after being informed in advance, adding operations are ongoing for the arrest of the accused.

Meanwhile, the tension between the parties and residents of nearby villages continues after the murder of three women due to the bloody dispute between Kalhoro and Junejo communities. Despite the passage of four days, the case of the murder of the deceased women has not been registered, due to which the risk of further bloodshed has become imminent, the nearby villagers feared.

LPP distributes food packets among flood victims

Saqib Mushtaq

LODHRAN: LPP (Lodhran Pilot Project) a social organization supervised by Jahangir Khan Tareen, has provided temporary shelters, ready-made food packets, ration bags to the people affected by the 2022 catastrophic floods in Rajanpur, Rahim Yar Khan, and Dera Ghazi Khan, multi-purpose cash assistance was provided.

According to the LPP spokesperson, kits, cash

grants, mosquito nets etc, were provided for women's hygiene related issues with the help of partners and financial support from corporate social responsibility program. In these affected districts, LPP provided over 3000 temporary shelters along with multi-purpose cash assistance of Rs.12000 per household to over 3000 households to help them restart their lives.

Similarly, 1500 ration bags were distributed to the most needy families in col-

laboration with the local administration In Rajanpur, the most devastated district of Punjab, LPP is currently working on a project to provide clean water through the installation of an RO plant. More than 1,000 households were supported in the form of carrots and mot grass). Livestock vaccinations will be administered to 2,200 domestic animals and animal feed (wanda) will also be provided to these families. No effort will be made.



HYDERABAD: BECS Teachers holding a protest in favour of their demands.

VC UAJK calls for effective strategies to train workforce

F.P. Report

MUZAFFARABAD: The Vice-Chancellor University of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (UAJK) Prof. Dr. Muhammad Kaleem Abbasi has said that the demand for skilled human resources in the medical field is increasing with each passing day across the globe and we need to adopt effective strategies to train the clinical and non-clinical healthcare workforce to take advantage of it.

He was addressing a reception given in honor of the Commandant Combined Military Hospital (CMH) Muzaffarabad Brigadier Zahid Hussain by UAJK Health and Medical Sciences Department the other day. Dr. Kaleem Abbasi remarked that all those institutions involved in human resource development in the highly demanding medical field deserved to be appreciated and supported by both civil society and the government.

Acknowledging the quality healthcare services of the CMH Muzaffarabad along with its training program for the students of UAJK, the VC termed it the pioneer institution which first started medical services in the area for the masses with the assistance of the Army Medical Corps (AMC). Dr. Abbasi

expressed his pleasure over the availability of quality teaching hospitals like CMH, AIMS, and RIC for the UAJK students of various medical specialties where they are receiving quality medical technology training.

The Vice-Chancellor thanked Brig. Zahid Hussain of the Army Medical Corps, and the Health Department of the AJK government for their consistent support in providing training opportunities to the students of the varsity. Addressing the reception as a chief guest, Commandant Brig. Zahid Hussain expressed pleasure to interact with the management, faculty, and students of the UAJK in one sitting and said that he was extremely satisfied with the collective efforts of CMH and UAJK that was not only benefiting humanity but also a great service to the nation and country.

Brig. Zahid Hussain stated that the health sector has now become an industry in the world and there is a great demand for medically trained manpower in the private sector as well. He urged the students to explore and get benefit from the opportunities available in the health sector worldwide. He added that equipping the hospital with adequate human

resources and the latest diagnostic equipment is at the top of his priorities. "In three to four months time, a state-of-the-art MRI machine provided by Pak Army is being installed in the hospital" the commandant informed.

Brig. Zahid further said that apart from this, new electro-medical equipment is being installed in the Radiology Department, and new Ultrasound Machines and Laboratory kits are also in the process of installation to provide modern diagnostic facilities to the common man at their doorsteps. "Students of the Department of Health Sciences UAJK would greatly benefit from these facilities during their training period", he added.

He assured the administration and faculty of UAJK that along with serving the suffering humanity, his institution will continue to provide the best training opportunities to the students. Speaking on the occasion, Associate Dean of Health and Medical Sciences Dr. Bashir ur Rahman Kanth said that ninety percent of the graduates who completed their studies in various programs from UAJK Health and Medical Department have currently doing jobs in various government and private health institutions.



SHANGLA: KP Minister for Labour Shaukat Yousafzai addressing party workers.

Enmity turned into friendship

F.P. Report

TIMERGARA Due to the efforts of the Jirga, the 53-year-old enmity in Nakhtro Koto Tangi Dara has turned into friendship and the parties have joined each other and thanked each other. So far many people have been injured and the cases against each other were being heard in different courts of the parties, but the leaders of the local jirga, the well-known religious scholar Dr. Abdul Rahman Hadifi, Maulana Dr. Muhammad Rasool Khan, Anwar Syed Zada, Haji Rahmanullah, Muhammad Iqbal, Chairman Haji Muhammad Ibrahim Khan.

After the desperate efforts of Rizwanul Haq, the land dispute between the parties was resolved after 53 years and the parties were side by side and grateful. Speaking on this occasion, the speakers said that the people of the area should resolve their disputes through Jirgas and keep themselves safe from the rounds of the courts because the disputes which are resolved through the courts will increase bitterness. He said that peace is a Sunnah act and peace is good for both worlds. People should move forward to resolve their conflicts and tolerate each other so that the atmosphere of love and affection is maintained.

COE to be established at CAMI

KHANEWAL (INP): Chief Operating Officer (COO) Technical & Vocational Training Authority (TEVTA), Ahmad Shahzad said that out of 17 Centres of Excellence (COEs), in the field of Mechanical (Milling, Turner and Computer Numerically Controlled), one will be established in the Center for Agriculture Machinery Industries (CAMI).

Speaking during his visit to CAMI, Mian Channu district Khanewal on Sunday, he said that the total cost of COE in the institute will be 170 million rupees and it will enable the locals to obtain training on latest Machinery. He also directed the Principal of the institute to start work on "Kissan Fair", social media coverage, extension services, brushers and pamphlets and construction of Mosque, inside the institute.

The annual sale of CAMI for precious year was approximately 14 million rupees whereas during last 05 years CAMI generated around 30 million rupees through sales of different agricultural products. CAMI is producing state of art products like Cultivator, Chisel Plough, Cotton Root Digger, Rear Blade, Soil Scraper, Rotavator, Disc Harrow, Rabi Seed Drills, Zero Tillage Drill, Planter, Cotton Ridger, Cotton Inter Cultivator, Band Placement Drill, Coulter Rabi Drill, Small, Seeded Drill, Sugarcane Ridger with fertilizer attachment, Fertilizer Broad Caster, Boom Sprayer, Wheat Thresher, Multi-crop Thresher, Sunflower Thresher, Small Seeded Thresher, Maize Sheller, Seed Grader, Trolley, Hydraulic Trolley, Water Bowser, Hand Cart and Bio Gas Drum. All CAMI staff was directed to render services to the common farmers for boosting the agricultural sector of the region.

PPP activists took out rally in Larkana

LARKANA (PPI): Pakistan People's Party, District and City activists, took out a rally from their Kennedy Market office in solidarity with the Foreign Minister and PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari here on Sunday as per the announcement of its top leadership.

The participants also shouted slogans against the extremist BJP and its Modi government. District General Secretary Ijaz Ahmed Laghari, Khair Muhammad Sheikh and others who led the protest instead of their top leadership said while addressing the participants that we will not tolerate propaganda about Pakistan and Bilawal Bhutto Zardari in any way so BJP and Modi government should stop it. They said that Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has shown a mirror of reality to the Modi government in the United Nations, after which the real face of India has been exposed in front of the whole world.

They said that they want to tell the BJP, which is demanding an apology from Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and shouting slogans against Pakistan, that the Modi government, which pardoned terrorists in India and massacred

Muslims in Kashmir, should apologize from the platform of the United Nations and stop brutality in Kashmir.

They said that with Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's open stance on Kashmir and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the BJP and Modi government have cried out and the people of Pakistan will not remain silent on the propaganda about the country and its foreign minister. They said that the Modi government should avoid false propaganda against Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, otherwise there will be protests against the Modi government and BJP not only in Pakistan but also in other countries. PPP activists of Naundero also took out a rally separately here where they demanded an apology from Indian rulers.

Students from various districts visit Mohenjo Daro: The male and female students of various schools visited the world heritage ancient site of Mohenjo Daro near Larkana on Sunday ahead of winter vacations.

The students belonged to the schools of Larkana, Jacobabad, Khairpur Mirs, Hyderabad, Sukkur. The buses carrying male and

female students from these cities started coming with jubilation.

Hundreds of students from Nusrat Bhutto School, KM School, Shah Latif School, Qazi Abdul Waheed School and others, and also colleges visited different parts of the most historical site of Sindh where they visited Stupa, DK Area, Tourist Park, Bath Side, museum and other areas and parts of the historical monuments.

The students also expressed their keen interest and happiness in the monuments to see the historical events in the museum, five thousand years old idols, hearts, beads, jewelry, necklaces, chariots, boats, artifacts, oxen carts, and so forth.

Students Allah Bakhsh Chandio, Mazhar Ali Abbasi, Iftikhar Sandano, and Fatah Abbasi while talking to media persons said that the charging of entry tickets, parking tickets and hotel charges for tourists coming from far-flung areas should be abolished forthwith. The best restaurants and hotels should be established and drinking water facilities must also be provided so that the visitors do not feel any difficulty.

Hafizabad Press Club elect office bearers

Hafiz Aziz-ur-Rehman

HAFAZABAD: District Press Club elections for the year 2023 held at the Press Club/Jinnah Hall. Chairman Rai Ghazanfar Ali Khari had won with a huge majority including the entire panel.

According to the details, District Press Club elections for the year 2023 were held at the Press Club/Jinnah Hall yesterday. Ch. Intiaz Ahmad Taj was the Chairman of the Election Commission while Gulzar Hussain Chauhan and Mehr Habibullah were the members of the Board. A large number of Press Club members participated in the elections.

Taj Media Group, Azad Media Group and Hijazi Media Group nominated candidates for Chairman Rai Ghazanfar Ali Khari, President Saeed Anwar Mirza, Vice Chairman Irfan Nimat, General Secretary Malik Hamid Raza, Joint Secretary Syed Mahmood Bismal, Finance Secretary Mian Muhammad Javed, and Information Secretary Mahmood Ali and Office Secretary Mehmood-ul-Hasan Siddiqi won with a significant margin by securing 87 votes while the votes of opposing candidates were only 35. The opponent walked out of

the polling hall after seeing their definite defeat. The Chairman and Members Election Board have issued the notification of the final results.

Later, the oath-taking ceremony of the newly-elected office bearers of the District Press Club was held and they were sworn in by the former chairman of the Press Club, Rana Muhammad Arshad Anjum. The office bearers were elected. Addressing the ceremony on this occasion, former chairman Ch. Intiaz Ahmad Taj and Rana Muhammad Arshad Anjum said that electing the representatives through elections is a democratic process and the beauty of this process should be maintained in all circumstances.

The newly-elected chairman Rai Ghazanfar Ali Khari said in his address that he will take everyone along for the stabilization of the democratic process in the organization and increase the dignity of the club and members and fulfill the trust of his colleagues. On this occasion, on the directions of DPO Rai Mazhar Iqbal, a heavy contingent of police was deployed and foolproof security arrangements were made.

APS martyres remembered: District Bar President Khalida Shahid



PABBI: Assistant Commissioner Maleeha Saher inspecting facilities during her visit to anti-drug centre.



Monday, December 19, 2022

UK sending troops to fill in as ambulance crews strike

LONDON (AP): The British government said Sunday it will dispatch 1,200 troops to fill in for striking ambulance drivers and border staff as multiple public sector unions walk off the job in the week before Christmas.

Ambulance crews are due to strike, joining nurses, railway staff, passport officers and postal workers, who are all staging a series of walkouts in the coming weeks. The U.K.'s most intense strike wave for decades is a response to a cost-of-living crisis driven by soaring food and energy prices in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Some 417,000 working days were lost to strikes in October, the highest number in a decade. Unions are seeking pay increases to keep pace with inflation, which was running at 10.7% in November, down slightly from 11.1% in

October but still a 40-year high. The Conservative government argues that double-digit raises would drive inflation even higher, and has tried to pin blame for disruption on union leaders. In the tabloid Sun on Sunday, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak branded union chiefs "Grinchmas that want to steal Christmas for their own political ends."

Cabinet minister Oliver Dowden said "it would be irresponsible to allow public sector pay and inflation to get out of control." "We're making progress with the economy. Don't put that at risk with these unaffordable demands," he told the BBC. The government is calculating that public opinion will turn on the unions as people across the U.K. face postponed hospital appointments, canceled trains and travel delays during the winter holiday season. But opinion polls show a high level of support for the workers —

especially nurses, whose strikes across England, Wales and Northern Ireland are the first in the 100-year history of their union, the Royal College of Nursing.

Nurses and ambulance crews say they will still respond to emergencies during their strikes. "We've given a commitment that our members will scramble off picket lines and get into ambulances if there are emergencies that need to be covered," said Onay Kasab, national lead officer of the Unite union. But Matthew Taylor, who heads health service body the NHS Confederation, said patients will be at risk, and called on both government and unions to compromise. "We're in the middle of winter and we have a health service which, even on an ordinary day without industrial action, is finding it difficult to cope," he told the BBC. "So there are going to be risks to patients. There's no question about that."

‘Exploding grenade launcher a gift from Ukraine’

WARSAW (Reuters): Poland's top policeman said that an explosion in his office was caused by a grenade launcher, telling private broadcaster RMF FM that he had received two of the weapons as a gift from Ukraine. Poland's interior ministry and prosecutor's office had not previously confirmed media reports that the explosion, at police headquarters in Warsaw, was caused by a grenade launcher.

Prosecutors said they were investigating the blast, which resulted in Chief Jaroslaw Szymczyk being taken to hospital. "When I was moving the used

grenade launchers, which were gifts from the Ukrainians, there was an explosion," Szymczyk told RMF FM. He said he was moving the launchers into an upright position at the time. RMF cited a source from a Polish delegation that visited Ukraine as saying Szymczyk had received two launchers from officials as presents during visits to the police and the State Emergency Service of Ukraine.

The officials had assured the Polish delegation that the launchers were not loaded, and the delegation took them back to Warsaw by car before leaving them in the back room of

Szymczyk's office, the source told RMF. Reuters was unable to independently confirm this version of events. Ukrainian police and the State Emergency Service of Ukraine did not immediately respond to requests for comment. A Polish police spokesman could not immediately be reached for comment.

Szymczyk has been criticised over the incident, with commentators with backgrounds in the security services citing by Polish media as saying that military equipment should not have been taken into Poland from outside the European Union or taken into an office.

Nigerian chess master granted asylum in US

ABUJA (AFP): The family says their next goal is to obtain US citizenship. A 12-year-old chess prodigy from Nigeria was granted asylum in America after racking up trophies while homeless in New York City. The family of chess master Tanitoluwa "Tani" Adewumi was officially given safe haven in the US after fleeing Nigeria in 2017. The Washington Post reports.

"It feels amazing, because it's been such a long journey," said Adewumi, whose family applied for asylum in 2019. "I'm just grateful that we've gotten this opportunity." The family reportedly received their asylum cards on Nov. 30, which will now allow Adewumi to travel and compete internationally. "It is, in effect, their license to remain in the United States. It allows them to travel internationally," said Matthew Ingber, who worked alongside a pro bono legal team that handled the family's asylum case.

"It's their path to the freedom that they wanted," he said. As reported previously by theGrio, Adewumi and his family fled northern Nigeria about five years ago due to fear of the extremist group Boko Haram. They were living in a homeless shelter in New York City when Adewumi joined a chess club at his local public school. Adewumi rose to fame after setting a record in the state championships at 8 years old when he defeated 73 of the best players in his age group. At the time, the boy and his family were still living in a Manhattan-based homeless shelter.

He became the 28th-youngest national master in the US Chess Federation at age 10, according to CBS News. In 2019, Adewumi made headlines at age 11 while still homeless and on track to becoming the youngest-ever chess grandmaster, the highest title a player can attain after becoming a national master. In 2021, Adewumi won the under-12 division of the

North American Youth Chess Championship and became an International Chess Federation (FIDE) master.

The family started a GoFundMe page in 2019 to raise funds to support Adewumi's chess journey as well as cover their living expenses. The campaign quickly surpassed the original goal of \$50,000. After a New York Times story about the family went viral, they were able to move into a two-bedroom apartment three years ago, theGrio reported. "Our lives have really improved and things have changed tremendously," the child's father, Kayode Adewumi, stated on the fundraiser page.

The GoFundMe campaign remains active and currently collects money for the Tanitoluwa Adewumi Foundation, which supports "talented but less privileged children" and "homeless children," per the campaign. The page has garnered more than \$256,000.

Congolese cope with M23 rebel violence

BENI, Congo (AP): Kavira Mathe was making dinner for her two sons when bullets began flying. Eastern Congo's M23 rebels had attacked her village, killing scores of civilians. She and others fled for their lives, she said. "I lost several friends," said Mathe speaking to The Associated Press by phone from Kanyabayonga where she now shelters. Trekking 50 kilometers (some 30 miles) to safety, she saw roads littered with bodies that appeared to have been bound and shot, she said.

"It was really horrible to see," said Mathe. "We are tired of this war." Communities in eastern Congo are struggling to survive in the wake of that massacre and others in which at least 130 people were killed by M23 rebels in what the United Nations called "unspeakable violence" against civilians.

Nearly 26,000 people have been displaced since the attacks at the end of November, according to the UN refugee agency, adding to hundreds of thousands who have been uprooted since fighting began between M23 and a coalition of armed civilian protection militia more than a year ago. The Associated Press spoke with four people who fled the attacks in North Kivu province. They said M23 shot people indiscriminately, raided shops and chased them from their homes so that people had to hike to safety for hours over rugged terrain and through rivers, without food or water. Many now live in squalid conditions, cramped into small rooms with no money or access to fields for farming.

The M23 rebel group, largely comprised of Congolese ethnic Tutsis, rose to prominence 10 years ago when its fighters seized Goma, eastern Congo's largest city on the border with Rwanda. It derives its name from a March 23, 2009, peace deal, which it accuses the Congo government of not implementing. The rebel group was dormant for nearly a decade before resurfacing late last year. Since October, M23 violence has surged and the rebels have seized more territory including Rutshuru Center and Kiwanja and destroyed a newly established site for displaced Congolese who had recently returned from Uganda.

"This situation has directly put thousands of families in very poor living conditions. In the makeshift camps where they live, there is no food, no shelter, no drinking water, no primary health-care. In short, the families are in unprecedented suffering," said Francois Kamate, press officer for LUCHA, a local rights group. Aid organizations are struggling to cope with the soaring needs. Water is extremely limited in the areas surrounding Goma, contributing to an outbreak of cholera. More than 100 cases have been reported in recent weeks, said Caitlin Brady, Congo director for the Norwegian Refugee Council. "The humanitarian community is responding, but we have to have more resources to scale up," she said.

In Covid-hit Beijing, funeral homes and crematoriums are busy

BEIJING/SHANGHAI (Reuters): Hearse bearing the dead lined the driveway to a designated COVID-19 crematorium in the Chinese capital while workers at the city's dozen funeral homes were busier than normal, days after China reversed tight pandemic restrictions.

In recent days in Beijing the spread of the highly transmissible Omicron variant has hit services from catering to parcel deliveries. Funeral homes and crematoriums across the city of 22 million are also struggling to keep up with demand as more workers and drivers testing positive for coronavirus call in sick. China is yet to officially report any COVID deaths since Dec. 7 when the country abruptly ended many key tenets of its zero-COVID policy that had been championed by President Xi Jinping, following unprecedented public protests against the protocol.

A US-based research institute said this week that the country could see an explosion of cases and over a million people in China could die of COVID in 2023. A sharp surge in deaths would test authorities' efforts to move China away from endless testing, lockdowns and heavy travel restrictions, and realign with a world that has largely reopened to live with the disease. A Reuters journalist saw about 30 stationary hearses stopped in the driveway leading to the Dongjiao funeral home, a COVID-designated crematorium in Beijing.

Parked among them were an ambulance and a wagon with a sheet-wrapped corpse in the open trunk that was later picked up by workers in hazmat suits and moved to a preparatory room to await cremation. Three of the numerous chimneys billowed smoked continuously. A few metres away from the crematorium, in a funeral parlour, the Reuters journalist saw about 20 yellow body bags containing corpses on the floor. Reuters could not immediately establish if the deaths were due to COVID.

The parking security operator and the owner of an urn shop at the funeral home building, speaking on condition of anonymity, told Reuters the number of deaths was above average in this period and was more when compared to the period before lifting of most pandemic curbs on Dec. 7. Sick workers have also affected staffing at the roughly one dozen funeral parlours in Beijing.

"We've fewer cars and workers now," a staffer at Miyun Funeral



Home told Reuters by phone, also speaking on condition of anonymity, adding that there was a mounting backlog of demand for cremation services. "We've many workers who tested positive." It was not immediately clear if the struggle to meet the increased demand for cremation was also due to a rise in COVID-related deaths. At Huairou Funeral Home, a body was kept for three days before it could be cremated, a staffer said. "You can transport the body here yourself, it's been busy recently," the staffer said. China's health authority last reported COVID deaths on Dec. 3. The Chinese capital last reported a fatality on Nov. 23.

Yet respected Chinese news outlet Caixin reported that two veteran state media journalists had died after contracting COVID-19 in Beijing, among the first known deaths since China dismantled most of its zero-COVID policies. Caixin reported a 23-year-old medical student in Sichuan died of COVID on Dec. 14. Still, the National Health Commission reported no change to its official COVID death toll of 5,235 since the pandemic emerged in Wuhan province in late 2019.

Since lifting restrictions earlier this month, China has told its population of 1.4 billion to stay home if they have mild symptoms, as cities across China brace for their first waves of infections. Had the strict containment policies been lifted earlier, say on Jan. 3 this year, 250,000 people in China would have died, prominent Chinese epidemiologist Wu Zunyou

said. As of Dec. 5, the proportion of seriously or critically ill COVID patients had dropped to 0.18% of reported cases, Wu said, from 3.32% last year and 16.47% in 2020. This shows China's fatality rate from the disease is gradually falling, he said, without elaborating. Official figures on cases have become an unreliable guide as less testing is being done across the country following the easing of zero-COVID policies.

China stopped publishing the number of asymptomatic cases, citing a lack of PCR testing among people with no symptoms. The lack of officially reported COVID deaths for the past 10 days has stirred debate on social media over data disclosure, fuelled also by a dearth of statistics over hospitalisations and the number of seriously ill. "Why can't these statistics be found? What's going on? Did they not tally them or they just aren't announcing them?" one person on Chinese social media asked.

In Shanghai, more than 1,000 km (620 miles) south of Beijing, local education authorities told most schools to hold classes online starting, to cope with worsening COVID infections across China. In a sign of staffing crunches to come, Shanghai Disney Resort said that entertainment offerings may reduce due to a smaller workforce, although the theme park was still operating normally. At one of Shanghai's Christmas markets, in the city centre, there were few visitors. "Everyone is too scared," said one staffer at the ticket booth.

Peru's dark past surfaces as young protester laid to rest

QUINUA (AP): This rural hamlet nestled high in the Peruvian Andes was the site of a major battle that secured South America's independence from Spain in the 19th century. But, the streets of Quinua were overrun by weeping residents commemorating a far more senseless loss: the death of Clemer Rojas, a 23-year-old student who left his parents' home to protest the ousting of President Pedro Castillo and never returned.

A funeral procession of a few thousand peasant farmers, led by a steady drumbeat and people speaking in their native Quechua language, carried Rojas' casket draped in Peru's red and white flag to a colonial church where a mass was celebrated, and he was later buried in a nearby cemetery. Interspersed amid the crowd were signs calling for the closure of Congress and denouncing caretaker President Dina Boluarte as an "assassin." "My son is leaving. Tell me he's not leaving," Nilda Garcia, a street vendor, waived as friends and family members struggled to keep her from falling down.

Rojas died in clashes with the army in the nearby provincial capital of Ayacucho, which has emerged as an unlikely epicenter of unrest in Peru's still unfolding political crisis. The tumult was triggered by Castillo's attempt to close Congress — a futile act of gamesmanship widely condemned by the US and others as a self-coup but seen here, in Peru's

long-neglected countryside, as a pride-filled display of defiance against a hostile establishment that never allowed the former rural school teacher to govern since his shock victory 17 months ago. Boluarte has tried to quell the protests, emphasizing her own humble roots and support for protesters' demands that elections, scheduled for 2026, be pushed up to next year. At a news conference, Peru's first female president delivered extensive remarks in Quechua — a foreign language to past Peruvian presidents — comparing the highway blockades, acts of arson and violent protests engulfing Peru to the invisible, emotional damage suffered by children growing up in a broken home with constantly feuding parents.

"Didn't you see me walking across the country, filling plazas and looking for votes among brothers and sisters?" said Boluarte, who served as Castillo's running mate and only broke with him following his attempt to dissolve Congress. "Then why this violence in the streets? I didn't look to be here. I tried to protect him as much as I could." Authorities blame the bloodshed in Ayacucho on a horde of young protesters who attacked an army patrol with sharp objects, explosives and homemade weapons as it was racing toward the airport to break up an unruly crowd.

Nine people died that day — more than a third of the total deaths reported nationwide — as soldiers hustled

from the barracks as part of a 30-day state of emergency and indiscriminately fired tear gas, rubber bullets and live ammo into large crowds. In a tragic irony, Rojas was killed by a fellow conscript's bullet. Like his father, he joined the army as part of military service for Peruvian men that is mandatory in name only: most of the draftees, like Rojas, are teenagers hailing from impoverished, Quechua-speaking homes.

"He wasn't armed," says his father, Reider Rojas, who was dressed in black. "They fired at point-blank range. The autopsy said a bullet fired by a Galil rifle used by the army pierced his liver and lungs." In his hometown, Rojas is remembered as a good kid and an avid participant in folk dances around Carnival time who drove a moto taxi to pay for his studies at a vocational school.

Ayacucho's small size and sclerotic agro-based economy belie the oversized role it has played in Peru's history. Once a thriving outpost of the Incan empire, it was vanquished in the 16th century by Spanish colonizers. Centuries later, it was renamed Ayacucho, in reference to the battle where a rebel army led by Venezuelan-born Simon Bolivar gained the definitive upper hand against royalist forces sent from Spain. Its name in native Quechua translates as "corner of death" in honor of the battle's many casualties.

Economic pain, Turkish strikes drive Syrian Kurds to Europe

QAMISHLI, Syria (AP): Baran Ramadan Mesko had been hiding with other migrants for weeks in the coastal Algerian city of Oran, awaiting a chance to take a boat across the Mediterranean Sea to Europe. Days before the 38-year-old Syrian Kurd was to begin the journey, he received news that a smuggler boat carrying some of his friends had sunk soon after leaving the Algerian coast. Most of its passengers had drowned.

It came as a shock, after spending weeks to get to Algeria from Syria and then waiting for a month for a smuggler to put him on the boat. But having poured thousands of dollars into the journey, and with his wife and 4- and 3-year-old daughters counting on him to secure a life safe from conflict, the engineer-turned-citizen journalist boarded a small fishing boat with a dozen other men and took a group selfie to send to their families before they went offline.

After a 12-hour overnight journey, Mesko made his way to Almeria, Spain, on Oct. 15, and then flew to Germany four days later, where he is now an asylum seeker in a migrant settlement near Bielefeld. He's still getting used to the cold weather, and is using a translation app on his phone to help him get around while

learning German. He said he's hopeful his papers will be settled soon so his family can join him. At least 246 migrants have gone missing while trying to cross the western Mediterranean into Europe in 2022, the International Organization for Migration says. In the past few years, thousands more have perished making the dangerous sea voyage.

Mesko is among a growing number of Syrian Kurds making the journey to Europe on a winding course that includes travel by car and plane across Lebanon, Egypt, Libya, Algeria, then finally by boat to Spain. They say they are opting for this circuitous route because they fear detention by Turkish forces or Turkish-backed militants in Syria if they try to sneak into Turkey, the most direct path to Europe. According to data from the European Union border agency Frontex, at least 591 Syrians have crossed the Mediterranean from Algeria and Morocco to Spain in 2022, six times more than last year's total.

A Kurdish Syrian smuggler in Algeria said dozens of Kurds from Syria arrive in the Algerian coastal city of Oran each week for the sea journey. "I've never had numbers this high before," the smuggler told The Associated Press, speaking on

condition of anonymity for fear of arrest by Algerian authorities.

Years of conflict and economic turmoil have left their mark on Syria's northern areas, home to some 3 million people under de facto Kurdish control. The region has been targeted by Islamic State group militants, Turkish forces and Syrian opposition groups from the country's northwestern rebel-held enclave. Climate change and worsening poverty spurred a cholera outbreak in recent months. Like Mesko, many of the migrants come from the Syrian city of Kobani, which made headlines seven years ago when Kurdish fighters withstood a brutal siege by the Islamic State militant group.

The town was left in ruins, and since then, "not much has happened" to try to rebuild, said Joseph Daher, a professor at the European University Institute in Florence, Italy, adding that most development funding went to cities further east. Recent events in northeastern Syria have given its residents an additional incentive to leave. Turkey stepped up attacks on Kurdish areas in Syria after a bombing in Istanbul in November killed six people and wounded over 80 others. Ankara blames the outlawed Kurdish Workers' Party and the US-backed Kurdish militia, the People's

Protection Unit in Syria. Both have denied responsibility.

Since then, Turkish airstrikes have pounded areas across northeastern Syria, including Kobani, further battering its already pulverized infrastructure, and Ankara has vowed a ground invasion. Bozan Shahin, an engineer from Kobani, recalled a Turkish airstrike last month. "I saw my mother trembling in fear and holding my 4-year-old sister to keep her calm," Shahin said. He now wants to join the flow of Kurds headed from Syria to Europe.

"I have some friends who found a way to get to Lebanon through a smuggler and go somewhere through Libya," he said. "I'm not familiar with all the details, but I'm trying to see how I can take that journey safely." The operation, which takes weeks and costs thousands of dollars, is run by a smuggler network that bribes Syrian soldiers to get people through checkpoints where they could be detained for draft-dodging or anti-government activism, then across the porous border into Lebanon, the migrants and smugglers said.

There, the migrants typically stay in crowded apartments in Beirut for about a week while awaiting expedited passports from the Syrian

Embassy by way of a smuggler's middleman. With passports in hand, they fly to Egypt, where Syrians can enter visa-free, then take another flight to Benghazi in war-torn Libya before embarking on the journey to Algeria through another network of smugglers. "We went in vans and jeeps and they took us across Libya through Tripoli and the coastal road and we would switch cars every 500 kilometers or so," Mesko said.

During the journey across the desert, they had to cross checkpoints run by Libya's mosaic of armed groups. "Some of the guards at checkpoints treated us horribly when they knew we were Syrian, taking our money and phones, or making us stand outside in the heat for hours," he said. An armed group kidnapped the group of migrants who left before his and demanded \$36,000 for their release, Mesko said.

By the time they reached the Algerian city of Oran, Mesko was relieved to take refuge in an apartment run by the smugglers. While they waited for weeks, he and the other migrants spent most of their time indoors. "We couldn't move freely around Oran, because security forces are all over and we did not cross into the country legally," Mesko said. "There were also gangs

in the city or even on the coast who would try to mug migrants and take their money."

Human rights groups have accused the Algerian authorities of arresting migrants, and in some cases expelling them across land borders. According to the UN refugee agency, Algeria expelled over 13,000 migrants to neighboring Niger to its south in the first half of 2021. Despite his relief at arriving safely in Germany with a chance to bring his wife and girls there, Mesko feels remorse for leaving Kobani. "I was always opposed to the idea of migrating or even being displaced," he said. "Whenever we had to move to another area because of the war, we'd come back to Kobani once we could."

Mesko spends much of his time at asylum interviews and court hearings, but says he's in good spirits knowing he's started a process he only dreamed of months ago. He hopes to be granted asylum status soon, so his wife and daughters can reunite with him in Europe. "Syria has become an epicenter of war, corruption and terrorism," he said. "We lived this way for 10 years, and I don't want my children to live through these experiences, and see all the atrocities."

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Nagorno-Karabakh, a new crisis in making

ACCORDING to the media, Russia expressed concern over escalating tensions in its neighborhood between Armenia and Azerbaijan as a key road linking Armenia to the Yerevan-controlled disputed Nagorno-Karabakh enclave remained blocked for the consecutive fourth day. According to the details, a group of Azerbaijani environmental activists blocked the Lachin corridor, the only land route for people, goods, food, and medical supplies to reach Nagorno-Karabakh from Armenia across Azerbaijan territory.

The two former Soviet States and Caucasus Republics have reinvented the century-old dispute regarding jurisdiction over the Nagorno-Karabakh region that had been ruled by multiple dynasties with different administrative and geographical arrangements in the past. However, after the dissolution of the former Soviet Union, the two neighbors resorted to war to gain control over the autonomous region and have fought several wars over the past three decades. Historically, Nagorno-Karabakh is a part of Azerbaijan but home to over 120,000 ethnic Armenians who have sympathies toward Yerevan and intends to join Armenia. However, the region is surrounded by Azerbaijan's territory and the Lachin corridor is the only land route that connects the landlocked Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia. Recently, a group of Azerbaijani activists blocked the road in a peaceful stand-off with Russian troops, who are deployed in the region as a peacekeeper since 2020.

The Armenian government has termed the closure of the passage a gross violation of the bilateral Treaty between Baku and Yerevan. Armenia said that the protesters have been dispatched by the Azerbaijani government in an attempt to block Armenia's access to the region and called it hostage of population and the beginning of a humanitarian crisis in the region. On the other hand, the Azri government claimed that the protesters were, expressing their genuine frustration and rightful dissatisfaction of the Azerbaijani public with the illegal economic activity, looting of natural resources, and damage to the environment. Baku has accused Armenia of multiple breaches of bilateral agreements including illegal mining, laying of landmines, and looting of natural resources and minerals in the disputed territory.

In fact, global politics and regional rivalries have bitter facts and interesting colours and shades while belligerent nations commonly take unimaginable measures to exploit the others' weaknesses to consolidate their occupation, economic and military position through the introduction of changes to the political, geographical, and demographic landscapes of a particular area or a disputed region. Historically, Russia had played the role of a Policeman in the entire Central Asia and South Caucasus regions after Mikhail Gorbachev dissolved the Ex. USSR in 1991. Previously, Moscow brokered a tri-party truce between warring nations and deployed over 5,000 Russian troops as peacekeepers that regulate traffic and entry into the Armenian control Nagorno-Karabakh region since 2020. Presently, Baku has accused Russian Troops of supporting Armenia and obstructing Azerbaijanis' freedom of movement into the region, examining landmines laid by the Armenian Army and visiting mining sites in the area.

Armenia and Russia are close allies and previously, Moscow backed Armenia and Turkey supported Azerbaijan in the 2020 Karabakh war. Presently, Baku became annoyed by Moscow's inclination toward Yerevan and sharply drifted toward the west. The newest shift in regional politics had caused tremendous pressure on the Kremlin, which favors the status quo while western nations are glad over the eruption of upheaval in Moscow's backyard. Armenia and Azerbaijan both demand full control over the disputed territory which is not possible. Earlier, the Ukrainian war ruined the entire world, now, another catastrophe is likely to come through the newest campaign.

National capital and peril of encroachment

THE encroachment is a social evil, which is growing unhindered across the country and the national capital has no exception from illegal construction and encroachment in the markets, residential areas, and busy roads. Like all other major cities, this menace has grown up in posh sectors of the capital while residents pulled over into streets and shopkeepers blocked footpaths and parking areas in the markets. In fact, no implementation of the law and corruption of the government officials had been the real reason for the ever-growing encroachment, which has gotten complete ingress in our society.

The idea of Islamabad had been conceived as a model capital city about half a century ago, that not only meets the global standards of living, beauty, and cleanliness but also presents national prestige and a great Islamic legacy to the world. The planning and construction of this magnificent project were tasked to the Capital Development Authority (CDA), a newly formed autonomous body in the country.

Unfortunately, like all other cities and government departments, the Capital and CDA, both have come symbols of depletion, corruption, and lawlessness. The ungoverned constructions, tent villages, and Kuchi Abadies in the federal capital present the scenes of Southern Punjab and FATA. Whereas, the local housing societies and private Malls compete with Paris and London because of merit, uniformity, and rule of law. Realistically, the encroachment has shaped a serious social, administrative, and Security challenge for the government, while the relevant government departments and their employees are equally responsible for making up for this upheaval. The current situation merits the implementation of harsh measures by the government, so this cancer could be treated once and for all.

Quote of the day

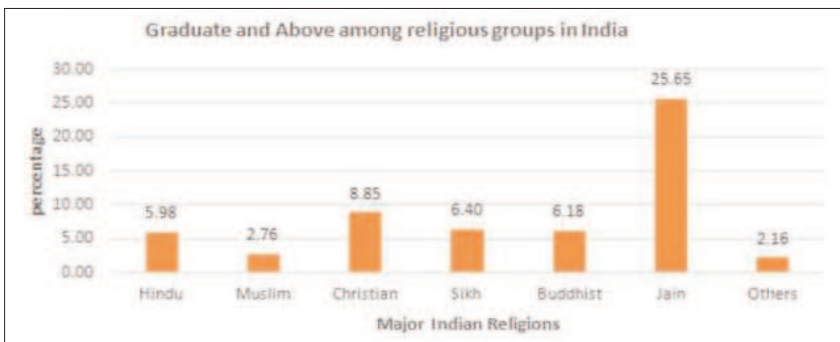
Competition has been shown to be useful up to a certain point and no further, but cooperation, which is the thing we must strive for today, begins where competition leaves off.
— Franklin Delano Roosevelt, American President [1936-1945]

Muslims will suffer the most

IN India, the nightmare for Indian Muslims does not appear to be ending anytime soon. As if the daily physical and virtual assaults on Indian Muslims weren't enough, the government of India has decided to further torment the Muslim community by scrapping the Maulana Azad National Fellowship (MANF). Following the report of the Sachar Committee in 2006, the scholarship was launched by the UPA-I government to support students from minority communities, such as Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, and Parsis, to pursue higher education. It was India's only fully funded fellowship, providing financial assistance to six notified religious minority students seeking higher education.

However, due to the highest proportion of Muslims among minorities, the majority of MANF recipients were Muslim students. As a result, Muslim students would be the most affected by the discontinuation of the scholarship even though it helped all minorities. Given the anti-minority stance of the incumbent government and the fact that the scholarship is named after a prominent Muslim leader and freedom fighter, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, and that the majority of scholarship recipients were Muslims, it

would not be incorrect to assume that the target of the decision is the Muslim community. The government must be reminded that the decision to discontinue the MANF is going to affect all minorities not just the Muslims. It may shift its anti-Muslim stance to another arena that only affects Muslims.



The ministry of minority affairs stated that the MANF scheme was no longer required because it ran concurrently with other scholarship programs. This is true because all minority students are eligible to receive assistance from the Junior Research Fellowship (JRF), and many receive assistance from the National Fellowship for OBC and a few receiving assistance from the National Fellowship for ST. However, these scholarships are given separately, not simultaneously. It means that if student A receives a scholarship from JRF or another parallel government scheme, he or she will be ineligible for all other schemes.

Abdul Moid

Given the reasoning of the minority affairs ministry to discontinue MANF, I sincerely hope that other ministries don't follow suit and stop giving fellowships to Scheduled Castes (NFSC), Scheduled Tribes (NFST), Persons with Disabilities (NFD), and

the minority Muslim community is the primary target. The minorities, especially Muslims will be left to compete only in a general or group scholarship schemes where the combined educational level of all including SRCs is better than Muslims. In this unfair

Other Backward Classes (NFOBC). Because Students from these communities and groups also benefit from one or more schemes in addition to the above fellowship schemes exclusively for them. If they do, which they will not (which is great), there will be only one overarching scholarship program for all students, which will primarily benefit upper caste and upper-class students. Now, you can understand the gravity of the situation that how the government by this decision has compromised the constitutional mandate of justice and equity for the marginalized sections of the society. In this scenario,

competition, Muslims will suffer the most. This will lead further marginalization of Muslims in higher education.

Considering that this government has been hostile to religious minorities, especially Muslims and Christians, it would not make sense to say that the ministry made an honest decision. After all, the decision to repeal MANF comes at a time when the Indian government has been systematically attacking the Muslim community at large. It has been accused of committing atrocities in the name of "nation-building" and "national security," and of enacting anti-

Muslim policies such as the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) amongst many. The shutting down of the MANF is just another attempt by the government to harass and marginalize the Muslim community.

The decision appears to run counter to the government's own oft-repeated slogan "sabka saath, sabka vikas". However, it is very much in line with the ruling party's unstated ideological position of excluding Muslims from all walks of life. The latest move is a cruel reminder that the government does not care about the welfare of the minority community and is instead intent on punishing them. The decision to close the MANF disproportionately affects Muslims and deprives them of a valuable educational opportunity. It also sends a clear message that the government is not interested in promoting education among the Muslim community.

The decision to discontinue the MANF scholarship is particularly worrying for Muslim students who have the lowest educational attainment levels among all socio-religious categories (SRCs). Numerous government reports and policies have for a long time shown that the educational standards of Indian Muslims are deteriorating, but despite this, neither the current nor the previous governments have taken any concrete action.

Rather, this government is hell-bent on robbing Muslims of whatever limited opportunities exist for them.

This latest step by the Indian government is therefore a blatant disregard for the rights of the Muslim minority and a violation of their fundamental right to education.

At every level of educational attainment, Muslims fall behind both the general population and other socio-religious categories. The disparity in higher education attainment is considerably more pronounced and starker. As above Chart, indicates, only 2.76 percent of Muslims get a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 5.98 percent of Hindus, 8.85 percent of Christians, 6.40 percent of Sikhs, 6.18 percent of Buddhists, and 25.65 percent of Jain. Given that Indian Muslims have the lowest educational backwardness of all socio-religious categories, and particularly in higher education, only a heartless and callous government could make such a decision.

The decision to terminate MANF is undeniably a regressive step that will disproportionately affect the Indian Muslims among the SRCs. It will further dim the already bleak prospects of Muslims in higher education. The move will even more deepen the sense of hopelessness and alienation among Muslim youths. The government must reconsider and overturn its decision.

Japan sees China as ‘the greatest strategic challenge ever faced’

Aurelia George Mulgan

THE past year has not been good for Japan, nor for Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's government. Japan has faced a dramatically deteriorating global and regional security environment and a perfect storm of challenges on the home front, including the COVID-19 pandemic, soaring inflation and the ramifications of the assassination of former prime minister Shinzo Abe on 8 July.

Kishida initially touted himself as 'the leader that this era needs'. He began with high approval ratings and a packed policy agenda. But by October, support

series of ministerial departures likened to falling dominoes. The fate of another minister currently hangs in the balance.

The nature and extent of ties between the ruling Liberal Democratic Party and the Unification Church have slowly been revealed since Abe's death. The issue prompted a cabinet reshuffle in August, with multiple ministers disclosing links to the church and Kishida's instruction to ruling party members to sever any such connections. It still took five months for the government to produce legislation to prevent the kind of financial exploitation that motivated Abe's

a strong protective supporter, particularly since the death of Abe, whom Kishida relied on as a sounding board, adviser and internal party influencer.

The result is a dysfunctional Prime Minister's Office and an administration under pressure because of declining support rates. Even October's comprehensive economic stimulus package designed to counter the weak yen and rising prices did not restore public confidence in the administration. Consumer prices (excluding those of food) have risen by nearly 4 per cent in a year while annual

ing to interfere in the free market, but building a broad middle class through income redistribution, a reduction in economic inequality and increased wages has been elusive. Nor have there been major advances on key measures such as regulatory reform and raising labour productivity.

Kishida's administration is generally behaving just like its predecessors — prioritising short-term spending boosts over structural reforms. Shortcomings on the home front have been counterbalanced by the prime minister's busy diplomatic

level to Japanese security from North Korean ballistic missiles, a more belligerent Russia and the extraordinary expansion in Chinese military power and growing assertiveness in the region. The result has been a major rethink of Japanese defence policy, with the government approving revisions to three key national security documents.

The new National Security Strategy now designates Russia as a 'potential threat' and China as 'the greatest strategic challenge ever faced'.

In a major advancement in defence capability Japan will accelerate its acquisition of counterstrike mis-

ly increasing Japan's defence expenditure, however, has been highly contested even within the LDP. Kishida has pledged 43 trillion yen (US\$313 billion) in defence expenditure over five years to fiscal 2027 — a rise of more than 50 per cent, or 2 per cent of GDP — but objections have been raised to each and every alternative to fund the increase. In the end, the LDP approved a basic framework of tax hikes involving income and corporate tax surcharges, and an increase in the tobacco tax.

It has been a difficult year for Kishida despite the 'fresh start' he got with the

Kishida's administration is generally behaving just like its predecessors — prioritising short-term spending boosts over structural reforms. Shortcomings on the home front have been counterbalanced by the prime minister's busy diplomatic schedule including amicable meetings with South Korea's President Yoon and Chinese President Xi, and the prospect of new Japan-China defence hotline in 2023. Relations with Taiwan are also expanding at the political level, continuing Abe's legacy. Another focus has been promoting Abe's free and open Indo-Pacific initiative but the most pressing strategic challenges have been the increased threat level to Japanese security from North Korean ballistic missiles, a more belligerent Russia and the extraordinary expansion in Chinese military power and growing assertiveness in the region. The result has been a major rethink of Japanese defence policy, with the government approving revisions to three key national security documents. The new National Security Strategy now designates Russia as a 'potential threat' and China as 'the greatest strategic challenge ever faced'. In a major advancement in defence capability Japan will accelerate its acquisition of counterstrike missiles as part of an integrated air and missile defence system enabling 'punitive deterrence'. This will include purchasing 500 US precision-guided Tomahawk cruise missiles as a stop-gap measure until Japan can develop its own standoff missiles, as well as plans to work with the United States on a joint counterattack capability plan and potential cooperation during deployment.

for his government had plummeted to below 30 per cent with one popular magazine describing the public as 'increasingly disgusted with Kishida's lack of leadership'. Previous prime ministers, such as Kishida's predecessor Yoshihide Suga, resigned with approval ratings this low.

As for the Kishida cabinet, the news was equally bad with an approval rate of just 31 per cent in November. This followed a

killer.

The prime minister's 'leading by listening' has given way to reports that he no longer heeds the advice of those around him, including Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno. Kishida lacks two critical support structures. The first is a 'watchdog' to protect him and lay the policy groundwork — the role that former prime minister Suga played for Abe. The second is Kishida's lack of

earnings have increased by only 3 per cent in 20 years. OECD statistics now put Japan's annual per capita income 11th from the bottom among 34 comparable member countries.

Kishida's paradigm-shifting economic policy initiatives, touted early in his administration, such as rejecting neoliberalism and building a 'new model of capitalism for Japan', remain unrealised. Early on, Kishida appeared will-

schedule including amicable meetings with South Korea's President Yoon and Chinese President Xi, and the prospect of new Japan-China defence hotline in 2023. Relations with Taiwan are also expanding at the political level, continuing Abe's legacy.

Another focus has been promoting Abe's free and open Indo-Pacific initiative but the most pressing strategic challenges have been the increased threat

siles as part of an integrated air and missile defence system enabling 'punitive deterrence'. This will include purchasing 500 US precision-guided Tomahawk cruise missiles as a stop-gap measure until Japan can develop its own standoff missiles, as well as plans to work with the United States on a joint counterattack capability plan and potential cooperation during deployment.

The issue of dramatical-

LDP's sweeping victory in July's upper house elections, the slight uptick in support for the cabinet in December and the continuing endorsement of all factions for his leadership.

Next year will be no easier with local government elections scheduled in April and big issues on the table such as mounting security challenges, a declining birth rate and overcoming obstacles to economic reform.

N. Korea is ‘preparing for a nuclear war’

Andrey Yashlavsky

NORTH Korea fired two ballistic missiles, the South Korean military said. The launches come days after Pyongyang said it had tested a new "high thrust" engine in a bid to advance its nuclear and missile programs. Experts warn that North Korea is "preparing for a nuclear war."

North Korea fired two ballistic missiles, the Seoul military said, days after Pyongyang announced it had successfully tested a solid-fuel engine for a new weapon system.

Military tensions on the Korean Peninsula have soared this year as Pyongyang conducted unprecedented mass weapons tests, including the launch of its most

advanced ICBM last month, according to The Guardian.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said on Sunday it detected two ballistic missiles fired from the Dongchang-ri area in North Pyongan province. The missiles were fired from 11:13 to 12:05 local time towards the East Sea, also known as the Sea of Japan, the report said.

"Our military has stepped up surveillance and vigilance by working closely with the United States and maintaining a state of full readiness," the South Korean Chiefs of Staff said in a statement.

Japanese Deputy Defense Minister Toshio Ino said the missiles fell into the sea and so far there

has been no damage to aircraft or ships in the area.

The launch came just days after North Korea tested a "high-thrust solid-propellant engine" and state media described it as an important test "to develop another new type of strategic weapon system." The development could allow Pyongyang to have a more mobile and hard-to-find arsenal of intercontinental ballistic missiles capable of reaching the US mainland.

North Korea has conducted a series of tests of nuclear-capable ballistic missiles in recent months, including last month's launch of its longest-range experimental liquid-propellant ICBM, the Hwaseong-17,

designed to carry multiple warheads.

Ankit Panda, a nuclear policy expert at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, told CNN last week that the pace of testing this year shows Pyongyang has become a missile power. "The big picture is that North Korea is literally turning into a major operator of large-scale missile forces," the expert said. - The word "test" is no longer appropriate to describe the majority of North Korean missile launches. Most of the rockets they have launched this year are part of military exercises. They are preparing for a nuclear war." Ankit Panda and other ana-

lysts point out that North Korea's missile tests are in line with an ambitious plan that Kim Jong-un developed in 2021 to make North Korea a powerful power in this area.

Some experts say North Korea will eventually use the expanded arsenal to push for sanctions relief and other concessions from the United States.

The exact status of North Korea's nuclear strikes remains a secret, as all of its ICBM tests in recent years have been conducted at a steep angle to avoid neighboring countries.

Some experts speculate that North Korea already has operational nuclear-tipped missiles that could hit the entire United States. But other analysts believe

that Pyongyang is still a long way from acquiring such weapons, saying the DPRK has yet to publicly prove that it has the technology to protect warheads from the harsh re-entry conditions.

The US and South Korea have stepped up their regular military exercises that provoke North Korea to retaliate. Washington and Seoul are seeking to further strengthen their joint defence capabilities in the face of North Korea's advancing nuclear program.

North Korea has threatened pre-emptive use of nuclear weapons in potential conflicts with the US and South Korea, and the US military has warned Pyongyang that the use of nuclear weapons "will lead to the end of this regime."

This is not forgiven

AN elite French university was at the center of a scandal - a choreographer who insisted on separating male and female roles in classical dances was suspended from work. Why in Europe they are punished for traditional approaches to education - in the material of RIA Novosti.

Leading and led
The Paris Institute of Political Studies, or, as it is more commonly known, Science Po, is the cadre of the French elite. Graduates include influential journalists, entrepreneurs, diplomats, a dozen foreign heads of state, a dozen prime ministers and five presidents of the Fifth Republic, including the current one, Emmanuel Macron.

In addition to the main program, Science Po, like other major institutions of higher education, offers students many sections, from sports to theater. Valerie Plasene led an elective class of ballroom dancing. A graduate of Science Po herself, she had been teaching for eight years, was in good standing with the management, and was popular with students. However, in December she lost her position, refusing to compromise her principles.

The university, without notifying the teacher, changed the procedure for enrolling in dance lessons: if earlier students indicated

their gender in the questionnaires, then in the new semester they were asked to limit themselves to the gender-neutral English words leader and follower ("leader" and "follower").

As a result, the majority signed up as "leaders", and some of the male students - as "followers". However, the teacher did not see any point in this and at the very first lesson she built the students in two lines, dividing the young men and girls so that they could choose a couple for themselves.

Homophobia and discrimination

Some of the progressive youth did not like it very much. Ms. Plazene was complained about, accusing her of repeated sexist, discriminatory, homophobic and degrading statements. And also in the fact that she did not want to teach same-sex couples.

"I was contacted by the management, saying that my remarks during class made one of the students feel uncomfortable. They say that it is necessary to pay special attention to the feelings of students, since many are very vulnerable and it is better not to mention some things today," Plazene said in a TV interview.

She did not agree with the claims, because she is convinced that she did not offend anyone. "Yes, I say "man" and "woman." There

Daniil Nizamutdinov
is a strict order in dancing, a certain set of rules - I was taught that way, and in all textbooks the roles in a couple are different, "she explains.

This is completely natural, since by nature men are usually larger and stronger, and the role reversal will not allow many dance steps and lifts. In her opinion, just the division into leader - follower infringes on the fair sex, since in the dance both partners are equivalent and the woman is not at all "led".

"The interaction of partners of different sexes creates unity and harmony. This is the basis, it has always been like this," the choreographer emphasizes. Indication of gender when registering for classes is also necessary to form an approximately equal gender composition of participants. Few young people come to dance classes, so we need to ask the girls to invite acquaintances more actively.

Finally, the choreographer considers same-sex couples simply unaesthetic, although he admits this when someone lacks a partner.

Political correctness as a religion

The university management was not convinced by the teacher's arguments: she was offered to either apolo-

gize to the students and agree with the terms leader and follower, or quit. Plazene left the university.

The story got into the press and quickly scattered on social networks, dividing commentators into two camps. The right stood up for the teacher and attacked the Science Po directorate, while the left stood up for the offended feelings of the students.

"I'm one of those who complained. This teacher is a sexist and homophobic, constantly made inappropriate remarks. Blatant unprofessionalism, from which many feel uncomfortable," wrote one Science Po student.

"I was also in her class and I disagree with you. There was nothing nasty in what she said, at worst a couple of faux pas that only indicate that she belongs to another generation. However, none of this should be used to lead to such a development of events," replied another.

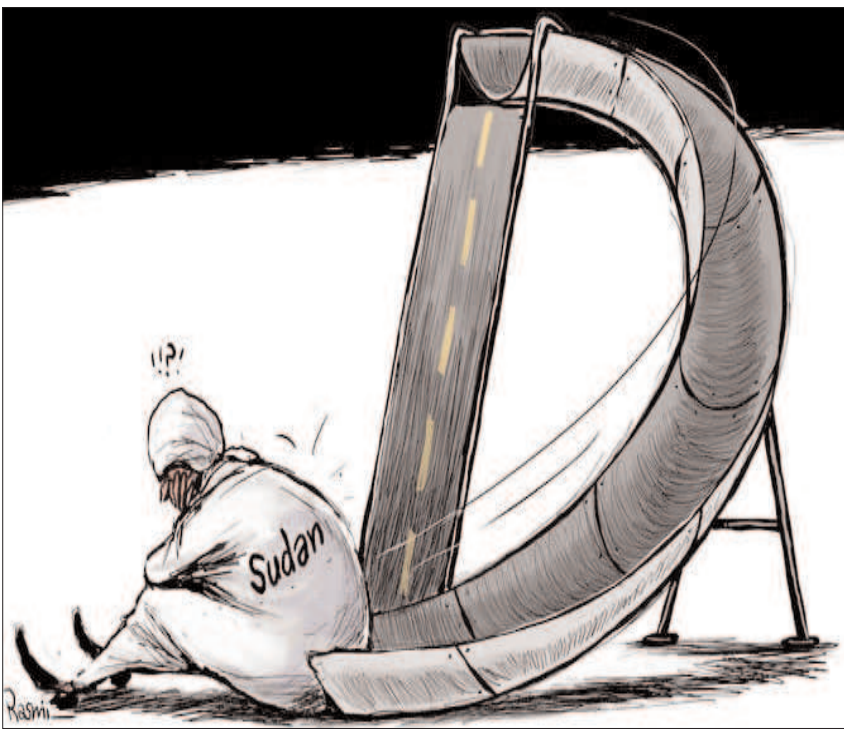
Director of the Institute for Political Studies Matthias Visherá said that the actions of the teacher did not comply with the ethical charter of the university, which does not allow discrimination in any form. He also emphasizes that the terms leader-follower are widely used in the world.

Besides, Visherá adds, Plazene quit herself.

Meanwhile, many accused the leadership of Science Po in the absence of common sense and the dictates of political correctness elevated to the absolute. Just as it happens in educational institutions in the United States, where you need to fully follow the modern gender theory that rejects the difference between the sexes: they say that gender does not determine a person, but a person determines gender. And another position is completely unacceptable.

There is an opinion that today the French elites are completely subordinate to the American ones, and this, of course, does not bypass the forge of national administration personnel. So, according to a recent study by the newspaper Figaro, three-quarters of Science Po students consider the differences between men and women artificially imposed by society. This is not surprising: the professors in France are overwhelmingly left-wing and the corresponding agenda is being promoted in educational institutions.

And tolerance for various kinds of minorities in the best American tradition gradually turned into intolerance towards those who, like Ms. Plazene, for example, still believe in the biological difference of the sexes. And dare to say it out loud. This is not forgiven.



Assam is the dark side of India

ASSAM is the dark side of the planet that is India. Rest of India neither knows nor cares what happens there. That has happened time and again. That is to say India does not seem to really know what is happening to it or it is impossible to retrieve the truth from the messy accumulation of lies and distortions. For example the truth about the bloody and bitter ULFA episode and the hair-raising incidents of gruesome secret killings will perhaps never be known, i. e. the extent of secret involvement of state agencies in such violence.

Into this blurry scene has stepped in an entity that can feed upon and acquire ever increasing strength from this confusion. It has hit upon two unailing methods that have served it well. First, showering freebies and hard cash on various sections of the population without actually solving their problems, or even covering the majority of people of each section. 35000 schoolgirls have been given scooters at a cost of about 300 crores of rupees. It may be noted that many millions of school girls had not been covered and presumably will not be covered during the present term or later.

Then under various opaque schemes artists and writers are being given literary awards and pensions galore in an unprecedented manner. Farmers have been regularly given 20kg of rice per head every day so that they not only have much more than enough per family to buy other necessities to live comfortably without having to soil their hands. First the nightmare of soaring cost of raising rice-crop making farming unviable, but the process has already begun, and it will not be possible to stop it.

Hiren Gohain

applause of beneficiaries and increasing tribe of toadies, that poor people (including families even possessing fridges and elderly people in old age homes) will be covered by the Arunoddo Scheme that hands out dollops of cash in haphazard manner. There is no rigorous checks on the criteria for selecting beneficiaries, the amount needed for significant relief, and actual delivery. Nor is it known how it will affect the government's finances, not to speak of the extent of anticipated benefit.

Under this blaring propaganda what is happening is actually quite alarming. Assam is the fifth state in poor performance in failure to relieve hunger, first in incidence of violent rape, and among leaders in incidence of crime and suicide for economic hardship and frustration for loss of hope. The answer to these accusing figures is just announcing grand-sounding schemes that amount to little. For example land is acquired or sieged from so-called foreigners to relieve landlessness (there are now three million people without land, mostly poor farmers), and then quietly handed over to private business. Public education is on a steep slide downhill with millions of students facing a dark future and a record-breaking drop-out rate among poor families.

There is continuous din day and night from furious construction work at sites of new six-lane roads, bridges, flyover, toll gates, leveling of hills, diverting or desiccating rivers, decimating forests. The destruction of or damage to forests is followed invariably by scavengers looting timber, coal, wild species to

surge of establishing medical colleges and universities in every town and subdivision to the drum-beat of ending forever the medical bottlenecks and health issues of an underdeveloped state. Scores of crores of rupees change hands as commission from builders of imposing buildings, suppliers of costly machines. But there are pitifully few trained doctors and teachers in various departments. Some of these medical colleges have no departments of Cardiology and Neurology or very rudimentary ones. It is alleged that the same set of people are shifted around as showpieces of staff and teachers before visiting teams of ICMR.

With much fanfare corruption rackets from Congress days (from a time when present CM was number 2 in a Congress cabinet) in APSC examinations was investigated and accused persons convicted. But in the upshot some beneficiaries got kicked out from civil service but many convicted stayed on and were promoted! So much for the hype for months on end to corruption. Several tests for entry to posts in the police reeked of rank corruption but investigation stopped halfway and petered out. Blatant financial profligacy is joined by other practices to muffle doubt and douse anger. Not a week passes without some festivity and celebration led in person by the hyper-active CM.

The entire period so far of Himanta Biswa Sharma's term as Chief Minister has been marked by aggressive, bellicose and incessant howling by him about the threat posed by 'Moghuls' to Assam's culture and civilization'. He actually included in the

BJP and RSS cannot be expected to continue the free gifts indefinitely. There is an urgent warning note against such freebies from the Finance Ministry. The Supreme Court has also voiced its disapproval of such sine cures. The future of such schemes of charity is grim. Anyday the lazy dream may collapse and its addicts might find themselves out in the cold.

and then the unexpected boon of living without care and need to labour. The combination makes it imperative to join the BJP bandwagon and cast votes in return for fear of losing the boon.

And so on. BJP and RSS cannot be expected to continue the free gifts indefinitely. There is an urgent warning note against such freebies from the Finance Ministry. The Supreme Court has also voiced its disapproval of such sine cures. The future of such schemes of charity is grim. Anyday the lazy dream may collapse and its addicts might find themselves out in the cold. But the lavish and incessant showers of such benefits in return for votes are not financed by budgeted and successful development, but by reckless bank-loans from various sources. Assam's public stood at, Rs 1 lakh 25 lakh till end of November 2022. The state government went ahead to borrow Rs. 800 crores more to meet the cost of such wasteful hand-outs.

In the latest development the reckless CM has announced to thunderous

the tune of hundreds of crores of rupees also spawning horrid crimes. For example land is seized from so-called foreigners. Little of it seems to hold out any prospect of development or empowerment to natives. What appears to be taking place is break-neck preparation for setting the stage for Big Capital's ACT EAST adventure with Southeast Asia. But the din of loud praise and celebration drowns unease and questions. One frightening cost of such development is the stampede of large herds of wild elephants into adjoining settlements and villages from destroyed forests running amuck, destroying standing crops, razing homes beyond repair and killing men women and children almost every day. Elephants have also died of accidents on unfamiliar terrain, train hits and poisoning and cruel contraptions. The CM's frontal photos beaming from ear to ear appear almost every day full page in newspapers, but the horrifying news on elephants are pushed down to small print in inside pages.

Then the incredible

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‘The White Man’s Burden’

RECENTLY, the British think tank, the Royal Institute of International Affairs, also known as Chatham Ho-use, published an article by the director of its Russia and Eurasia program, James Nixey. In it, he writes that even a Ukrainian victory on the battlefield will not help the West defeat Russia. This, in his opinion, can be achieved in only one way - by destroying something called the "imperial idea" in the Russian mind.

"The imperial itch is so deeply rooted in Russians that it needs to be eradicated not only from the Russian arsenal, but also from the intentions and moods of the elites and the common people. This will be difficult to achieve, because many believe in this idea with religious fervor - even the Russian Orthodox Church justifies Russian "imperialism" with messianism," the author writes.

No, it didn't seem to you: a subject of the former mistress of the seas blames other people for imperial ambitions. Yes, this is done by the representative of the nation that gave world literature a manifesto of colonialism called "The White Man's Burden".

There are many examples of how London diligently dragged this very

burden on the way to building an "empire on which the sun never sets", abundantly flavoring the route with blood, there are many: this is the Great Famine in Ireland, and the first concentration camps in the history - for the Boers in South Africa, and the persecution of an entire people with opium in China, and the slave trade by Africans (here, of course, the British were not alone - all of Europe tried, which is why we now have to kneel).

Separately, it is worth mentioning India. Its plunder by Britain is a fairly well-known fact, but the mistress of the seas was famous for more than one robbery. It was here that the British actively used such a thing as the "devil's wind": the rebellious sepoys were tied to the muzzle of a cannon, and then fired from it so that the cannonball or buckshot would pass through the body. And these were not isolated cases - subjects of Queen Victoria put such executions on stream.

But let's leave history to historians - in the past of many peoples there are pages that seem monstrous to today's reader (although they can hardly be woven into volumes as heavy as those of the United Kingdom). Decades ago, Britain lost its colonies, but

David Narmania

it still has not got rid of colonial thinking. However, it is worth noting that this, as with the slave trade, applies to the entire West.

Britain, the US and Europe after the Cold War proclaimed themselves masters of the globe. They invented more sophisticated ways to enrich themselves at the expense of others, changing the mechanism, but retaining the essence. The well-being of Western civilization has been built for centuries at the expense of the exploitation of other peoples, reinforcing in the heads of its representatives the idea of their own exclusivity. The collapse of the Soviet Union was the last argument in its favor, because the West had no equal opponents in terms of ideas in terms of strength.

And then he rushed to change the world in his image and likeness. London, Washington, Paris and other European capitals came to the conclusion that they have the right to determine the right side of history, the correctness and incorrectness of views, thoughts, preferences. The need to export Western democracy has become an axiom: only what they consider good is good. And the

only bad thing is that they condemn.

Under this banner, the bombing of Yugoslavia, the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, the "Arab Spring", the NATO operation in Libya took place. At the same time, the West preferred not to notice the extermination of civilians in the DPR and LPR.

But, as the further development of events showed, the "civilized world" turned out to be wrong. Nowhere did he manage to achieve the stated goals, and their actions were less and less consistent with the epithet "civilized".

Despite this, the United States and its allies continue to consider their point of view the only true one and impose it on the whole world - what is this, Mr. Nixie, if not a manifestation of imperial ideas? And this behavior is manifested not only in politics, but also in other areas. How else to explain all the new letters in the LGBTQ+ acronym? This is increasingly slipping into surreal and buffoonery - through the efforts of the liberal-democratic camp, the hackneyed meme about the gender "Apache combat helicopter" will soon become a reality.

And they carry this banner where it is not expected at all - in societies where

religion and traditions play a much more prominent role.

In this respect, the West turns into a kind of Mr. Smith from The Matrix - everything he touches, he wants to make himself. In this regard, another analogy suggests itself: the program that was designed to protect the matrix itself eventually turned into a virus, not to say - into a tumor. At the same time, what Nixie is trying to pass off as imperial thinking is nothing more than an attempt to protect himself from this onslaught. Russia did not become part of the Western world after the collapse of the USSR, it turned out to be too different from it in an ideological sense to abandon its cultural heritage. And too big and rich for the US, Britain and their allies to ignore.

Of course, imperial thinking must be fought. This is exactly what Russia is doing in challenging the unipolar world.

This is a very difficult path, but in this confrontation Russia comprehends itself and tries to formulate its vision of the future - it almost lost this right after the collapse of the USSR. Of course, this understanding will not happen quickly, but the process has already begun, and it will not be possible to stop it.

Andrey Vladimirov

about here. Three months ago, mass protests swept the country, which seemed to have every chance of turning into a revolution and overthrowing the theocratic dictatorship. But the Mullah regime survived. How? The regime not only does not hide its methods, but, on the contrary, demonstrates it with deliberate frankness: the protesters are executed in public.

Nearly 30 rebels have already been sentenced to death by hanging. And this is far from the limit: the processes continue. There are also juveniles on the death list. The death sentence was passed, in particular, on Sonia Sharifi, who is not yet 17. According to media reports, the girl was accused of "enmity against God", as well as "preparing Molotov cocktails" and "writing graffiti". The noose also threatens 15-year-old Amir Hossein Rahimi: the charges are about the same.

The sentences against two suicide bombers have already been carried out. The first execution took place on December 8, the second - on the 13th, that is, on the day when the Russian Prosecutor General flew to Iran. Whether Igor Krasnov visited the place of execution is unknown. But why not actually visit? First, as already mentioned, executions in Iran are public, and in this case the element of entertainment is even more enhanced: the sentenced, 23-year-old Majidreza Rakhnavard, was hanged on a crane. See from

afar.

Secondly, if such a booze, such an exchange of experience, has already begun, as they say, then it is necessary to exchange properly: to study the experience of friends in all its inseparable fullness. It should be noted, by the way, that the Iranians are leaders not only in terms of suppressing anti-government protests, but also in many other issues. For example, they are head and shoulders ahead of us in the fight against adulterers.

According to Article 88 of the Iranian Penal Code, "Adultery committed by an unmarried person is punishable by 100 lashes of scourging."

And in the Russian Criminal Code there is no article punishing for this at all. Well, at least for now: who knows how far the process of sharing experiences will go.

Iran has gone far ahead in countering non-traditional sexual relations: "The act of sodomy... is subject to a normalized punishment of one hundred lashes... If in such a case the active participant in the act is a person who does not profess Islam, and the passive participant is a person professing Islam, the first is assigned a normalized punishment in the form of the death penalty..."

Persons who commit an act of lesbianism are given a normalized punishment of one hundred lashes... An act of lesbianism committed for the fourth time is punishable by death."

And here is what awaits

those who encroach on someone else's property: "The normalized punishment for theft is executed as follows: for the first theft, four fingers of the right hand of the punished are cut off, so that the thumb and palm remain intact; for the second theft, half of the foot of the left foot is cut off, so that a part of the place that is wetted during ritual washing remains intact. Recall, by the way, that protests in Iran erupted after the death of 23-year-old Mahsa Amini: she was detained by a Sharia police patrol for "inappropriate wearing of the hijab" and died soon after. According to the authorities, Mahsa suffered a sudden heart attack. According to relatives and witnesses, the cause of death was the brutal beating of the girl by the police.

But the detention itself was in any case within the law: the appearance of a woman in a public place without a hijab or even in a hijab, but wearing it incorrectly, not in accordance with Islamic norms, is a criminal offense in Iran, which is punishable by imprisonment for up to two months and / or a large monetary fine.

In general, everything, as we see, is clear, precise, everything is laid out on the shelves. No understatement, gaps, legal gaps. Actually, the only question that arises in connection with this is: how does all this "advanced" experience correlate with the protection of human rights and freedoms?

How does all this “advanced” experience correlate with the protection of HRs and freedoms?

IF we believe the state institutions responsible for protecting human rights and freedoms, things in this area have been generally good in our country so far. But now, apparently, it will be quite good. After all, if before our state fought for our rights and freedoms alone, now a powerful ally has come to the rescue: the Prosecutor General of Russia and the Organization of the General Inspectorate of the Islamic Republic of Iran signed a Memorandum of Understanding and Cooperation.

The full text of the document, unfortunately, is not given, but "one of the priority issues, first of all, is the protection of human rights and freedoms," assures the official website of the Russian supervisory agency. The memorandum was signed during the recent visit of Russian Prosecutor General Igor Krasnov to Tehran.

Judging by the information on the website of the RF GP, the trip was extremely fruitful. Igor Viktorovich met with his Iranian counterpart, Prosecutor General of the Islamic Republic of Iran Mohammad Jafar Montazeri, with the head of the Iranian judiciary Gholyam Hossein Mohseni Ezhei, with the head of the Organization of the General Inspection of the Islamic Republic Zabiholla Khodayan...

In addition to the above-mentioned memorandum, a program of cooperation

between the Prosecutor General's Offices of the two countries for 2023-2025 and an interdepartmental agreement on the creation of a working group to combat crimes were also signed. At all his Iranian meetings, Igor Krasnov emphasized the similarity of "threats and challenges faced by Russia and Iran" and, accordingly, their law enforcement systems.

"Particularly topical issues that require the exchange of experience within the framework of mutual cooperation, the Prosecutor General of Russia called countering attempts from outside to destabilize the domestic situation and create ground for mass unrest," the official statement says. opinion, effective legislation and certain tactics that allow effectively countering these and other similar phenomena, including information crime," Igor Krasnov noted.

But apparently, our guardians of the law have something to succeed with their Iranian colleagues. Otherwise, Krasnov would not have insisted on the need for an exchange of experience.

Exchange is when not only we give them, but they give us. It is not specified which Iranian "tactics" aroused keen interest among Russian prosecutors. But since we are talking primarily about the fight against attempts to "destabilize the domestic situation", in general, it is not difficult to guess.

The Iranian authorities have something to brag



Undeclared ban on industrial law material must be lifted: President

LAHORE (INP): President All Pakistan Business Forum (APBF), Syed Maaz Mahmood expressing grave concern over unannounced ban of the government on import of goods, non-clearance of consignments and unavailability of dollars with the banks has asked the government to ensure dollar availability for import of raw material, besides allowing unrestricted import of industrial machinery and spare parts to avert any halt in industrial operations in the country.

In a statement issued here on Sunday, he urged the government to take immediate steps to ensure availability of forex otherwise industries may close down, which will have adverse impact on the overall economy of the country, as the country's total liquid foreign exchange reserves held by the State Bank have plunged by \$784 million to a nearly four-year low of \$6.72 billion.

Syed Maaz Mahmood

Govt urged to modernize surgical industry

SIALKOT (APP): Prominent industrialist of surgical industry Imran Ashraf stressed on the need to modernize surgical industry by ensuring transfer of advanced manufacturing technology from European countries.

While talking to APP here on Sunday, he said that a century old surgical industry was facing shortage of skilled people.

He urged the government to start advanced training programmes for preparing skilled labour for surgical industry.

"The industry will flourish if modern technology will be introduced and training institutes will be setup, where workers will be trained and skilled labor will be produced", he added.

He highlighted that some instruments including laparoscopic were not making value added instruments because its raw material was not available in Pakistan.

"We don't have good quality stainless steel, we import it from Japan saying that the good quality instruments are made from European, Japanese and German steel, he added.

He said that there was no steel mill in Pakistan from where we can produce quality stainless steel.

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

Chairman APBF Ibrahim Qureshi said that the foreign exchange reserves should remain the top agenda of the government.

However, SBP's reserves have dropped by more than \$4 billion from around \$11 billion at the time when this government took the helm in April 2022. He said that APBF is in favor of export expansion and this is where we should plan to focus our efforts to take this forward for sustained economic growth. He said that our tax to GDP percentage is very low at 9.2 percent. We have to do better in order to achieve economic stability but we will undertake reforms in a gradual and orderly fashion in this regard.

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

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

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

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

Maaz Mahmood attributed the fall in foreign exchange reserves to a payment of \$1 billion against the maturity of sukuk. However, he said the \$6.7 billion reserves were not calculated after the payment for bonds.

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

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

He said that the demand

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

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

Maaz said that the unannounced and improper policy of the government aimed at containing imports is beyond comprehension. Former Finance Minister imposed ban on luxury items which was removed on foreign pressure. Ban on import of items under Chapters 84 & 85, imposed five months ago, is badly affecting industrial activities, resulting in closure of industrial units.

There are thousands of containers on the port awaiting clearance, pending due to Forex crisis. The SBP first put ban on payments of 100,000 dollars and then on 50,000 dollars.

The SBP and commercial banks are now unable to clear even the documents on their maturity at 30, 60 or 90 days, leaving bad reputation of local importing industries since foreign sellers are not trusting local manufacturers and exporters anymore, he added.

Need urged for adopting steps for skilled workforce

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chief Executive Officer Pakistan Furniture Council (PFC) Mian Kashif Ashfaq Sunday urged the need to adopt result oriented prudent measures and provide workforce with the opportunities for skill development.

He said that the industrial sector was confronted with severe shortage of skilled manpower across the country, which was affecting the delivery schedule of export shipments.

Speaking at a workshop on "The role of skill development in economy" he said modern technology is growing exponentially, with new advancements coming up every day and disrupting the usual work practices. He said continuous process improvement followed by innovations has compelled to change and adapt new business models.

He said as a result, it created a skills gap, where the skills offered do not match required by the employers to meet future global challenges in local and international markets.

Quoting the World Economic Forum, he said more than a billion people including Pakistan will need to be re-skilled by 2030 on modern lines to meet ever growing demands of skilled manpower.

He said keeping up with recent technology trends has become the need of the hour for employability for any workforce throughout the world.

Mian Kashif said women who constitute 48 percent of the population must be fully offered opportunities under one umbrella to gain knowledge of modern technical skills and tools to contribute towards national economic development which will also help a lot to narrow down skill gap besides providing ample job opportunities.

He said current literacy rate of Pakistan is around 62.3 percent that means 60 million are unable to read or write. He said illiterate people can be trained in furnitures industry and sectors including construction through imparting neces-

sary training instead of wasting huge segment of the society.

He said genuinely highly qualified IT skilled people are in great demand in developed countries which he added will have great direct impact on national economy. He said "our universities and other educational institutions must reshape their outdated syllabus in line with ever changing global trends and meeting the markets driven demands".

Kashif said that all technical institutions under federal and provincial governments must take stakeholders into confidence prior framing policies for launching new courses.

He said only such courses be offered which meet demands of industrial sectors. He said academia and industrial linkage will help greatly improving the economic growth and employability of students after completion of their studies.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenues Muhammad Ishaq Dar chairing a meeting on reforms in Energy Sector.

Canada CG visits PSGMEA

SIALKOT (APP): Consul General of Pakistan in (Vancouver) Canada Janbaz Khan said that the industrialists of Sialkot should come forward to promote bilateral trade with Canada to stabilize the country's economy.

In this regard, I offer my services as the Canadian Consul General and assure you of my full cooperation.

He expressed these views while visiting Pakistan Sports Goods Manufacturers and Exporters Association Sialkot (PSGMEA) during an important meeting with the exporters.

The meeting was attended by Chairman Pakistan Sports Goods Manufacturers and Exporters Association Sialkot (PSGMEA) Arshad Latif, Senior Vice Chairman (SVP) PSGMEA Zarar Ahmed, Vice Chairman (VC) Umer-uz-Zaman, business leader of Sialkot Business Community Riaz-ud-Din Sheikh, Executive Committee members, Malik Zulfiqar, Iqbal Soni, Sohail Zafar, Zaheer Ahmed, Muhammad Yousaf, Muhammad Shahid, Zaheer Ahmed, Arif Iqbal and others.

Addressing the meeting participants, Consul General of Pakistan in (Vancouver) Canada Janbaz Khan said that "I firmly believed that the businessmen of Sialkot would leave no stone unturned to make the country's economy more stable.

He said that the Sialkot exporters had wrote a golden history after establishing two mega projects of Sialkot international Airport Limited (SIAL) and own private airline namely AirSial Airline. He said all these products were helping to highlight the positive image of Pakistan globally.

Reduced remittances to have devastating effects on economy

KARACHI (INP): Former vice president of Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FPCCI) Atif Ikram Sheikh

has said that decrease in remittances from Pakistanis living abroad is disturbing and it can have disastrous effects on the country's economy.

A strategy should be made to deal with this problem as the country is already facing falling exports and declining investment, he said.

In a statement issued on Sunday, Atif Ikram Sheikh who has also served as Chairman PVMA said that the exchequer is already empty and it cannot make up for the shortfall in remittances.

He said that the country is facing the risk of default

while at such a critical juncture, remittances are continuously declining.

Remittances from overseas Pakistanis during November 2022 declined by 14.3 percent, year-on-year, while the month-on-month decline stood at 4.8 percent. Whereas, with the cumulative inflow of \$12 billion during Jul-Nov 2022, the remittances decreased by 9.77 percent in the first five months of FY23 as compared to a similar period of last year.

The reasons behind this are said to be the recession in the West and the re-emergence of illegal channels of hundi that attract outward flows of remittances.

During the period from 2016 to 2019, remittances hovered around \$ 20 billion.

In the year 2020, remittances soared to \$ 23 billion. The years 2021 and 2022 saw a jump to \$ 29.5 billion and \$ 31.3 billion, respectively. In the five months (July to November 2022) it dipped to \$12 billion.

The remittances are also falling due to deepening political uncertainty and a weak fiscal situation leading to worries of a default. The sentiment of overseas Pakistanis appears to have turned bearish, which found its best reflection in the reduction in remittances during this period.

Many expatriates are taking a wait-and-see approach, he said, adding that the IMF tranche has been delayed, and the funding from Saudi Arabia is also late, which makes it difficult to repay the loans.

Need urged for evolving polices to flourish trade

ISLAMABAD (APP):

Coordinator to Federal Tax Ombudsman Meher Kashif Younis on Sunday urged the need for evolving policies by taking all the relevant stakeholders on board to flourish local trade and industry, which will help achieve sustainable economic growth and social prosperity in the country.

Talking to a delegation of industrialists and traders led by Ahmad Amin Chopra, Kashif underscored the need to review economic policies, particularly in wake of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, which he said affected the economic growth and impeded the supply of raw

materials to industry.

He said after the flood devastation, the business community was facing liquidity problems, which he said is the factor responsible for the reduction in large-scale manufacturing production, including steel products. He said unexpected flash floods and high global commodity prices largely narrowed down economic growth.

He urged the government for taking all stakeholders into confidence to evolve a viable economic strategy to steer the country from the prevailing economic situation, adding that it is admitted fact world-

wide that the survival of a country exclusively depends on its sustainable and sound economy.

Meher Kashif also urged the need for further enhancing trade and business cooperation with developed economies, including China, Russia, Gulf states, and other friendly countries to help the country to overcome impediments faced due to the rapidly changing global situation in the wake of conflicts.

He said that the local steel industry is currently working at 30 % capacity due to weaker demand and high costs of imported materials.



FAISALABAD: A shopkeeper weighing coal to sell it to consumers as demand increased due to low pressure and shortage of gas during winter season.

Gas companies laying 10,707-km pipelines to reinforce gas transmission network

ISLAMABAD (APP): The two state-owned companies, SNGPL and SSGC, are in process of laying almost 10,707-kilometer pipelines to reinforce gas transmission networks in their operational areas across the country during the current fiscal year.

The Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL) would place 9,605 kilometers and Sui Southern Gas Company (SSGC) 1,102 transmission and distribution pipelines in their respective areas during 2022-23 aimed at improving the efficiency of

the commodity supply to domestic, industrial, and commercial consumers.

The companies would collectively spend funds amounting to Rs 113.899 billion on the upgradation of the gas transmission and distribution system. "The SNGP and SSGC have planned to invest Rs 27,669 million on transmission projects, Rs 77,484 million on distribution projects, and Rs 8,746 million on other projects bringing the total investment of Rs 113.899 million during the fiscal year 2022-23," according to an official docu-

ment available with APP. The available statistics indicated that Pakistan has an extensive gas network with more than 13,513 KM transmission, 155,679 KM distribution, and 41,231 KM service gas pipelines for cater to the requirement of millions of consumers.

The number of consumers has increased from 10.3 million to more than 10.7 million across the country.

The companies are also executing at least three strategic projects to supply gas to two Special Economic Zones (SEZs)

and an industrial park in their respective areas to boost industrial production.

For this purpose, the government has allocated funds amounting to Rs 431.45 million in the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP 2022-23) to advance three ongoing projects one each in Balochistan, Sindh, and Punjab.

The SSGC is laying a pipeline to supply 10 MMCFD (Metric Million Cubic Feet per Day) Regasified Liquefied Natural Gas (RLNG) to Bostan Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in Balochistan

Province with an allocation of Rs 100 million for the current fiscal year, and a dedicated line to provide 13 MMCFD RLNG to Bin Qasim Industrial Park, located in Karachi city of Sindh province, with Rs 74.71 million funds.

Similarly, the SNGPL is carrying forward a project to supply 40 MMCFD gas/RLNG to Allama Iqbal Industrial City, a Special Economic Zone in Faisalabad of Punjab province, for which the government has earmarked Rs 256.74 million funds in the PSDP 2022-23.

BMP for taking serious action to stop cross-border illegal currency movement

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Expressing dissatisfaction over dollar availability for import of raw material the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry's Businessmen Panel (BMP) on Sunday stressed the need for stopping cross-border smuggling of foreign currency and other valuable items in order to bring economic and financial stability in the country, as the agencies concerned have failed to make any serious progress in this regard.

FPCCI former president and BMP Chairman Mian Anjum Nisar observed that the government will have to initiate strict and vigilant operations against the illegal cross border move-

ment of foreign currency, urea, wheat and other items by the Customs, law enforcement and intelligence agencies.

He called for making a clear roadmap to strengthen anti-smuggling regime in the country, taking practical measures to show some progress on anti-smuggling achievements.

The Pakistan Customs, FIA and the Interior ministry should sit together and take pragmatic measures to curb the menace of smuggling instead of hollow slogans, he urged.

Mian Anjum Nisar further stressed upon the need of coordination among all the concerned agencies for this purpose by taking comprehensive and combined action against those

involved in the smuggling activities and currency speculation.

The relevant authorities should speed up their operations to curb cross-border smuggling and in this regard a regular review meeting on anti-smuggling operations should also be held on weekly basis.

While highlighting the economic situation in the country, he stressed upon the need of coordination among all the necessary platforms for this purpose, emphasizing the relevant authorities to devise a robust and proactive road map to curb the cross-border smuggling of various items in order to bring economic and financial stability in the country.

Quoting the reports, he said that the recent ranking of the rule of law index issued by the World Justice Project placed Pakistan at 129 out of 140 countries, whereas the corruption perception index rated it at 140 out of 180. These rankings testify that our governance system is compromised, and our institutions have failed to perform their assigned roles. Pakistan is currently passing through the worst economic phase of its existence and independent experts are continuously warning about the risk of default.

Foreign exchange reserves of Pakistan are reduced to their lowest level, whereas inflation, according to official

sources, is hovering over 23 percent though in reality it is much higher, especially in rural areas. Being an import-based country, we are dependent on the dollar rate.

In the last few years, the rupee has devalued by over 100 percent. Though we opted for an open market where the demand for dollars is very high but the the State Bank of Pakistan has remained unsuccessful in stopping inter-bank manipulation of the exchange rate.

Although the government has implemented additional requirements for documenting purchase of dollar, the gap between interbank and the open market rate is widening and actually has given rise

to yet another grey market where the American dollar is traded at a premium of almost 10 percent the official interbank rate and that too without any legal formalities of furnishing of particulars and biometric etc.

Weak border controls, particularly with respect to Afghan-Transit Trade, constitute another major factor that has added to our economic woes.

Vested interests in connivance with law enforcement agencies, and their reluctance to tighten monitoring of cross-border movement of items such as currency, urea, wheat, sugar, and other household goods has resulted in Pakistan paying a huge price for these self-created

lapses.

Sharing its porous and unmanned borders with Iran and Afghanistan, Pakistan since its inception has always faced a daunting challenge in controlling the illegal operations of smugglers who take advantage of unregulated trade in cigarettes, livestock, and food items, including wildlife and petroleum products in addition to currency.

The absence of a comprehensive and potent policy to prevent this illegality, failure to not only equip border security agencies with modern combat weapons but also sufficient moral incentives has led to accumulation of illicit wealth parked in safe havens for the traf-

fickers.

It has ripped apart the country's economic fabric. Unlicensed operators in Pakistan play a major role in facilitating movement of criminal proceeds generated through fraudulent invoicing and other means. According to reports, the volume of the hundi and hawala business alone crossed \$15 billion.

In its report, Bringing Finance to Pakistan's poor Access to Finance for Small Enterprises and the Underserved, the World Bank mentions that the average Pakistani household remains outside the formal financial system, saving at home and borrowing from family or friends in cases of dire need.



In brief

Shoaib, Sarah seal Tennis C'ships 2022

ISLAMABAD (APP): Rising star Muhammad Shoaib continued his winning streak as he clinched men's singles title of the 8th Benazir Bhutto Shaheed National Tennis Championships 2022, beating Muzzamil Murtaza in the final at Islamabad Tennis Complex on Saturday. The 20-year-old Shoaib, who earlier this month overpowered national ace Aqeel Khan to seal the Federal Cup Tennis men's singles title, produced another master-class performance to outsmart 23-year-old Muzzamil. Shoaib, who is showing the signs that he is set to dominate the future of national tennis for years to come, won the first set 7-5. He lost the second set 1-6 but made a strong comeback to win the third set 6-4 and lift the trophy. In ladies' singles category, seasoned Sarah Mahboob beat Esha Javad 6-0, 6-1 in a one-sided final to seal the title. On Sunday, final competitions were also held in other categories. Following are the results:- U12 singles final: Hassan Usmani bt Shayan Afridi 2-4, 5-3, 4-2 U10 singles final: Shayan Afridi bt Hajra 4-1, 4-2 Seniors 45 doubles final: Azeem Khan/Mehmood Khan bt Israr Gul/Rashid Malik 5-7, 6-1, 10-7.

Shiffrin wins Super-G to close in on record

ST. MORITZ (Agencies): Mikaela Shiffrin claimed her 77th World Cup victory in Sunday's Super-G race in the Swiss resort of St. Moritz to close in on the record for overall victories of fellow American Lindsey Vonn. The two-time Olympic gold medalist and reigning overall World Cup champion finished 0.12sec ahead of Italian Elena Curtoni with France's Romane Miradoli third at 0.40sec. The 27-year-old from Colorado has returned to success in Super-G, two years after her last victory in the discipline, claiming her third win of the season after Levi's two slaloms. She is approaching the record of 82 World Cup victories set by Vonn, who retired in 2019. Specialist in the technical disciplines – giant and slalom – Shiffrin returned to speed events in Saint-Moritz this weekend competing in the downhill and Super-G. She finished fourth in Saturday's downhill after a race dominated by Italian Sofia Goggia, who finished fifth Sunday in the Super-G.

India beat BD to go third in Test C'ship

CHITTAGONG (AFP): Shakib Al Hasan provided brief entertainment for Bangladesh but India kept their cool to win the first Test by 188 runs and take a 1-0 lead in the two-match series in Chittagong on Sunday. The result moved India up into third place in the ICC Test Championship behind Australia and South Africa with seven wins from 13 matches. Bangladesh are in last place. Set an enormous 513 to win, Bangladesh put up dogged resistance with Zakir Hasan scoring a century on debut on Saturday in a record opening partnership with Najmul Hossain who made 67. Skipper Shakib Al Hasan made a marauding 84 that included six sixes but he was bowled by Kuldeep Yadav on day five and the hosts quickly folded to be all out for 324 after an hour's play.



LUSAIL CITY: Lionel Messi of Argentina lifts the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 Winner's Trophy during the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 Final match between Argentina and France at Lusail Stadium.

Messi makes his record 26th appearance at the World Cup

LUSAIL (AP): Lionel Messi is making a record 26th appearance at the World Cup, breaking a tie with Germany great Lothar Matthäus. Messi's games have been spread over five World Cups, starting in 2006. He has 11 goals in total, tied for sixth in the all-time list. Messi has said this is likely to be his last World Cup.

World Cup champions to get \$42 million in prize money: The World Cup champions will earn \$42 million in prize money for their soccer federation.

The losing team in Sunday's final between France and Argentina will get \$30 million from a FIFA prize fund of \$440 million. When France won the World Cup in 2018, the country's federation got \$38 million from FIFA's \$400 million prize fund.

Not all the money goes to players, but they are expected to get a good chunk of it. France players such as Kylian Mbappé are in line to be paid

a bonus of 554,000 euros (\$586,000) by their federation for winning the final, French sports daily L'Equipe reported. Every national soccer federation gets at least \$9 million in prize money for playing at this year's World Cup, plus \$1.5 million for each toward costs of preparing for the tournament.

Third-place team Croatia earned \$27 million in prize money. Morocco, which ended up in fourth, will be paid \$25 million. FIFA's total revenue for the past four years was \$7.5 billion, with most from broadcast and sponsorship deals, plus ticket and hospitality sales.

Qatar's 2022 World Cup ends with modest ceremony, titans clash: Tens of thousands of football fans wearing French and Argentinian colours gathered at Doha's Lusail stadium on Sunday where the 2022 World Cup ends with a dream-like scenario for Qatar: a showdown between Kylian Mbappé and Lionel Messi, both stars of Doha-

owned Paris St Germain.

The throngs overcrowded Doha's metro with Qatar Rail delaying access to the stations as a modest closing ceremony kicked off inside the stadium where dancers celebrated A Night to Remember. The stadium appeared almost full as the game started, with Argentinian fans vastly outnumbering the French.

The crowd watched Qatar's air force planes flying over Lusail as the Gulf state also celebrated its national day, with thousands of police forces, including anti-riot units armed with water canons, securing the area.

After 63 matches, the World Cup in Qatar comes to a close with reigning champions France taking on Argentina in a showpiece final with both teams looking to add a third star to their crest. France's Mbappé and Argentina's Messi, both playing for the Qatari-owned club, are also a reminder of Qatar's influ-

ence on global soccer beyond the FIFA World Cup organisation.

"Our parents talked to us about Maradona, and we will talk to our sons about Messi... We hope that we will win the cup, and we can celebrate with him and all the people in Argentina," said Nicolas Gomez, a fan from Argentina.

French fan Dylan Cognard from Normandy dismissed the heavy presence of Argentina's supporters: "(They have) a lot of chants, but if we score, there will be zero sound ... They will stop singing 'muchacho'."

Thousands also gathered outside the stadium to watch the game on giant screens: "We have no tickets. We are here for the national day and because the players might come out after the finish. We wanted to just see them," said Shafeek Mydheea, a tourist from Dubai standing in front of two rows of riot police outside Lusail metro station.



LUSAIL CITY: Messi scores the team's first penalty in the penalty shoot out.



DOUAI: Supporters of France react as they watch the giant screen live broadcast.



Argentina supporters in a fan park in Buenos Aires celebrate their country scoring a goal.

3rd Test evenly poised after Noman, Abrar's four-fers, Brook's century



KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Harry Brook continued his remarkable series to rebuild England's innings with his third century in as many Tests after Pakistan had the visitors pinned down on the second day of the final match in Karachi on Sunday.

England took an improbable 50-run lead on the back of Brook's innings before they were bowled out for 354 and Pakistan cut the deficit to 29 at the close of play.

Pakistan's openers Abdullah Shafique and Shan Masood were batting on 14 and 3, respectively with the home side ending the day on 21 for no loss. Brook's 111 revived England's chances of becoming the first team ever to clinch a 3-0 series sweep in Pakistan after the visitors were teetering at 145-5. England lead the three-match series 2-0 after a 74-run win in Rawalpindi and a close-fought 26-run victory in Multan.

After Pakistan's spinners

knocked over the English top-order, Brook and wicketkeeper Ben Foakes amassed 117 for the sixth wicket, and brought England within touching distance of Pakistan's first innings total of 304.

The 23-year-old Brook drove spinner Abrar Ahmed for his eighth boundary to reach his third career hundred following up his 153 in the first Test and 108 in the next.

In all Brook cracked eight fours and three sixes before he was trapped leg before to become debutant pacer Mohammad Wasim's first Test wicket. Brook has now scored 468 runs -- beating David Gower's 449 in 1984 -- for the highest series total by an England batter in Pakistan.

He also equalled Mohammad Yousuf's record of three hundreds in successive matches in an overseas series -- in Test matches between England and Pakistan. Yousuf hit three centuries in England in 2006. Pakistan's spin-

ners Noman Ali and Abrar Ahmed had England in a tight spot after the first session. The duo finished with 4-126 and 4-150, respectively. Brook revealed he told a friend he will score two hundreds in Pakistan.

"I said to one of my mates (before the tour) I'd like to get two before I got here, so it feels very nice to go one better," said Brook who was part of Pakistan Super League winners Lahore earlier this year.

Brook praised his partner Foakes. "Ben (Foakes) didn't look like he was going to get out. We just knocked it around for as long as we could. We were just trying to build a partnership."

"We will do our best to bowl them (Pakistan) out," Noman hoped Pakistan can still pull off a consolatory win. "We still have a good chance because they have to play the fourth innings," said Noman.

"If we give them a 200-250 target then we have a good chance because there will be turn and low bounce in the coming days."

England were struggling at 145-5 soon after lunch after Ben Stokes (26) attempted a third run which Brook turned down only to see his skipper stranded.

After Brook fell, Foakes added another 51 alongside Mark Wood for the seventh wicket. Noman then dismissed Foakes and Rehan Ahmed (one) while Ahmed accounted for Wood and Ollie Robinson for 29.

In the morning session, Noman removed Ben Duckett and Joe Root off successive deliveries.

With the National Bank Cricket Arena pitch offering turn, left-arm Noman trapped Duckett (26) leg before and had the experienced Root caught low in the slip by Salman Ali Agha for nought. Pope stood firm amidst the dual wicket fall, reaching his 11th fifty before he was bowled for 51 by Ahmed, who added to the wicket he took on Saturday.

Lahore Open Polo Salam Polo, Diamond Paints/Sheikhoo register victories

LAHORE (APP): Salam Polo and Diamond Paints/Sheikhoo Steel registered victories in the Coca-Cola Lahore Open Polo Championship 2022 here at the Lahore Polo Club ground on Sunday.

Sensational Nicolas Ruiz Guinazu steered Salam Polo to an emphatic 8-4 victory over Zacky Farms/Kalabagh in the first match of the day. Guinazu played the hero's role from Salam Polo by smashing in superb five goals while he was ably assisted by Hashim Kamal Agha, Raja Arslan Najeeb and Hamza Ali Hakeem. Ali converted one goal apiece. On the other hand, Raja Jalal Arslan fired in all the four goals for Zacky Farms/Kalabagh. Team Salam Polo dominated the

match right from the word go as they cracked a classic quartet in the first chukker against one goal by Zacky Farms/Kalabagh to gain a healthy 4-1 lead. The second chukker was evenly poised as both the sides scored one goal apiece with Salam Polo still enjoying 5-2 lead. The third chukker was fully dominated by Salam Polo team as they banged in a superb brace to further enhance their lead to 7-2 while in the fourth and last chukker, Salam Polo though struck one goal to further stretch their lead to 8-2 yet Zacky Farms/Kalabagh played better polo and thrashed in two back-to-back goals but it proved too little too late for them, as they lost the crucial match by 4-8. Jhon Fisher and Col Omer

Minhas (R) officiated the match as field umpires.

Nicolas Antinori excelled in Diamond Paints/Sheikhoo Steel's 8-6 triumph over Guard Rice in the second match of the day. Antinori stole the show from the winning side by displaying excellent mallet and pony skills and firing in five fantastic goals while his teammates Omar Asjad Malhi banged in a beautiful brace and Mir Huzafa Ahmed struck one goal. On the other hand, Taimur Ali Malik hammered a hat-trick while Saqib Khan Khakwani, Shaukat Ali Malik and Muhammad Ali Malik converted one goal apiece from Team Guard Rice.

Diamond Paints/Sheikhoo Steel were off to a flying start as they thrashed in three back-to-

back goals to take 3-1 lead in the first chukker. Guard

Rice made a good comeback in the second chukker, as they also hammered an impressive hat-trick to equalize the score at 3-3. Just before the end of the second chukker, Diamond Paints struck one goal to get back a slight 4-3 lead. The third chukker was then saw the dominance of Diamond Paints as they cracked a classic quartet to take a huge lead of 8-3 while Guard Rice converted one to reduce the margin to 8-4. The fourth and last chukker was though dominated by Guard Rice as they added two more goals in their tally but it was too little too late as they lost the match by 6-8. Jhon Fisher and Manuel Carranza supervised the match as field umpires.

Exceptionally talented Ahmed wins Pakistan Open Golf Title

LAHORE (APP): Ahmed Baig of PAF Skyview Golf Club underlined unmatched golfing skills to the title of the 49th Pakistan Open Golf Championship here at Lahore Garrison Greens Golf Course on Sunday.

During the course of four rounds, aspirants seeking the Pakistan Open Golf Title for 2022-23 were several giants of the game, yet it was the young Ahmed who showed ample intensity and sparkle to the win the title of the premier event of the National Golf Calendar.

As Ahmed Baig emerged triumphant, to applaud and pat him on the back was Brig Sajid Akram (ret) Honorary Secretary of PGF who complimented him for an excellent performance and committed to make all resources available so that Ahmed could continue to excel and show more results on the national and international front. PGF official said, "We are there for you and expect you to come up with results." He also pointed out that presently Gulam Nabi, our legendary golfer carries the record of winning the Pakistan Open six times and hoped that Ahmed Baig will break this record.

During the final round the run of play was controlled by the proficient Ahmed. His tee shots were forceful and precision oriented backed by

flawless approach shots that resulted in the ball landing on greens, mostly within five to six feet of the flag stick, and that made putting uncomplicated and fetched him five birdies on holes 3, 5, 8, 16 and 18. He encountered one bogie on the 11th hole too but otherwise the touch of the champion was admirably visible and imposing.

Ahmed certainly remained incessant about his pursuit of victory. His championship scores were 726,866 and 68 and a total aggregate of 274, fourteen under par. Certainly an exceptional score that fetched him the champions trophy and the winners prize money of Rs919,000 out of the total prize money of eight million rupees. Balance was distributed among top 50 professionals as per rule.

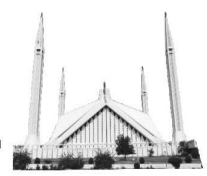
The second position holder Matloob Ahmed, the number two ranked golf professional of the country managed to win the runners up position with four rounds scores of 727,565 and 71 and a total aggregate of 283, five under par, a commendable effort from him. Other contenders who ended up well are Muhammad Alam of Lahore Garrison with a score of 284, four under par. He secured the third position.

Fourth position went to Mohammad Munir (Rawalpindi Golf

Club) with a score of 287, one under par followed by Khalid Khan (Peshawar) and Mohammad Shahzad (Garrison) bunched together at a score of 288. Following them are three professionals at a score of 289. They are Ansar Mehmood (Margalla Greens), Waheed Baloch (Karachi) and M.Nazir (Rawalpindi). Three more professionals ended up at score of 290. These competing professionals are Mohammad Saqib, Abdul Zahoar, Talat Ijaz.

Senior Professional Category Results; Muhammed Akram (Gymkhana) first; Mohammad Tariq (Islamabad) second; Muhammed Akhter (Islamabad), third; scores of Mohammad Akram and Mohammad Tariq were level and they went into a sudden death playoff. Akram won on the third hole. Best Junior Professional of this championship is Jawad Ahmed of Peshawar. Mohammad Sahil also of Peshawar is second and Rehan Babar of Lahore Garrison is third.

The best amateur of the championship was Saad Habib Malik of Rumanza Golf Club. Other two amateurs who survived the cut and made their mark were Ali Amin and Mohammad Irtaza. A superbly organized championship by the team of Pakistan Golf Federation.



In brief

ANF seizes 467 kg drugs

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) Pakistan seized over 467 kg of drugs, and arrested eight accused including a woman besides impounding three vehicles while conducting six counter-narcotics operations throughout the country, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Sunday. He informed ANF in two operations near Islamabad Toll Plaza managed to recover two kg of Ice drug and 2.4 kg charras from the possession of two accused including a woman. In two other operations in Lasbela, ANF seized 220 kg charras and arrested five accused besides impounding three vehicles. In the fifth operation, ANF foiled a bid to smuggle drugs from Khyber to Punjab and recovered 180 kg charras and 60 kg opium from secret cavities of a car. The spokesman informed that in the sixth operation, a raid was conducted at a private courier office and ANF recovered 3.3 kg of Ice drug from a leather jacket parcel being sent to Australia. All cases have been registered at respective ANF Police Stations under CNS Act 1997 (Amended 2022) and further investigations are under process.

Admin foils to smuggle flour

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Food Department Rawalpindi and district police while foiling 19 bids to smuggle wheat and flour seized 6962 bags during the current month. According to a district administration spokesman, the authorities of the food department along with Rawalpindi district police conducted raids and rounded up 19 drivers on recovery of 6962 wheat and flour bags during December. He said the Food Department Rawalpindi and district police on the directives of the authorities concerned were strictly monitoring all the exit points of Rawalpindi district to foil wheat and flour smuggling bids and taking action in accordance with the law against the rules violators. The spokesman said that all the exit points of the Rawalpindi division were being monitored 24/7 to control wheat smuggling as the administration had set up 14 check posts at exit points of the four districts of the division to check wheat smuggling.

IRSA releases 73,600Cs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Sunday released 73,600 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 39,300 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1491.90 feet and was 93.90 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 19,200 cusecs while outflow as 40,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1121.20 feet, which was 71.20 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 6,500 cusecs and 20,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded 64,200, 31,800, 25,100 and 12,200 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 8,200 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 2,000 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.



ISLAMABAD: An attractive view of sunset in the federal capital. —APP Photo

Saudi govt facilitating Hajj, Umrah pilgrims to fullest extent possible: Ashrafi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister's Special Representative for Interfaith Harmony and Middle East Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi said the Saudi government was facilitating the Hajj and Umrah pilgrims to the fullest extent possible. In his remarks at a Hajj Conference organized by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony and the Hajj Organizers Association of Pakistan (HOAP) the other day, he said the Saudi government, particularly Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz and Saudi Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman, were making all-out efforts to create more facilities for pilgrims and

religious tourists.

Ashrafi, who is also the chairman of Pakistan Ulema Council (PUC), said as part of the preparations for Hajj pilgrims and other religious tourists, the government of Pakistan was in constant contact with the government of Saudi Arabia.

He said the pilgrims were expected to have more facilities this year, which was a welcome development, adding that the Saudi government made the best arrangements for Hajj last year.

He said, in collaboration with HOAP, the PUC would arrange a series of trainings for pilgrims across the country.

He said the Saudi government's recent initiatives to facilitate the Umrah visa were appre-

ciable and commendable. "Every Muslim values Saudi Arabia's government and public services," he maintained.

Ashrafi said the entire Islamic world was grateful to Saudi Arabia's leadership for not suspending Hajj despite the Corona pandemic as it was a tremendous accomplishment on the part of the Saudi administration.

He said the nation was thankful to Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Religious Affairs Minister Mufti Abdul Shakoor for the pilgrims' arrangements made last year.

He said the government would continue to assist Hajj organizers and any such initiatives that would benefit pilgrims and religious tourists.

3,092 FIRs registered over violations

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Administration had registered as many as 3,092 FIRs on violations of anti-dengue SOPs from January 1 to date in various areas of the Rawalpindi district, said District Coordinator Epidemics Prevention and Control Dr. Sajjad Mehmood here Sunday.

Giving details of the punitive actions, the health officer said that the district administration, in collaboration with allied departments, had sealed 703 premises, issued Challans to 7,964, notices to 17,025, and a fine of Rs 12,435,643 imposed on violations of dengue SOPs in 2022.

Dr. Sajjad informed that around 4,767 confirmed cases had been reported in the district this year, while the number was 6,298 in 2019, 17 in 2020, and 2,508 in 2021.

The health officer further stated that presently, only three patients having positive symptoms were admitted to the two city's allied hospitals, including two to the Benazir Bhutto Hospital, and one to the District Headquarters Hospital.

13 fresh Covid-19 cases reported: NIH

ISLAMABAD (APP): Health officials on Sunday said that 13 new Coronavirus cases were reported during the last 24 hours. As per data shared by the National Institute of Health (NIH), the case positivity ratio is 0.25 percent while 29 patients were in critical condition.

No death was reported from the Coronavirus in the last 24 hours while 5,262 Covid-19 tests were conducted.

Meanwhile, Minister for National Health Services Abdul Qadir Patel appreciated the efforts of all stakeholders, healthcare staff, vaccination teams, and administration working across Pakistan despite multiple challenges.

He advised all provinces and regions to administer booster doses to further improve protection against Covid-19 transmission. He said that in view of the global pandemic situation, the Central Health Establishment (CHE) will be strengthened to enhance its functionality.

Chairman condemn heinous terrorist attack in Lakki

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Senate Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani on Sunday condemned, in the strongest terms, the early morning's terrorist attacks in Lakki Marawat, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa that claimed lives and injuries of police personnel.

In his message, the Senate Chairman commiserated with the bereaved families whose loved ones were gruesomely martyred besides praying for the speedy recovery of the security personnel

injured in the attack.

Pakistan will continue raising its voice against terrorism for peace in the region. Such cowardly attacks cannot sabotage the peace and order situation in the country.

The Chairman said that the terrorists wanted to stop the process of development and achieve nefarious intentions by spreading fear and panic among the people through destructive activities, but the evil elements cannot demoralize us

through these activities.

Lauding the role of security in war against terrorism, he said the country will never forget their sacrifices and this spirit will never diminish until the end of this war.

Deputy Chairman Senate Mirza Muhammad Afridi, Leader of the House in Senate Senator Ishaq Dar, Leader of the Opposition Senator Dr. Shahzad Wasim have also expressed deep sorrow and regret over the loss of precious lives in the terrorist attack.

Railways retrieved 961 acres land from land grabbers

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

"Around 474 acres

retrieved in Punjab, 135 acres in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 329 acres in Sindh and only 23 acres in Balochistan acres land had been retrieved by the Pakistan Railways," an official in the Ministry of Railways told APP. He said that about 3,287 acres in Punjab, 832 acres in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 5,180 acres in Sindh, and 687 acres of land in Balochistan were being encroached.

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

for retrieval of Railways land from encroachment.

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

He said Pakistan Railways had also decided to accelerate its ongoing anti-encroachment operation against land grabbers across the country to recoup its land from different individuals, groups, and even business organizations who were using it for residential, commercial, and agriculture purposes for decades.

"The encroachment operation will be launched with the assistance of Railway Police and district administrations of the relevant provincial governments," he added.

He said the government was taking several steps to retrieve encroached land from the land grabbers including a detailed survey being carried out to identify

the encroached land, occupied by the individuals and under illegal occupation by various government departments. The official said that First Information Reports were being lodged and cases were registered and sent to PR Judicial Magistrates for expeditious trial.

The issue regarding illegal occupation and possession of PR's land by government departments and institutions has also been taken up with the concerned departments, he added. The official said PR owned 167,690 acres of land across the country, of which 90,326-acre was in Punjab, 39,428-acre in Sindh, 28,228-acre in Balochistan, and 9,708-acre in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

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

Christmas tree brings festive sparkle to capital city

ISLAMABAD (APP): With only a few days left in the grand festival of Christmas, the Christian community in the federal capital like other parts of the country has started decorating Christmas trees for their homes, offices and street corners with the help of embellishments, following the old tradition.

The offices, shops, malls and hotels in the federal capital have also placed the ornamented Christmas tree to share the happiness of the festival with the members of the Christian community and attract visitors.

The Christmas tree is the main symbol of the Christmas celebrations to welcome the arrival of Santa Claus which allure people especially children with its decorative look.

The members of the Christian community decorate the evergreen coniferous tree, either real or artificial, as a tradition associated with the celebration of Christmas. The tree is usually decked with different ornaments including baubles, small bells painted gold or silver, stars of different shapes and sizes, pine cones, apples, candies, tinsel and balloons made from glass, metal, wood and ceramic. An angel and star are often placed at the

top of the tree representing the host of angels.

"The biggest excitement of the festival is to decorate Christmas tree with beautiful ornaments. I have decorated my tree and I am excited to share its pictures with my friends on social media", Rizwana Masih, a young girl said. Talking to APP, she said, "Decorating Christmas tree is the main hallmark of this festival and our celebrations remain incomplete without this tree".

Younas Gill, a young boy said, "We are celebrating this Christmas through arranging parties and gatherings still but decorating Christmas tree is our first priority". "We have decorated an artificial Christmas tree at our home to enjoy the upcoming festival", he said. The festival of Christmas also brings good business to the flowerers and sweet sellers, gift shops as well as retailers of ornaments.

Hammad Nawaz, a decorative items seller at Karachi Company said people mostly used colourful candles and electric lights (fairy lights) to decorate their small-sized trees as these were easily available here while many people also used to decorate outdoor trees with lights and some other

ornaments.

He said, although the pandemic has affected our business during the past years but this year, we are expecting a good number of customers.

In various cultures, the Christmas tree is traditionally brought into the home and decorated with Christmas lights (originally candles), ornaments, garlands, tinsel, and candy canes during the days around Christmas.

The earliest accounts of decorating an evergreen tree at Christmas were recorded in Livonia (roughly modern territory of Estonia and Latvia) in 15th century.

It is pertinent to mention here that the Christian community is finalizing its preparations for celebrating the Christmas festival with more enthusiasm and renewed spirit, feeling the echo of church bells that announce the birth of Jesus.

The festival will be marked through different activities ranging from official gatherings to cake-cutting ceremonies in small communities.

The joyous occasion will fill the atmosphere with colours, symbols and traditions of Christmas that mainly include Christmas Tree, Santa Clause, Carols and Christmas gifts.

Fake news – a common challenge for society to tackle in social media era

ISLAMABAD (APP): Journalism is in a state of considerable flux as new digital platforms including social media have unleashed innovative ideas to disseminate information and educate the masses on different issues.

But at the same time, it has become difficult to differentiate between authentic information and hoaxes or disinformation. Such a flow of disinformation, known as fake news, is accelerating and affecting the way individuals interpret the developments taking place daily.

Many information systems, even citizen journalism have been polarized in this era and there has been a precipitous decline in public trust in the traditional mode of journalism.

"I don't know what to believe, whom to trust and from where to find authentic information," said Zara Hassan, a student at a university, who wanted to seek some clarification on a religious matter. "Every person on social media shares information without verification, or checking the source," she said.

Due to the fast-paced information flow, there is a proliferation of fake news which has eroded trust in credible news sources as it seems people prefer the news with some flash.

It is unfortunate that some anti-social elements take advantage of public curiosity and misuse the new media platforms to achieve their nefarious designs or let down their opponents by launching propaganda

campaigns.

Fake news and sophisticated disinformation campaigns have become problematic and it is essential to address these issues without undermining the benefits of social and traditional media. A glaring example was the recent EU Disinfo labs report on how India was releasing news through hundreds of fake media houses against Pakistan and China.

Earlier in a meeting with a delegation Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (Dastoor) delegation, Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb urged the media organizations and journalists to play a proactive role in curbing fake news and propaganda. "The balance between media freedom and a sense of responsibility can

prevent the growing division of the society."

Marriyum said exhibiting collective responsibility was the need of the hour to moderate public opinion by differentiating between hatred and difference of opinion. Media experts also believe it is important that government, media outlets and other stakeholders work together and promote news literacy and strong professional journalism in their respective domains.

In the given circumstances, it has become essential for individuals to be cautious and exhibit maturity by verifying the received news or any information before sharing it with others.

This can be achieved through multiple sources, examining evidence to support claims, and

being aware of potential biases or agendas in the news. Social media and journalism platforms should invest in tools that identify fake news, reduce financial incentives for those who get monetary benefits from disinformation and improve online accountability.

Media literacy skills, coupled with knowledge to differentiate between good and bad values, are vital for children growing up in the digital age, and parents and teachers should play an important role in teaching those skills.

Besides, fact-checking and regulation are some of the main measures that can be taken to combat the negative effects of fake news. Media literacy education involves teaching individuals how to critically evaluate the

news they consume and how to recognize fake news. Fact-checking organizations or initiatives can help to identify and debunk fake news, making it less likely to spread. Regulation can also be an effective tool in combating fake news, such as by requiring social media platforms to remove false or misleading content.

Media outlets can also take steps to fact-check information before publishing or disseminating it and to provide clear attribution for sources. Overall, a combination of these measures is likely to be the most effective approach in combating the negative effects of fake news. It is important for states, media outlets, educational institutions and parents to be proactive in addressing this issue.

Seven criminals arrested

GHOR/HERAT (Agencies): The local security officials in Ghor and Herat provinces says that seven people were arrested on charge with criminal offenses in the provinces. The local security officials of the provinces said that they have arrested 5 people on charge of robbery in Herat and two others flying their houses in Ghor. The detainees under police custody and after their first investigation their dossiers will be sent to the judicial organs.

Ammunition discovered

URUZGAN (Agencies): The local security officials of Uruzgan provinca of Afghanistan said that security forces have discovered and seized a number of military supplies in Uruzgan province. The police officials of Uruzgan province of Afghanistan told Bakhtar News Agency, that they have discovered and seized the ammunition during an operation in the first police district of the capital of the province.

Jamadi-ul-Awwal 24, 1444 — Monday, December 19, 2022

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

Qomi to take charge of Iran’s Embassy



KABUL (TOLONews): Iran’s special envoy for Afghanistan, Hassan Kazemi Qomi, will take charge of the Iranian embassy in Kabul as the tenure of Bahadur Aminian, the current ambassador, is coming to an end.

The media officer of Iran’s embassy in Kabul, Sayed Abbas Badrifar, told TOLONews that Qomi will start his job after administrative procedures are completed.

According to Badrifar, the mission of Bahadur Aminian has ended.

“Mr. Kazemi Qomi has been appointed as the new head of the embassy. He will come to Afghanistan

after completing administrative procedures,” Badrifar said.

Political analysts said that Qomi will play a crucial role in the improvement of relations between Kabul and Tehran.

“I think Iranians are trying to give the responsibility to those who are familiar with Afghanistan so that they can accomplish their policies for Afghanistan,” said Javid Sangdil, a political analyst.

“He can have a positive and good role in improving relations, solving Afghan refugees’ problems as well as in trade and transit,” said Aziz Maarej, a former diplomat.

The Islamic Emirate has welcomed the appointment of Qomi as head of Iran’s diplomatic mission in Afghanistan.

“We believe that this new change will benefit the two countries. We don’t have any observations on this. This is the right of a country to change its ambassador but we stress on relations of the two countries and the relations will be maintained,” said Zabiullah Mujahid, Islamic Emirate’s spokesman.

Qomi, who is Iran’s special envoy for Afghanistan and visited Kabul last year. He has served as Iran’s consulate in Herat province in the west of the country.

Cold winter complicates life for displaced families

PARWAN (TOLONews): A number of displaced families in Parwan province said they are passing through a hard time in the cold winter as they lack the required facilities for their daily lives.

The families asked the government to help them to return to their homes.

Gul bibi, Laila, and Sohaila are sisters who were displaced due to conflicts last year. They said they collect waste from around the city and use it for warming their homes.

“We collect plastics and waste and use them for warming our homes,” said Sohaila, member of a displaced family.

Other internally displaced persons criticized the aid distribution process in the province and asked the government to help them to return to their home provinces.

“We ask the government to facilitate our return to our homes, resume our schools and pay attention to our children’s education,” said Aziz Agha, member of a displaced family.

“We received some aid but that is not enough for us,” said Noor Agha, a displaced person.

Local officials in Parwan said that efforts are underway to address the problems faced by displaced families.

“Efforts are underway to address their problems regarding home, health and water. We will solve all of them soon,” said Mohammad Idris Anwari, the governor of Parwan.

Intelligence forces received new uniforms

FARAH (Agencies): New special uniforms distributed to intelligence forces of Farah province, said local officials of the province. In the distribution process the uniform, the provincial head of Intelligence department of Farah, Mawlawi Sher Ahmad Tawab said the new special uniforms distributed so that no one could misuse from the name or uniforms of the intelligence’s forces.

Meanwhile, the deputy governor of Farah, Mawlawi Abdul Karim Jihadyar, asked the intelligence forces of the province to do their duties with honesty and be patience while, performing their duties and responsibilities.

Damaged helicopters adjusted

KABUL (Agencies): Two more damaged helicopters have been restored and ready for flights says the Ministry of National Defense in a statement.

The technical staff of the Ministry of National Defense were able to adjust two more helicopters, “35MI-1” and “208C-2” says the statement of the Ministry.

The Ministry of National Defense’s add that they will continue adjusting damaged aircrafts. In its late, announcement the Ministry informed adjusting more the 60 damaged helicopters and are ready to use the Ministry added.

Deputy PM urges countries of region nto interfere conducting uplift projects in Afghanistan

KABUL (Agencies): The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan Deputy Prime Minister, Mawlawi Abdul Salam Hanafi, in the occasion of ‘International Migration Day’ called on the countries of the region not interfere conducting major development projects in Afghanistan.

The Deputy PM Mawlawi Abdul Salam Hanfi attended the ceremony of ‘International Migration Day’ celebrated in Kabul by the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation.

During the celebration ceremony, Khalil ur Rahman Haqqani, Acting Minister of Refugees and Repatriation, said about 7 million Afghans have migrated to neighboring and other countries.

According to him, two Afghans displaced inside the country for the cause of wars.

He said that the Islamic Emirate deemed its main responsibilities providing livelihood and housing to

displaced residents.

Haqqani reminded that in one year, about three million immigrants have returned to the country from Iran, Pakistan, and other countries.

Meanwhile, the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Prime Minister, Mullah Mohammad Hassan Akhund, in his message, called the reason for Afghan migration, the aggression of the Red soveit Army and Americans invasion with allies.

PM on his message, called on the countries of Iran and Pakistan to treat Afghans refugees wills based on the rights of immigrants international rights.

In the same time, PM in his message, called on Afghans refugees to return to their country.

Meanwhile, the deputy of the International Migration Organization in Afghanistan said that since 1992, this organization has been working in Afghan-



istan in different sectors. The International Migration organizationhas helped 700 thousand returnees so far in a year he said.

Afterwad, Mohajer Farahi, Deputy Minister of Publication Affairs of the Ministry of Information and Culture, said that the compulsions and pressures have caused the migration of Afghans,

adding, that now advertisements and propaganda have caused to prevent Afghans from returning to their country.

International Migration Day is celebrated every year by countries, on the occsion, the problems and challenges of immigrants and finding solutions to the refugees usually take to discussions.

MoHD slams ex-politicians giving views on Afghanistan reconstruction

KABUL (Khaama Press): The Acting Minister of Higher Education Neda Mohammad Nadim said politicians outside the country have no right to provide consultations and views on Afghanistan’s reconstruction, according to sources.

Nadim’s remark came at a time a number of Afghan politicians have urged on country’s reconstructions under the Taliban leadership since last August.

“You have taken all the property of Afghanistan away with you and now you will build a building there (abroad),” he said, as TOLONews quoted. “Who has given you the right to give advice about the reconstruction of Afghanistan?”

Addressing a gathering of lecturers in Kandahar, Nadim vowed that the issue in their payments would be addressed, adding efforts are underway to strengthen the university’s capacity.

“The problems in payments will be addressed. The issue in payments lecturers who are studying abroad has been solved,” he said.

Meanwhile, lecturers expressed happiness about the announcement on their

payments, saying this will inspire all the lecturers to do better. “This is good news that teachers will be paid like in the past. This will have a positive impact on their activities,” said Shir Mohammad, a lecturer, as local media quoted.

“There should be master’s degree programs in government and private universities in Kandahar,” said Naqibullah Afghan, head of a private university in Kandahar.

The Afghan Ministry of Higher Education is the Government ministry that is in charge of regulating, expanding and developing Afghanistan’s institutions of higher education.

It is responsible for the training of teachers and for establishing a national higher education curriculum as well as special education programs, in-service training, and promoting further education for university faculty members.

It also develops partnerships with international universities, organizes seminars and conferences, ensures that residential accommodation is available for students and teachers of universities and provides expertise and training



in accounting and management procedures and in computer literacy.

In August, the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) during press conference announced they have changed university curriculum, criticizing the previous one formed by the former government.

“The education curriculum which we had in the past was weak. It was not made in a format to compete with the world,” the acting Minister of MoHE told reporters at the press conference held to provide the annual report of the ministry’s activities, as TOLONews reported.

According to then Minister Abdul Baqi Haqqani, the new curriculum increased certain sub-

jects’ duration from one hour to three hours, including Saqafat subject that is an Islamic religious book.

He called for the international community to support Afghanistan in its education system, exclaiming it is their duty.

“This is the duty of the international community. When it doesn’t provide aid in several areas for Afghanistan, it must provide aid for education and higher education,” he said, as quoted by local media.

This came at a time girls schools from grade six and above remain suspended since March this year, as the Islamic Emirate announced its leadership are developing a new educational system that is in accordance with the Islamic law.

Cash aid distributed to needy in Zabul province

ZABUL (Agencies): Cash aid, and winter clothes were distributed to hundreds of families affected by floods in Zabul.

The Natural Disaster Management Department

of Zabul province with the financial cooperation of IOM distributed cash and non-cash aid to 798 families affected by floods.

The assistance which

included winter clothes distributed to these families in the capital and districts of the province.

In cash assistance, each family was provided with \$200 and 1,300 Afghanis.



Over 1 billion Afs of debts collected: DABS

KABUL (TOLONews): The country’s power distributor, Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat (DABS) said it has collected more than 1 billion Afs of debts from former politicians and government organizations.

The collection of debts helped DABS to process the payments of the imported electricity in the country, a DABS spokesman Hekmatullah Maiwandi said.

“We have received 1.1 billion Afs (over \$12.5 million) from government institutions,” he said. “We also collected 70 to 75 million Afs (\$855,000) in debts from politicians.”

“The roadmap should be made such as pre-payment meters should be installed. An agreement should be reached with the Ministry

of Finance. The government departments should pay their electricity through the finance ministry or any other institution,” said Amanullah Ghalib, former head of the DABS.

Meanwhile, Deputy Foreign Minister Sher Mohammad Abas Stanekzai in a telephonic conversation with Uzbekistan envoy for Afghanistan, Esmatullah Ergashev, discussed issues around imported electricity to the country, Foreign Ministry spokesman Zia Ahmad Takal said.

Stanekzai urged Uzbekistan to provide Afghanistan with the amount of electricity agreed upon between the two sides.

Kabul Chamber of Industry and Mines said that although factories have

paid their debts to DABS, they are yet to be provided with sufficient power.

“The supply of electricity to industrial parks particularly in Kabul is not normal and this creates problems for investors,” said Sakhi Ahmad Paiman, deputy head of the chamber.

Kabul residents meanwhile said they are frustrated by continued power cuts in the capital city.

“If the debts have been paid, they (DABS) should provide service to the people. The electricity bills are charged as before but there is no power,” said Arash, a Kabul resident.

“We have no electricity. In every 24 hours, it is provided from 11pm to 1:00 am,” said Ahmad Shamim, a Kabul resident.

Ghor women demand maternity health facilities in all districts

FEROZKOH CITY (Pajhwok): A number of women in western Ghor province have welcomed the establishment of UNFPA-funded health facilities in some remote parts, but they demand well-equipped maternity health clinics be established in all districts of the province.

Recently, United Nations’ Population Fund (UNFPA) has funded the creation of 25 Aschiana health centers in remote areas of Ghor province.

Non-profit national organization Agency for Humanitarian and Develop-

ment Assistance for Afghanistan (AHDAA) in coordination with the Public Health Ministry and UNFPA financial help recently set up 25 health centers in nine remote districts of Ghor province.

Every health center has one nurse who provides maternity health services.

Malika, 27, a mother of two children, appreciated the creation of Aschiana health centers and said the residents previously suffered a lot due to lack of health facilities during the past two decades.

She said local residents

had to seek health services either in the provincial capital or in neighboring Herat province.

“I’ve given birth to my both children under the supervision of a local wet nurse, one time I was forced to travel to the provincial capital because of losing a lot of blood during birth,” Malika said.

“After the birth of my second child, I was in terrible health condition due to blood loss, there was no doctress to help me, so I took a risky trip to the provincial hospital,” Malika added.

“Not only me, but many other women had experienced this type of risky childbirth in the absence of female health facilitators, such births even conclude in the death of mothers or infants,” she added.

Malika said: “When there are no female doctor, nurse or maternity clinic in the village, the women do not visit male doctors for their health issues, while women of remote areas cannot reach hospital for the birth of their children, which causes the death of mother or her child”.

Nooria, 31, a mother

from Pasaband district, said she had witnessed many mothers or their babies dying due to the lack of access to health services in remote areas.

She told the story of one of her neighbors who was evacuated to Ferozkoh city, but she died on the way due to severe blood loss.

Both Nooria and Malika demanded establishment of well-equipped hospitals and clinics that provide maternity health services in districts.

Nooria appreciated the creation of Aschiana health centers and added such cen-

ters could save lives.

Anjeela Sharifi, a civil society activist and women rights defender in Ghor province, also appreciated the creation of health centers but said fewer women in remote areas had access to health facilities — a reason behind the high mother-child mortality rates.

Sharifi hoped more such health centers would be established and people would have access to health services in all remote areas of the country.

She urged the government and other relevant international organizations

to establish health clinics in remote areas and appoint professional nurses to provide better health services to women.

Doctor Seddiquallah Hasanai, AHDAA provincial office head in Ghor province, said: “By creating Aschiana health centers, we want to expand the access of all of women to better health services and safe births”. During winter season, roads usually get blocked because of heavy snowfall, he said.

“These clinics can provide better health services to women and their children

during snowfall and winter season, when the residents cannot access other hospitals,” Hasanai said.

These health centers are created with financial assistance of UNFPA, he added.

Dr. Abdul Sattar Muwafiq, the provincial Public Health Department head, said: “When roads get blocked due to snowing, it becomes impossible to travel from one place to another and creation of such health clinics has many benefits for local residents”. He urged relevant institutions to create more such health clinics in the province.

Over 17 people killed and 32 injured in Salang tunnel fire

KABUL (Agencies): More than 19 people were killed and over 3- more were injured in the fire at a tunnel in the Salang Pass, the local officials said.

"32 people were wounded and 19 others killed. A tanker that is stranded in the tunnel caused a second blast. The path is now completely closed. The rescue teams are in the area and are trying to evacuate the wounded and martyrs," said Hekmatullah Shamim, a spokesman for the Parwan governor.

Hamidullah Misbah, a spokesman for the Ministry of Public Works, said the fire has been extinguished. He said the incident hap-

pened at around 6:30pm when a fuel truck overturned and caught fire.

Misbah added that the fire was extinguished at around 8:00am on Sunday while teams were sent to the area from Baghlan and Parwan provinces.

He said the number casualties may rise.

According to him, the Salang pass will remain closed to traffic until the next announcement of the Public Works Ministry.

The evacuation of the wounded to the hospital is yet to be finished.

"People pushed away the car that was stuck there and then a blast happened. The fuel tanker exploded," a

wounded said.

"Three to four people got out of the car from the front seat. When they pushed the vehicle, it exploded. I fell down. My clothes caught fire," a wounded said.

The Ministry of Defense said on Twitter that it has sent helicopters and rescue teams to Salang Pass.

The Islamic Emirate's spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid said in a statement that the Islamic Emirate offer its condolences to the victims.

Mujahid said that the Islamic Emirate calls on all relevant organizations to boost efforts to prevent such incidents in the future.

"When we went inside the tunnel in the morning, we saw bodies that were not recognizable as they were severely burnt. Women, men and children were among them," said Ajab Gul, an eyewitness.

"The Ministry of Defense, the Interior Minister and Health Minister and all government organizations are working together. We couldn't count the cars. Around one hour ago, two cars exploded," Hafiz Noorullah Ansari, head of the fire department.

PTI leaders divided on dissolution of assemblies

ISLAMABAD (INP): Senior leader of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Chaudhry Jaffar Iqbal has claimed that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leadership is divided over dissolution of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assemblies.

In a statement issued on Sunday, he said that most of the PTI leaders were not in favour of dissolution of the two assemblies and they wanted the incumbent government to complete tenure and holding of general election in time.

Chaudhry Jaffar Iqbal termed the announcement of dissolution of Punjab and KP assemblies as last blackmailing tactics of PTI Chief Imran Khan and said that he would not dissolve the assemblies but was only playing a reprehensible politics on the issue for his political survival.

Terming the Imran Khan's narrative false and baseless, he said that former prime minister had faced defeat on every front and now playing a game of dissolving the two assemblies for point scoring.

The PML-N leader said, "Imran Niazi is doing disgraceful politics to destabilize the country as he has already hatched conspiracies to default and isolated Pakistan internationally during his previous regime."

He said Imran Khan is not a well-wisher of the country and reiterated that his politics was surrounding on lies and U-turns.

Chohan challenges rivals

LAHORE (INP): Spokesperson for Punjab Chief Minister, Fayyaz ul Hassan Chohan has challenged the political rivals to hold general election to prove their public reputation.

In a statement issued on Sunday, he said that announcement of Chairman PTI Imran Khan to dissolve assemblies has taken away the night sleep of the 'imported government'.

Fayyaz ul Hassan Chohan said that illogical statements of the PMD leaders reveal that they were mentally disturbed.

He said that the political opponents instead of making statements should conduct election and contest election against PTI and give public opportunity to decide about their future.

The CM's spokesman paid tributes to CM Pervaiz Elahi for his support to Imran Khan.



LAKKI MARWAT: RPO Bannu Syed Ashfaq Anwar, Lt. Col. Mehmood, Additional DC Dr. Tariqullah, DPO Ziauddin Ahmed, SP Murad Khan with others offering funeral of martyred policemen.

PPP ready to contest elections in Punjab, KP if PTI dissolves assemblies

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Poverty Alleviation and Social Protection Faisal Karim Kundi on Sunday said that Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) was ready to contest elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa if Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) dissolved assemblies in the two provinces.

"PPP's leadership, workers, and candidates are ready to contest elections in Punjab and KP as per the wish of PTI chairman", he said during a news conference held here.

Faisal Kundi said he would ask all the members of his party and collation parties to fulfill Imran Khan's wish of conducting elections in the two provinces.

Criticizing the PTI chairman for delaying the dissolution of assemblies, the SAPM said yesterday Imran Khan had given another date for dissolving assemblies, which was next Friday. "The decision of dissolving assemblies has not been implemented may be due to the unavailability of the architect and masons PTI has hired from different political parties," he

remarked in a satirical way.

The SAPM said the people of Pakistan were asking questions about the utilization of Rs 15 billion collected by Imran Khan for the flood-affected people.

"Imran Khan could not get an FIR registered in his own governed province and protect the gifts of Toshakhana; how can he run a country," he questioned.

The audio leaks of Imran Khan and his wife are also an eye-opener for the masses that how dishonest he is, he added.

Robbers and thieves would be held accountable, Kundi said while indicating that more than half of the PTI candidates would contest elections from prisons whereas others might be get disqualified over corruption charges.

The SAPM said PPP has always respected the constitution and rendered sacrifices for ensuring true democracy prevails in the country.

About the Foreign Minister's response to India, he said, "The voice of Bilawal Bhutto Zardari is the voice of every Pakistani, Kashmiri, and staunch believer of democratic and human rights values."

He said the way Bilawal Bhutto has shown a mirror to his Indian counterpart by giving befitting response to his allegations. His statement has received overwhelming support not only from people and human rights activists in Pakistan but also from India.

He said Bilawal Bhutto has represented Pakistan and its people belonging to all schools of thought as well as Kashmiri masses, however, PTI chairman remained silent at this time.

Faisal Kundi said that Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi was involved in the killings of Muslims in Gujarat and is replicating the same in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK).

About the flood relief assistance disbursement, Faisal Kundi said that around 98 percent amount out of a total of Rs 70 billion has been disbursed among 2.8 million families while the rest of two to three percent is in process.

He said that recently, transgenders have been included in the Benazir Kafalat Programme for which the transgenders have to obtain CNIC from NADRA to be eligible for

the said programme.

He said the team of Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) is working on the project of 'dynamic survey' which would be inaugurated by Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif and Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto.

To a question, Faisal Kundi said Pakistan's stance had been presented on international platforms in a weak manner in the past, however, Bilawal Bhutto has presented Pakistan's stance in a very effective manner.

To another question, he said that PPP would present its stance to the coalition party members about the election.

The PTI government has failed in providing protection to the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa during their tenure while their police are busy giving protocol to the political personalities.

Highlighting the poor law and order situation in KP, the SAPM mentioned the killing of four people in Lakki Marwat in a recent incident and attacks on polio workers which reflect the failure of the PTI government in KP.

Putin sounds out military commanders on Ukraine

MOSCOW (INP): President Vladimir Putin has sought proposals from his armed forces commanders on how they think Russia's military campaign in Ukraine should proceed, during a visit to the operation's headquarters, the Kremlin said.

A series of defeats in 10 months of fighting, resulting in Russian withdrawals from areas around the capital Kyiv and Ukraine's second city Kharkiv and most recently from the city of Kherson, have forced Putin to call up reservists and generated rare public criticism

from military bloggers and some allies.

Since the appointment in October of Air Force General Sergei Surovikin to lead the campaign, Russian ground forces have focused more on defence than attack, while waves of air strikes on cities have left millions of Ukrainian civilians without heat, light or water for days on end as winter sets in.

In video footage released by the Kremlin on Saturday, Putin presided at a meeting of around a dozen people at a circular table, flanked by Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu

and Chief of General Staff Valery Gerasimov — both of whom have been heavily criticised by hawkish commentators. Putin was then shown at the head of another conference table at the joint task force headquarters, inviting suggestions from a row of military commanders.

"We will listen to the commanders in each operational direction, and I would like to hear your proposals on our immediate and medium-term actions," Putin said. Surovikin was also shown attending the meetings in still photographs on the Kremlin website.



SALANG TUNNEL: Medical workers carry bodies of those who killed after an oil tanker caught fire.

Seven Iraqi police killed in suspected IS attack: Police

KIRKUK, Iraq (AFP/APP): At least seven members of Iraq's federal police were killed Sunday during an attack near Kirkuk in the country's north, where remnants of Islamic State group jihadists are active, police and government sources told AFP.

A bomb blast initially targeted a truck transporting the men. It was followed by "a direct attack with small arms", near the village of Chahal al-Matar, a federal police officer who attributed the assault to IS, told AFP on condition of anonymity.

No group immediately claimed responsibility for the attack.

"An assailant has been killed and we are looking

for the others," the officer said, adding that two policemen were also wounded in the attack.

In Baghdad, an official from the Ministry of Interior confirmed the attack, saying seven police, including one officer, were killed.

IS seized large swathes of Iraqi and Syrian territory from 2014, declaring a "caliphate" where they ruled with brutality before the jihadists' defeat in late 2017 by Iraqi forces backed by a US-led military coalition.

IS lost its last Syrian bastion, near the Iraqi border, in 2019.

The US-led anti-IS coalition continued a combat role in Iraq until

December last year, but roughly 2,500 American soldiers remain in the country as trainers.

IS remnants, however, remain active in several areas of Iraq.

Baghdad's security forces continue to carry out counter-terrorism operations against the group and the deaths of IS fighters in airstrikes and raids are regularly announced.

Despite the setbacks which has left IS a shadow of its former self, the group can still call on an underground network of between 6,000 and 10,000 fighters to carry out attacks on both sides of the porous Iraqi-Syrian border, according to a UN report released earlier this year.

On Wednesday a roadside bomb that hit a military vehicle killed three Iraqi soldiers in farmland north of Baghdad, the defence ministry said.

There was no immediate claim for the bombing in a known hotspot of IS sleeper cells.

Last month a machine gun attack on a remote northern Iraqi military post killed four soldiers near Kirkuk, a military source said.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility.

In January 2021, IS claimed responsibility for a twin suicide attack at a Baghdad market that killed 32 people, the first such assault in the city for more than three years.

Martyrdom anniversary of Mehfooz observed

RAWALPINDI (INP): The Pakistan Army observed the 51st martyrdom anniversary of Lance Naik Muhammad Mehfooz Shaheed, recipient of the Nishan-e-Haider, on Sunday in Mehfoozabad, old Pind Malkan, according to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR).

Major General Shoaib Bin Akram laid a floral wreath at the martyr's mausoleum and a smartly turned-out contingent of the army presented the guard of honour.

The military's media wing reported that various people from different walks of life, including civil and military officials as well as relatives of the martyr, attended the wreath-laying ceremony.

Lance Naik Muhammad Mehfooz was born on October 15, 1944, in Pind Malakan, a village in Rawalpindi.

He was enrolled in the Pakistan Army on October 25, 1962. After training, he joined the 15th Punjab Regiment.

During the 1971 war, Lance Naik Muhammad Mehfooz was part of the Pul Kanjry operation in the Wahga-Attari sector.

chief who would allow him to extend his rule for another 10 years.

Kh Asif said that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan, during his around four-year tenure in government, destroyed the national economy. He said people were suffering as a consequence of Imran Khan government's failure and wrong policies.

He said Imran Khan used to say that he would commit suicide but not take loans. However, in the history of the country, no government took as much loan as the previous government of Imran Khan did.

The federal defence min-

ister said that the coalition government in Centre was trying day and night for the last eight months to improve and revive the country's economy. It is determined and very soon it would be able to bring the country's economy on the right track, he added.

He said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and the allies were trying their best to provide relief to the common man.

Kh Asif said the lies and thefts of Imran Khan had come to the fore in the form of audio leaks. He sold out jewellery worth Rs 6 billion from Toshakhana for only Rs 15 million. He alleged that Imran Khan and his

wife had turned politics into a business.

The minister said that during the PTI four-year rule, false cases were registered against PMLN leaders and they, including he himself, were kept in prisons. But by the grace of Allah Almighty, we were cleared of all fake cases," he added.

Khawaja Asif said the elections would not be on the demand of Imran Khan, but according to the country's constitution and law. He said general election could not be held under anyone's pressure and decision in that regard would be taken by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in consultation with coalition partners.

Tunisia Opp calls for president to resign

TUNIS (AFP/APP): The leader of Tunisia's main opposition alliance said Sunday that President Kais Saied should "leave immediately", a day after voters overwhelmingly snubbed elections for a neutered parliament.

The electoral board said 8.8 percent of the nine-million-strong electorate had turned out for Saturday's polls, the culmination of a power grab by Saied in the only democracy to have emerged from the Arab Spring.

An abstention rate of more than 91 percent "shows that very, very few Tunisians support Kais Saied's approach", Ahmed Nejib Chebbi, president of the National Salvation Front, told AFP by telephone.

He said the result showed "great popular disavowal" of the process that began when Saied, elected in 2019, seized executive powers last year.

The president in July 2021 sacked the government, froze parliament and surrounded it with military

vehicles, following months of political deadlock and economic crisis exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic.

Saied, a former law professor, followed up by seizing control of the judiciary and pushing through a constitution that consolidates his near-absolute power in a widely boycotted referendum in July.

His moves, a decade after the ouster of dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, have sparked fears of a return to autocracy.

The National Salvation Front, which includes Saied's nemesis the Islamist-inspired Ennahdha party, boycotted Saturday's election, saying it was part of a "coup" against Tunisia's democracy.

The ballot for the new 161-seat assembly followed three weeks of barely noticeable campaigning, with few posters in the streets and no serious debate among a public preoccupied with day-to-day economic survival.

Saied's moves were initially supported by some Tunisians tired of the

messy and sometimes corrupt democratic system installed after the revolution.

But almost a year and half on, the country's economic woes have gone from bad to worse and inflation is higher than Saturday's voter turnout.

The previous legislature, dominated by Ennahdha, had far-reaching powers in the mixed presidential-parliamentary system enshrined in Tunisia's post-revolution constitution.

But the new chamber "won't be able to appoint a government or censure it, except under draconian conditions that are almost impossible to meet," according to political scientist Hamadi Redissi.

Candidates were required to stand as individuals, in a system that neuters political parties.

Hamza Meddeb, a fellow at the Carnegie Middle East Center, said the election was a "formality to complete the political system imposed by Kais Saied and concentrate power in his hands".