

ISLAMABAD (APP): As many as two bills including the Imports and Exports (Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2022 and the Islamabad Capital Territory Criminal Prosecution Service (Constitution, Functions and Powers) Bill, 2022 were introduced in the National Assembly. The bills were moved by Minister for Commerce Syed Naveed Qamar and Minister of State for Law and Justice Shahadat Awan in the House respectively.

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PM seeks plan to solarise govt buildings in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday directed the authorities concerned to formulate a plan at the earliest for solarisation of government buildings in Islamabad. The prime minister, who chaired the meeting of the cabinet committee on energy, was given a briefing on the gas development schemes across the country.

The cabinet committee approved the completion of construction work of the gas development schemes started during 2013-18. Federal ministers for finance, planning, energy and parliamentary affairs, Advisor Ahad Cheema, state ministers for petroleum, and finance and senior government officers attended the meeting.

PM chairs cabinet meeting

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chaired the meeting of the federal cabinet here on Tuesday.

The meeting discussed

agenda items pertaining to development projects and governance.

The overall political situation in the country also came under discussion.

NDMA chief briefs PM on rehabilitation of flood-hit areas: Chairman of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) Lt. General Inam Haider called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif here on Tuesday. During the meeting, he gave a detailed briefing to prime minister on the ongoing efforts for rehabilitation of flood-affected areas.

SAPM Abdul Karim, Senator Sajid Mir call on PM: Special Assistant to Prime Minister Hafiz Abdul Karim on Tuesday called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and discussed the overall political situation in the country. Senator Professor Sajid Mir also attended the meeting, according to PM Office.

Housing minister, MNAs meet prime minister: Federal Minister for Housing and Works Moulana Abdul Wasay called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday.

During the meeting, they discussed matters pertaining to the housing ministry and overall political situation in the country. Meanwhile, Members of the National Assembly Chaudhry Muhammad Hamid Hameed, Sheikh Rohail Asghar and Muhammad Afzal Khokhar, MPA from Balochistan Yar Muhammad Rind, and Senator Kamran Murtaza also called on the prime minister and discussed matters of mutual interest.

Federal Minister for Finance Ishaq Dar and Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Sardar Ayaz Sadiq also attended the meeting.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting of Federal Cabinet.

‘Security forces rescue all hostages detained at CTD Bannu compound’

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif on Tuesday informed the joint session of Parliament that security forces, in a successful operation, got all the hostages released, detained in CTD compound in Bannu by terrorists.

Speaking in the Parliament, he said the Special Service Group of Pakistan Army started operation at 12:30 pm on Tuesday and got the compound cleared by 2:30 pm. He said all the terrorists were killed in the operation. The Defence Minister further said that two security officials embraced martyrdom in the operation, while around 15 SSG personnel, including an officer, got injured.

At the outset, The Joint Session of the Parliament offered feteiha for the departed souls of various people, including grandmother of Deputy Speaker Zahid Akram Durrani, martyred officials of security forces, who laid their lives in the line of duty in defence of the country, and 12 other people, died in a cylinder blast in Balochistan. The House also prayed for early recovery of the injured.

The parliament passed several bills. These include: “The Global Change Impact Studies Centre (Amendment) Bill, 2022”, “The Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (Amendment) Bill, 2022”--

Ned assures to provide assistance to Pakistan

Jalil Afridi

WASHINGTON DC: US State Department spokesperson, Ned Price while answering a question by The Frontier Post said that the US will provide assistance to Pakistan incase the later needs it to fight against terrorism.

While speaking at the press briefing at US State Department, Ned Price stated that “we are aware of the Counter Terrorism Center being taken over by the Taliban in Bannu” and that US is keeping a keen eye on the situation.

In reply to a question about Pakistani Foreign Minister, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari calling Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi the butcher of Gujarat and whether US was compromising on some of its values in terms of having India as strategic partner, Ned replied by saying that India is our strategic partner and we do raise our concerns with them on different forums with regard to any human rights violations in India. Ned did emphasize that both Pakistan and India are US

partners and he hopes that both the country can sit down and discuss their issues, including the Kashmir issue.

While replying to another question by this scribe that whether US will recover the looted money by former Afghan President, Ashraf Ghani which he took away from Afghanistan when he escaped and took refuge in UAE, Ned said that different departments within the government work on such issues but over all there was no clarity in Ned’s reply to this question.

Ned Price also said the US is not aware of any meeting between the Taliban leadership and the Russian authorities.

Ned also hoped that the upcoming visit of US Secretary of State, Anthony Blinken will bring some fruitful results for both the countries and for the countries around the world. Ned did regret the fact that China was heavily cooperating with Russia while Russia was the aggressor and leashing a war on sovereign Ukraine.

Bilawal defends remarks against Modi, says he was referring to historical fact

ISLAMABAD (INP): Foreign Minister Bilawal-Bhutto Zardari has defended his recent remarks about Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saying that he was referring to “a historical fact”.

At a news conference inside the UN last week, Bilawal had described Modi as “the butcher of Gujarat,” adding that instead of being punished for the 2002 massacre of over 2,000 Muslims in Gujarat, he was made the prime minister. He was responding to his Indian counterpart S. Jaishankar’s remarks who, for two days in a row, had called Pakistan “the host of Osama bin Laden” and the “perpetrator of terrorism.”

The Indian government had heavily criticised Bilawal’s remarks while workers of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) had staged protests in parts of the country,

including outside the Pakistani High Commission in New Delhi. Some workers had also burnt an effigy of Bilawal. In an interview with Bloomberg, the foreign minister said: “I was referring to a historical reality.

The remarks I used were not my own. I did not call I did not invent the term ‘Butcher of Gujarat’ for Mr Modi. The Muslims in India following the Gujarat riots used that term for Mr Modi. “I believe I was referring to a historical fact, and they believe that repeating history is a personal insult,” he said.

“It’s been two days since my remark a member of Mr Modi’s party has announced a 20 million rupee bounty on my head. So, I don’t think the best way to disprove the fact that Mr Modi is the ‘Butcher of Gujarat’ is to adopt such extreme steps,” he said.

Hours after Bilawal reached

Washington for talks with US officials, the US offered to assist India and Pakistan in resolving their differences, reminding them that they were key global partners and that America would like to continue ‘valuable partnerships’ with both. State Department Spokesperson Ned Price addressed a news briefing in which he responded to a question about last week’s war of words between Bilawal and his Indian counterpart.

“We have a global strategic partnership with India. I have just spoken to the depth of our partnership with Pakistan. The two relationships stand on their own. It’s not a zero-sum relationship,” he said. The US, he said, sees the importance of maintaining these valuable partnerships with our Indian and our Pakistani friends, adding that they had a relationship in which “we can be friends with both”.

Asif Zardari holds another meeting with Ch Shujaat

LAHORE (NNI): In a significant political development, the former president and Pakistan Peoples’ Party (PPP) Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari on Tuesday held another important meeting with Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q)’s President Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain.

Both the leaders held second meeting in two consecutive days amid PTI chief Imran Khan’s announcement to dissolve the Punjab Assembly and tabling of co-confidence motion by the Opposition against Chief Minister Pervaiz Elahi.

Both the leaders held indepth talks and also took Prime Minister

Shehbaz Sharif on board through a telephonic call during the meeting.

Nasir Hussain Shah and Malik Ahmad Khan briefed the leaders on important issues while Federal Ministers Chaudhry Salik Hussain and Tariq Bashir were also present.

On the other hand, Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari on Tuesday spoke via telephone with deposed prime minister and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supremo Nawaz Sharif three times to discuss the discussed the political situation in Punjab.

He also spoke with Prime Minister

Shehbaz Sharif.

Zardari and Nawaz discussed in detail the ongoing political scenario in the province following former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan’s announcement to dissolve the provincial assemblies on Friday, December 23. Zardari and Nawaz deliberated on the options available to stop the dissolution of the Punjab Assembly through the vote of no-confidence.

Later, the former president called Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

The two discussed the evolving political situation as well.

Cabinet discusses 'austerity policy' for judicious utilization of available resources

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federal Cabinet on Tuesday held a thorough discussion on the ‘austerity policy,’ which would be finalized in a couple of days by a committee chaired by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, to ensure judicious utilization of available resources.

“The PM has chaired 3-4 meetings of the committee during the last days. A conclusive meeting will be held on Thursday. We will discuss the policy with all provinces tomorrow and the day after tomorrow for getting their input. Their suggestions will be incorporated in the policy,” Minister for Defence Khawaja Muhammad Asif told the media after the cabinet meeting. He was flanked by Adviser to the PM on Kashmir Affairs Qamar Zaman Kaira and Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb.

The defence minister said the committee, working on the austerity policy and consisting of 10 federal ministers and four secretaries, was aimed at limiting the nation’s living and working styles within the available resources. Elaborating main contours of the policy, Khawaja Asif said as per the estimates there would be a saving of around Rs 56 billion annually if the 20 percent workforce of the public sector departments started performing their duties online/working from home on rotation. “The estimate [of Rs 56 billion annual saving] is not inflated rather it is almost 10-15 percent less than the actual evaluation.”

He said the timings of wedding halls would be limited to 10 p.m., while restaurants, hotels, and markets would close down by 8 p.m., however, there could be some room to extend the restaurants’ closing time by one hour.

“With the implementation of this

step, there will be a saving of Rs 62 billion [annually], he added.

Khawaja Asif said the use of energy-efficient fans, which were available in the markets, would help save Rs 15 billion [annually] as they consumed about 40 to 60 watts of electricity as compared to the old ones consuming about 120 to 130 watts of electricity. He said the committee had calculated that there would be a saving of Rs 23 billion [annually] with the use of light-emitting diode (LED) bulbs.

“By using efficient energy fans and air conditioners in homes, about 8000 to 9000 megawatts of electricity can be saved on average,” he added.

He said Rs 28 billion per month could be saved in terms of Capacity Payments also.

The minister said the government would soon launch a campaign, directing gas supply companies to provide energy-saving devices used with geysers. “This move will save Rs 92 billion annually,” he added.

He said the government was in negotiation with motorcycle companies for the production of electric bikes. “The motorcycles that run on petrol will slowly be phased out.

“We have begun importing e-bikes and started negotiations with motorcycle companies for the modification of existing ones [...], this will help save us around Rs 86 billion,” he added. The minister expressed the hope that with the introduction of e-bikes the price of existing motorcycles would considerably decrease. However, he said, the government would ensure a price check on the e-bikes. If all the measures were translated into action, the country would hopefully save billions of rupees, he added.

Khawaja Asif said the Ministry of Information would be running a campaign in social media, electronic and

print media to create awareness among the public about the measures being taken under the austerity plan.

Talking about water conservation, he said the government had adopted an effective strategy under which rainwater could be harvested and used for daily household consumption. “In the next few days, we will be approaching all the provinces with this national project and then the final approval of the conservation policy will be given,” the minister said.

“This is a national programme, we want to evolve consensus before its launch. The exercise will be completed within two days and the final approval of the conservation policy will be accorded on Thursday hopefully.” The minister urged the nation to “normalize” its behavioural patterns as the country was in a ‘grave economic crisis’. “We can’t afford the culture of wastage [available national resources] anymore.”

To a question, he said all stakeholders, including the traders’ community, would be taken on board about the decisions to be taken by the cabinet for the conservation of energy, which would have long-term effects. To another question, he said the protocol culture that emerged in the country required to be changed for the better future. “I also believe that politicians should be the first ones to adopt these changes and become role models for the public,” the minister added. To another query, Khawaja Asif said the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had not shown any seriousness regarding the Bannu incident. “It is unfortunate that the whole leadership of the PTI is sitting in Zaman Park Lahore for reasons known to everybody,” he added.

KP CM expressed grave concern over rising inflation

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mahmood Khan has expressed grave concern over the rising inflation in the country coupled with non-provision of budgeted funds of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province by the incumbent Federal Government, adding that the indifference has raised serious questions over the credibility and competency of the federal cabinet in running the federation.

In a statement issued from the Chief Minister’s secretariat, Mahmood Khan deplored the undemocratic and immoral attitude of the federal government. He stated that Rs 189 Billion funds of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province have been withheld by the Federal Government to create financial instability in the province, which is an undemocratic approach towards achieving selfish political interests.

He clarified that the component parties of the PDM are jeopardizing national interests for their political motives and have

no policy to steer the country out of the prevailing economic crisis. Inflation has reached an all-time high and basic commodities have gone beyond the purchasing capacity of ordinary citizens. Mahmood Khan maintained that the component parties of PDM used inflation as an excuse to topple a democratically elected government under the regime change conspiracy and have caused inflation to double after coming into power.

This clearly indicates that the component parties of PDM were never sincere in their claims and do not have any interest in addressing the issues facing ordinary citizens. They only wanted to seize control of the country to abolish corruption cases against them and pave way for the entry of corrupt politicians into the political landscape of the country.

Moreover, they are serving alien interests to remain in power and further loot the nation’s capital. To succeed in their nefarious intentions, they have undermined the credibility of accountability institutions

in the country. The Chief Minister clarified that Chairman Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf Imran Khan is the only political figure who enjoys the uniform support of citizens from all over the country. Sweeping victory in the recent by-elections has proved that PTI is the only political party that represents the federation and that has the ability to represent Pakistan internationally and steer it out of the prevailing crisis.

The Chief Minister maintained that the political stature of Imran Khan is unparalleled, due to which the component parties of PDM are hesitant about going into general elections. They can clearly witness their defeat because they have been exposed completely and are unacceptable to the general masses. Free and Fair elections will prove to be the last nail in the coffin of the corrupt political union.

The Chief Minister concluded that every legal, political and constitutional means would be adopted to achieve the rights of the province and rid the country of corrupt politicians.

IHC seeks reply from Imran in Tyrian White case

ISLAMABAD (TLTP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) has sought reply from the counsel for PTI Chairman Imran Khan on a petition seeking his disqualification “for concealing his alleged daughter’s name in the nomination papers.”

IHC Justice Aamer Farooq heard the petition filed by Mohammad Sajid who contended that Khan had disclosed his two sons and not his alleged daughter Tyrian White in the nomination papers. He sought the disqualification of the former premier under Article 62(i)(f).

The TLTP learnt that a legal team comprising Salman Akram Raja, Azhar Siddique and Abuzar Salman Niazi represented the PTI chief in the case whereas a lawyer for the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) also attended the hearing.

As Salman Akram Raja argued that a verdict in an identical case had already been announced, the chief justice directed him to submit his written reply. The ECP counsel also endorsed the argument of the lawyer of the PTI chief.

LASBELA (PPI): The death toll in a huge cylinder blast which occurred in Balochistan district of Lasbela yesterday rose to 12 as more victims succumbed to their injuries at a Karachi hospital on Tuesday. The explosion took place in a shop damaging nearby buildings and shops and destroying 25 motorcycles. Four shops and a hotel were totally gutted as a fire broke out after the blast.



LHC suggests fortnite winter vacation in Lahore schools to curb smog

LAHORE (TLTP): The Lahore High Court (LHC) has directed a judicial commission to propose to the school education department to announce a two-week long winter vacation in the public and private schools as a step to help curb smog in the provincial capital.

Justice Shahid Karim was hearing public interest petitions filed by Haroon Farooq and others on different environmental issues. The judge previously ordered closing of the schools on Fridays and Saturdays.

The TLTP learnt that the judge directed the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (Pemra) to run a smog awareness campaign on TV channels. He also directed the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) to strictly monitor the smoke-emitting industries. Earlier, the Lahore deputy commissioner submitted a report containing recommendations to mitigate smog.

The report revealed that the Punjab government had

LHC bins petition against possible dissolution of Punjab Assembly

LAHORE (TLTP): The Lahore High Court (LHC) has rejected a petition seeking an order to stop the possible dissolution of the Punjab Assembly.

A citizen, Namdar Ali, filed the petition and made PTI Chairman Imran Khan, Punjab Chief Minister Parvez Elahi, Governor Balighur Rehman, and others parties. The petitioner argued that Mr Khan announcement about the dissolution of the Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assemblies was against the constitutional autonomy of the provinces. He added that the PTI chief wanted to dissolve the assemblies for his political interests. The

TLTP learnt that as LHC Justice Shahid Karim took up the plea, he reprimanded the petitioner for unnecessary applications, remarking that Constitution clearly explained the process for dissolution of assemblies.

“How can court bar someone from using its constitutional right?” Justice Karim questioned and directed the petitioner to withdraw his application. The case was wrapped up after the petition was taken back by the applicant. Last week, the PTI chairman said he would dissolve the assemblies on Dec 17, adding that the Punjab chief minister would back his decision.

already approved a project for procurement of 200 drone cameras under a World Bank-funded programme. It said modern

drones with night-vision cameras could be programmed to report smoke emissions even during night time.

The report further stated that long-range PTZ (Pan-Tilt-Zoom) cameras did not require human control and can automatically detect and record certain emissions from up to 3,000 meters distance. It proposed installation of the PTZ cameras at the smog hot spots in Lahore, including Mahmood Booti, Karol Ghati, Lakhodair, Turkey Road, Ring Road, Multan Road and Bund Road.

It also suggested installation of at least ten air quality monitoring stations in the city and increase in the field posts for the better implementation of the government policies.

The report said the Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA) had been focusing more on the ornamental plants, whereas urban green spaces should be used to purify the air and reduce “fugitive dust” in the city.

The judge adjourned the hearing till December 23 and directed the provincial government to release funds for the implementation of the report’s suggestions.



ISLAMABAD: The Non-Resident Ambassador of Serbia, Mr. Dragan Todorovic, presenting his diplomatic credentials to President Dr. Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Electric Taxi Service to be launched soon: Sharjeel

F.P Report

KARACHI: Sindh Minister for Information, Transport and Mass Transit Sharjeel Inam Memon on Tuesday announced that electric taxi service will be launched soon in Karachi under Sindh Mass Transit Authority and it is agreed in principle in meeting held today that taxi service will be launched in two phases with fleet of Blue and Pink Taxi. He said that Pink Taxi will be reserved for women only.

The minister announced this while talking to media at Sindh Assembly media corner. PPP member of Sindh Assembly Syed Zulfiqar Ali Shah also present. The minister said that in first phase Pink Taxi Service for women will be launched and lady captains will be hired to drive pink taxi service and it's fare would be between Rs. 200 to 500 He added that proper monitoring system including cameras will be installed in taxi service for safety of the passengers.

The minister said that on the directives of Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, public transport system is being modernized in the province. He said that BRT orange line is functional and it is being redesigned to integrate it with the green line. He said that people's bus service has been successfully running its operations in Karachi, Larkana, Hyderabad and at the end of December, it will be launched in Sukkur city.

He said that first electric bus service will also be launched soon in Karachi and negotiations on the agreement with operators are in final phase. He said that BRT Yellow Line will start soon and it's construction will commence with construction of bridge along with the Jam Sadiq bridge will also start soon as international bidding process has been started and traffic police had been directed to divert the heavy traffic on the bridge.

Traffic issues: He called traffic a

serious issue in the city and JICA has conducted a study on Karachi traffic in 2011. He added that a Lebanese company has been tasked to conduct new study on traffic and it is under way.

Reaction to Waseem Akhtar's Statement: He added that MQM Pakistan is our coalition partner in center and we have agreed points and we talk in parameters of agreed issues. He said that they did take Waseem Akhtar's statements seriously. Waseem Akhtar has not raised such issues in any meeting. Whether he (Waseem Akhtar) had given statement with the permission of his leadership. He said that Waseem Akhtar might have given such statement in context of upcoming local bodies elections so as to revive their reputation in the public and to activate their workers. He said that law and order situation in Karachi is much better than past. He said that now no one can close down the city on 10 minutes strike call. Extortion and dead bodies in sacks stopped. No one can set the buses on fire.

He added that crime rates in metropolitan cities remains high through out the world but this doesn't mean that he was defending it. He added that Karachi is a safe city and for better than law and order situation in Peshawar, Quetta and Lahore. The minister said that Sindh government had allocated 100 percent funds in the budget for the safe city project. The work is underway on the project. He added police is trying to contain the street crime in the city.

Illegal Immigrants: He said that issue of illegal immigrants is mandate of NARA. Sindh police is trying to address the issue and has arrested number of illegal immigrants. He said that these arrested illegal immigrants will be deported after legal formalities. The minister said that illegal immigrants has no right to do sale and purchase of any kind. It is international law throughout the world

that illegal immigrants have no such rights. He said that illegal immigrants will be dealt strictly according to law if illegal immigrants were involved in street crimes and would be deported.

Imran Khan: He said that PTI is in state of chaos, fear and panic. PTI's own Chief Minister Punjab has called PTI chief 'selfish and thankless' but astonishingly no leader of PTI had condemned it. He said that Imran Khan has not spared his patrons, what will he do for the people.

Trans Karachi Board of directors meeting: Provincial Minister for Information, Transport and Mass Transit and Chairman Trans Karachi has said that all projects should be completed on time, so that the cost does not escalate, as burden of cost increase falls on the government treasury. The provincial minister said this while presiding over the 22nd Board of Directors meeting of Trans Karachi at his office. He said that people are facing severe problems on University Road, we are trying to complete this project soon. The provincial minister asked the administrator Karachi to resolve the land issue for the construction of the BRT Red Line bus depots, on which the administrator Karachi Dr. Saifur Rahman told the board that 10 acres for the construction of the bus depots has been reserved and allocated at allaudin park.

Trans Karachi may take the control of the land today. In the meeting, the minutes of the 21st board meeting were also approved and the progress of the BRT Red Line project was reviewed in detail. The meeting was attended by Secretary Transport Abdul Haleem Sheikh, Managing Director Sindh Mass Transit Authority Zubair Chana, Administrator Karachi Dr. Saifur Rahman, Justice Retired Shaik Usmani, Rukhsana Rahoja, Shamail Sikandar, CEO Trans Karachi Wasif Ajjal, Company Secretary Iqbal Lalani and others.

Sindh declares December 27 as public holiday

KARACHI (APP): Sindh government, on Tuesday, declared December 27 as public holiday across the province on account of 15th death anniversary of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto.

Chief Secretary Sindh Dr. Muhammad Sohail Rajput, through a notification issued here, announced that all the offices, autonomous and semi-autonomous bodies, corporations and local councils under the administrative control of the provincial government would observe public holiday on December 27, 2022. However, essential services and those engaged in COVID-19 emergency and flood duties would perform their duties as normal, the notification added.

German delegation, Nisar discuss rehabilitation of flood affectees

KARACHI (APP): A delegation of the German NGO and representatives of the German Medico international Dr. Sonke Widdrich and others met PPP Sindh President Nisar Ahmed Khuhro and DG PDMA Syed Salman Shah at a camp of Sindh Minister for Saeed Ghani here on Tuesday. They discussed ongoing relief measures taken by the Sindh government for the flood victims of the Sindh province, according to a communiqué here.

The PPP Sindh President and Director Generals (DG) Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) informed the German Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) delegation about the flood affected areas of Sindh, where German Medico International to possibly help the provincial government for the rehabilitation of the flood victims.

Court directs IO to file reply in case against Aamir Liaquat's widow

KARACHI (TLTP): A judicial magistrate has issued notices to the FIA's investigating officer and prosecutor on an application seeking grant of bail to Dania Shah, the widow of media personality and politician Aamir Liaquat Hussain, detained in a case pertaining to allegedly leaking his indecent video on social media.

The TLTP learnt that Judicial Magistrate (East) Mukesh Kumar told the IO and prosecutor to submit their replies to the bail plea till Dec 20 and adjourned the hearing. On Saturday, a judicial magistrate had remanded Ms Shah in judicial custody till Dec 19 after the FIA produced her before the court following her arrest from her house in Lodhran district of Punjab the day before.

On Monday, she moved an application seeking grant of post-arrest bail, submitting that neither she had any account on the YouTube or any other video-sharing

social media website nor had she uploaded and disseminated the alleged obscene videos of her on the internet recorded with her late husband.

Ms Shah alleged she could not imagine defaming or humiliating late Aamir Liaquat being his wife, but she had been made a scapegoat in a false case under a preplanned conspiracy when she asked for her share in the inheritance.

She further alleged that Hussain's first wife Bushra had extended threats to implicate her in false cases to pressurise her to not claim any share in the assets left behind by her husband.

Dua Aamir, daughter of the late TV anchor, had lodged an FIR against her under Sections 20 (malicious code), 21 (cyberstalking) and 24 (legal recognition of offences committed in relation to information system) of the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act, 2016.

Rs 474 bln investment made in K-Electric after privatization: Senate body told

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Senate Standing Committee on Power Tuesday was apprised that an investment of Rs 474 billion has been made in K-Electric since its privatization in 2005.

The committee which met with Saifullah Abro in the Chair was told that first foreign direct investment of around \$ 700 million was made in the company after its privatization.

Imran Qureshi, Chief Regulatory Affairs of K-Electric, apprised the committee that the K-Electric was first established in 1913 and nationalised in 1952. The company has 3.4 million customers and earned its first profit in 2012 after its privatization, he said.

He said K-Electric was currently running six power plants including Korangi Combined Cycle, Korangi Gas Turbine, SITE Gas Turbine, BQPS II, BQPS III, Port Qasim having total capacity of around 1870 MW. Senator Saifullah Abro said that despite producing 1870 MW with additional of 1100 MW from Government of Pakistan, why K-Electric failed to meet the energy requirement of Karachi.

He inquired the K-Electric officials about the cost incurred on these power projects and details relating to Power Purchase Agreement of K-Electric with government. The Chairman expressed dissatisfaction over the briefing and directed the officials to provide a comprehensive briefing in the next meeting.

Chairman Committee Senator Saifullah Abro also expressed displeasure over the continuous absence of Federal Minister for Energy (Power Division) and CEO, K-Electric in the meeting. The Committee decided to meet and discuss the matter with the Chairman Senate.

The Senate Committee was also briefed by privatization commission about the privatization of K-Electric.

The officials apprised the committee that, in 1992, the government approved a strategic plan for the commercialization and privatization of power sector. K-Electric was making losses for the last 13 years and the loss for the year 2001,2002 and 2003 were Rs.16.4 billion, Rs 17.7 billion and Rs14.4 billion respectively, they added.

DCs directed to ensure timely payments to sugarcane growers

LAHORE (APP): Chief Secretary Punjab Abdullah Khan Sumbal on Tuesday directed all the deputy commissioners for ensuring timely payment of dues to sugarcane farmers and availability of urea fertilizer at officially-fixed rate.

He gave these instructions while presiding over a video link meeting of divisional commissioners and deputy commissioners here at the Civil Secretariat.

The administrative secretaries of agriculture and food departments, deputy commissioner Lahore and officers concerned attended the meeting while all divisional commissioners and deputy commissioners participated through video link. The Chief Secretary said that the government would protect the rights of farmers in any case and would take stern action against the sugar mills over illegal deductions and delay in payments.

He also asked the officers to adopt strict measures to prevent smuggling of urea fertilizer. He said that demand, supply and prices of urea fertilizer should be closely monitored.

The Chief Secretary ordered the deputy commissioners to give approval to the housing societies only as per rules.

He said that during the current financial year, record development funds of Rs 217 billion were utilized in a short span of time, adding that timely use of funds, quality and transparency in uplift projects must be ensured.

Court hears Nazim Jokhio murder case

KARACHI (INP): Additional sessions judge Malir heard Nazim Jokhio murder case on Tuesday, Pakistan People's Party (PPP) MPA Jam Awais and eight other suspects were indicted for murdering Nazim Jokhio in a previous hearing.

Additional First Sessions Judge Malir heard a compromise petition filed by the family members of the victim. The coun-

sels of the sides presented their arguments over the matter. The court adjourned further hearing of the case for brief interval to reserve decision on the plea.

In a previous hearing the court indicted Jam Awais and others accused of Nazim Jokhio's murder. All eight suspects including Jam Awais pleaded not guilty in the murder. In October last year.



LAHORE: A donkey cart holder on the way loaded with plastic pipes towards his destination.



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TENDER NOTICE

PROCUREMENT OF ELECTRIC & IT EQUIPMENT

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Information Technology Board (KPITB) invites sealed bids along with 2% bid security of the total quoted price from reputed bidders registered with Income Tax and Sales Tax Departments and who are on Active Taxpayers List (ATL) of FBR & KPRA, for the **Procurement of Electric & IT Equipment for ADP Scheme "Establishment of Citizen Facilitation Centers in KP"**.

PROCUREMENT OF ELECTRIC & IT EQUIPMENT		
2	Date & Time of Bid Submission	January 05, 2023 at 02:00 PM
3	Date & Time of Bid Opening	January 05, 2023 at 02:30 PM

Detail Bidding documents containing eligibility criteria, specifications of items and other terms and conditions, can be downloaded from the website of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Information Technology Board (KPITB) i.e. www.kpitb.gov.pk/rfps

The sealed bids prepared as per instruction in the bidding documents shall be submitted to the office of KPITB located at Plot 134-136, Industrial Estate Phase#5, Hayatabad, Peshawar on or before the above mentioned date and time. All the bids will be opened in the presence of bidders / their representatives who want to be present at the time of opening of bids. The bids received after due date and time will not be considered.

Assistant Director Procurement, INF(P) 7096/22
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Information Technology Board,
Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa,
Peshawar, Pakistan.
Phone #: 091-9219505, 091-5891613



We are surrounded by mafias: Chief Justice PHC remarked

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench comprising of Chief Justice Peshawar High Court (PHC) Justice Qaiser Rashid and Justice Ijaz Anwar ordered Evacuee Property Board Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Chief to appear before court today (on Wednesday).

During hearing, Additional Advocate General Syed Sikandar Shah, Additional Attorney General Amir Javeed, Ali Gohar Advocate nominated by PHC to visit Panj Terat temple for submission of report, committee members for status and condition of forests & minerals in Chitral district.

Additional Prosecutor General Nab Muhammad Ali along with District Forest Officer Tariq

Shah appeared before court in cases filed by Dr. Adnan and others regarding environmental issues.

Additional Prosecutor General Muhammad Ali informed that he along with DFO Tariq Shah will visit Chitral after submission of report by committee constituted for probe cutting of trees and excavation of minerals in the district who worked from 5 to 14 December to identified further gray areas in this regard.

In the meantime, Chief Justice PHC Qaiser Rashid ordered Additional Prosecutor General along with DFO for immediate visit to Chitral after obtaining report because delivery of services will disturb following snowfall season. Muhammad Ali Advocate

informed that famous walnut forests were grounded which is neglected while CJ PHC inquired from Ali Gohar Advocate regarding his visit to Panj Terat temple on court's order.

Ali Gohar Advocate informed that unfortunately Panj Terat temple is dump of garbage despite it is the jurisdiction of Evacuee Property Board and all pathways are filled with dirt and dust.

He added that pictures didn't place on court's record because it will defame us.

However, Chief Justice Qaiser Rashid remarked that we are surrounded by mafias. Because on one hand land mafia on other hand timber mafia are active while added that in Evacuee Property Board

has zero performance because didn't utilized 36 thousand Kanal land provided in Takhtbhai area of Mardan district.

Chief Justice Qaiser Rashid observed that we people didn't have any sense of responsibility for national resources and added that Panj Terat temple was famous internationally but unfortunately it become dump of garbage as per submitted report while cut centuries old trees in Chitral by timber mafia.

Chief Justice PHC Qaiser Rashid added that these are important issues and demands early hearing while adjourned further hearing and ordered Evacuee Property Board Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's chief to appear to today before court.



PESHAWAR: Special Assistant on Information Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif meeting Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mahmood Khan at Chief Minister's House.

PHC suspends imprisonment of alleged fraudulent F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Justice Lal Jan Khattak of Peshawar High Court (PHC) has suspended imprisonment along with fine of fraudulent allegedly involved issuance of Rs50 million fake check, on Tuesday.

According to prosecution accused Jahanzeb has issued alleged fake cheque of Rs50 million in business dispute while First Information Report was registered against him on 21st October 2022.

The counsel for petitioner Danyal Khan Chamkani Advocate informed that Jahanzeb was convicted by Peshawar's magistrate for three years of imprisonment along as well as imposed Rs1 million fine in the offense. He added that District Session Judge has already turnaround acquittal petition and the petitioner approached PHC for relief.

Justice Lal Jan Khattak of PHC suspended trial court's decision and ordered to release Jahanzeb on bail after conclusion of arguments.

Digital page for public complaints introduced

PESHAWAR (APP): Home & Tribal Affairs Department, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has introduced a digital page for the redressal of public complaints.

In a statement issued here on Tuesday, Advisor to KP CM on Home & Tribal Affairs Department, Babar Saleem Swati said that for maintaining law and order and provision of protection to the people, the provincial government has digitized all affairs.

He said that now anyone can lodge a complaint or submit information on the web page of the Home Department regarding illegal weapons, explosive material, extortion, money-laundering, illegal mobile CIM, immoral & illegal use of internet, narcotics, smuggling, fake documents, kidnapping for ransom, human-trafficking, gambling and etc.

The advisor said that the provincial government is providing facilitation to the people to prevent illegal businesses across the province. He said that names of complainants would be kept in secret during the process and can lodge any complaint on this online page.

‘Irrigation circle to bring revolution’

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Irrigation Arshad Ayub Khan on Tuesday said the establishment of new Hazara Irrigation Circle would bring agricultural revolution in the area besides creating employment opportunities for the locals.

He said that the establishment of new circle became possible due to special interest and guidance of KP Chief Minister.

He said Hazara Circle would reduce the problems of millions of people of Hazara Division, while their issues related to irrigation would be solved in Hazara. He paid tribute to CM and said that under his leadership, practical steps are being taken to implement the reform agenda across the province.

Rs700m Insaf Rozgar Scheme phase-II to start soon: Jhagra

PESHAWAR (APP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government is launching Rs.700 million second phase of Insaf Rozgar Scheme under which loans of up to Rs 1,000,000 will be given to youth to start their own business.

Finance Minister Taimur Jhagra in statement said that despite all financial challenges, the KP government going all the way to provide opportunities for the youth of the merged

districts with interest free loan. He said that Bank of Khyber will release details and advertisements soon, adding youth can benefit from this injection of cash into the tribal districts economy.

Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mahmood Khan offering interest free loan for the youth of the province that they can start their own business.

The KP government

starts Insaf Rozgar Scheme with the help of Bank of Khyber.

Under this scheme government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is providing loan without any interest to low income, unemployed, male and females with terms and condition.

Taimur Jhagra said that it is an opportunity for all KP domicile holders that they can take loan f and start their own business anywhere in the country.

Three companies get status of zone enterprises

PESHAWAR (APP): In another landmark achievement of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zones Development & Management Company (KP-EZDMC), the 5th Rashakai SEZ committee awarded the status of zone enterprise to 3 companies who are now recipients of industrial plots in Rashakai Special Economic Zone.

According to an official of the company here on Tuesday, a collective investment of PKR 1.2 billion and employment generation of 500+ is expected from these companies.

These three enterprises

include G&S MEDCURE PVT LTD, which will cater to the diverse market of Pakistan in the health sector, providing health care products, GLOBE PARK METALS (PVT) LTD, with a background as a trader in long steel, smart-phones, Ferrous and Non-ferrous scrap in the UK, UAE, and Pakistan, and HARIS MAHMOOD (PVT) LTD with an aim to export food items, raw cotton, and other miscellaneous supplies.

As of now, the SEZ committee has approved 18 enterprises, leasing out 68 acres of land with an investment figure of PKR

79.2 billion.

The swift approval mechanism and quick implementation by the federal and provincial Government make Rashakai SEZ, the premier CPEC industrial project in Pakistan, a fast-emerging zone in industrial development.

The zone will invigorate industrial activities and uplift the region's economy, kindling hope of revival. The teamwork by the federal and provincial government departments, particularly the efforts of the KP-EZDMC and KP-BOIT are helping in removing hurdles in industrialization.

CNG owners delegation calls on Governor

PESHAWAR (APP): A delegation of Peshawar CNG owners on Monday called on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Ghulam Ali here at Governor House and expressed gratitude for resolving the issue of low gas pressure to CNG stations.

The delegation felicitated the Governor over his appointment and completed one month at his office.

They presented a gift of an antique gun to the governor as an expression of gratitude for the steps taken to resolve issues of CNG stations.

District admin holds open court

PESHAWAR (APP): The District administration Peshawar organized an open court in Mera Khachori, a suburban locality of the city on Tuesday.

Besides, DC Peshawar, Shafiqullah Khan, AC Nadia Nawaz Dogar and AAC, Tehrim Shah, officers of the subsidiary departments, public representatives, local notables and general public attended the open court at large.

During the open court, the residents of the locality complained of massive power load shedding and called for cut in its duration to facilitate the people. Similarly, they also complained of low gas pressure and demands improvement in it.

The residents of the area also complained of poor sanitation services and called for the cleaning of drains and streets on daily basis. They also called for the establishment of a stadium in the area to promote the local youth towards positive activities and provision of Rescue 1122 services in the area.

Speaking on the occasion, Assistant Commissioner, Nadia Nawaz Dogar said that the purpose of organizing open courts is to bridge distance between the administration and general address public complaints at their door steps.

Cold and dry weather to prevailed

PESHAWAR (APP): Provincial Meteorological Center Peshawar on Tuesday predicted that mainly cold and dry weather is expected in most districts of the province, while very cold in upper parts and hilly areas during the next 24 hours.

It said that dense fog is likely to occur over Peshawar, Charsadda, Nowshera, Mardan, Swabi and D.I. Khan districts, as well as over Peshawar to Swabi Motorway during night and morning hours.

Travelers on Motorways and National Highways were advised to adopt precautionary measures during travelling.

During the last 24 hours, mainly cold and dry weather occurred in most districts of the province, while very cold in hilly areas and upper parts.



PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali with others offering Namaz-e-Janaza of martyred official at Police Line.

Seminar on Pak current economic condition held

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A seminar on "chances of default of Pakistan economy: causes, consequences and the way forward" was organized by Peshawar University Teachers Association (PUTA) at University of Peshawar here on Tuesday.

As per details, a series of annual seminar on the theme of chances of default of Pakistan economy: causes, consequences and the way forward started by PUTA which was attended by a noted economist who was the chief guest of the event and also served at PIDE, PIPS and WBF forums; Prof. Dr. Shahid Wasim Malik, currently holding Mehbub ur Rasheed chair for State

Bank of Pakistan at University of Peshawar. The university teachers, students and journalist were also participated on the occasion.

The Chief Guests Shahid Wasim Malik said that Pakistan is likely to avert the default position, that Pakistan successfully paid current payment of euro-bond worth of one billion dollar and continue global downward trend of crude oil prices that will relax import bill of the country.

He appreciated the short term adjustments by present government to reign in current account deficit, restricting imports and rupee-dollar disparity but warned that such short-term measures could harm business community trust and

business ecosystem in the long run.

He pointed out that whooping services sector is welcoming but low intensity industry is hurting Pakistan economy that must be corrected by igniting massive industrial growth to offset imports burden.

He remarked that government must look to invest in universities for ideas, innovation and knowledge based economy for long term solution to ailing economy.

In the concluding session, President Peshawar University Teachers Association Dr. Muhammad Uzair thanked Dr. Sajjad Ahmad Jan for his efforts for arranging a fruitful seminar.

PESCO notifies power suspension

PESHAWAR (APP): The Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO) on Tuesday notified that due to maintenance work power supply will remain suspended from 500 KV Sheikh Muhammadi Grid Station on 21st, 24th and 28th December from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. due to which consumers of 11 KV Sarband, Shabkhel, Sheikhani feeders will face inconvenience.

It said the power supply will also remain suspended from 132 KV Warsak Road Grid Station on 21st, 24th and 31st December from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. resultantly

consumers of 11 KV Kochyan 1,2, Mathara 1,2, Shagai Industrial, Shahi Bala, Swat Scout, Shaheen Foundation, MES, Colony 2, Marbal Chowk, Sher Bridge, New Machini feeders will face inconvenience.

The power supply will remain suspended from 66 KV Warsak Grid Station on 21st and 24th December from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. resultantly consumers of 11 KV Tarnab, New Mulaghori, DAM Sidr, Hussain Marbal feeders will face inconvenience. The power supply will also remain suspended from 132 KV Mansehra

Grid Station on 21st December from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. resultantly consumers of 11 KV Murad Pur, Shankari, Pakhel, Ahsan Shaheed, Ghazikot, Axillary feeders will face inconvenience.

Likewise, the power supply will remain suspended from 132 KV Mardan Grid Station on 21st December from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. resultantly consumers of 11 KV Nawa Kali, Sheikh Maltoon, City 2, Eidgah, Baghram, Rural 1, Badshah Khan Medical College feeders will face inconvenience.



PESHAWAR: Residents of district Kurram hold protest rally in favour of their rights. — F.P. photo by Ghulam Murtaza



PESHAWAR: An old man selling napkin (dasterkhan) at Hashtnagri Chowk.

Position of inflows, outflows in rivers issued

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

According to a spokesperson of the authority inflows and outflows in River Indus at Tarbela was 18600 cusecs and 34000 cusecs while inflows and outflows in Kabul River at Nowshera was 8500 cusecs and 8500 cusecs while inflows and outflows in Kabul River at Khairabad Bridge was recorded at 15100 cusecs and 15100 cusecs.

Similarly, inflows and outflows in Jhelum River at Mangla 8300 cusecs and 20000 cusecs while inflows and outflows Chenab at Marala was 5300 cusecs and 2000 cusecs respectively.

Meanwhile, inflows and outflows in Jinnah Barrage at 45500 cusecs and 40500 cusecs while in Chashma, the inflows and outflows were 34900 cusecs and

39000 cusecs. In Taunsa (inflows 37700 cusecs and outflows 27700 cusecs), Guddu (inflows 31200 cusecs and outflows 22000 cusecs), Sukkur (inflows 27600 cusecs and outflows 11800 cusecs) Kotri (inflows 11200 cusecs and outflows 7000 cusecs), Trimmu (inflows 5700 cusecs and outflow Nil cusecs while in Panjnad (inflows 6100 cusecs and outflows Nil cusecs) respectively.

Similarly, Tarbela dam was operating at level of 1490.50 feet against the minimum levels of 1398 feet, present level 1490.50 feet and maximum conservation level 1550 feet. Live storage on Tuesday morning was recorded 2.759 million acre feet (MAF).

Mangla: Minimum operating level 1050 feet, present level 1119.35 feet, maximum conservation level 1242 feet, live storage today 0.770 MAF.

Chashma: Minimum operating level 638.15 feet, present level 641.20 feet, maximum conservation level 649 feet, live storage today 0.044 MAF.

Police pledge foolproof security

PESHAWAR (APP): With a few days left to Christmas, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police authorities have decided to further beef up the security of churches across the province especially in Peshawar to avert any untoward incident on the grand annual event.

In this regard, Superintendent of Police (SP) Hayatabad, Dr Muhammad Umar along with police officials visited various churches in Pishtakhara area and conducted security audit of the premises.

He took a detailed review of the security cover in and around the churches and suggested extra security measures to ensure safety of the people. He said the KP police were utilizing all available resources to ensure security of people and their worship places.

He said the impartial attitude of the police force with its people regardless of their religious affiliation will help promote religious harmony among people. He added that the police will provide foolproof security to the Christians and their worship place on the occasion of Christmas.



In brief

Police arrest 3 contract-killers
F.P. Report

DIR UPPER: Dir Upper Police during a crack-down against anti-social elements have arrested three contract-killers, arrived in the district for killings, said a press release issued here on Tuesday. Dir Upper Police have received a tip that some contract killers have entered the district for killing Musafir Jan son of Abdul Hassan, resident of Noor Khel on which the personnel of Police Station Barawal conducted raids and arrested two suspects Aziz-ur-Rehman son of Baghi Kha, resident of Arundu (Chitral) and Jan Mohammad son of KasharKhan, resident of Arundu (Chitral) (present) resident of Abua Kota (Bari Kot) Swat. Later, the third suspect Shams-ur-Rehman was also arrested. During the search police also recovered two 30-bore pistols, 20 cartridges and cash amount from their possession. A team headed by the SP Investigation, Farman Khan has been constituted for investigation from the accused contract killers. According to initial interrogation, the accused have confessed that they had have paid an amount of Rs.2 million for the murder of two persons including Musafir Jan son of Abdul Hassan.

Property dispute claims life

SARGODHA (INP): A man was shot dead over property dispute in Masti Khel area on Tuesday. Police said that Muhammad Yameen (48) was working in his fields in Masti Khel area when his cousins- Saleem and Naveed allegedly opened fire at him in a fit of grudge over property dispute. He received critical bullet injuriesand died on the spot. Police were looking into the matter.

Criminals nabbed

SARGODHA (INP): Sargodha Police on Tuesday arrested 32 criminals who were involved in cattle theft, bike lifting, pick pocketing, drug dealing and pushing etc during the last 24 hours. The raiding teams arrested 32 outlaws-- Usama, Usman, Talha, Khaleel, Kamran, Aslam, Junaid, Jameel, Rehaan, Shafique, Akraam Ali, Muraad, Rehman, Allah Ditta, Qasim, Naem, Jahangir, Saleem, Yousaf, Naseer, Jaber, Jaffer, Qayyum, Baqir and others. Police recovered seven pistols, eight guns and 456 bullets, 855 liters liquor, 456-g hashish and various other valuables from their possessions. Concerned police launched investigations.

Collision kills youth

HYDERABAD (PPI): One person was killed and another injured in a road accident in Hyderabad in the wee hours of Tuesday. The accident occurred near cement factory in Hyderabad where an over speeding trailer hit a motorcycle, killing a youth on the spot and critically injuring another. Police and rescue teams reached the spot and shifted the dead and injured to Civil Hospital, Hyderabad. Police sources said that the deceased was identified as Mona Lal.

Arrangements for Christmas

SUKKUR (INP): Divisional Commissioner Sukkur, Ghulam Mustafa Phull on Tuesday directed the police and other security organizations to ensure fool-proof security arrangements around the churches so that the Christian community members could celebrate Christmas with a sense of security.

Up-gradation of PST, SST teachers soon: Minister

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Education Shahram Khan Tarakai on Tuesday said that the up-gradation of primary school teachers and SST teachers, including the rest of the teachers, will be promoted under the four-tier formula, for which the Finance Department has been discussed, while soon cadre-wise service structure will also be given to IT teachers.

He said this during his visit to Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education Mardan, to conduct education expo to give opportunities to students to study in different countries, which will help students to

study abroad.

Minister Education, while referring to the ongoing reforms, said that from grade 9 to 12, orders have been issued to all education boards by making the study of the Holy Quran as a compulsory subject, now every child will get 50 marks.

He said that it was Imran Khan's vision to establish Rahmatulil Alameen Authority and distribute this scholarship throughout the country, according to which cheques of Rs25000 were distributed to male and female students in Mardan Board today.

A generous amount was provided to students, while the students who took the position on merit under the

Stori da Pakhtunkhwa program, the first installment of Rs.180,000 was paid and full installments of Rs.3,60,000 were also paid to other college side students.

The minister said that we have started the second shift program in about 1,100 schools of the province in which about 30,000 children are getting education for which thousands of teachers have been hired.

He said that early age program has been stated in grade 6th to 8th schools, while to ensure quality education, around 3000 school leaders have been recruited throughout the province to provide quality education to students.

Throat slit bodies of two youths found in Tank

F.P. Report

TANK: The throat-slit bodies of two youths were found in a dried mountainous water channel in Abak Tangi area of Tank district on Tuesday morning.

Local police said the bodies of two youths, stated to be first cousins, were spotted by the locals in a water channel. Both the youth were slaughtered by unknown killers who dumped their bodies in a dried water channel.

Police said the killers also left a paper piece written with "those indulging in espionage will face the same fate" near the bodies of the youths. Police have shifted the bodies to DHQ Tank for post-mortem and collected evidence for investigating

the unfortunate incident.

Annual sports prize distribution ceremony held for school players: Annual prize distribution ceremony of sports was held at Government Shaheed Sher Nawaz Centennial Model High School No.1 here on Tuesday. During the ceremony prizes and trophies were distributed among winner and runner up teams and players of the district's high and higher secondary school in different games.

Nisar Ahmad Khattak District Education Officer (Male), Wajhi-Ud-Kundi Deputy Director Establishment Elementary and Secondary Education Department participated in the ceremony on behalf of Hafiz Ibrahim Director

(Elementary and Secondary) Education Peshawar (KP) besides students and heads of educational institutions.

Dr. Qayyum Nawaz principal of the institution welcomed the guests and Director Representative Wajhi-Ud-Din Kundi and said all Principals, headmasters, winner, runner up teams and their in-charge grace the occasion and added that such healthy activities should be promoted for healthy personality development of students. He also highlighted cooperation of Dr. Zain Ullah Deputy District Education Officer (Male), Tank special regarding successful conduct of the sports event.

3 killed as van overturns

KASUR (INP): Three members of a family were killed while eleven others suffered injuries when a van they were riding in overturned near Bhoneki Morh, Pattoki due to dense fog on Tuesday early morning.

According to Rescue-1122 spokesperson, the van was heading towards Okara from Lahore when it met accident. Resultantly, Muhammad Aslam (52), Rani Bibi (50), Muhammad Ashraf (60) died on the spot

while 11 others sustained critical injuries.

The injured were identified as Nasreen Bibi (40), Muhammad Aslam (40), Abdul Basit (40), Mumtaz (55), Yasir Rizwan (30), Samina Bibi (47), Akram (48), Shahid Ashraf (37), Afzal Faqeer (50), Abdul Razaq (59) and Ahsiq (40). On information, Rescue and police teams reached the spot and shifted the victimsto THQ hospital Pattoki.



HYDERABAD: A view of damaged safety grills at Kali Mori Bridge, which needs attention of authorities concerned.

Islam ensures women's right from property to livelihood

Zia-ur-Rahman Tajik

IN Islam, women and men have equivalent rights but in the case of inheritance. Islam allows half a share to women as compared to men in the estate of their father. And as per the interpretation of religious scholars' reason for half share of women is as follows.

Islam has differentiated between men and women because of their realistic perception and financial obligation because men bear all expenses of their wives and children. Men also give dowry to their wives and work diligently to provide for all living expenses. Women are not required to work and pay for such living expenses. A female is not required to spend the wealth she has, on her family.

On the death of a Muslim succession of an estate left by him immediately opens and the property is transferred to the legal heirs without any intervention by the state functionaries. All the persons who are entitled to inheritance immediately and automatically become co-shares of the estate left by the deceased.

But unfortunately, most of the time female heirs relinquished their property rights in favour of

male heirs on the touchstone of the principle of mutual contract. But all agreements without consideration are void as per section 25 of the contract Act. A male co-heir has rarely relinquished his right of inheritance in favour of a female heir. Relinquishment of property by the female heir in favour of the male heir is void, against morality and illegal and a major sin among all worldly sins. It is also very astonishing that parents also deprive their daughters of inheritance and transfer the property to their sons through gift mutations at the cost of facing consequences on the day of judgement. Such types of gifts and mutations are not permissible in Islam and are void and can be challenged at any time.

The transfer and gift of the property by the parents in favour of some heir at the expense of other heirs cause heartburning and enmity among them. It was held by the August Supreme court of Pakistan in the reported judgement (2015 SCMR 1704) that the court have to look into the surrounding circumstances to ascertain the true intent behind the gift to determine its validity and to ensure that women were not deprived of their property through frivolous or fraudulent means by taking

advantage of their literacy, weak social background and other compelling circumstances to which they might be easily exposed.

Depriving children of inheritance is an injustice and Islam's emphasis on justice and justice in Islam is considered to be an attribute of Allah Almighty. The administration of justice is the performance of religious duty and has been placed next to piety. A legal heir can be deprived of inheritance under section 317 of the Pakistan penal 1860 code If the person committing murder is an heir. Depriving females of inheritance is a common phenomenon in Pakistan and with time, the number of cases filed by females for the right to inheritance has increased in civil courts.

The parliament through the 3rd criminal law amendment Act 2011 inserted section 498A In Pakistan penal code 1860 and protected women's rights of inheritance. The said section is read as follows. "Prohibition of depriving women of inheriting property. Whoever by deceitful or illegal means deprive any women of inheriting any movable or immovable property at the time of opening succession shall be punished with imprisonment for either description for a

term which may extend to 10 years but shall not be less than 5 years or with fine of 1 million or with both."

But astonishingly no proper heed was paid to this section of law in Inheritance cases and very rare FIRs are registered under this section. Due to fear of jail and ultimate conviction on conclusion of trial a male heir would easily transfer and hand over a share of their sisters in inheritance and thus the female would also be safeguarded from the agonies of prolonging trial and settlement of the issue without considerable delay.

The govt is required to give wide publication to the said section through print, electronic and social media for the information of the general public. It is the fundamental right of every citizen of Pakistan under article 23 of the constitution of Pakistan to acquire, hold and dispose of property subject to exceptions imposed by law or constitution.

All citizens are entitled to equal protection of the law and are equal before the law as per article 25 of the constitution and there shall be no discrimination based on sex, cast, creed, education or status but with one exception provided by Article 25 (3) of the Constitution that the state can make special laws

for the protection of women and children. Govt of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa because of specific authorization provided by Article 25(3) of the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan promulgated a special Act for the protection of women's rights known as the "Khyber Pakhtunkhwa enforcement of women's property rights Act 2019, And Under section 4 of the said Act if any complaint is filed by any woman deprived of her ownership or possession and if no proceeding is pending regarding it in any court then the complaint shall be decided within 60 days by the ombudsperson.

The decision shall be implemented within 7 days under section 5 of the Act. In case of involvement of complicated questions of law and facts, the ombudsperson shall refer the complaint to the civil court for decision and the civil court shall treat it as a civil suit and decide it. And Under section 7 even if any proceeding is pending in any court about the ownership or possession of any property claimed by women the ombudsperson even than can proceed and decide the matter. But sections 4 and 7 of the said Act are contradictory to each other and in case of the contra-

dictory provision, the same are to be harmoniously interpreted so that one may not yield the other by applying the principles of harmonious interpretation.

Appeal against the decision of the ombudsperson lies to the high court within 45 days. The ombudsperson on its own or in the complaint of an NGO can also initiate action about the ownership or possession of a woman deprived of her property. Immunity is also granted to the action, order and decision of the ombudsperson and cannot be questioned in any court.

There is no limitation for filing a complaint under the said Act. A woman can also file a complaint for the property mentioned in the Nikahnama to the ombudsperson. In addition to it under the married women property Act 1874, a woman has the legal right to separate her property and take legal action for her property in her name.

The present Act provides support, justice, protection and remedies to the women deprived of their properties, several females have benefited and their shares in inheritance were transferred and handed over to them through the complaint filed before the ombudsperson under the newly promulgated Act.



HYDERABAD: Workers of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf holding a protest against Sindh government for acceptance of their demands.

Encroachment demolished on Panjkora river
F.P. Report

TIMERGARA: District administration of Lower Dir has demolished the illegal constructions worth billions of rupees in Timergara city while launching an indiscriminate operation against illegal encroachments along the banks of the Panjkora river, on Tuesday.

The district administration has so far demolished 257 illegally constructed shops, 2 plazas and one hotel, Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Zubair Khan Niazi expressed these views in his office in Balambat. Addressing the press conference, ADC Finance John Muhammad and AD Local Government Amir Nizam Durrani were also present on this occasion. The work is going on rapidly in Timergara Khor, where the land mafia had illegally encroached on a large scale, on which the district administration has taken strict action and started an indiscriminate operation against them, with the completion of the project worth Rs18 millions.

Not only will illegal encroachments be stopped, but this DC Lower Dir said that certain groups are trying to sabotage this multi-purpose project which will not succeed and the district administration will not put any pressure and threats. And the operation against illegal encroachments will continue in Timergara Khor. He further said that in the light of the High Court's Somoto order, an operation against illegal encroachments has also been started on the banks of the Panchkora River, with the restoration of the river in good condition. Along with this, the flow of river water will be controlled, similarly, children and entertainment parks equipped with all facilities are being constructed in Chakdra and Balambat. In response to a question, Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Zubair Khan Niazi said that the operation is not being carried out at the behest of anyone in Timergara city, but it is being operated under the survey of Nespak and there is no pressure in it.

City beautification plan will be completed soon

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Zubair Khan Niazi has said that mega development projects in the district will be completed soon as the administration is committed to provide relief to local masses.

Briefing local journalists about the ongoing mega projects and anti-encroachment drive in his office here on Tuesday the DC said the ongoing mega projects including the Chakdara Public Park, Chakdara Sports ground, Asbanr public park, Timergara public park, maintenance and repair of Timergara Jail to Timer Chowk Road, pavement of Timergara model streets, walking track and Shaheed Chowk flyover would be completed.

He also informed the media about the ongoing anti-encroachment drive in parts of the district and said the administration had razed illegal structures after the chief justice of Peshawar high court took a suo moto notice and directed the administration to implement its orders. He said that an indiscriminate anti-encroachment drive on the bank of Panjkora River was in progress that would be accomplished without accepting any pressure.

The DC said the administration had so far demolished a total of 257 shops, 2 plazas, one hotel and several kiosks built upon the water courses in the district. He said that speedy work on the government beautification project was in progress. He said the project would be completed with a cost of Rs 18 million. The DC said that some elements wanted to sabo-

tage the development projects in the district but they would not succeed.

The DC said the River Protection Act and the orders of the honourable High Court in this regard would be implemented in letter and spirit. He said that in the light of the provincial government's directives, the survey on the Panjkora River under the supervision of the National Engineering Service of Pakistan (Nespak) had been completed, the report of which would be received by December 31. The additional deputy commissioner (finance and planning) Jan Muhammad, assistant director local government Nizam Durrani, SDO irrigation department Tayyub Syed, Engineer Saddam and other officials were also present on this occasion.

Government Middle School inaugurated

F.P. Report

GHALANAI: Newly establishment Government Middle School Ali Nagar area of Mohmand inaugurated which was constructed with mutual cooperation among district administration and security forces to ensure provision of education youth, on Tuesday.

District Administration and Security Forces are taking important steps to promote education in Mohmand district. In this regard, the construction of Government Middle School Ali Nagar

Ali Nagar in Mohmand was completed in a very short period of time.

Along with the construction of classrooms for the students and staff room for the faculty, other important facilities have also been provided in the school, including the solar system for the supply of electricity and clean water. District Administration and Officials of FC Khyber Pakhtunkhwa North, local elders and people of the area attended the inauguration ceremony of Government Middle School Ali Nagar.

On this occasion, the local elders thanked the District Administration and FC Khyber Pakhtunkhwa North and said that important steps are being taken for development in remote areas of Mohmand district by which the people of the area are becoming self-sufficient. Elders said that the construction of schools in the area is an important step. Now it is the duty of the government to take steps to start regular classes in this school. While parents also have a duty to send their children to the school.

SHO allegedly injured

LARKANA (PPI): One Station House Officer (SHO) Ali Hassan Abro was allegedly injured when he was fired on by the gangsters in the riverine area of Veehar police station in Dokri Taluka on Tuesday.

According to police, he was following the footprints of the robbery criminals along with a police party by the accused. SHO Abro was rushed to the emergency department of

Chandka Medical College Hospital by his colleagues for treatment and further management. Veehar police on the occasion said that armed robbers deprived Nooruddin Khoro and Zulfiqar Khoro of Rs1.1 million and fled and they were following their footprints on receipt of the information when the criminals opened fire on seeing them in which SHO Abro was injured.



Chinese with mild COVID urged to work as curbs ease

BEIJING (AP): Several local governments in China encouraged people with mild cases of COVID-19 to go to work this week, another sign of the difficulty the country faces as its rollback of virus-containment measures sets off a wave of infections — and a growing number of deaths.

Health authorities reported Tuesday that five people died in the latest 24-hour period, all in Beijing, fueling concern that the toll could rise sharply after the lifting of most “zero-COVID” restrictions. The official toll likely understates the actual number, and it’s unclear how the unleashing of the virus will play out in China and whether the health care system can handle a surge in cases nationwide. The city of Guiyang in southern Guizhou province proposed that infected people with little or no symptoms go to work in a range of sectors, including government offices, state-owned companies, medical, health and emergency workers and those in express delivery and supermarkets.

That’s a sea change from just a few weeks ago, when China’s policy was to isolate anyone infected at a hospital or government-run facility. The announcement Tuesday followed similar ones from the cities of Wuhu in Anhui province and Chongqing earlier this week. The moves appear to be in response to worker shortages that have affected medical care and food deliveries. They also reflect the difficulty officials face in trying to revive an economy that was throttled by pandemic restrictions, and now that they have been lifted, is being slowed by workers falling ill.

China had long hailed its restrictive “zero-COVID” approach of lockdowns, quarantines and com-

pulsory testing as keeping case numbers and deaths relatively low. Yet the policy placed China’s society and the national economy under enormous stress and prompted rare anti-government protests, apparently convincing the ruling Communist Party to heed outside advice and alter its strategy. Now, unofficial reports suggest a widespread wave of new coronavirus cases, and relatives of victims and people who work in the funeral business have said deaths tied to COVID-19 are increasing.

Wang Guangfa, a doctor in the Respiratory Department of Peking University First Hospital, warned Beijing will see the peak of severe cases in the next one or two weeks. “The current wave of infection resembles an epidemic tsunami,” he said in a Q&A piece published online this week. He also said northern China will have a higher rate of severe cases than the southern part because of the cold weather.

As is typical, cases of severe illness and death will be largely concentrated among the elderly or those who haven’t received booster shots of vaccines, said Dr. Gagandeep Kang, who studies viruses at the Christian Medical College in Vellore, India. China, despite fully vaccinating 90.3% of its population, has only given a booster dose to 60.5%. China needs to prioritize giving boosters, especially to those over 60, to avoid large numbers of deaths, Kang said.

The National Health Commission said the five newly recorded fatalities had taken the country’s total death toll to 5,242 — relatively low by global standards but potentially set to increase substantially following moves by the government to step away from

the “zero-COVID” policy. With people now testing and recuperating at home, China has said it is no longer possible to keep an accurate count of new case numbers, making it substantially more difficult to gauge the state of the current wave of infection and its direction. Some scientific models have estimated numbers will rise with an eventual death toll in the tens or hundreds of thousands.

China is trying to persuade reluctant seniors and others at risk to get vaccinated, apparently with only moderate success. Vaccination centers visited over recent days have been largely empty and there has been no major publicity drive in the entirely state-controlled media. The other major concern is shoring up health resources in smaller cities and the vast rural hinterland ahead of January’s Lunar New Year travel rush, which will see migrant workers returning to their hometowns.

Numbers of fever clinics have been expanded in both urban and rural areas and people have been asked to stay home unless seriously ill to preserve resources. Hospitals are also running short on staff, and reports say workers have been asked to return to their posts as long as they aren’t feverish. Case and death counts in every country are thought to underestimate the true toll of the virus, but there are particular concerns in China. Chinese health authorities count only those who died directly from COVID-19, excluding deaths blamed on underlying conditions such as diabetes and heart disease that raise risks of serious illness. In many other countries, guidelines stipulate that any death where the coronavirus is a factor or contributor is counted as a COVID-19 related.

Guterres calls for credible climate action

UNITED NATIONS (AP): The head of the United Nations urged world leaders to take “credible” new action to curb climate change, warning that efforts so far fall short of what’s needed to avert catastrophe.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said the Paris climate accord’s goal of capping global warming at 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 Fahrenheit) “is gasping for breath” as the gap between actual greenhouse gas emissions and the amount allowing the target to be met keeps growing. Guterres blamed governments for this failure, saying “national climate plans are falling woefully short,” though he acknowledged some steps have been taken to shift the global economy away from the fossil fuel use that is largely to blame for heating up the planet.

The UN chief said he wants “all countries (to) make an extra effort to reduce emissions this decade in line with the 1.5-degree goal and ensure support for those who need it.” Guterres said he would not relent in pushing governments to confront “this existential threat” and planned to convene a gathering of leaders in September to discuss tackling climate change.

The invitation would be open to governments, businesses and civil society, he said. “The price of entry is non-negotiable — credible, serious and new climate action and nature-based solutions that will move the needle forward and respond to the urgency of the climate crisis.” “It will be a no-nonsense summit,” Guterres said, adding: “There will be no room for back-sliders, greenwashers, blame-shifters or repackaging of announcements of previous years.”

Hunger threatens Congo’s Goma

GOMA (Reuters): Sitting in the dirt, Valerie Kahindo picks spoiled kernels from a sack of maize — the only job the farmer can find in the eastern Congolese city of Goma after rebel fighters seized her fields and forced her to flee without her family. The mother of eight is among 450,000 people displaced in this year’s renewed offensive by the M23 rebel group, whose seizure of land in North Kivu province has also severed key trade routes and disrupted farming that is the backbone of the local economy.

“The M23 set up camp in my field... They destroyed my field,” 50-year-old Kahindo said at the mill in Goma that she once supplied with up to 15 tonnes of maize per year. Her children, grandchildren, parents and siblings are stuck in rebel-occupied parts of Rutshuru territory to the north of Goma, a key trading hub of almost one million people on the border with Rwanda.

“They call me day and night asking for help, but I have no way to send them even 5 kg of flour. There is not even a road to deliver it.” The M23, formed in 2012, says it is defending the interests of Congolese Tutsis, the ethnic group targeted in the 1994 genocide in neighbouring Rwanda.

Congo, Western countries and UN experts accuse Rwanda of backing the M23, which it denies. The situation in Goma is acute too. Since fighting surged in the province again in October, prices for everyday essentials such as maize, beans and charcoal have almost doubled because the violence has made roads impassable and has forced farming cooperatives to close in Rutshuru, the breadbasket of the province, according to the regional business association. Bweta Maize Flour mill, where Kahindo works, has had to slash production by 90% to around 50 tonnes per month due to the drop in supply of unprocessed kernels. It can buy maize from Rwanda, but the price is three times higher and customs procedures cause agonising delays, said manager Kevin Paluku.

“We don’t know if our families will get by because we don’t have enough to eat,” said worker Innocent Bahati, as he waited glumly with flour-dusted colleagues for the milling machines to start up again.

Peru Congress to reconsider early election



LIMA, Peru (AP): Peru’s Congress is set Tuesday to consider holding early elections, beset by protesters who have blocked highways and clashed with security forces amid deadly nationwide unrest ever since the lawmakers ousted President Pedro Castillo. It’s the second time in days that the lawmakers — easily the most reviled of a widely discredited political elite — are taking up the proposal to push forward to next year the elections for president and Congress originally planned for 2026.

The measure has the backing of caretaker President Dina Boluarte, who took over from Castillo after the former rural school teacher tried to dissolve Congress on Dec. 7 — a move widely condemned by even his leftist supporters as a self-coup and act of political suicide. After the failed move, he was swiftly arrested. The early elections proposal failed to muster enough votes last week after leftist lawmakers abstained, conditioning their support on the promise of a constitutional assembly to overhaul Peru’s political charter — something that conservatives denounce as putting Peru’s free market economic model at risk.

“Don’t be blind,” Boluarte said in comments over the weekend, slamming lawmakers for not moving more decisively to defuse mounting political tensions. “Look at the people and take action in line with what they are asking,” Castillo, a political novice who lived in a two-story adobe home in the Andean highlands before moving to the presidential palace, eked out a narrow victory in elections last year that rocked Peru’s political establishment and laid bare the deep divisions between residents of the vibrant capital, Lima, and the long-neglected countryside.

Castillo’s attempts to break a stalemate with hostile lawmakers by closing Congress only deepened those tensions. Within hours of his attempted power grab, he was ousted by Congress and jailed fac-

ing a criminal investigation, accused of trying to usurp power in violation of the constitution. Boluarte, who has the backing of US President Joe Biden’s administration and speaks fluently the native Quechua language of many protesters, has struggled to restore order in the restive nation.

In several parts of the country, protesters who voted for her and Castillo’s ticket last year have defied a 30-day state of emergency and taken to the streets to demand her immediate resignation. The death toll from the unrest rose to 26 after security forces firing tear gas dispersed thousands of informal miners who cut off the Pan-American Highway at two vital chokepoints for more than a week, forcing truckers to dump spoiled food and fish bound for market. Hundreds have been injured.

Should lawmakers decide to push up elections, they would in essence be throwing themselves out of work. Under Peru’s constitution, the 130 members of Congress are entitled to serve only a single term. Boluarte is also facing pressure from fellow leftists across Latin America led by Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador.

Ignoring calls by Boluarte and others to butt out of Peru’s internal affairs, López Obrador has criticized Peru’s conservative media and business establishment for the classist, sometimes bigoted way it portrayed Castillo during his 17-month presidency. He said that if lawmakers reject early elections and cling to power, and the president stays, then “everything will have to be achieved by force and repression, leading to a great deal of suffering and instability for the people.”

The Mexican president has reiterated his willingness to grant asylum to Castillo, who was intercepted by protesters and security forces while trying to flee to the Mexican Embassy in Lima after his bid to shutter Congress backfired.

Venezuelans try to rebuild after shattered US dreams

EL TOCUYO, Venezuela (Reuters): Julio Perez, a 38-year-old auto mechanic, sold his car and tools to make the dangerous journey from Venezuela to the United States. But like many migrants in the two months since the United States changed its immigration policy, he opted to board a plane back to Venezuela.

The United States on Oct. 12 expanded the existing Title 42 policy, used since the pandemic to send migrants from Central America and elsewhere back to Mexico and other countries without a chance to seek asylum, to include Venezuelans. Perez, who went without eating for two of the four days trekking through the Darien jungle, says he dreams of trying again by plane, but that his means are limited.

“For now, I’m staying here, to start from scratch,” he said. A US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) spokesperson told Reuters that the number of Venezuelans who crossed

the southwest border without authorization is down to around 100 a day on average from 1,100 a day the week before the Oct. 12 announcement. Reuters spoke to nine migrants who crossed the Darien and had to return because of the policy change, including Franklin Sandoval a 22-year-old, who, like Perez, hails from Venezuela’s west-central city of El Tocuyo.

Sandoval trekked through muddy pathways and waste-high rivers, only to find out the news of the Title 42 policy after emerging. “To be told this news was really, really awful after everything I experienced there in the jungle,” Sandoval said. Upon receiving the news of the US policy change, which has been slammed by human rights groups, Sandoval too decided to cut his losses and return to Venezuela via Panama. Since returning, he has been unable to find work and says he suffers anxiety attacks remembering the

journey. “When you leave the Darien, you don’t laugh or cry, you’re traumatized,” he said. The Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA), a rights group, says the move has exacerbated an existing humanitarian crisis pointing to families traveling with children and a lack of shelters. One Mexican official told Reuters that the comprehensive deal they reached with the United States on Venezuelan asylum seekers had shown “good results” since it granted humanitarian access to thousands of them by air in addition to the expulsion provision.

The Title 42 policy is now set to end on Dec. 21 unless legal challenges delay that deadline, adding to more confusion for migrants. Like Sandoval, Perez - who says he would never attempt to cross the Darien again - is still haunted by his journey of broken dreams. “I don’t sleep well,” Perez said. “I keep waking up remembering what we went through there.”

UK nurses stage second strike for inflation-busting pay

LONDON (Agencies): United Kingdom nurses have staged a second unprecedented strike amid an increasingly acrimonious fight with the government for better wages. Up to 100,000 members of the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland are holding the latest one-day stoppage on Tuesday after walking out last Thursday for the first time in the trade union’s 106-year history.

They are demanding an inflation-busting pay increase to make up for years of real-terms salary cuts, but the government insists recession-hit Britain cannot afford anything above a 4.5 percent rise. “We need more money, we need more staff, we need patient safety,” said Lucy Savage, 21, on a picket line outside Aintree University Hospital in the northwestern city of Liverpool.

“We’re overworked and underpaid, the NHS [National Health Service] is just a shambles,” Suni George, 45, said his pay had hardly changed in his 17 years of working as a nurse. “We get a lot of tax so even when the annual income

looks like it’s gone up, we don’t have more money,” he said outside the same hospital. Al Jazeera’s Jonah Hull, reporting from London, said the strike was “bound to have an effect on the healthcare provision in the NHS”. “That is, of course, the point of the strike — to cause disruption,” Hull said. “And there will be a second day of disruption with nurses joining picket lines across England, Wales and Northern Ireland,” he added.

“It is historic — this sequence of nurses strikes. They are the most extensive in the 106-year history of the Royal College of Nursing and indeed in the history of the NHS itself — which many in the picket line say has been the subject of funding cuts and underfunding for years ... as have the nurses themselves who say they have lost up to 20 percent in real terms pay with wages failing to keep with inflation.” Dave Carr, a nurse and member of the RCN, said the industrial action was a “last resort” attempt to get the government to change tack.

“We have been forced into a position where we can no

longer deliver the [proper] level of care to our patients because of a shortage of staff,” Carr told Al Jazeera. “There are 47,000 vacancies for nursing positions in the NHS,” he added, noting the health service was unable to recruit and retain people because of low salaries that had been outpaced by inflation. “We don’t want to be on strike but this is our last resort and the only way we feel that we can make the government see sense about its catastrophic policies in the NHS.”

The striking nurses are just some of numerous UK public and private sector workers taking industrial action over pay and working conditions, as they grapple with a cost-of-living crisis worsened by decades-high inflation. The UK consumer prices index is currently running at nearly 11 percent. Ambulance workers, including paramedics and call handlers, are set to strike on Wednesday.

A second such walkout is scheduled for December 28, while others, including postal, railway and Border Force staff, are staging stop-

pages over the Christmas period. The RCN has criticised Prime Minister Rishi Sunak’s government for refusing to discuss pay as part of stalled negotiations. RCN chief Pat Cullen said nurses would take wider industrial action next month if the dispute was not resolved.

“If this government keeps giving our nursing staff the cold shoulder as they have to date then, it’s really unfortunate, that come January, we will see more hospitals being involved and striking and that means more nursing staff involved,” she said. The union has also accused health secretary Steve Barclay of adopting a “macho” negotiating style during brief meetings held recently.

“The RCN’s demands are unaffordable during these challenging times and would take money away from front-line services while they are still recovering from the impact of the pandemic,” Barclay said. He and other ministers have reiterated that they can only accept the recommendations of an independent pay review body.

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The pandora of circular debt

CIRCULAR debt had been an ever-existing and always-growing phenomenon in the country over the past several decades. The case of Pakistan's Power sector circular debt has been a tale of institutional weaknesses, a lack of financial sustainability, poor governance as well as political interference in administrative affairs in the country. The issue had been mounted multiple times and successive governments resolved the problem through ad-hoc measures including the provision of funds by the government, increasing consumers' energy bills, or even allocation of subsidies to the fuel importers and power generating companies in the country. Yet, this curse repeats again and again while the state and the public were the ultimate losers in this recurrent fiasco. Historically, no government ever tried to diagnose the real reasons for the core issue and fix it permanently while top brass of power generating and distributing companies always attempted to pass their term smoothly by shifting the backlog to their predecessors.

According to the reports, the Country's power sector normally owes Rs. 450 billion to Rs. 500 billion in circular debt annually while the current upsurge in energy prices and the rupee's steep backslide in the international currency market have likely to add further in such a colossal amount. Presently, Pakistan's circular debt had reached over Rs. 2.44 trillion. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) issued a research study regarding different factors contributing to circular debt in Pakistan, which revealed that DESCO's inefficiency cost 31%, unbudgeted subsidies usually offered by the government forms 18%, delayed tariff adjustment caused 35% losses while financial cost of fuel or power generation constitutes 16% share of the annual circular debt in the country. Unfortunately, this vicious cycle repeated unhinderedly over the past decades while no institution had ever made a sincere effort to minimize the volume of the problem through timely action including procurement of energy fuel, adjustment of prices, reduction in line losses, recovery of bills, and payment of dues to other participating entities so this menace could be fixed at its early stage.

Ironically, all stakeholders including political leadership, IPPs, and government agencies ranging from WAPDA, K-Elect, DESCOs, NTDC, NEPRA, the Central Power Purchasing Agency (CPPA) and OGRA, as well as the power division and the finance ministry are equally involved in making up for this upheaval. Historically, no elected government ever hold public institutions accountable for their poor performance and negligence and usually paid huge amounts from the national exchequer to resolve the issue, while this policy led to a reoccurrence of circular debt issue, promoted corruption and non-compliance with the agenda by the relevant entities. In fact, expecting a miracle without undertaking surgery for the cancer is awful and pathetic and the government must resolve the issue permanently at the institutional level. The government and public institutions need to implement strict measures to keep a regular balance of their inflows and outflows, while public entities must be free from all kinds of political intimidation in taking their policy and operational decisions so the nation comes out of this unending economic fiasco forever.

UK's anti-migrant policies

ACCORDING to western media, Britain's High Court has declared that the plan conceived by the former Conservative ruler Boris Johnson is lawful for the government to make arrangements for relocating asylum-seekers to Rwanda and process their asylum claims there instead of the United Kingdom. The British adjudicators were of the view that the government must consider each case on circumstances.

Previously, UK's Anglo-Indian home secretary Priti Patel signed an accord with the Rwandan government to deport asylum seekers and illegal migrants to African state instead of hosting them until the processing of their application or otherwise. Interestingly, the UK was so desperate to send asylum-seekers to Rwanda that the Johnson regime paid 140 million pounds (\$170 million) in advance to Rwanda to compensate the African nation. The deal attracted worldwide criticism from human rights defenders, civil society, and aid groups while King Charles termed it appalling and pathetic. According to critics, it was inhumane to shift poor asylum seekers to Rwanda who escaped danger in their countries and desire to take shelter in Great Britain, while Johnson's regime was so cruel that it intended to send them to Rwanda which itself has a poor record of human rights and civil liberties.

Several asylum-seekers, aid groups, and a border officials' union filed a lawsuit to stop the Conservative government from implementing the deportation agreement that is intended to deter migrants from reaching the UK. The aid groups and human rights activists were hopeful of getting some relief from Britain's judiciary. But, the recent verdict of the UK's High Court revealed that British judges had colluded with the anti-immigrant English rulers regarding the scheme that entirely contradicts the global law, British constitution, Royal norms, and traditions of the English.

Apparently, British society had lost its noble traditions and historic legacy because a mixed generation of Anglo-Indians and Anglo-Africans had reached to UK's high offices and had much influence in policy-making. Presently, the inheritors of refugees are coining and supporting anti-migrant policies in the west, because they don't realize the sufferings of their forefathers otherwise Rishi and Priti may have better feelings for the homeless.

Quote of the day

We know now that government by organized money is just as dangerous as government by organized mob.
— Franklin Delano Roosevelt, American President [1936-1945]

So why are so many environmentalists around the world anti-nuclear?

Jesse Velay-Vitow

IT doesn't take an economist to see that we are in the midst of an energy crisis. Anyone who has frequented gas stations is well aware that fuel prices increased nearly 50% during the last year before settling down more recently. This rapid increase in prices doesn't just affect what we pay at the pump, but what we pay to heat our homes as well. Both of these are examples of inelastic demand. In other words, as the price of fuel increases, demand doesn't fall.

This is partially due to global supply chain issues and the actions of the Russian government but is also caused by fuel taxes and the costs imposed on oil companies by regulation. One of the main drivers of this regulation is the environmental movement with the purported aim of weaning western society off fossil fuels to alternative energy sources. Options like wind, solar, and geothermal are often discussed, but one of our best options is consistently absent from the discussion: nuclear energy. Understanding why nuclear power is strangely absent from the alternative energy discussion requires a close reading of the history of environmentalism as well as the nuclear disarmament movement. What we will find is that there is a dark anti-human streak running through these ideologies. A centuries-old solution looking for a problem: depopulation.

Thomas Malthus was the first to raise the concern that if population growth is exponential and food growth linear, we will eventually breed ourselves into starvation. Although there is abundant evidence that we exert control over how

many children we have, and that resource development is not necessarily linear, Malthus's belief that population control or even depopulation would be necessary still persists. It was and is a solution in search of a problem.

No matter if it is climate change, food availability, or energy usage, there have always been those who say that the solution is to reduce the number of people using those resources. This shows itself in such obviously anti-human sentiments as calling us a cancer on the planet, but also in more subtle ways such as assuming that the planet would be better off if the industrial revolution had never happened. When viewed through this lens, the curious alliance between the environmental and anti-nuclear movements begins to become clear. If we do use nuclear power, the energy crisis will abate and we will no longer need depopulation as a solution.

The story of nuclear power arguably begins with the Trinity test in the New Mexico desert, an event which prompted the two most famous quotes about nuclear power as a force of destruction: J. Robert Oppenheimer's poetic paragon of the Bhagavad-Gita, "Now I am become death the destroyer of Worlds," and Kenneth Bainbridge's far blunter "Now we're all sons of bitches." The eventual use of two nuclear bombs by the Americans on the Japanese during WWII cemented the understanding that nuclear power could very well end humanity. This impression was strengthened by the following decades during which the world stood on the precipice of nuclear war.

However, in a parallel

that Oppenheimer must have been aware of, connecting nuclear power to the Hindu god of destruction implies that it might also sustain or create. Shiva is, after all, only one-third of the Trimurti. What Shiva destroys, Brahma creates and Vishnu preserves. Correspondingly it didn't take long for the science behind nuclear bombs to be directed at more productive aims. Just over six years after the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki the world's first nuclear power plant EBR-1 generated electricity.

Since then, nuclear power has been expanded as an energy source, but not to the degree that one might expect. This is partially due to the efforts of the disarmament movement, which cautioned that nuclear proliferation for power generation was equivalent to offensive capacity. This has guided American foreign policy for decades, leading to the prevention of nuclear energy capabilities in Iran among other countries. Although the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons does purport to have the peaceful development of nuclear energy as a subsidiary aim, in practice the two have been hard to separate. This might explain why non-western countries have had issues adopting nuclear energy, but why have we in the West dragged our feet? Let's start with the safety objection.

For those of us who were born after 1980, our closest touchstone for the dangers of nuclear power is the Fukushima Reactor disaster of 2011. Chernobyl is a pop history fact and 3 Mile Island is long forgotten. Fukushima may have only

killed one person. Even for those with longer memories, these disasters shouldn't serve as a deterrent to pursuing nuclear energy. Technology and regulation have improved dramatically. In fact, the majority of radiation deaths in recent years have been radiotherapy accidents, not reactor meltdowns. Combine this with the fact that reactors have become increasingly safe, and that the next generation of reactors physically can not melt down, the safety concern seems moot.

If concern about safety does play a role in the slow pace of nuclear energy infrastructure development, it is limited to the preference that nuclear power plants should be further away from population centers. So how do we explain that a country as large and sparsely populated as, for example, Canada only has four operating nuclear power plants? On the surface, it would seem that nuclear power fits somewhere between fossil fuels and solar/wind in terms of environmental impact. So why are so many environmentalists around the world anti-nuclear?

To answer that we have to look at the history of environmentalism as a movement. Rachel Carson's Silent Spring is often cited as the beginning of the modern environmental movement. Her focus was the use of pesticides and how they affected not just human beings, but the environment as a whole. This was a departure from the tradition of viewing pollution through the lens of its effects on human beings.

From the very beginning, we can see two strains of thought embedded in the environmental movement.

The first is pro-human: we must protect the environment so that we can promote human health, flourishing, and happiness as well as take into consideration the well-being of non-human life. The second is profoundly anti-human, and sees human endeavors as fundamentally opposed to the natural order. The extreme logical consequence of this perspective is anti-natalism and depopulation, the idea that it is morally right to reduce or eliminate humanity. It is a sentiment that is similar to Malthus's wish. With this in mind, the opposition to nuclear energy begins to make sense. With nuclear energy, we would no longer be at risk of our population growth outstripping our energy production. Population restriction would no longer be necessary.

The anti-human ideology finds a useful weapon through the re-working of Malthus' original arguments. In neo-Malthusianism, rather than focusing on food as a resource, the same argument is applied to population and some other required resource—in this case, energy. The argument is exactly the same: human population grows in an unlimited fashion, but energy growth is limited. Therefore, we must place controls on the growth of human population. To preserve the validity of the neo-Malthusian argument, energy capacity can not be allowed to increase. This explains why many of the purported Green parties (though with some exceptions) have opposed nuclear energy to this day. It also provides some explanation as to the opposition to cleaner forms of fossil fuel use. This manifests as a doctrinaire divestment of all non-renewable energy

sources. What has historically been an implicit call to reduce human populations now has become quite loud. Greta Thunberg has pivoted from calling for carbon reduction to human population reduction and even the end of capitalism!

It is hard to come up with a vision of the future that respects less the philosophical traditions of liberty and humanism than one wherein nuclear energy development is hamstrung for the purpose of immutating population control. We have seen what level of state control is required to effectively curb population growth in China's one-child policy. This is to say nothing of the long-term negative effects of population reduction on the economy and innovation more broadly. Greater population allows for more specialization. In a world of 8 billion, we have the ability to allow scientists, artists, and entrepreneurs to explore their passions. It only takes a few capable and lucky people to change the world, and the more of us there are the better the odds are that this will happen.

One possible way to push back against the specter of Malthus is to reinventor the strain of environmentalism that views human flourishing as an end and that sees an increase in humanity as a good thing. In the same way that Malthus and his adherents have been proven wrong time and time again by the fruits of human ingenuity in agriculture, technology, and logistics, he will be proven wrong again when it comes to energy. Investment in nuclear energy is the surest way to ensure human flourishing and usher us forward into a future where energy concerns no longer apply.

US war in Somalia rarely receives media coverage

Daniel Larison

THE US war in Somalia rarely receives much media coverage, so it was notable that The Washington Post published a long article last week detailing the current American military role in the conflict against the Al Shabaab militia.

The article emphasized the pitfalls of the previous 2020 withdrawal of troops from the country and the greater costs and inefficiencies of using "commuting" troops to support the Somali government from nearby bases in Kenya and Djibouti. It tells the story of how U.S. forces are "scrambling" to recover from the setbacks caused by the withdrawal under Trump without putting the withdrawal in the context of a failed military campaign that had already stretched on for more than a decade.

The wisdom and necessity of the mission in Somalia are never questioned even in passing, and the entire report reads like an exercise in putting the most positive spin on the Biden administration's decision to send several hundred troops back into Somalia.

What the article never attempts to do is to offer any compelling reasons why U.S. forces should still be involved in a Somali war in 2022 when there is no discernible connection

between this conflict and the security of the United States. Ongoing American involvement in Somalia's war is something that seems to be taken for granted, and the only questions that the article tries to answer are how best to fight the war and how effective local Somali government forces have become.

Bottom line: the Washington Post fails to hold our government accountable for a war it's been waging unsuccessfully for 15 years. This kind of slack journalism has allowed wars like this one to drag on without end.

Another important omission from the article is any discussion of the legal authority for U.S. military operations in Somalia. Since the Obama administration named Al Shabaab an "associated force" of Al Qaeda, the U.S. government has worked on the assumption that the 2001 AUMF covers this group. This is an exceptionally weak foundation for a legal justification for using force in Somalia more than twenty years after the original resolution was passed.

Not only does Al Shabaab have nothing to do with the people responsible for planning and carrying out the 9/11 attacks, but the group itself only came into existence years later. Furthermore, it has demon-

strated no ability to conduct attacks outside East Africa. The idea that the United States is in any sense defending itself by waging war on Somali militiamen strains credulity past the breaking point. Among other things, the war in Somalia is a cautionary tale of how the 2001 AUMF has become an all-purpose license for war whenever the executive chooses to use it.

Both parties share in the failures of U.S. policy in Somalia. U.S. involvement in the war there stretches back to the Bush administration, and it has deepened over time as the "war on terror" has become an entrenched and routine part of our foreign policy. Trump inherited and escalated the war in Somalia for almost his entire presidency, and it was only at the very end that he ordered approximately eight hundred troops to leave the country. Of course, U.S. involvement in the war did not really end, and the troops simply relocated to bases in neighboring countries.

Even when Trump succeeded in ordering a withdrawal, he was unable to extricate the U.S. from the conflict in question. Instead of admitting that the intervention had been unsuccessful, the U.S. kept it

going by shuttling its forces into the country on a rotating basis. This is the arrangement that the Biden administration ended when the president ordered 450 troops to go back to Somalia on a more permanent basis earlier this year. In one of his only reversals of a Trump policy, Biden opted for the older approach that had already been found wanting.

As Oona Hathaway and Luke Hartig explained earlier this year, the decision to withdraw the troops based in Somalia followed a significant escalation by U.S. forces during the Trump years. The withdrawal was a belated acknowledgment that the intensified campaign against Al Shabaab had not yielded the desired results: "After its stepped up military campaign failed to achieve durable gains and following a last ditch effort to negotiate with al-Shabaab, the Trump administration decided to cut its losses and withdraw U.S. forces.

The Biden administration has decided to re-engage, though currently at a level that leaves the country in a long-term stalemate. Battlefield losses could still degrade al-Shabaab, especially its external operations capabil-

ities, but the larger conflict is likely to remain static."

During the Trump years, U.S. forces significantly increased the use of airstrikes and drone strikes against supposed Al Shabaab targets. As a recent report from the Dutch peace organization Pax shows, this intensified aerial campaign inflicted serious harm on civilians that were either caught in the crossfire or who were themselves mistakenly targeted. This not only did lasting damage to the communities affected by these strikes, but it also served to benefit Al Shabaab by aiding in the group's recruiting. This part of the U.S. war in Somalia is barely mentioned in the Post article, and the civilian casualties that it caused are nowhere to be found.

U.S. military involvement in Somalia is relatively small, and that is why it has been able to fly under the radar without much public or Congressional scrutiny for so many years. It is incumbent on journalists and analysts to do more than just ask whether one kind of military footprint is more efficient than another.

On the rare occasions when the war in Somalia does receive coverage, we need reporters to ask why the U.S. is persisting with a policy of militarized counterterrorism when it has

clearly failed to reduce, much less eliminate, the threat that Al Shabaab poses to Somalia. When it comes to providing stability to Somalia, Hathaway and Hartig note that "the militarized approach that has long dominated U.S. policy toward Somalia appears unlikely to produce" it, and they add that "there's a strong case that the opposite would prove true."

Writing for the Quincy Institute in 2020, Elizabeth Shackelford asked the pertinent questions about this policy: "Why is the U.S. military fighting a war there? What U.S. national interest is the war serving? And are America's actions in Somalia and the region furthering that national interest?" These are the questions that we need our major papers to be asking the administration, which is recommitted to fighting a war that most Americans know little or nothing about. The truth is that there is no U.S. national interest served by fighting in this war, and the U.S. keeps fighting it mostly out of habit and inertia.

If the case for U.S. military involvement in Somalia were sound, Congress should be able to debate and vote on it on its own merits. Failing that, the U.S. should fully withdraw from this war once and for all.

‘It’s a bottomless pit’

Andrey Kots

THERE are more and more problems in NATO because of supplies to Ukraine. Many Western countries that flooded Kyiv with weapons faced a shortage of artillery ammunition. About the upcoming "shell hunger" - in the material of RIA Novosti. Scarce material

Western weapons have been flowing into Ukraine in an endless stream for almost ten months now. NATO countries are throwing more and more military hardware. However, in Europe and the United States are increasingly expressing doubts about the advisability of further assistance.

The stake on the combined air power played a cruel joke: Brussels and the Pentagon, as it turned out, did not count on battles with massive use of artillery and armored vehicles.

Of particular concern to politicians and the military is the colossal consumption of ammunition by the Ukrainian side. The lion's share of Western deliveries

is the artillery of the most common NATO caliber of 155 millimeters. Kyiv received hundreds of towed American M777 howitzers, French Caesar self-propelled guns, German PzH 2000 self-propelled guns, Swedish Archer systems, and so on. All this is actively used at the front, which leads to wear and tear of equipment, and also requires a constant and uninterrupted supply of shells. However, NATO's stockpiles are far from endless.

The Germans were among the first to sound the alarm. The newspaper Die Welt calculated that the Bundeswehr's cannon artillery shells would be enough for a maximum of several days of intense hostilities. It will not be possible to quickly compensate for the losses: the defense industry is simply not designed for the mass production of 155 mm caliber ammunition.

The situation is aggravated by the shortage of raw materials. Germany imports cotton lint necessary for the production of

shells from China, and in early December, for unknown reasons, the PRC delayed sending the next batch. Moreover, the Bundeswehr admitted that in recent months the lead time for this material has tripled.

The lack of funds also hinders the solution of the problem. In December, German Finance Minister Christian Lindner refused a request from Defense Minister Christina Lambrecht to allocate money for ammunition. The official reason is "complicated bureaucratic procedures."

Production ramp-up
The Americans handed over a million 155-mm shells to Kyiv. The Pentagon's army warehouses were noticeably empty. As a result, only 21,000 pieces of ammunition for M777 howitzers were sent to Kyiv in November, although in the summer they were transferring from 75,000 to 120,000 per month.

"The efforts of the Biden

administration expose two serious national security problems: an insufficient supply of ammunition and the difficulties faced by the military-industrial complex due to the rapid increase in the production of critical products," emphasizes the American edition of The National Interest. "Unfortunately, the industry has been underfunded for decades And that led to shortages."

Earlier, The Wall Street Journal reported that about 100,000 shells for the Armed Forces of Ukraine will be purchased from South Korea. Washington understands that this is only a temporary option: Seoul itself needs ammunition to neutralize the artillery threat from the DPRK.

The United States is trying to urgently correct the situation. The Pentagon recently placed two government orders for 155mm munitions. New production lines will open in Texas and Ohio.

The American army

promised to reach 20 thousand shells per month by spring, by 2025 - up to 40 thousand. It is unclear, however, how much this will help the Armed Forces of Ukraine, which fire up to ten thousand NATO-caliber shells per day. Russian artillery along the entire line of contact on average spends three times more.

Rethinking the approach

Stock depletion was also reported in France, Italy and the United Kingdom. However, London, according to The Guardian, will soon send hundreds of thousands of artillery ammunition to Kyiv - under a contract for 250 million pounds.

Missile systems and anti-aircraft guns will also be handed over. At the same time, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak instructed officials to evaluate the course of the Ukrainian conflict and the role played by British support.

In other words, he ordered a financial audit of the funds invested in the Armed Forces of Ukraine. "The general trend is

changing, because the supply of expensive weapons is not endless," says Alexei Podberezkin, director of the MGIMO Center for Military and Political Studies. "One shell costs thousands of dollars. And they are spent faster than they are produced. Supplies, say, for an artillery battalion are enough for a week -two. And the average cycle of their production is about a year."

In conditions of shortage in NATO, they decided to give 105-mm howitzers instead of 155-mm howitzers. These light guns, produced in the 1950s, are far inferior to modern guns. Range - no more than ten kilometers.

This means that the artillery crews of the Armed Forces of Ukraine will need to come very close to the line of contact - under dense return fire.

Of course, as analysts note, if NATO seriously spins the flywheel of its own defense industry, there will be no shortage of ammunition. But this will take a lot of time.

The final nuclear disarmament of Ukraine kickoff

THE special military operation in Ukraine showed as clearly as possible the inextricable link between energy and politics, whose radical continuation is military operations. Since the military is traditionally very reluctant to communicate with the general public, the expert community, analyzing the geography and targets of the next wave of Russian strikes on the Ukrainian energy infrastructure, immediately noted an important feature. In addition to momentary blackouts of electricity and water, the work of the Russian military was clearly aimed at obtaining a cumulative effect. And he came.

The Ukrainian nuclear monopoly, the national company "Energoatom" published a statement according to which, starting from 13:00 on December 18, all Nuclear power plants, and this is nine power units at once, are in operation. However, the victory was immediately overshadowed by the clarification that, according to the results of a massive missile strike on December 16, all nine reactors were operating in a limited power mode. Even exact figures are known, namely, that the generation capacity at each pair of reactors has been reduced by at least 600 megawatts, that is, three hundred for each atomic brother. Surprisingly, the operator even dared - contrary to the most severe information censorship - to name the reason for the decline. It turned out that while various Ukrainian politicians, experts and bloggers were laughing out loud at the "ancient and ineffective" Russian missiles, which, according to the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense, are knocked down almost in full strength, the energy infrastructure is getting more and more knocked out. Or a blackout.

It is highly likely that this statement by Energoatom, as is custom-

ary in an extremely free and democratic Ukraine, will later disappear or change significantly in its semantic content, but this will no longer matter at all. An important word sparrow flew out, and it's too late to catch it.

Surely everyone has already seen photos of large Ukrainian cities, immersed in the early December mist, moreover, supplemented by a very moderate temperature of heating radiators. The authorities and citizens can record as many uplifting videos as they want and brag about how they can easily live without the benefits of civilization, if only not with the damned Muscovites. In practice, life in the regime of such restrictions, and even in the dead of winter, will lead to an increase in fatigue at the grassroots level, and on a national scale will cause (and is already causing) the migration of the population from urbanized regions to villages, and in some cases even abroad. That is, in the future, not only the number of urban, but also the entire population of the country as a whole will decrease.

Whoever considers our conclusions far-fetched and is more inclined to trust the brave videos, in which the Ukrainians are pretty adept at shooting, can conduct a simple full-scale experiment.

On the landing, turn off the power supply of your apartment, turn off the supply of hot and cold water, use the mobile Internet every few hours and, excuse me, send natural needs to a bag or bucket, then taking it out into the street. Mark the time for which your perseverance is enough.

Here, of course, it is necessary to make a reservation that Ukrainian power engineers and public utilities are making titanic efforts, patching up ancient and worn-out - still Soviet - heat and power networks. For example, yesterday the mayor of Kyiv announced with genuine pride that

Sergey Savchuk

there is heating again in the capital and two metro stations will be opened. The latter, however, are not at all new and were launched by Viktor Yanukovich, but who cares about such trifles. At the same time, the general situation, supplemented by Energoatom's statement, brings us back to the original topic of the conversation.

Even the most superficial analysis allows us to state two facts with good reason.

It is quite obvious that our Ministry of Defense did not hesitate to seek advice from specialized specialists, and therefore, at first glance, weak and unsystematic strikes are increasingly clothed in a visible and tangible shell of darkness and cold. Secondly, the correctness of the chosen strategy was confirmed when numerous network screamers were put to shame, wondering why Caliber and Geraniums did not fly over large energy facilities like nuclear power distribution substations. While self-proclaimed experts demanded, as they say, to strike at the very heart, the military, together with the joined power engineers, proved that it was possible to stop this very heart by seriously disrupting the work of small vessels, or, in our case, distribution networks.

Kyiv currently has three nuclear power plants at its disposal - Khmelnytsky, South Ukrainian and Rivne, where two, three and four nuclear reactors, respectively, heat water in their wombs.

Given the outflow of millions of citizens and the actual collapse of the industry, these and other smaller caliber generation facilities that remained in operation should have been more than enough to meet the needs of the remaining ones. But in this case, the harsh power of Soviet nuclear power plants was not a blessed salvation, but a suitcase without a handle.

The nuclear industry is ready to send thousands of megawatts to consumers, the problem is that the transport infrastructure, especially transformer substations of medium and high power, either work at the limit of their capabilities, or are already out of order.

To understand what is happening, we use a simple and clear analogy.

Imagine that you have a water tower where several tons of water have been accumulated. A large-diameter main pipe leads from it, spreading out as a network of smaller and smaller pipes, through which liquid is supplied to the homes of local residents. Typically, water, under the influence of gravity and its own weight, is forced through pipes whose size and length are precisely calculated so as to guarantee reliable operation. And suddenly, suddenly, a significant part of the final thin tubes fails and can no longer be used. At the same time, the pressure and volume of pumped water remained the same, that is, the load on the remaining final network is higher with each new loss. Sooner or later, this will lead to a breakthrough and flooding.

The analogy, we repeat, is very arbitrary, and in the case of electricity, due to excessive load at the entrance to the network, not a spill will occur, but a short circuit and a fire on power lines. In addition, unlike water, electricity cannot be stored in tanks or tanks, it must be transferred almost instantly to the very transport infrastructure that is regularly encountered with Russian defense products. So it turns out that in theory Kyiv has nine reactors with a total installed capacity of 7,800 megawatts, but in practice no more than six thousand can be used, with a forecast of a further decrease, because the Russian General Staff has not yet announced lunch breaks.

Ukraine would not be

itself if even in such a crisis situation it did not manage to get into a corruption scandal.

The Ukrainian (which is very important) media exploded several times only during the autumn with publications that while the population was sitting en masse without electricity and tightening their belts in the hope of an ephemeral victory over Moscow, the Kiev authorities and the oligarchs who own Ukrainian power plants, under the guise increase sales of electricity abroad. Since generating companies (like DTEK, which owns the largest Burshtynska TPP in the western part of the country) have long ceased to publish data on export flows, Ukrainian journalists made rough calculations, comparing average production figures during periods of mass outages and average consumption volumes. No matter how they thought, but the numbers still did not converge, more precisely, it turned out that the generation was going, but somewhere past the houses and apartments of Ukrainians. Along the way, price indicators on European stock exchanges were analyzed, from which it turned out that either megawatts were eaten by mice, or someone without too much publicity received millions of dollars of superprofits. However, no one was directly accused, and articles of this kind democratically quickly disappeared from a wide field of vision.

In conclusion, let us say that in Ukraine the situation with electricity supply, on which the operation of critical urban, communal and transport infrastructure depends, will systematically worsen. There are two reasons - "Caliber" does not care what fairy tales the command of the Armed Forces of Ukraine tells the population, and the Ukrainian oligarchs are only interested in the current megawatt-hour quotes on the EU exchanges.



The 'actual malice' standard protects journalists from abusive lawsuits

RIGHT after Thanksgiving, a federal judge for the Southern District of New York ruled that former Congressman Devin Nunes's lawsuit against NBC-Universal Media may proceed. Nunes is suing NBC-Universal for defamation, and the media giant responded by making a motion to dismiss. Judge Kevin Castel's ruling is not a definitive resolution of the case (it only holds that it has sufficient merit to move forward for now). Nevertheless, we can learn a lot from his order and opinion about the state of American defamation law—both what it is and, perhaps, how it could be improved.

The ruling is a partial victory (and hence a partial setback) for both sides. Nunes's original complaint was based on three statements made by Rachel Maddow on her MSNBC show of March 18, 2021. The judge held that two of the statements are not actionable, but that a third is. Thus, the case can go forward in a stripped-down form, focused on Maddow's one potentially defamatory remark.

In her broadcast, Maddow, while commenting on a newly declassified report from the Director of National Intelligence, claimed, in the first place, that Nunes had "accepted a package" from Andriy Derkach, a man "sanctioned by the U.S. Government as a Russian agent." In the second place, Maddow asserted that Nunes had "refused to hand" the package "over to the FBI, which is what you should do if you get something from somebody who is sanctioned by the U.S. as a Russian agent." Finally, she noted that the "Republicans" had nevertheless "kept Mr. Nunes on as the top Republican on the intelligence committee, and then asked, rhetorically, 'How does that stand? How does that stay a thing?'"

Judge Castel found that Maddow's first and third statements were not defamatory. Although the first was technically inaccurate (because the package had been handled not by Nunes but by his staff), it was nevertheless "substantially true." Here the judge's opinion nicely brings to light the moral principles that inform defamation law. The point of such law is not to guarantee the absolute accuracy of everything that is said about every person.

It is rather to protect individuals from a specific kind of injury: the harm to reputation that comes from false and seriously derogatory claims. If a statement is somehow incorrect, but still close enough to the absolute truth that it would not make any difference to the typical viewer's judgment about the plaintiff's reputation, then it cannot be defamatory.

The judge found that Maddow's third statement was not defamatory because it was merely an expression of opinion that Nunes was not fit to remain on the House Intelligence Committee. Generally, remarks that reflect negatively on a person's professional fitness are capable of being defamatory. Nevertheless, as Judge Castel explains, a statement, to be a proper matter of a defamation claim, must be a false statement of fact. The aim of defamation law is to protect the reputations of individuals not from negative opinions (which are unavoidable in life, especially in a free society) but from harmful and false statements of fact.

Carson Holloway

This brings us to Maddow's second statement, which is, according to Judge Castel, the surviving basis for Nunes's suit—and for NBC-Universal's potential liability. Maddow's claim that Nunes had refused to hand the package over to the FBI is potentially defamatory because it is both a statement of fact and reflects badly on Nunes's professional conduct. It is also substantially untrue. In fact, the package had been promptly forwarded to the FBI and had thus been handled appropriately. Maddow, then, said something factually false that was injurious to Nunes's reputation.

It would seem, then, that Nunes has, based on this remaining complaint, a strong defamation case against NBC-Universal. But not so fast. As Judge Castel's opinion reminds us, Nunes, as a then-member of the House of Representatives, is a "public figure" for the purposes of this case. As such, it is not enough for him to show—as it would be for an ordinary litigant—that he was the victim of a defamatory falsehood. He must also show that the defamation was done with "actual malice"—that is, that Maddow knew the statement was false at the time that she made it, or that she at least acted with reckless disregard for its truth or falsity. The judge denied NBC-Universal's motion to dismiss because it is plausible that, once the case is more fully litigated, Nunes could bring evidence that Maddow acted with the necessary "actual malice."

Nevertheless, past experience of similar suits by public figures shows that it is very difficult if not nearly impossible to demonstrate actual malice. Accordingly, Nunes's suit will probably fail in the end, even though the judge has let it move forward for now.

In truth, the "actual malice" standard is a problem not only for Devin Nunes but, more generally, for American law and American democracy. To be clear, the problem here is not with Judge Castel's opinion. It is a faithful and able exposition of the prevailing legal standards, which are binding on him as a district court judge. Nevertheless, the requirement that public figures demonstrate actual malice in defamation cases is an unconstitutional and harmful novelty that the courts should reconsider.

The standard is a novelty because it is not rooted in the longstanding tradition of American defamation law. It is rather the fruit of the innovating spirit of the 1960s. It was only in 1964, in *New York Times v. Sullivan*, that the Supreme Court held that the First Amendment requires that public figures, unlike ordinary litigants, have to show not only that they were injured by defamatory falsehood, but also that the defamation was done as the result of actual malice. The standard is a fairly typical product of the Warren Court, which was short on respect for America's legal traditions and long on the desire to devise new principles that the justices believed were somehow more enlightened and progressive.

The "actual malice" standard is unconstitutional because it is not really required by the original understanding of the First Amendment. As has been observed by Justice Clarence Thomas (and as I have argued at length here), the Founding generation—those responsible for writing and ratifying the First

Amendment—did not hold that the Constitution requires that libel actions be judged under different standards for public figures. They held instead to a simpler principle: namely, that libel or defamation is not part of the freedom of the press, and that therefore legal actions against libel raise no constitutional problems. This Founding-era understanding, moreover, prevailed in much of America—and was reiterated by the Supreme Court—up until the New York Times Court changed course in 1964.

Finally, the "actual malice" standard is harmful because it introduces an indefensible inequality into our law of defamation and undermines our capacity for self-government. One of the great promises of the American regime is equality before the law. That principle requires that the law protect the rights of all equally. The New York Times doctrine instead sets up a kind of class system in which the right to reputation of the famous or prominent—"public figures"—is less protected than that of ordinary people. This is no more consistent with America's best traditions than if we were to declare that henceforth the property rights of the rich would be less protected than those of the poor and middle class.

The New York Times court tried to justify the "actual malice" standard by appealing to the requirements of self-government. A healthy democracy, the Court contended, requires vigorous public debate—debate that the Court feared might be chilled by excessive libel actions in the absence of the actual malice standard. Whatever threats to freedom of the press may have concerned the Court in 1964, we can see today that the long-term tendency of the actual malice standard is to undermine the quality of democratic deliberation by eroding the factual reliability of the public discourse. The debate necessary for a healthy democracy must be not only vigorous but also accurate. For the people to govern truly, the information on the basis of which they make their political choices must be true. But the actual malice standard, by making it so difficult for a public figure to sue successfully for libel, perversely ensures that journalists have little legal incentive to ensure that their reporting and commentary are factually accurate.

Moreover, Nunes's suit itself reminds us of who really benefits from the "actual malice" requirement. Nunes is not suing Rachel Maddow. He is suing her employer, NBC-Universal. We often think of reporting as being done by independent journalists. Under the spell of this vision, we may imagine that the "actual malice" standard protects such journalists from abusive lawsuits brought by powerful public figures. In reality, most journalists today—at least most of the really influential ones—are employees of massive media corporations. The actual malice standard, then, does not protect journalists so much as it protects those corporations. Viewed in this light, the privilege that the actual malice standard creates for journalism savors more of oligarchy than of democracy.

The New York Times doctrine, then, has not been the pure boon to democracy and the Constitution that its defenders claim.

Reduce addiction

In order to send even more fuel to the new key consumers that have replaced Europe and not lose profits, Moscow offered to help Delhi with the lease and purchase of oil tankers. Indeed, our own transport, including sea transport, is essential in the new realities.

"Absorbed" volumes The price ceiling introduced on December 5 by the G7, the European Union and Australia has had no effect on Russia's Asian partners. Chinese traders are working as usual, private refineries, the so-called samovars, have purchased batches of Russian ESPO oil for delivery in December-January and an increased discount to the benchmark Brent. The number of transactions continues to grow.

According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), since February, India has increased purchases by 36 times - from 30,000 to

1.08 million barrels per day - and even overtook China (830,000 per day). The total flow of fuel to Asia has tripled to 2.5 million barrels. A third is taken out of Russian ports by tankers that hide the destination.

As a result, according to S&P Global Commodities at Sea, the share of China and India in sea exports of crude oil from Russia reached 68 percent. "Asian giants swallowed up European barrels almost completely," analysts stated.

The G7 Price Cap Mechanism, which controls access to insurance and transportation services, provides for a transitional period of 45 days for ships loaded before December 5 and unloaded at the port of destination before January 19. Consumers use this window. Moreover, according to industry sources, Indian refineries signed contracts for even larger volumes in advance in anticipation of possible failures.

Natalia Dembinskaya

"We are not asking our companies to buy Russian oil specifically. We are asking them to focus on the best available offer," said Indian Foreign Minister Subramanyam Jaishankar.

However, the routes became much more complicated, which led to an increase in freight rates. In addition, Western companies refuse to insure carriers.

"It is necessary to change the routes of about half of the two million barrels per day. A shortage of ships is inevitable," the S&P Global rating agency indicated.

"Oil from Russia is exported mainly on foreign tankers. Under the conditions of insurance sanctions, raw materials are actually delivered at the risk of shippers and consumers. If the tanker crashes, no one will compensate for the losses," explains Leonid Khazanov, an industrial expert.

The Federation of Indian Exporters has long pushed for a reduction in dependence on Europeans. The government was required to develop its own shipping lines and stimulate the production of shipping containers. "The rise in freight costs in global companies creates serious problems," market participants complained.

According to Dmitry Adamidov, an independent expert in the field of logistics, in this case we are talking about "serious intentions" and long-term contracts.

"The oil market will become fragmented more and more. It makes sense to establish strong cooperative ties by fixing volumes and, possibly, prices (for example, as part of a barter scheme). In these circumstances, own transport is not only desirable, but even necessary. How exactly the project is being implemented - at the expense of India,

Russia or on an equal footing, it is still difficult to say," he notes.

Considering that Moscow supplies oil to Asia at very good prices, the Indians are quite capable of taking on the costs of renting and insuring foreign ships, Leonid Khazanov adds.

"Or let them place orders for the construction of large-capacity tankers at Russian shipyards. Of course, this is not a quick business, but they would reduce dependence on international logistics operators. It is also possible to create a joint operator with a fleet of tankers. The founders are Russian oil companies and Indian refiners," argues analyst.

The effect is clear in any case: Delhi will continue to buy as much oil as it wants, including at a price higher than the one set by the G7. Plus complete independence from Western insurance, financial and transport services.

Rifts won't pull EU apart

It cannot be predicted how the war in Ukraine will end.

Now in its eleventh month, Russia's war against a neighbor of the EU has left parts of Ukraine in ruins.

So many civilians have been killed. So many cities, towns, and villages have been destroyed. As winter sets in, so much of the infrastructure has been deliberately targeted. Much of the population is without water, heating, basic services, food, shelter, and safety. Reports from Mariupol which Russia bombed and then occupied in June are shocking.

Russia's war against Ukraine is not about stopping Kyiv from joining NATO—used by Russian President Vladimir Putin as a justification for invading in the first place. Nor is it about fighting Nazism, another excuse. It is, as Gwendolyn Sasse recently wrote, about "the destruction of the Ukrainian state and the Ukrainian nation."

It's not at all sure that all European countries have internalized Putin's goal. If anything, his unremitting war has opened several important rifts inside the

EU. How they will be overcome could determine Europe's future security architecture.

The first rift concerns the viability of the EU's soft power.

The EU was created out of the rubble of World War II. Its ideology, for want of a better word, continues to be a peace project.

Leaving aside its economic strength, the EU it is a soft power organization whose security is guaranteed by the United States.

And it is a power in which two former rivals—France and Germany who waged war across the continent over the centuries and who managed to forge a rapprochement after 1945—largely shaped the EU's relations with Russia.

From the 1960s onward, successive German governments pursued a special policy with the Soviet Union and continued to pursue it with Russia after the end of the Cold War. Wandel durch Handel (change through trade) was not just a slogan. It was about knitting Russia with Germany through gas pipelines.

It is now clear, despite so many unheeded warnings

Judy Dempsey

by the Central Europeans, how this dependency became an instrument used by the Kremlin to weaken and divide Europe. Europeans are now paying a very high price for Germany's uncritical dependence on Russian gas.

They have had to scramble to diversify their energy resources that includes buying liquefied natural gas from the United States, Qatar, and other countries.

Some political parties in Europe have accused the United States of taking advantage of Europe's energy problems—which are of its own doing—instead of acknowledging that such imports are keeping households warm and industry functioning.

Despite the destruction Russia is wreaking on Ukraine, both Chancellor Olaf Scholz and sections of his Social Democratic Party and business lobbies hanker after the status quo ante.

Herein lies the second rift. It is linked to EU member states' varied historical experiences and the resulting threat perceptions.

The EU as a peace project was finessed over the

years without a voice from the Eastern or Central Europeans. They had to endure living under the dictatorship of the Soviet Union.

Today, Western Europe, particularly France and Germany, considers a future European security architecture involving Russia in some form. For the East Europeans, security is about defending themselves against Russia. That is why the latter want Ukraine to win and Russia to be defeated. For them, Russia's invasion of Ukraine threatens Europe's stability and security—a threat that would be compounded if Russia were to win.

That also explains why the East Europeans want the EU and NATO to defend Ukraine as much as possible. Their own historical and cultural experiences of living under the Soviet communist system plays a major role in how they see Ukraine's fight for independence and sovereignty.

Post-1945 Europe had a divided continent in which Western Europe enjoyed a peace project of freedom, democracy, and stability. Eastern Europe lived under

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Dar lauds UAE support for Pakistan's economy

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Tuesday said that the United Arab Emirates (UAE) was one of the major economic partners of Pakistan.

"Pakistan attaches great value to brotherly relations with the UAE," the minister added.

These views were expressed by the minister while meeting with a delegation of Etisalat International led by Mikhail Gerschuk, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Etisalat International.

The delegation comprised Abdulrahim Abdulla Abdulrahim Al Noorani, CEO Etisalat Pakistan; Hatem Bamatraf, President and CEO of PTCL and Ufone; and Kamal Shehadi, Chief Strategy e& International, said a press release issued here.

Minister of State for Finance and Revenue Ayesha Ghous Pasha, SAPM on Finance Tariq Bajwa, SAPM on Revenue Tariq Mehmood Pasha, the secretary Finance, the secretary IT & Telecom, and senior officers from the finance and privatization divisions attended the

meeting. Finance Minister Senator Ishaq Dar welcomed the delegation and highlighted the deep-rooted brotherly relations between Pakistan and the UAE.

Ishaq Dar recalled his meetings with Etisalat in Abu Dhabi and Dubai during his recent visit to the UAE and underscored the significance of resolving outstanding issues between Etisalat and the privatization commission and moving ahead for a mutually beneficial solution.

He also highlighted prospects of foreign investment in Pakistan, especially

in IT and Telecom sector, which was growing rapidly, and said that the government was providing conducive environment and facilitation to attract foreign investment.

Mikhail Gerschuk, CEO e& International briefed the meeting on company's profile and its future investments in Pakistan and expressed readiness to further invest in IT and Telecom sector of the country.

Both sides agreed to proceed ahead for the resolution of all outstanding issues between Etisalat and the privatization commission in a spirit of goodwill.

PSX's 100-index witnesses bearish trend, loses 1138 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bearish trend on Tuesday, losing 1138.37 points, a negative change of 2.78 percent, closing at 39,832.45 against 40,970.82 points on the previous day.

A total of 265,284,415 shares were traded during the day as compared to 142,576,639 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 6.536 billion against Rs 3.811 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 341 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 37 of them recorded gains and 283 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 21 companies remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were WorldCall Telecom with 33,588,424 shares at Rs 1.17 per share,

K-Electric Ltd with 19,975,000 shares at Rs 2.29 per share and Hascol Petrol with 12,525,000 shares at Rs 5.26 per share.

Rafhan Maize witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 190 per share price, closing at Rs 8355, whereas the runner-up was Bata (Pak) with a Rs 49.33 rise in its per share price to Rs 1600.33.

Pak Services witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 116.00 per share closing at Rs 1432.00 followed by Nestle Pakistan with a Rs 90.28 decline to close at Rs 5250.00.

Rupee loses 18 paise against dollar

The exchange rate of the Pakistan rupee depreciated by 18 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading on Tuesday and closed at Rs 225.12 against the previous day's closing of Rs 224.94.

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

The price of the euro was decreased by 51 paise and closed at Rs 238.83 against the previous day's closing of Rs 239.34, according to State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese Yen gained 10 paise to close at Rs1.70, whereas a decrease of 76 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs 273.70 as compared to its last closing of Rs 274.46.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and Saudi Riyal increased by 05 paise each to close at Rs 61.29 and Rs 59.85 respectively.

Gold price up by

Rs3900, reaches all-time high to Rs178,800 per tola

With an increase of Rs 3900 in price of 24 karats per tola, the gold rates reached all-time high to 178,800 on Tuesday compared to its sale at Rs 174,900 on during last trading day.

The rates of 10 gram 24 karat gold also increased by Rs 3344 to Rs 153,292 from Rs 149,948; whereas the price of 10 gram 22 karat gold went up to Rs 140,518 from Rs 137,453, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola silver increased by Rs 30 to Rs 2050 whereas that of 10 gram silver went up by Rs 25.72 to Rs 1757.54.

The price of gold in the international market increased by \$ 12 to \$1808 compared to its sale at \$1,796, the association reported.

Asian markets fall, yen rallies after BoJ policy move

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Markets fell in Asia on Tuesday and the yen rallied after Japan announced a surprise tweak to its ultra-loose monetary policy, just as traders were fretting that central bank efforts to tame inflation will tip economies into recession.

Sentiment was also being weighed down by a spike in Covid infections in China as officials roll back many of the strict containment measures that have been in place for almost three years.

A so-called Santa rally appears to be eluding investors, with the mood dampened by last week's warnings from the Federal Reserve and European Central Bank that they will likely push interest rates higher than expected next year.

The remarks dealt a blow to a short rally across equities that had been fuelled by data showing inflation coming down.

Adding to the selling pressure were comments from former New York Fed chief William Dudley, who told Bloomberg Television that any sign of optimism in

markets could make monetary policymakers tighten even more.

Tokyo sank more than two percent after the Bank of Japan adjusted its parameters for controlling bond yields, in a shift away from its long-running dovish stance of keeping rates ultra-low to boost the struggling economy.

Inflation in Japan has risen sharply this year, with the consumer price index in October at 3.6 percent, the highest in four decades, though bank boss Haruhiko Kuroda and other officials have said that would be temporary, citing a lack of strong demand and wage rises. The move sent the yen to just above 133 per dollar, its strongest level since August.

The Japanese unit has been hobbled this year by the BoJ's determination to stick to its loose monetary policy -- hitting a 32-year low of around 150 to the dollar in October -- even as the Fed ramped up borrowing costs.

"This was bound to happen with inflation rising in Japan, it's just happened

sooner than many thought," Amir Anvarzadeh, of Asymmetric Advisors, said. "It could spark money flowing back into Japan."

Hong Kong, Shanghai, Sydney, Seoul, Singapore, Wellington, Taipei, Mumbai and Bangkok were also in the red.

"Those who were in the camp of a year-end rally are now second-guessing their investment thesis," said JC O'Hara of MKM Partners.

"The markets may have placed a little too much faith in Santa Claus and the rally he typically brings."

With few catalysts to drive trade, investors are winding down for the Christmas break, though they are keeping a close eye on developments in China, which is suffering a sharp jump in Covid cases.

Officials in recent weeks have started to move away from their rigid zero-Covid policy of lockdowns and mass testing following widespread protests.

And while the shift has been welcomed as a much-needed boost to the world's number-two economy, there is growing anxiety

about the immediate impact on businesses and the healthcare system.

"A massive China reopening bounce is giving way to a reality check as investors come to grips with numerous zero-Covid off-ramp economic and medical issues that China is simply unprepared to handle," said SPI Asset Management's Stephen Innes.

"Especially if the predicted 10 million-plus daily Covid cases hit the healthcare system later this month."

Still, the expected pick-up in demand from the China reopening continues to support commodity prices, with both main oil contracts up more than one percent, extending Monday's gains.

The impact of Covid and weaknesses in the country's vast property sector led the World Bank on Tuesday to slash its China growth forecasts to 2.7 percent this year, from 4.3 percent predicted in June. It also revised its forecast for next year from 8.1 percent down to 4.3 percent.

Canvas Footwear exports increased

ISLAMABAD (APP): Canvas footwear exports during the first five months of the fiscal year of 2022-23 increased by 42.33 percent as compared to the exports of the commodity during the corresponding period of last year.

During the period from July 22-Nov 22, Canvas footwear worth US \$309,000 were exported as compared to the exports of US\$ 217,000 during the same period of last year.

According to the data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, the exports of leather footwear increased by 28.45 percent, worth US\$61,612,000 as compared to exports of US\$47,654,000 during the same period last year.

Meanwhile, Footwear exports also increased by 27.97 percent as the exports recorded during the current fiscal year were US \$75,168,000 as compared to the exports during the same period of last year which were US\$58,740,000.

POL import bill shrinks by 8.11% to \$7.7 billion

ISLAMABAD (APP): The imports of the overall petroleum group declined by 8.11 percent during the first five months of the current fiscal year (2022-23) as compared to the corresponding period of the last year, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics reported.

The total imports of the petroleum group during July-November (2022-23) stood at \$7,700,272 million, as against the imports of \$8,379,847 million during the same period of last year, according to PBS data.

Among petroleum commodities, the import of petroleum products declined by 14.52 percent, from \$4,155,917 million last year to \$3,552,326 million during the period under review.

Likewise, the imports of liquefied natural gas declined by 17.38 going down to \$1,584,800 million this year against the imports of \$1,918,188 million recorded during the corresponding period of

last year.

On the other hand, the products that witnessed positive growth included petroleum crude, the imports of which grew by 10.55, from \$2,056,288 million last year to \$2,273,329 million whereas imports of liquefied petroleum gas increased by 16.19 percent, from \$249,309 million to \$289,671 million.

The imports of all other petroleum products increased by 0.81 percent, from \$ 0.145 million to \$0.146 million.

Meanwhile, on a year-on-year basis, the petroleum group imports witnessed a decrease of 24.58 percent during the month of November 2022 as compared to the same month of last year.

The petroleum imports during November 2022 were recorded at \$1,646,185 million against the imports of \$2,182,562 million during November 2021.

On a month-on-month

basis, the petroleum imports into the country increased by 38.56 percent during November 2022 when compared to the imports of \$1,188,107 million October 2022, according to the data.

It is pertinent to mention here that during the first five months of the current fiscal year, the merchandise trade deficit witnessed a decline of 30.14 per cent and was recorded at \$ 14,406 million this year against the deficit of \$ 20,621 million last year.

According to PBS data, the exports from July-November (2022-23) were recorded at \$11,932 million against the exports of \$12,362 million in July-November (2021-22), showing decline of 3.48 percent.

On the other hand, the imports of the country decreased by 20.15 percent during the period under review by going down from \$ 32,983 million last year to \$ 26,338 million during the current year.



MULTAN: Workers roasting peanuts at Grain Market.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Shipping activities reported at the Port on Monday, where seven ships namely, Maersk Brooklyn, MSC Pina, MSC Michigan VII, Asia Aspara, Straits Star, Al-Deebal and World Progress carrying Containers, Palm oil, Chemicals, LNG and Gas oil, berthed at Qasim International Container Terminal, Liquid Cargo Terminal, EngroVopak Terminal, EngroElengy Terminal and FOTCO Oil Terminal respectively.

Meanwhile three more ships, Lady Linn, Maersk Chicago and MSC Asya carrying Chemicals and Containers also arrived at outer anchorage of the port during the last 24 hour.

A total of 12 ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them four ships, Maersk Brooklyn, MSC Pina, MSC Michigan VII and Kanha left the Port on Tuesday morning while three more ships, Straits Star, Libera B and World Progress are expected to sail on today in the afternoon.

A Cargo volume of 133,516 tonnes, comprising 97,888 tonnes imports cargo and 35,628 tonnes export cargo, including containerized cargo carried in 4,309 Containers (2,985 TEUs Imports and 1,324 TEUs export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

There are 13 ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them, 3 ships, Lady Linn, Maersk Chicago and MSC Asya & another containers ship 'MSC Lana' carrying Containers and Chemicals are expected to take berths at EVTL and QICT on Tuesday.

Mobile phones import decreased

ISLAMABAD (APP): The import of mobile phones witnessed a decrease of 66.08 percent during the first five months of the current fiscal year (2022-23) as compared to the corresponding period of last year.

Pakistan imported mobile phones worth US \$290,570 million from July-November 2022 as compared to the imports of US \$856,730 million during July-November (2021-22), showing a decline of 66.08 percent, according to the latest data released by the PBS.

Meanwhile, on a year-to-year basis, the import of mobile phones also declined by 69.57 percent during the month of November 2022, as compared to the same month of last year.

The import of mobile phones during November 2022 was recorded at \$64,520 million against the exports of \$212,058 million in November 2021.

On a month-on-month basis, the imports of mobile phones also dipped by 1.92 percent during November 2022, as compared to the imports of US \$65,780 million during October 2022, according to the data.

It is pertinent to mention here that during the first five months of the current fiscal year, the merchandise trade deficit witnessed a decline of 30.14 percent and was recorded at \$ 14,406 million this year against the deficit of \$ 20,621 million last year.

The exports from July-November 2022 were recorded at \$11,932 million against the exports of \$12,362 million in July-November (2021-22), showing a decline of 3.48%.

Need stressed for capitalizing on US market for exports

ISLAMABAD (APP): US market offers many openings for exports to Pakistan and the entrepreneurs should accelerate efforts to capitalize on these opportunities to increase exports and earn more foreign exchange for the country.

This was said by Asim Ali Khan, Pakistan's Consul General-designate to Los Angeles, USA while addressing the business community during his visit to Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI).

Asim Ali Khan said that the business community should identify specific products that may have good potential to penetrate the US market and assured that he would extend all possible facilitation to them for improving exports to the USA.

He said that the business community should share problems and issues being

faced by them in doing business with the USA and he would try to take up them with the relevant authorities for redress.

He said that ICCI should arrange his meeting with local IT companies to discuss ways and means to further improve exports of the IT sector with the USA. He assured that he would share business-related information with ICCI so that its members would be able to take advantage of the available business prospects in the US market.

Speaking at the occasion, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry said that the annual turnover of USA in 2021 was over US\$ 4600 billion, but Pak-US bilateral trade was reportedly up to US\$ 12 billion, which was not reflective of the actual potential of both countries.

He said that Pakistan has good potential to improve exports of IT products and services to the USA and urged Pakistan's foreign mission in the USA to cooperate with the private sector in improving exports with this huge market.

He said that many other products of Pakistan including pharmaceuticals, cutlery, women-made products and others can find good markets in the USA.

He assured that ICCI would like to work closely with Pakistan's Consul General in Los Angeles to explore new avenues of promoting trade and economic relations with the USA.

Sheikh Muhammad Ijaz, Akhtar Hussain, Khalid Chaudhry and others also spoke at the occasion and shared useful ideas for further increasing business and investment relations with USA.

Tokyo stocks close sharply lower

TOKYO (AFP/APP): The Tokyo stocks closed sharply lower on Tuesday after the Bank of Japan made a surprise tweak to its longstanding ultra-loose monetary policy that prompted the yen to appreciate to the dollar.

The benchmark Nikkei 224 index closed down 2.46 percent, or 669.61 points, at 26,568.03, while the broader Topix index lost 1.54 percent, or 29.82 points, to 1,905.59.

"It's panic selling, as no one had expected the Bank of Japan decision," Ryuta Otsuka, stocks strategist of Toyo Securities told AFP.

"Trading volume was thin as many investors were absent from the market with the Christmas holidays approaching, which also played a role in the

dramatic fall in share prices," he said.

After a two-day policy meeting, the bank said it would widen the band in which it would allow yields for 10-year Japan government bonds to move, saying it would "improve market functioning".

The change marks a rare shift of gears for the dovish central bank, which has largely left its policy intact even as counterparts in other major economies hike rates to tackle inflation.

The announcement came during the morning break in Tokyo trade, but the key Nikkei 225 index plunged as it reopened, falling as much as three percent at one point. The move saw the yen strengthen rapidly against the dollar, with the greenback falling from a

daily high of 137 yen to 133 yen within minutes of the decision.

The dollar slid further and was changing hands at 132.91 in late Tokyo hours.

A stronger yen also weighed on the market, on concerns it may worsen exporters' earnings, but the main reason for the rout was that "everyone was surprised, like thunder in a blue sky", Otsuka said.

Among individual equities, Toyota dropped 3.40 percent to 1,845 yen, Sony Group fell 3.68 percent to 10,350 yen, and SoftBank Group dived 4.85 percent to 5,726 yen. Banks rallied, with Sumitomo Mitsui Financial Group soaring 5.36 percent to 4,974 yen and Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group climbing 5.98 percent to 818.4 yen.

WWF, APTMA to hold sessions for industry

LAHORE (APP): World Wildlife Fund Pakistan and All Pakistan Textile Mills Association (APTMA) have agreed to carry out joint sustainability awareness sessions to ensure waste water reduction, capacity building, and reduction of carbon footprints in the textile industry through EU-funded, worth 7 million euro project NAMA.

This understanding was developed during the visit of a WWF-Pakistan delegation to the Northern office of the Association on Tuesday. The delegation was consisted of Sohail Ali Naqvi, Director Freshwater Programme of WWF, Rashid Ahmed, Manager, Arjmand Qayyum Senior Manager, and Ms Irfah Kamil Senior Officer, Senior Vice Chairman Kamran Arshad and Secretary General APTMA Raza Baqir welcomed the delegation.

Director Freshwater Programme Sohail Ali Naqvi said, smart and innovative solutions to conserve water, energy and other natural resources in textile sector can help reduce adverse environmental impacts,

provide cost-saving opportunities and enhance overall revenue of industries. These solutions are being implemented in the industrial sector at a larger scale across Pakistan.

He said the project had been launched by WWF-Pakistan under its 6-year International Labour and Environmental Standards Application in Pakistan's SMEs (ILES) project, funded by the European Union. The project was implemented in four major cities across Pakistan; which include Karachi, Lahore, Faisalabad and Sialkot; and aims to support the economic integration of Pakistan into the global and regional economy by increasing exports through improved compliance and gaining confidence of international buyers, he added.

According to him, the textile sector was a key driver of Pakistan's economy and provides employment to a considerable population. The ILES project was striving hard to build the capacity of the public and private partners, providing them with technical

support to achieve sustainable industrial growth, he added.

He said the industry would be provided low interest loans under the programme to improve sustainability practices in the industry. Larger national banks have agreed to finance the initiative, he added.

He said the WWF had prepared a dashboard for dissemination of best sustainability practices in the textile industry.

Speaking on the occasion, APTMA Senior Vice Chairman Kamran Arshad appreciated the WWF Pakistan efforts in promoting sustainability practices in the textile sector. He expressed the hope that the WWF Pakistan would be working in close liaison with the European Union in Islamabad for Pakistan's readmission to the GSP plus scheme.

He also urged the visiting WWF delegation to suggest solutions, besides sharing data for the spinning and weaving sectors in line with the best international practices.



In brief

Sports gala inaugurated

FAISALABAD. (APP): Commissioner Muhammad Shahid Niaz inaugurated a sports gala at Iqbal Stadium here on Tuesday. The gala was arranged by a private school to provide entertainment facilities to children. Speaking at the ceremony, the commissioner said sports were imperative for children to make their body and mind sound as such activities improve immune system of the children as well. He said that the administration would also provide necessary facilities for promotion of sports activities at school and college level in the division.

PDKF calls on SBP Vice Chairman

LAHORE (APP): A delegation of Pakistan Desi Kushti Federation (PDKF) under the leadership of Nadeem Pehlwan called on Vice-Chairman Sports Board Punjab Malik Nadeem Abbas Bara and Director General Sports Punjab Tariq Qureshi here at National Hockey Stadium on Tuesday. Nadeem Pehlwan also presented a souvenir of Sher-e-Lahore Dargah to Director General Sports Punjab Tariq Qureshi on this occasion. The promotion of desi kushti among younger generation across the province was discussed at length during the meeting. Tayyab Raza Pehlwan, who recently won Sher-e-Lahore Dargah, Sajid Hussain Awan Pehlwan, Haji Khalid Pappu Pehlwan, Bilal Awan Pehlwan, Naveed Pehlwan and Latif Pehlwan were also present on the occasion. Speaking on the occasion, SBP Vice Chairman said that desi kushti was quite popular in Pakistan especially in Punjab province. "Keeping this factor in view Sports Board Punjab is organizing competitions of desi kushti regularly to provide sufficient playing opportunities to emerging wrestlers of the province," he added. Director General Sports Punjab said that Sports Board Punjab had always taken all possible measures for the promotion of all sports disciplines including desi kushti in all parts of the province. "We recently organized historic Rustam-e-Pakistan Dargah in Taunsa for the promotion of desikusti in far-flung areas of the province," he added.

PBBF gets PSB affiliation

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Basketball Federation (PBBF) has become an active affiliated unit of Pakistan sports board (PSB) after the approval of PSB Board meeting, the PBBF announced on Tuesday. "This affiliation is in line with the PSB Rules 2022," a PBBF spokesman said in a statement. According to the spokesman, the decision to grant affiliation was taken in the 26th PSB Board meeting, held under the chairmanship of Federal Minister for Inter-Provincial Coordination (IPC) Ehsan Ur Rehman Mazari, who is also the President of PSB. Under the leadership of its President, Brigadier (R) Muhammad Iftikhar Mansoor and Secretary General, Khalid Bashir, PBBF is playing an active role for the promotion of basketball in the country. The PBBF is also recognized by Pakistan Olympic Association (POA) International Olympics Committee (IOC), International Basketball Federation (FIBA) and FIBA Asia.

Pakistan suffer first-ever 3-0 home Test whitewash

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): England beat Pakistan by eight wickets in the third and final Test in Karachi on Tuesday to sweep the series 3-0 and hand their Pakistan their first home whitewash.

Resuming on 112 for two, England reached the modest 167-run target in just 38 minutes, with Ben Duckett and Ben Stokes finishing unbeaten on 82 and 35, respectively.

England won the first Test in Rawalpindi by 74 runs and the second in Multan by 26 runs.

This was England's first Test tour of Pakistan since 2005, having refused to tour the South Asian country in the years since because of security concerns. Duckett cracked his 12th boundary off fast bowler Mohammad Wasim to seal the victory on the fourth day, with England finishing on 170 for two.

Salman Ali Agha dropped Stokes off spinner Abrar Ahmed with the England captain on 22 and just 19 needed for victory.

With nine wins in their last 10 matches, England have vindicated their newly adopted freewheeling

approach to Test cricket dubbed "Bazball", after the nickname of coach Brendon McCullum.

McCullum and Stokes took charge of a misfiring side in May that had won just one of their previous 17 Tests, including a 4-0 humiliation in the Ashes in Australia. England played power-packed cricket right from the start of the Pakistan tour, smashing 506 for four to set a record for the most team runs on the opening day of a Test.

Four batters -- Zak Crawley, Ollie Pope, Harry Brook and Duckett -- scored hundreds that day, another record. Stokes was also bold in his captaincy, setting a tantalising 343-run target for Pakistan in Rawalpindi and then setting unusual fields to get wickets.

"It's perfect," said Stokes of the 3-0 result. "We've got a process we want to play but the challenge was the different pitches for every Test." Although the batters shone on Pakistan's run-friendly wickets, he also had praise for his bowlers.

"We were particularly good with the ball. Whoever I threw it to, they seemed to

deliver. The commitment and mindset has been top-drawer," he said. Player-of-the-series Harry Brook, who accumulated 468 runs with three hundreds, was also singled out by Stokes.

"Every person has stood up at some point, but Brook has been unbelievable. He's set Pakistan on fire... the calmness and belief is high class." Disconsolate Pakistan skipper Babar Azam said his side were only "good in patches".

"Definitely, it's a big disappointment. We are not good enough to fight back," he said. Pakistan's problems were compounded by injuries to their fast bowlers, with Shaheen Shah Afridi ruled out before the series with a knee injury. Haris Rauf and Naseem Shah missed the last two Tests with fitness problems. But Pakistan suffered major batting collapses, losing their last six wickets for 108 in the first innings in Karachi and seven for 52 in the second.

Tuesday's defeat means it is also the first time Pakistan have lost four home Tests on the trot, having been beaten by Australia in Lahore in March.



KARACHI: England's players pose for photograph with the trophy after winning the third test and series.

Aqeel, Shoaib register solid wins in Begum Kulsum Saifullah tennis tourney

ISLAMABAD (APP): Top-ranked players Aqeel Khan and Muhammad Shoaib opened their campaigns in the 8th Begum Kulsum Saifullah Khan National Ranking Tennis Tournament 2022 on winning note here at Pakistan Tennis Federation (PTF) Complex on Tuesday.

Top seed Aqeel trounced Waqas Malik in straight sets 6-2, 6-0, while Shoaib downed Usman Ejaz 6-0, 6-2.

Earlier an impressive ceremony was held where Salim Saifullah Khan, President of PTF was the chief guest. Tennis ace Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi, Aqeel Khan and a large number of players, parents, coaches and PTF officials attended the ceremony.

The PTF president also witnessed some of the matches and had a fruitful discussion with Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi and Aqeel Khan for

promotion of tennis in Pakistan. He expressed satisfaction on the renovation of the Aqeel Khan Centre Court. Contests of Men's Singles, Boys 18&Under Singles and Boys 14&Under Singles were held.

The results are as under: Men's Singles 1st Round: Abdullah Adnan bt Ahmed Babar 6-0, 6-1; Imran Bhatti bt Jibran ul Haq 6-4, 6-3; M. Huzaifa Khan bt Israr Gul 6-1, 6-2; M. Talha Khan bt Bakir Ali 3-6, 6-4, 6-2; Muzamil Murtaza bt Asadullah 7-5, 6-3; Sami Zeb Khan bt Heera Ashiq 6-7(6), 6-2, 6-4; M. Abid bt Hasam Khan 6-3, 6-2; Shahzad Khan bt Hamid Israr 6-4, 6-0; Mudassar Murtaza bt Ahmed Nael Qureshi 6-2, 6-1; Aqeel Khan bt Waqas Malik 6-2, 6-0; Yousef Khalil bt Bilal Asim 6-0, 6-1; Saqib Hayat bt Farman Shakeel 6-3, 6-1; Mahatir Muhammad bt Shahid Afridi 3-6, 6-1, 7-5;

Muhammad Shoaib bt Usman Ejaz 6-0, 6-2; Barkatullah bt M. Hamza Asim 6-1, 6-1; Faizan Fayyaz bt M. Zain Ali Hayat 6-0, 6-2

Boys 18&Under Singles 1st Round: Sami Zeb Khan bt M. Haziq Asim 6-1, 6-1; Kamran Khan bt Mustansir Ali Khan 6-4, 6-2; Saifullah Khan bt Bilal Ikram 6-1, 6-1; Farman Shakeel bt Hamza Rehmat 6-1, 6-0; M. Talha Khan bt Ibrahim Bin Sohail 6-0, 6-1.

Boys 14&Under Singles 1st Round: Ahmed Shaikh bt Anees Khan 5-4(5), 4-2; Amir Mazari bt Hashir Alam 4-0, 4-1; Abdullah Khan bt Ali Bachani 4-0, 4-1; S. Hassan Usmani bt Ahmed Khan 4-2, 4-2; Abdul Basit bt Haziq Areejo 4-1, 5-3; Rayan Khan bt Junaid Khan 4-0, 4-2; Ihsanullah Kabir bt M. Sohan Noor 3-5, 5-4(6), 5-4; Sameer Zaman bt Abdul Razak 4-1, 4-1.



BUENOS AIRES: Argentina's players celebrated on an open-top bus after landing at Buenos Aires airport.

Level One Coaching Course starts today



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Level One Coaching Course, organized by Pakistan Cricket Board, is starting today (Wednesday). The opening ceremony of the course will be held in Mian Abdul Majeed Auditorium Hall, Physics Department, Islamia College Peshawar. In the course around 40 former national and international players from across the country will participate.

According to Islamia College Director Sports Ali Hoti, the best arrangements have been made in Islamia College for PCB level one coaching course. The administration of Islamia College Peshawar is taking interest in cricket as well as other various sports, he said while talking to *The Frontier Post*.

PCB's National High Performance Center Manager Coach Education Rahat Abbas, First Class Cricketer Taimur Azam, Level Four Coach Haji Sarwar, Level Four Coach and First Class Cricketer Rahmat Gul will give lectures in the course. Ali Hoti also said that sports activities have taken a boost in Islamia College University since Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Gul Majeed Khan has taken charge of the historical institution.

PFF marred in vested interests, says Adnan Khan

KARACHI (NNI): In an interview, Mr. Adnan Khan, a qualified football referee, has criticized the internal politics of Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) for the wastage of energies in vested interests, due to which the game of football is suffering and, for the past 7 years, football lovers have been pointing out these issues but to no avail. Mr. Adnan Khan added that the young of Karachi already have very few opportunities for healthy sports activities and football is one of the very few.

Argentina's World Cup winners arrive home to heroes' welcome

BUENOS AIRES (Agencies): Thousands of ecstatic fans gave Argentina's squad a heroes' welcome in Buenos Aires in the early hours before dawn on Tuesday after the plane carrying Lionel Messi and his World Cup-winning teammates touched down at Ezeiza airport.

The Argentine capital has been in party mode since their dramatic victory over France in Sunday's final in Qatar that gave the country its first World Cup win since Diego Maradona hoisted the trophy 36 years ago.

The players, wearing their gold winners' medals around their necks and taking turns to hold the World Cup trophy aloft, waved at

fans from an open-top bus as the lights from thousands of mobile phones sparkled and flags fluttered in the crowd. Joyous fans sang to the beat of a drum, and fireworks lit up the sky as the bus slowly wound its way through the crowd.

Thousands had tracked the plane, the state airline Aerolineas Argentinas AR1915, all the way from Doha and a stop-off in Rome. The players were expected to spend a few hours at the Argentine Football Association (AFA) facilities near the airport before heading at noon to the huge Obelisco monument in the centre of town, where hundreds of thousands are likely to gather.

"Good morning!" Messi said on Tuesday in an Instagram post in which he could be seen sleeping in his room at the AFA complex next to the golden trophy. Local media estimated that there were already more than 100,000 people waiting for the players at the Obelisco by mid-morning, with more crowds joining from streets on all sides.

Argentina beat France 4-2 on penalties after a scintillating 3-3 draw, with Messi scoring twice and France's Kylian Mbappe netting three times. Messi, 35, announced that the final would be his last match in the World Cup though he intends to play a few more games for the national side.

The 49th WAPDA All Inter-Unit Bodybuilding Championship held

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The 49th WAPDA All Inter-Unit Bodybuilding Championship held in Peshawar, the provincial capital, has ended. In this mega event, LESCO bodybuilders won the champion trophy by showing their best skills. got the third position, in the same way, IESCO got 26 points, Fesco got 18 points, Pesco got 12 points.

The chief guest of the final ceremony was Iyaf Khan, Director HR Pesco gave certificates and trophies to the position holder players and distributed commemorative shields to the officials. On this occasion, the President of Pakistan Bodybuilding Federation and Championships Chief Judge Tariq Parvez, Pesco Sports Officer Shahid Hussain, Mr. Pakistan Arshad Mughal, Haider Ali, Ajmal Khan, Usman Mughal and Pesco Cricket Coach Sajjad Akhtar were also present in the judges.

Bodybuilders from across the country took part in full preparations, these competitions were watched by a large number of spectators. According to the results of the competitions, 100 kg weight bodybuilder Muhammad Zubair from LESCO won the gold medal in



the plus category, Muhammad Akhtar of LESCO won gold, Yasin Khan of Pisco won silver and Mian Azim of Fesco won the bronze medal. In 80 kg, Hafiz Adil Subhan of LESCO won gold, Momin of Gapco won silver and Tansaz Mohammad Mudassar Khalid of NTDC won bronze medal. In 85 kg weight category, Waqas Tariq of NTDC won gold medal while Bodybuilder Abbas Khan of LESCO won silver and player Faraz Saleem from Mapco won bronze medal.

In the 90kg event, Ahmed Khan of Gipco won first place, Fidah Hussain Baloch of Hesco won second and Kamran Mashhadi of WSB won third place. In 70kg, Muhammad Amin of LESCO stood first while Muhammad Salman of ESCO stood second and Abdul Razzaq of NTDC

stood third. In 75kg, Kishore Ali of ESCO won the gold medal while Aftab John of LESCO won silver and NTDC. K Owais Sajjad won the bronze medal. In 55 kg, Mohammad Tariq of NTDC won the first position, Ghulam Abbas of LESCO got the second position and Nadeem Aslam of NTDC got the third position, in 60 kg Mohsin Ali of LESCO won gold, Shah Mir Ali of NTDC won gold.

Silver and Fisco's Muhammad Adnan won bronze medals, similarly in 65 kg weight, Arshad Ali won gold, Fisco's Muhammad Imtiaz won silver and Gapco's Muhammad Imtiaz won bronze. The chief guest of the closing ceremony, Siyaf Khan, Director HR Pisco, gave certificates and trophies to the position holder players.

FIH issues latest team rankings, Pakistan remain unmoved at number 17

ISLAMABAD (APP): The erstwhile four-time Hockey World Cup winners and three-time Olympic Champions Pakistan seem light years away from regaining their lost glory in the game as they continue sticking with the 17th position in the latest team rankings, issued by the International Hockey Federation (FIH) on Tuesday.

Once a formidable side, Pakistan have turned into a pale reflection of their former self. Early this month, they finished 7th in the Nations Cup in South Africa and wasted the chance to accumulate some points to improve their ranking. Two months of action-packed hockey in November and December have shaken up men's and women's world rankings as the curtains are being closed on the year 2022.

While there are small movements at the top of the table, there have also been teams who have made big moves up and down the world rankings over the length of the year, the International Hockey Federation (FIH) said in a press release. In the FIH Men's World Rankings, the top-9 teams who play in the FIH Hockey Pro League have all retained their rankings, showing the

competitiveness at the top, with no team managing to pull clear in the early stages of the tournament.

Australia, who recently played a 5-match test series against India winning 4 games and losing 1, remain at the top with 3054 points. It's the European triumvirate in the next three positions, with Belgium (2858) second, Netherlands (2723) third and Germany (2623) in fourth position. India (2486) dropped a point in the test series against Australia, but remain in fifth place, followed by England (2478) in sixth, Argentina (2266) in seventh, Spain (2120) in eighth and New Zealand (1918) in ninth.

In the race to grab the final spot in the top-10 to end the year, Korea (1853) pipped Malaysia (1840) by defeating them in the Bronze medal match on the final day of the FIH Hockey Men's Nations Cup 2022. The Korean team was very aware of the change in ranking that would happen if they defeated Malaysia in the bronze medal match and mentioned in the post-game interview that it was a major driving factor in inspiring them to get the win.

Of the teams playing in the Nations

Cup, Malaysia now sit in eleventh, dropping down one spot. France (1767) moved down a spot as well to twelfth. Ireland (1739) who had a near perfect tournament, winning all 4 games until they lost to South Africa in a closely contested final moved up a spot to thirteenth, followed by South Africa (1653) in fourteenth, who were the biggest gainers, having started the event in the seventeenth position.

Japan (1544) moved up two spots into the sixteenth position, followed by Pakistan (1495) in seventeenth and Canada (1489), who dropped four places, in eighteenth. Through the entirety of the year 2022, some of the biggest gainers in men's rankings include Korea (from 16th to 10th), Sri Lanka (from 39th to 34th), Portugal (from 46th to 40th) and Guatemala (from 81st to 44th). In the FIH Women's World Rankings, the FIH Pro League and the FIH Hockey Women's Nations Cup have seen the top ranked teams exchange points through wins and losses, but the top 16 ranked teams have continued to hold on to their rankings through the matches in both events.

Lahore Open Polo DP/Sheikhoo, Guard Rice, Diamond Paints emerge victorious

LAHORE (APP): Diamond Paints/Sheikhoo Steel, Guard Rice and Diamond Paints emerged as winners in the Coca-Cola Lahore Open Polo Championship 2022 here at the Lahore Polo Club on Tuesday.

Nicolas Antinori hammered an impressive hat-trick in the Diamond Paints/Sheikhoo Steel's thrilling 7-6 triumph over Salam Polo in the first match of the day. Besides the heroics of Nicolas Antinori, Mir Huzaifa Ahmed (two goals), Usman Aziz Anwar and Umar Malhi (one goal each) also made a good contribution from the winning side.

Nicolas Ruiz Guinazu was in sublime form and played well for the losing side as he contributed with fabulous four goals while his teammates Agha Musa and Raja Arslan struck one goal each. Jhon Fisher and

Tomas Marin Moreno supervised the match as field umpires.

Tremendous teamwork and combined efforts guided Guard Rice to a superb 7-4 success over Zacky Farms/Kalabagh in the second match of the day. Muhammad Ali Malik (with a contribution of three goals) was the hero of the match so as the Taimur Ali Malik and Saqib Khan Khakwani, who pumped in two goals each from the winning team.

Nazar Dean Ali Khan and Raja Jalal Arslan though played well for Zacky Farms/Kalabagh by contributing two goals each, yet their efforts couldn't yield fruit. Jhon Fisher and Omar Asjad Malhi were the field umpires. Phenomenal Ahmed Ali Tiwana

excelled in Diamond Paints' 8-5 emphatic victory over Newage Cables/Master Paints in the third and last match of the day. The major contribution from the winning side was Ahmed Ali Tiwana's fabulous four-goal contribution, which was skillfully supported by his teammates Lt Col Omar Minhas (R) and Hamza Ejaz's contributions of two-goal each.

On the other hand, Juan Cruz Gregual played equally well for the losing side by firing in four fantastic goals while his teammate Sufi Mohammad Farooq contributed with one goal, but their efforts remained fruitless, as their team faced 5-8 defeat at the hands of Diamond Paints. Jhon Fisher and Amirreza Behboudi officiated the match as field umpires.



In brief

IRSA releases 68,200 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Tuesday released 68,200 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 41,100 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1490.50 feet and was 92.50 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 18,600 cusecs while outflow as 34,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1119.35 feet, which was 69.35 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 8,300 cusecs and 20,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded 43,100, 27,700, 22,000 and 11,800 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 8,500 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 2,000 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

NHMP saves life of traveler

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP) saved the life of a traveler in a medical emergency near Karnal Sher Khan Interchange here on Tuesday. According to the details, NHMP patrolling team received the information that a traveler had a heart attack on the road, responding to which NHMP provided first aid and transferred the patient to the Mardan Medical Complex through an ambulance. The senior officials of NHMP appreciated the rapid response of the patrolling team.

Shortest day of year today

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan, like other countries located on the northern hemisphere of the globe, will experience the shortest day of the year on Wednesday. Talking to APP, an official of the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) said that in the technical parlance the phenomenon was referred to as the winter solstice. "Sunrise will be at 07:05 and sunset will be observed at 17:06, while total duration of the day will be around 10 hours and one minute." "Solstice is defined as either of the two times of the year at which the sun is furthest north or south of the equator. While the winter solstice falls on December 21, the summer solstice occurs on June 21", the PMD official said.

Power suspension notice

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Tuesday issued a power suspension programme for Wednesday for various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work. According to IESCO Spokesman, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period from 09:00 AM to 02:00 PM, Islamabad Circle, Orchard Scheme, CDA Pump, Melody, Saudi Embassy, Satara Market, Burma, Azad Shaheed, Chara, Coral, Al Mustafa Tower, G-9/3, I-8/4, FHS, PHA2, G-14/4, NPF2, T&T, Company Bagh, Kohala, Pearl Continental, Kotli Sattian, Balawara, Shahdara, Capital Steel, New PTN, Potohar Steel, Katarian Feeders, Rawalpindi City Circle, Misrial Road, Askari XI, Race Course, Iqbal Town, Subhan Shaheed, Westridge, Raja Abad, Golra, Dhok Chowdhury, New Race Course, Charing Cross Feeders.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman National Disaster Management Authority Lt. General Inam Haider Malik calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

President for an integrated national mental health helpline

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Tuesday emphasised the need to set up an integrated, effective and standardized national-level mental health helpline to provide mental health services and counseling at the grassroots level.

The president, chairing a follow-up meeting on mental health here, said a coordinated, sound, and singular approach at the federal and provincial levels, with the participation of the public and private sectors, should be adopted to address the issues of mental health and well-being in Pakistan.

Country Director of the World Health Organization (WHO), Dr Palitha Gunarathna Mahipala, representatives of the National Commission for Human Rights, Pakistan Psychological Association, Pakistan Psychiatric Society, other organizations, and officials of the federal and provincial governments attended the meeting. The president emphasised that all resources and initiatives taken at the federal and provincial level and in the private sector related to mental health and well-being should be enlisted and incorporated into a single national helpline for providing speedy and prompt mental health services to the people of Pakistan.

He called for enlisting mental health institutions, teaching hospitals, and other mental health facilities, besides creating a database of mental health providers, which should be integrated into the helpline for providing efficient and effective referrals to the patients.

The president said that avenues in

the public and private sectors should be explored to meet the financial need of Rs 45 million for the establishment and launching of the first-ever national mental health helpline.

He added that after the establishment and activation of the mental health helpline, there should be a fully coordinated awareness campaign through conventional and social media and other means of communication to sensitize the masses to seek counseling and help through the helpline. President Alvi called for creating a curriculum on mental health and well-being in coordination with relevant stakeholders from the public and private sectors and teaching it at an appropriate level in educational institutions to sensitize students on stress and tension management during their studies and handling emotional and social issues.

He said that such students would also be able to educate their family members regarding the importance of mental health and well-being.

He underlined that a separate initiative may be taken to educate parents and family members to remain engaged with their family members and provide mental health counseling and help. The president said that the HEC, universities and teaching hospitals should create additional seats to encourage enrolment in mental health education to create a critical mass of psychologists and psychiatrists to cater to the need of growing mental health issues in society.

He also said that the management of the national helpline may also consider engaging final-year students in the psy-

chological and psychiatric disciplines for six-month internships to respond to the queries and provide counseling to the patients using the helpline. President Alvi appreciated the committee for coming up with a fully integrated comprehensive and all-inclusive first-ever national helpline model with an integrated WhatsApp chatbot, web-based counseling and referral system across the country at par with the world standards.

The president said that a separate committee may be set up comprising stakeholders from federal and provincial governments and the private sector and legal fraternity to review all the existing laws and rules that exist at different levels and propose improvements and suggestions while factoring in best practices around the world. He said that it should come up with standardized laws and rules which may later be adopted at the federal and provincial levels to create an interface across the country of the resources and interventions in the mental health sector.

The president also took notice of the high suicide rate in certain parts of Gilgit-Baltistan and emphasised the need to carry out a comprehensive study to unearth reasons for such a high rate and put in place a counseling and remedial system to first arrest this trend and later fully eliminate it. Country Director of the World Health Organization (WHO) said that the helpline should be made part of an integrated system of providing mental health services to the masses by integrating the primary, secondary and tertiary health systems at the federal and provincial levels.

IHC refuses to stay construction of Bahara Kahu bypass project

ISLAMABAD (TLTP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) has refused to immediately issue stay orders in the Intra Court Appeal (ICA) challenging the dismissal of their petition against construction of the Bhara Kahu bypass on Quaid-i-Azam University (QAU)'s land.

The IHC division bench conducted hearing of the ICA of five faculty members of Quaid-i-Azam University (QAU).

IHC Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb on Dec 12 dismissed the petitions. The appellants filed an intra-court appeal against the order through Kashif Ali Malik Advocate.

The TLTP learnt that the appellants are "Doctors of philosophy in their respective disciplines at the QAU and as concerned citizens had challenged the constitutionality and legality of the project named as second phase of Margalla Road i.e. 08 km long Bhara Kahu bypass from Murree Road, passing through the university to Satara Meel as proposed and initiated by the

Capital Development Authority (CDA), by illegally carving out a new alignment for Margalla road in sheer violation of the Master Plan of Islamabad."

It said the CDA, being proponent of the project, was bound to get an environment impact assessment (EIA) done under Section 12 of Pakistan Environment Protection Act 1997 before commencing the construction. However, admittedly, work on the project had commenced without obtaining an EIA from Pakistan Environment Protection Agency.

This was done despite the fact that in an earlier petition regarding construction of package 1 of the Margalla Road, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) had directed the respondents to proceed in accordance with law and comply with the environmental laws before undertaking such a construction activity, it added.

The appeal said the land in question belonged to future generations and included various projects as

part of the university's future expansion programme, especially the CPEC Research Centre on Earth Science.

The syndicate of QAU at its 174th meeting held on May 30, 2019, resolved to approve the allocation of 50 acres for establishment of the CPEC Research Centre on Earth Sciences at QAU subject to modalities to be worked out by the HEC, QAU and the Chinese Academy of Sciences which will be approved by the syndicate, the petition added.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Sept 30 laid the foundation of the Bhara Kahu bypass and directed the National Logistics Cell (NLC) to complete the project in three months.

The five-km-long road (including a one-km flyover) will start from Murree Road near the QAU stop and culminate on Murree Road near the Jugi bus stop adjacent to Punjab Cash and Carry from where a flyover will begin which will end outside Bhara Kahu bazaar towards Murree.

PNCA holds art fundraiser for flood affectees

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) on Tuesday organized an Art Fundraiser photography exhibition for extending financial help to the flood affectees. The show "Panorama Pakistan", a photography exhibition portrayed colors, life, and people of Pakistan by various professional photographers.

Fareena Mazhar, Secretary of the Ministry of National Heritage and Culture Division inaugurated the show which is a collaborative effort of PNCA, Syed Abu Akif, former federal secretary, and Rabia and Tahira Families Trust to support those affected by the floods that destroyed most parts of the country, resulting in the loss of precious lives and livelihoods.

Fareena Mazhar called the general public to visit the Exhibition, with exquisite photography, and to invest generously in acquiring works of their choice for homes or offices.

Swati's bail case adjourned

ISLAMABAD (APP): A local court of Islamabad on Tuesday adjourned hearing on bail petition of Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI)'s leader Azam Khan Swati in controversial tweet case.

During the course of proceeding, Special Prosecutor Raja Rizwan Abbasi read out the FIR's contents against Mr. Swati and said the accused had committed a crime twice while giving disrespectful statements on Twitter.

The accused both times had tweeted through his verified account and he didn't even denied it, he said, adding that whether a responsible citizen could use such language, the accused had adopted.

The prosecutor said thousands of people were following the accused on Twitter, adding that what kind of message was being conveyed through social media against the state institution.

The accused tried to spread hate among his followers against the officers of the state institution, he said, adding that the FIA was authorized to conduct investigation on the controversial tweets.

The prosecutor prayed the court to grant more time for further arguments in the case. The defence lawyer said Azam Swati's tweet was not on the record, adding that the tweets were done from three different accounts. His client had only given answer, he said.

The lawyer said that Mr. Swati used to tweet by himself but he never answered to any tweet. The verification of the tweeter account should be observed firstly before proceeding the case, he said. The lawyer said that the bail petition was filed on December 2, and the decision was still awaited. He prayed the court to announce its verdict on the same date.

Railways to start shuttle service between Malakwal via Pind Dadan Khan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways is all set to start Shuttle Service between Malakwal via Pind Dadan Khan during the next week to provide maximum facilities to the passengers of the areas.

"The decision was taken on the directions of Minister for Railways Khawaja Saad Rafique who asked the Divisional Superintendent, Pakistan Railways Rawalpindi Division and concerned deputy commissioner to contact notables of the area regarding starting the train service soon," an official in the Ministry told APP.

He said Pakistan Railways has decided to provide modern travelling facilities to the passengers and pursuing the rigorous exercise on making Pakistan Railways a profitable entity.

The official said that Pakistan Railways had also decided to install modern Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) system in all

the passenger trains for making the journey extra comfortable and safe.

He said that Malakwal via Pind Dadan Khan railway track, which was closed due to lockdowns imposed during the coronavirus pandemic, could not be restored until now.

Thousands of people in the three districts of Rawalpindi Division have been deprived of economical railway travel

due to the closure of the train service and the previous government did nothing to restore the track.

It is pertinent to mention here that due to the presence of Haranpur (Victoria) Bridge, the train was the only mode of public transport from Malkwal to Pind Dadan Khan. Citizens have to travel 72 kilometers to take the other route or use motorcycles to cross over the Bridge, a distance which is by no means risk-free.

ANF disrupts supply of drugs for New Year parties at varsities

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) in an operation foiled a bid to smuggle drugs from Karachi to Islamabad via a woman carrier, intended to be supplied to colleges and varsities students for New Year parties, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman on Tuesday.

He informed that the operation was conducted at Daewoo bus service Rawalpindi on the information of intelligence sources

in which the ANF officials seized over 4.3 kg of weed concealed in plastic boxes.

The spokesman said sources informed ANF officials that a woman would smuggle weed through the Daewoo bus from Karachi to Rawalpindi. The ANF team continued surveillance at the bus terminal after receiving the information. The team managed to net a suspected person resident of Waziristan and a female accused at the ter-

minal and weed was seized from their bag during the search operation.

Preliminary investigation revealed that the accused is a key member and organizer of a group involved in supplying narcotics for the parties in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. The seized weed was supplied for New Year parties.

A case has been registered and further investigations are ongoing under Anti-Narcotics Act, he added.

Christian community to plant one mln trees: Dr Joseph

RAWALPINDI (APP): Archbishop Rawalpindi/ Islamabad Dr Joseph Arshad on Tuesday announced that the Christian community would start a campaign to plant one million saplings on the occasion of Christmas to make Pakistan greener and greener.

Addressing the Interfaith harmony conference at a local hotel, he said that the Christian community was "striving for the development and prosperity of the beloved country" and the role of religious leaders was important for promoting inter-faith harmony.

On the occasion, the business community expressed solidarity with the Christian community and their determination to participate in the joys of Christmas. In his address, President of Anjuman Tajran Rawalpindi Cantt Sheikh Hafeez extended Christmas greetings and said that the Christian community played a vital role in promoting religious tolerance and unity.

Speaking at the event, focal person of the district peace committee, Maulana Hafiz Muhammad Iqbal Rizvi lauded the role of the district administration in devising the best security arrangements at Christian

worship places.

He said the promotion of inter-faith harmony was the "need of the hour", and religious leaders must play their role in promoting religious tolerance.

Ali Hussain Arif, Pandit Rakesh Chand, Anoop Singh, Inspector Muhammad Iqbal in charge of Rawalpindi Police religious wing, Dr. Farhad, Akmal Shehzad Ghuman, Director Admin Press Information Department Saghir Wattoo, Pir Azmatullah, Shaukat Jafri, Malik Babar, and others also spoke while a cake was also cut on the occasion.



ISLAMABAD: Adviser to Prime Minister for Political and Public Affairs Engr Amir Muqam meets social media volunteers at Ministry.

Severe cold wave to hit country in last week of Dec

ISLAMABAD (INP): A weather official has forecast severe cold wave in some parts of the country in the last week of December or in January.

"Mostly normal temperature will prevail from December to February," Chief Meteorologist said. A tendency for below normal rain is likely over the country during this season.

He predicted minimum rainfall in the country till February next year. Dry weather with cold night and misty/foggy morning likely to prevail over most parts

of the province especially in upper Sindh, according to the weather forecast.

Minimum temperature in Karachi will remain 13.0 degree Celsius on Tuesday, while it will be between 11 – 13 degree C in the city on Wednesday and 10 – 12 degree Celsius on Thursday. Pakistan Meteorological Department PMD in its monthly outlook earlier predicted a normal to below normal precipitation likely over the country during December.

"The rainfall is expect-

ed to remain below normal over northern half of the country including northern Punjab, Upper Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan" according to the weather outlook.

"Nearly normal rainfall is expected in most parts of Punjab, Balochistan and Sindh during the month," it said. Dry condition will have negative impact on air quality index in urban (southern and central Punjab) areas of the country, resulting in health issues due to smog.

Three suspects arrested

SAMANGAN (Agencies): The local police officials of Samangan province of Afghanistan said that police personnel arrested three people on suspicion of murder and robbery. The provincial Samangan Police Commander said in a statement on Tuesday that three people were arrested on charges of murder and robbery. One person arrested on charges of the murder of a man and two others has been arrested on charges of robbery.

The Frontier Post

Jamadi-ul-Awwal 26, 1444 — Wednesday, December 21, 2022

Seven projects commenced

KHOST (Agencies): The Ministry of Energy and Water of Afghanistan (MoEW) informed launching 7 projects with a cost of 50 million Afghanis in districts of Khost province of Afghanistan. Job opportunities have been provided for 3,000 people with the commencement of these projects according to the Ministry's statement and with the completion of these projects, thousands of acres of land will be protected from flood damage.

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

Students seek reopening of girls' schools in Afghanistan

KABUL (TOLOnews): Students from primary school students who have passed the final exam for the sixth grade said they are concerned about their future as going forward, they will not be able to continue their education due to the closure of secondary schools for girls.

The students said they want the reopening of secondary schools for girls across the country – that are closed for the past one and half years.

"Today is a day of despair because we will not be able to go to schools anymore like other girls

who are already deprived of schooling," said Husna, a student.

"I am so upset about the closure of schools. Girls across Afghanistan cannot go to schools," said Sadia, a student.

Tayiba, a student who scored top in the sixth grade, said she is concerned about the closure of the girls' schools.

She asked the government not to deprive girls of schooling.

"I cannot continue my education. Primary school is not enough for me. I am worried about my future," she added.

A number of Kabul residents asked the government to reopen secondary schools for girls.

"We asked the government to reopen schools and resume the classes," said Latif, a Kabul resident.

"We ask the government to provide education facilities for girls so that they can go to schools," said Mujtaba, a Kabul city resident.

Secondary schools for girls are closed for the past one and a half years. The Islamic Emirate held an exam for girls who were in 12th grade but their schools were closed.

Afghan-Iran officials meets at border

NIMROZ (Agencies): Local officials of Nimroz say that the border officials of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan met with the Iranian border officials to discuss living issues along the Silk Road.

The Commander of the 3rd Border Battalion of Nimroz province, Mullah Muhammad Ibrahim, the head of head of Vice and Virtue Department, Maw-lavi Abdul Ghafar Farooq and some other Afghan officials discussed border issues, drug and human trafficking with Iranian sides, according to a statement.

During the meeting, the commander of the 3rd battalion and the accompanying delegation visited the border posts.

Karzai meets exiled politicians

KABUL (TOLOnews): Former President Hamid Karzai held meetings with a number of former Afghan officials and politicians in Germany and Turkey.

Shahzada Massoud, a close aide to Karzai, said the former president during his meetings discussed the start of intra-Afghan negotiations and ways to unify the people.

"He is currently in Turkey and has met a lot of Afghans. These meetings will continue tomorrow as well," Massoud said. "The biggest goal of the meetings is to achieve enduring peace and stability in Afghanistan."

"Mr. Karzai has come to Istanbul. We had a meeting with him. Almost all Afghans have gathered for welcoming him," said Abdul Shakur Dadras, a close aide to Karzai.

But the Islamic Emirate said that Karzai does not represent the Islamic Emirate in his meetings with the politicians.

"It is mainly referred back to himself. He is not there to represent the Islamic Emirate and he is neither an official. Also, we have no objections to these meetings because Afghans need to meet each other," an Islamic Emirate spokesman said.

Karzai also visited the UAE ahead of his trip to Germany and Turkey.

"It is aimed at meeting his former colleagues and friends. Everyone, including Hamid Karzai, knows that no role is seen for the former figures in a near future in Afghanistan," said Torek Farhadi, a political analyst.

On December 3, Karzai traveled to the UAE, where he met with Thomas West, the US special envoy for Afghanistan.

Drugs factory discovered and closed

HERAT (Agencies): The Counter Narcotics officers of Herat province discovered and closed a drug productions factory in Adraskan district of the province.

Herat security officials said that counter-narcotic officers with the cooperation of Adraskan district security officials have discovered a drug production factory and closed it.

Officials said that 2,500 kilograms of chemicals used in the drug production also seized from the site and set ablaze.

Hospital opened in Bamyan

BAMYAN (Agencies): A 20-bed hospital for drug-addicted treatment has started working in the Warsa district of Bamyan province, the local officials of the province said.

The Bamyan security spokesman Mohammad Khowni said that the hospital is particularly dedicated to drug-addicted, which is opened after the sovereignty of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.

Routes for major railway project identified: ARA

KABUL (TOLOnews): Work on identifying the routes for a major railway project, the Trans-Afghanistan Railway, has been finalized and talks are underway with Uzbekistan and Pakistan officials to kick off the project, the Afghanistan Railway Authority (ARA) said.

The \$5 billion project has been designed to connect South Asia with Central Asia through Afghanistan.

The railway authority said international organizations to provide financial support to the project.

"At the current situation, the government cannot provide its budget," ARA chief Bakht Rahman Sharafat said.

"As I said earlier, the primary steps, which don't need a high budget, such as satellite imaging and visibility study can be done, but after that, relevant organizations can provide funds – to the project -- and can invest in it."

The Afghanistan Cham-



ber of Commerce and Investment (ACCI) said the railway project can play an essential role in improving trade between Afghanistan and countries in the region.

"Railway is second cheapest transportation. Afghanistan is not even one

percent benefited from it," said Mohammad Yunus Mohmand, acting head of the ACCI.

"The commodities that are transported to Afghanistan via railway will cost fairly for the traders and, meanwhile, commodities can be carried

safely and without damage through railway," said Zalmay Azimi, an investor.

The Hairatan-Mazar-e-Sharif Highway is part of the Trans-Afghanistan Railway that facilitates the import of commodities from Central Asian nations to Afghanistan.

Over 19800 beggars collected from Kabul city so far

KABUL (Agencies): The committee for collecting beggars around capital from the beginning of the series up to now 19827 beggars collected from different sites of Kabul.

In a statement the office of Deputy Prime Minister, said from the collected beggars in Kabul 11285 are

women ar 4730 deserving and the rest 6555 were professional beggars.

Meanwhile, 1812 male beggars, of which 684 were professional beggars.

In the mentioned beggars, 6730 children, of which 2737 were deserving, 3931 were professional

beggars, and 62 were headless, the statement added.

After a biometric, the headless beggar children are acknowledged to training schools by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, and they were provided with education and professional trainings courses.

Meanwhile, the Afghan Red Crescent Society started distributing cash to deserving beggars a couple of weeks back, adding to the organization reports that hundreds of people have received cash aid.

According to the statement 2,000 Afghanis were distributed to each member of the beggar families.

Most Nangarhar factories closed due to power outages

JALALABAD (Pajhwok): More than half of factories in this capital city of eastern Nangarhar province have been closed down due to power shortage, rendering more than 10,000 people jobless.

Factory owners and the Chamber of Industry and Mines of Nangarhar say the government should take serious measures to solve the problem of imported electricity as soon as possible.

According to the Chamber of Industry and Mines of Nangarhar, about 400 large and small factories exist in the province, some in Jalalabad city and dozens in the Sheikh Misri Industrial Park.

The chamber's president, Ajmal Shams, told Pajhwok Afghan News on Sunday that more than half of the factories had to be shut down due to frequent and protracted power outages.

He said large steel mills, talc processing factories, oil production and some other factories had been closed and small factories which heavily depended on electricity had also stopped their activities.

He said most of the factories which could not be run on generators had been closed. He said Jalalabad city was supplied one and a half hours electricity in 24 hours and the same was used by factories. "Small factories that work on generators can't even meet



their expenses because diesel is expensive."

He said there were about 400 large and small factories in Nangarhar and 30 to 50 people worked in each factory but most of them were now jobless.

Shams said they had many times shared the issue with officials of the Department of Electricity, but they say Uzbekistan had reduced the amount of electricity it exported to Afghanistan.

The Talc Processing Factories Union in Nangarhar also says up to 100 factories have been closed due to the power outage and about 2,000

workers have become unemployed.

Mahfooz Ahmad Kakar, the spokesperson of the union, asked the government to solve the electricity problem as soon as possible.

Nabiullah, who owns an iron melting factory in Nangarhar, said after the increase in power outages, he had to close his factory.

Nangarhar Electricity Department officials did not talk to Pajhwok about the matter, but on the Facebook page of this agency it is written that due to a general problem in the electricity network, electricity is cut off to Jalalabad city, which has affected fac-

tories and ordinary residents. Electricity to the city is provided for one hour in 24 hours.

Officials of Da Afghanistan Barishna Shirkat say they have discussed with Uzbekistan officials the electricity problem and they have assured that the problem would be solved.

DABS spokesman Hikmatullah Maiwandi told Pajhwok Afghan News that senior DABS and government officials had taken up the issue with officials of Uzbekistan, who had assured that more electricity would be supplied to Afghanistan under the contract.

7,000 acres of usurped land freed in Kunduz



KUNDUZ (Agencies): Local officials of Kunduz said 7,000 acres of usurped lands freed from the grip of usurpers in Kunduz.

The Ministry of Justice in statement said that the board

for the repossession of usurped lands has explored this land in the areas of Chehal Kapeh Shirkhan Bandar and Imam Sahib district, a part the land is forest, one part is grassland and the

other part is farmland. The committee for retaking usurped lands the relevant authorities directed to take action on the leasing of farmland in this area, according the Ministry.

Suspicious disease killed 2 infected dozens of people



ZABUL (Agencies): Dozens of residents of Shahjoy district of the province have been infected with a suspicious disease, say Dr. Abdul

Hakeem Hakeemi, head of public health of Zabul.

Two children lost their lives from the disease, adding their health team is striving to treat other

patients, he said.

Intense fever and bleeding from the mouth and nose are the symptoms of this disease, Dr. Hakeemi added.

Balkh yoga practitioners seek permission

MAZAR-I-SHARIF (Pajhwok): Some yoga sportswomen in northern Balkh province demanded the government to allow them practice Yoga as their future remained uncertain after regime change in the country.

Officials, however, said efforts were on to provide proper environment for women where they can play sport.

Some yoga sportswomen said in the past they practice Yoga with the support of Indian Consulate General in Balkh but they stopped doing yoga after the new government took over.

They said yoga was effective in combating mental pressure and stress comparing to other sports.

Assal, one of the yoga

practitioners, said after the establishment of new government she was unable to practice yoga, adding that if the government allowed her she will provide yoga training to other girls.

Habibiah, another yoga player, said the sport helped human being in their mental and spiritual growth and health.

Nooria, another player said yoga was not in clash with Islamic values and Afghani culture asking the government to allow women to paly sport.

Another yoga player Hameeda said acting Afghan government stopped women from playing sport and their future is dark.

She said women role in the society was vital and asked the government to allow women play sport.



Balkh Sport Department assured that they did not ignored women, adding that efforts were on to provide women with the environment where they could play their sport.

Balkh Sport Department Finance and Administration Head Pardesh Dehqanzoy

told Pajhwok Afghan News two women had been hired in their department who will work in their area of women sports.

He said efforts were on to create women-centric grounds and gymnasium where they could play their sports.

Envoys of Canada, Austria, others present credentials to president

ISLAMABAD (APP): The newly appointed envoys of Canada, Austria, Syria, Serbia, and the Slovak Republic on Tuesday presented their credentials to President Dr Arif Alvi in the Presentation of Credentials Ceremony here.

Later, High Commissioner of Canada Leslie Scanlon, Ambassador of Austria Andrea Wicke, Ambassador of Syria, Dr Ramez Alraee, non-Resident Ambassador Serbia Dragan Todorovic, and non-Resident Ambassador of Slovak Republic Ladislav Ballek also separately called on the president.

Talking to the Canadian ambassador, the president highlighted that there was great economic potential in Pakistan, a market of 220 million people, and investment opportunities. He said that the Canadian businesses should be encouraged to explore the opportunities available in Pakistan. He said that the resolution of the Reko-Diq project was a positive development, and expressed the hope that it would encourage further Canadian investment in Pakistan.

The president stated that Pakistan and Canada enjoyed cordial and friendly relations and that Pakistan looked forward to greater bilateral cooperation in the areas of the economy, commerce, and investment. Welcoming the Austrian ambassador, the president said that Pakistan attached high importance to its relations with Austria, both bilaterally and in the context of the European Union. He informed that Pakistan's investment regime was very liberal, and the Austrian companies should benefit from it and consider making investments in the Special Economic Zones being set up all over the country.

He said that Pakistan offered significant opportunities for investment in the fields of hydropower, railways, communication, renewable energy, and waste management technologies.

President Alvi said that there were ample opportunities for cooperation in start-ups and information technology sectors, and expressed hope that the two countries work towards

enhancing cooperation in these fields.

He also urged the need to further enhance bilateral trade and economic cooperation, adding that the true potential of bilateral trade was still unrealized. He noted that Austria had remained supportive of Pakistan's GSP+ status and that the country looked forward to Austria's continued support towards the successful completion of the ongoing 4th biennial review and for the new GSP Plus Scheme post-2023.

The president underscored that Pakistan would like to work together with its international partners, including Austria, to address the global issue of climate change.

He expressed gratitude to the government and the people of Austria for providing Euro 2 million in humanitarian assistance for the flood victims in Pakistan. Talking to the Syrian ambassador to Pakistan, the president urged the need for regular contact between the two countries at different tiers of leadership in order to further cement cordial relations.

He said that Pakistan's relations with Syria were multi-faceted and deep-rooted and that cultural, religious, and historical ties bound the people of the two countries.

He appreciated the friendly gesture by the Syrian government to open group visas for Pakistani pilgrims and commended the decision taken by the airlines of both countries to operate direct flights between Karachi and Damascus. While talking to the non-resident ambassador of Serbia, the president said that both countries needed to work diligently to strengthen their bilateral economic and trade relations in order to bring them to par with the actual trade potential.

He further highlighted that Pakistan offered tremendous opportunities for investment and cooperation in the fields of hydropower, communication, higher and technical education, industrial and commercial interaction, renewable energy, information technology, circular economy and waste management technologies.

President Alvi further said that Pakistan, having a population of over

220 million, was an ideal market to hire skilled and semi-skilled workers, which the Serbian corporate sector could utilize. "Skilled youth from Pakistan can help the construction sector which is presently booming in Serbia", he added.

The president thanked the Serbian side for agreeing to support Pakistan's candidature for the Council of International Maritime Organization and Commission on the Limits of Continental Shelf (CLCS).

Talking to the non-resident ambassador of the Slovak Republic, the president expressed the hope that the envoy would be able to contribute towards expanding bilateral ties between the two countries.

He noted with satisfaction that the ministries of foreign affairs of both countries had set up a mechanism for Bilateral Political Consultations, which would provide a good opportunity to review the overall relationship and take new initiatives.

The president further said that the investment policies of Pakistan were very liberal, and urged the ambassador to persuade the Government of Slovakia and businesses to take advantage of them.

He suggested that bilateral cooperation and investment in a variety of sectors, including the automobile industry, machinery, energy, construction, infrastructure, agriculture, electric industry, tourism and food processing. President Alvi also highlighted that Pakistan's start-up and information technology sector was expanding very fast, and urged the ambassador to meet the concerned people in this regard.

He also informed that Pakistan had also established Special Economic Zones and that Slovak investors were welcome to invest in them.

He also noted that GSP Plus had played an important role in the growth of trade between Pakistan and the EU countries and that Pakistan looked forward to Slovakia's continued support towards the successful completion of the ongoing 4th biennial review and for the new GSP Plus Scheme post-2023.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Sardar Tanveer Ilyas Khan called on President Dr. Arif Alvi at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

US lawmakers call for criminal charges against Trump

WASHINGTON (AFP/APP): Lawmakers investigating last year's assault on the US Capitol recommended Monday that Donald Trump be charged with multiple offenses including insurrection -- raising the stakes in a parallel criminal investigation that could put the former president in jail.

The House of Representatives select committee called for the indictment -- as well as charges of obstruction of an official proceeding and conspiracy to defraud the United States -- after an 18-month probe into the storming of Congress on January 6, 2021.

At least five people died after a mob whipped up by Trump's false claims of a stolen election, and directed to march on Congress by the defeated president, ransacked the seat of US democracy in a thwarted bid to prevent the transfer of power to President Joe Biden.

The bipartisan committee voted unanimously to refer the charges to the Justice Department after opening remarks by vice-chair Liz Cheney in which she accused Trump of "a clear dereliction of duty" in failing to immediately attempt to stop the riot and called him "unfit for any office."

"No man who would behave that

way at that moment in time can ever serve in any position of authority in our nation again," she said.

The referrals are seen as largely symbolic, as the panel has no control over charging decisions, which rest with the Justice Department.

Jack Smith, a largely independent special prosecutor appointed by Attorney General Merrick Garland, is leading his own investigation into Trump related to the 2020 election.

But the move is nevertheless historic, as Congress has never made a criminal referral against a sitting or former president, and it will add to the clamor among Trump's opponents for prosecution.

It is also a major blow to Trump amid a series of missteps in the weeks since he announced a comeback bid for the White House -- including the Republicans' poor midterm election showing in states where the tycoon endorsed candidates.

Charges could result in a ban from public office for the 76-year-old Republican, who still wields considerable power in the Republican Party, and even prison time.

"To cast a vote in the United States is an act of faith and hope," committee chairman Bennie Thompson said.

"That faith in our system is the foundation of American democracy. If the faith is broken, so is our democracy. Donald Trump broke that faith."

The seven Democratic and two Republican panel members are winding down their work before the end of the year, and have compiled their findings into an eight-chapter report set to be released on Wednesday.

The committee's case is that Trump "oversaw and coordinated a sophisticated seven-part plan to overturn the presidential election and prevent the transfer of presidential power." Investigators say the plot began with Trump's campaign to spread allegations he knew were false that the election was marred by widespread fraud.

He is accused of trying to corrupt the Justice Department and of pressuring his vice president Mike Pence, as well as state election officials and legislators, to overturn the vote by violating the Constitution and the law. Trump is also accused of summoning and assembling the mob in Washington, and directing it toward the Capitol despite knowing it was armed with assault rifles, handguns and numerous other weapons.

Will seal Punjab CM house unless no-trust motion session is summoned: Rana Sanaullah

LAHORE (INP): Federal Interior minister Rana Sanaullah on Tuesday warned that any attempt to scuttle or avoid the no-trust motion moved by the combined opposition against Punjab Chief Minister Chaudhry Parwez Elahi would be met with the closure of the provincial chief minister's mansion. He expressed these views while talking to the media on Tuesday outside Punjab governor's house. Reacting to the statement by Punjab Assembly Speaker Sibtain Khan that the governor cannot summon a session of the provincial assembly, the federal interior minister said that the "statement is against the constitution."

He added that the provincial governor can call a session of the provincial assembly at any moment.

The Interior Minister further asked if Chief Minister Elahi accepts that 99% of

the members do not want to dissolve the assembly, then why was he supporting the move. Pointing towards Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan, Sanaullah said that a mentally unstable person was trying to demolish democracy in Punjab. We should understand the logic of this "mad man". "The nation and institutions have consensually decided to stop this madman," he stated.

If he wants to survive in the assembly, the federal interior minister said that Elahi must ask for a vote of confidence. "All members of allied parties are on the same page," he claimed.

Should Elahi also fail to obtain a vote of confidence, then, he claimed that the Punjab governor was empowered to call for fresh elections for the seat of the provincial chief minister.

PTI MNAs to appear before NA speaker in unison on 22nd

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) lawmakers have decided to appear before National Assembly Speaker Raja Parvez Ashraf on December 22 (Thursday) for the verification of their resignations. The decision was made by PTI after the members did not get a response to the letter they wrote to the NA speaker. The party Vice-Chairman Shah Mahmood Qureshi had written a letter to Ashraf a few days ago for endorsing their resignations.

As many as 123 PTI members will gather at Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) House, Islamabad, and will walk to the Parliament House under the leadership of Qureshi. All PTI lawmakers resigned on April 11 after former prime minister Imran Khan was being removed through a no-confidence motion by the then-opposition alliance. Following their en masse resignations, NA speaker summoned all PTI lawmakers who had resigned to appear before him individually and verify their resignations.

He had set the date between June 6 and 10. However, not a single PTI MNA appeared as they were barred by PTI Chairman Imran Khan from appearing before the speaker of what he called a 'dummy' assembly. Later, the resignations of PTI members were de-sealed and Raja accepted only 11 of them.

World Bank approves \$1.69b for flood relief to Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (INP): The World Bank (WB) has approved \$1.692 billion in financing for five projects to support people living in flood-affected areas of southeastern Sindh province of Pakistan. Three projects support rehabilitation and housing reconstruction and the restoration of crop production for vulnerable communities, while another two projects support health services for mothers and children, the WB said in a press release.

"Sindh was the province worst-affected by the 2022 floods. There were huge damages to the housing, health, and agriculture sectors and people lost their livelihoods. Beyond the rehabilitation and reconstruction of damaged houses and infrastructure, our

engagement in the flood response effort is an opportunity to strengthen resilience, and reform institutions and governance structures", said Najy Benhassine, WB Country Director for Pakistan. The Sindh Flood Emergency Rehabilitation Project (\$500 million) will help rehabilitate damaged infrastructure, provide short-term livelihood opportunities, and strengthen government capacity to respond to disasters. The project will help restore and improve critical irrigation and flood protection infrastructure, water supply schemes, roads, and related infrastructure.

At least 2 million people—approximately 50 percent of whom are women—in the most flood-affected

districts will benefit from the restoration and the resilient reconstruction of critical infrastructure. A community-level cash-for-work program will provide short-term income support to approximately 100,000 households. This will include semi-skilled and unskilled labor and will support livestock restocking for affected smallholder livestock farmers.

The Sindh Floods Emergency Housing Reconstruction Project (\$500 million) will support owner-driven and multi-hazard resilient reconstruction of core housing units. A housing subsidy will provide reconstruction and restoration grants for 350,000 housing units (almost 20 percent of the total housing rehabilitation needs for Sindh).

89 Hindu pilgrims from India arrive to perform rituals

LAHORE (APP): As many as 89 Hindu pilgrims arrived here on Tuesday through the Wagah border on a six-day visit to participate in Shivratri (night of Shiva) celebrations at the Katas Raj temple in Punjab. The pilgrims, led by Sanjay Mehlaawat, were received by Secretary Shrines Evacuee Trust property Board (ETPB) Rana Shahid on behalf of Chairman ETPB Habibur Rehman Geelani.

Talking to the media, the secretary said the pilgrims would spend a day in Lahore and then will leave for Katas Raj temple where main celebrations would be held on Thursday. The pilgrims would return to India on December 25. "I welcome the pilgrims coming to Pakistan not only from India but from all over the world on behalf of the Pakistani government", he remarked.

IHC rejects PTI's request to stop FIA actions

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Tuesday rejected the request of Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf (PTI) seeking to stop the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA)'s actions after the decision of Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) in prohibited funding case.

However, the court continued listening arguments of the respondents in the main petition.

A larger bench of IHC headed by Chief Justice

Aamer Farooq and comprising Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb and Justice Baber Sattar heard the case filed by PTI challenging the ECP's decision and seeking to stop FIA's action. Chief Justice Aamer Farooq remarked that what would be the act of ECP if it received evidences of foreign aid to the party. What the petitioner wanted in the case, he asked, and said that the federal government was yet to send the reference to the apex court.

The chief justice remarked that the court

wanted to conclude the case early but the petitioner could not start its case yet. The court instructed the petitioner to conclude its arguments early and after it time would be given to the other side.

Barrister Anwar Mansoor, the PTI's lawyer, submitted the written arguments before the court and contended that the ECP had no authority to send the matter to the federal government, adding that the ECP had sent the matter to federal government regarding dissolving the party.

Putin insists no plan to absorb Belarus on visit in Ukraine shadow

KYIV (AFP/APP): President Vladimir Putin denied plans to absorb Belarus as he paid a rare visit Monday to the country whose strongman assisted his invasion of neighbouring Ukraine.

Putin flew into Minsk with his defence and foreign ministers in tow, hours after Russian forces launched a swarm of attack drones at critical infrastructure in Kyiv, which provoked emergency blackouts in a dozen regions.

Putin said that Russia and Belarus -- slapped with new Western sanctions since President Alexander Lukashenko was declared the winner of a sixth term in 2020 elections widely criticised as fraudulent -- were "united by a common history and spiritual values". Putin called the countries "closest allies and strategic partners" but said that rumours that Russia sought to take over Belarus came from "ill-wishers".

"Russia has no interest in absorb-

ing anyone, this would simply make no sense," Putin said.

In Washington, State Department spokesman Ned Price scoffed at Putin's remarks.

"I think a statement like that has to be treated as the height of irony coming from a leader who is seeking at the present moment -- right now -- to violently absorb his other, peaceful next-door neighbour," Price said.

"We have seen the Lukashenko regime essentially cede its sovereignty -- cede its independence -- to Russia," Price said.

Belarus has let Russian forces use its territory and hours before Putin touched down in Minsk, Moscow released footage of drills with Belarusian forces including tank manoeuvres and sniper fire at a snow-dusted training ground.

Lukashenko urged closer military cooperation and said that Russia and Belarus are "open for dialogue with other states, including European

ones." "I hope that soon they will listen to the voice of reason," Lukashenko said. Speculation mounted ahead of the Russian leader's visit that he would pressure Lukashenko to send troops to Ukraine to fight alongside the Russians after Moscow suffered a string of defeats in nearly 10 months of fighting. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov, however, dismissed the reports "as totally stupid, groundless fabrications."

In October, Belarus announced the formation of a joint regional force with Moscow with several thousand Russian servicemen arriving in the ex-Soviet country. The drone attacks wounded three people near Kyiv. They came as Russia said it shot down several US-made missiles over its airspace near Ukraine. "I first heard the air raid siren... I thought there is going to be a drone attack. For the first time, it scared me," said Natalia Dobrovolska, a 68-year-old resident of Kyiv.

SC moved to stop Elahi from funding family's constituencies

ISLAMABAD (TLTP): The Supreme Court has been approached to seek an order restraining Punjab Chief Minister Chaudhry Parwez Elahi from allocating public development funds for the constituencies belonging to his family members.

Advocate Mian Dawood, the petitioner, also requested the apex court to prevent different government agencies from releasing payments to contractors or placing the public revenue at the indirect disposal of Punjab Assembly members from the constituencies belonging to the family members of the chief minister.

The TLTP learnt that petitioner said it was an admitted fact that the Punjab chief minister granted his home district the status of division and then allocated over Rs100 billion for development schemes, apparently for two districts -- Gujrat and Mandi Bahauddin. He alleged that the CM had released funds to the constituencies of Chaudhry Hussain (NA-68, Gujrat-I), Moonis Elahi (NA-69, Gujrat-II), Sajid Ahmed Bhatti (PP-67, Mandi Bahauddin-III) and his own constituency of PP-430, Gujrat-III.

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