

Religious scholar shot dead

KHAR (APP): Unknown assailants Thursday shot dead a religious scholar in main bazaar of Khar, Bajaur tribal district. According to police and rescue sources, Moulana Aziz Jan was way to his book shop when attackers opened fire on him. He sustained critical wounds and rushed to District Headquarters Hospital where doctors pronounced him dead.

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# PM, COAS discuss national security

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif here at the PM House on Thursday. Professional as well as matters relating to national security were discussed in the meeting, a statement issued by the PM Media Wing here said.

The meeting also discussed rising terror incidents in the country.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has summoned a meeting of the National Security Committee (NSC) on Friday to discuss matters related to national security. Sources privy to the matter told ARY News that the PM has convened the NSC meeting at PM House on Friday, which would be attended by the defence minister, interior minister, foreign minister and finance minister as well as the military chiefs. The NSC huddle would be briefed on the recent terror wave in Pakistan, sources say.

**PM briefed on preparations for Climate Resilient Pakistan conference:** Federal Minister for Climate Change Sherry Rehman called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif here on Thursday and briefed him about the preparations for the upcoming Climate Resilient Pakistan conference. The international conference on Climate Resilient Pakistan will be co-hosted by the Government of Pakistan and the United Nations to be held in Geneva on January 9, 2023.

The prime minister and the federal minister discussed the matters pertaining to climate change. The conference will bring together governments, leaders from the public and private sectors and civil society to support the people and the government of Pakistan after the devastating floods of 2022.

**Rehabilitation of flood-hit population big challenge:** PM: Prime

Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday said rehabilitation of flood victims and the reconstruction of damaged infrastructure was a big challenge for a developing country like Pakistan.

The prime minister expressed these views as he chaired a review meeting on the Resilient Pakistan Conference to be held in Geneva next month. Shehbaz Sharif said hundreds of lives and billions of dollars had been lost this year due to flash floods in Pakistan.

He vowed to make every possible effort to accommodate the flood-struck population. At the climate change conference in Geneva, he said, the government would convey to the world the plight of Pakistan's flood-hit people. The proposals and detailed plan of action regarding the conference were presented before the meeting.

The meeting was informed that the participation of friendly countries

as well as development partners and international financial institutions was also expected in the conference. The prime minister directed to finalize the action plan for the conference on a priority basis. Federal Ministers including Ishaq Dar, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, Ahsan Iqbal, Sherry Rehman, Marriyum Aurangzeb, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Hina Rabbani Khar, Special Assistants Syed Tariq Fatemi, Jahanzeb Khan, Syed Fahd Hussain and concerned senior officials were present.

**PM, Kaira discuss Kashmir Affairs Ministry's matters, political situation:** Adviser to the Prime Minister on Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan Affairs Qamar Zaman Kaira called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif here on Thursday.

The matters relating to the ministry and the overall political situation in the country came under discussion.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a review meeting regarding Resilient Pakistan Conference to be held next month in Geneva, Switzerland.

## 3 soldiers martyred, 2 terrorists killed in Kurram fire exchange



RAWALPINDI (APP): Three soldiers of Pakistan Army were martyred and two terrorists killed in an intense exchange of fire in general area Arawali, Kurram district, on Thursday.

The killed militants remained actively involved in terrorist activities against security forces, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said.

The army troops fought bravely and effectively engaged the terrorists, and recovered weapons and ammunition after killing them. The martyred soldiers included Subedar Shuja Muhammad (43), resident of Khairpur; Naik Muhammad Ramzan (32), resident of Khuzdar; and Sepoy Abdul Rehman (30), resident of Sukkur.

The sanitization of the area was being carried out to kill terrorists, if any found in the area, ISPR said. The Pakistan Army, it added, was determined to eliminate the menace of terrorism and such sacrifices of its brave soldiers further strengthened its resolve.

**President, PM laud Pakistan Army's valor for anti-terror action in Kurram District:** President Dr Arif Alvi and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday lauded the Pakistan Army for action against terrorists in the Kurram District of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

They paid tribute to the sacrifices of martyred soldiers, including Subedar Shuja Muhammad, Naik Muhammad Ramzan and Sepoy Abdul Rehman.

"We will continue to move forward against terrorism with a firm resolve and steadfastness. Those challenging the security of Pakistan would nowhere find any haven," the prime minister remarked.

The president resolved that the efforts of the security forces as well as the whole nation would continue till elimination of the scourge from the homeland. He said the prayers of the whole nation went to their brave security forces.

Both the president and the prime minister sympathised with bereaved families of the martyred soldiers and prayed for high ranks of the martyrs in the paradise and for patience to the grieved families to bear the loss.

## IHC seeks new timeline for LG polls in Federal Capital

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Thursday instructed the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to submit local government elections' new timeline on Friday after holding consultation with the Federal Government.

Justice Arbab Muhammad Tahir, who heard the pleas case filed by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and the Jamaat-e-Islami the petitions challenging the Commission's notification regarding postponement of the LG elections in Federal Capital, also sought written arguments from the Attorney General for Pakistan (AGP) and the ECP.

At the outset of hearing, the AGP said the court should ask the ECP director general as to why the elections as the government had not changed the local and had only increased the number of union councils (UCs).

He said the ECP would complete the process of delimitation of UCs within 60 days. The court asked the ECP official whether the Commission was ready to conduct the elections on December 31 as the government was referring the matter to it. Whether the ECP's decision did not violate the assurance it had submitted to the court regarding the LG polls, Justice Arbab questioned.

The ECP director general said it would take time to transport the election material. Holding elections on December 31 was not possible in the new situation.

The court asked why not the proceedings of contempt of court should be initiated against the ECP.

The Commission's lawyer said the election act authorized the Federal Government to increase the number of UCs in the capital.

The court asked whether the Federal Government could increase the number

of UCs at anytime. The ECP lawyer said there was no restriction in that regard as the government could change the local area after consultation with the ECP.

The court said who would be responsible as the ECP had already spent around Rs 600 million on the LG electoral process. The lawyer said the money belonged to the tax payers and the Federal Government had issued the said funds.

The ECP would announce new election schedule after completing the UCs' delimitation, he added.

Justice Arbab remarked that the court would not shift the burden to the tax payers at any cost.

He expressed annoyance with the officials and remarked that why the ECP had not produced the complete record despite orders.

The ECP DG said they would inform the court regarding the expenditure incurred so far in writing.

The lawyer said the ECP had set aside the notification regarding the increase in the number of UCs, which the IHC had nullified. The ECP had postponed the elections after hearing the government as per the directives of IHC.

The AGP said how the increase in the UCs' number had affected any right of the petitioners. He questioned whether the LG elections had been conducted in Punjab.

Setting the ECP's order of election postponement at the stage would create problems, he added.

The court instructed the AGP and the ECP to submit their written comments to it till tomorrow. Observing that it was a simple matter and the ECP used to work in haste, it also directed the Commission to consult the government and give the timeline of elections on Friday.

The case was then adjourned.

## Shahbaz Gill moves SHC against arrest warrant

KARACHI (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader and former SAPM, Dr Shahbaz Gill on Thursday moved Sindh High Court (SHC) against the issuance of his arrest warrants in a sedition case.

The PTI leader pleaded with the government for an immediate hearing of the plea, which was turned down by the SHC bench. The court said it only hears new cases on an immediate basis. The court directed Shahbaz Gill to file the plea as per rules and regulations via the roster bench.

It may be noted that on December 22, a district and sessions court in Islamabad issued a bailable arrest warrant for Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Shahbaz Gill in the sedition case. As per details, the hearing of the sedition case was held in the district and sessions court Islamabad.

The court issued a bailable arrest warrant upon PTI leader's absence and rejected his petition for exemption from personal appearance in the case. The former SAPM should be presented before court on the next hearing and submit surety bond of Rs 200,000. Moreover, the court adjourned Shahbaz Gill's indictment in the sedition case till January 6.

## PPP, PTI will not accept technocrat govt: Qadir

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Member of the National Assembly (MNA) of the Pakistan People's Party Qadir Mandokhail claimed that PPP and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) will not accept a technocrat government.

Qadir Mandokhail, while talking to a private news channel said that there is no mention of a technocrat setup in the Constitution. "PTI will not accept a technocrat government nor it will be accepted by PPP." The PPP lawmaker said that not a single political party would accept a technocrat setup in the country. He admitted that technocrats are working in different sectors and they used to influence the decisions. He said that he had already predicted that Punjab Assembly will not be dissolved despite the announcement of the PTI chief Imran Khan.

Mandokhail questioned how can someone believe the PA dissolution claims by Pervaiz Elahi when he is influencing all decisions of the opposition. He said that the NA speaker had approved the resignations of 11 lawmakers on the basis of evidence. Regarding the Punjab governor's denotification order, the PPP lawmaker said that the legality of the notification was accepted by the court. He said that the governor's order for the vote of confidence was not nullified. He clarified that the Lahore High Court (LHC) suspended the governor's order regarding the de-notification of the Punjab cabinet but was not nullified.

## Raja invites PTI members to become part of NA, play their constitutional role

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf on Thursday invited the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) members to again become part of the National Assembly and play their constitutional role in the larger national interest.

Reconciliation was need of the hour to overcome the challenges being faced by the country, he said while talking to a delegation of PTI members of the National Assembly (MNAs), led by former speaker Asad Qaiser. The PTI delegation included former deputy speaker Qasim Khan Suri, Malik Amir Dogar, Attaulah Khan, Amjad Khan Niazi, Niaz Ahmad Jakhar, Dr Shabbir Hussain Qureshi, Faheem Khan, Lal Chand Malhi and Tahir Iqbal.

Raja Pervaiz Ashraf said as a speaker, he would give ample opportunity to the PTI members to explain their position at the floor of the National Assembly.

He said the Parliament was the

only forum where the politicians could sit together and solve the problems of people and the country. The politicians should have contact on sustainable basis and doors for negotiations must not be closed, he stressed. Emphasizing the politics of reconciliation, he said for the sake of the country's interests, the whole leadership should work beyond their political affiliations.

He pointed out that under Article-64 of the Constitution, the resignation should be handwritten. "Once it is received, the speaker meets the respective member to ascertain whether or not it was submitted under duress." He mentioned that several PTI lawmakers had moved courts, which showed that the party had decided to use the move to pressure the government.

He said some of the resigning PTI members had applied leave from the House, some others came to the House to just mark just their attendance, while some had already plead-

ed that their resignations must not be accepted. He said an MNA from Karachi whose resignation was accepted had filed a petition in the Islamabad High Court and submitted an affidavit that he had not resigned.

He said that an MNA was a representative of some 600,000 to 700,000 people and before accepting his / her resignation, the speaker must be satisfied that the same was tendered voluntarily not under any duress.

Answering the question of Asad Qaiser, the speaker said the National Assembly Secretariat was ready to again write letters to the resigning MNAs. The PTI delegation members replied that they would have to consult the party in that regard.

The meeting was held in a very cordial atmosphere. Deputy Speaker Zahid Akram Durrani was also present in the meeting. On the occasion, Fateha was also offered for the departed soul of the grandmother of Zahid Akram Durrani.

## Afghan authorities assured to resolve all issues soon: FO

ISLAMABAD (INP): Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch has stated that Pakistan has been engaging with Afghanistan authorities on all matters, including the border situation and security of diplomats and missions and terrorist threat its Pakistan faces.

Responding a question during her year-end briefing in Islamabad on Thursday, she said the Afghan-interim authorities have assured to resolve all such issues soon.

She said Pakistan has a natural stake in peace and stability in Afghanistan and we would like to continue to engage and find solutions to all matters of concern.

Responding a question she stated that Islamabad wants India to end its suppression in Kashmir and desist from supporting terrorist activities inside Pakistan to destabilize the country.

Replaying another questions, she said Pakistan is interested in peace

and dialogue and it is up-to the Indian authorities to take a responsible position to improve relations.

To a question about Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's visits abroad, the Spokesperson said these tours are a demonstration of international community's interest to engage with Pakistan and to develop understanding on a range of issues.

She said Pakistan is also very interested in expanding and strengthening its friendship around the world. She said with the enhanced interactions, visits and exchanges, we can strengthen our friendship, cooperation and dialogue with the international community.

Replying to another question, Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said Pakistan is grateful to various countries and multilateral financial institutions and organizations for providing humanitarian assistance for the flood-affected people of Pakistan.

She said these include Belgium,

China, Denmark, the European Union, France, Germany, Greece, Indonesia, Italy, Iran, Jordan, Malaysia, Nepal, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Tajikistan, Turkiye, Turkmenistan, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Uzbekistan as well as some multilateral financial institutions and the United Nations.

Answering a question about Afghanistan, the Spokesperson said Pakistan has been engaging with Afghanistan authorities on all matters, including the border situation and security of diplomats and missions and terrorist threat its Pakistan faces. She said the Afghan-interim authorities have assured to resolve all such issues soon. She said Pakistan has a natural stake in peace and stability in Afghanistan and we would like to continue to engage and find solutions to all matters of concern.

## KP CM directs completion of formalities for academic activities in UVAS

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mahmood Khan has directed the concerned authorities to complete all codal formalities for commencement of academic activities at the newly established University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences on priority basis.

"This is the first-ever university of its kind in the province and of vital importance owing to growing needs of veterinary education in region," he remarked and added that the project on completion would not only promote innovative research techniques in this field but would also provide a solid base for the sustainable development of all relevant sectors.

While chairing a progress review meeting regarding commencement of classes at the University of Veterinary

and Animal Sciences, the Chief Minister directed the concerned quarters to bring the relevant laws and rules in coherence with contemporary needs, adding that the proposed draft of the act already under consideration be finalized immediately and submitted for approval. Principal Secretary to Chief Minister Amjad Ali Khan, higher authorities of Live Stock, Law and Establishment departments and other relevant officials attended the meeting. It is pertinent to mention here that the newly established university will provide education and research facilities in 20 different departments of three faculties.

Under the faculty of Bio Sciences, seven different departments would be established, including Anatomy, Physiology, Pharmacology, Fisheries, Wildlife, Biochemistry and Biotechnology.

Similarly, under the Faculty of Veterinary Science, nine different departments, including Pathology, Microbiology, Medicine, Surgery and Pet Sciences would be established, whereas under the faculty of Animal Production and Technology, five departments would be established, including Animal Nutrition, Livestock Management, Poultry Sciences, Breeding and Genetics and Department of Meat and Dairy Technology. It was further told that the relevant institutions of the Livestock and Dairy Development Department would also be linked to the university as outreach centers.

Briefing the forum about preparedness for the commencement of classes and other related matters of the university, it was told that the construction work on the building of the University is in progress.





## Heavy fog disrupts flight operations in Lahore

LAHORE (INP): Poor visibility caused by heavy fog has badly affected flight operations at Lahore's Allama Iqbal International Airport.

As per details, the heavy fog has dropped the visibility at the runway of Lahore airport.

Dense fog has blanketed different cities of Punjab, including Lahore, paralyzing routine life and disrupting road and air traffic. There is a huge number of passengers at the Allama Iqbal International Airport Lahore because of the delay in flights.

The international flight operations between Riaz and Karachi are delayed as a result of fog.

Earlier, due to poor visibility and fog in Lahore, Pakistan International Airlines shifted all international flight operations between 10 pm and 11 am from the capital of Punjab

to Islamabad. "All international flights scheduled to operate to/from Lahore between 10 pm and 11 am have been shifted to Islamabad," PIA spokesman Abdullah Hafeez Khan said in a statement.

The rescheduling of flights during these hours is temporary and will be restored as soon as the foggy conditions improve, according to the national flag carrier.

He clarified that flight-shifting arrangements will be reversed once the foggy conditions improved in Lahore.

The move was aimed at ensuring air safety and saving long waiting times for passengers, he claimed.

The spokesperson advised the passengers to contact the PIA call centre at (021) 111 786 786 to get timely information about flights.

## Elections the only way forward to put country on track: Siraj

LAHORE (INP): Amir Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Sirajul Haq has rejected the buzz about installing a technocrat caretaker setup for a year or more as a joke and said the elections are the only way forward to put the country on track.

Addressing a press conference at Mansoorah on Thursday, he emphasized the need for electoral reforms before the polls. He added elections without reforms will worsen the crises further.

Sirajul Haq expressed solidarity with the people of Balochistan and condemned the police crackdown on the Gwadar sit-in. He announced the JI will mark Friday as the day of solidarity with Balochistan. He said the propaganda was being

spread that the Gwadar sit-in was against the CPEC.

"I want to make it clear that CPEC is crucial for the development of Pakistan, and the JI is fully supporting the project."

Residents of Gwadar had been demanding their rights even before the idea of CPEC, he said, adding the government should listen to their demands and hold dialogue with them. The JI, he said, has never supported violence in politics.

The JI chief said the country was paying the price of the ill-conceived policies of the PDM, the PPP and the PTI governments. He said the law-and-order situation worsened in KPK while the sense of deprivation among the people of Balochistan was at its

peak, Punjab was facing political crises, and floods brought the worst crisis in Sindh.

Amid the overall situation, he said, the federal and provincial governments were in deep slumber. Their only concern, he added, was the protection of self-interests. The ruling elite consisted of landlords and imperialists were least bothered about the problems of the common man, he said. The mafias were ruling over the country and they lied to the people, he said.

Siraj said that the JI wanted free and fair polls without any interference from institutions. He said the Election Commission should be financially and administratively independent, and elections should be

## German Consul General calls on Karachi administrator

KARACHI (PPI): Consul General of Germany Mr Rudiger Lotz on Thursday called on Administrator Karachi Dr Syed Saifur Rahman at his office in Karachi and discussed matters of mutual interest.

The Administrator Karachi said that Germany and Pakistan have long-standing relations. In Karachi, corners projecting cultures of different countries will be created in Bagh Ibn Qasim, adding that Germany can also have a part of Bagh Ibn Qasim to highlight its culture, he added.

Administrator Karachi Dr Syed Saifur Rahman said that Karachi is the largest city in Pakistan and the sixth largest city in the world. He said that there are excellent investment opportunities in Karachi. He said that German-made products, especially heavy machinery, are widely used in Pakistan. Dr Saifur said that Germany's excellent and durable products have great demand in Pakistan. He said that efforts are being made to upgrade Karachi's infrastructure, street lights, gardens and hospitals.

## CM Sindh terms flood rehabilitation, mitigating impacts of Covid as major challenges

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, on Thursday, said that the rehabilitation of flood affected population and infrastructure and framing the effective policy to mitigate negative impacts caused by Covid-19 as well as exploiting opportunities in the post-COVID world were the major challenges. He expressed the views while addressing the participants of 52nd PN Staff Course and 20th Correspondence Staff Course here at CM House.

The meeting was attended by Chief Secretary Sohail Rajput, IG Police Ghulam Nabi Memon, Chairman P&D Hassan Naqvi, Home Secretary Saeed Mangniro, and secretaries of different departments. Murad Ali Shah said that Pakistan was a country of over 200 million people, and by 2025 we would have 100 million people in the middle class, making Pakistan, the world's 10th largest middle-class country.

The CM said that Pakistan promised to

become one of the fastest-growing economies, and he showed his confidence that with the development of infrastructure, investment in energy, education, vocational training and rapidly improving healthcare, we were poised to take off and compete alongside the rest of the world.

The CM talking about devastating floods said that Sindh was passing through one of the most challenging times of its history, and it was quite explicit from the unprecedented and heavy torrential rains that occurred in July and August which claimed 801, lives, including 151 female, and 339 children and around 8,442 were injured. He said that as per the Livestock department around 436,000 livestock have perished, 2,087,186 houses damaged, and crops standing over 3,777,272 acres washed away. He added that the survey of the works and service dept indicated that around 860 roads (8,463 km), 165 bridges, 1749 cul-

verts, and 2115 causeways were badly damaged during the 2022 Floods.

Murad Shah said that his government, to address the crisis, took Relief and Rescue Operations in which 22 Tent Cities were established in Malir, Jamshoro, Dadu, Matiari, Thatta, Khairpur, Kambar-Shahdadkot, and distributed relief items, including 873,000 Tents, 3,775,560 Mosquito Nets, 2,425,318 Rations Bags, and 1,411,416 Blankets. The CM said that he was also working with the

World Bank (W.B) and has established a public sector company for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of damaged houses in calamity-hit areas.

Highlighting the business opportunities in Karachi the CM said that success of industry and business was fundamentally dependent on two key criteria: connectivity and access to the commercial centre. "This makes Sindh, including Karachi and its surrounding areas, an ideal business destination," he added.

**PAKISTAN CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY (PCAA)**  
**CANCELLATION**

**TENDER NOTICE FOR PROVISION OF PRECAST BOUNDARY WALL AROUND SAIDU SHARIF AIRPORT**

1. Reference is made to Tender Notice for the work "Provision of Precast Boundary Wall around Saidu Sharif Airport" published dated **8th December 2022**.

2. It is informed that the above referred tender is hereby cancelled.

**DIVISIONAL ENGINEER ES (CIVIL)**  
**BKIAF PESHAWAR**  
PID/KH#1821/22, [www.caapakistan.com.pk](http://www.caapakistan.com.pk)

**ADDENDUM**

With reference to our "Request for Proposal" bearing Procurement Reference Number KPITB/22/RFP/037 & INF(P)6990/22, **HIRING OF TRAINING CONSULTANCY FIRM(S) FOR PROVISION OF DIGITAL TRAINING SERVICES UNDER THE PROJECT "DIGITAL ECONOMY & SKILLS CENTER, MARDAN"** issued with the bid submission date of 05<sup>th</sup> January, 2022, has been extended till **12<sup>th</sup> January, 2023 at 02:30 PM**. The opening of the bid will be made on the same date at 03:00 PM.

All other terms and condition will remain unchanged.

**Assistant Director Procurement,**  
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Information Technology Board (KPITB) Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 134-Industrial Estate, Hayatabad, Peshawar, Pakistan. **INF(P) 7206/22**

**SOLARIZATION OF MOSQUE / MASAJID / MADARASA / JANAZGAH & EID-GAH AT UC'S BALKOT, SHINGAL DRA, BARTONI, HARNAIL, SHATAL, JUDBA, MANJAKOT, PALOSA, KAND AKAZAI, MERA MADA KHEL, SHADAG OF DISTRICT TORGHAR ADP 220679**

**CORRIGENDUM/ADDENDUM**  
**REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL**

**Reference:** Advertisement Published in Daily Aaj Peshawar on 03rd December 2022, vide INF(P) 6787/22

The Pakhtunkhwa Energy Development Organization invited the technical & financial Proposals for hiring of the Consultancy services for the project Solarization of Mosque / Masajid / Madrasa / Janazgah & Eid-Gah at UC's Balkot, Shingal Dra, Bartoni, Harnail, Shatal, Judba, Manjakot, Palosa, Kand Akazai, Mera Mada Khel, Shadag of District TorgarADP 220679.

1. The Deadline for the Submission of Proposal provided in advertised in Daily AAJ Peshawar dated 30th Dec, 2022, is hereby postponed and new date of deadline for submission of proposal is extended to **10th Jan, 2023 until 1100 hours**. Proposals will be opened on the same day at **1130 hours** in the presence of prospective applicants or authorized representatives.

2. All other Terms and Conditions will remain the same.

3. This advertisement is also available on PEDO & KPRA websites.

**PROJECT DIRECTOR SOLAR** **INF(P) 7229/22**  
House No. 21-B-2, Abdara Road, University Town Peshawar. Phone: 091-7254668

## PIC organizes two-day training workshop for journalists

ISLAMABAD (APP): A two-day training workshop for new and mid-career journalists organized by Pakistan Information Center (PIC), a special project of Press Information Department (PID), Ministry of Information and Broadcasting concluded here on Thursday.

The workshop was held at the Information Service Academy (ISA) under the theme of "News Authenticity and Tools to Counter the Fake News & Anti-State Propaganda," said a press release issued by PID. The main objective of the workshop was to enlighten the participants on the need and importance of countering fake news and negative propaganda. The workshop was inaugurated by Secretary, Information and Broadcasting Ms. Shahira Shahid. In the first session of the second day, Khyber TV Director Hassan Khan gave a detailed presentation about information warfare and propaganda tools and countering propaganda and answered the questions.

In the second session, former Director General of Radio Pakistan, Murtaza Solangi, highlighted the importance of verifying of facts and figures before the publication of the news story. He told the participants about the strategy to counter the propaganda against the

state. The third session was conducted by the Director General of the Information Service Academy, Saeed Ahmed Sheikh. He informed the participants about the need and importance of true news and keeping the national interests in mind while filing the news stories.

On the occasion, Project Director, Pakistan Information Center Muhammad Saghir Ahmad Wattoo while addressing to the participants, highlighted the importance of this training workshop and thanked all guest speakers and participants for showing their keen interest during the event.

At the end of the workshop, Chief Guest Executive Director General (EDG) Information Service Academy Syed Mubasher Toqeer Shah and President of National Press Club (NPC) Anwar Raza distributed certificates among the participants of the workshop. Later, he presented commemorative shields to the guest speakers.

On this occasion, commemorative shields were also presented to EDG ISA and President of NPC. The participants emphasized the need to continue the series of such training workshops on important subjects in the future as well.

### Court Notice

In the Court of Abdul Halem Civil Judge V /Alaqa Qazi Buner at Daggara.

Suit No 322/1, Institution 13/9/2022, Date of hearing, 18/1/2023, Abdul Karim VS Mst Gulshah Khiron. Fulfilment of deed Suit Notice to no 2.Zamin Gul 3.Fazal Ahad sond of Fazal Karim resident of Taghan Koz Gokand tehsel Daggara district Buner. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants can not be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendants will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8.30 am dated 18/1/2023 the proceeding will be taken ex- parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

### Court Notice

In the Court of Abdul Halem Civil Judge V /Alaqa Qazi Buner at Daggara. Suit No 411 /I, Institution 15/9/2022, 21/11/2022 Date of hearing, 26/1/2023. Mohammad Kamin VS Sultan Mehmood. Declaration Suit Notice to no 1.Sultan Mehmood son of Hidayatullah resident of Torwarsak tehsel Daggara district Buner. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants can not be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendants will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8.30 am dated 26/1/2023 the proceeding will be taken ex- parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

held on the principle of proportional representation. He said people must reject the tested parties and vote for the JI for corruption-free Islamic welfare Pakistan.

### TEHSIL MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION MATTATA

## E-BIDDING NOTICE

Sealed tender for the following developmental schemes are hereby invited on above/below system from the approved & registered government contractors / firms who are enlisted with Local Government Elections & Rural Development Department / Local Council Board, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and renewed their licenses for the year 2022-23.

**Detail of Schemes is as under:-**

District Development Initiative (DDI) 2022-23.					
S.No.	Name of Schemes	E/Cost (M)	Earnest Money 2%	Receiving Date & Time	Opening Date & Time
01	Construction/Up Gradation/Improvement/Rehabilitation of Mosque/Madrasa/Janazgah/Graveyard & Other Public Facilities in Tehsil Matta Package-I (PK-09) and Adjoining areas.	10	0.2	24/01/2023 12:00 PM	24/01/2023 2:00 PM
02	Construction/Up Gradation/Improvement/Rehabilitation of Mosque/Madrasa/Janazgah/Graveyard & Other Public Facilities in Tehsil Matta Package-II (PK-09) and Adjoining areas.	10	0.2	-do-	-do-
03	Construction/Up Gradation/Improvement/Rehabilitation of Mosque/Madrasa/Janazgah/Graveyard & Other Public Facilities in Tehsil Matta Package-III (PK-09) and Adjoining areas.	10	0.2	-Do-	-Do-
04	Construction/Up Gradation/Improvement/Rehabilitation of Mosque/Madrasa/Janazgah/Graveyard & Other Public Facilities in Tehsil Matta Package-IV (PK-09) and Adjoining areas.	8.80	0.176	-Do-	-Do-
05	Boring & Installation of Pressure Pumps/Hand Pumps at Tehsil Matta and Adjoining areas Package-I	4	0.08	-Do-	-Do-
06	Boring & Installation of Pressure Pumps/Hand Pumps at Tehsil Matta and Adjoining areas Package-II	4	0.08	-Do-	-Do-
07	Boring & Installation of Pressure Pumps/Hand Pumps at Tehsil Matta and Adjoining areas Package-III	4	0.08	-Do-	-Do-
08	Boring & Installation of Pressure Pumps/Hand Pumps at Tehsil Matta and Adjoining areas Package-IV	4	0.08	-Do-	-Do-
09	Boring & Installation of Pressure Pumps/Hand Pumps at Tehsil Matta and Adjoining areas Package-V	4	0.08	-Do-	-Do-
10	Boring & Installation of Pressure Pumps/Hand Pumps at Tehsil Matta and Adjoining areas Package-VI	4	0.08	-Do-	-Do-
11	Boring & Installation of Pressure Pumps/Hand Pumps at Tehsil Matta and Adjoining areas Package-VII	4	0.08	-Do-	-Do-
12	Boring & Installation of Pressure Pumps/Hand Pumps at Tehsil Matta and Adjoining areas Package-VIII	4	0.08	-Do-	-Do-
13	Boring & Installation of Pressure Pumps/Hand Pumps at Tehsil Matta and Adjoining areas Package-IX	3.5	0.07	-Do-	-Do-
14	Boring & Installation of Pressure Pumps/Hand Pumps at Tehsil Matta and Adjoining areas Package-X	3.5	0.07	-Do-	-Do-
15	Boring & Installation of Pressure Pumps/Hand Pumps at Tehsil Matta and Adjoining areas Package-XI	3	0.06	-Do-	-Do-
16	Construction of Culverts at Tehsil Matta and Adjoining areas Package-I	4	0.08	-Do-	-Do-
17	Construction of Culverts at Tehsil Matta and Adjoining areas Package-II	4	0.08	-Do-	-Do-
18	Construction of Culverts at Tehsil Matta and Adjoining areas Package-III	2	0.04	-Do-	-Do-
19	Construction of PCC Roads and Protection wall/Retaining wall at Tehsil Matta and Adjoining areas Package-I	8	0.16	-Do-	-Do-
20	Construction of PCC Roads and Protection wall/Retaining wall at Tehsil Matta and Adjoining areas Package-II	4	0.08	-Do-	-Do-
21	Construction of PCC Roads and Protection wall/Retaining wall at Tehsil Matta and Adjoining areas Package-III	4	0.08	-Do-	-Do-
22	Construction of PCC Roads and Protection wall/Retaining wall at Tehsil Matta and Adjoining areas Package-IV	4	0.08	-Do-	-Do-
23	Construction of PCC Roads and Protection wall/Retaining wall at Tehsil Matta and Adjoining areas Package-V	4	0.08	-Do-	-Do-
24	Construction of PCC Roads and Protection wall/Retaining wall at Tehsil Matta and Adjoining areas Package-VI	4	0.08	-Do-	-Do-
25	Construction of PCC Roads and Protection wall/Retaining wall at Tehsil Matta and Adjoining areas Package-VII	4	0.08	-Do-	-Do-
26	Construction of PCC Roads and Protection wall/Retaining wall at Tehsil Matta and Adjoining areas Package-VIII	4	0.08	-Do-	-Do-
27	Construction of PCC Roads and Protection wall/Retaining wall at Tehsil Matta and Adjoining areas Package-IX	4	0.08	-Do-	-Do-
28	Developmental works (cutting/leveling) in roads, Playground and graveyards at Tehsil Matta and Adjoining areas Package-I	4	0.08	-Do-	-Do-
29	Developmental works (cutting/leveling) in roads, Playground and graveyards at Tehsil Matta and Adjoining areas Package-II	3	0.06	-Do-	-Do-
30	Developmental works (cutting/leveling) in roads, Playground and graveyards at Tehsil Matta and Adjoining areas.	3	0.06	-Do-	-Do-
31	DWSS (Gravity) at Tehsil Matta and Adjoining areas Package-I	4	0.08	-Do-	-Do-
32	DWSS (Gravity) at Tehsil Matta and Adjoining areas Package-II	3	0.06	-Do-	-Do-
33	DWSS (Gravity) at Tehsil Matta and Adjoining areas Package-III	3	0.06	-Do-	-Do-
34	Supply of pipes for community schemes at Tehsil Matta & Adjoining areas Package-I	4	0.08	-Do-	-Do-
35	Supply of pipes for community schemes at Tehsil Matta & Adjoining areas Package-II	4	0.08	-Do-	-Do-

### TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- Sealed Tender based on **MRS-2022 (B)** Contractors followed the new provincial Government rules under the Notification No. MRS Cell/C&W/6-1/D&S/2019-20 Dated 01-10-2019 keeping in view the mentioned notification the contractors shall quote their rates (ONLINE) as Above/Below.
- Tender forms will be received till **12:00 pm** and opening of tender will be at **2:00 pm** on dated **24/01/2023** at office of TMA Matta.
- All the bidding will be through E-bidding system. Tender form and BOQ can be filled and downloaded by the original-contractor available on the official website of LCB ([www.lcbkp.gov.pk](http://www.lcbkp.gov.pk)) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa after one day of publishing of NIT in newspaper.
- Complete bid (Original) must reach to the TMA Matta on or before the fixed date/time.
- The following documents must be attached with bids:
  - Enlistment and Renewal Copy in Local Council Board for the Year 2022-23.
  - Photocopy of CNIC.
  - Power of Attorney (if applicable).
  - Valid Photocopy of Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC)
- Tender documents of bidders if found with bogus/false documents will be rejected and their registration shall stands cancelled/blacklisted in addition of forfeiture of earnest money and security amount (if any).
- No tenders are acceptable through Faxby hand. Sealed bids sent through registered mail/couriers service should reach up to the specified time and date, and will be opened in presence of bidders/representatives.
- The contractors quoting their bids up to a limit of 10% below Engineer estimate shall submit bid security @2% only of Engineer Estimate.
- The contractors quoting their bids more than 10% below up to 20% below on Engineers' Estimate shall submit along with their bids 8% Additional Security of Engineer's Estimated cost in addition to 2% bid security, if the bid is not accompanied with the required amount of additional security then it will be considered as non-responsive and the 2% bid security shall be forfeited in favor of Government and the second lowest bidder and so on will be considered accordingly.
- Similarly, a contractor quoting bid more than 20% below shall submit with his bid an additional security on Engineer's Estimated cost equal to the differential amount of submitted bid and Engineers' Estimate along with detailed rate analysis. In case of more than 20% below bids, if the bid is not accompanied by the detailed rate analysis and/or required amount of additional security, then the said bid shall be considered as non-responsive. All the securities submitted along with such non-responsive bid shall be forfeited in favor of Government and the 2nd lowest bidder and so on will be considered accordingly.
- In case detailed rate analysis submitted with the bids is, in view of the Procuring Entity, not convincing, the Head of the Procuring Entity may declare such bid as non-responsive without any forfeiture of bid securities and record reasons thereof.
- The procuring entity may offer the contract to next lowest bidder after due diligence in the context of financial difference between such two bids or may advertise procurement opportunity afresh.
- In case the bid becomes a tie the contractor shall be decided through a free toss which shall be binding and final.
- The time limit of each work shall be as per work order issued to successful bidder and the contractor will have to start the work within 15 Days' time period after the issuance of Work order failing which the Contract will be cancelled and security/additional security (if any) will be forfeited.
- The successful contractor will execute an agreement with the department within 15 days in which all amendments must be included so far.
- All federal and provincial duties/stamp duty and taxes including sales tax will be recoverable as per directives of the government issued from time to time.
- TMA Matta may reject any or all bids after communicating the reasons for rejection at any time prior to the award of contract.
- Any addition made in terms & Conditions in the NIT advertised in the newspaper will be implemented as per KPRA Rules.
- The contractor who offered their bids online but do not sent the hard copies or incomplete/defective documents will be debarred from tendering process of TMA Matta, in the future and their case will also be send to the competent forum for blacklisting.
- All bidders are required to be registered with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority, established under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Finance Act, 2013 (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Act No. XXI of 2013), for works consulting & non-consulting services as listed in Schedule-U of the Act ibid.

**Tehsil Officer (I&S),**

**INF(P) 7191/22**

**Tehsil Municipal Administration Matta**  
**Tehsil Municipal Officer,**  
**Tehsil Municipal Administration Matta**





## Walk on national census: Gandapur hails holding of grand mass awareness

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The KP Minister for Local Government, Elections and Rural Development, Sardar Faisal Amin Gandapur, hailed the holding of Grand mass awareness walk on national census in Peshawar and expressed his sincere gratitude to the citizens who enthusiastically participated in it despite the rain and cold wave down-town the provincial metropolitan following his request in this regard. He however expressed the confidence that, just like the government employees and people from all walks of life, participated in this grand walk with national spirit and with the renewed enthusiasm, they would also fully cooperate with the field staff in completing the entire census process successfully.

Sardar Faisal Amin Gandapur, in his message on the occasion of the grand awareness walk organized in Peshawar on the seventh national census, said that this purposeful walk would tantamount to, great mass awareness not only on the importance of the census, but also in completing all its phases. He hoped that people associated with all sections of life will fully coop-

erate with the field staff of the Department of Census and his local government department in making this seventh national and the first ever digital census of the country successful in every respect and will provide them with the most accurate information. He said that the seventh census being launched across the country from February 1, will be the first digital census in the history of Pakistan to pace way for brisk future planning. He said that as per clear instructions of the provincial government, the Department of Local Government and Elections in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will play its role alongside the Census Division and the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics at all stages to make 7th National Census a success story in all respects. In this regard, he also referred to the five-day training workshop of master trainers for the seventh census at the Local Government Secretariat, Peshawar, which was also held in all the divisional headquarters of the province including Peshawar as well as the newly merged districts.

The KPLG minister said that under this first digital census in the country's history, the census department

and the officials of the provincial government will go to the field and get the consolidated data of the citizens under the online digital system. He said that the training of the master trainers was completed by December 23, after which the enumerators would start their work from January 7 to January 23, after which the census would be formally started in the next phase in February. He said that census is an important national obligation on which the country's future planning, progress, development and people's prosperity depended. He added that the new census is of pivotal importance for better future planning of the country. Therefore, he maintained, the entire government machinery including divisional and district administration officers and police authorities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will fully cooperate with the staff of the Census Division and Statistics Department.

Minister also appealed to the religious scholars and other opinion-making segments of society to raise mass awareness and conscience in this regard so that this national duty and all its stages can be carried out and completed in the most successful and proper manner.

Sardar Faisal Amin Gandapur further said that the planning, development and prosperity of Pakistan for the next several decades depended on the ensuing national census, hence forth he said, living nations demonstrate missionary spirit on such occasions and this is what we expect from our conscious and patriotic people, he concluded.

Provincial Secretary Local Government and Rural Development Syed Zaheerul Islam Shah also clarified in his message on this occasion that the Department of Local Government will not only fully cooperate with the Federal Departments of Census and Statistics in carrying out the seventh national census but will also come upto the national expectations according to the needs, guidance and instructions of the Department of Census and Statistics. He said the concerned LG staff will remain in the field side by side with the officers and personnel of census division. Hence he directed all the officials of the KP Local Government and Elections Department to fully cooperate with the Census Division and the Census Office Peshawar in this regard.



PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mahmood Khan chairing a progress review meeting on University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences.

## Crimes cases on raised, says Javed

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In a posh area like Hayatabad, the anti-social elements have disturbed the peace of the areas and put the residence under severe stress due to raise in crime rate, known businessman Gulam Bilal Javed told media men here on Thursday.

The increasing number of incidents in the posh area of Peshawar, Hayatabad, has made life difficult for the citizens, he added. Due to the increasing incidents of terrorism, the residents of Hayatabad have installed security cameras of their own.

In the street next to the former DIG's house on Hayatabad Medical Complex Road, two persons entered the house for the purpose of committing an incident, but they got scared when they saw the camera.

When we contacted the Police, they said that these are drug addicts, while the district administration had undertaken to catch the drug addicts and treat them, but the police said that we pick up the drug addicts and hand them over to the Deputy Commissioner Cell established for this purpose and they are passing through rehab under the government project.

Gulam Bilal Javed on this occasion said that it is difficult to catch each and every one rather many of the criminals are involved in robberies as well. He said if the administration continues to be negligent like this, it will become difficult for the citizens to live with peace. He said despite informing the SP Cantt and SP of the area on telephone to increase the patrolling and also deploy Ababil Force in the area but so far no action was taken.

## Awareness seminar organized

PESHAWAR (APP): Water and Sanitation Services Company Mardan (WSSCM), Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan (AWKUM) and Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) on Thursday organized an awareness creating seminar aiming to reduce plastic pollution.

The main objective of awareness seminar was to inform and sensitize students and public about plastic borne diseases and to highlight measures that can help reduction of plastic pollution.

Director General (DG) Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Anwar Khan, Chairman Environmental Sciences Department Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, Professor Dr. Dilawar Farhan Shams and Ayaz Ali Program Officer Pakistan Red crescent Society highlighted importance and objectives of seminar.

Dr. Hameeda Bibi from AWKUM gave a briefing on mechanism of microplastic accumulation and its uptake in soil and plant system.

DG EPA, Anwar Khan said that from 1st February, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government is imposing a complete ban on the use of all types of plastic in the province from February 1. He said that KP is the only province that has formulated a climate change policy and established an improvement fund for reduction of environmental pollution.

Deputy Manager WSSCM, Muhammad Ishaq briefed that the company is collecting and disposing 180 tons of garbage from Mardan city daily in which more than 7.3% is plastic waste. He said that our failure to reduce plastic use would negatively impact existing environment system.

## Allocation 3% quota to ministerial in PMS: PHC issues notice to AG

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising of Justice Syed Arshad Ali and Justice Dr. Khurshid Iqbal issued notices to Advocate General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in writ regarding allocating 3% quota to ministerial staff at Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner office in Provincial Management Services from tehsildar quota, on Thursday.

The writ was filed representatives of various employees' associations in which Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Secretary Establishment, Secretary law & Parliamentary Affairs, Secretary Administration and Deputy Comm-

issioner Peshawar along with others were made respondents in the petition. The counsel Muhammad Farooq Afridi Advocate requested for suspension of operation notification No. SOE-II(ED)2(14/2022) dated 10 October 2022 and interim relief to restrain respondents from holding Provincial Selection Board (PSB) meeting for promoting ministerial staff of Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner office under 3% PMS quota till the final decision of writ petition.

The PHC's divisional bench comprising of Justice Syed Arshad Ali and Justice Dr. Khurshid Iqbal issued notice to Advocate General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa while adjourned further hearing.

## Encroachments removed from University Road, ten persons held

PESHAWAR (APP): A team of district administration led by Assistant Commissioner, Syeda Zainab Naqvi Thursday removed encroachments including kiosks being illegally erected by shopkeepers on University Road.

Heavy machinery was used to dismantle structures constructed by shopkeepers on university road.

Ten persons were also arrested by district administration on the spot.

Assistant Commissioner (AC) has warned strict action against shopkeepers found guilty of violating their limits and said that step has been taken to ensure smooth flow of traffic on main artery of the city that was often choked due to unauthorized construction by business owners.

## Walk on 7th national census in Peshawar held

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A Grand Public Awareness Walk was organized in Peshawar by Census Division Islamabad and Bureau of Statistics Peshawar with the support of the Provincial Department of Local Government, Elections and Rural Development to raise mass awareness on the importance of 7th National Census being held early next year in the month of February. The walk started from Census Office near State Life Building and passed through Fakhr Alam Road, Green Shadi Hall, State Bank Building and Cantt: Railway Station whereas it ended at Press Club Peshawar.

In spite of the heavy rain and cold weather in Peshawar, people from all walks of life including government employees, traders, industrialists, religious scholars, lawyers, students and teachers participated in the walk.

During the walk, the participants held placards in their hands highlighting the importance of the 7th national and the country's first digital census. They also raised various slogans on the greater benefits of census in the country.

Deputy Director General of Census Division Shaukat Ali, Census Commissioner Akhtar and Secretary Coordination and Elections, Department of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Local Government Sajid Gul addressed the partici-

pants at the end of the walk, who besides clarifying the importance and usefulness of the ensuing national census, urged them to endeavor their best and encourage the masses to help and support in early completion of the census process most successfully and to fully cooperate with the staff who approach the people in the streets for the purpose.

President of Peshawar Press Club M Riaz Khan and other journalist fraternity present on the occasion also met the organizers and participants of the walk and assured them of the full cooperation of the media community in making the census campaign a success story in larger national interest.

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F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Right to Public Service Commission (RTPSC) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa attached salaries of District Police Officer (DPO) Bajaur and concerned Inspector while imposed Rs25 thousand fine on applicant for filing fake/fraudulent complaint against public servant, on Thursday.

Chief Commissioner

RTPSC Muhammad Salim Khan along with Commissioner Muhammad Asim Imam heard seven complaints while issued directions to competent officials to ensure delivery of services to public.

RTPSC ordered attachment of DPO and concerned Inspector Bajaur for did not registering First Information Report of Syed Mand while imposed Rs20 thousand fine on fake com-

plaint while directed Principal Technical College for his suspension and concerned Village Secretary Atta Ullah appeared before the commission.

The commission returned to Rs50 thousand to applicant Hazar Hayat obtained by Patwari as bribe while directed Tehsildar Ghazi and Patwari Junaid to concluded transfer of property within seven on their

appearance before RTPSC.

RTPSC directed Tehsildar Syed Amin along with Naib tehsildar and concerned Patwari to conclude transfer ancestral property of applicant Waleed in Buner district while ordered to appear along with concern documents after fortnight.

The commission issued notice to Xen Communication and Work while ordered Sub Divisional Forest Officer Mansehra Muhammad Junaid to issue wood cutting till 19th January 2023 and directed to proof ownership of property within two days.

Chief Commissioner RTPSC Muhammad Salim Khan said that the commission is working as liaison among public servants and citizens to ensure delivery of services within stipulated timeframe and good governance in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

## Water position in rivers issued

PESHAWAR (APP): WAPDA has issued the position of the river inflows and outflows at Tarbela, Mangla and Chashma along with the reservoirs' levels and the barrages here on Thursday morning.

According to a spokesperson of the authority, inflows and outflows in Indus River at Tarbela were 17000 cusecs and 10000 cusecs while inflows and outflows in Kabul River at Nowshera were 8300 cusecs and 8300 cusecs.

Similarly, inflows and outflows at Khairabad Bridge were 16800 cusecs and 16800 cusecs respectively. In Jhelum River at Mangla, the inflows and outflows were 6900 cusecs and 4000 cusecs while in inflows and outflows in Chenab River at Marala were 12400 cusecs and 12400 cusecs respectively.

Furthermore, inflows and outflows in Jinnah Barrage were 23000 cusecs and 18500 cusecs while inflows and outflows in Chashma were 19100 cusecs and 13000 cusecs.

Similarly, inflows and outflows were 19500 cusecs and 16700 cusecs, Guddu (inflows 21600 cusecs and outflows 14900 cusecs), Sukkur (inflows 15800 cusecs and outflows 500 cusecs), Kotri (inflows 3700 cusecs and outflows 3700 cusecs) Trimmu (inflows 6200 cusecs and outflow Nil cusecs) while in Panjnad (inflows 5900 cusecs and outflows Nil cusecs) respectively.

Meanwhile, Tarbela Dam was operating at the level of 1490.17 feet against the maximum conservation level of 1550 feet and minimum operating level 1398 feet.

## E-stamp paper formally launched in Peshawar

PESHAWAR (APP): Deputy Commissioner (DC) Peshawar, Shafiqullah Khan formally launched e-stamp paper in the provincial capital on Thursday.

The step has been taken on the special directives of the Chief Minister Mahmood Khan. Besides, officers of the district administration, officers of the revenue department and

National Bank of Pakistan (NBP) were also present on the occasion.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony, the Deputy Commissioner said that with the launching of e-stamp papers, the practice of the issuance of stamp papers in back dates would stop and help prevent dispute regarding sale and purchase of properties, beside

the fixation of actual rate and eradication of the tampering and frauds.

He said that each e-stamp paper would be issued an unique Barcode, which could be easily verified online. He further termed the introduction of e-stamp paper a revolutionary step as compared to manual one and will go a long way in the facilitation of the people.

## Pneumonia claims lives of 175 children in Dec

PESHAWAR (INP): As many as 175 children died of pneumonia in three major hospitals of Peshawar during December.

According to details, 447 children suffering from pneumonia and cold borne

diseases were shifted to Khyber Teaching hospital during last one month of which 153 children died of pneumonia. On the other hand, 10 children among the pneumonic affected children shifted to Hayatabad

Medical Complex during ongoing month expired. During the month of December, 300 children suffering from pneumonic were shifted to Lady Reading Hospital where 12 children died during treatment.



PESHAWAR: Assistant Director Local Government Malik Arshad lead protest against Minister for Relief with directorate staff while Class-4 Representative Faqir Hussain and Firdous Khan claimed will stand shoulder to shoulder with officer cadre demands.





## In brief

### Three killed as roof collapses Syed Waliullah Shah

NOWSHERA: Three members of a family were killed and four others injured when roof of a portion of house collapsed due to gas cylinder explosion here on Thursday. According to details, the incident took place in Wapda Colony of tehsil Pabbi in district Nowshera where as gas cylinder exploded due to leakage resultantly roof of a room collapsed. Seven members of family were buried under the rubble of which three died and four sustained injuries. The rescue teams and local people through joint efforts pulled out the bodies and injured from the debris and shifted them to local hospital.

### Commissioner visits industries F.P. Report

D I KHAN: CEO-KPEZDMC, Mr. Javed Iqbal Khattak along with Commissioner D I Khan Division, Mr. Amir Afaaq, performed the groundbreaking of 3 new industries namely Maxel Pharma, Al-Hamd Floor & General Mills, and Ittefaq Concrete Segments in KPEZDMC D.I. Khan Economic zone. Honorable Chief guests also inaugurated the infrastructure development works in Zone including roads, tube well and sewerage lines. These 3 industries with an estimated investment of PKR 600 million will generate more than 500 direct employment opportunities. The 189 acres D I Khan Economic Zone is planned to cater one of the most resource rich region of Pakistan. It includes districts from both KP and Punjab, such as Dera Ismail Khan, Tank, Lakki Marwat, Mianwali, Bhakkar, Dera Ghazi Khan and South Waziristan Agency. Located on the second most important juncture of CPEC route, on the Western Corridor, this EZ has a great vantage point in terms of accessibility. With a sizeable labor force and GDP strength, the aforementioned region stands perfectly feasible to make D. I. Khan Economic Zone a commercial and economic success.

### Coordination body meeting F.P. Report

BANNU: Commissioner Bannu Division Mati Ullah Khan chaired Divisional coordination committee meeting of preparation in Bannu Division for the first-digital census of the country on Thursday. Commissioner Bannu Division Mati Ullah Khan reviewed preparation for the upcoming national census during a meeting held in Commissioner Office Bannu here on Thursday. Divisional In-charge of Pakistan Bureau of Statistics Muhammad Umer, Deputy Commissioner Bannu Oun Haider Gondal, Deputy Commissioner Lakki Marwat Fazal Akbar, District Police Officer Bannu Muhammad Iqbal, D.E.O.s, Secretary to Commissioner Noor Ul Amin participated. The divisional in charge of the National Census gave a detailed briefing about different preparations in the meeting. He said that the 7th census would be the first digital census in the history of Pakistan in which complete data of citizens will be obtained from the field and collected through an online system. He said that Commissioner has been nominated as Divisional Census Coordinator, DCs as District Census Coordinators for districts, and Assistant Commissioners for tehsils.

# 123 terrorists arrested, 93 killed by Lakki Police

## F.P. Report

LAKKI MARWAT: At least 123 terrorists with nine among them having a head money were arrested and 93 were killed in encounters by police in Bannu region during the outgoing year, said Bannu Regional Police Officer Syed Ashfaq Anwar in a statement on Thursday.

He said that a number of terror acts and crime incidents were prevented in Bannu, Lakki Marwat and North Waziristan districts through proactive policing. "The approach also helped to maintain law and order situation, promote peace and curb crimes in the region", he maintained.

He said that in the outgoing year, police also captured five kidnappers and 20 extortionists who were involved in kidnapping for ransom and extortion of money. He said that twenty eight policemen laid down their lives in the line of duty while twenty two were wounded in different operations against terrorists and wanted outlaws.

The regional police chief said that along with dismantling terrorist groups and eliminating several important militants' commanders, the counter terrorism department personnel seized 14 hand grenades, a suicide jacket and a heavy machine gun, 12 pistols, 4 rifles, 31 sub machine guns, 3 rocket propelled grenade (RPG) launchers along with as many shells during separate actions against militants. Highlighting the role of Ababeel force in curbing street crimes, Mr Ashfaq said that the force personnel equipped with modern weapons and ICT tools checked 200 vehicles and 250 bikes, besides they held 165 persons for their involvement in street crimes and wheeled on roads.

The RPO said that the national action plan (NAP) was implemented with a true

spirit as police carried out 3206 search and strike operations wherein 2727 proclaimed offenders and 16499 suspects were arrested from different parts of the region. Giving details of the seizure items, he said that the law enforcers with the help of narcotics eradication teams recovered 64kg ice drug, 73kg heroin, 484kg hashish, 3kg opium, 1194 litre wine, 187 rifles, 1464 shotguns, 5995 pistols, 819 AK47 assault rifles, 3 hand grenades and 102669 bullets from drug traffickers and anti-social elements during raids.

The regional police officer also shed light on a number of welfare initiatives launched for the police force during the outgoing year and said that the legal heirs of the deceased cops received over Rs 4 million as death compensation (burial charges) while over Rs one million and Rs 3.84 million were spent on provision of treatment and educational facilities to the parents and children of policemen respectively.

He said that a huge chunk of the amount was also disbursed under dowry fund and cash assistance for the widows of deceased cops. "The policemen also received RS 2.65 million as interest-free loans to meet their genuine needs", he added. Ashfaq said that the dispute resolution council settled 860 disputes while the police assistance line (PAL) provided relief to more than two thousand citizens.

He also claimed that special measures were put in place to enhance the professional capacities of cops and improve their investigation skills in the merged areas. The regional police officer declared boosting community policing for a peaceful and crime free society his top priority and reiterated that the anti-state elements would be dealt sternly as they did not deserve any leniency.

# Seminar on reduction of plastic pollution held

## F.P. Report

MARDAN: Water and sanitation services company Mardan (WSSCM), Abdul wali khan university Mardan (AWKUM) and Pakistan red crescent society (PRCS) here on Thursday organized an awareness seminar on reduction of plastic pollution.

The main objective of the awareness seminar was to inform and sensitize the students and public about plastic borne diseases, and to highlight the importance that how we can reduce plastic pollution. Director General Environmental Protection Agency Anwar Khan, Professor Dr. Dilawar Farhan Shams Chairman Environmental Sciences Department Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan and Ayaz Ali Program officer Pakistan Red Crescent society highlighted the importance and objectives of the seminar.

Dr. Hameeda Bibi from AWKUM given a brief on mechanism of micro-plastic accumulation and uptake in soil and plant system. Uzma Noreen on bacterial degradation of plastic, and Muhammad Ishaq delivered his speech on plastic recycling technologies while in panel discussion Ayaz Ali from PRCS, Rahatullah from WSSCM, and Dr. Shams Ali Baig from AWKUM participated and given the practical solutions.

DG EPA Anwar Khan said that from 1st February, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government is imposing a complete ban on the use of all types of plastic in the province.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is the only province that has formulated a climate change policy. He said that the province has established an improvement fund for the reduction of environmental pollution, through which the ideas of the research related to improvement of the environment will be funded and supported.

He said water use in service stations is a matter of concern and due to excessive extraction of the water this precious resource is being gradually depleted. While addressing to the participants, the speaker said that more than 350 million tons of plastic is used globally every year. Pakistan is the sixth largest plastic producing and consuming country.

The speakers said that 20 to 30% of municipal waste contains plastic, in which only 10% can be recycled, while 24% of plastic can be used for energy and 60% of plastic is not used in any ways. WSSCM Deputy Manager Municipal Services Muhammad Ishaq briefed the participants that wsscm collects and disposes 180 tons of garbage from Mardan city on a daily basis, in which more than 7.3% is

plastic waste.

If we fail to reduce the use of plastic, it will have worse effects on our environment. The speakers urged all the stakeholders to take measures to control the plastic pollution, through public sensitization, Media and other means of communication.

**Two killed:** A women related dispute claims lives of two brothers and serious bullet injuries to third brother in Sarfaraz village, police and rescue officials told. The officials of Jabbar police station told that their preliminary investigations revealed that the alleged killed named Sher Bahadar, Gul Ahmad, Abdullah and Yousaf opened indiscriminate firing over three brothers identified as Rehmat Jan, Abdul Ghafar and Matiullah after exchanging hot words over a women-related dispute.

As a result of the firing, the victims Rehmat Jan and Abdul Ghafar died on the spot while their third-one brother Matiullah received bullet injuries in the firing. Both the alleged killers and victims were relatives. The officials of Jabbar police station registered FIR on the complaint of Abdul Qayum, brother of the slain persons, against the above mentioned alleged killers. The complainant mentioned in the FIR that a women-related dispute was the reason behind the double murdered incident.

## People urged to stand with police for peace F.P. Report

MALAKAND: Regional Police Officer Malakand Sajjad Khan has said that the prevailing better law and order situation in Malakand Division was in result of police and public sacrifices. He added that police have been conducted search and strike operations in the mountainous areas of the entire division and now the whole area has been declared clear. The police will take timely action on any information from the public regarding detouring of peace, drugs or other anti-social activities. He urged the public to stand with their police against criminals and anti-social elements.

He expressed these views while addressing a grand ceremony of dignitaries of Swat region, DRC members, trade union, here at Javed Iqbal Shaheed Police Line, Qbal Swat on Thursday. DPO Swat Shafiullah Gandapur, SP Special Branch Pir Zarbadshah and other police officers were also present.

On this occasion, RPO Malakand said that the police have shown their bravery in all situations and would play a leading role in the war against terrorism. He said that it was our prime determination to make sustained the current durable peace in Swat and other areas of the division while the police was ready for maintaining it at the cost of any sacrifice, the RPO added.

He said that the police force was making all out efforts for the establishment of a peaceful and crime-free society and the operation against the elements involved in crime and drug peddling was going on in the entire division. The RPO appealed to the parents on this occasion to keep an eye on their children so that they stay away from drugs and other bad social associations. He further said that the forum of DRC, which includes religious scholars and dignitaries, was proving to be very effective for the resolution of public disputes and has resolved a large number of public issues.

The RPO said that all the DPOs have been instructed to adopt by police a better attitude towards the public in the police stations. The DPO Swat Shafiullah Gandapur on this occasion said that the Swat Police was standing at hard stance against criminals while law and order will be maintained here in any cost. He said that the efforts of the Swat police were being continued to bring the drug dealers in apprehension, in recent days, many drug dealers have been arrested and a huge quantity of drugs has also been recovered from them and they sent to jail, the DPO commented. He further said that the police needs full support of the public in this regard. Swat Trade Federation President Abdul Rahim, local dignitaries, DRCs chairman and others also addressed the event and highlighted the bravery and sacrifices of Swat Police. The public leaders assured to be stand aside of the police and expressed their satisfaction by the performance of the police for peace and security.

# KP Governor hails role of tribal journalists



## F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: The nation has remembered sacrifices rendered by the tribal journalists in the line of their professional duty and they have contributed with their blood for restoration of durable peace in the area. Problems being faced will be taken up with the federal government for its resolution.

These views were expressed by the governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Gulam Ali while addressing the oath taking ceremony of the interim cabinet of Tribal Union of Journalist (TUJ) merged districts here in governor house, Peshawar on Thursday. He said that the journalist com-

munity in general and tribal media persons especially had rendered unmatched sacrifices and it would be wasted.

Beside decades of unrest in the merged tribal region, the tribal journalists executed their professional duties efficiently, he opined. The governor assured that the federal government was well aware of the miseries of the tribesmen and all initiatives would be adopted to provide them relief and remove their sense of deprivation.

Prior to it, the governor administered oath to the 18 members interim cabinet of TUJ with its chairman Qazi Falullah. Qazi Fazlullah, the newly elected chairman of TUJ, appraised the gov-

ernor of the problems of tribal media persons and said that without any proper patronage of the government or international communities, they were executing their professional duties in hostile surroundings.

He demanded provision of all basic rights being enjoyed by journalists in downtown to them. Central leader of Jamiat Ulema E Islam, Fazal Rehman (JUI-F) Aman Ullah Haqqani, JUI-F, Khyber Mufti Ijaz, Jihad Shah Afridi and number of media person from ex-tribal region participated in the moot. It is to be mentioned here that TUJ was restored after a decade aimed to safeguard rights of the journalist community of tribal merged districts.

# Anti-drugs awareness walk arranged in Dir

## F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The local administration on Thursday arranged an awareness walk against the growing trend of drug abuse among youth in Samarbagh. Teachers, students, area elders, social and political activists participated in the walk led by the assistant commissioner Muhammad Suhail. The sub divisional police officer Nasir Khan and tehsil municipal officer Samarbagh Farman Ali also attended the event.

The participants carrying placards inscribed with slogans against drug abuse walked on the road and gathered in front of the AC office. Speaking on the occasion the AC Suhail Khan asked youth to keep away from drugs and focus on their studies. He said that it was the collective responsibility of the society to discourage drugs. He asked the locals to cooperate with the local administration in eliminating the menace of drugs from the area.

**Official suspended:** District police officer Ikramullah on Thursday on the directives of regional police officer Sajjad Khan suspended a naib muharrir of the Munda police station for his incorrect and negligence in registering a case against an accused of heroine smuggler. Following the directives from the RPO the official identified as Arshad Khan was suspended and returned to the Timergara police lines. It is said the district public prosecutor

had complained against the official that he had registered contradictory figures in the report. The DPO also ordered an inquiry against the official.

**Malakand armed services' board shifting demanded:** Retired personnel of armed services have demanded the government to shift the district armed services board (also called soldiers' board) from Malakand top to Chakdara without any further delay. Talking to local journalists at Chakdara here on Thursday the representatives of the retired personnel from the three services including retired subedar major Said Gul, Badshah Zada, Jehan Bakht, Noor Faqir and others complained that after the construction of the Swat motorway the pensioners and their relatives found it difficult to reach the Malakand top as the main Grand Trunk road was no longer used by public transport.

They said that about 15000 aged retired personnel belonged to different districts of Malakand division like Swat, Lower and Upper Dir, Chitral and Bajaur and they had to verify their pensions and other documents from the services board. They pointed out that the government had started work to construct a public park at Chakdara and it had enough land. They said that about 600 kanal of land at the Chakdara Khwar were being used for the park.

They demanded the gov-

ernment and the district administration to specify at least one acre of land in that park for the district armed services' board so that the aged pensioners and their widows could benefit from it. They said that Chakdara was the center of the whole Malakand division and lied at a suitable distance from various districts so the government should shift the services, board here.

## Free medical camp held F.P. Report

GHALANAI: Efforts are being made by the Security Forces to provide basic health facilities to the people in Mohmand district. In this regard, Frontier Corps North organized a free medical camp in Suran Valley. In the free medical camp, doctors and nursing staff conducted free check-ups of more than 775 men, women and children of the local population suffering from various diseases and provided them with free medicines.

On this occasion, the doctors also provided awareness to the public to prevent seasonal diseases. Residents of the area expressed their gratitude to Frontier Corps North and said that by organizing free medical camp in remote areas of Mohmand, basic health facilities are being easily available to the people and they don't have to go to other areas for treatment.

# Tourists throng to Kalam, Malama Jabba to enjoy first snowfall

MINGORA (APP): Following MET office's prediction of the snowfall over the hills of Upper Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including Swat valley, the tourists and snowfall lovers on Thursday thronged to the most scenic Kalam, Bahrain and Malam Jabba valleys to enjoy the first snowfall of the winter season.

Domestic tourists along with families mostly arrived from different districts of Central Punjab and northern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were being seen in substantial numbers in Upper Swat's valleys of Kalam, Madain, Bahrain and Malam Jabba exploring its mesmerizing natural beauty amid light to modern rains and snowfall that turned weather extremely cold and muggy.

Tourists from Peshawar, Nowshera, Mardan, Charsadda, Lahore, Rawalpindi and Islamabad were seen in large numbers at Kalam, Malam Jabba and Bahrian to get pleasures from snowfall, trout fish and river rafting. Besides Kalam and Malam Jabba, the snowy mountains peaks of Gabin Jabba, Miandam, Matiltan, Kalam, Utror, Gabral, Matiltan, Mahodand, Loye Sar resorts have drawn influx of snowfall lovers along with families and children amid great fun and laughter.

"I came from Wapda Town

Peshawar to my favorite tourists' destination Kalam for snowfall and trout fish following MET's office forecast for snowfall over the hills of Upper Swat," said Ahtisham Khan, a lecturer of Urdu literature while talking to APP. He said Swat was known for a combination of its seven distinctive features including snowfall that was hard to find together in any tourist destination of Pakistan. In addition to being a home to primitive Gandhara civilization, he said the Swat's unique features including ice skiing, river rafting, adventure sports, snow-clad mountain peaks, trout-fish, and Swat motorway has made it an ideal destination for winter tourism and sports in Pakistan.

These distinctive characteristics, which are second to none in any other district of the country, draw adventure sportsmen, archeologists, water rafters, mountaineers, snowfall lovers, foodies, and eco-tourists throughout the year. The 150-kilometer-long freshwater of the river Swat originating from different glaciers and lakes including Mahodand and Gabral mountains offers unique opportunities for adventure sports enthusiasts to explore in a single day trip along with loved ones.

Fazagut, Fatehpur, Barikot, and Chakdara were most suitable for water rafting in river Swat

and if developed on modern lines could attract a large number of tourists during winter. River Swat is ideal for 'fish jumping and disappearing water sports' and introduction of such sports would help bolster the rural economy and promote tourism and transport industries in KP. Bestowed with more than 50 high-altitude small and big lakes, Swat's Mahodand lake is an exceptional source of attraction for tourists enjoying its blue-waters and boats riding amid cold breezes and snowfalls.

Qaiser Khan, a retired Wapda employee, told APP that he came from Nowshera to enjoy snowfall in Kalam, trout fish of River Swat and Mahudand lake. He said Mahudand and Gabriel lakes carried unique charm and clean air besides nearby birds chanting valleys take tourists into a lap of serenity.

"I have ordered two KG trout fish to enjoy with my family members," Qaiser said, adding green trout of Swat attract foodies amid snowfall at Kalam, Madain and other areas of the district. Besides its famous Deodar trees and precious wildlife, he said the Swat's snow-clad tall mountain ranges of Falakser, Mankial and Elum peaks offer great challenges to mountaineers and trekkers to explore especially during winter. Likewise, its extensive plains

and orchards that bear fruits and vegetables carried a unique comparative advantage than other tourists destination of the country.

He advised tourists to bring warm clothes and sweaters while coming to Upper Swat these days in the wake of chilly weather and rainfall. Attracting Buddhists, monks and archaeologists from across the world throughout the year, the Swat's archaeological treasures and ancient artifacts housed at Saidu Sharif Museum become a distinctive feature taking tourists to the glorious history of Swat.

The most celebrated monk from Thailand, Arayawangso along with 20 disciples has recently visited different Buddhist sites of Swat including Saidu Sharif Museum and Stupa besides Buthkara Buddhist monastery which impressed him a lot. He said Swat was very important in terms of Buddhist history in Pakistan and must be visited by followers of Buddhism from all around the world. Another striking feature of Swat is skiing sports being played at Malam Jabba every year during winter and such sport was hardly placed in any part of the country.

Malik Luqman, KP tourism department's senior planning officer told APP that a mega project costing Rs238 million

was prepared for organizing different winter sports and tourism events in various districts including Swat. Kalam's winter gala and tour-de-cycle race would be organized in Swat while first-ever sports rafting at River Swat would be held besides an international paragliding event at Saidu Sharif. He said a youth leadership conference and skiing event at Malam Jabba was also planned.

To reduce tourists' load at Kalam, Malam Jabba and Bahrian, he said new tourists spots would be developed at Sola Tanar, Puchar and Jargo valleys while walking tracks would be developed to promote ecotourism in Swat. To maintain natural beauty and avoid pollution at tourist spots in Swat, he said camping pods would be established at new tourists' destinations besides Kalash culture events in Chitral. To link new tourist destination with Swat Motorway, he said that Rs4.8 billion were being spent on development and construction of new roads.

Tourism budget has been swelled to Rs8.6 billion during 2022-23 while work on the world bank's assisted KP Integrated Tourism Project costing Rs17 billion was underway in the province, he added. Luqman said the construction of

15 jeepable tracks was also proposed in Malakand and Hazara divisions while six tourist facilities centers were established and work on seven others started.

He said ground breaking of 23 km long Mankyal-Bada Sarai Road has been performed that would be rehabilitated at an estimated cost of Rs 5.70 billion. The project also includes the construction of four bridges and two rest areas. He said that an Integrated Tourism Zone at Mankyal Swat would be established where modern facilities would be provided to tourists under the KITE project. He said a Rs 365 million project for feasibility studies for identification of new tourist spots was planned. To promote ecotourism in southern districts of KP, he said that a road to Sheikh Badin tourist resort located at the confluence of DI Khan and Lakki Marwat districts would be constructed with an estimated cost of Rs3 billion while a tourist wing for merged areas was being established to monitor and oversee tourism-related activities there. Tourism police was made operational at Malakand and Hazara divisions to facilitate tourists. He said Tourism police were deployed on key places of Swat to facilitate tourists and snowfall lovers during winter season.





## China's COVID policymaking under scrutiny as infections soar

BEIJING (Reuters): After China scrapped three years of zero-COVID curbs in 30 days, setting off a massive wave of infections, Beijing's policymakers face an immense challenge to treat the sick and minimise deaths while winning back public trust dented by previous policies.

Scenes of overwhelmed hospitals, people on intravenous drips by the roadside and lines of hearses outside crematoria have fuelled public concern. An extraordinarily small number of reported fatalities - 10 deaths since the old policy regime was overturned on Dec. 7 - and a decision by authorities to stop publishing data on cases have also stoked distrust. With estimates of millions of daily cases and at least 1 million COVID deaths next year, global experts say the world's most populous nation needs to bolster its medical infrastructure quickly. Chinese officials have vowed to step up protection for key demographic groups - including millions of elderly people - boost vaccination rates and expand healthcare resources.

Experts say China has been caught ill-prepared by the abrupt U-turn in policies long championed by President Xi Jinping and implemented by trusted ally Vice Premier Sun Chunlan, be it the Chinese capital or the countryside. In December, tenders put out by hospitals for key medical equipment such as ventilators and patient monitors were two to three times higher than in previous months, according to a Reuters review, suggesting hospitals across the country were scrambling to plug shortages.

China's COVID policy, especially at the grassroots level, is in chaos due to crunches in medical supplies and the sheer number of sick elderly people, said Alfred Wu, associate professor at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore. "This is very much an unprecedented emergency now, because of the healthcare crunch that has happened everywhere, at different levels, even in Beijing," Wu said.

"More fundamental, and more subtle and more important is the social contract and social trust in China. It is supposed to be very high and supposed to help the government deal with many challenges but now the issue is we don't know how much faith people have in the government." The State Council Information Office, which handles media queries for the government, did not respond to Reuters requests for comment.

Over the past three years, Vice

Premier Sun, 72, has been the face of China's COVID fight, a mother-like figure who has executed Xi's zero-COVID policy with a firm hand. On Jan. 22, 2020, while visiting the central city of Wuhan where the new coronavirus was first found, Sun told local cadres to implement the "strictest" counter-epidemic measures. A day later, the city of over 13 million was thrown into a lockdown - the first of many across China that sparked anger and protests.

In April this year, Sun rushed to Shanghai as the city went under lockdown, according to state media reports. At the end of a one-month stay, Sun said it was not the time for the city of 25 million to relax. The lockdown continued for another month. Trusted by Xi, the former factory worker has taken blows for his COVID policies.

In 2020, while inspecting a high-rise condominium in Wuhan, her group was heckled by residents under lockdown. "It's fake! It's fake!" they yelled from their windows, accusing officials of staging grocery deliveries to coincide with her visit. During the Shanghai lockdown, while also on an inspection tour, Sun was bombarded by pleas from residents shouting from their windows: "No more rice! No more cooking oil! Please take us with you! Don't leave us!"

Sun will step down in March during a Cabinet reshuffle that also involves many other top government officials. She is also past the typical retirement age of 68. "From a political perspective, she has faithfully obeyed the orders of President Xi," said Yanzhong Huang, senior fellow for global health at the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), an independent US think tank.

According to minutes of a COVID teleconference among top policymakers seen by Reuters and confirmed by a source with knowledge of the meeting on Dec. 25, Li Qiang, the former Communist Party chief of Shanghai who oversaw the city's two-month lockdown, spoke as the new head of a small but powerful policy-deciding group on COVID. Li is a close ally of Xi's and was recently elected to the No.2 position on the seven-man Standing Committee, the pinnacle of power within the Communist Party.

How the current infections are tackled remain a key near-term challenge to COVID czars. "If they cannot do a good job in handling the surge of cases and this leads to mass die-off, that fear and panic would be a challenge to social and political stability," CFR's Huang said.

## Flights resume between Addis Ababa, Mekelle

TIGRAY (BBC): Families wept and kissed the tarmac at the main airport in Ethiopia's northern Tigray region as they reunited after being kept apart by war for more than 18 months. The emotional scenes followed the resumption of commercial flights between the federal capital Addis Ababa and the regional capital Mekelle.

The city, which has a population of around 500,000, was largely cut off from the rest of the world during a brutal two-year war that claimed the lives of tens of thousands of people, and displaced millions of others. The government and Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) finally signed a peace accord last month, opening the way for passenger flights to resume.

TPLF-controlled Tigrai TV showed footage of passengers dropping to their knees and kissing the tarmac at the airport in

Mekelle. There were also emotional scenes at Addis Ababa's Bole International Airport, as people flew in from Tigray. As telephone services had also been cut, some people had no contact with their relatives in Tigray for more than 18 months, and were anxiously waiting to find out whether they were still at home and safe.

They included 47-year-old Kahssay Hailu, who had been stranded in Addis Ababa since she came to the city to be with her daughter, as she prepared for her exams. "I lived here, separated from my husband and child whom I love," Mrs Kahssay told Reuters news agency, as she waited at the airport in Addis Ababa to catch her flight to Mekelle. "When I heard of the news [of flights resuming], I fell to the ground and cried," she added.

Another woman, 67-year-old Nigsti Hailemariam, said she had

arrived in Addis Ababa in 2020 to help her pregnant daughter give birth. "I came here to see my daughter who was giving birth. My plan was to stay just two weeks and then everything was shut down suddenly. It has been more than a year-and-a-half. I'm very happy that peace is returning, and excited that I am finally going home," she told Reuters.

The war started after a massive fall-out between Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and the TPLF-controlled regional government. Mr Abiy accused Tigrayan forces of attacking military bases and trying to overthrow him. He responded by ordering air strikes, and sending troops to Tigray to dislodge the TPLF from power in the region. The African Union (AU) brokered a deal between the two sides last month to end hostilities and to restore basic services in Tigray.

## US to impose COVID-19 tests for travelers

CHICAGO (Reuters): The United States will impose mandatory COVID-19 tests on travelers from China, US health officials said, joining India, Italy, Japan and Taiwan in taking new measures after Beijing's decision to lift stringent zero-COVID policies. The officials told reporters that beginning on Jan. 5, all air passengers 2 years old and older will require a negative result from a test no more than two days before departure from China, Hong Kong or Macao.

Passengers who test positive more than 10 days before a flight can provide documentation of recovery in lieu of the negative test result, the federal officials said. In an abrupt change of policy, China this month began dismantling the world's strictest COVID regime of lockdowns and extensive testing, putting its battered economy on course for a complete reopening next year.

The lifting of restric-

tions, following widespread protests against them, means COVID is spreading largely unchecked and likely infecting millions of people a day, according to some international health experts. Beijing has faced international criticism that its official COVID data and its tally of deaths are inconsistent with the scale of its outbreak.

Some global health experts have said the virus could infect as many as 1 million people per day, and international modeling groups have predicted China could experience 2 million deaths or more. Earlier this week, US officials cited "the lack of transparent data" from China, a persistent complaint from Washington about China's handling of the pandemic, as reason for considering its own travel restrictions.

The US and Chinese approaches to battling COVID have been markedly different throughout the

## Rwanda says Congo fighter jet violated its air space

KIGALI (Reuters): Rwanda's government said that a fighter jet from Democratic Republic of Congo briefly violated its airspace, the latest accusation to fly between the two countries whose relations have frayed this year. Congo, Western powers and United Nations experts accuse Rwanda of backing M23 rebels in eastern Congo, who have seized several towns and villages in offensives this year.

Rwanda denies any involvement, saying the allegations are a tactic to cover up Congo's security failures. In July Congo's president and his Rwandan counterpart agreed at a summit in Angola's capital, Luanda, to de-escalate tensions, but the M23 rebels continued to advance. In November an unarmed Congolese warplane briefly landed at a Rwandan airport while on a reconnaissance mission near the border, in what Congo said was an accident.

"These repeated violations are against the spirit of Luanda and Nairobi peace initiatives," Rwandan government spokesperson Yolande Makolo said in a statement. "The authorities in (Congo) seem to be emboldened by consistent coddling by some in the international community who repeatedly heap blame on Rwanda for any and all ills in (Congo), while ignoring the transgressions originating from (Congo)," Makolo added. Congo's government and army spokesmen did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

The M23 rebels withdrew from a small portion of territories they had seized, as part of what they described as a goodwill gesture in a ceasefire brokered by East African regional leaders.

## Australia says no change to rules

SYDNEY (Reuters): Australia is making no change to its rules around allowing travellers from China into the country, despite measures by some countries to require mandatory COVID-19 tests, Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said on Thursday. "We will take the appropriate advice from the health experts," Albanese told the Australian Broadcasting Corp (ABC).

"There is no change in the travel advice at this point in time but we are continuing to monitor the situation, as we continue to monitor the impact of COVID here in Australia as well as around the world." Since China relaxed strict measures to stop the spread of the coronavirus, the country has experienced a surge of cases, overwhelming hospitals and prompting countries including the United States, India and Japan to impose restrictions on travellers from the mainland.

Australia and China recently resumed diplomatic dialogue after relations between the countries hit a low point following criticism by Australia of China's handling of COVID-19. In 2020, China imposed trade sanctions on several major Australian exports. This month, Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong became the country's first government minister to visit China since 2019.

On Thursday, Australian Trade Minister Don Farrell said he was willing to visit China to talk through Beijing's bans on imports of Australian barley and wine, which are currently the subject of an Australian complaint to the World Trade Organization. "When you have trade disputes that can't be resolved by discussion that's your only alternative," Farrell told the ABC.

"We would prefer to sit down and discuss the issues," Albanese, asked on the Seven Network if he planned to visit China, said he had a "very positive" meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping at the G20 summit in Indonesia in November, but "we'll wait and see in regards to a visit by myself". "There are none planned at the moment," he added.

## Kosovo closes main border crossing after roadblock in Serbia

MERDARE, Kosovo (Reuters): Kosovo closed its biggest border crossing with Serbia after protesters blocked it on the Serbian side to support their ethnic kin in Kosovo in refusing to recognise the country's independence. Tensions between Belgrade and Pristina have been running high since last month when representatives of ethnic Serbs in the north of Kosovo left state institutions including the police and judiciary over the Kosovo government's decision to replace Serbian issued car licence plates.

Kosovan Interior Minister Xhelal Svecla said Serbia, under the influence of Russia, was aiming to destabilise Kosovo. Serbia denies it is trying to destabilise its neighbour and says it just wants to protect its minority there. The Kremlin also denied the Kosovan accusations but said it supported Belgrade. "Serbia is a sovereign country and it is absolutely wrong to look for Russia's destructive influence here," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

For over 20 years, Kosovo has been a source of tension between the West which backed its independence and Russia which supports Serbia in its efforts to block the country's membership in international organisations including United Nations. Since Dec. 10, Serbs in northern Kosovo have exchanged fire with police and erected more than 10 roadblocks in and around Mitrovica. Their action followed the arrest of a former Serb policeman accused of assaulting serving police officers.

Serbia put its troops on highest alert. Late, Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic, who said Serbia was continuing to fight peace and seek a compromise, inspected the troops close to the border. Serbs in Serbia



used a truck and tractors to create the latest roadblock, close to the Merdare crossing on Kosovo's eastern border, Belgrade-based media reported.

The government in Pristina has asked NATO's peacekeeping force for the country, KFOR, to clear the barricades. But KFOR has no authority to act on Serbian soil. Kosovo's Foreign Ministry announced on its Facebook page the Merdare crossing had been closed since midnight, saying: "If you have already entered Serbia then you have to use other border crossings ... or go through North Macedonia."

The Merdare entry point is Kosovo's most important for road freight, as well as complicating the journeys of Kosovars working elsewhere in Europe from returning home for holidays. With two smaller crossings on the Serbian border in the north closed since Dec. 10, only three entry points between the two coun-

tries remain open.

Pristina main airport was also closed over a bomb threat, Kosovo police said in a statement. Police did not say if it was related to the recent tensions. Serbian Defence Minister, Milos Vucevic, said Vucic was in talks with the so called Quint group of the United States, Italy, France, Germany and Britain about the current tensions can be resolved.

Around 50,000 Serbs living in ethnically divided northern Kosovo refuse to recognise the government in Pristina or the status of Kosovo as a country separate from Serbia. They have the support of many Serbs in Serbia and its government. Albanian-majority Kosovo declared independence from Serbia in 2008 with the backing of the West, following a 1998-99 war in which NATO intervened to protect ethnic Albanian citizens.

## Russia launches massive missile barrage across Ukraine

KYIV (AP): Multiple regions of Ukraine, including its capital, faced a massive Russian missile attack Thursday, the biggest wave of strikes in weeks targeting power stations and other critical infrastructure during freezing weather. Air raid sirens rang out across the country. Ukraine's military chief, Gen. Valerii Zaluzhnyi, said preliminary reports showed Russia fired 69 missiles at energy facilities and Ukrainian forces shot down 54 of them. Several people were wounded, although there were no immediate reports of any deaths.

Russia dispatched explosive drones to selected regions overnight before broadening the barrage with "air and sea-based cruise missiles launched from strategic aircraft and ships" in the morning, the Ukrainian air force said. The widespread attack was the latest in a series of Russian strikes on power and water supplies that have increased the Ukrainian population's suffering. Moscow has launched such attacks almost weekly since October while its ground forces struggle to hold ground and advance.

On Thursday, air defense systems were activated in Ukraine's capital, Kyiv, to fend off strikes, according to the regional administration. Sounds of explosions were heard in the city. At least three people were

wounded and hospitalized, including a 14-year-old girl, Mayor Vitali Klitschko said. He warned of power outages in the capital, asking people to stockpile water and to charge their electronic devices.

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba condemned Russia for launching the missiles amid the winter holidays, calling it an act of "senseless barbarism." "There can be no 'neutrality' in the face of such mass war crimes. Pretending to be 'neutral' equals taking Russia's side," Kuleba tweeted. After more than 10 months of fighting, Russia and Ukraine are locked in a grinding battle of attrition. The Ukrainian military has reclaimed swaths of Russian-occupied territory in the country's northeast and south, and continues to resist persistent Russia attempts to seize all of the industrial Donbas region in the east.

At the same time, Moscow has methodically targeted Ukrainian power facilities and other key infrastructure in a bid to weaken the country's resolve and force it to negotiate on Russian terms. The time between strikes has increased in recent weeks, though, leading some commentators to theorize Russia is trying to ration its missile supply. While the Ukrainian military reported success in shooting down incoming Russian missiles and explosive drones after

earlier attacks, some still reached their targets. Most cities have gone without heat, internet service and electricity for hours or days at a time.

Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal said a number of energy facilities were damaged during what he said was the 10th such large-scale attack on his country. "Russia is trying to deprive Ukrainians of light before the New Year," Shmyhal wrote in a Telegram post. He said that emergency blackouts may be necessary "in some areas."

Anastasia, a medic who took shelter Thursday at a central Kyiv subway station and gave only her first name, said she was tired of the war. "We don't know how long the war will last. It's hard to be afraid every day and put your life on hold," she said. Numerous explosions also took place in Kharkiv, which is located in eastern Ukraine and the country's second-largest city, and in the city of Lviv near the border with Poland, according to their mayors. About 90% of Lviv was without electricity, Mayor Andriy Sadovyi wrote on Telegram. Trams and trolley buses were not working, and residents might experience water interruptions, he said.

In a development that could further escalate tensions, a Telegram channel affiliated with the presidential press service of

Belarus said a Ukrainian S-300 air defense missile landed in Belarusian territory of Belarus early Thursday. It said the missile could have veered off course accidentally and there were no casualties. The Belarusian Defense Ministry said later that the missile was downed by the Belarusian air defense over the western Brest region and fell into a field, according to a statement carried by the state Belta news agency.

Belarus served as a staging ground for Russia's Feb. 24 invasion of Ukraine, and there are fears that Moscow's close ally could try to find a pretext for joining attacks against neighboring Ukraine. The governor of Russia's Saratov region, Roman Busargin, said Russian air defenses downed an "unidentified object" near the city of Engels, home to a Russian air base that serves as the main hub for nuclear-capable strategic bombers that are engaged in launching missile strikes on Ukraine.

The Russian military said the Engels base was targeted by Ukrainian drones twice this month, most recently, Russia's Defense Ministry said three servicemen were killed by fragments of a downed Ukrainian drone. Ukrainian authorities have maintained ambiguity about attacks on Russian soil, stopping short of claiming responsibility for them.

## Sarajevo's agony echoes as Ukraine braces for a dark winter

SARAJEVO, Bosnia-Herzegovina (AP) Vildana Mutevelic huddled in her apartment with her two young children and elderly cousins. They had no heat, electricity or running water as artillery shells tore the roof off their building and almost took their lives. To survive, she improvised.

Mutevelic made a lamp out of used engine oil, water and a shoelace for a wick. She cooked on a fire fueled by books, furniture, shoes or clothes. A plastic spoon, she discovered, when lit, worked well as a temporary flashlight if she ventured outside. Plastic sheets covered the blown-out windows, a flimsy buffer against the bitter cold. Her news of the world came from a neighbor who powered a radio with a car battery. "The electricity failed right away," Mutevelic, 70, said through a translator. "And everything we had in our freezers, it melted. Those were our stocks, basically. That's all."

For Mutevelic, these are memories from three decades ago, when Bosnian

Serbs besieged Sarajevo, causing thousands of civilian casualties. But it's all happening again in Ukraine. Russia's armed forces have aimed their firepower at Ukraine's energy infrastructure as winter weather sets in. Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who has accused Russia of "energy terrorism," said earlier this week that about 9 million people were without electricity. The country's prosecutor general, Andriy Kostin, told The Associated Press that Russia's deliberate targeting of Ukraine's essential utilities is another act of genocide, the most heinous of war crimes.

"We are convinced that the crimes (Russia) is committing in Ukraine bear all the hallmarks of genocide," Kostin said in a statement. "The aggressor state is 'weaponizing winter,' depriving Ukrainians of the basics electricity, water and heating." To make civilians suffer and die as a way to force their government to yield isn't a new wartime strategy. But it's prone to

failure. Families, neighbors and entire communities band together, brainstorm and resist. As Sarajevo did. And as Britain did when the island nation refused to buckle under Nazi Germany's withering assaults 80 years ago.

"The ability of a modern population to survive under duress and under aggression because of the mere willingness to continue to exist is sometimes underestimated," said Bruno Tertrais, adviser for geopolitics at the Institut Montaigne, a Paris-based think tank. Ukrainians are displaying the same resolve and ingenuity. Larysa Shevtsova's apartment in Ukraine's southern city of Kherson lost its electricity and water. But gas still flowed into a stove in the cramped kitchen. With two fire-resistant bricks and advice from a family friend, she and her husband were able to keep the temperature bearable in their home without being confined to the kitchen.

They'd set a brick directly on one of the stove's four burners, the three others

covered by large pots and a kettle. When the rectangular block was hot enough, it was carried carefully into the living room and set on top of a Soviet-era space heater that no longer worked. Shevtsova, her husband and two sons, one of them 3 years old, huddled around the brick for warmth that would last for about 30 minutes. "We use this method to heat the room," Shevtsova said. "Before that we just froze."

The Associated Press and the PBS series "Frontline," drawing from a variety of sources, have independently documented more than 40 attacks by Russia on Ukraine's electrical power, heat, water and telecommunications facilities since February. The extent of Russia's path of destruction is not limited to one region of Ukraine. From the east to west, Russia has unleashed an onslaught of drone and missile attacks meant to inflict maximum damage to Ukraine's energy infrastructure with a drastic uptick in strikes since September, according to AP's analysis of the data.



## The Frontier Post

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# Ukraine war and energy diplomacy

**RUSSIAN Energy Minister Alexander Novak has said that active work is underway for the establishment of the gas hub in Türkiye. According to him, the Russian government is in consultation with its partnering nations regarding the newly constructed energy corridor to boost its gas exports.**

The Russia-Ukraine war has caused a global energy crisis while this conflict has proved to be a double edge weapon for the entire world which not only depleted the global oil reserves but also made the purchase of essential energy products an unaffordable luxury for the nations in most parts of the world. Historically, Europe, an ever-energy-deficient region had been fulfilling half of the energy needs through Russian oil and gas over the past several decades. Moscow not only earned lucrative profits from oil and gas export to Europe but also had been using this leverage for political and strategic gains at the regional and international levels long before the first shot was fired in Ukraine.

Interestingly, Russia and European allies had used energy and economic sanctions as weapons against each other during the ongoing conflict and both sides equally faced damage and hurt the adversary through the implementation of reciprocal measures. According to experts, the weaponization of energy and retaliatory measures now have crossed the boundaries of Russia and Europe and expanded to other nations as the United States and G7 allies have charted a plan to put a price cap on oil and gas to reduce the provision of finances to Russian war machine against Ukraine. The United States has approached OPEC Plus nations including Saudi Arabia to increase oil production to overcome global price hikes but the global cartel acted otherwise and slashed its production by 6-8 percent for the next quarter.

After grasping tremendous economic and political benefits from Europe over the past decades, Russia has now turned Eastward by establishing an energy hub in Turkey along with a renewed push for great energy trade with China, Türkiye, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, and Uzbekistan as potential consumers of the Russian pipeline gas. Besides providing Russian gas to European nations through the Russo-Turk energy corridor, Moscow also intends to export Russian gas to Pakistan and Afghanistan either through Central Asian infrastructure or from the territory of Iran on a swap basis for each other customers in adjacent regions.

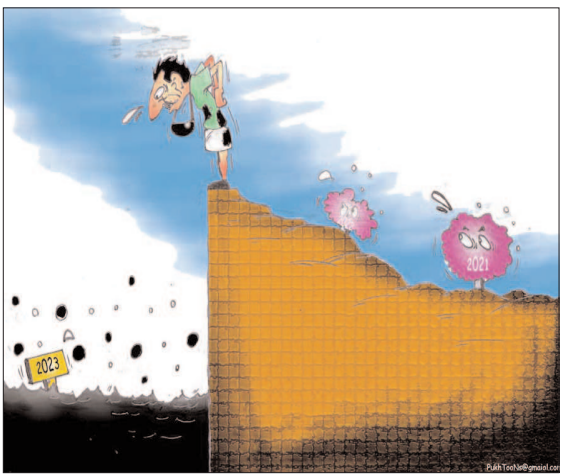
In fact, the Ukrainian conflict expanded to multiple sectors including global trade and economy, energy production and bidding, banking system, and after all global diplomacy and foreign relations among the nations. Developed nations are battling serious repercussions of global price hikes whereas the poor nations had reached the verge of collapse and are compelled to join either bloc to satisfy their dire food insecurity, energy, and economic needs. Presently, European nations have learned a lesson from their energy insecurity and struggling hard to end their dependence on Russian oil, natural gas, and coal. If war is the continuation of diplomacy and energy weaponization is a tool for blackmailing then economic sanctions are also a war-winning strategy in the contemporary world. Realistically, the global powers always bulldozed the Geneva convention and coined such battle rules that fulfilled their agenda thus belligerents must not indulge other nations in their dispute, so a peaceful equilibrium and coexistence prevail in the universe.

## Pak Army's war on terror

**THE two-day 254th Corps Commanders' Conference has expressed its resolve to fight against terrorists without any distinction to eliminate the menace as per the aspirations of the people of Pakistan. According to Pakistan's Army media wing, the Corps Commander Conference held a comprehensive review of all professional and organizational matters pertaining to the Pakistan Army, the country's law and order situation, and the geostrategic environment in the region and beyond. The top brass of the Pakistan military expressed satisfaction over the operational preparedness of the armed forces, training activities, and ongoing Counter Terrorism campaign in different parts of the country.**

Pakistan Army is the sole national institution that is a highly organized and disciplined force with great traditions of professional excellence, operational readiness, and patriotism throughout history. The entire nation is extremely worried about the resurgence of the menace of religious terrorism in the country, cross-border attacks, and renewed ethnic insurgency in Balochistan. The changed geostrategic paradigms and enemy-sponsored terrorism are likely to shatter the peace and stability in the region if they would not tackled by our state institutions timely, with an iron hand.

The Pakistani nation will not compromise on its sovereignty and the hard-earned successes of our security forces against the violent giant of extremism and terrorism will not be lost at any cost. The recent Corps Commander Conference has reiterated Pakistan Military's resolve to defeat the evil of terrorism in the country.



**M**ANY assume that if the U.S. were to withdraw its commitment to military primacy in East Asia (as it seems to be doing both economically and politically) or to back off its current support for Taiwan's indefinite separation from the China mainland, China would dominate the region. But this ignores the nationalism of both northeast and southeast Asian societies as well as the natural opposition of India to any such outcome.

The historical three-body structure of East Asian order seems to be reemerging, with a revitalized Japan and Southeast Asian coalition resuming their independent interactions with both each other and a rejuvenated China. In light of this, the question for the United States is not how to hang onto its monopoly of power on China's periphery, but how best to support the countries of Northeast and Southeast Asia in their efforts to balance China while accommodating it. These efforts by them are firmly grounded in contemporary realities.

Without explicit support from the United States, Japan (one of the world's largest economies and technology originators) is reemerging as an Asian politico-military power. North Korea has given up on its earlier aspirations to develop relations with the United States to keep China at bay and is perfecting a transoceanic nuclear deterrent directed at America. South Korea, with the seventh-largest armed forces in the world, is seriously considering supplementing its U.S. nuclear umbrella with its own nuclear weapons.

In Southeast Asia, a prosperous, stable, and resolutely strategic-minded Singapore provides exemplary counsel to ASEAN on relationships with the world's great powers. Indonesia, Malaysia, and Vietnam are careful to maintain mutually agreeable relations with China, but none needs U.S.

encouragement to resist Chinese encroachments on its economic interests and claims of sovereignty in the South China Sea. Thailand is back to its historically successful strategy of flexibly balancing between potential foreign hegemony — in this case China and the United States. The Philippines is in search of an accommodation with China that reduces but does not eliminate its dependence on the United States. Cambodia and Laos have turned to China to offset domination by either Thailand or Vietnam.

Every country in East Asia would welcome a stable order that relied on a US-backed balance of power among the countries of the region rather than on bilateral confrontation between the United States and China.

The basis for such a US-supported regional order now exists. A balance of power does not — as many in the United States appear to believe — require the capability to annihilate a great power rival, but only the capacity to inhibit or check undesirable actions by it. In association with a less dominant but still impressively powerful United States, the Indo-Pacific states are now rich and strong enough to provide the foundation for an effective system of regional political, economic, and military checks and balances. Such a system would prevent the replacement of U.S. with Chinese hegemony; avert challenges to the national interests of China, its neighbors, and the United States; and preserve peace and stability in the region. But for such a regional order to emerge, the United States would have to:

— Base its policies on interests rather than ideology.

— Accept that its post-World War II primacy in Asia is no longer necessary or affordable.

— Agree to participate in regional economic groupings in which China has a position of parity or leadership (like the Asian

Infrastructure Development Bank, the Japanese-sponsored successor to TPP, or the RCEP).

— Insist that its regional partners assume primary responsibility for their own strategic defense rather than volunteering to provide this regardless of what, if anything, they contribute; and

— Focus on promoting the development of U.S. regional partners' economic, political, and military capabilities and connectivity rather than on preserving American primacy.

A transition to a regional balance of power in which neither the United States nor China is in command but that both are committed to sustain and help manage would require intensive consultations by both with each other and with others in the region. A shift to an inclusive balance of power arrangement for the Asia-Pacific would not be politically easy for Washington, Beijing, Tokyo, or other regional capitals but, with far-sighted and resolute leadership in these capitals, it could be realized.

In such an order,

— Both China and the United States would accept Japan's return to a status as a great politico-military as well as economic power.

Such a Japan would have a continuing special relationship with the United States but its own independent defense relations with other Indo-Pacific countries, like Australia, India, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam.

— The United States would reaffirm the “interest in a peaceful settlement” by the parties to the Taiwan issue themselves that it officially espoused in 1972 and encourage negotiations between Taipei and Beijing to accomplish this goal.

— A peace treaty would replace the armistice in Korea and the United States would recognize the DPRK (repulsive as its political position is), ending Pyongyang's fears of U.S. attack to accomplish regime

Chas Freeman

change. The two states on the Korean Peninsula would be left to assert their geopolitically strategic independence, balance each other, and resume the traditional role of states on their shared peninsula as independent buffers between China and Japan.

— All participants in the Indo-Pacific balance would accept the freedom of ASEAN member states to coalesce and cooperate as necessary to temper and counter great-power rivalry in Southeast Asia, and to draw on India and other outside powers, including China, the EU, Japan, Russia, and the United States, to this end as required.

— All would acknowledge the logic of ASEAN member states, like Cambodia and Laos, seeking protection from the ambitions of more powerful neighbors with great powers both in the region and outside it.

— The United States would support the development of regional associations and processes to support negotiated solutions to territorial and resource management disputes like those in the South and East China Seas, rather than take sides in these disputes.

This agenda may sound diplomatically challenging — even utopian — and it certainly would not be easy to achieve. But if the United States does nothing, currently shifting balances of power and increased hedging of the sort that the regions' countries are already engaged in will likely produce a ragged facsimile of it. With or without American encouragement, Japan will sooner or later reemerge as an independent great power. Taiwan's status will one way or another be resolved. Unless allayed, the DPRK's paranoia will further increase the lethality of its hostility to America. ASEAN nations will make their own accommodations with China either in concert with the United States or in defiance of it. National

security concerns by regional states will drive them to seek support for their independence from each other as well as external powers. Territorial disputes will fester until armed conflict resolves them. But wise statecraft can anticipate adverse trends and turn them to the national advantage.

There is no advantage to leaving the future of the Asia-Pacific region to chance or to the impact of adverse trends. U.S. and allied countries' statecraft and diplomacy should instead shape the regional order, backed by political, economic, and military capabilities whose configurations reflect the strategy the diplomacy is designed to advance. The object should be to dissuade China from any effort to control or dictate the region's future and to reduce the need for war to prevent this. It is not in the U.S. interest — nor is it in the interest of the countries in the region, including China — for peace and prosperity to depend on military confrontation and the threat of armed conflict between China and the United States.

The Asia-Pacific region needs an American and Chinese-backed balance of power that leverages the rising capabilities of the region's independent states to counter any great power effort — American or Chinese — to coerce them. Such a balance would enable the United States and China to offset each other's wealth and power at levels of commitment that are affordable in terms of both blood and treasure. It would provide affordable security for American interests in Asia. And it would benefit China by averting the temptation of neighboring states to join the United States in hostility to its rise, setting aside some drivers of bilateral confrontation with the United States, re-enabling the development of a mutually beneficial Sino-American relationship, and restoring credibility to the prospect of a peaceful resolution of Taiwan's political

status. For all in the region, such a balance would provide both surer and more affordable political, economic, and military security.

In his inaugural address as president in January 1961, John F. Kennedy electrified America and the world with his declaration that: “We shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and success of liberty.” That remarkably combative spirit led Americans and our allies into the abyss of Indochina and subsequent “forever wars.” Kennedy's call still resonates but it is not a guide to a more peaceful and prosperous world.

The United States is beset with debilitating problems at home that ideological adventures abroad cannot cure and will only exacerbate. These problems must be addressed to ensure that the U.S. remains both prosperous and internationally competitive. It is time to recognize that, in the Asia-Pacific, sound policy must be rooted in the capabilities and intentions of nations there, not on ruinous, inevitably futile efforts to retain U.S. dominance. The United States cannot be more willing than the countries of the region to resist coercion or to coalesce to assert and defend common political, economic, and security interests. But in America's own interests, it should be willing to help them do so.

It is time to replace hubris with realism in U.S. Asian policy and time to temper military confrontation with strategy, statecraft, and diplomacy. It is also time to replace paternalism in U.S. relations with Asian ‘allies’ and friends with a respectful regard for the dilemmas they face and with careful listening to their ideas about how best to sustain their independence and development as the distribution of military, economic, and political power in their region continues to shift.

## Pentagon calls Israel: A ‘leading strategic partner of US’

Paul R. Pillar

**THE Biden administration appears to be moving the United States into an ever-closer de facto military alliance with Israel, even though the two countries have never had a mutual security treaty.**

This development continues a trend that became especially marked during Donald Trump's administration, in the closing days of which the Department of Defense placed Israel in the area of responsibility of U.S. Central Command, the unified command covering the Middle East. The Pentagon's announcement of that switch described Israel as a “leading strategic partner of the United States.”

Sources in the Biden administration told Newsweek's William Arkin that the bureaucratic realignment of unified commands was “the most profound change” for the U.S. military regarding relations with Israel since that state's founding. The expressed hope was that this would eventually lead to a NATO-like alliance in the Middle East that would be directed against Iran, Russia, and China.

Entering a military alliance with any foreign state is a major step that carries major risks, especially the risk of being dragged into someone else's war. The step ought not to be taken without careful consideration that the alliance is needed to fulfill a significant security requirement and that the benefits will outweigh the costs and risks.

There is no public indication that the drift into a close military partnership with Israel has been given any such consideration. This situation contrasts with, for example, the recent issue of admitting Finland and Sweden to NATO. Although admission of the two northern European countries enjoyed broad support against the backdrop of Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine, there at least was some debate and consideration of the pros and cons of this expansion of the Atlantic alliance, including in Congress. One

looks in vain for comparable debate about commitments to Israel.

The conditions that would justify making the commitments that any security alliance—either formal or de facto—entails include a genuine and significant military threat from a hostile power. It must be a threat that the prospective members of the alliance cannot meet alone. And the threat must be one that, if it materialized and was not met, the geopolitical outcome would seriously harm U.S. interests.

Extending a security commitment to a would-be ally should not be charity, to borrow a formulation that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky used in his recent appeal to Congress for continued assistance. The alliance should benefit the United States and not just benefit other parties to the arrangement. Commitments should be two-way, preferably with other parties to the alliance willing and able to assist the United States in ways that, absent those commitments, they might not undertake.

Finally, although external circumstances may bring into alliance countries with markedly different domestic politics and societies, the conditions to justify an alliance are more likely to be present when fundamental values are shared. Common values make clear the blow to U.S. interests if a partner should succumb to a foreign threat, and common values make the partner more willing to assist the United States.

NATO provides useful comparisons and contrasts. Expansion of the alliance in the 1990s and some of its use in out-of-area operations are highly questionable, as is whether NATO should have continued to exist at all after the Cold War. But when NATO was established in 1949, the conditions justifying such an alliance did seem to be present. These included a major military threat in the form of the Red Army occupying Eastern Europe, the inability of European democracies—still working their way out of the destruct-

tion of World War II—to meet that threat alone, and the obvious blow to U.S. interests that a Soviet takeover of Western Europe would have meant. The two-way nature of the commitment was underscored when the sole invocation of the critical Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty—in which an attack on one member is to be considered an attack on all—was in response to an attack on the United States in September 2001.

Underlying all this were the shared values of liberal democracy. Later straying from that sharing by Poland and especially Hungary, which have become sore points in the European Union and not just in NATO, are exceptions that highlight the rule.

The conditions involving present-day Israel are much different from any of this. There is no hostile threat in the Middle East remotely comparable to the Red Army in Europe in the 1940s. No hostile power is capable of achieving hegemony over the region. Israel itself is the pre-eminent military power in the region, thanks to its technologically superior conventional forces and its generally assumed possession of the only nuclear weapons in the region. Israel does not need a military alliance with the United States to be secure against foreign threats.

No conceivable scenario would see a foreign power crossing the Jordan River or Mount Hermon to attack Israel. Israel's chief security problem—and a major drain on the resources and attention of the Israel Defense Forces—is of its own making: the occupation of Palestinian territory and the suppression of violent reactions of the subjugated indigenous population that lives there. The occupation and related suppression are not in U.S. interests. Instead, they are contrary to U.S. interests, by perpetuating a conflict and source of instability and by associating the United States with an often lethal denial of human rights—a denial that exacerbates U.S.

security problems by fueling terrorism and anti-Americanism in the region.

Common values do not unite the United States and Israel in the way that liberal democratic values united America with Western Europe. Israel's legal system and sense of nationhood are based on favored treatment of one ethnic/religious group and its institutionalized supremacy over other groups. Israel uses democratic methods within the favored group, but no state that denies political rights to millions of inhabitants of land it rules, and that Israel treats for other purposes as an integral part of its own territory, is a democracy. The incoming Israeli government—the most extreme yet—will widen the values gap even further, as Israel sinks ever deeper into racism and apartheid.

The lack of value to the United States of Israel as a military ally was underscored during Operation Desert Storm, the campaign to eject Iraq from Kuwait in 1991. The United States pressed Israel not to join the fight against the Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein, despite that regime's effort to bring Israel into the fight with missile attacks on Israeli territory. Israeli involvement would have undercut the U.S. administration's effort to hold together an Arab coalition in opposition to Iraq.

Some commentators—including the Pentagon in its announcement about the reshuffling of unified commands—contend that the upgrading of Israel's relations with a few Arab states (the so-called “Abraham Accords”) makes closer military cooperation with Israel safer today than previously. But drawing in Arab autocracies such as the UAE and Bahrain, which deviate even more sharply from American values and are parties to local rivalries that do not coincide with U.S. interests, only multiplies the chances of the United States being sucked into someone else's quarrels. Moreover, Israel's

upgrading of relations with a few autocratic regimes—made possible only through side-payments by the Trump administration—did not remove the resonance that the unresolved Palestinian issue retains throughout the Arab world and much of the Muslim world beyond, and that gives Israel negative value as an ally. This resonance was demonstrated by the many expressions at the recent World Cup tournament in Qatar of support for Palestinians.

Other commentary has for many years contended that the United States gains advantage from Israel's prowess in security matters such as counterterrorism and the development of military technology. But the relevant question is how much more, if anything, Israel would do in these areas, with some collateral benefit to the United States, than it would be doing anyway even without the voluminous financial and diplomatic support it receives or the kind of military alliance to which the United States is gravitating. Israel has its own strong reasons, even without such U.S. favors, to sell its military technology and to cooperate on counterterrorism.

When the narrow Israeli objectives involved in its military activity collide with U.S. interests, it is U.S. interests that have suffered—despite the U.S. financial and diplomatic favors bestowed on Israel. This has ranged from the killing of an individual U.S. citizen to a larger-scale attack on a U.S. ship and its crew in time of war.

The risks of a closer military relationship with Israel center on Israel's tendency to get involved in deadly scrapes. Israel is the Middle Eastern state that has thrown its military weight around, with multiple attacks on the territories of other nations, more than any other state in the region. Israel has repeatedly initiated wars, including the big one in 1967, which began with an Israeli attack on Egypt. Later came repeated Israeli invasions of Lebanon, multiple devastating military attacks on the

Palestinian-inhabited Gaza Strip, an attack on an Iraqi nuclear reactor (an attack that revived and accelerated a covert Iraqi nuclear weapons program), and a later similar attack in Syria.

Currently, Israel continues a sustained aerial campaign against targets in Syria, which has been going on for years and has included scores of raids. So far, the firing in anger between Israel and Syria has been almost all in that one direction, but the chance of escalation involving either Syria or its Iranian or Russian allies is significant.

Today, the chances of Israel instigating a new war involving Iran are substantial.

Threatening military attack on Iran has been a leitmotif of Israeli leaders, part of a strategy of stoking maximum hostility toward Iran as a way of serving other Israeli objectives. When Benjamin Netanyahu earlier led the Israeli government, avoiding an Israeli attack on Iran was one of the motivations for Barack Obama's administration to use intense diplomacy to block all possible paths to an Iranian nuclear weapon.

With Netanyahu now back in power at the head of his radical coalition, and with Iran having expanded its nuclear program in response to Donald Trump's foolish abandonment of the agreement that had severely restricted that program, the danger of Israel instigating a war with Iran is as great as ever. For Netanyahu, the preferred scenario would have the United States, rather than Israel, assume the main burdens and costs of such a war. Especially given Israel's long record of covert operations against Iran, the ability of Netanyahu's government to manipulate events and bring about such a scenario is substantial.

In sum, a military alliance with Israel brings little or no benefit to the United States but entails major costs and risks, especially the risk of being dragged into a war waged not because of U.S. interests but because of the objectives of a foreign regime.

## The ‘Chinese threat to Taiwan’

Petr Akopov

**global governance in a more just and reasonable direction.” Simply put:**

This year, there were only two face-to-face meetings between Putin and Xi — very few for pre-pandemic

Russian-Chinese relations — but still, the Feb-ruary meeting in Beijing was the first face-to-face talks since the end of 2019. It was there that a joint declaration on international relations entering a

new era was adopted - a kind of manifesto for a new world order, which emphasized that “friendship between the two states has no borders, there are no forbidden zones in cooperation.” However, three weeks later, a special military operation began in

Ukraine - and the conflict between Russia and the West reached a new - the most severe - level, only one step inferior to a direct military clash. How did China behave in this situation?

(Continued on Page 7)

**T**HE Russian-Chinese naval exercises in the East China Sea have become a symbolic end to 2022 for the relationship between the two countries, although Putin and Xi Jinping may still have a

telephone conversation right before its finale. The outgoing year was one of the most important for the relations between the two great powers: because it tested them both for their strength and for their strategic nature.

They passed the test: the other day, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said that relations between the two countries are solid, like a monolith, and are not subject to interference and provocations, “they are not afraid

of major changes in the situation.” And a week ago, while receiving Dmitry Medvedev in Beijing, Xi Jinping said that “China is ready to move closer to Russia in order <...> to jointly promote the development of



# Arms control between US and Russia is on life support

**FROM the earliest days of his administration, President Biden has sought to draw a sharp distinction between his approach and that of his predecessor, Donald Trump.**

He pledged to put diplomacy first, repair alliances frayed by Trump's bombastic rhetoric, and rejoin several key international agreements, including the Paris climate accords. He quickly renewed U.S. participation in the New START Treaty and pledged to rejoin the Iran nuclear deal, formally known as the Comprehensive Program of Action, or JCPOA. He spoke of pursuing a "foreign policy for the middle class" that would elevate domestic concerns as a foundation of U.S. global strength.

With respect to the Middle East, the president used his first foreign policy speech to unveil a plan to work towards an end to the brutal war in Yemen, including a promise to "end support for offensive operations [by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates], including relevant arms sales."

Nothing could seem further from the transactional, "America First" approach pursued by Donald Trump. But two years into the administration, the reality of

Biden policy has proven to be more complicated than its early rhetoric suggested.

One of the signal accomplishments of the administration to date was sticking to its deadline for withdrawing U.S. troops from Afghanistan despite opposition in the D.C. and media establishments. But the Afghan withdrawal did not presage an end to the forever wars or the global war on terror. Indeed, Biden underscored his continuing commitment to a global war on terror in his speech marking the pullout from Afghanistan:

"Today, the terrorist threat has metastasized beyond Afghanistan. So, we are repositioning our resources and adapting our counterterrorism posture to meet the threats where they are now significantly higher: in South Asia, the Middle East, and Africa."

Meanwhile, the administration appears to have failed to redeem its pledge to rejoin the JCPOA, in part due to a lack of urgency and flexibility in pursuing an agreement. In a December 4 speech, Secretary of State Anthony Blinken implied that the administration was still committed to the deal, while at the same time making a veiled threat to use force if Iran seeks a nuclear weapon:

"We continue to believe that diplomacy is the best way to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. But should the Iranian regime reject that path, its leaders should make no mistake that all options are on the table to ensure that Iran does not obtain a nuclear weapon."

Blinken's statement was contradicted by a November 4 statement by President Biden himself. A video of a political rally, which was only made widely available in late December, shows Biden responding to a question about the Iran deal by saying, "It's dead, but we're not going to announce it." When asked about the video, National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said "there is no progress happening with respect to the Iran deal now. We don't anticipate any progress, anytime in the near future. That's just not our focus."

It's not unusual for presidential plans to be derailed by unexpected crises. In Biden's case, that crisis is the Russian invasion of Ukraine. He deserves credit for rallying NATO allies to provide ample support for Ukraine's defense. If the latest aid package is approved, total U.S. military aid to Ukraine and U.S. NATO allies will reach \$50

billion. Yet to be determined is whether the Biden administration will develop a full-fledged diplomatic strategy for trying to keep the Ukraine war from grinding on for years or escalating dramatically from its current levels. While a diplomatic solution is not in the cards at the moment, it's not too early to prepare the ground for a possible settlement.

On its pledges with regard to Saudi Arabia, administration policy has been disappointing. After a review of U.S. security policy towards the Gulf states that included pausing weapons transfers, the administration has gone on to offer \$4 billion in arms to the Saudi regime.

Furthermore, Biden's trip to Saudi Arabia last summer, hat in hand, failed to persuade Riyadh to increase oil output in hopes of lowering gas prices in the U.S. Instead, the Saudi leadership collaborated with Russia to keep prices high, even as it continues to buy oil from Moscow. This move so angered key players in Congress that members ranging from Senate Foreign Relations Committee chair Robert Menendez (D-NJ) to Rep. Ro Khanna (D-Calif) called

William Hartun

for a suspension of some or all weapons supplies to Saudi Arabia until such time as it shifts policy on oil output and relations with Russia. The Biden administration has said there will be "consequences" for Saudi actions, but so far there have been none.

Meanwhile, the administration lobbied against recent efforts to pass a War Powers Resolution on Yemen in the Senate, which advocates say would have cut off U.S. arms and military support to Saudi Arabia as a way to prevent it from restarting attacks on Yemen, as well as to persuade it to negotiate in good faith for an agreement to end the war. The primary sponsor of the resolution, Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT) pulled it at the last minute under an agreement with the administration to come up with language that both sides could live with.

On the budgetary front, the administration has been as or more aggressive than Trump in pushing for funds for the Pentagon, reinforced by hawks in Congress who have moved to provide even more funding than the administration requested. Spending on the Pentagon and related items like nuclear warhead work

at the Department of Energy is likely to hit \$858 billion next year. That's \$80 billion more than FY 2022 levels. The increase alone is greater than the entire military budget of every nation in the world but China.

On relations with China, the administration appears to be veering off course. Despite some rhetoric about the need to cooperate with China, especially on existential issues like climate change, the Biden administration has taken a hard line against Beijing, muddying the waters about whether it would send U.S. troops to Taiwan in the event of a Chinese invasion and undermining the "one China" policy that has kept the peace between the two rival powers for over four decades.

Last but not least, the administration has doubled down on the Pentagon's three-decades-long plan to invest up to \$2 trillion in a new generation of nuclear-armed bombers, missiles, and submarines, complete with new warheads to go with them. This is far more than is needed for deterrence and is only likely to contribute to a new nuclear arms race.

Arms control between the U.S. and Russia is on life support. But even at the height of the Cold War,

Washington and Moscow maintained communications regarding their respective nuclear arsenals. The Cold War period was marked by the conclusion of major arms control treaties including the partial test ban, the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT), the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty (CFE) and the Intermediate Nuclear Forces in Europe Treaty (INF). To its credit, the Biden administration has not given up on the prospect of new arms control agreements, as noted in its recent Nuclear Posture Review: "Consistent with our commitment to put diplomacy first, the United States will pursue new arms control arrangements that address the full range of nuclear threats and advance our global non-proliferation interests."

This may be easier said than done, but the fact that the Biden administration remains committed to arms control in the current global security environment offers a sign of hope.

In the larger picture, however, the Biden commitment to lead the charge of democracies over autocracies is a flawed concept. Among other things, not all autocracies are created equal – witness continuing U.S. arms supplies to Saudi

Arabia and Egypt. The administration would be better served by striving to preserve and strengthen democracy at home in a bid to persuade others that it is a better system of government. The \$37 billion-per-year investment in addressing climate change contained in the Inflation Reduction Act that passed earlier this year is one step in the right direction, as is the administration's infrastructure plan.

It's hard to definitively assess an administration after just two years in office. And it's not too late to change course. If it were to live up to its own early rhetoric, the Biden administration could sow the seeds of a more effective foreign policy that truly puts diplomacy first and enhances democracy and economic equality at home. Instead, it has squandered too many resources and too much attention on military solutions to complex security problems, crowding out its better instincts in the process. Hopefully, this will change over the next two years, and diplomacy and economic engagement will be elevated above militarized approaches to foreign policy. It will be up to a better informed and more engaged public to help make that happen.

**ON the surface, the decline of classical liberalism continued worldwide in 2022. The adverse political current was so strong and deep that it affected societies both democratic and totalitarian and stretched from Europe to Latin America to Asia, not excepting the United States. The global push against classical liberalism ranged broadly against key elements of the philosophy—from free trade to individual responsibility to limited government.**

But as powerful as these forces were, by end of the year a few green shoots for liberty appeared—surprising demonstrations against state power in some of the world's most authoritarian nations and signs of successful opposition to the increasing power of the state in more democratic ones. These signs of hope underscore some enduring sources for classical liberalism's power. Classical liberalism draws on a deep desire for liberty and the economic prosperity that liberty's exercise brings. It is aided by a natural force that springs up through the concrete of even the most regimented societies and sprouts even more abundantly at unexpected times

in societies with more porous democratic soil. In some nations, like the United States, it is also protected by strong classical liberal traditions, including law that supports such key premises as the separation of powers and individual rather than group rights.

**The United States**

One can get a quick snapshot of the weight of the state by looking at government spending and government debt. Both have gone up dramatically in the United States since 2010 with spending up as a percentage of GDP by almost a third and debt by almost half. Some of that was caused by spending directly on the pandemic but by no means all of it. Some of the ostensibly "pandemic" spending in bills was actually directed to interest groups like government employees or to bailing out union pension funds. In any event, the additional debt is now a drag on economic growth and must be paid back either through higher taxes or through inflating the currency.

Happily, the Biden administration failed to get all the spending that it wanted through even a Democratic Congress. The divided Congress that resulted from the 2022 midterms assures that there

will be no legislative spending sprees next year. But perhaps the most troubling domestic decision of the year bypassed Congress altogether to spend hundreds of billions of dollars by forgiving student debt by executive order.

As a matter of policy, blanket student loan forgiveness has nothing to be said for it. It is regressive, because the lifetime earnings of those whose loans will be forgiven are greater than those of the average taxpayer who will foot the bill. Moreover, the decision was carefully timed to energize the youth vote in the midterms. It seems to have helped the Democrats stave off a more substantial defeat: the young were their strongest age cohort. Student debt relief exemplifies one of classical liberalism's worst nightmares: the party in power uses government largess to stay in power.

Beyond spending, the Biden administration continued to pursue identity politics, supporting aid that went only to certain farmers defined by race and using its regulatory authority to pursue various race-conscious policies. Since classical liberalism is premised on individual rather than group rights, the administration's ever-

expanding push for race consciousness and the identity politics that supports such policies is even more dangerous to the classically liberal society than excessive government spending.

But there has been better news from the Supreme Court. It took up a challenge to the constitutionality of the loan forgiveness plan, likely vindicating the separation of powers by restricting the executive branch's power to spend without well-grounded statutory authority. From the oral arguments on Harvard's admission program that discriminates on the basis of race, the Court also appears ready to end such racial and ethnic preferences, ideally through reading Title VI to mean what it says—that universities receiving federal funds cannot discriminate against any race or ethnic group. These developments underscore the power of our classical liberal traditions encoded both in past statutes and the Constitution to arrest the decline of classical liberalism long enough to permit a contemporary democratic counter-reaction.

**Other Democracies**

Classical liberalism has been in decline in Europe as well. In Great Britain,

John O. McGinnis

Liz Truss was selected as Prime Minister, largely on the basis of a Thatcherite platform of cutting taxes and deregulating the economy. But her shamolic implementation of these policies rattled the markets, and she was deposed within a month. She may well have discredited classically liberal economic policies in Britain for a generation.

In France, Emmanuel Macron, a faint-hearted classical liberal working within the unfavorable context of the French dirigiste state, lost his majority to parties of the national right and radical left. The prospects for his domestic economic reform program look bleak. In Italy, the right won the fall election decisively, but the leader hails from the nationalist right descended from the fascist party of Benito Mussolini. Nevertheless, her political program has begun sensibly with efforts at tax cutting and deregulation. There are reasons she is likely to continue on this path. First, her coalition contains more classically liberal parties who might otherwise defect, and she must pursue market-friendly policies to energize growth and pay off Italy's enormous debts.

Both causes have larger implications for classical liberalism's resilience.

First, fusionism is almost inevitable on the right: there simply are not enough classical liberals ever to be a majority by themselves but they can exert real influence in right-of-center political coalitions.

Second, economic reality bites at some point. Unlike the left, the right is dominated by voters, such as small business owners, who depend on a growing economy. That means that even the nationalist right is likely to pursue more classically liberal economic policies than their election rhetoric often suggests.

Almost every nation in Latin America was governed by the left at the start of 2022 and Brazil, the most populous nation in the region, elected yet another leftist as President, even though he had been previously convicted of corruption. But again there were signs of improvement in Chile, the South American nation traditionally most favorable to classical liberalism. In a referendum, its people overwhelmingly rejected a socialist constitution that its government supported, sticking with a classically liberal constitution instead. This victory again reminds us that hav-

ing a sound constitution is an anchor for society—one that is hard to haul away and destroy.

**The Authoritarian Nations**

China, Russia, and Iran, the most important authoritarian nations in the world, all intensified control over their people in 2022. Xi Jinping has cast off the Communist Party's consensus constraints and assumed almost dictatorial power. Vladimir Putin started a war against neighboring Ukraine and crushed all dissent. Iran under Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei has abandoned any pretense of democracy by disqualifying all moderate candidates and appears ever closer to acquiring nuclear weapons. On the surface, this new axis of evil seems more of a threat to liberty than ever before, both to the citizens of their own nations and to the world outside.

But each of these regimes in the last few months has experienced serious setbacks. China has witnessed the most serious demonstrations in decades against its zero-covid policy. Iran seems to be entering a pre-revolutionary period: the morals police enforcement of a dress code has led to violent demonstrations and nationwide strikes. Putin's war has

proved a striking mistake, requiring him to resort to a very unpopular draft to try to reverse battlefield losses. All these leaders seem less secure than when the year started.

The events show some of the inherent weaknesses of despotic regimes in the modern world. Such regimes are prone to grand miscalculations because their leaders become isolated and lack the feedback loops provided by civil society—a hallmark of the classical liberal regime. Like despots throughout time, they nevertheless can succeed in keeping power by dividing the potential opposition. But in each of these cases, a fundamental miscalculation has united society against them, because it affects an encompassing interest—the liberty of movement in the case of China, the dignity of women in the case of Iran, and the ability to live in peace in the case of Russia.

These failures show that the impulse for freedom can threaten the authoritarian state. Similarly, developments in the United States and elsewhere suggest that the decentralizing power of the market and civil society within democratic states can make a comeback against the centralism of expanding government.

## WTO protests to US

Dmitry Kosyrev

**One hundred twenty-seven members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) protested to the United States, and this is perceived by literally everyone as an action organized by China.**

True, the action is far from the first. And exactly the 61st - with a changing composition of the protesters (there were fewer of them before). Perseverance is a national Chinese trait, and in the WTO they show it to the world in all its glory. The story here is this: we reported earlier this month that in early December, the WTO Dispute Settlement Body ruled (after four years of torment) in favor of China in a 2018 case involving U.S. duties on U.S. steel imports. After that, Beijing, inspired by the victory, filed exactly the same lawsuit already about the same American bans on almost

any cooperation with China in terms of semiconductors. Although it is known that the United States is not going to implement these WTO recommendations, water wears away the stone.

Today the attack goes in a slightly different direction. The fact is that the Dispute Resolution Body is one thing, but the WTO also has a Supreme Appeal Body, whose members are called judges, and, in fact, they are recruited from professional judges. And here the problem is that this part of the WTO has been in deep paralysis for many years, because the United States has blocked the mechanism for appointing these same judges there. And now, once again, most of the world's economies have condemned America for this. And she, accordingly, once again ignored it.

Let's look at one of the episodes of that struggle. Year 2018, India, the

European Union, China and others opposed the United States. That, it seems, was protest number two out of 61. The fact is that America then (as it is now) blocked the process of selecting judges, at that time there were three of seven of those left, of which two resigned a month later. The protesters proposed to lengthen the term of service of judges, to make their work permanent, not combined, and, most importantly, to leave them in office until a replacement is found. The United States, we repeat, blocked all this and, it seems, are now doing about the same thing. That is, America does not need the WTO as an organization where there are mechanisms that challenge its decisions.

And here the most interesting thing is that everyone else - and today - needs such a mechanism, including those who are considered an ally of the United

States. The current action of China in the British The Guardian is described as follows: there are two signatures side by side - Australia and China. And in 2018, Norway, Canada, Switzerland, the same Australia also protested.

But now, we repeat, 127 states have come out against the United States - and this is the very majority that refuses to join the anti-Russian sanctions. And not necessarily from moral-allied-political, but more often from purely economic considerations.

Here we must take into account that, according to this majority, now is simply not the time to use trade restrictions (that is, sanctions) against anyone. Who is bad from the sanctions against Russia, we already see. And from January, new sanctions against China should come into force - in

terms of semiconductors and a variety of other goods. And this at a time when dozens of countries around the world foresee some completely unpredictable economic horrors.

The assessment of the same WTO: if world trade grows at all in 2023, then by a maximum of one percent, although earlier it was expected to grow by 3.4 percent. And this is after the covid reset, which in its consequences turned out to be worse than the world war. Miracles are now simply expected from China (because there is no one else) - a sharp revival of trade after the end of the "zero covid" policy and, accordingly, a frenzied activation of production there and the conclusion of many trade deals. But miracles also depend on how skillfully Beijing will resist. It is clear that he will do this not only in the WTO, which

has been turned into a nonentity by America.

Note that the essence of the whole plot is the approach of the moment when unilateral (that is, bypassing the UN ) economic sanctions, and in fact trade restrictions will become a thing of the past. Beijing is showing that such a moment is not entirely over the horizon. More precisely, slowly brings him closer with his perseverance.

But US resistance is also not weak. Here is an episode of this struggle: there is such an American author - Victor Cha (an ethnic Chinese with hatred for the homeland of his ancestors). He, in addition to being busy with journalism, is actively working in a uniquely harmful semi-state organization - the "National Endowment for Democracy". And the other day, this Cha appeared simultaneously in several publications with his well-known

ideas on how to prevent China from influencing anything in the world through compatriots and with the help of its weight in world trade. The most valuable thing in this publication is the thought brought to crystal clearness: China wants to make governments and businesses around the world respect its interests.

What is this, an accusation? Yes, because China, Cha says, is the enemy of democracy. And the countries of the collective West should therefore not engage in nonsense, but unite against the threat, since this giant cannot be stopped one by one. And now the main thing: during the years of the Cold War, Washington more than once abandoned liberal practices in order to protect the liberal world order. And now the West may need "compromises" on free trade principles if it wants to stop Beijing from corrupting globalization.

That is, these principles must be completely discarded, and not only in trade, because there is no other way out.

Actually, this is the exact definition of what is happening. The principles of that same liberal world order do not work, because the West is losing because of them. And he began to ignore them for a long time - after which a deadlock arose for those who started the current world war back in 2018 (although the Crimean "warm-up" of 2014 was earlier). At first, the war was going on precisely in world trade (with powerful information support), starting with all sorts of restrictions against China. The question is what will happen now. America has not yet learned to retreat, but it is also unpleasant for it to receive protests and, in addition, slide into an economic dead end and drag allies there.

## The ‘Chinese threat to Taiwan’

(Continued from Page 6)

In words, Beijing took a position above the clash between Russia and Ukraine, but in the conflict between Russia and the West, in fact, supported Russia. In response to calls to join anti-Russian sanctions or at least put pressure on Moscow, China constantly reminded the West of the need to take into account Russia's concern for its security, that is, it said that the West itself provoked Putin to use force. The debate about whether the conflict between Russia and the West is beneficial to Beijing has not stopped all this time - both in the West and in Russia. The strange hopes of some Western analysts that China would take an equidistant position did not materialize, although officially China is not going to be subject to Western

anti-Russian sanctions - in reality, there are plenty of opportunities to circumvent them. What Moscow and Beijing are successfully doing is not as fast and simple as Russia would like, but the process itself is important here.

And the most important thing here is not whether the conflict between Russia and the West is beneficial for China: this is a question of yesterday. Yes, it seemed to some that it would be beneficial for China to divert US attention to the European direction, but in fact everything that is happening only confirms the general trend: the West has declared China and Russia its main opponents, and a blow to one of them is a blow to the other. Formally, our countries are not allies, but in the same February statement by Putin and Xi, it was said that our

relations are superior to the military-political alliances of the Cold War (a reference to NATO, and to the Soviet-Chinese pact), that is, we are bound by common goals and interests. China and Russia are indeed too powerful and independent powers to act in a tight bond, but it is the commonality of both interests and challenges and threats that brings us closer than any signed mutual assistance treaty. We really stand back to back, as the Chinese leaders like to point out, and this is no coincidence, not only because we are neighbors. This is also a conscious strategic choice of the Russian and Chinese leadership for many decades to come.

This year, China had a great opportunity to make sure that even with a shift in attention to Russia and Europe, the United States is

ready for the most unexpected provocations, as was the case with Speaker Pelosi's trip to Taiwan. The United States had no point in provoking Beijing in this way - it would seem that they should show restraint and not comb the Taiwan issue now. But in Washington did exactly the opposite. First, they themselves promoted the absolutely false theme of the "Chinese threat to Taiwan" - they say, it grew up against the backdrop of the Russian operation in Ukraine - and then staged a demonstration of support for "Pacific Ukraine" with the help of Pelosi's visit. Much has been said in this way the United States defiantly humiliated China, showing its inability to do anything with Taiwan, but given that China did not have any plans to seize the island, in

reality, Beijing simply received clear confirmation of the American unwillingness to give up hegemony and hard pressure on the Celestial Empire.

So no distraction to Russia changes anything in the American strategy towards China. Moreover, the States themselves are beginning to believe in their own propaganda about the threat of war on two fronts. And, accordingly, they are increasing pressure on Beijing, forcing it to respond more actively against the United States on the economic and other fronts. In other words, doing what China wanted to avoid: it was in its interests to gradually oust the US from its position of hegemon. But the accelerated course of the global transformation left no chance for this option: not even because Russia launched a special

operation on February 24, but because America in response attempted a global blockade of Russia.

And thus gave a signal for the accelerated dismantling of the Western-centric world financial and economic system: China simply cannot now follow the tactics of slow progress, no one will give it much time. The United States will provoke China in every possible way - both militarily, shaking the Taiwan issue, and economically, expanding sanctions. China needs to go on the counteroffensive - hence the negotiations on the use of the yuan in oil trade with the Saudis, and the

attempt to convince Europe to show independence in maintaining ties with China.

China does not need a weak Russia that has lost to the West, just as Russia does not need a weak, self-contained China. Our countries had different tactics as part of a common strategy aimed at depriving the West of hegemony in the world financial and economic system and at curtailing the Atlantic model of globalization. Now Russia will be more focused on the military component of the confrontation with the West, but this does not mean that it will cease to play an important role on the finan-

cial and economic front, where China is the main work, or in infrastructure projects, such as global and interregional transport and trade corridors. Both countries will increasingly coordinate their actions, helping and taking into account the interests of the partner, complementing each other. Because when you stand back to back, this does not mean that you are only responsible for your site, it means that it is your priority. But the main thing is that you are not afraid of a stab in the back and you know that you have common not only opponents, but also goals.

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# PSX witnesses bullish trend, gains 467.93 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed a bullish trend on Thursday, gaining 467.93 points, with a positive change of 1.19 percent, closing at 39,747.36 against 39,279.43 points on the previous day.

A total of 227,788,151 shares were traded during the day as compared to 258,454,294 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 7.037 billion against Rs 8.508 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 347 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 227 of them recorded gains and 101 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 19 companies remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were Bank Al-Falah with 52,190,634

shares at Rs 29.88 per share, K-Electric with 20,118,500 shares at Rs 2.49 per share and Nenergyco PK with 13,116,410 shares at Rs 3.63 per share.

Rafhan Maize witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 592.65 per share price, closing at Rs8494.65, whereas the runner-up was Nestle Pakistan with a Rs 366.24 rise in its per share price to Rs5781.54.

Bhanero Tex witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 77.50 per share closing at Rs 960.00, followed by Premium Tex with a Rs 44.20 decline to close at Rs 557.05.

**Rupee sheds 04 paisa against dollar**

The exchange rate of the Pakistani rupee depreciated by 04 paisa against the US dollar in the interbank trading on Thursday and closed at Rs 226.41 against the

previous day's closing of Rs 226.37.

According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 233.5 and Rs 235.5 respectively.

The price of the euro was decreased by 07 paisa and closed at Rs 240.58 against the previous day's closing of Rs 240.65, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese Yen gained one paisa to close at Rs1.69, whereas an increase of 29 paisa was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs 272.50 as compared to its last closing of Rs 272.21.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and Saudi Riyal increased by 01 paisa each to close at Rs 61.64 and Rs 60.22 respec-

tively.

**Gold price decrease by Rs 200 per tola**  
The price of 24 karat per tola gold witnessed a decrease of Rs 200 on Thursday and was sold at Rs182,600 against its sale at Rs182,800, the previous day.

The price of 10 gram 24 karat also decreased by Rs 171 and was sold at Rs 156,550 against Rs156,721; whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat went down to Rs 143,504 against its sale at Rs 143,661, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola and ten gram silver remained constant at Rs 2,050 and Rs 1,757.54 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market increased by \$04 and was sold at \$1,807 against its sale at \$1,803, the association reported.



ISLAMABAD: A vendor selling coal during winter season at his roadside setup.

## Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Shipping activities reported at the Port on Wednesday where six ships namely, African Pheasant, Ncc Yanbu, EM Astoria, Clemen Shulte, MSC Illinois and Nave Andromeda scheduled to load/offload Cement, Soyabean oil, Containers and Mogas, berthed at Multi Purpose Terminal, Qasim International Containers Terminal and FOTCO Oil Terminal respectively.

Meanwhile three more ships, Ice Energy, High Sea and Gion Trader carrying Furnace oil and Palm oil also arrived at outer anchorage of the port during the last 24 hour.

A total of 08 ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them two ships, Clemen Shulte and MSC Illinois left the Port on Thursday morning while two more ships, Rigel and EM Astoria are expected to sail on today in the afternoon.

A Cargo volume of 121,873 tonnes, comprising 76,220 tonnes imports cargo and 45,653 tonnes export cargo, including containerized cargo carried in 4,598 Containers (2,682 TEUs Imports and 1,916 TEUs export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

There are 14 ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them, 03 ships, Dreggen, EM Astoria and Express Rome & 04 more ships, MSC Iris, Al-Gharaffa, Desert Harrier and Star Suzanna carrying Palm oil, Containers, LNG and Coal are expected to take berths at LCT, QICT, EETL, PQEPT and PIBT on Thursday.

## Lifting of LC restrictions

ISLAMABAD (APP): Hailing the decision of State Bank of Pakistan for lifting restrictions on issuance of letters of credit, Coordinator to Federal Tax Ombudsman Meher Kashif Younis on Thursday said that it would greatly help in improving economic growth and accelerate the economic activities across the country.

According to a press release issued here, he said the economic activities were slowed down due to the non-issuance of letters of credit by the commercial banks that badly affected industrial production, adding that industrial and agriculture sectors will benefit from these relaxations.

The business community is grateful to the Prime Minister, and ministers for finance and commerce for exercising their sphere of influence for meeting their long-awaited genuine demands for the restoration of the letter of credit facility, he said adding that the local economy was already directly and indirectly plagued due to Russia-Ukraine conflict and flood devastation.

After the press conference, more than five hundred traders and second-hand clothes vendors held a protest demonstration and

# UBG to continue advocating just cause of traders

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman United Business Group in Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry Shahzad Ali Malik on Thursday said that UBG firmly believes in the rule of law, the supremacy of the constitution, and the promotion of democracy and will continue to advocate the just cause of traders and businesses community in the corridors of power.

He sought the support of executive committee members to play their key role in strengthening the federa-

tion by fully ensuring the peaceful exit of the outgoing body on December 31, adding that the outgoing body of FPCCI has convened an annual general meeting on December 30.

The outgoing President of the Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) convened the annual general meeting of the apex trade body on Friday and copies of the agenda have been circulated among all members, said a press release.

The incumbent office bearers including the presi-

dent, senior vice president, and all vice presidents will cease to hold their offices automatically on January 01.2023 as their one-year tenure stands expired on December 31, he added.

Shahzad Ali Malik said UBG has fully committed to safeguarding the interests of the business community at all levels throughout the country which is the backbone of the national economy and urged the Directorate General Trade Organization to take measures for holding a fair free and impartial election.

# Medicinal products' import decreased

ISLAMABAD (APP): The import of medicinal products witnessed a decline of 70.20 percent during the first five months of the current fiscal year (2022-23) as compared to the corresponding period of last year.

Pakistan imported medicinal products worth \$632.828 million from July-November (2022-23) as compared to the imports of \$2123.489 million from July-November (2021-22), according to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS).

In terms of quantity, however, medicinal imports witnessed a surge of 27.53 percent, as the country imported 16,999 metric

tons of medicinal products during the months under review as compared to the imports of 13,330 metric tons last year.

Meanwhile, on a year-on-year basis, medicinal products imports during November 2022 decreased by 77.48 percent, from \$688.876 million in November 2021 to \$155.130 million.

On a monthly basis, medicinal products imports during November 2022 however increased by 47.27 percent as compared to the imports of \$105.337 million in October 2022.

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.

According to PBS data, 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 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.

# Merchants decry 300% tax on secondhand clothes

KARACHI (PPT): All Pakistan Second Hand Clothes Merchant Association on Thursday urged the government to withdraw the decision to increase the valuation duty on their second-hand clothes which is worn by the poor people.

Second hand clothes have also gone out of the reach of the poor. Severe winter is going on all over the country, including Karachi, and to prevent from cold breezes, the poor and middle class people buy second hand warm clothes, which is cheapest in price and the only solution to warm themselves in the winter season, but our government has imposed a 300% tax (valuation duty) on old warm clothes, said association general secretary Usman Farooqui while addressing a press conference at Karachi Press Club.

After the press conference, more than five hundred traders and second-hand clothes vendors held a protest demonstration and chanted slogans outside Karachi Press Club, demanding justice.

Speaking on the occasion, Joint Secretary of the Association Ameer Mohammed said that this month, as soon as winter begins, one container of old clothes will cost three times more. The poor importers who are already worried about the rising value of the dollar is now further burdened by the taxes and already subjected to several taxes including sales tax in addition to valuation duty, which makes second hand clothes more expensive.

Member of the Association Abid Inam said that access to cheap clothing will become the dream of the people, who are already crushed by inflation. The government has raised the valuation duty on woolen second hand clothes from 36 cents to one dollar, making old warm clothes 300% more expensive.

Representative of Sher-

shah Wholesale Seco-

ndhand Cloth Market, Wali Khan and Ali Zain said that winter had started in the entire country and people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan were extremely poor and totally dependent on second hand clothes, he said.

Zain added that as snow had started, people needed warm clothes, but the government had kept them away from the people. He revealed that three hundred containers were stuck up at the port and Director General Valuation (Pak-Customs) Irfan Marwat was not giving them time for hearing.

The total import of second-hand clothes is one hundred million dollars across the country which is ordered from Europe, America and other countries. According to the leaders, after the 300% increase in duty, it caused a lot of damage not only to the national exchequer but also to shipping companies also.

## Tokyo markets end lower

TOKYO (AFP/APP): Tokyo shares ended lower on Thursday, after falls on Wall Street, with investors taking to the sidelines and avoiding risk ahead of New Year holidays.

The benchmark Nikkei 225 index fell 0.94 percent, or 246.83 points, to end at 26,093.67, while the broader Topix index dropped 0.72 percent, or 13.75 points, to 1,895.27. The dollar fetched 133.62 yen, against 134.39 yen on Wednesday in New York.

Trade was thin on the Japanese market, where investors "squared positions" to minimise risks from "any surprise event that might happen during the four-day year-end holiday season", Makoto Sengoku, market analyst at Tokai Tokyo Research Institute, told AFP.

Globally, investors remained leery of China's economic reopening, with the United States and Italy announcing mandatory Covid-19 testing for travellers from the world's second-largest economy.

Beijing's sudden abandonment of tough measures to contain the coronavirus is "providing markets with an inflation headache", said analyst Stephen Innes of SPI Asset Management.

With "little to no visibility into the state of the nation's outbreak, health officials in other countries fear an upsurge in cases tied to Chinese travellers, who are now unshackled to fly around the globe", Innes added.

Among major shares in Tokyo, SoftBank Group dropped 1.62 percent to 5,618 yen, Sony Group was down 0.63 percent to 10,115 yen and Toyota lost 0.10 percent to 1,817 yen.

Uniqlo operator Fast Retailing slid 2.97 percent to 79,000 yen.

## Asian stocks down

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Asia-Pacific stocks fell in early trade on Thursday as the Covid surge in China cast a shadow over markets across the region.

Investors had cheered the easing of China's strict zero-Covid controls -- which had hammered the world's second-largest economy -- but are now worried about the impact of the outbreak on global supply chains and inflation.

The United States, Japan and Italy have imposed restrictions on visitors from China, and a senior US official warned that the surge increases the potential for new Covid variants to emerge.

Hong Kong and Tokyo were both down more than one percent in early trade. Sydney, Singapore, Shanghai, Taipei and Seoul were also in the red.

Volumes were thin in the final trading week of the year, with investors chewing on the prospects of a recession in 2023, and how central banks -- especially the US Federal Reserve -- are going to handle the fight against rampaging inflation.

The Fed and others have repeatedly raised interest rates to put the brakes on soaring prices, but higher borrowing costs also slow down economic activity.

# Country faces no threat of default: Ahsan Iqbal

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Planning Development & Special Initiatives, Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Thursday dispelled the rumors related to default risks of the country and called for adopting export oriented policies for public and private sector to accelerate export led growth.

The minister made these remarks while chairing a roundtable on 'Conducive Business Environment' organized by the Ministry of Planning Commission on Thursday. The roundtable was attended by the representatives of relevant ministries, chambers of commerce and other relevant stakeholders.

"A specific political party is propagating the rumors about the country's default for the political objectives; however, Pakistan has come out of economic crises successfully after taking tough deci-

sions," he said.

The minister said that anyone who talks about the default of the country is Pakistan's enemy and the politics of those who declare Pakistan as default will default soon. To promote private sector investments, we need to create an enabling and investor-friendly environment in the country while emphasizing to increase exports to up to 100 billion dollars.

The problems faced by the country will be solved under the leadership of the Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif who has adopted the path of stability while moving the country in the right direction, he added.

Furthermore, he said that China offers Pakistan a 'potential export market' which we must take advantage of while emphasizing the importance of local and foreign investors in the country which he believes

should be top priority. "There are immense opportunities for exports in the Chinese market but unfortunately, Pakistan has only 3 billion dollars' contribution in China's 2250 billion dollar exports which must be increased," remarked the Minister.

The Minister asked country's chambers of commerce to take special measures in increasing exports to China while reiterating that the Planning Ministry is committed to facilitate through one-window operation.

While referring to the recent floods, the Minister said that recent floods had affected the country badly. However, he said that Pakistan has managed to rescue the country during this humanitarian crisis and reiterated that flood-affected areas will be given a top priority during the rehabilitation phase.

# Shaukat Khanum Hospital, Lahore 28 years of providing hope to cancer patients celebrated

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Twenty-eight years ago on December 29, 1994, Pakistan's first dedicated cancer hospital opened in Lahore as a symbol of hope for cancer patients. Shaukat Khanum Memorial Cancer Hospital and Research Centre (SKMCH&RC), once considered a mere dream, became a reality because of the unprecedented support of the Pakistani people. Yesterday, SKMCH&RC in Lahore marked the completion of twenty-eight years of serving humanity and the Hospital in Peshawar marked its 7th anniversary.

On this occasion, Dr Faisal Sultan, the Chief Executive Officer of SKMCH&RC said, "I want to thank all the donors and supporters who make it possible for us to continue to provide state-of-the-art cancer treatment, free of charge, to over 75 percent of our patients. Shaukat Khanum Hospitals in Lahore, in Peshawar, and



soon in Karachi, aim to provide quality cancer treatment to cancer patients, irrespective of their ability to pay.

These hospitals were built and are able to treat more patients each year because of the unstinting support of the Pakistani people who generously give their donations and Zakat to this cause. This unwavering support over the years meant that we were able to embark on the construction of Pakistan's

biggest cancer hospital in Karachi.

The hospital will be twice the size of our hospital in Lahore and will especially benefit the people of Sindh and Balochistan. The physical structure of our third hospital is complete and finishing work is underway. I am confident that with your ongoing support, we will complete the project on time and will celebrate its inauguration in late-December, 2023".

# Stocks wobble as China's Covid surge spooks investors

LONDON (AFP/APP): Stocks sank in Asia and wavered in Europe on Thursday, with sentiment clouded by China's Covid surge. The United States has joined a growing number of countries in imposing restrictions on visitors from China after Beijing announced it would remove curbs on overseas travel as Covid cases surge.

Investors had previously cheered the easing of the nation's strict zero-Covid controls -- which had hammered the world's second-largest economy -- but are now worried about the impact of the outbreak on global supply chains and inflation.

Hong Kong stocks slid 0.8 percent and Tokyo lost 0.9 percent, while Sydney, Singapore, Shanghai, Taipei and Seoul also lan-

guished in the red. Europe lapsed into negative territory at the open, before diverging as the morning progressed.

"The Covid spike (in China) looks to be impacting sentiment in markets, especially with other countries now taking action due to the scale of the surge," Craig Erlam, analyst at trading platform OANDA, told AFP. "There is a risk... that the relaxation of curbs will cause some disruption and have knock-on effects elsewhere."

Yet volumes were thin in the final trading week of the year, with investors chewing on the prospects of a recession in 2023, and how central banks -- especially the US Federal Reserve -- are going to handle the fight against rampaging inflation.

"More broadly, equity markets are just drifting into the New Year and will continue to be choppy for the rest of the week in what I expect will be very thin trade," Erlam added.

The Fed and others have repeatedly raised interest rates to put the brakes on soaring prices this year, but higher borrowing costs also slow down economic activity. Wall Street tanked Wednesday, with the Dow losing 1.1 percent and the tech-rich Nasdaq sliding 1.4 percent, extinguishing hope of a prolonged festive rally.

World oil prices fell sharply on Thursday, with traders concerned that the new China outbreak could fuel a global resurgence of the pandemic and ravage energy demand once again.

## Dollar falls against yen

WASHINGTON/LONDON (Reuters): The dollar slipped on Thursday after rising in the previous session, with investors on edge at the end of the year as initial optimism over China's reopening fizzled out.

After hitting a one-week high against the yen on Wednesday, which saw the dollar touch 134.40, the greenback hit a session low against the yen on Thursday.

The dollar last fell 1.050% versus the yen to 133.065.

The dollar also fell against the Swiss franc to as low as 0.9208, the lowest level since March 31. It was last down 0.57% at 0.923.

The euro edged higher, up 0.3% to \$1.064 after falling 0.27% on Wednesday.

Investors are weighing the impact of China's rapid loosening of its strict COVID-19 rules with a

surge in new infections.

Following China's removal of its quarantine rule for inbound travelers from Jan. 8, the United States, Japan, India and other countries said they would require COVID tests for travelers from China.

"China is one of the keys I think to 2023 and what happens to the global economy," said Chris Gaffney, president of world markets

at TIAA Bank.

"If they can bounce back from the dramatic slow-downs that we've seen, that helps the overall growth on the global scale, but on the other hand, it could also lead to higher energy demand and more demand means higher prices," he said.

The offshore Chinese yuan fell 0.23% versus the greenback at \$6.9788 per dollar.





In brief

Manchester City beat Leeds United

LONDON (Agencies): Manchester City beat Leeds United 3-1 on Wednesday in an English Premier League Week 17 match. The first half seemed destined to end goalless until Manchester City midfielder Rodri found the net in the 46th minute at Elland Road in Leeds. The Citizens picked up where they left off in the second half when Norwegian star Erling Haaland scored in the 51st minute. Haaland netted again in minute 64 to score his 20th goal in the league and give a 3-goal lead to his team. Pascal Struijk brought one back for Leeds with his header in the 73rd minute. The Citizens raised their points to 35 and kept their chase of leaders Arsenal, who has 40 points. Leeds United is in the 15th spot in the table with 15 points.

PAF T20 Cricket Championships

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Air Force (PAF) T20 Cricket Championships Trophy for the Blind will commence here at the PAF Cricket Ground in Sector E-9 on Friday. The four-day event is being organized by the Islamabad Cricket Club of the Blind in collaboration with the PAF, said a press release on Thursday. As many as four teams including Peshawar, Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK), Gujranwala and Islamabad are participating in the event. On first day two matches will be played. In the first match AJK will take on Gujranwala, while in the second match hosts Islamabad will face Peshawar.

Messi gifts Dhoni's daughter jersey

LAHORE (INP): Argentinian star footballer Lionel Messi has fulfilled his dream of lifting the FIFA World Cup trophy in 2022 after beating France in the final on Dec 18. Fans and followers of the legendary footballer want to get their hands on his jersey, however, only a few have gotten it. Recently, former Indian cricket team captain MS Dhoni revealed that his daughter has received a signed jersey from Messi. Ziva Singh Dhoni, whose Instagram account is managed by her parents, could be seen wearing Argentina's shirt signed by Messi. "Like father, like daughter!" the picture was captioned.

Rashid named Twenty20 captain

KABUL (Agencies): Rashid Khan will captain Afghanistan in Twenty20 internationals after being named as the replacement for Mohammad Nabi by the Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB) on Thursday. Nabi stepped down as captain in November, after Afghanistan were eliminated from the T20 World Cup without winning a match. This will be Rashid's second stint as captain. The spinner resigned immediately after Afghanistan's squad was announced for the 2021 World Cup last year, saying the selection committee had not obtained his consent for the team. "I have the experience of leading my country before, there is a great bunch of guys with whom I have a good understanding and feel pretty comfortable," Rashid said. "We will try to stick together, will work hard to put things on the right track and bring pride and joy to our country and nation." Rashid's first assignment as captain will be a three-match T20 series against the United Arab Emirates in February.

# Pakistan in trouble after Williamson hits double century

KARACHI (AP): New Zealand pushed Pakistan onto the backfoot in the first test after Kane Williamson hit a marathon unbeaten double century on Thursday. Williamson's 200 not out in 10 hours earned New Zealand a meaningful 174-run lead as the visitors declared at a monumental 612-9 at tea, with tailender Ish Sodhi scoring a career-best 65. New Zealand spinners Michael Bracewell and Ish Sodhi made early inroads in the final session to reduce Pakistan to 77-2 at stumps. Pakistan still trails by 97 runs on a wicket which has some encouragement for spinners from the bowlers' footmarks. "We know there's a lot of hard work to do," Williamson said. "It's (the pitch) definitely deteriorated a bit, there's lot more rough (bowlers' footmarks) as we saw towards the backend of our innings ... lot of variable bounce." Imam-ul-Haq saw off the session with an unbeaten 45 while nightwatchman Nauman Ali survived an umbrella of fielders around him in the last over to go not out on 4. Abdullah Shafique once again threw away his wicket as he was caught low down at short mid-on for 17 after attempting a needless drive against offspinner Michael Bracewell. Shafique had fallen cheaply in Pakistan's first innings score of 438 when he came down the wicket off Ajaz Patel in only the fourth over of the game and got stumped. Lefthander Masood was out lbw for 10 after he went onto the backfoot against

Sodhi's sharp delivery. Captain Tim Southee ended Pakistan's long frustrating time in the field when he declared just after Williamson lifted mystery spinner Abrar Ahmed over extra cover for his 21st boundary and then raised his fifth double hundred with a single that also featured a six. Abrar, who took 17 wickets in two test matches against England earlier this month, finished with 5-205 but not before Williamson and Sodhi had extended the lead with a 159-run seventh-wicket stand on a slow turning wicket. "Technically, Williamson is a very sound batter and he took singles so easily on even good balls," Abrar said. Williamson and Sodhi dug in for well over 1 1/2 hours into the second session after New Zealand resumed on 440-2 before Pakistan claimed three quick wickets through spinners. "We wanted to bat longer and get a few (runs) more on the board," Williamson said. "The contribution from Ish Sodhi with the bat was really important ... we need some patience going into tomorrow and try to utilize the assistance off the surface as well as we can." Both put on 79 runs in the first session and batted with determination even when Pakistan took the second new ball. They stood firm against the googlies and legspin of Abrar while leftarm spinner Nauman (3-185) couldn't pose problem from the footmarks. Sodhi finally holed out soon after crossing his previous test best of

63 – also against Pakistan in 2014 – while Southee and Neil Wagner followed without scoring. Williamson was on 186 when last man Ajaz Patel walked in but went into the 190s with a straight six over the head of Abrar before eventually reaching his second double hundred against Pakistan in a 395-ball knock. It was Williamson's first international score of over 100 in almost two years since he made 238 against Pakistan at Christchurch in January 2021. Williamson fully capitalized on two stumping chances early in his innings and also twice successfully overturned onfield lbw rulings against him through television referrals as Pakistan rued the missed opportunities. Sodhi batted with a lot of patience and hit three boundaries against seamer Mir Hamza on the off side of the wicket after Pakistan took the third new ball. Hamza, also making a comeback after playing his only previous test against Australia in 2018, could have had his first wicket in the penultimate over before the break but Pakistan didn't appeal as the TV replays suggested he got a thin outside edge of Sodhi's bat. New Zealand's lead was 24 when Nauman came close to dismissing Williamson on 116 in his second over of the day. But Williamson quickly went for a successful television referral against umpire Aleem Dar's lbw ruling after he missed a full-length delivery down the legside and the TV replays suggested the ball had pitched outside the off stump.



KARACHI: New Zealand's Kane Williamson celebrates after scoring 200 runs during the fourth day of first test cricket match.

## Melbourne looks into hosting Pakistan, India test

MELBOURNE (INP): The Melbourne Cricket Club (MCC) is looking into the possibility of hosting a test match between India and Pakistan, who have not played each other in the longest format of the game since 2007 with bilateral cricket between the neighbors' suspended. Since India hosted Pakistan in a bilateral limited overs series in 2013 the pair have only competed against each other at 20- and 50-overs World Cups and the Asia Cup. The last time they met was at the Twenty20 World Cup in October, where more than 90,000 fans piled into the Melbourne Cricket Ground to watch India win a last-ball thriller. MCC Chief Executive Stuart Fox said the atmosphere at that match showed there would be no problem filling the venue for a test series between the two. "The atmosphere for that game, I've never felt anything like it," Fox told radio station SEN. "The noise after every ball was phenomenal. Three (tests) in a row would be lovely at the MCG, you'd fill it every time. "We've taken that up with Cricket Australia. I know the (Victoria) government has as well. It's enormously complicated from what I can understand, amongst a really busy schedule. So I think that's probably the greater challenge." Fox said he hoped Cricket Australia would keep pushing the proposal with the International Cricket Council, the sport's global governing body. "When you do see some of the stadiums around the world unoccupied, I think it would be much better to have a full house and that atmosphere and celebrating the game with full houses," added.

## Australia crush South Africa again to seal series



MELBOURNE (Agencies): Australia thrashed South Africa by an innings and 182 runs in the second Test to win the series with a game to spare. Resuming on 15-1, South Africa were bowled out for 204 before tea on the fourth day at the Melbourne Cricket Ground. Off-spinner Nathan Lyon claimed 3-58, including Temba Bavuma for 65, while Khaya Zondo and Keshav Maharaj were needlessly run out. The final Test in Sydney starts on 3 January. Australia, who won the first Test inside two days, extended their lead over India at the top of the World Test Championship table. South Africa, who began the series in second, are now fourth. Australia captain Pat Cummins described his side, who have won seven of their 11 Tests in 2022, as "probably the best test team I've played in". "In terms of captaining, I don't feel like I have to do much at all," he said. "Everyone looks after themselves. You just kind of make sure the buses are on time, which the team manager does. "It's just in a really sweet spot at the moment. We can just sit back and appreciate the place that we are in because it's really special. We're having a hell of a lot of fun as well doing it together with some of our best mates." South Africa captain Dean Elgar said: "That was bit of a hammering. It is not easy at the moment. "We're playing for the badge; we're playing for the pride of our team. I'm sure there's a lot of guys hurting." Australia's victory at the MCG was all but certain after they posted a mammoth 575-8 declared - featuring 200 from David Warner and Alex Carey's 111 - in reply to South Africa's 189. Although the tourists avoided an eighth successive total of less than 200, they never looked likely to take the game into a fifth day. Bavuma was the only batter to make more than 33 as Scott Boland claimed 2-49 on his home ground and Cummins, who removed Elgar on the third evening, conceded only 20 runs from 16 overs and reviewed two decisions that were overturned by the TV umpire. Part-time leg-spinner Steve Smith sealed victory in the Shane Warne Test by bowling Lungi Ngidi. Pace bowler Mitchell Starc, who bowled 18 overs in the second innings despite dislocating a finger on the opening day, will miss the third Test. All-rounder Cameron Green, who took 5-27 in the first innings and broke a finger during his unbeaten 51, has also been ruled out.

## Yousaf Khalil advances to semi-finals

ISLAMABAD (APP): Yousaf Khalil moved to the semi-finals of the 7th Serena Hotels National Ranking Tennis Tournament after toppling Muzammil Murtaza in the quarter-final here at PTF-SDA Tennis Complex on Thursday. Yousaf won the fixture 6-3,1-6,6-1. In ladies singles quarter-finals, Esha Jawad edged passed Amna Ali Qayum 6-4,6-0, while Sarah Mahboob saw off Kainat Ali 6-0,6-0 and Meheq Khokhar outclassed Amarah Khan 6-1,6-1. Fixtures in other categories were also held on Thursday. Following are the results:- Boys Singles 18 & Under 2nd Round: Rahim Veqar bt Amir Mazari 6-2, 6-1; Asad Zaman bt Ibrahim Saqib 6-0,6-4; Uzair Khan bt M. Slar Khan 6-3, 5-7,6-3; Mahatir Muhammad bt Taimoor Ansari 6-0,6-1; Sami Zeb Khan bt Abdul Rafay 6-0,6-0; Ahmed Nael Qureshi bt Abdul Basit 6-2,6-1; Hamid Israr bt Hamza Asim 6-3,6-3; Bilal Asim bt Hamza Roman 6-1, 6-2. Meanwhile, rain affected several matches on Thursday, which will now be held on Friday.

## PCB, Balochistan Govt to jointly renovate stadium

QUETTA (APP): The Balochistan Government and the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Thursday decided to jointly renovate a cricket stadium in Quetta with proper arrangements for holding PSL matches in the provincial metropolis. The decision to the effect was taken during a meeting of PCB officials with Principal Secretary of Balochistan Chief Minister, Imran Kichki. During the meeting, issues pertaining to holding of Pakistan Super League (PSL) matches in Quetta were discussed in detail. It was assured that effective steps would be taken for the security of teams and fans. Imran Kichki said holding of PSL matches in the provincial capital would give an opportunity to the local cricket players to improve their game. Both the grounds and weather conditions in Quetta were suitable for holding summer cricket camps, he added. He said Chief Minister Mir Abdul Quddus Bizenjo had deep interest in promoting sports activities in the province. The provincial government, he said, was playing an important role in keeping hockey and football alive at the national level. He said there were a lot of talented cricket players across Balochistan as the game was played at Tehsil level, and organizing matches like the PSL would give them an opportunity to come forward and show their prowess.

## Djokovic can't forget being deported but ready to move on in Australia

ADELAIDE (Reuters): Novak Djokovic will never forget how it felt to be deported from Australia earlier this year but the Serb said his willingness to return for next month's Grand Slam at Melbourne Park shows the depth of feeling he has for the country. Djokovic was deported on the eve of the 2022 Australian Open in January for not being vaccinated against COVID-19 and received a three-year travel ban for the country. However, the former world number one's visa ban was waived in November, opening up a path for Djokovic to target a 10th Australian Open crown and giving him a chance to tie Rafa Nadal's mark of 22 Grand Slam titles. "You can't forget those events, it's one of those



things that stick with you," said Djokovic in his first news conference since returning to Australia. "It stays with you for the rest of your life. It's something I've never experienced before and hopefully never again, but it is a valuable life experience for me. "But I have to move on and coming back to Australia speaks about how I feel about this country and how I feel about playing here." Djokovic will warm up for the Australian Open by playing in the Adelaide International starting on Jan. 1 and he is hoping for a warm reception from local fans. "It's a great place and the people in Adelaide, and generally in Australia, love tennis, love sports and it's a sporting nation so hopefully we're going to have a lot of people watching and

we can have a good time," Djokovic said. "I'm hoping everything is going to be positive. Obviously, it's not something that I can predict. I'll do my best to play some good tennis and bring good emotions and good feelings to the crowd." Djokovic said his overall experience in Australia had not been soured by what happened in January. "What happened 12 months ago was not easy to digest for some time but at the same time I had to move on. Those circumstances will not replace what I have lived in Melbourne and in Australia throughout my entire career," Djokovic said. "So I come with positive emotions and I really look forward to playing there. It's been my favourite Grand Slam, the results prove that."

## Rizwan, Nida Dar among ICC T20I cricketer of the year nominees

DUBAI (Monitoring Desk): The International Cricket Council (ICC) on Thursday announced the nominations for the ICC T20I cricketer of the year with Pakistan wicketkeeper-batter Mohammad Rizwan and all-rounder Nida Dar making the cut in their respective sections. In the men's section, the other three nominees are India's Suryakumar Yadav, England's Sam Surran and Zimbabwe's Sikander Raza. Rizwan was also crowned the T20I cricketer of the year by the ICC in 2021. Among the leading run-scorers in the 20-over format this year, Yadav is at the top spot with 1,164 runs followed by Rizwan (996 runs), Virat Kohli (781 runs) and Sikander Raza (735 runs). While Curran was nominated for his "remarkable T20 World Cup" show this year. "His best showing came in the final against Pakistan in Melbourne, where he conceded just 12 runs in his four overs while taking three wickets," the ICC said, adding he was also named the player of the match. Hailing Rizwan for his consistency in the format, the cricket body said the Pakistani opener amassed 996 runs with nine catches and three stumpings in 25 matches in the outgoing year. It said Rizwan also smashed 10 half-centuries in 2022 in T20Is, and finished with 175 runs in the T20 World Cup, the joint-most by a Pakistan batter.



"Averaging 45.27 in T20Is in 2022, Rizwan enhanced his reputation as a high-quality anchor at the top of Pakistan's batting line-up," the statement said. The ICC recounted that Rizwan's best performance came in the home series against England in the build-up to the T20 World Cup when he scored an unbeaten 88 off just 51 balls as Pakistan scaled a 200-plus target without the loss of a wicket. Women's nominees Aside from Nida Dar, the women nominees are India's Smriti Mandhana, New Zealand's Sophie Devine and Australia's Tahlia McGrath. Dar made 396 runs in 16 matches at an average of 56.57, and 15 wickets. Dar is the first and the only Pakistan bowler to have claimed 100 T20I wickets, and currently, the second-highest wicket-taker in Women's T20Is, according to the ICC. But she also impressed with the bat. She struck three fifty-plus scores this year: an unbeaten fifty at the Commonwealth Games, similar exploits against India at the Asia Cup, and a well-made 61 at home against Ireland in

adjudged player of the match for her match-winning contributions. ICC nominates Babar Azam for Men's ODI Player of the Year DUBAI (INP): Pakistani skipper Babar Azam has been nominated for the International Cricket Council (ICC) ODI Player of the Year award for the second successive year. Babar, who won the prestigious award in 2021, has been nominated this year too following his sublime record in ODIs with Australia's Adam Zampa, Zimbabwe's Sikander Raza and West Indies's Shai Hope as the other three nominees. The top-ranked ODI batter, who has been ruling the rankings chart since April 2021, accumulated 679 runs in nine matches. Babar carried on his astounding form in the 50-over format and crossed the fifty-plus score eight times and converted three of those into centuries. Babar finished the year with a stunning average of 84.87. "The ICC Men's ODI Cricketer of the Year 2021 is in the running to do a repeat in 2022. Pakistan captain Babar Azam once again showed his prowess in the 50-over format," said ICC in a press release. "It was a memorable year for Babar as captain of the Pakistan ODI team, winning three series out of three. Pakistan were unstoppable in the ODI format, losing just one match (against Australia) out of nine," the statement added.





## In brief

### NHA chalks out plan for Motorway

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Highway Authority (NHA) Thursday chalked out plans for 270-kilometre-long, Hub-Dureji-Dadu Motorway (M7) to connect more cities in the country to the Motorway Network. According to the official document available with APP, NHA has sought consultancy services for a feasibility study and detailed design for the construction of the M7 Motorway. M-7 is a portion of the south-bound motorway from Islamabad to Karachi and after its completion, there will be less traffic on M-6. The 270-kilometre-long highway will feature six service areas. Earlier this month, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif laid down the groundwork for the 306-kilometre-long, Sukkur-Hyderabad Motorway (M-6). The Sukkur-Hyderabad Motorway is the final segment of the Peshawar-Karachi Motorway, which will interconnect major cities in Pakistan.

### CDA retrieves 400 kanal land

ISLAMABAD (APP): Enforcement teams of Capital Development Authority (CDA) on Thursday conducted a mega anti-encroachment operation in Sector C-16, demolished several illegal constructions and retrieved 400 kanals state land. The operation was carried out on the instructions of the CDA chairman. The land in Gandhara enclave, in Sector C-16 Mauza Sangiani, which is about 400 kanals, was illegally occupied by the local people. With the help of district administration, six shops, four hotel kiosks and 23 rooms were demolished during the operation. In a separate operation, plastic bags were also seized from several shops in Sector I-9/4 and I-9/2 during a crackdown against those violating the Prohibited Plastic Products Regulation 2019.

### Power suspension programme

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Thursday issued a power suspension programme for Friday 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 04:00 PM Mianwala, Mithial, Azeem Shaheed, Bhatiot, Chajjimar, Kisan feeders and surrounding areas.

### CTP to take action against 'wheelies'

RAWALPINDI (APP): City Traffic Police (CTP) Rawalpindi have decided to take strict action against one-wheeling and car stunts by youngsters on eve of New Year's night. According to the traffic police spokesman, on the directives of Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Taimoor Khan, the police had finalized arrangements to take action in accordance with the law against the rules violators. Moreover, 320 traffic wardens would be deployed on city roads to ensure smooth flow of traffic and control one-wheeling. The CTO had instructed the traffic wardens to net those involved in the one-wheeling and car-racing. He said the CTP, in this regard, had formed seven special squads to arrest the violators and impound their vehicles. He informed that several arrangements were made to curb the activity aimed at protecting the youngsters as one-wheeling was one of the causes of death and severe injuries for the riders.



ISLAMABAD: Adviser to the Prime Minister on Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan Affairs, Qamar Zaman Kaira calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

## Covid sub variant surveillance system operational: Qadir

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination, Abdul Qadir Patel on Thursday said that the government has strengthened the role of Border and Health Services in Pakistan to deal with any sub-variant of Covid-19. Addressing a meeting of the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC), which was held here at the National Institute of Health (NIH) to discuss the COVID-19 situation, the minister said that there was a surveillance system at all

entry points of the country including airports.

He said that the situation was completely under control and asked the general public to avoid listening to rumors. He added that the Corona case passivity ratio was just 0.3 to 0.5 in the country while 90 percent of the country's population already got the COVID-19 vaccine.

He said that there will be rapid tests and screening of passengers at all airports. He said that an efficient system with a proper management team was fully functional in the country to

remain vigilant and was ready to make an emergency plan to deal with any sub-variant of Covid-19.

He said that Border and Health Services Pakistan was ensuring the implementation of international health regulations. He added further steps were being taken to strengthen the role of Border and Health Services Pakistan.

He said that in case of any untoward situation the health system was fully prepared to deal with any sub-variant of the Omicron variant of COVID-19 including BF.7 in the country.

## 30 tourist vehicles got stuck in snow at Pir Chinasi

ISLAMABAD (APP): More than 30 vehicles of tourists got stuck in the snow at the tourist spot Pir Chinasi; teams were dispatched from Muzaffarabad to rescue them. According to private media reports, around 30 vehicles of tourists got stuck in the snow in Pir Chinasi area of Muzaffarabad, the capital of Azad Kashmir.

Rescue 1122 teams and police were dispatched from Muzaffarabad to evacuate the tourists.

According to Muzaffarabad police there was no snow removal machinery in Peer-Chinasi, however, machinery with chains has been dispatched to the incident. Police further said that the Deputy Commissioner, SP and other civil officials have reached the spot, the passengers will be shifted to a safe place by other vehicles.

## Rain, snow expected over the mountains, GB, Kashmir

ISLAMABAD (APP): Cold waves will grip most parts of the country while rain and snow over the mountains is expected in Gilgit-Baltistan and Kashmir during the next 24 hours according to the forecast of the Pakistan Meteorological Department.

According to the synoptic situation, continental air was prevailing over most parts of the country. A shallow trough of the westerly wave was likely to approach the western parts today.

Cold waves will grip most parts of the country while, while very cold in the upper parts.

However, light rain/light snow over the mountains is expected at north and eastern Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, upper and central Punjab, Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan.

Dense foggy conditions are likely to continue over plain areas of Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and upper Sindh.

During the last 24 hours, cold and dry weather prevailed over most parts of the country while rainfall occurred in Balochistan, Punjab, upper Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and upper Sindh.

## President calls for a consensus-based nationwide energy conservation

ISLAMABAD (INP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Thursday called for launching a consensus-based nationwide, comprehensive and all-encompassing electricity, gas and water conservation strategies to conserve precious national resources and divert them for the welfare and prosperity of the people.

The president, during a meeting on energy conservation at Aiwan-e-Sadr, underscored that a comprehensive policy and programme should be prepared after consulting all stakeholders, including the provinces, besides launching an awareness campaign across the country to conserve electricity, gas and water.

Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Minister for Defence, Khawaja Muhammad Asif, Minister for Economic Affairs, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, Minister for Industries and Production, Syed Murtaza

Mahmud, Federal Minister for Energy, Engr. Khurram Dastgir Khan, Minister of State for Petroleum, Musadik Masood Malik, and senior officials of the Power, Finance, and Industries Division, and National Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority (NEECA), attended the meeting. The president said that there was a need to generate out-of-the-box ideas, absorb creative ideas, benchmark best practices around the world, develop policies and strategies around them and ensure their implementation on a timeline basis to achieve the desired objectives in the shortest possible timeframe.

"Pakistan can make rapid and accelerated progress in all sectors provided it enhanced and accelerated the implementation speed on initiatives of national importance, following a strict timeline while maintaining quality and ensuring desired outputs and outcomes", he observed.

## IHC rejects accused request in Noor Mukadam case

ISLAMABAD (NNI): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Thursday rejected the request of Zahir Jaffar, the main accused in Noor Mukadam murder case, to make his foreign nationality documents as part of the case. Chief Justice Aamer Farooq heard the case filed by Zahir Jaffar. The petitioner's lawyer adopted the stance that it should be on record that the accused also had already made it clear

The chief justice remarked that how it affected the case even if the foreign nationality documents were put record. Whether the accused wanted to take advantage of him being a US national. If it were the case then anyone (foreign national) could come to Pakistan and then flee abroad go after killing someone here, he observed. CJ Aamer Farooq said it had already made it clear

that the law of land would be applied in the case.

The court maintained the objections of Registrar Office on the plea and dismissed the case.

The Registrar Office had objected that no such petition could be filed once the decision in the main appeal was reserved. A two-judge bench headed by Chief Justice Aamer Farooq heard the case along with the objections.

## Authorities direct to take strict action against smog SOPs violators

RAWALPINDI (APP): Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, Saqib Manan here on Thursday directed the authorities concerned to take strict action in accordance with the law against the violators of smog Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) issued by the government to control smog and fog. While reviewing the measures taken by the Environment Department for smog he said that industrial units, brick kilns and transports violating the rules should be dealt with iron hands.

The crackdown should be accelerated and action should also be taken against those causing smog by burning crop residue and smoke-emitting vehicles.

He further said that the brick kilns of old technology should be instructed to convert their kilns to the new technology as soon as possible and geo-tagging of all registered kilns should be completed soon in order to protect the people from air pollution and the diseases.

He expressed these views while addressing the participants of a meeting held in the Commissioner's Office regard-

ing smog. Additional Commissioner, Coordination, Syed Nazarat Ali, Additional Deputy Commissioner, Headquarters, Marzia Saleem, ADC (G) Nosheen Sarwar, Secretary Regional Transport Authority and other concerned officers attended the meeting.

On this occasion, the commissioner was informed about the details of the anti-smog campaign in Rawalpindi district. Action was being taken against the rules violators without any discrimination that causes smog. 3559 smoke-emitting vehicles were issued challan slips and a fines amounting to over Rs 2.1 million were imposed on the violators during last one month. Apart from this, an industrial unit for violating environmental laws was also sealed and a fine amounting to Rs 100,000 was imposed on it.

During the anti-smog operations, 62 brick kilns were sealed in Rawalpindi district, 27 in Chakwal and 18 in Attock while FIRs were also lodged against 73 rules violators. Total fines amounting to Rs 6.4 million were imposed in the division.

## Amnesty scheme for 'overstaying foreigners' to expire on Dec 31

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Amnesty scheme for foreigners staying over an extended period in Pakistan will expire on December 31, 2022.

The Ministry of Interior in a notification issued on Thursday had directed the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) to stop extend-

ing the amnesty scheme to the said individuals residing in Pakistan after the expiry of the due date.

The ministry of interior had given a general amnesty scheme for overstaying foreigners to exit Pakistan without paying charges with a cutoff date of December 31, 2022. After the expiry of the amnesty scheme's period,

foreigners who have overstayed for more than one year may be put into the blacklist category, barring their entry to Pakistan in the future. The NADRA received online applications till December 29, 2022. The penalty charges would be imposed on those overstaying in the country after the date of January 01, 2023.



ISLAMABAD: Mercury rapidly drops due to light rain followed in the twin cities.



Project completed in Kunduz

KUNDUZ (Agencies): The local officials of Kunduz said that the works of a canal and a water reservoir have been completed with a cost of 15 million Afghanis in the Aliabad district. The canal project, which was carried out under the title of ABADAI has a 135 meter long canal reinforced with RCC, 123 meter stone work, 16 meter long gabion wall, 22 cubic meter water reservoir, 110 meter long Includes deep wells and 5,000 trenches.

5 injured in road accident

ZABUL (Agencies): Local traffic officials of Zabul informed saying that 5 people were injured in a traffic accident in the, the capital city of the province in Qalat. The provincial head of Public Health of Zabul, Dr. Abdul Hakeem Hakeemi, told that in collision of a car 5 people injured, in the center of this province. A similar incidents happened on the main road of Kabul and Kandahar from time to time, which lead to casualties of some people.

UN: Some programs halted over ban on women aid workers

KABUL (TOLONews): The United Nations in a statement said that some agencies in Afghanistan have stopped their activities and warned that some other programs will also halt their operations because of the Islamic Emirate's decision to ban women from working in non-governmental organizations.

UN's Principals of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on Afghanistan in a statement said that banning women from working in humanitarian non-governmental organizations is a major blow to vulnerable communities, women, children, and the country.

The committee added that women are teachers, nutrition experts, team leaders, community health workers, vaccinators, nurses, doctors, and heads of organizations, and have access to populations that

male employees cannot reach, their participation in aid delivery is not negotiable and must continue, some organization for lack of female staff has to pause their activities.

"We foresee that many activities will need to be paused as we cannot deliver principled humanitarian assistance without female aid workers," the committee said. The UN committee urged the Islamic Emirate to reverse the ban on women's schools, universities and work.

Meanwhile, foreign ministries of 12 countries, including the US and the UK, in a statement expressed grave concern about the Islamic Emirate's decision to bar women from working in NGOs. They said that the decision puts at risk millions of Afghans who depend on humanitarian assistance for their survival.

"NGOs will be unable to reach the country's most vulnerable people to provide food, medicine, winterization, and other materials and services they need to live, this would also affect the humanitarian assistance provided by international organizations, as international organizations utilize NGOs to deliver such materials and services," the statement said.

They called on the Islamic Emirate to reverse immediately their decision to ban women from working in NGOs.

According to international organizations, over 28 million people in Afghanistan, including millions of women and children, require assistance to survive as the country grapples with the risk of famine conditions, economic decline, entrenched poverty and a brutal winter.

10,000 needy families received assistance

KABUL (Agencies): In Nangarhar, Paktia, Laghman, Jawzjan and Logar provinces, 10,382 needy families received humanitarian assistance. With the financial support of IRC and DACAAR, 134 families in Achin and Dara Noor districts received health tool containing 19 pieces of non-food items.

In Paktia, the World Food Programme distributed food items to 4,500 needy families in Rohani Baba, Dande Patan and Chamkan districts of this province. 300 widows in Alishang district of Laghman to received humanitarian aids.

In the capital of this province, Mehtarlam city, 72 returnees and internally displaced families received cash aid of 58,000 US dollars by the UNHCR organization. The UNHCR organization provided cash assistance to 109 families in Jawzjan, in which each family received 275 dollars.

Based on another report, Cash aid was distributed to 5,771 families by the World Food Programme in Logar, where 4,300 Afghanis distributed to each family.

MoFA conduct training

KABUL (Agencies): The Ministry of Foreign Affairs commenced a diplomatic training course for the Ministry employees.

A momentary diplomatic training course under the title of "specialized diplomatic training program" has been conduct in the Department of Diplomacy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said Foreign Ministry in a statement. 31 employees of ministries and departments participate in this program and the training continued for at least three days.

In this program, subjects including international relations, intimacy with international organizations, history of the Islamic Emirate, policies and goals, and intellectual education are taught by professors and experts, according to the Ministry.

Soldiers and policemen graduated

KABUL (Agencies): hundreds of soldiers and policemen have graduated from the educational and training centers of these provinces after intellectual and military training, say security officials of Nangarhar and Balkh.

460 soldiers graduated from Nangarhar East Zone Police Education and Training after a month and a half of intellectual and military training.

The chief of this center, Rahmatullah Nomani, said during a ceremony addressing the soldiers: "You are the servants of the people, you will try your best to serve the people.12,500 soldiers have graduated from this educational and training center after intellectual and military training, he added.

Meanwhile, a number of policemen graduated from Balkh Education and Training Center. The Balkh Police Education and Training Center Mawlawi Fazl ur Rahman Nusrat said to the graduates that they should not rely only on these studies, but they should strives to glow at the country level.

24 instructors from a 15-day capacity building course, 45 engineers from a one-week mine identification course, 37 from a one-week seminar on site inspection, 25 Instructors graduated from a three-day orientation seminar and 77 guards graduated from a 30-day course.

China ready to invest in coal power generation

KABUL (Agencies): China wants to invest in the production of 500 megawatts of electricity from coal in Afghanistan.

The Executive Director of Da Afghan Breshna Sherkat, Mullah Muhammad Hanif Hamzah, met with the representative of the Chamber of Commerce of China, according to DABS statement.

The representative of the Chinese chambers of commerce told tDa Afghan Breshna Sherkat senior official that they want to invest in the production of 500 megawatts of electricity from coal in Afghanistan.

They are ready to install their production and technical equipment for this



objective in any province Afghanistan wants, according to DABS.

For his part, Hamza thanked the representative of the Chinese chambers of

commerce and said that a joint technical delegation of Da Afghan Breshana Sherkat and China will discuss and exchange opinions on all issues through joint

meetings to reach this goal. He assured all kinds of cooperation in providing any facility for investment in the electricity production sector in Afghanistan.

Banning women working for NGOs

US, partners urger Afghan authorities to reverse decision

KABUL (Khaama Press): The United States and its partner countries urge the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan authorities to reverse the decision barring Afghan women from working with NOGs.

The Foreign Ministers of Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Norway, Switzerland, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States and the High Representative of the European Union are gravely concerned about the Taliban's decision barring

female employees from working with national and international non-governmental organizations.

In a joint statement, the foreign ministers called on the de facto authorities of Afghanistan to urgently reverse the decision and allow the female employees to return to work and contribute towards their family incomes and livelihoods.

This gender-based restriction puts the lives of millions of Afghan households in grave danger who have depended on humanitarian aid, ever since the

takeover of power by the Taliban in August last year.

Women are absolutely vital in providing services to the much-needed Afghan society during these difficult times. Without female employees, non-governmental aid organizations cannot deliver their services in distributing medicine, food, winterization, and other life-saving facilities in different parts of the country in a timely manner.

This comes as the United Nations and a number of renowned international aid organizations have already

called on the Afghan authorities to revoke the decision and allow female employees to return to work with NGOs.

"We support the Afghan people's calls for girls and women to return to work, school, and university, and for women to continue to play essential roles in humanitarian and basic needs assistance delivery, and we urge the Taliban to respect the political, economic, social, and cultural rights of women and girls in Afghanistan," the statement reads.

Salang high closed to traffic due to heavy snowfall

SALANG PASS (Khaama Press): The authorities of Afghanistan's Salang Pass have announced that the highway is blocked for trucks or "high-tonnage" vehicles due to heavy snowfall and strong winds. Abu Mohammad Hafeez Mohammad Yaqoob, the Head of the Salang Preservation Department earlier today said to the media that the highway connecting Kabul to the northern provinces was blocked due to heavy snowfall and strong winds.

According to the authorities, the high is blocked for heavy trucks "high-tonnage" while other vehicles are allowed to cross the snow-covered pass using



tire chains.

The snowfall will continue in the Salang area for another 24 hours as per the weather forecast.

Salang is the major highway connecting Kabul to at least nine provinces in the north of Afghanistan. In the winter season, the highway

gets closed to traffic on and off mostly due to heavy rains, snowfalls as well as avalanches on certain occasions.

Proposals for projects under review: Report

KABUL (TOLONews): Work on Indian projects in Afghanistan has been halted over security and political situation, Indian media reported, citing the country's External Affairs Ministry.

Based on the reports, India's development partnership with Afghanistan includes more than 500 projects spread across each of its 34 provinces and in various sectors.

"Several proposals in this regard are already under process. Due to the political and security situation in Afghanistan, projects implementation has suffered setbacks," a statement of India's Ministry of External Affairs said as quoted by NDTV.

Afghanistan's Ministry of Economy said the resumption of development projects in the country would create job opportunities for people across the country.

"Resumption of development projects will enhance economic development, reduce poverty, and increase jobs," Deputy Minister of Economy Abdul Latif Nazari said.

According to the Ministry of Economy, work on projects supported by India has been completed by 70 percent.

"Work on 70 percent of projects has been completed in rural areas in 34 provinces, including the construction of schools,

hospitals, clinics, dormitories, local institutions, roads, water reservoirs, sport stadiums and parks," said Abdul Rahman Habib, a spokesman for the Economy Ministry.

Analysts said the resumption of India-funded projects would improve Afghanistan's relations with the region and will create jobs for the people.

"It will have a positive impact on the country's economy if they resume the projects in Afghanistan," said Darya Khan Bahr, an analyst.

Earlier, the Ministry of Urban Development said that it is expected that India will begin work on 12 projects in Afghanistan.

Interior Ministry forms 27 new districts in provinces



KABUL (TOLONews): The deputy minister of interior Noor Jalal Jalali said on Wednesday that 27 new districts have been formed at the people's will and based on the order of the Islamic Emirate's leader.

"The leader of the Islamic Emirate, out of compassion, has approved twenty-six or twenty-seven districts, and we are ready for to implement the order," said Jalali.

Analysts said that the current government should think about solving the country's key issues instead

of creating new districts. "The government should pay all of its attention once again to reopening schools. Reforms like this will not have an impact on the economic situation of the people and their families," said Torek Farhadi, a political affairs analyst.

"The decisions which are made should be fair and balanced. We have seen in

previous periods that provinces and districts have been established based on individual actions and assessments. It was neither balanced nor fair," said Mohammad Akram Arifi, a university lecturer.

Afghanistan now has 364 districts in 34 provinces. With the creation of additional districts, that number will rise to 391.

Outdate food, non-food items disposed

PAKTIKA (Agencies): 9 tons of outdate food and non-food items were collected and burnt from the shops of Sarobi, Barmal and Shekin districts of this province, say local officials of Industry and Commerce of the province.

An official at the department of Industry and Commerce of the province, Mullah Khan Hussain Haidar said that the commission for the prevention of outdate food products is monitoring all districts of the province and any outdate food and non-food items will be collected and burned.

Lately, the commission had carried out monitoring several times in the central Sharna, Matakhan, Yusuf Khel and Argon districts, according to him.

Acres of land belonging to DABS in Baghlan freed

BAGHLAN (Agencies): Local officials of Baghlan say that they have freed 10 acres of Da Afghan Breshna Sherkat's land from the grip of usurpers in that province.

The head of DABS in Baghlan, Qari Sardar Wali Hamza, said that the 10-acres of land of Ghaza Gel Substation in Khanjan District of this province, which was seized by the powerful in the ex-adminis-

tration, was returned.

Qari Hamza said that the usurpers have built about 45 residential houses on this land, and they have been assigned 15 months to leave the company's property.

He called the recovery of this land an important step in the expansion of Gaza Gel substation, adding that the districts of Andrabs will be supplied with electricity from this substation.







ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi chairing a meeting on energy conservation, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

## G7 tells Taliban to ‘urgently reverse’ ban on women aid workers

LONDON (AFP/APP): G7 foreign ministers on Thursday called on the Taliban to "urgently reverse" a ban on women working in Afghanistan's aid sector.

The ban is the latest blow against women's rights in Afghanistan since the Taliban reclaimed power last year.

The Taliban rulers also barred women from attending universities earlier this month, prompting global outrage and protests in some Afghan cities. The G7 ministers along with those of Australia, Denmark, Norway, Switzerland and the Netherlands said in a joint statement they were "gravely concerned that the Taliban's reckless and dangerous order... puts at risk millions of Afghans who depend on humanitarian assistance for their survival". "We call on the Taliban to urgently reverse this decision," they said in the statement issued by Britain's foreign ministry.

It comes after six aid bodies suspended operations in Afghanistan in response to the ban.

They included Christian Aid, ActionAid, Save the Children, the Norwegian Refugee Council and

CARE. The International Rescue Committee, which provides emergency response in health, education and other areas and employs 3,000 women across Afghanistan, also said it was suspending services.

"Women are absolutely central to humanitarian and basic needs operations. Unless they participate in aid delivery in Afghanistan, NGOs will be unable to reach the country's most vulnerable people to provide food, medicine, winterization, and other materials and services they need to live," the G7 statement said.

"The Taliban continue to demonstrate their contempt for the rights, freedoms, and welfare of the Afghan people, particularly women and girls," it added.

Christian Aid has warned that millions of people in Afghanistan are on the "verge of starvation".

"Reports that families are so desperate they have been forced to sell their children to buy food are utterly heartbreaking," said Christian Aid's head of global programmes Ray Hasan.

A ban on women aid workers would "only curtail our ability to

help the growing number of people in need", he added.

The Taliban's ban has come at a time when millions across the country are dependent on humanitarian aid provided by international donors through a vast network of NGOs. Afghanistan's economic crisis has only worsened since the Taliban seized power in August last year, which led to Washington freezing billions of dollars of its assets and foreign donors cutting aid. After the minister of higher education banned women from universities, charging that they too were not properly dressed, protests were forcefully dispersed by the authorities.

Since returning to power in August last year, the Taliban had already barred teenage girls from secondary school.

Women have also been pushed out of many government jobs, prevented from travelling without a male relative and ordered to cover up outside of the home, ideally with a burqa. The G7 grouping takes in Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK, US as well as the European Union.

## Naval Chief satisfied with operational readiness of PN Fleet

KARACHI (INP): Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi has expressed complete satisfaction over operational readiness of Pakistan Navy Fleet and lauded the dedication and professionalism of officers and men for successful conduct of large number of naval exercises including bilateral and multilateral exercises in own and international waters contributing towards regional maritime security and protection of Pakistan maritime interests in the region and beyond.

He was speaking as Chief Guest on the occasion Pakistan Navy Fleet Annual Efficiency Competition Parade held at Karachi on Thursday to mark culmination of rewarding and eventful operational year of Pakistan Navy Fleet units.

Earlier, upon arrival, the Chief Guest was received by Commander Pakistan Fleet, Vice Admiral Ovais Ahmed Bilgrami and Guard of Honour was presented by a smartly turned out contingent of Pakistan Navy.

Speaking on the occasion, Admiral Amjad Khan Niazi commended PN Fleet efforts and contributions in achieving significant operational objectives and milestones and protection of

Pakistan's Sea Lines of Communication. He highlighted Pakistan Navy endeavours to ensure seaward security of Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), Gwadar Port and maritime related projects of CPEC.

The Naval Chief reiterated that Pakistan Navy is fully cognizant of changing geopolitical realities in the region and stands resolute to defend country's sea frontiers.

The Admiral also underscored that prevalent global and regional geostrategic environment demands Pakistan Navy to remain ever vigilant and battle to safeguard Pakistan maritime interests.

Earlier, in his welcome address, Commander Pakistan Fleet Vice Admiral Ovais Ahmed Bilgrami highlighted PN Fleet achievements during the outgoing year making particular mention of the conduct of a number of Live Weapon Firings, participation in multilateral exercises, HADR missions, Overseas Deployments and Regional Maritime Security Patrols undertaken by Fleet units.

Later, Chief of the Naval Staff gave away Efficiency Award shields to best performing units of various Squadrons of Pakistan Navy Fleet.

## Country faces no threat of default: Ahsan Iqbal

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Planning Development & Special Initiatives, Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Thursday dispelled the rumors related to default risks of the country and called for adopting export oriented policies for public and private sector to accelerate export led growth.

The Minister made these remarks while chairing a roundtable on 'Conducive Business Environment' organized by the Ministry of Planning Commission on Thursday. The roundtable was attended by the representatives of relevant ministries, chambers of commerce and other relevant stakeholders.

"A specific political party is propagating the rumors about the country's default for the political

objectives; however, Pakistan has come out of economic crises successfully after taking tough decisions," said the Minister. The Minister said that anyone who talks about the default of the country is Pakistan's enemy and the politics of those who declare Pakistan as default will default soon. To promote the private sector investments, we need to create an enabling and investor friendly environment in the country while emphasizing to increase exports to up to 100 billion dollars.

The problems faced by the country will be solved under the leadership of the Prime Minister Shabbaz Sharif who has adopted the path of stability while moving the country in the right direction, he added.

Furthermore, he said that China offers Pakistan a 'potential export market' which we must take advantage of while emphasizing the importance of local and foreign investors in the country which he believes should be top priority. "There are immense opportunities for exports in the Chinese market but unfortunately, Pakistan has only 3 billion dollars' contribution in China's 2250 billion dollar exports which must be increased," remarked the Minister.

The Minister asked country's chambers of commerce to take special measures in increasing exports to China while reiterating that the Planning Ministry is committed to facilitate through one-window operation.

## Long march against Indian occupation on Kashmir reaches Muzaffarabad

MUZAFFARABAD (INP): The long march organized by Pasban-e-Hurriyat Jammu and Kashmir against Indian illegal occupation on Jammu and Kashmir besides pressing for the Kashmiris' demand for right to self-determination reached Muzaffarabad on Thursday, after three days. Seventy five people started the march from Athmuqaam area of the Neelum Valley on Tuesday (December 27). During the march, the participants carried flags and chanted slogans against Indian illegal occupation of Jammu and Kashmir.

The march culminated at Burhan Wani Shaheed Chowk. It was led by Chairman Pasban-e-Hurriyat Uzair Ahmad Ghazali, Vice Chairman

Usman Ali Hashim, Muhammad Ismail Jagwal, Muhammad Ishaq Shaheen, Khawaja Muhammad Sadiq, Tanzeer Iqbal, Liaquat Ali Rana, Muhammad Fayyaz Khan, Faisal Farooq Sheikh, Muhammad Mushtaq and Imtiaz Aziz Khan. Speaking on the occasion, Uzair Ahmed Ghazali said that the purpose of the march was to repeat the demand for granting of the right to self-determination to the Kashmiri people and holding of an impartial plebiscite in Jammu and Kashmir.

"We demand of the international human rights organizations that they should play their role for the release of Kashmiri prisoners languishing in Indian jails," he said. World community

should come forward and declare all the illegal actions taken by Modi government on Kashmir on August 5, 2019 null and void, he added.

Uzair Ghazali appealed to the people of Azad Jammu and Kashmir to come out of their homes on the occasion of Right to Self-Determination Day on January 5 and demand of the United Nations to fulfill its commitments regarding grant of this right to the Kashmiris.

He said that in the next phase of the march a rally will be organized on January 5 from Burhan Wani Chowk to the United Nations Observer Office where a resolution will be presented for provision of the right to self-determination to the Kashmiris.

## SC dismisses Imran's appeal in defamation case

LAHORE (APP): The Supreme Court (SC) on Thursday dismissed an appeal of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman Imran Khan against striking out his right of defence in a defamation suit filed by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif against him.

The three-member bench heard the appeal at Supreme Court Lahore Registry and dismissed it with a 2-1 majority while upholding the trial court orders. Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah, who was heading the bench, and Justice Amin-ud-Din Khan dismissed the appeal whereas Justice Ayesha A Malik dissented with their verdict.

During the proceedings, Mustafa Ramday appeared on behalf of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and argued that the trial court lawfully struck the right of the petitioner (Imran Khan) to answer the interrogatories of the respondent (Shehbaz Sharif).

He said that the trial court passed the orders after the petitioner (Imran Khan) failed to file the reply despite the repeated opportunities. He submit-

ted that the trial court conducted 21 hearings from the direction of filing the reply to striking out the right of defence in the suit whereas 13 adjournments were taken instead of filing the reply on behalf of Imran Khan. He submitted that the petitioner could have refused to give an answer to any question in his reply, adding that the final opportunity to file a reply was also deliberately missed.

However, Imran Khan's counsel Barrister Ali Zafar submitted that the trial court unlawfully struck the right of his client. He submitted that the trial court exercised its suo motu powers to seize the right of the petitioner to file objections. He further submitted that out of 23 hearings, the counsel for Imran Khan sought adjournments on 10 different occasions whereas the opponent sought adjournments on 7 occasions.

He pleaded with the court to set aside the verdict of the trial court.

Subsequently, the bench, after hearing detailed arguments of the parties, dismissed the

appeal with a 2-1 majority and upheld the trial court verdict.

It is pertinent to mention here that an additional sessions judge had struck out Imran Khan's right of defence in the defamation suit in Nov, 2022.

The Lahore High Court had also dismissed an appeal of the PTI chairman against the trial court verdict on Dec 7.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, through the defamation suit, had submitted that PTI chief Imran Khan alleged in a TV programme on April 26, 2017, that Rs 10 billion bribe offer was made to him by Shehbaz Sharif for silence over the Panama papers case. He said that allegations levelled against him were not only false but also defamatory. He said that Imran Khan also failed to tender a publicly broadcast apology despite the fact that he was served a legal notice in May, 2017 for the purpose.

The court has been requested to issue a decree for recovery of Rs 10 billion as compensation for the publication of defamatory content.

## LHC declines plea to stop NAB proceedings

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Thursday declined a plea to stay proceedings initiated by the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) against Farhat Shahzadi, a friend of former prime minister Imran Khan's wife Bushra Bibi, her husband Ahsan Jamil Gujjar and others.

The division bench headed by Justice Shehram Sarwar Chaudhry heard the civil miscellaneous application filed by Farhat Shahzadi and others challenging the NAB proceedings against them. The court also issued notices to the bureau and sought reply on the application.

The petitioners' counsel argued before the court that his clients had challenged the proceedings and inquiry launched by the bureau against them because the bureau lacked jurisdiction to hold inquiry against private persons.

However, despite the pendency of the petition, the respondent NAB authorities had wrote a letter to police for ensuring the service of a call-up notice to some persons in connection with the inquiry, he added.

He submitted that the step was aimed to harass the petitioners, adding that the action was discriminatory in the light of amendments made in the NAB ordinance.

## No let-up in Pakistani rupee's depreciation spell

ISLAMABAD (INP): Entangled in the quagmire of US dollars flight and ensuing forex reserves crunch, the local currency has failed to sustain its weight in the interbank trading thus keeping up its downward trajectory.

According to money dealers, the Pakistani rupee depreciated by 13 paise in the interbank trading activity on Thursday. The US dollar after gaining 13 paise in its value was being traded at Rs226.50.

Wednesday, the PKR shed 22 paise against the greenback, letting the latter to be concluded at Rs226.37.

## ‘Police martyr of I-10 blast to be awarded Tamgha-e-Shujaat’

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Interior Rana Sanaullah Thursday said that Adeel Hussain, the martyr of the blast which occurred last week in sector I-10, would be awarded Tamgha-e-Shujaat for his bravery.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had also approved the martyr package for Shaheed Adeel Hussain, he said while visiting the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) hospital, where he inquired after the health of Constable Muhammad Hanif who sustained injuries in the blast.

The minister was

accompanied by Inspector General of Islamabad Police Dr Akbar Nasir Khan, Director General Operations Sohail Zafar Chattrha and other senior officers. Rana Sanaullah said that terrorists would never be allowed to succeed in their nefarious designs as the country's law enforcement agencies were fully capable of countering them.

He lauded the injured policeman and his colleagues who had saved the Federal Capital from a major incident by foiling terrorist's attempt.

The minister said the entire Pakistani nation paid tribute to the brave

policemen who sacrificed their lives for the country. The country's security forces would not be demoralized by such cowardly acts of the terrorists, he added.

Dr Akbar Nasir said that Adeel Hussain embraced martyrdom, while four other policemen were injured in the bomb blast, and the martyr's family was immediately provided with Shaheed package and assured that his heirs would be looked after.

On the occasion, the minister also presented a bouquet of flowers and a cheque to the injured police constable.

## Freeze assets of Dar restored

LAHORE (INP): The city administration in the Punjab capital on Thursday restored the assets of Finance Minister Ishaq Dar, which were frozen by the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) in an assets beyond means case.

It reported in media that administration had returned the property Hajveri House, 7-H, Gulberg-III, to Mr Dar after it was directed by the anti-graft watchdog to do so. Furthermore, a letter has been sent to the four banks to restore his Rs5.58 billion worth of accounts.

An accountability court ordered freezing of Dar's assets after his continuous absence from court proceedings in the case.

In November last, the court sent the reference against the finance minister and others in an assets beyond means case back to the NAB, saying it did not fall under its jurisdiction after latest amendments to the NAB laws.

A reference against Ishaq Dar and others was filed in 2017. After his indictment in the case, he flew to London and remained in self-exile for nearly five years. He was also declared a proclaimed offender in the case for not showing up in court. However, the decision was reversed in September last, paving the way for Mr Dar to return to the country and assume charge as finance minister.

## Pneumonia claims lives of 175 children in Peshawar

PESHAWAR (INP): As many as 175 children died of pneumonia in three major hospitals of Peshawar during December.

According to details, 447 children suffering from pneumonia and cold borne diseases were shifted to Khyber Teaching hospital during last one month of which 153 children died of pneumonia.

On the other hand, 10 children among the pneumonic affected children shifted to Hayatabad Medical Complex during ongoing month expired. During the month of December, 300 children suffering from pneumonic were shifted to Lady Reading Hospital where 12 children died during treatment.

## AC rejects bail plea of Agha Siraj Durrani

KARACHI (INP): An accountability court on Thursday rejected the bail plea of Sindh Assembly Speaker Agha Siraj Durrani in assets beyond means case. The accountability court announced the reserved verdict on Agha Siraj Durrani's plea seeking bail in assets case.

The bureau had filed a reference against the speaker, his brother Agha Masihuddin, wife, son, daughters as well as 13 others before a NAB court in 2019 for allegedly accumulating assets worth over Rs1.61 billion through illegal means. He had been arrested in the premises of the Supreme Court last year after a three-judge bench turned down his plea for pre-arrest bail and instead directed him to surrender before the national graft buster.

## President Alvi seeks affordable housing for people

ISLAMABAD (PPI): President Dr Arif Alvi has urged the need to adopt environment-friendly, energy-efficient and cost-effective construction and housing practices to provide quality accommodation for the Pakistani people.

Promoting vertical construction in the country could help provide cost-effective and affordable housing to the poor and lower middle class, besides overcoming the shortage of space in urban areas, preventing unplanned growth of cities, and saving agricultural land from encroachment, he expressed these views while addressing the closing ceremony of the 2nd Pakistan International Property Expo and Convention, organized by the Pakistan Association of Exhibition Industry (PAEI), at Aiwan-e-Sadr, according to a PID statement issued on Thursday.

Founder Chairman of PAEI, Mr Khurshid Barlas, members of the housing and construction sector, businessmen, and government officials attended the ceremony. Addressing the ceremony, the President said that the government had been focusing on the development of the construction and housing sector as it played an

important role in creating jobs, advancing growth and economic development, and fulfilling the growing housing demands of the rising population of the country.

The President called for discouraging the tendency to make unplanned housing schemes lacking basic civic amenities at all levels, adding that no housing society should be approved until it met all the codal formalities, provided civic amenities, was environment friendly and catered to the needs of the lower segments of society. He also called for promoting aesthetically pleasing construction in the country, besides adopting green building practices, including the promotion of solarization and vegetation on unutilized roofs in urban areas.

The President said that no society could rise until it lifted its vulnerable and poorer segments of the society out of the poverty trap. He highlighted the need for the public and private sectors to join hands to bring innovative and out-of-the-box solutions for the rehabilitation of the residents of Katchi Abadis and resolving their issues.

He stated that Katchi Abadis suffered from a lack of civic amenities

and were inhabitable, adding that inclusive and poor-friendly development should be promoted in the country so that no one was left behind and the fruits of development reached all segments of the population. The President said that every eligible citizen of the country should responsibly take part in politics, and intelligently vote for electing capable, efficient and effective representatives. He said that leadership should be capable of taking the right decisions at the right time, fighting against corruption and corrupt practices, and expediting the decision-making process via the state machinery to lift people out of poverty.

The President said that government policies should be targeted towards creating an economic system with the help of the private sector to ensure the equitable distribution of precious national resources to the underprivileged segments of the population in the underserved areas of the country. He added that proactive steps should be taken to ensure that less developed areas of the country were brought at par with other areas, instead of concentrating development activities and initiatives in a few urban centres.