

DSP, wife and 3 children die

PISHIN (INP): Balochistan Constabulary Loralai DSP, along with his three children and wife, waskilled in a tragic road accident at Gawal in Pishin on Wednesday. According to Balochistan Levies, five people were killed after a trailer hit a car in Khuzai area of Pashin. The deceased were identified as Loralai DSP Mukhtar Mulghani and his wife and three children. The incident happened owing to dense fog and slippery roads in the area.

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif addressing a news conference.

Suicide blast outside Afghan ministry kills 20

KABUL (Agencies): An suicide bomber who detonated explosives outside the foreign ministry in Afghanistan's capital Kabul on Wednesday killed 20 people, according to an information ministry official. Ustad Fareedun, an official at the Taliban-run information ministry, said the bomber had planned to enter the foreign ministry but failed.

"Twenty people were killed and many other injured in the suicide attack," he said. In the aftermath, bodies lay strewn on the road outside the high-walled compound of the ministry, marked with the Taliban flag, a video verified by AFP showed. Some injured people writhed on the ground, screaming for help, and a handful of onlookers scrambled to offer assistance.

The blast hit at about 4pm local time, Kabul's

police spokesperson Khalid Zadran said. He did not provide details on the number of casualties, saying officials were investigating. The blast took place at a busy time of day in a heavily fortified area surrounded by checkpoints on a street housing several ministries.

The ministry itself did not appear to be badly damaged. Window panes in the interior ministry were also shattered by the impact of the blast. Some countries, including Turkey and China, also have embassies in the area. A person in a nearby office, who asked not to be named, described hearing a loud explosion and said they were evacuated from their building.

An AFP team was conducting an interview inside the information ministry next door when the blast took place. A company driver waiting outside saw a man holding a bag and

with a rifle slung over his shoulder walk past before the man blew himself up. "He passed by my car and after a few seconds there was a loud blast," Jamshed Karimi said, adding he saw 20 to 25 casualties. "I saw the man blowing himself up."

"There was supposed to be a Chinese delegation at the Foreign Ministry today, but we don't know if they were present at the time of the blast," deputy minister of information and culture Muhajer Farahi told AFP. However, Ahmadullah Muttaqi, a senior official at the prime minister's office, said no foreigners were present at the ministry when it was attacked. He reiterated that the suicide bomber wanted to enter the ministry but he could not reach the target. "Security officials detected him at the gate and the bomber blew himself up. It occurred at the end of office timings."

PM thanks China, Saudi Arabia for pledges

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Wednesday thanked the Chinese leadership for a pledge of US\$ 1.1 billion including US\$ one billion by the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) at Geneva Conference for reconstruction and rehabilitation of flood affected areas in Pakistan.

Describing the support as "crucial for reconstruction", the Prime Minister in a twitter post said that "Our great friend China has always stood by Pakistan through thick & thin." "We are highly grateful to Chinese leadership for a pledge of \$1 billion by Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank & \$100 million separately @ Resilient Pakistan," he added.

The Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also expressed gratitude to Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia Prince Mohammed Bin Salman on announcement of \$1 billion at climate conference held in Geneva. "Pakistan sincerely thanks Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman for Saudi Arabia's generous announcement of \$1 billion at the Resilient Pakistan Conference," he said in a tweet.

The prime minister said, "We are immensely grateful for his decision to consider increasing Saudi investment up to \$10 billion and deposits with State Bank of Pakistan to \$5 billion," he said. In another tweet, Shehbaz Sharif also thanked President World Bank David Malpass for pledging \$2 billion for the post-flood recovery, reconstruction and rehabilitation at Resilient Pakistan Conference in Geneva.

He mentioned that the World Bank is a longtime development partner of Pakistan. Earlier in a tweet, the prime minister expressed gratitude to United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres for his unwavering support to Pakistan's flood victims and raising his voice for recovery and reconstruction in the wake of floods. Shehbaz Sharif mentioned that the UN Secretary-General played a pivotal role in making Resilient Pakistan Conference a resounding success.

Assassination attempt on KP DG Mines

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: As many as four persons committed assassination attempt against Director General (DG) Mines and Minerals with arms in the head Office at 11:30 am, on Wednesday.

According to details, two alleged culprits were arrested from the spot and two unknown private guards escaped from the crime scene.

The arrested alleged culprits are identified as Shah Khalid a contractor and Farooq Khan and two other private guards who escaped from the crime scene. It is worthy mention that reason behind the assassination attempt didn't disclosed.

The Frontier Post

PM to leave for UAE today

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will embark on a two-day official visit to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on Thursday. He will be visiting the UAE at the invitation of the President of the United Arab Emirates Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. The prime minister will be accompanied by a high-level delegation, including key cabinet members.

PM: World reposed trust in Pakistan despite propaganda

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday, calling the \$9.7 billion pledges by the international community at the Geneva conference a "vote of confidence" on the Pakistani nation, assured that the funds would be spent transparently and audited through the third party.

"This is the manifestation of trust and dignity to the government and the people of Pakistan by the world nations. They would not have pledged around \$10 billion of their taxpayers' money if they had any apprehensions of any embezzlement in funds as was being propagated by our political adversaries," the prime minister told a news conference on his return from Geneva where he co-hosted the International Conference on Climate Resilient Pakistan with United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

Giving a breakup of the pledged money, PM Shehbaz said the Islamic Development Bank made the biggest pledge of \$4.2 billion followed by \$2 billion by the World Bank, \$1 billion each by Saudi Arabia and AIIB (Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank), \$500 million by the Asian Development Bank, \$100 million each by China and the United States, Euro 380 million by France, Euro 84 million by Germany and \$25 million by Qatar, besides others.

The prime minister congratulated the whole nation as well as the coalition government for the unexpected response by the international community as he said the pledges were far above their expectations. He said following the pledges by the international community, it was the Government of Pakistan's responsibility to ensure successful and transparent execution of the projects to meet the needs of flood survivors and the world's expectations.

Appreciating the efforts by ministers for foreign affairs, climate change, finance, information and oth-

ers, he said the federal secretaries had prepared an efficient roadmap for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the flood victims. The prime minister said despite the worst division created by the opposition in society, the representatives of federal and provincial governments attended the conference and presented their case to the international community, which was also a display of the nation's trust in the coalition government.

He specially thanked the UN Secretary-General for supporting Pakistan in its endeavours of building back after it was hit by the worst floods in history. He said as the incumbent government was a combination of youth and experience, it was a must to put in all the efforts to accomplish the objectives of reconstruction and rehabilitation.

The prime minister also thanked the Saudi leadership for hinting at enhancing the safe deposit to \$5 billion and investment to \$10 billion. To a question, Prime Minister Shehbaz said the country had sufficient stock of wheat, however, it was upon the provincial governments to release the commodity to the flour mills. Unfortunately, the provinces were not releasing the required quantity of wheat, he added, assuring that the Federal Government would use its powers to provide relief to the masses. He told the media that the government was totally aware of the changing global circumstances and that the reconstruction projects would be made resilient using modern technology. The government would spare no effort to achieve the objective and the government's commitment for transparency through a third-party validation would send a strong message to the donors, he added.

Asked about the distribution mechanism of funds, the prime minister said the federating units would get funds considering the flood-caused losses as Sindh suffered the most followed by Balochistan, South Punjab districts, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and a

small area in Gilgit-Baltistan. He said the Federal Government had already transparently distributed around Rs 90 billion among 2.7 million households through the Benazir Income Support Programme.

Regarding his upcoming visit to the United Arab Emirates, the prime minister said Pakistan desired to enhance its trade and investment relationship with the friendly country. Responding to a question about the security situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, PM Shehbaz mentioned the National Security Council meeting which discussed the situation in detail and resolved to eliminate the scourge. However, he said the provincial government was responsible to strengthen its counter-terrorism department to deal with the militancy.

The prime minister was accompanied by Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Climate Change Minister Sherry Rehman, Finance Minister Ishaq Dar, Communications Minister Maulana Asad Mahmood, National Food Security Minister Tariq Bashir Cheema, and Awami National Party leader Mian Iftikhar Hussain. In his remarks, Bilawal Bhutto said the Geneva conference was a manifestation of the prime minister's successful foreign policy as it had not only achieved the target of \$8 billion pledges but also helped Pakistan gain the international community's support to bust a myth that Pakistan stood isolated in the world.

He said across the geo-political divide, the international community supported Pakistan, including the European Union which faced unnecessary criticism by the previous government. Moreover, the foreign minister said, the conference would also put to rest the baseless propaganda about Pakistan's economic situation. He appealed to the people to keep extending humanitarian assistance as the flood victims were still facing difficulties and hardships, and the situation was feared to further aggravate due to the ongoing cold spell.

UOP's botanical garden case PHC orders KP CM to appear today

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench comprising of Chief Justice Peshawar High Court (PHC) Justice Qaiser Rashid and Justice Ijaz Anwar ordered Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to appear before court today (on Thursday) in Contempt of Court (COC) petition regarding rehabilitation of University of Peshawar's Botanical Garden Azakhal, on Wednesday.

Moreover, the divisional bench also ordered Deputy Secretary Higher Education to prepare summary in this regard while directed Tehsil Municipal Officer and Public Health Engineering concerned to appear court for provision of water to the Botanical Garden.

During hearing UOP's syndicate counsel Justice (retired) Abdu Samad Khan

along with varsity's Wasimu-Din Khattak, legal officer Riaz Ali Khan, Additional Advocate General Syed Sikandar Shah, inquiry's focal person & Additional Prosecutor General Muhammad, Additional Deputy Commissioner Nowshera Qurat-ul-Ain Wazir and Deputy Secretary Higher Education Department (HED) appeared before court in COC petition.

UOP's lawyer informed that a meeting was held with Local Government without any conclusion, in the meantime Additional Advocate General Syed Sikandar Shah argued that in the meeting it was decided that HED will prepare summary as competent authority and then it should be forwarded to Chief Minister for necessary.

Meanwhile, Deputy

Secretary HED informed that he has no information in this regard while added that court will be assisted properly after obtaining knowledge regarding the preparation of summary.

Additional Deputy Commissioner Nowshera Qurat-ul-Ain Wazir informed that provision of water is dominion of Tehsil Municipal Administration and Public Health Engineering but she would take steps in this regard. Director Botanical Garden Azakhal Dr. Asad informed that local students are working as social activists in plantation drive but provision of water has created problems at the research garden of UOP, while PHC has ordered concerned authorities as well as Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to appear today (on Thursday) before court.

Wheat hoarders, profiteers to be dealt with sternly: PM

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif Wednesday said as the country had ample stocks of wheat, no one would be allowed to indulge in unjust profiteering by creating artificial shortage of the commodity.

He urged the provinces to ensure timely supply of wheat to flour mills from their own as well as PASSCO's reserves and improve governance in that regard. The prime minister was presiding over a high-level meeting regarding artificial shortage of wheat, hoarding and unjust profiteering.

The meeting, which was attended by Minister for Food Security Tariq Bashir Cheema, Advisor to the PM Ahad Cheema, senior officials and provincial chief secretaries, reviewed the current situation and stocks of wheat in the country. The prime minister said owing to the steps taken by the government, the price of wheat flour had witnessed a decrease of around Rs 1,000 per 40kg bag over the last five days, which was a good omen. He urged the relevant federal and provincial institutions to take strict measures against the hoarders of wheat and flour, adding the government would bring those hitting the poor masses with inflation through artificial shortage of flour.

During the meeting, the prime minister was told that as the country had ample stocks of wheat, the provinces were being directed to further speed up the supply of wheat from the reserves of PASSCO to flour mills. It was told that 1.3 million metric tons of exported wheat had reached the country, whereas another matching stock would also reach by the end of January. The meeting was further told that by end of season during the current year, the carry-forward stock of 1.4m metric tons of wheat would be available which would be enough to meet the country's food requirements before the start of new season.

Punjab governor can ask CM to take trust vote: LHC

LAHORE (INP): The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Wednesday resumed hearing on Punjab Chief Minister Pervaiz Elahi's plea challenging Governor Balighur-Rehman's order to de-notify him as CM. A five-member bench comprising Justice Abid Aziz Shaikh, Justice Chaudhry Muhammad Iqbal, Justice Tariq Saleem Sheikh, Justice Asim Hafeez and Justice Muzamil Akhtar Shabir took up Elahi's plea.

During today's proceedings, Elahi's lawyer Barrister Ali Zafar argued that the governor cannot ask CM to take trust as his rights are limited. At this, Justice Asim Hafeez remarked that the governor can ask a chief minister to take a vote of confidence from the assembly. "Chief minister should always have the support of 186 members."

As the hearing went underway, Justice Abid Aziz Shaikh remarked that the vote of trust matter had not yet been solved. "This issue will only be resolved once CM Perviaz Elahi takes the vote of confidence," the governor's lawyers said, adding that Elahi had a lot of time to take the trust vote after the previous hearing but he did not do it. At this, Justice Shaikh turned to Elahi's lawyer and asked: "How many days will be suitable for you to take the vote of confidence? We will fix a time accordingly and your

problem will be solved." Last month, the governor had de-notified CM Pervaiz Elahi in the wee hours of December 23, 2022, for failing to take a vote of confidence from the provincial assembly.

In his order dated Dec 22, the Punjab Governor Baligh-ur-Rehman stated that Punjab CM Pervaiz Elahi and his cabinet were constitutionally made inactive for not seeking the vote of confidence from the provincial assembly. The Punjab governor stated said since CM Pervaiz Elahi had refrained from obtaining the Vote of Confidence at the appointed day and time therefore he ceases to hold office.

A very next day, Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi moved Lahore High Court (LHC) against Punjab Governor Baligh-ur-Rehman for denotifying him as Punjab's chief minister. In a petition, filed through his lawyer, Elahi, argued that the Punjab governor did not fulfil the constitutional requirement and ordered a vote of confidence during the ongoing session of the Punjab Assembly. The petition maintained the governor did not authorise to summon assembly session when the current session was already underway.

Pervaiz Elahi pleaded with the high court to declare the governor's order "null and void". At the previous hearing, the

Lahore High Court (LHC) had restored Punjab Chief Minister Pervaiz Elahi and the provincial cabinet after suspending the governor's denotification order. Barrister Ali Zafar on behalf of Pervaiz Elahi, Nasr Ahmed on behalf of the federal government and Khalid Ishaq on behalf of Governor Punjab presented their arguments.

The lawyer representing Punjab CM, Ali Zafar, pleaded with the LHC bench to give direction after nullifying the governor's denotification order. To this, the LHC judge remarked that the court wants to maintain a balance to make things better. The judge questioned how an interim relief would be granted if assurances are not being given to the court. "We would restore the cabinet but you will need to give an assurance that our order will not be misused. We can give you more time. How can we stop the constitutional process of the dissolution of the assembly? However, we want to stop creating such a situation."

The LHC adjourned the hearing for an hour after ordering CM's lawyer to submit an affidavit to give assurance to not dissolve the Punjab Assembly. After the hearing resumed, Pervaiz Elahi submitted the affidavit to assure that he will not advise the Punjab governor the dissolve the provincial assembly.

OGRA approves 74% hike in natural gas prices

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) has approved a 74 per cent increase in the prescribed prices of natural gas for the 2022-23 fiscal year. According to details, the regulator allowed Sui Northern Gas Pipeline Limited (SNGPL) to increase prices by up to 74.42 percent. It also allowed Sui Southern Gas Company (SSGC) to increase gas prices by 67.75 percent for the year 2022-23.

The oil and gas regulator has approved increases of Rs406.28 and Rs469.28 per million British thermal units (mmBtu) for SNGPL and SSGC, respectively. OGRA further said that the average gas price for SNGPL would reach Rs952.17 per unit from the existing rate of Rs545.89 per mmBtu, while that of SSGCL would reach Rs1,161 per unit from the current Rs692.63 per mmBtu. Any revision as advised by the federal government shall be according-

ly notified by OGRA. Till such time, the existing category-wise natural gas sale prices shall continue to prevail.

If the federal government fails to provide its recommendations on category- and slab-wise gas prices to Ogra within 40 days, the prescribed prices determined by the authority for each category and slab would stand automatically notified and the gas utilities would be bound to charge new rates.

Stakeholders turned blind eye towards public grievances: CJ PHC

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Chief Justice Peshawar High Court (PHC) Justice Qaiser Rashid remarked that stakeholders leave their houses to address hurdles facing by public while observed they had kept blind eye to problems as well as see nothing outside their home but there is another world outdoor from glass's palaces and submitting positive reports that everything is good, on Wednesday.

This was observed during hearing several writ regarding mining and deforestation in Chitral valley while Secretary Forests Abid Majeed, Director General Mines& Minerals Muhammad Naeem Khan, Director Galyat Development Authority, Adnan Abrar, Focal Person

Muhammad Ali, Additional Advocate General Syed Sikandar Shah and counsel for petitioner Ali Gohar Durrani along with other competent authorities appeared before court.

Secretary's forests informed that requested for provision of further time for submission of report in the regard because the committee is returned yesterday from Chitral.

He added that court's order implemented in true spirit and claimed that permits issuing to local communities for small trees to ensure provision of wood for heating due to serve cold weather in the area.

Unfortunately, contracts are granting from here for cutting of forest at Chitral while the local community cannot able to cut wood for their daily usage, Chief

Justice observed.

The counsel Ali Gohar Durrani informed that in 2017 Liquefied National Gas (LNG) mix air plant was planned in Chitral but it was shifted to Gilgit due to political issues while the competent argued that the project is stopped due to unavailability of funds but the government is purchasing 165 Mercedes luxury vehicles for ministers.

Director General Mines and Minerals Muhammad Naeem informed that ban is imposed on every kind of leases as per court's directions to evaluate it for smooth delivery and doesn't create environmental issues while Chief Justice ordered DG to personally look into the matter to curtain hurdles.

Director General Gas

Muhammad Rashid informed that LNG mix air plant planned for Gilgit nor for Chitral but dropped due to unavailability while Chief Justice observed what are proving government closing public interest projects and added that court should not leave Chitral alone because it is also part of Pakistan.

The divisional bench comprising of Chief Justice PHC Justice Qaiser Rashid and Justice Ijaz Anwar ordered Secretary's forest to visit the area for submitting report on deforestation and actions against culprits involved while directed District Forest Officer Tariq Shah and Additional Prosecutor General Muhammad Ali to submit report pine-nuts and adjourned further hearing 31st January.



PESHAWAR: Politicians from Haripur with Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa after joining PTI.

CJ PHC inaugurates KPBC law journal F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Justice Peshawar High Court (PHC) Justice Qaiser Rashid inaugurated Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Bar Council (KPBC) Law Journal which should be issued on monthly basis, on Wednesday.

During inaugural ceremony Vice chairman KPBC Muhammad Ali Jadoon, Muhammad Ilyas Khan, Syed Jaffar Advocate along with members Syed Mubashir Shah, Nouman Kakakhel and president and general secretaries of all bar associations across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were present.

Vice Chairman KPBC said that Law Journal longstanding demand of legal fraternity. He added that the journal should be issued on monthly basis and would be on available online and provided on post to lawyers.

Chief Justice PHC Justice Qaiser Rashid appreciated inauguration of law journal and other welfare projects for legal fraternity. He assured his full assistance to KPBC at every forum welfare of lawyer and Rule of Law.

Body sought details

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Standing Committee on Irrigation chaired by Aasya Saleh Khattak directed concerned authorities to furnish details of steps taken for environmental protection in Lawaghar Dam.

She said that Lawaghar Dam was constructed for provision of drinking water but it was being used for fish production. She ruled out any compromise on providing potable water to area residents.

She said that provincial government is making incessant efforts to provide drinking water to people. She also expressed resentment over not providing details of contractors and companies that have been blacklisted.

Aasya Khattak also directed to expedite work on ongoing developmental schemes in Lower Dir. She also express concern over recruiting sixty persons for Zaibi Dam during last year and said that dam has still un-functional.

The meeting was also attended by Dr. Sumaira Shams, Muhammad Idrees, Rabia Basri, Mian Nisar Gul, Zafar Azam, Mir Kalam, Anita Mehsud, Sahibzada Sanaullah and concerned official.

that uplift projects were approved and executed on basis of favoritism and personal affiliation.

They said that funds for Inqilab Road to Chamkani has been approved twice but allocated amount was spent on areas that belonged to blue eyed people of PTI.

They said that congested locality of Zarinabad that is located near the road is severely affected by the apathy of local PTI leaders who have turned a blind

New BRT route opened

PESHAWAR (APP): Provincial Transport Minister, Malak Shah Muhammad Khan on Wednesday formally inaugurated Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) new feeder route from Shah Alam Pull to the Mall of Hayatabad.

After cutting the ribbon of the new feeder route, the minister said BRT was an important and beneficial project of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government for its people. The service, he said, provides modern commuting facilities to the masses on subsidized fares.

The BRT service has achieved international awards for its best services, the minister said and added that before the completion of this project the opponents used to make fun of the project and highly criticized it.

LG&RDD declares 'New Khanpur City' illegal housing society — action ordered against TOI Khanpur

PESHAWAR (APP): The Local Government and Rural Development Department (LG&RDD) of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Wednesday declared the NOC and LOP (Layout Plan) issued to so-called "New Khanpur City" housing scheme in Haripur illegal.

An official communiqué issued here said that the society was not fulfilling the local government rules and regulations and despite that Tehsil Officer Infrastructure (TOI) of Khanpur issued NOC and LOP in haste, adding that Tehsil Municipal Administration has formally charged the official and sought his response.

It said that Muhammad Khurshid Khan, the original owner of the land in his complain submitted with the Provincial Local Government Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in June last year claimed that the land shown to TMA was actually his own property which was specifically earmarked for agricultural purposes.

He further alleged that TMA Khanpur surprisingly

issued the NOC / LOP for this residential scheme in a very hasty manner and avoided finding out the facts about the actual ownership of the land at the time.

Moreover, the LOP was issued in the name of a company named "New Khanpur City Private Limited" which was registered after the issuance of NOC and in the name of this company there was no land in Surrey in Khanpur.

Local Government Secretary Syed Zaheerul Islam Shah exercising his powers under the Local Council Servants (E&D) Rules, 1980 and Local Council Board (Conduct of Business) Rules, 1988 ordered an inquiry against Tehsil Officer of Khanpur and established a two-member investigation committee.

The committee found the Tehsil Officer guilty of irregularities in this regard. In the charge sheet issued to TOI, the Municipal Secretary made it clear by referring to the report of the inquiry committee that the Mazkura tehsil officer was found guilty of violating

the rules regarding the issuance of provisional NOC to the New Khanpur City Housing Scheme.

The chargesheet further disclosed that the presence of basic amenities including gas, electricity, water, street lights, roads, and sewerage system in the housing scheme was not ensured while issuing the NOC and the LOP as per rules. And the situation on the spot was not confirmed nor was the total area of the scheme disclosed which was the responsibility of TMA.

The Secretary Local Government while seeking a written response from TOI on the said irregularities warned that otherwise unilateral action would be taken against him.

Meanwhile, Malik Muhammad Khurshid, the original owner of the land in question, while appreciating the initiative of the Municipalities Department for exposing the irregularities of the TMA, said that the Civil Court of Haripur has also issued an injunction against New Khanpur City.



PESHAWAR: Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Dr. Shahzad Khan Bangash presiding over a meeting.

Chamkani resident decries attitude of PTI local office bearers

PESHAWAR (APP): People residing in Chamkani, a suburban area of provincial metropolis said that their area has not been given due share in ongoing development work due to ill planned and discriminatory policies of local government representatives of Pakistan Tehreek Insaf (PTI).

Locals alleged that internal difference in PTI local government representatives has affected pace of development work. They said

that uplift projects were approved and executed on basis of favoritism and personal affiliation.

They said that funds for Inqilab Road to Chamkani has been approved twice but allocated amount was spent on areas that belonged to blue eyed people of PTI.

They said that congested locality of Zarinabad that is located near the road is severely affected by the apathy of local PTI leaders who have turned a blind

eye to deteriorated sanitation conditions in that locality.

The said that due to incomplete road accumulated sewage water often enters nearby houses besides increasing sufferings of children and students who went to various schools situated in that area.

Area residents urged authorities to take action and solve the problems of locals that are the main victims of indifference attitude of PTI local office bearers.

Moderate rain with snowfall over hills predicted

PESHAWAR (APP): The Provincial Meteorological Center Peshawar on Wednesday predicted that rain with moderate to heavy snowfall over the hilly areas is likely to occur over Chitral, Lower & Upper Dir, Malakand, Buner, Swat, Shangla, Kohistan, Battagram, Torgar, Mansehra, Abbottabad, Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber and Kurram districts during the next 24 hours.

It further predicted that light to moderate rain is also likely to occur over Haripur, Swabi, Mardan, Nowshera, Peshawar, Charsadda, Kohat, Karak, Hangu, Orakzai, Lakki Marwat, Bannu, Tank, Dera

Ismail Khan, North & South Waziristan districts.

Moderate to dense fog is likely to occur over Dera Ismail Khan, Peshawar, Charsadda, Nowshera, Mardan and Swabi districts as well as Peshawar to Swabi Motorway at night.

During the last 24 hours rain with snowfall over the hills occurred in most parts of the province.

Rain recorded (in mm) was as Pattan 07, Kalam 06, Parachinar 05, Mohmand (Mamut Gut 05, Ghalanai 02), Malam Jabba, Bajaur & Dir (each) 04, Khyber (Tirah 04, Landi Kotal 02), Timergara 03, Saidu Sharif, Chitral,

Bannu, Buner 02, Kakul, Balakot, Kohat, Drosh 01, Peshawar, Mirkhani, Takht Bhai, D.I. Khan & Risalpur (each) Trace. Snowfall recorded (in inches): Kalam 03, Malam Jabba 02.

The maximum and minimum temperatures recorded in centigrade at different stations of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were as Peshawar City 22/06, Chitral 11/01, Timergara 13/02, Dir 13/00, Mirkhani 11/00, Kalam 05/-4, Drosh 11/01, Saidu Sharif 15/04, Pattan 14/06, Malam Jabba 07/-2, Takht Bhai 21/05, Kakul 16/04, Balakot 17/06, Parachinar 14/-5, Bannu 24/04, Cherat 14/03, D.I. Khan 25/08.

ANP defers protest

PESHAWAR (APP): The Awami National Party has announced to postpone its protest against the administrative failure and rocketing prices of commodities in the province due to the rain spell in KP.

A statement issued from Bacha Khan Markaz said on Wednesday that ANP's provincial president Aimal Wali Khan has announced a new date for the protest.

Quoting Aimal Wali, the statement said due to the incompetence of the provincial rulers the province was faced with financial crisis and other administrative shortcomings for the last nine years, rendering the masses helpless.

Aimal Wali said the people of KP were already faced with multiple problems and the ANP will not add to their miseries by calling a province-wide protest during this cold weather. With the consent of the party, Aimal Wali said now the protest will be held on January 13 (Friday).

Wali directed the party office bearers to utilize all their energies in persuading the people to take part in ANP's protest in large numbers to make it a successful show.

Police bust robbers' gang

PESHAWAR (APP): Capital City Police have busted a dangerous gang of robbers by arresting its three members and recovered 44 precious mobile sets from their possession on Wednesday.

The arrested members of the gang belonging to the suburban localities were involved in snatching mobile phones, cash and other valuables from the people in University Town, Abdara Road, University Road, Danishabad and surrounding areas at gunpoint.

During initial investigations, the arrested accused had confessed involvement in several robberies. Beside, recovery of precious mobile phone sets, a motorcycle and arms used in the criminal activities have been recovered from them.

The members of the gang were changing IMEI numbers of the snatched mobile phones sets before smuggling them to the neighbouring country Afghanistan.

The arrested accused, during investigations have revealed names of their other accomplices and a special team under the supervision of DSP Town, Luqman Khan has been formed for their arrest.

Rasm-e-Qul to be held tomorrow F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Mother of the Director National Accountability Bureau (NAB), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mian Muhammad Waqar passed away.

She was also mother of Dr Naveed and Arshad Advocate.

Her funeral prayers were offered at Dag Ismailkhel in Nowshera.

Her Qul would be held at their ancestral village on Friday.

Brigadier Commander 102 Brigade, IG visits jail



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Brigadier Commander 102 Brigade and Inspector General of Prisons, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa visited Central Prison Peshawar and various issues especially security matter

were discussed in detail.

Meanwhile, Superintendent Central Prison Peshawar Maqsood ur Rahman Khattak briefed the visitors regarding various functions and issues of jail.

The visitors were please and satisfied on the overall

situation of jail. In order to boost up security, various steps like enhancing training, strengthening of staff as well as carrying out some additional construction work etc, was proposed by the participants to avoid any unpleasant incident.

ANP announces schedule of Bacha Khan Week

PESHAWAR (APP): Awami National Party here Wednesday announced schedule of activities planned for Bacha Khan Week that would be inaugurated on January 20 at Bacha Khan Markaz.

A press release issued form BKM said that the activities would continue till January 29 that would be participated in by party office bearers including ANP Provincial President, Aimal Wali Khan.

The activities include books exhibition at BKM, cultural show, seminars and tableaux. Leaders of various political parties, journalists, civil rights activists and public figures would participate in the activities.

Mayor provides computers to educational institutions

PESHAWAR (APP): Mayor Peshawar Zubair Ali on Wednesday provided new computers to three municipal educational institutions here enabling students to get modern education through latest computers.

"There will be no compromise on quality, we will make the municipal inter schools and colleges high quality educational institutions and it should be the mission of all of us to include them in the best educational institutions of the province," he said while

addressing a ceremony here.

He assured all out efforts to fulfill the demand of municipal educational institutions and provide best quality education to the students.

He said that it was the responsibility of all every government to provide best education to the children and as the future of the country attached to their success.

The Mayor urged the administrations of the schools to do utmost work

hard with the students so that they could get positions in next year board exams.

Director General Arshad Ali Zubair, Director Administration HR Muhammad Owais Khan, Director State Management Mian Anisur Rahman, Principal of Municipal School and College Boys Wazir Bagh Qazi Farman, Principal of Degree College Najma Shafiq and Principal of Municipal Inter College Girls Shahi Bagh Nusrat Mustaal were present on the occasion.



PESHAWAR: Officials of Municipal Inter School & Colleges with Mayor Haji Zubair Ali.



In brief

Road accident claims one life

BAHAWALNAGAR (INP): A youth was killed when the motorcycle he was riding on was hit by a car in Bahawalnagar. According to details, the accident took place at the Chishtian Road near Adda Takht Mehal in Bahawalnagar where a speeding car collided with a motorcycle, killing a youth on the spot. Rescue teams reached the spot and shifted the dead body to District Headquarters (DHQ) Hospital. According to rescue sources, the deceased was identified as Muhammad Rafiq.

BPC new cabinet first meeting held

F.P. Report

BUNER: Buner Press Club (BPC) general body meeting was held in chair of president Muhibul Haq while general secretary A.R. Abid Buneri briefed the participants in devised one year plan to ensure welfare of the community and highlight public's interest news, on Wednesday. According to details, members unanimously approved and rectified the changes and additions and printing and publishing the constitution a fresh with new title in booklet format. The changes were to minimizing the apprenticeship period for associate members having master degree to 4 month and for Journalism degree holder just 3 months instead of 6 months period. The major addition was including electronic media persons in the press club this year while in past only print media persons were giving membership. The meeting approved conducting twice a week "meet the press programme" in the press club to facilitate all of political religious parties the civil societies organizations and the departments to explain its narratives, point of view on issues besides an individual would have to utilize the opportunity to express. The meeting decided to develop close contacts with public and institutions to play due positive role for bridging the gap between them with the aim to address public worries and to satisfy.

People problems to be redressed

F.P. Report

TANK: The district administration on Wednesday held an open court for resolving problems of people pertaining to the revenue department. The Revenue Darbar was presided over by Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) General Tanvir Khan, Assistant Commissioner Tank Amin Ullah Khan, Additional Assistant Commissioner Jamshad Alam Khan, Additional Assistant Commissioner Revenue Shohab Khan and revenue officials were present. The ADC said that the forum was being held in line with directives of the provincial government to address problems of people at their doorstep. A large number of people attended the Darbar wherein they raised several issues pertaining to the revenue department including land transfers, Fard, registry, domicile and accuracy of land documents etc. The ADC listened to the problems and directed the revenue officials to take immediate measures on resolution of problems which were highlighted during the forum. He said that district administration was working on several fronts to extend relief to people by resolving their problems at earliest and added that officials concerned of departments had been mobilized to further improve service delivery.



KHAR: A man preparing chapli kabab at his shop as demand of this item is increased in winters. - F.P. photo

Rally against price hike held in Dir

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Despite of heavy rain and chilly cold, hundreds of the Jamaat-i-Islami workers protested on the road against the shortage of wheat flour, inflation and price hike at Timergara here on Wednesday.

The JI workers gathered in the Ahya ul Uloom Balambat and marched on the road while carrying umbrellas, banners and placards inscribed with slogans against the current government's failure to control inflation. The protesters were led by the JI district chief Izazul Mulk Afkari, general secretary Hafiz Yaqubur Rehman and Malik Sher Bahadar. The protesters blocked the main road at Gorgorai Chowk for some time while the traffic was diverted on the Timergara bypass road.

Speaking on the occasion the JI district chief Izazul Mulk Afkari said the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) government at the center and the Pakistan Tehreek Insaf

(PTI) government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab had confronted the nation with a record inflation, artificial price hike and unemployment. He said the wheat warehouses were filled with wheat bags but the masses stood in queues to get a 20 kg of flour bag. He said both the PDM and the PTI had deceived the nation on mere slogans and they had nothing to do with the poor people.

Afkari said that the daily wage was unable to feed his family as the prices of essential commodities had increased many folds. He said the lower and the lower middle class was the worst affected due to the current situation. Condemning the PTI chief Imran Khan, he said that he had claimed to solve the problems faced by the nation. He said that he himself was in the grip of corrupt elements. He asked the masses to send honest and pious people to the assemblies in future so that their problems could be solved.

The rally was also addressed by Malik Sher Bahadar, Shad Nawaz Khan, Hafiz Yaqubur Rehman and others.

Etimad center: The JI district general secretary Hafiz Yaqubur Rehman on Wednesday demanded the federal government to set up an Etimad center either at Chakdara or Timergara for biometric verification of documents of the overseas and getting medical certificate.

Talking to local journalists at Timergara he said the overseas belonging to Lower Dir, Upper Dir, Lower Chitral, Upper Chitral, Bajaur, Swat, Bunir and Shangla had to travel to Peshawar for verification of their documents and getting medical certificate. He said the overseas were finding it difficult to get biometric verification at Peshawar. He demanded the government and the foreign ministry to establish a separate Etimad center at Chakdara or Timergara so that the overseas could be facilitated at their doorstep.

Youth engagement in sports activities stressed

F.P. Report

ZHOB: Advisor to CM Balochistan Mitha Khan Kakar has said that sports is an effective and meaningful way for engaging youth, it also gives them a lesson of tolerance. Encouraging and engaging the young generation in sports, literally ensures a secured future, peaceful and developed society.

He was speaking at the closing ceremony of a football tournament held at The Balochistan University of Information Technology, Engineering, and Management Sciences (BUIITEMS Zhub campus). Director BUIITEMS Dr Abdul Salam Lodhi and District Programme Manager Balochistan Rural Support Programme Quttab Khan Afqai were also present on the occasion.

The football tournament entitled 'Youth

Engagement' was organized by the BUIITEMS in collaboration with the BRSP - National Poverty Graduation Programme (NPGP) on the futsal court of the varsity. The final match was played between the Degree College football club and Lala Shaheed football club. Finally, Lala Shaheed club won the final match.

DPM BRSP Quttab Khan Afqai, in his welcome speech said that organizing the tournament was aimed at promoting the sports activities among the youth and engage the young segment of society in healthy and positive activities, where the sportsmen can prove their mettle.

Talking to the players, member of Balochistan assembly Mitha Khan Kakar said that the sports activities were extremely important for the youth and

said he was pleased to see the players with their excellent sporting skills. 'Participation in sports promises good health and therefore, such activities should be promoted. I was thrilled to see the passion and keen interest of the youth in sporting activities,' he admired.

Advisor to CM Balochistan also appreciated the efforts and generous contribution of BRSP in the development sector and said the organization has done excellent development work in every nook and corner of the poverty-hit Balochistan. Organizing sports events and engaging the youth was another good initiative of the organization. Meanwhile, Mitha Khan Kakar, Dr Abdul Salam Lodhi and Quttab Khan Afqai distributed trophies among the winner and runner-up teams and all the sportsmen.

SDDA, police distorting facts, claims TRP

Shafiqullah

MINGORA: Chairman of Tehreek Roorwali Pakistan (TRP) Fayaz Khan Damghar has said that the person accusing me of land mafia are delinquent itself, I have not done any illegal work, I have land documents and will not allow anyone to deprive from my right.

Police and SDDA are distorting the facts regarding the transfer of 152 kanals of land, 73 FIRs were lodged illegally against our colleagues in three years. He expressed these views while holding a crowded press conference at Swat Press Club. On this occasion, Ali Rehman, Iqbal Khan, Liaquat Ali Khan, Shaheen Iqbal, Shahid Yar Khan, Karam and others were also present.

Fayaz Khan said that 5 thousand and 500 kanals of property in Kanju Township has been owned by our fore-

fathers since 1963, but all the roads to access these lands have been closed by the authorities of Airport Security and SDDA. He said that In 1971, the airport authorities and the government promised us that they would build underground roads to reach these lands, but so far the promise has not been fulfilled. He said that on December 21, the SDDA and police officials held a self-imposed press conference against us and told that Fayyaz Khan and other associates have forcibly occupied the government land by cutting different types of trees. All the allegations are based on lies and have no relation to the facts.

IG Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, DIG Malakand Division and SP Police are acting on personal enmity but now we are under threat from the police department. They have illegally registered 73 FIRs

against our colleagues, now we request the higher authorities to take legal action against them as the police is also a mafia, if anything happens to us, all the responsibility will be on the police.

He further said that the SDDA officials themselves cut down illegal trees and then put the blame on the people. They should be asked that hundreds of trees are now in their custody, where did they come from and who cut them? Involved It is known that SDDA mafia itself is involved in all these activities. They demanded the Prime Minister of Pakistan, the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Chief Justice to take notice against these people because the people of Swat have sacrificed a lot, now we should not be made a scapegoat anymore and take actions against all the non-mafia.

Traffic week starts to create awareness

Syed Waliullah Shah

NEWSHERA: District police on Wednesday started a traffic week in order to make the public aware about the traffic rules. District Police Officer Muhammad Umar Khan visited various places along with DSP Headquarters Arshad Khan and distributed traffic rules awareness pamphlets, booklets and helmets to motorcycle riders.

The District Police Officer regarding the awareness campaign said that the traffic rules awareness campaign will reduce the tragic traffic accidents on the highways and the loss of precious human lives. He further said that organized traffic reflects an organized society. He said that traffic plays an important role in the completion of a civilized society.

He said that a public awareness campaign about traffic rules is a link in this chain and observance of traffic rules is a sign of a civilized nation. Seminars will be held in schools and colleges to create awareness about traffic rules in the district.

Four killed in armed clash near Malakwal

MALAKWAL (PPI): Four persons, including two real brothers, were shot dead and a passer-by injured in near Malakwal on Wednesday.

According to police, four persons, including two real brothers, were shot dead and a passer-by injured during a clash between rival groups in Chak 33 of Gojra village in the suburbs of Malakwal. The incident happened after two groups had a heated exchange of arguments a few days back.

The slain were identified as Muhammad Jaffar, Sana Ullah Babar Sultan, Atif Sultan and Malik Umair. Tense gripped the area soon after the incident. Gojra Police Station personnel shifted the bodies to Tehsil Hospital Malakwal for postmortem. The police have started a probe into the incident.

Six children, 1 female shifted to welfare home

Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: Upon the directions of Worthy Deputy Commissioner Kohat, Usman Ashraf, Assistant Commissioner, Kohat along with Amjad Afridi District Officer, Social Welfare, Kohat and Saleem Altaf Advocate, Chairman Karwan e Amal Kohat conducted deterrence operation under Vagrancy Restraint Act.6 children and 1 female were rescued and shifted to Welfare Home, Kohat.

Child Protection Officer has been directed to contact their families and to motivate their parents to enroll them in schools etc or else they will be proceeded under relevant sections of Child Protection and Welfare Act 2010.

Saleem Altaf distributed socks among them and lunch was served to them. Counseling was done and the children and female were dropped to their homes.

Heavy downpour, snowfall suspends power supply

F.P. Report

ABBOTTABAD: The mountainous parts of Abbottabad district received snowfall while plain areas including Bakote, Lora, Havellian and others received rain. As per details, the snowfall in upper areas started in the early hours of Wednesday and continued throughout the day, blocking link roads and disrupting power supply and brought activities of daily life to a standstill in the region.

Spokesperson Galiyat Development Authority (GDA) Ahsan Hameed, told The Frontier Post that the upper parts received more than 10 inches snowfall while lower areas received six to eight inches snowfall. The snow clearing machinery of the Galiyat Development Authority (GDA) had been deployed at various places of Galiyat to remove snow. They have managed to clear the main Abbottabad-Murree road, Nathiagali-Ayubia road, Changlagali road and some other connecting roads in the region for vehicular traffic.

Sardar Shahzad, a social activist stated that the cellular services and electricity was also disrupted and rates of firewood and food items further increased manifold. He further said though the snowfall was a good for the residents of the area as it brought an end to the prolonged dry spell due to which the areas were in gripped of water shortage. It brought smiles to the faces of inhabitants in Galiyat. However, he has demanded to the government authorities to make necessary arrangements for clearance of snow on earlier basis so the public and tourists can facilitate. He demanded to the district authorities to stop shopkeepers from the artificial price hike and asked for legal action against involved persons cashing the situation.

Quetta, other areas receive rains and heavy snowfall: Quetta and other areas of Balochistan have received rains and heavy snowfall, according to a report on Wednesday. According to the

Meteorological Department, Quetta, Pishin, Chaman, Qila Abdullah, Mastung, Nushki, and Dalbandin received heavy rain. There was also a heavy snowfall in Quetta, Ziarat, Khanozai, Kahan, Mehtarzai, Kaushik, and Toba.

People are facing difficulties as the snowfall has blocked several roads for traffic. The Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) has delivered the machinery to deal with any emergency situation in the snow affected areas. Different areas of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) also received snowfall. The flight schedule was affected at Jinnah International Airport, Karachi due to fog.

A Lahore-bound AirSial flight was delayed by one hour. It will now leave for its destination at 9am. Lahore-bound Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) flight PK302 was delayed by one hour. It will now leave for its destination at 10pm. Islamabad-bound AirSial flight PF123 was delayed by two hours. It will now leave for its destination at 3pm. The schedule of flights arriving in Karachi was also changed.

A Karachi-bound PIA flight from Multan will now arrive at 5:30pm instead of 12:25pm. A Karachi-bound AirSial flight from Lahore will now arrive at 1:30pm instead of 12:30pm. Another AirSial flight from Islamabad will arrive at Karachi Airport at 8pm instead of 6pm. Other flights will be operated according to the schedule. Fog blanketed the plains of Punjab, forcing the authorities to close the motorways for traffic. According to the motorways police, various sections of the motorways were closed due to zero visibility. Motorway (M-2) was closed from Lahore to Kot Momin. Lahore-Multan Motorway was closed from Faizpur to Darkhana. Lahore-Sialkot Motorway (M-11) was also closed. Motorway (M-4) was also closed from Faisalabad to Abdul Hakeem due to fog. The drivers were advised to install fog lights on their vehicles.

MMC patients facing hurdles due vacant faculties

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Patients and their family members have been facing hurdles and difficulties owing to non-posting of relevant officials on administrative posts in Mardan Medical Complex (MMC) Hospital for the last one year, it has been learnt.

The hospital officials on condition of anonymity told Dawn here on Wednesday that the medical director, hospital director and Dean of the Mardan Medical Complex Hospital were terminated from their posts due to their poor performances about one year back.

The quarters concerned had publicized for the said posts time and gains in different newspapers but no appointed had been made on the posts yet owing to unknown reasons. The MMC officials told that acting medical director, hospital director and dean were running the said posts since the termination act. However, it is observed that the acting medical director, hospital and dean have been feeling hesitations to take decisions on basic and important affairs of the health facility which has not only created difficulties for patients but is also affecting the hospital system.

Imad Khan, family member of a patient while talking to Dawn told that it was prime duty of the members of Board of Governors of Mardan Medical Complex Hospital to appoint permanent eligible officials on the abovementioned posts forth-

with as per legal procedure. He appealed to high-ups of health department to resolve the issue accordingly for the sake of best interest of general public.

Uninterrupted supply of edible items directed: Commissioner Mardan Division Syed Abdul Jabbar Shah has issued instructions to take concrete steps to provide basic facilities to the citizens so that their problems can be solved on a priority basis. Along with the supply of food items to the citizens in the markets at the rates fixed by the government, also pay attention to holding open kitchens to solve their problems and take immediate action on identifying the problems.

Commissioner said that the public servant should make service to the people as his motto by becoming a servant of the people, take the prayers of the people and will also be leaders in the hereafter. These instructions were issued by Commissioner Mardan Division Syed Abdul Jabbar Shah while presiding over the revenue review meeting of Mardan and Swabi districts on Wednesday.

Additional Deputy Commissioners, A.C.s, and Administration Officers of the respective districts, besides officers of the concerned departments attended. Commissioner Mardan issued instructions that the visits of the additional assistant commissioners to the development projects should include the technical staff of the rele-

ANP hold protest against high inflation

F.P. Report

BARA: Workers of Awami National Party (ANP) Khyber chapter hold a protest rally against price hiking in essential commodities here in Bara on Wednesday. District leadership of ANP besides volunteers of the party, office bearers of Pakhtun Students Union, Malgari Ustaztan, writers and people from different walks of life participated in the demo.

The protesters carried placards inscribed with slogans against high inflation. Speaking on the occasion ANP district chief Shah Hussain Shinwari, Vice-President Shereen Afridi and General Secretary Sadeeq Charagh Afridi categorically condemned the price hike and said unprecedented increase in edible in the last three years had proved that the rulers intended to take away from the poor, right of living.

It was difficult for a common man to make his both ends meet with the present rate of food and non-food inflation, they remarked.



SHANGLA: An aged beneficiary receiving Rs. 7000 from Benazir income support programs. - F.P. photo



Thursday, January 12, 2023

China blocks visas for S Korea and Japan over Covid curbs

BEIJING (BBC): China has stopped issuing short-term visas to individuals from South Korea and Japan in retaliation for Covid restrictions on Chinese travellers. Beijing says the pause on South Korean visas will remain in place until "discriminatory" entry restrictions against China are lifted. Japan and South Korea are not the only countries imposing entry requirements on travellers from China, where Covid cases are surging, but their measures are among the most stringent.

Last week, South Korea stopped issuing tourist visas for those coming from China, which the Chinese foreign ministry called "unacceptable" and "unscientific". Japan, meanwhile, is currently allowing Chinese visitors into the country - provided they test negative for Covid. This is similar to the UK and the US, but Japan is also restricting flights from China to certain Japanese cities. Beijing's embassies in both Seoul and Tokyo confirmed the new visa restrictions for visitors to China.

China reopened its borders for the first time since March 2020 as part of scrapping of its "zero-Covid" policy. Reacting to China's latest visa restrictions, South Korea's foreign ministry told the BBC that its policy towards arrivals from China was "in accordance with scientific and objective evidence". According to South Korea's Disease Control and Prevention Agency, around a third of all arrivals from China tested positive for Covid prior to the visa restrictions being put in place.

At Seoul's Incheon International airport - the only South Korean airport still allowing flights from China - arrivals are met by military personnel in personal protective equipment. The BBC managed to speak to some of them as they were escorted to the airport testing centre. "Personally, I



think it's OK. I have been through much worse during this pandemic," said William, a businessman from Shanghai. "As a traveller I just try to comply with the policies as much as possible."

But another passenger disagreed. "In my mind it's not scientific at all," said Emily, who arrived from Hong Kong. She, like those coming from mainland China, was required to test. "I feel like it's a little bit unfair on this side. They must feel really unsafe, I suppose." Many South Koreans support the idea of protecting their country from China's coronavirus surge - but not all are convinced that the decision is a purely medical one.

"There is a political element to it and the relationship between the two countries isn't a good one. A lot of Korean people hold a lot of animosity blaming China for the coronavirus," said Jinsun, who was heading to Abu Dhabi. Another woman going on her honeymoon to Paris said South Korea might not have implemented such rules if the country concerned wasn't China. "But then again, whatever we did, China would have a

problem with it," she said.

The South Korean curbs are supposed to last at least until the end of the month, which would give scientists time to analyse for any potential new variants coming from China. "There's no transparency at the moment in China about any monitoring for new variants. If a new variant comes from China, it would be a very difficult situation for the whole world," Professor Kim Woo Joo, an infectious diseases expert at Korea University and a government adviser, told the BBC. "It would also be a disaster for the Korean healthcare system. We currently have a lot of hospitalisations and deaths already and our elderly people are also under-vaccinated. This is what we are worried about." At the moment, only a small number of business or diplomatic travellers from China are being allowed into South Korea. They must test negative before departure and also on arrival. One Chinese man who tested positive escaped from a bus taking him to a quarantine hotel near the airport. Two days later he was caught by police in a hotel in Seoul.

China FM on Africa visit sidesteps call for UN council seat

NAIROBI (AP): China's new foreign minister, Qin Gang, has sidestepped a new call by the African Union for permanent representation on the United Nations Security Council during his visit to Ethiopia. Speaking at the opening of the Chinese-built headquarters of the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa, Qin instead emphasized China's partnership with Africa in security and economic development.

African Union Commission Chairman Moussa Faki Mahamat told a joint press conference that Africa's lack of permanent representation on the Security Council is a "burning issue" considering that most issues on the council agenda are related to African countries. "It is unacceptable that others decide in the place of others. It is not fair. We need a new order at the international level which will respect the interests of others," he said.

China is one of the council's five permanent members. Qin, who was appointed in December, is on his first overseas visit as foreign minister and is beginning a weeklong trip to Africa. He will also visit Gabon, Angola, Benin and Egypt. China's foreign ministers for more than three decades have started their terms by visiting Africa, whose population as a continent rivals China's. China has invested heavily in infrastructure in African countries, including roads, railways and hospitals.

Qin rejected the idea that China is competing in Africa with the United States, which last month sought to reassert its influence with a US-Africa summit in Washington. "What Africa needs is solidarity and cooperation, not block competition. No one has the right to force African countries to take sides," Qin said. The AU Commission chair said, "Africa refuses to be considered to be an arena of exchange of influence. ... We are open to cooperation and partnership with everybody, but our principles, our priorities and our interests have to be respected. The partnership we have with China is based on these principles."

Colombia VP says she was targeted with roadside bomb

BOGOTA (AP): Colombia's Vice President said that her security team found more than seven kilos of explosives buried next to a rural road that leads to her home in the southwestern province of Cauca. She described the incident as an assassination attempt.

Francia Marquez shared a police report on her Twitter account which says a drug-sniffing dog alerted to the bomb, which was made of ammonium nitrate, powdered aluminum and shrapnel, and that anti-explosives officers blew it up in a controlled explosion. The vice president, who has previously faced death threats, described it as a new assassination attempt that won't stop her advocacy for peace and equality.

Marquez is Colombia's first Black vice president. She was elected last September along with President Gustavo Petro, an economist and former guerrilla fighter, who is attempting to raise taxes on the wealthy, increase government spending and start peace talks with the nation's remaining rebel groups. Before she entered politics, Marquez led protests against mining companies and illegal miners operating in Cauca and was forced to leave her home village of Suarez, due to death threats.

The environmental activist rose to fame last year when she participated in presidential primaries, and helped President Petro secure votes in the nation's Afro-Colombian communities and also among women and young people inspired by her life story. Marquez currently heads the Ministry of Equality, a new agency that seeks to ensure women and ethnic minorities have equal access to the government's social programs.

Armenia cancels, mily drills, widening rift with Moscow

YEREVAN, Armenia (AP): The prime minister of Armenia said that his country has refused to host military drills planned by a Russia-dominated security pact, an announcement that reflected the Armenian government's growing tensions with Moscow. Nikol Pashinyan has repeatedly criticized Russian peacekeepers for failure to secure free transit along a corridor linking Armenia and the separatist region of Nagorno-Karabakh that Azerbaijani activists have blocked since last month.

Speaking at a news conference, Pashinyan said that Armenia considers the military exercise the Moscow-dominated Collective Security Treaty Organization planned for later this year "inappropriate in the current situation." "At least this year, these drills won't take place," he said. Pashinyan's move followed his refusal in the fall to sign a conclusive document from a meeting of the leaders of CSTO member nations in Yerevan, Armenia's capital.

Nagorno-Karabakh lies within Azerbaijan but has been under the control of ethnic Armenian forces backed by Yerevan since a separatist war there ended in 1994. That conflict left not only Nagorno-Karabakh itself but large chunks of surrounding lands in Armenian hands. In 44 days of heavy fighting that began in September 2020, the Azerbaijani military routed Armenian forces, forcing Yerevan to accept a Russia-brokered peace deal that saw the return to Azerbaijan of a significant part of Nagorno-Karabakh. The agreement also required Armenia to hand over swaths of land it held outside the separatist region.

Lachin province, which lies between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia, was the last of the three areas on the rim of Nagorno-Karabakh that Armenian forces surrendered in December 2020. Russia deployed nearly 2,000 peacekeepers for at least five years to ensure safe transit across the region, to monitor the peace deal and to help refugees return. But travel across the Lachin corridor has been blocked since Dec. 12 by Azerbaijani activists, who demanded access to what Azerbaijan has described as unlawful mining sites in Nagorno-Karabakh. Armenian authorities have described the blockade as part of efforts by Azerbaijan to extend its control over the region and urged the Russian peacekeepers to unblock the road.

The Azerbaijani move has left Russia in a precarious position. Armenia hosts a

Russian military base, and Moscow has been the country's top ally and sponsor. But the Kremlin also has sought to maintain warm ties with oil-rich Azerbaijan. Western sanctions over the Russian invasion of Ukraine have made Russia increasingly dependent on Azerbaijan's main ally, Turkey. With its attention focused on the fighting in Ukraine, Russia has taken a wait-and-see attitude on the Lachin corridor blockade, angering Armenia.

"Russia's military presence in Armenia not only fails to guarantee its security, but it raises security threats for Armenia," Pashinyan said. He noted that the blockade of the Lachin corridor is intended to "break the will of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh," adding that Armenia will also seek support from the US and the European Union to help ease the tensions with Azerbaijan. After the Russian peacekeepers' five-year mandate is over, Armenia could invite UN peacekeepers to come in "if Russia fails to fulfill its function to ensure security for the population of Nagorno-Karabakh," Pashinyan said.

The Russia-brokered 2020 peace deal also called for the creation of a transportation link between Azerbaijan and its Nakchivan enclave via Armenian territory. Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev accused Armenia of reneging on its promise to provide such a transit corridor. "Whether Armenia wants it or not, it will be implemented," Aliyev said in televised remarks, describing the corridor to Nakchivan as Azerbaijan's "natural right." He added, though, that Azerbaijan has no plans to wage another war against Armenia.

Asked to comment on Armenia's decision to cancel the planned military drills, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Moscow would ask Yerevan to clarify its position. "In any case, Armenia is our close ally, and we will continue our dialogue, including the most complex issues," he told reporters. Peskov previously rejected a claim by the secretary of Armenia's Security Council that Moscow had pressured Armenia to join a union of Russia and Belarus. Commenting on the claim, Pashinyan said that Moscow had not made any official request to that effect but noted that "the reality isn't as simple as it seems." He added: "Sometimes, it's not the text but the subtext that needs to be considered." "Armenia's sovereignty is an absolute value," the prime minister said.

Philippines court voids old South China Sea deal

MANILA (Reuters): The Supreme Court in the Philippines declared the country's 2005 energy exploration agreement with Chinese and Vietnamese firms was illegal, ruling the constitution does not allow foreign entities to exploit natural resources.

The decision, on an agreement that expired in 2008, could complicate efforts by China to revive oil and gas exploration talks with the Philippines in areas of the South China Sea that are not in dispute. The court gave no explanation for why the ruling came 14 years after a petition was filed. China and the Philippines have sparred for decades over sovereignty

and natural resources in the South China Sea, which led to a landmark arbitration case in 2016 won by Manila.

Efforts to find a legally viable way to work together on energy exploration have repeatedly hit walls. The previous Philippine government in June last year abandoned the latest attempt, citing constitutional constraints and issues of sovereignty. Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr, ahead of a visit to China last week, said his country must find a way to exploit its untapped energy reserves in its exclusive economic zone, even without China's expertise.

China claims jurisdiction over almost the entire South

China Sea and the risk of energy activities being disrupted have made it tricky for the Philippines to find foreign partners, despite an arbitration court clarifying what Manila's entitlements were. Its Supreme Court voided what was a deal between state-run Philippines National Oil Company, China National Offshore Oil Corp and Vietnam Oil and Gas Corporation covering a 142,886 square kilometre (55,169 square mile) area of the sea. It ruled it was illegal because the constitution stipulates the Philippines state must control and supervise activities and companies involved must be majority Philippine-owned.



BERN: Pakistan Scouts Commissioner Sardar Waqar Advocate posing a photo with Bénédicte de Cerjat Ex Ambassador of Switzerland to Pakistan.

Tigray forces begin handing over heavy weapons to Ethiopian army

ADDIS ABABA (Reuters): Tigray forces, who fought a two-year war against Ethiopia's federal government, began handing over heavy weaponry to the national army as part of an African Union-led peace process. The demobilisation of Tigray forces is seen as central to the Nov. 2 ceasefire agreement, alongside the restoration of services, resumption of humanitarian aid and withdrawal of Eritrean troops, who fought alongside Ethiopia's army but were not party to the truce.

The conflict created famine-like conditions for hundreds of thousands of

Tigray's population, killed thousands and displaced millions across northern Ethiopia. The handover in the town of Agule, around 30 km (18 miles) northeast of the regional capital Mekelle, was overseen by a monitoring team comprising members of the two sides and a regional body, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD).

At the ceremony, Tigray Defence Forces (TDF) representative Mulugeta Gebrechristos said the start of the disarmament would play a major role in restoring peace. "We are operating with the belief that if we

are to have peace, all things that open the door for provocation must not be there. Peace is vital for us all," Mulugeta said in a speech broadcast on Tigray TV.

"We are all (part of) one Ethiopia. Both us and the TDF have moved from our respective defensive positions in peace, understanding and love," said Alemseged Tadesse, a representative of the Ethiopian army. Eritrean soldiers pulled out of several major towns in Tigray late last month but have not left Tigrayan territory, according to residents. Eritrea has declined to comment on whether troops will leave.

Myanmar junta chief family assets found in Thai drug raid

BANGKOK (Reuters): Thai officials found assets belonging to adult children of Myanmar's junta leader during a raid on the Bangkok apartment of a Myanmar tycoon charged with drug trafficking and money laundering, according to an official record and two people with knowledge of the case. Title deeds and bankbooks belonging to Min Aung Hlaing's daughter and son were found at the home of Tun Min Latt, 53, when he was arrested in the Thai capital last September along with three Thai nationals on charges of conspiracy to traffic narcotics and money laundering.

Tun Min Latt, who has interests in hotels, energy and mining, is a close associate of Min Aung Hlaing, who seized power from the democratically elected government in February 2021, three sources with knowledge of the matter told Reuters last year. He has procured supplies for the military, the sources said. Publicly available pictures show them together at an arms fair in 2019. Tun Min Latt is in pre-trial detention; his lawyer could not be reached for comment.

Min Aung Hlaing's two children face no legal

action over the assets, according to the two people with knowledge of the case. They added that Thai authorities did not consider them relevant to the investigation against Tun Min Latt. Min Aung Hlaing's son Aung Pyae Sone and his daughter Khin Thiri Thet Mon, who along with their father have been sanctioned by the United States and Canada, did not respond to requests for comment by Reuters. The U.S said they had businesses that "directly benefited from their father's position and malign influence".

Their father also could not be reached for comment, and messages to Myanmar's military junta went unanswered. The discovery of the documents indicated close ties between Tun Min Latt and the Myanmar junta chief's family.

A spokesperson for the activist group Justice for Myanmar said the discovery also indicated Min Aung Hlaing's family was hiding assets in Thailand and urged the Thai government to take "urgent action to prevent it from becoming a safe haven for Myanmar war criminals by blocking the illegitimate Myanmar junta and its members from

accessing Thai banks and property, and freezing stolen assets that belong to the people of Myanmar". Thai government spokesman Anucha Burapachaisri declined to comment and referred questions from Reuters to law enforcement agencies, who did not respond to requests for comment.

During the September raid on Tun Min Latt's apartment in the Belle Grand Rama 9 condominium in Bangkok, police said they had seized \$8.96 million worth of assets including luxury cars, watches and expensive bags, along with \$239,091 in cash. According to an official asset seizure record dated Sept. 17, 2022, they also uncovered title deeds and a purchase contract from 2017 of a four-bedroom unit in the same condo in the name of Aung Pyae Sone, along with two Siam Commercial Bank (SCB) bankbooks for accounts in the name of Khin Thiri Thet Mon.

The document was obtained by Justice for Myanmar and independently verified by Reuters with two sources with knowledge of the case. Since the coup, Min Aung Hlaing's forces have launched a bloody crackdown on dis-

sent, killing thousands of opponents, according to the United Nations, which accuses Myanmar's troops of war crimes and crimes against humanity. The military says it is waging a war on "terrorists".

Thailand, which shares a land border of more than 2,000 km with Myanmar, has refrained from overt criticism of the junta and last month invited junta ministers to attend a regional summit, which was boycotted by several nations because of their presence. The two people with knowledge of the case, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to talk to media, confirmed that the assets belonging to Min Aung Hlaing's children had been found during the raid.

Reuters has confirmed that Khin Thiri Thet Mon's bank account has since been closed, but was unable to determine who closed it or when. SCB and the Belle Grand Rama 9 condominium did not respond to requests for comment. The Thai police, the Office of the Narcotics Control Board (ONCB) and the Anti-Money Laundering Office (AMLO) also did not respond to requests for comment.

Iran executions quash protests, push dissent underground

DUBAI (Reuters): Iran's hanging of protesters -- and display of their lifeless bodies suspended from cranes -- seems to have instilled enough fear to keep people off the streets after months of anti-government unrest. The success of the crackdown on the worst political turmoil in years is likely to reinforce a view among Iran's hardline rulers that suppression of dissent is the way to keep power.

The achievement may prove shortlived, however, according to analysts and experts who spoke to Reuters. They argue the resort to deadly state violence is merely pushing dissent underground, while deepening anger felt by ordinary Iranians about the clerical establishment that has ruled them for four decades. "It has been relatively successful since the number of people on the streets has decreased," said Saeid Golkar of the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, referring to the crackdown and executions. "However, it has created a massive resentment among Iranians."

Executive Director at the Campaign for Human Rights in Iran, Hadi Ghaemi said the establishment's main focus was to intimidate the population into sub-

mission by any means. "Protests have taken a different shape, but not ended. People are either in prison or they have gone underground because they are determined to find a way to keep fighting," he said. Defying public fury and international criticism, Iran has handed down dozens of death sentences to intimidate Iranians enraged by the death of Iranian-Kurdish woman Mahsa Amini, 22.

Her death in the custody of morality police in September 2022 unleashed years of pent up anger in society, over issues ranging from economic misery and discrimination against ethnic minorities to tightening social and political controls. At least four people have been hanged since the demonstrations started, according to the judiciary, including two protesters on Saturday for allegedly killing a member of the volunteer Basij militia forces. Amnesty International said last month Iranian authorities are seeking the death penalty for at least 26 others in what it called "sham trials designed to intimidate protesters".

The moves reflect what experts say is the religious leadership's consistent approach to government ever since the 1979 Islamic

Revolution that brought it to power -- a readiness to use whatever force is needed to crush dissent. "The regime's primary strategy has always been victory through terrorizing. Suppression is the regime's only solution since it is incompetent and incapable of change or good governance," said Golkar. Protests, which have slowed considerably since the hangings began, have been at their most intense in the Sunni-populated areas of Iran and are currently mostly limited to those regions.

And yet, the analysts said, a revolutionary spirit that managed to take root across the country during the months of protest may yet survive the security crackdown -- not least because the protesters' grievances remain undressed. With deepening economic misery, largely because of US sanctions over Tehran's disputed nuclear work, many Iranians are feeling the pain of galloping inflation and rising joblessness.

Inflation has soared to over 50%, the highest level in decades. Youth unemployment remains high with over 50% of Iranians being pushed below the poverty line, according to reports by Iran's Statistics Center. "There is no turning point

(back to the status quo), and the regime cannot go back to the era before Mahsa's death," Ghaemi said.

Alex Vatanka, director of the Iran Program at the Middle East Institute in Washington, said Tehran was banking on repression and violence as its way out of this crisis. "This might work in the short term but ... it won't work in the long term," Vatanka said, citing reasons such as Iran's deteriorating economy and its fearless young population who want "big political change, and they will fight for it." There are no signs that President Ebrahim Raisi or other leaders are trying to come up with fresh policies to try and win over the public. Instead, their attention appears to be fixed on security. The clerical leadership appears worried that exercising restraint over protesters could make them look weak among their political and paramilitary supporters, the analysts said.

Reuters could not reach officials at Raisi's office for comment. Golkar said an additional motive for the executions was the leadership's need to satisfy core supporters in organisations like the Basij, the volunteer militia that has been instrumental at countering the spontaneous and leaderless unrest.

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Flour crisis and the next

PESHAWAR High Court (PHC) has ordered Federal and provincial secretaries along with the Director of Food to appear before the court in the case regarding the non-availability and unprecedented hike in flour prices in the province. According to the petitioner, wheat and flour have become rare and their prices skyrocketed over the past few weeks while the public was roaming in search of the basic food item.

Pakistan is an agricultural country, while Sindh and Punjab produce a sufficient amount of wheat every year which satisfactorily fulfills the needs of the entire nation. Federal and Provincial governments also purchase sufficient stocks of wheat on yearly basis to meet national requirements and PASSCO procures commodities for Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Kashmir regions. After the 18th amendment, the purchase and distribution of wheat to flour mills, maintaining a sufficient stock of commodity, and control of inflation is the responsibility of provincial governments, however, the federal government keeps oversight on the overall situation in the country.

Unfortunately, Pakistan has suffered from the selfish politics of its leaders, the unrestricted greed of its traders, and a politico-bureaucratic nexus, that always created the newest crises and manipulated public issues for their benefit. The current flour crisis is another example of the government's mismanagement and complicity which merits stern accountability of the perpetrators, however, who would punish the culprits if policemen conspire with the criminals? Currently, the court has started hearing the case, hopefully, adjudicators will take stern action against the defaulters, so no one dares such acts in the future.

Taiwan's tension and Western legacy

TAIWAN President Tsai Ing-wen has called on Germany to maintain regional order in the Taiwan Strait and thanked European strongman for its consistent support of the Island nation.

Presently, Taiwan has become a cornerstone of the US-China rivalry because it not only provides Washington and its allies an opportunity to exploit China's most sensitive part but also gives them strategic superiority over China to weigh two-front war against the Asian Superpower in any future conflict in the Indo-Pacific region. The growing Chinese economic and military influence alarmed Washington in the late years of the Obama Presidency when the United States gradually restricted Chinese investment in the US along with a gradual upturn in US-Taiwan trade and security cooperation, while this trend became more vigorous through Trump's sanctimonious policies toward Beijing. Meanwhile, the US-led North Atlantic Alliance and European Union also recognized China as a common threat to the current-day western world order. The western nations adopted coordinated economic and military strategies against China through building strategic partnerships with regional states, while Taiwan had been identified as the most pivotal tool to exploit China's weakness effectively.

Apparently, a new cold war has begun between China and the west through sharply downgraded bilateral ties, declining trade, and an evergrowing economic, diplomatic, and military competition across the world ranging from the Indo-Pacific region to western Africa and from Oceania Islands to the Balkan region. The current-day cold war is being contested by Western democracy and the Chinese version of socialism, which aims at building its strength on economic invasion and military influence instead of political disposition in other nations. Although, the Chinese new world order does not confront Western democracy but it threatens the western economic hegemony in the contemporary world. Thus, the entire west is unified against China to protect its common interest in the world.

Currently, Taiwan is strengthening its military to contest a possible Chinese invasion against the Island, while Taiwanese authorities called on the western nations to forge a partnership to protect democracy and maintain regional order. The United States had allocated \$ 4.5 billion to support Taiwan's defense, while Tai Pei has requested the German Bundeswehr to share its war expertise with Taiwan to help alleviate the threat from its powerful neighbour. Although Taiwan is preparing for a full-fledged war, however, Tsai Ing-wen must make out about the war memories of Volodymyr Zelenskyy before taking any course, because the west always supports its allies by handing daggers and swords but never putting feet in the hot water and always witnesses brawl outside the arena. Therefore, the tiny nation must reconsider the pros and cons of the competition as things go Tsai alone has to face the enemy.

‘What do we want? Equality? When do we want it? Now!’

WE might hear “What do we want? Equality? When do we want it? Now!” in the streets at times but, if pressed, few people making such demands want only equality. They want equality because it will make possible something else, maybe justice or liberty. So even the most avid advocate could not honestly answer the title of Eva Brann's provocative book *Is Equality an Absolute Good?* in the affirmative. Equality is not an absolute good.

This makes Brann's confession of her genuine perplexity about the question and her identification as a “true believer and real apostate” noteworthy. The confession, however, is likely rhetorical flourish because, while she spends much of the first half of the book explaining why equality is so important, she is very clear that equality is misguided (and politically dangerous) as an abstraction and it is most operative when understood as equal “enough.” To insist on enough equality (only) is to assume that the presence of a certain amount of equality makes something else possible, palatable, or permissible. These things, for Brann, are freedom and flourishing. That is, equality is a very important intermediary, not absolute, good.

So why start the essay with the statement that she is a “true believer and real apostate” who is confounded by the idea of equality as an absolute good? Rather than indicate that she might find such claims alternatively persuasive and unpersuasive, she invokes religious terminology. For, Brann, the idea of equality being absolute can only be sustained as an abstraction, and efforts to make equality the prime political good have produced dreadful consequences in the real world. A brief comparison of the French and American

Revolutions in regard to actual success in establishing equality leads Brann to highlight the danger of operating with an abstraction. The French Revolution, 20th-century totalitarian movements, and claims made by unnamed groups today run this risk. She writes “[c]uring inequality, however, which is in little and large respects pervasive under personal freedom enabled by political liberty, means undertaking or rather attempting to bring about, ‘systemic reform,’ that is, administratively led revolution.” The principle issue with this, for Brann, is that there “is a system,” such as the revolutionary state, which can bring about equality in absolute terms.

It is also important to note that Brann, subtly, rejects libertarian-type ideas that give no regard to politically mediated efforts to reduce inequality, but insists on the value of classical liberalism and “bounded inequality.” Her defense of the importance of equality suggests that reducing inequality is a good thing, but she never defines inequality. She insists on the need for people to have sufficient goods in order to live well, but never explains how this is a matter of reducing inequality (instead of raising baseline conditions) or what sort of inequality (wealth, income, status) should be reduced. The lack of clarity is important because the “ardent equalizers... gripped by an ideological zealotry” that she opposes periodically swell into public squares with signs, screams, and, now, screens. They might not be satisfied with sufficient goods.

Brann sees such demagoguery as inherently abstract and imprudent. How can one make something abstract concrete? How can equality of relations between different people be equalized in time, and for all time? She draws out the abstract

notion of absolute equality by highlighting two primary meanings of equality, one mathematical, one moral. The latter is the one to which every school child is exposed. Is it not wrong to treat person A differently from person B? The former is even more elementary. We memorize $2+2=4$, despite the ravings of Dostoevsky's underground man. Equality is therefore a matter of mathematical identity (a standard that even “identical twins” fail to meet) and moral treatment. The tendency to try

Tony Spanakos

not terribly complicated. Trying to figure out how much of one is to be used in relation to another requires judgment, is calculable.

If we think of people, groups, or whatever human category, Brann notes, mathematical identity is impossible and undesirable. This is because we are essentially unquantifiable beings, beings that are beyond measure. As such, equality is, literally, a foreign goal that can only be imposed abstractly. Inequality, however, is a space for distinction, where

If we think of people, groups, or whatever human category, Brann notes, mathematical identity is impossible and undesirable.

to immamentize the abstract notion of equality in politics confuses the two.

The distinction between the two meanings is highlighted when Brann defines equality as “essentially quantitative” and inequality as “essentially qualitative.” To verify equality one must have measures and scales. It is, perhaps, a sign of the times that we truck in proxies that we treat as the real thing. Can we not simply compare the income of person A and B to determine inequality? If income is found lacking, could we adjust for purchasing power? Should we add in consumption patterns and the local costs of keeping up with people of whatever surname? More measures can always be added in, a margin of error can be introduced, and, of course, we can speak at the level of the aggregate because we know the limits of comparison. Such machinations seem rather complicated in order to make some claims about, and then policies, with regard to, equality. Measuring the length and weight of woof and warp is

we express who we are. Human will, “always on the side of freedom, becomes the partisan of inequality: Inequality means latitude in possibility, escape from comparison, release from positive definition—all preconditions of lived freedom.” Building on Aristotle, she writes “the soul being at its own work and doing it well—is way beyond measurement. Happiness indices belong to a litter I think of as idiots’ expertise.” Statisticians may grapple with how to quantify a qualitative category, such as happiness, but Brann's point is that sufficient equality is a precondition for a will operating freely to pursue its own flourishing. Sufficient equality means that equality is not absolute and, critically, inequality is present.

In the end, the book presents a strong classical liberal argument for “inequality as a political and personal good.” But one could easily ask how much inequality or what sort of mechanisms to reduce inequality are acceptable?

Given that the inequality in need of “bounding” is never defined—is it about incomes, status, physical abilities?—and there is little discussion of politics other than brief references to French Revolutionaries and totalitarian communist regimes, the reader has little sense of how conditions of equal “enough” are obtained. The assumption is that an informed citizenry capable of restraining its desires so that all can pursue freedom is fundamental. She rejects ideology and systems. She proudly discusses voting but criticizes, at least some, street politics, which many would say have been important in helping to reduce inequalities of various kinds. This seems an area in need of elaboration.

Similarly, the book does not address constitutions, law, and jurisprudence. One might agree with Aristotle, that fellowship is of greater value to the polis than justice (Nicomachean Ethics VIII, 1). But Brann's argument does not involve any bonds between fellow members of the polity. Rather she speaks of children cutting cakes (and wanting identical shares) and a child taking violin lessons. If there is flourishing to be done, it seems like it is done solo, with little regard to others. It also seems that it is done without constraints imposed by law. Some could certainly be persuaded that they are equal enough, while some might certainly think otherwise, and personal reflections on the limitations of equality as an absolute good are a weak substitute for law.

Perhaps the most apparent missing element of Brann's book is why inequality is so vexing for some. Brann's happy being follows his or her will and takes “very expensive” violin lessons, among other pursuits. Do the political “zealots” that she criticizes want to have sufficient

equality so that they can enjoy inequality also? Do they want to enjoy the identical paths of those they see as having more than they? Or do they want to take from those who have that which they do not really want?

Although political rhetoric is often sloppy, street politics deliberately messy, and policy formation strategic but often imprudent, it is likely that the “zealots” make claims and are motivated most by some mix of the first and third questions. Even if they, as leaders, are more likely to hold the third position—take from those who have that which they do not really want—the masses to whom they speak are more likely to prefer some version of the first: sufficient equality so they can enjoy inequality too. The danger, then, seems less the idea of understanding equality as an absolute good but that a group of people can commandeer political rhetoric (and possibly policy) in such a way that it is inspired by and produces a politics that is at odds with the positions of most people in a democratic society.

Much of Brann's commentary seems to respond to many of the same questions raised in Tocqueville's portraits in *Recollections* but without a sense of how what was being observed, troubling that it was, was temporary and ephemeral. There he noted, “[a]s is always the case in riots, the ludicrous vied with the terrifying.” Consistent with Democracy in America, Tocqueville underscored how understanding demands for equality required analysis of popular support, elite motivations for equality, the role played by law, institutions, habits, and associational life. Such a discussion would fill out the case made by Brann and make its relevance to the contemporary reader more evident.

The launch of international thermonuclear project delayed

Nikolai Guryanov

THE International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER) is facing problems that could delay the implementation of the world's largest clean energy project for years. This was stated by the CEO of the organization that manages the mega-building in the south of France. What are the prospects for a giant installation, in the creation of which Russia is involved, - in the material of RIA Novosti.

The purpose of ITER is to prove the possibility of using thermonuclear fusion as an environmentally friendly, safe and practically inexhaustible source of energy. The experimental reactor should pave the way for thermonuclear power plants.

The installation being built in France is the so-called tokamak. In a donut-shaped vacuum chamber, plasma heated to hundreds of millions of degrees moves. Such a temperature will melt any material, and to prevent this from happening, the hot substance from contact with the walls

of the chamber keeps the magnetic field.

The most efficient fuel for such reactors under terrestrial conditions is considered to be a mixture of deuterium and tritium, isotopes of hydrogen. It is she who is going to be used in ITER - but not immediately. Tokamak systems will first be comprehensively tested with the so-called first plasma - hydrogen. Then, according to the plan, they will gradually receive plasma discharges with design parameters in helium and deuterium and, ten years after the first launch of the machine, they will switch to deuterium-tritium, which will allow reaching the design power of thermonuclear reactions. The timing of obtaining the first plasma was postponed several times. As a result, they moved it to 2025. Now this deadline is in question.

"Months and even years"

The Director General of the International Organization ITER, Pietro Barabaschi, said that two serious problems had been

identified.

Firstly, deviations from the given dimensions of the sectors of the vacuum chamber. This key element of the reactor is a mega-object in itself. The internal volume of the chamber is 1400 cubic meters, the outer diameter is 19.4 meters, the height is 11.4, and the weight is about 5200 tons.

Five sectors are being built by the EU, four by South Korea. Who made the mistake is not specified.

In addition, there are signs of corrosion on the heat shield. Apparently, this is what Barabaski was talking about at the end of November. Cracks in the pipes of the cooling system, which arose as a result of welding pipes to the vessel, were found on a segment already installed in the reactor shaft, and it is impossible to repair the defect on site. It is necessary either to disassemble the object, or to manufacture a new section of the heat shield altogether.

Barabaski believes that repairs will take "months

and even years."

He admitted that getting the first plasma in 2025 seemed "unrealistic" even before that.

"So, we will compact"

Director of the Private Institution "ITER-Center" (State Corporation "Rosatom") Anatoly Krasilnikov urges not to dramatize the situation.

"This is normal for such a large and unique facility. Technical difficulties have arisen before," he points out. "The reason for the possible transfer, which the ITER director general speaks of, is primarily not in critical design defects, but in the fact that scientists want to expand the scientific program. This means that preparations for a test launch will take longer. In fact, the first plasma will not be what was meant by it."

Be that as it may, such decisions are made not by the CEO, but by the supreme body of the project, the ITER Council, which meets twice a year, adds Krasilnikov. According to him, the situation will finally

clear up only by the end of 2023 or even in 2024.

"Accordingly, the research program between the first plasma and deuterium-tritium will be tightened up. So far, everyone is determined to keep the second date - the middle of the thirties," Krasilnikov notes.

According to Barabaschi, the organization will take steps to stop the expected cost overruns. Like many other megaprojects, ITER is chronically underestimated. Five billion euros were allocated for the construction of the reactor, but over the years the amount has quadrupled.

Successes of Russia, USA and China

The project is being implemented by the whole world - the leading technological powers have committed themselves to the development and manufacture of various elements of the installation. The share of the European Union - 45%, Russia, USA, China, South Korea, Japan and India - 9.1% each.

This not only allows the distribution of financial costs, but also provides

each participant with access to key technologies.

Cooperation with Russia in this project continues despite the sanctions.

In total, Moscow must prepare 25 systems. Three are ready. In November, ITER received a poloidal field coil.

Smaller experimental tokamak-type reactors are already in operation. So, this month, Chinese scientists announced that they had succeeded in creating a more efficient energy confinement mode, Super I, on the EAST tokamak, which, they say, should become "the main scenario for the operation of ITER."

In the US, a breakthrough has been achieved with a different type of plant. In December, at the Livermore National Laboratory, the so-called ignition point was reached at the NIF experimental reactor - the laser fusion facility released more energy than was transferred to the deuterium-tritium target. However, according to experts, an economically viable reactor is still very far away.

Can US and Europe exert more pressure on Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh blockade without restarting a war?

THE blockade of Nagorno-Karabakh - a mountainous region internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan, but under effective Armenian control for three decades - is entering its fourth week. Reports highlight the rapidly dwindling supply of medicine, foodstuffs, and other essentials with seemingly no resolution in sight. Preoccupied with its war in Ukraine, Russia, the region's historic referee, has shown itself to be either unwilling or unable to end the ongoing crisis.

Azerbaijani self-described eco-activists have been blocking the Lachin Corridor, the only road connecting Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia proper, for almost a month. They are demanding a halt to what they claim are illegal mining practices on Azerbaijanian

territory, as well as the transfer of weapons (specifically mines) through the corridor.

Officials in the region's de facto capital, Stepanakert, have invited international experts to inspect the mines, which they say are operating "in the best standards," and have rejected Baku's claims that the road is being used to transport arms. However, Azerbaijan continues to press the issue of arms transfers on the international stage.

These issues risk reigniting the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan, with potentially disastrous consequences for regional stability as a weakened Russia may no longer be able to keep the peace.

Armenia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs recently warned that "the danger of malnutrition is tangible" for the 120,000 Armenians in

the region. Given that 400 tons of essential supplies used to arrive in Nagorno-Karabakh through the corridor every day, the continuing blockade is likely to provoke a serious humanitarian crisis with only a few Red Cross convoys having been allowed to pass through for medical emergencies. The sole alternative means of transportation into Nagorno-Karabakh is an airport located just outside of Stepanakert but is currently being used exclusively for the resupply and rotation of Russian peace-keeping forces.

In addition, the airport, the scene of an Armenian protest late last month, has been out of civilian use for decades, and Baku has threatened to respond forcefully to its potential additional use given that it lies within Azerbaijan's internationally recognized

borders.

The European Union and the United States have called on Azerbaijan to ensure freedom and security of movement along the corridor since the blockade began on December 12. However, the calls have not been backed by any real pressure on Azerbaijan and appear to have had no effect on Baku's decision-making. Meanwhile, Turkey, Azerbaijan's staunchest supporter and arms supplier, has blossomed as a global power broker since the war in Ukraine began.

While declining to enforce western sanctions against Russia and having played a leading role (alongside the UN) in producing the grain export deal last year between Kyiv and Moscow, Ankara has made itself indispensable to the Kr-

Artin DerSimonian

emlin in certain respects. It appears that Azerbaijan is using the newfound leverage of its ally, as well as its own significantly increased importance in supplying gas to Europe, to push its interests in the South Caucasus.

With Diaspora Armenian groups and some international non-governmental human rights organizations, including Genocide Watch and The Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention, having signed a letter laying out the serious potential for ethnic cleansing currently facing the inhabitants of Nagorno-Karabakh as a result of Baku's actions, the Armenians of the region are concerned for their survival.

At a United Nations Security Council meeting last month, the United

States, along with its allies, took a strong stance and called for the opening of the corridor and an end to the blockade. While a statement by the Council was intended to be released following the meeting, it never materialized, following a diplomatic breakdown involving the two parties, France, and Russia. In any event, a humanitarian crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh would pose, at the least, a serious political problem for the American and French governments given the large and politically influential Armenian communities in both countries.

However, Washington does have the ability to influence the situation more strongly. It should apply greater diplomatic pressure on Azerbaijan than it has to date to immediately open the corridor while also coordinating with Yerevan

and Moscow to ensure Baku's concerns are addressed within the bounds of the ceasefire agreement of November 2020. A key interest of both Baku and Ankara is the creation of a so-called Zangezur Corridor, which would connect Azerbaijan's exclave of Nakhchivan (which borders Turkey) with mainland Azerbaijan, thus forging a direct link between the two countries, a scenario strongly opposed by Iran and Armenia.

Precisely what force would control such a transportation route, which would traverse Armenia's southern region of Syunik, has emerged as a point of contention in negotiations following the ceasefire agreement. Meanwhile, Azerbaijan has demonstrated its willingness to exert military pressure to accelerate the negotiations. Given

this situation, Washington should encourage further negotiations to advance regional peace and reduce tensions through a diplomatic solution acceptable to all parties involved.

In addition, Washington should seek further action at the UN Security Council to resolve the crisis on the Lachin Corridor within an international framework. However, if such diplomatic actions fail to bear fruit, Washington could support a humanitarian airlift to deliver desperately needed supplies to Nagorno-Karabakh.

While limitations do exist on what pressure Washington can apply and what strings it may pull to resolve the situation, a clear need exists for the Biden Administration to act more decisively so as to prevent mass famine, or worse, from unfolding in the South Caucasus.

United States has its own 'Ukraine' on the border

THE North American summit in Mexico City is taking place in conditions close to combat. God knows what is going on in the "backyard" of the United Sta-tes, as Washington contemptuously calls the cou-ntries of Latin America.

Let's start with Mexico. Last year, President Andres Manuel López Obrador refused to attend the Summit of the Americas, held in the United States. He accused the host of imperialism and disrespect for the sovereignty of Latin American states.

Now a response has arrived from Washington. Under pressure from the White House, the Mexican security forces were forced to arrest Ovidio Guzman, nicknamed the Rat. This is the son of the famous drug lord, nicknamed Shorty, who has been "chasing

ly, is fighting this Maidan.

The Americans position themselves as masters of managing chaos, but something clearly went wrong with the management. Republicans openly drown for one President of Brazil, Democrats for another. And their battlefield is an innocent Brazil. So how are they going to manage chaos in the absence of a bipartisan consensus? This undermines any credibility in Washington.

Everything was much easier before. He finds the White House of his protegee in another country and moves him with all his might into power. It's like "our son of a bitch". And now the Republicans have their "son of a bitch", the Democrats have their own, and now these "sons of bitches" are fighting among themselves and everyone feels in mortal danger. The Kyiv regime should take a

Victoria Nikiforova

the United States carries particular risks. All this "wedding in Malinovka" - with drugs, shooting, massive crime - now and then overflows inside the American borders. And here the purely imitation nature of the American "management of chaos" becomes especially clear.

The fact is that the States are now facing a large-scale historical event - the mass migration of people from Latin America. More than two million migrants entered the US last year alone. More than five million since Biden's accession to the White House. This is in addition to the tens of millions who came earlier and now make up the majority in the cities of California and New Mexico.

Yes, the flow of people is controlled by criminal gangs, in particular drug

which the average Latin American today lives an order of magnitude worse than the average American.

And that's what to do with this reconquista, the United States does not know. The Republicans are just saying: troops should be stationed on the Mexican border and everything that moves should be shot at. That is what Donald Trump promised to do if he was elected president.

Democrats want to make deals, play for time. In 2017, when ex-President of Mexico Cuauhtemoc Cardenas filed a lawsuit to annul the Guadalupe Hidalgo treaty and, accordingly, to return California, Texas and New Mexico to the Mexicans, the New York Times Democratic Party wall newspaper responded with an interesting article.

It was written by the Mexican historian Enrique

By the way, in parallel, democratic opinion leaders are campaigning with might and main for the legalization of drugs, including the monstrous fentanyl. This is probably how they imagine the process of destroying the wrong US population and replacing it with the right one.

It turns out that Republicans and Democrats have directly opposite views on the great migration of peoples, which is now overwhelming the country. Democrats hope to use migrants to force out local rednecks. The Republicans are trying to save the locals. As a result, the issue of migration splits the country very seriously.

Well, come to power Trump or DeSantis, send an army to the border with Mexico - and then what? In Texas, this initiative will be

It turns out that Republicans and Democrats have directly opposite views on the great migration of peoples, which is now overwhelming the country. Democrats hope to use migrants to force out local rednecks. The Republicans are trying to save the locals. As a result, the issue of migration splits the country very seriously. Well, come to power Trump or DeSantis, send an army to the border with Mexico - and then what? In Texas, this initiative will be welcomed - no doubt. But in democratic California, there is a suspicion that unrest will begin in defense of migrants. And those Latin Americans who already today make up the majority in many cities of California will participate in them. It is the peaceful Latin American reconquista that frightens the US population so much. Therefore, the topic of an open border has become so painful for the people. And Biden's clumsy attempts to promote on the border, and his participation in the Mexican summit - all this is perceived only as an imitation of chaos management. Weak attempts to disguise the fact that under the very side of the United States, a giant conglomerate of Latin American states is boiling, fighting, shooting and looking resentfully at their ancestral lands.

kitchen" in the USA for quite a long time.

After the arrest of their leader, Krysenok's militants unleashed a real civil war in Mexico: mass shootings, street battles, shelling of the airport, killings of security officials and civilians began. It was quite predictable: in 2019, they tried to imprison Rat, but they quickly released him because a criminal uprising threatened to destroy all of Mexico. Now the army had to be thrown into the business. In response, the drug fighters promised a series of terrorist attacks.

Restless and in Brazil. There, supporters of former President Jair Bolsonaro and the newly elected Lula da Silva go wall to wall. Again, the protests have to be dispersed with the help of the army.

Bolsonaro, who fled away from sin to Florida to his friend Ron DeSantis, is supported by the American Republicans. The new President Lula, on the contrary, has Joe Biden as his official patron. He just called him, reassured him, invited him to Washington.

It turns out that an epic foreign policy battle between Ron DeSantis and Biden and Co. is being played out in Brazil. The governor of Florida is trying to organize a Maidan there, just like he tried to do in Cuba last year. And the White House, paradoxical-

closer look at this turn in American foreign policy. All this is fraught with new risks for the native puppets.

Well, the most epic failure of Washington in its "backyard" was, of course, the drain of Juan Guaidó. If anyone does not remember: this was the man whom Donald Trump appointed President of Venezuela, despite the fact that Venezuela was headed and is still headed by Nicolas Maduro, legally elected by the people. For more than three years, the country had a real president and, at the same time, an American "son of a bitch".

The Americans messed with the "young activist" a little, promoted him in the world media, forced their European vassals to recognize him. There was even a Venezuelan embassy in Washington representing Guaidó. However, the boy was unable to intercept the controls from Maduro - and now he was defiantly written off in the archive. As of January 3, the United States will no longer recognize Guaidó as president of Venezuela. Perhaps the American media will be able to pass it off as a victory. But in the eyes of the whole world - an obvious failure in the Venezuelan direction. And again, a bad signal to other American henchmen.

The policy of controlled chaos in the "backyard" of

cartels. Yes, migrants carry with them some unimaginable amount of drugs, such as the infamous fentanyl. And yes, according to official figures alone, more than 22 million Americans are so addicted to these drugs that they can't even get off. All this Biden and Obrador discussed at the summit in Mexico City. However, this is only the tip of the iceberg, as are the fair complaints of Republicans that migrants are dumping on the labor market and ruining the American budget for benefits.

The northward migration of Hispanics is driven by deep historical resentment. This is a kind of revenge on the Americans for the fact that they have profited for centuries, ruining their southern neighbors and brewing civil wars there. If anything unites the different states of South America, it is the hatred of gringos.

Migration is a kind of peaceful reconquista, a triumph of historical justice. Indeed, ancient Latin American civilizations, empires with centuries of history were simply wiped into dust by Western conquerors. Then their native land was taken away from them: for example, under the Guadalupe-Hidalgo Treaty, Mexico gave the States more than half of its territory. And, finally, they were driven into neo-colonial bondage, because of

Krause. He noted the validity of the Mexican demands to regain California, Texas and New Mexico and recalled the inhuman nature of the US war against the Mexicans: there were massacres of civilians, and the seizure of territories, property, and the expulsion of people from their land. He sadly stated that the States had not yet repented properly for the genocide of the Mexicans and had not paid them fair compensation.

Noting the "public importance" of Cardenas' lawsuit, Krause admitted that so far winning such a case in court is unrealistic. And he immediately proposed an exchange formula: the States, in order to atone for their historical guilt before the Mexicans, change their immigration laws and distribute citizenship to the people of Mexico, their children and grandchildren.

Under Trump, this idea somehow did not work out, but under Biden, it is being implemented simply at a Stakhanovite pace. Latin American migrants receive millions of American IDs every year. The Democratic Party thus provides itself with votes. And ordinary Americans are dying from drugs and dying in criminal showdowns - but who will feel sorry for them? Certainly not a democratic establishment working for global capital.

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These are hundreds of millions of people driven into centuries of poverty, this is the legacy of ancient civilizations, this is historical hatred of the invaders. In general, this is what Ukraine pretends to be today in relation to Russia. Only in Latin America this is not a propaganda chimera, but a historical reality. Whether the States will cope with their "Ukraine" is the most interesting question of the near future.



Russia loses only money

Sergey Savchuk

A number of foreign publications, frankly triumphant, carried the news that India was ready to join the group of countries that had previously adopted at the legislative level restrictions on the purchase of Russian oil, the so-called price ceiling. In particular, The Telegraph India writes about this with reference to its closed sources in the Ministry of Industry. It is reported that in the event that at the cost of black gold of Russian origin exceeds \$60 per barrel, official Delhi is ready to introduce the already mentioned restrictive mechanism, that is, to physically force our oilmen to deliberately sell raw materials below the market level, thereby provoking losses both corporate and budget.

We will leave the reliability of the information, as well as the reliability of the sources, on the conscience of the publication. At the same time, let's consider how likely such a scenario is and, most importantly, what will happen if India really starts to apply a price ceiling for Russian oil.

Perhaps we should start with the fact that India is one of the oldest trading partners of our country, but this wording reflects the development of bilateral relations only partially. The fact is that the trade turnover between Moscow and Delhi is growing with enviable stability. In September, Vladimir Putin met with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in Samarkand. During the conversation, the leaders noted the growth of mutual trade in the first half of the year by 120 percent compared to 2021. In absolute terms, the countries traded between themselves for a total of \$11.5 billion in six months.

As mentioned above, there is a constant increase, for comparison: in 2020, the trade turnover amounted to 9.2 billion, while it is important to note that Russian exports exceed the reverse flow of goods and services. To be specific, for the whole of 2021 (remember: we are comparing with the first half of 2022), Russian exports reached 9.1 billion, while Indian reverse imports are only 4.4 billion. Thanks to such a rapid growth, Russia in the list of trade partners of 1.5 billion India has soared from 25th to seventh place in just two years.

Due to media publicity, joint military-technical projects are mostly heard. In particular, Moscow supplied Delhi with almost three hundred modern Su-30MKI fighters, and the local corporation HAL (Hindustan Aeronautics Limited) received a license to assemble vehicle kits for combat aircraft supplied from Russia.

The same list includes T-90S tanks, the number of which, according to the results of the contract, in the ranks of the Indian army should exceed the bar of two thousand units. Be sure to mention the successful joint development of the BrahMos anti-ship missile, created on the basis of the Russian counterpart, the P-800 Oniks missile.

Let's add here the brainchild of the "Northern Design Bureau", which, on the direct order of the Ministry of Defense of India, developed the frigate of project 1135.6 "Talwar". Warships were built at the Yantar plant in Kaliningrad and today they are already performing combat missions in the warm waters of the Indian Ocean.

However, we got carried away with the military theme, let's return to the niche of energy that is more familiar to us.

The average citizen of

absolutely any country is much more interested only in what affects his own life. Relatively speaking, it is much more important for the inhabitants of Tula to know what is happening inside Russia and in neighboring Belarus along with Ukraine. This is a completely normal and understandable focus of attention. Therefore, the majority of our fellow citizens to a fair extent perceive India as a distant and hot country, something semi-mythical from children's fairy tales. At the same time, of course, India is the largest country in the region, with a powerful and rapidly growing economy and real sector, and the main challenge for it is rivalry with neighboring China, which is exactly the same demographic and industrial giant.

At the moment, the population of both countries is estimated at 1.4 billion people, but this figure is rather arbitrary. Experts have repeatedly noted that the real numbers of the population of India can differ dramatically from those declared. One of the reasons is still rather low urbanization, in which the lion's share of citizens lives in rural areas. This fact is superimposed by purely religious features, when in certain branches of Hinduism, parents do not register their children with state bodies. The numbers here vary, but some researchers call the number of 100-200 million people who now pass, as they say, below the registration and statistical radars.

That is, the size of the domestic market of India and its attractiveness for any external suppliers is approximately clear. Narendra Modi has been in power for a full eight years, including for the reason that the government under his leadership is carrying out global internal transformations, primarily related to the modernization of the energy sector, without which neither production growth nor the accompanying economic growth is possible. Naturally, in order to provide one and a half billion people with light, hot water, gasoline, asphalt, plastic and other products of the modern world, a real breakthrough of energy resources is needed. The problem is that India is not so rich in them, because energy imports are, without exaggeration, of vital importance for Delhi - and it is Russia that plays one of the main violins on this stage.

We will not bore you with regular figures of statistics and year-to-year comparisons. Let's just say that in the first nine months, imports of coal of energy grades tripled and amounted to 8.4 million tons. Russian coal miners have lost the palm here only to Indonesians and Australians - the two main world players, while their share in annual terms has practically not increased. And this, we recall, with its own production of 900 million tons.

The import of metallurgical coke is growing at a hurricane pace, specifically, its purchases in Russia have increased more than tenfold. The Modi government announced a government program back in 2019 that aims to make India the world's top steel power. Therefore, there is nothing surprising in the indicated growth. Back in 2021, the Indian delegation was extremely persistently interested in the possibility of increasing the capacity of the southern route of Russian railways in order to increase the transshipment of coke in the Black Sea ports to three to five million tons per year. Today, Russian coal goes to Asia through the ports of the Far East, some of which are

operating at the limit of logistical capacity.

India ranks third in the world in terms of oil and gas consumption. Is it any wonder that Indian emissaries roam the world, willingly investing substantial sums in projects of national interest.

For example, in 2012, Russian Gazprom signed a contract with GAIL to supply natural gas to India in the amount of at least 3.5 billion cubic meters per year. The amount is not very impressive, but the Indians have long and very closely followed the development of Russia's northern gas liquefaction projects. So closely that this year, after the start of the NWO and the imposition of sanctions, they began to resell Russian liquefied gas to Britain. With a premium, of course.

As for oil, since 2001 the Indian ONGC (Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Ltd.) owns 20 percent of the shares in the Russian Sakhalin-1 project. Under the terms of the contract, at least one million tons of oil is sent from the Far East to India annually. The same ONGC has been legally engaged in exploration and production of oil at fields in the Tomsk region since 2009. In 2015, Rosneft entered into a ten-year agreement with the Indian company Essar, under which oil exports should amount to at least 100 million tons. In the same year, the aforementioned ONGC bought 15 percent of the shares from the Russian Vankorneft for \$1.3 billion. The latter is engaged in the exploitation of the huge Vankor oil field in Krasnoyarsk region. A year later, the Indians entered into equity participation in oil production at the Taas-Yuryakhskoye field in Yakutia for another two billion.

But do not think that this process is one-sided. Integration works both ways, especially since our country has something to offer for export besides resources.

In 2016, Rosneft bought half of the assets from the Indian oil refinery Essar Oil, whose production facilities are located near the city of Vadinar. We are talking about one of the divisions of Nayara Energy Corporation - its specialization is the extraction and processing of oil and gas. At the moment, Rosneft operates in the domestic market of India, namely, it sells fuel through a network of more than six thousand car filling stations. The volume of Russian oil supplies for the needs of this project alone is estimated at 20 million tons per year.

Based on the foregoing, the fact of the announcement of the introduction of a price ceiling looks very ambiguous.

On the one hand, frauds from individual private companies cannot be ruled out, which can push our oil traders to large discounts, threatening to refuse purchases in general. There is nothing unusual and terrible here: the market is the market - and the weak do not live long here.

On the other hand, it is unlikely that any significant demarches should be expected at the state level, since Russia is a key supplier. In addition, there are a large number of already existing contracts with a clearly defined pricing mechanism - and any violations here are fraught with very painful fines and reputational losses, which is even worse.

Therefore, there is probably nothing to worry about. Oil cooperation is equally beneficial to both parties, but in the event of its break, Russia loses only money, while India loses both money and resources. Indians are not like those who like to shoot themselves in the foot. India is not Ukraine for you.

The internal political struggle in United States escalates

THE lower house of the new congress held its first meeting. However, the issues discussed were far from being paramount. Deputies have to be careful - it is already clear that there will be no unity in the Capitol. And this threatens both the United States and the Kyiv regime with problems. Centenary Record

The House of Representatives was supposed to start work at the very beginning of January. The elections were held in November, and there was enough time to settle the contradictions. But it didn't.

The speaker was approved only on the 15th attempt. This post is very important. The chairman of the chamber is, in fact, the third person in the state after the president and vice president. He formulates the agenda for legislators, determines priority issues and has the right to participate in the discussion of any initiative. In controversial cases, his vote becomes decisive.

This appointment is usually treated as a formality: the party that wins the election has no problem promoting its candidate. Now the Republicans are in trouble. They have 222 out of 435 seats, but Kevin McCarthy has struggled to

get the support he needs, with some Bishops systematically abstaining from voting.

There had not been such a long debate for a century - in 1923, it took nine attempts to complete the procedure.

The stumbling block this time was the contradictions between moderate Republicans and the radical wing of the party, tacitly led by former President Donald Trump. He has a very difficult relationship with McCarthy. And, according to the American media, the speaker actually negotiated the post in exchange for some concessions.

Grey Cardinal

McCarthy supported Trump in the first campaign. However, during the storming of the Capitol by supporters of the ex-president two years ago, an influential Republican opposed him.

He publicly denounced the former boss, urging him to recognize the victory of Democrat Joe Biden.

And Trump seems to have retaliated. According to Politico, he actively called his associates, urging them to "keep" critical votes.

Among the demands of the Trumpists from the unofficial Republican wing of MAGA is the reduction of military aid to Kyiv. If

Renat Abdullin

the moderate "elephants" on the Ukrainian topic have completely agreed with the "donkeys", then Trump supporters believe that the money of American taxpayers should be left in the United States, and not transferred to the Kyiv regime.

The former president himself cannot directly influence the House of Representatives. But the message for McCarthy is clear. It will not be easy for him to achieve unanimity in the party ranks. "It was a very strong message from Trump. McCarthy begged like a dog and got leftovers from the table in Mar-a-Lago," says Republican Mike Davis, referring to the speaker's personal visit to the Trump estate in Florida.

Military aid under threat McCarthy himself is quite reserved about supporting Kyiv. Back in October, he noted that he did not intend to give Ukraine carte blanche for gratuitous arms supplies and cash tranches.

Of course, this does not mean abandoning the pro-Ukrainian course. "I don't see a problem in McCarthy's statement. Some used it to say that the Republican Party does not support Ukraine. Nothing of the kind," Trump's for-

mer national security adviser Robert O'Brien explained in an interview with The Hill.

But radical Trumpists believe that McCarthy is simply playing along with the Democrats, hiding behind vague language.

And Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Green (influential in Republican circles) even threatened that Ukraine would not receive a cent. Trumpist Matthew Goetz, who is tipped to head the defense committee, has also repeatedly admitted that he would not want to finance the Kyiv regime.

Preparing for the elections

Focusing on the Ukrainian agenda, MAGA solves several problems at once.

Moderate Republicans are tired of the "toxic" and unpredictable Trump, but have not offered serious alternatives. The radicals are betting on the ex-president, believing that only he is able to really compete with Biden in 2024.

While the incumbent Democratic administration is preoccupied with overseas affairs, the elephants are playing a Trump-style populist card: America (and its taxpayer money) is above all else.

The repeated blocking of McCarthy's candidacy is a

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Pakistan Stock Exchange’s 100-index loses 43 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed a bearish trend on Wednesday, losing 43.31 points, a negative change of 0.11 percent, closing at 40,758.20 against 40,801.51 points the previous day.

A total of 189,373,700 shares were traded during the day as compared to 214,346,791 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 6.982 billion against Rs 6.565 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 342 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 111 of them recorded gains and 204 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 27 companies remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were K-Electric Ltd with 20,463,247 shares

at Rs 2.29 per share, Pak Petroleum with 17,774,824 shares at Rs 82.12 per share, and Sui South Gas with 15,142,500 shares at Rs 11.131 per share.

Al-Abbas Sugar witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 13.81 per share price, closing at Rs 403.31, whereas the runner-up was Millat Tractors with a Rs 12.80 rise in its per share price to Rs 507.09.

Premium Tex witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 48.78 per share closing at Rs 601.72, followed by Siemens Pak with Rs 39.26 decline to close at Rs 640.74.

Rupee weakens against dollar

The exchange rate of the Pakistani rupee depreciated by 04 paisa against the US dollar in the interbank trading on Wednesday and closed at Rs 227.92 against the previous day’s closing

of Rs 227.88.

According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 235.7 and Rs 238 respectively.

The price of the euro increased by Rs 27 paisa and closed at Rs 244.92 against the previous day’s closing of Rs 244.65, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese yen remained unchanged to close at Rs1.72, whereas an increase of 10 paisa was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British pound, which was traded at Rs 277.13 as compared to its last closing of Rs 277.03.

The exchange rates of the Emirates dirham and Saudi riyal increased by 01 paisa each to close at Rs 62.05 and Rs 60.69 respectively.

Gold prices decrease

by Rs 1,800 to Rs 180,000 per tola

The price of 24 karat per tola gold witnessed a decrease of Rs 1,800 on Wednesday and was sold at Rs 181,800 the last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs 1,543 and was sold at Rs 154,321 against Rs155,864, whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat went down to Rs 141,461 against its sale at Rs 142,875, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola decreased by Rs30 and was sold at Rs2,070 whereas that of ten gram silver went down by Rs25.72 to Rs1,774.69.

The price of gold in the international market increased by \$01 to \$1877 against its sale at \$1876, the association reported.



PESHAWAR: Representatives of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce Small Traders and Small Industry meeting with Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Six ships namely, Maersk Denver, MSC Maria Elena, MSC Helena III, Ocean Pioneer, Southern Wolf and Ladon carrying containers, palm oil, chemicals and mogas berthed at Qasim International Containers Terminal, Multi-Purpose Terminal, Engro Vopak Terminal and FOTCO Oil Terminal the other day.

Meanwhile an oil tanker ‘T-Sirius’ carrying Palm oil also arrived at outer anchorage of the port during the same day.

A total of 11 ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them 02 ships, Levantes and MSC Helena III left the Port on Wednesday morning, while 05 more ships, Al-Gattara, SC Falcon, Ocean Pioneer, Southern Wolf and Maersk Denver are expected to sail later today.

A cargo volume of 125,954 tonnes, comprising 94,065 tonnes of imports cargo and 31,889 tonnes of export cargo, including containerized cargo carried in 3,747 containers (2,428 TEUs Imports and 1,319 TEUs export) was handled at the port in the past 24 hours.

There are 18 ships at the outer anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them, 05 ships, Ourania Luck, Choula Treasure, Sti Onyx, Ulls Water and EM Astoria and two more ships, Wide Juliet and MH Langoeay carrying palm oil, containers, chemicals and gas oil are expected to take berths at MW-1, QICF, EVTL and FOTCO on Wednesday and another ship, Athenian is due to arrive at Port Qasim on Thursday.

Malaysia’s manufacturing sales value rises 11.8%

KUALA LUMPUR (APP): Malaysia’s manufacturing sales value continued its double-digit growth by registering 11.8 percent to record 159.2 billion ringgit (36.4 billion US dollars) in November 2022, official data showed Wednesday.

The growth was largely driven by the electrical and electronics products sub-sector, which surged 19 percent, and the manufacture of computer, electronic and optical products industries, the Department of Statistics said in a statement. The expansion of sales value was also contributed by the petroleum, chemical, rubber and plastic products that soared 15 percent, underpinned by the manufacture of coke and refined petroleum products industries.

Sales value in the transport equipment and other manufactures also picked up strongly by 10.2 percent, boosted by the manufacture of motor vehicles, trailers and semi-trailers industries.

The sales value of export-oriented industries, which contributed more than two-thirds or 72.9 percent of total sales, remained on a steady pace with 13.6 percent growth in November 2022.

The favorable performance was in line with the acceleration in external trade exports growth and price increases.

From January to November 2022, the sales value of the manufacturing sector jumped 16.6 percent to 1.64 trillion ringgit (375 billion dollars) as compared to the same period in 2021.

Pakistan focused on CPEC-SEZs to hike exports: SM Naveed

LAHORE (APP): Special Economic Zones Authority (SEZA) Chairman SM Naveed said on Wednesday that Special Economic Zones (SEZs), being developed under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), were one of the main focuses of the Pakistan government to increase exports of the country.

Chairing a meeting at his office here, he said that in order to enhance exports, nine SEZs had been identified under the CPEC where joint ventures from Pakistan, China and other foreign countries would be launched to enhance industrial production. He said that Pakistan had been facing the issue of trade deficit over the last few decades with the situation getting worse over the last decade due to its reliance on imported goods.

He said that according to State Bank of Pakistan, country’s exports during the FY2021 stood at US\$22,536 million where-

as its imports were US\$43,645 million, indicating a sharp trade deficit due to the lack of export-oriented products made by the country.

The SEZA chairman said, “I believe SEZs will play a great role in writing a new chapter of economic development of Pakistan because the government is offering a lot of incentives for the industries to be set up in the zones and a large number of investors are taking interest to invest in them, and more are expected in the future.”

He added that Pakistan’s Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the export sector had been almost zero and CPEC SEZs were one of the main focuses of the Pakistani government to uplift the export sector by attracting the FDI. SM Naveed said, “China is currently outsourcing its industry to some foreign countries, our government also wants Chinese industries specially the textile

and leather industry to be relocated to Pakistan, because we have the expertise, infrastructure and experience in this sector, and relocation of Chinese industrial units to our country will give a boom to our textile exports.”

He said that foreign investors would tap the potential of CPEC and China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) to find export markets for their products, besides catering to the local market of 220 million people.

Pakistan is located at a strategic location of the BRI, which not only gives it a chance to connect to the outside world but also attracts foreign investment inside it.

He said that Pakistan has now all the potential to start massive industrialization and the investors who invested in Pakistan now would be pioneers of many sectors of the industry in the country and might get huge benefits in the future.

Oil down over expected hefty rise in US stocks

ANKARA (APP): Oil prices declined on Wednesday over the double whammy of an expected rise in US crude oil inventories and growing fears about further interest rate hikes in the US.

International benchmark Brent crude traded at \$79.64 per barrel at 09.48 a.m. local time (0648GMT), a 0.57% decrease from the closing price of \$80.10 a barrel in the previous trading session.

The American benchmark West Texas Intermediate traded at \$74.63 per barrel at the same time, a 0.65% loss after the previous session closed at \$75.12 a barrel.

Late Tuesday, the American Petroleum Institute announced its estimate of a rise of nearly 14.9

million barrels in US crude oil inventories relative to the market expectation of a 2.4 million barrels fall.

Leading to investor caution, the new projected massive increase in crude stocks signaled falling crude demand in the US, the world’s largest oil consumer, and weighed on oil prices.

Weak US demand fears grew further after US Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell said on Tuesday that restoring price stability when inflation is high can require measures “that are not popular in the short term as we raise interest rates to slow the economy.”

In one of its most aggressive monetary tightening cycles in history, the Fed raised its benchmark interest rate seven times last year by a total of 425

points to tame inflation, which climbed last summer to its highest in more than four decades.

Demand hopes in China fuel investor appetite

China released a second batch of 2023 crude oil import quotas, increasing the total for this year by 20% in comparison to the same period last year.

In an e-mailed note, Australia and New Zealand Banking Group Commodity Strategist Daniel Hynes said China’s increasing crude import quotas suggest the world’s largest importer is ramping up to meet higher demand.

“It also appears to be importing a wider variety of Russian crude. Buyers snapped up three cargoes, including the lesser-known Arco grade,” he added.

Stocks waver as traders eye US inflation

NEW YORK (AFP/ APP): Global stocks wavered Tuesday following a downcast World Bank economic forecast as investors hold their breath ahead of key inflation data and earnings reports.

“Investors are in a wait-and-see mode,” said Art Hogan, analyst at B. Riley Financial, alluding to Thursday’s United States inflation report and subsequent earnings releases from JPMorgan Chase and other banks on Friday.

Wall Street stocks opened tentatively, tripping into the red early on, but eventually shook off the weakness.

The tech-rich Nasdaq led the market, ending one percent higher on solid gains by Amazon, Facebook parent Meta Platforms and others.

The World Bank’s latest economic forecast pointed to a “sharp, long-lasting slowdown” with global growth pegged at 1.7 percent, roughly half the pace it predicted in June, said the bank’s latest Global Economic Prospects

report.

But the biggest US economic release this week as far as investors will be concerned is Thursday’s consumer price index report, expected to show further moderation after big jumps in prices for much of 2022.

The CPI data will be scrutinized for implications on Federal Reserve policy, with the central bank enacting aggressive interest rate hikes to combat inflation.

Fed Chair Jerome Powell avoided tipping his hand on future policy decisions Tuesday in a speech in Sweden, but said the insulation of the Fed from electoral politics allows it to hike interest rates if needed “without considering short-term political factors.”

Another US central banker, Fed governor Michelle Bowman, expressed hopes for a soft landing during a separate public appearance.

“Unemployment has remained low as we have tightened monetary policy

and made progress in lowering inflation,” Bowman said in a prepared speech to an event in Florida.

“I take this as a hopeful sign that we can succeed in lowering inflation without a significant economic downturn,” she added.

But she warned that the Fed’s policy-setting Federal Open Market Committee will continue raising interest rates as there remains much work to do to lower inflation.

The benchmark lending rate will likely have to remain at a “sufficiently restrictive” level for some time to restore price stability, she said.

After a brutal 2022, equities worldwide have seen a strong start to the new year.

This was thanks in part to Beijing’s decision to pivot from restrictive Covid-19 policies, and to an improving economic outlook for Europe due partly to mild weather that has not taxed the energy market.

On Tuesday, European stock markets closed broadly lower.

Over 18% surplus witnessed in Pak-Bangladesh trade: SBP

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan’s goods and services trade with Bangladesh witnessed a surplus of 18.64 percent during first five months of current fiscal year (2022-23) as compared to the corresponding period of last year.

The trade surplus during the months under review was recorded at \$329.668 million against \$277.863 million during same months of last year, showing 18.64 percent growth.

The overall exports to Bangladesh were recorded at \$365.290 million during

July-November (2022-23) against exports of \$ 316.680 million during July- November (2021-22), showing growth of 15.34 percent, SBP data revealed.

Meanwhile, on year-to-year basis, exports to Bangladesh during November 2022 witnessed a nominal decrease of 2.66 percent, from US \$ 72.356 million to US \$70.431 million.

Similarly on month-on-month basis, exports of Bangladesh were rose by 16.69 percent during November 2022 in comparison with exports of US \$

60.355 million in October 2022, SBP data said.

Overall Pakistan’s exports to other countries witnessed a decrease of 2.01 percent in first five months, from US \$ 12.313 billion to US \$ 12.065 billion, the SBP data revealed.

On the other hand, the imports from Bangladesh during the period under review were recorded at \$ 35.622 million against \$38.817 million last year, showing a decrease of 8.23 percent.

Meanwhile, year-to-year basis, imports from

Bangladesh during November 2022 also decreased by 18.25 percent from US \$10.559 million last year to US \$8.631 million.

On month-on-month basis, the import from Bangladesh increased by 20.37 percent during November 2022 when compared to the import of US \$7.170 million in October 2022, SBP data said.

The overall imports into the country witnessed decrease of 16.15 percent, from \$29.663 billion to US \$ 24.872 billion, according to the data.

US flights gradually resuming after FAA issue

LONDON (BBC News): Normal air traffic operations are resuming gradually in the US after hours of delays, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) says.

It follows a problem with the system that alerts pilots to potential hazards on flight routes.

The FAA had said flights would take off again from 0900 ET (1400 GMT). It said it was continuing to look into the cause of the problem.

Flights already in the air were allowed to continue to their destinations.

Flights from New Jersey’s Newark airport, and Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport resumed slightly ahead of

others due to air traffic congestion in those areas.

Authorities are expected to impose a ground delay programme in order to address the backlog of flights which were halted for hours.

US President Joe Biden has been briefed, and the White House said there was no evidence of a cyberattack “at this point”.

Speaking to reporters, the president said the FAA “expect [that] in a couple of hours they’ll have a good sense of what caused it, and we’ll respond at that time”.

In a tweet, the White House Press Secretary said the president had called for a “full investigation”.

The FAA said the source

of the problem was its Notice to Air Missions System.

Major US airlines said they were closely monitoring the situation. American Airlines, which carries the most passengers annually in North America, said it was working with the FAA to minimise customer disruption.

United Airlines said it would waive change fees and any difference in fare for customers rescheduling flights departing on or before 16 January, 2023.

Delta said it was “safely focused on managing our operation during this morning’s FAA ground stop for all carriers”, adding it would provide updates as

soon as possible.

For international passengers, Air Canada - the foreign carrier with the most flights into the US - said the outage would impact on cross-border operations on Wednesday, but it couldn’t initially say to what degree. The carrier said it would put in place a “goodwill policy” so affected passengers can change their travel plans.

Virgin Atlantic said it was continuing to operate its schedule of US flights departing from the UK. However, some US departures may be affected by delays.

British Airways said its flights to and from the US were continuing to operate as planned.

Fashion giant to raise pay in Japan by up to 40 per cent

LONDON (BBC News): The owner of Japanese fashion chain Uniqlo says it will raise the pay of staff in its home country by up to 40 percent.

Fast Retailing says the new pay policy will apply to full-time employees at its headquarters and company stores in Japan from the beginning of March.

Last week Japan’s prime minister called on firms to put up wages to help people struggling with rising prices.

It comes as salaries in the country remain flat even as inflation is going up at its fastest rate in decades.

The company said it made the move “in order to remunerate each and every employee appropriately for their ambition and talents, as well as increase the company’s growth potential and

competitiveness in line with global standards.”

“In Japan especially, where remuneration levels have remained low, the company is significantly increasing the remuneration table,” it added.

Under the new policy the monthly salary of recent university graduates will rise from ¥255,000 (\$1,926, £1,585) to ¥300,000, an increase of almost 18%.

At the same time new store managers in their first or second year in the role will see their pay go up by about 35%.

The company’s hourly-paid employees received salary increases in September last year.

Wednesday’s announcement came just days after Prime Minister Kishida urged companies to fast track wage hikes.

“There are alarm bells warning that stagflation emerges if wage growth lags behind price hikes,” he said in a New Year address to business leaders.

Stagflation is when an economy does not grow but prices continue to rise.

Official figures published in November showed that Japan’s economy unexpectedly shrank for the first time in a year as gross domestic product fell by an annualised 1.2% in the three months to the end of September.

Meanwhile, Japan’s core consumer prices rose by 3.7% in November, the fastest pace since the Middle East oil crisis in 1981.

Recent research in Japan showed that more than three quarters of firms surveyed raised wages last year but the majority of the increases were well

below 10%.

Fast Retailing’s chief executive Tadashi Yanai is often cited as a trailblazer in Japanese business circles.

For example, in 2009 Mr Yanai told the BBC that he would diversify production out of China and start making clothes in Cambodia to lower costs.

The decision, which was seen as a major gamble at the time, has since paid off for the firm.

In recent months Mr Yanai has been critical of the Japanese government’s economic policies, especially when the yen weakened against other major economies late last year.

He has also called for fundamental reforms to Japan’s economy to help protect ordinary people from the impact of rising prices.

Tokyo shares close higher

TOKYO (AFP/APP): Tokyo stocks closed higher on Wednesday following gains on Wall Street, as investors awaited all-important US inflation data for clues on the future of Federal Reserve rate hikes.

The benchmark Nikkei 225 index gained 1.03 percent, or 270.44 points, to end at 26,446.00, while the broader Topix index climbed 1.08 percent, or 20.37 points, to 1,901.25.

Traders were in a wait-and-see mode ahead of the release of the US consumer

price data later in the day.

Global investors breathed sighs of relief after Fed chair Jerome Powell did not make major news headlines in a speech on Tuesday, letting them return to buying on Wall Street.

Investors are increasingly expecting the US Fed will hike rates by 0.25 percentage points rather than 0.5 as they see cooling inflation pressure.

“Admittedly, there is still some residual uncertainty on the 25bp vs. 50bp question because the FOMC

minutes were inconclusive, so Thursday’s CPI release will be an essential input into the Fed decision,” said Stephen Innes of SPI Asset Management. The dollar stood at 132.29 yen against 132.21 yen seen Tuesday in New York.

In Tokyo trading, Sony Group jumped 3.49 percent to 11,100 yen while SoftBank Group added 0.26 percent to 5,969 yen.

Uniqlo operator Fast Retailing firmed 1.41 percent to 81,450 yen after the company said will raise the

wages of thousands of its employees in Japan by up to 40 percent.

Department stores were lower after Beijing said late Tuesday it would suspend the issuing of visas for Japanese and South Korean citizens in response to measures imposed by Tokyo and Seoul on arrivals from mainland China, where Covid cases are surging.

Isetan Mitsukoshi Holdings dropped 2.97 percent to 1,335 yen while Takashimaya tumbled 2.26 percent to 1,767 yen.



In brief

Netball Championship

ISLAMABAD (APP): All Pakistan Inter-School Netball Championship will be staged from January 27 to 29 at Pakistan sports board (PSB) Coaching Center Karachi. The event aimed at promoting netball at the grass-roots level will be held under the auspices of Pakistan Netball Federation (PNF). Mudassar Arain, president of PNF said in a statement. He said that the preparations for the championship had already started adding that school teams from all over the country would participate in the championship.

Seven day winter festival

ISLAMABAD (APP): A seven-day winter festival of 2023 would start at Attabad Lake in Hunza on January 14 (Saturday) aiming to entertain tourists with the scenic beauty of Hunza. At the feast, local sports competitions including ice hockey, ice skating would be arranged, a private news channel reported. Rism Shop, Rism Tao and other local old games would be played in the event.

Rohit withdrawing 'Mankad' appeal

NEW DELHI (Reuters): India captain Rohit Sharma said he withdrew a Mankad run-out appeal against Dasun Shanaka in Tuesday's one-day international as that was not how they envisioned dismissing the Sri Lankan skipper, who scored a century in a game his team could not win. With Sri Lanka requiring 83 runs off the last three balls in the second innings, India's Mohammed Shami ran into bowl but whipped the bails at the non-striker's end as Shanaka - who was then on 98 - left his crease. Shami appealed for a run-out as the umpire signalled for a TV review before Rohit stepped in and withdrew the appeal after a chat with the umpire. "I had no idea Shami did that and then went for an appeal," Rohit said in a post-match interview. "Again, he is batting on 98. The way he batted was brilliant, we've got to give it to him. We cannot get him out like that. "We wanted to get him out the way we thought we would get him out, but that was not something that we thought of. But again, hats off to him, he played really well." The Mankad dismissal, named after former India all-rounder Vinoo Mankad, is legal but has fuelled debate as to whether it breaches the spirit of the game. Shanaka eventually brought up his century on the penultimate delivery of the innings before wrapping things up with a six to finish with an unbeaten 108. India won by 67 runs to take a 1-0 lead in the three-match series.

FIH contributes 300 trees

ISLAMABAD (APP): The International Hockey Federation (FIH) has decided to make a donation equivalent to the plantation of 300 trees for the Hockey Forest project. The project consists of building a hockey forest in South Africa as a measure to offset the carbon footprint that is created by the demands of the sport's growing schedule, said an FIH news release on Wednesday. It was started in 2019 by the German women's hockey team, the Danas, who partnered with the Grootbos Foundation in South Africa, set up a crowdfunding page and planted the first trees themselves in 2020 during a training camp in Stellenbosch, South Africa.

Spinners lift NZ to 79-run win over Pakistan in ODI

KARACHI (AP): New Zealand's spinners strangled Pakistan on a turning wicket to win the second ODI by 79 runs Wednesday and level the three-match series 1-1.

Devon Conway hit a brilliant 101 and captain Kane Williamson scored 85 before New Zealand lost nine wickets for 78 runs and got bowled out for 261 against the leftarm spin of Mohammad Nawaz (4-38) and fast bowler Naseem Shah (3-58).

Williamson perfectly outmanoeuvred Pakistan on the wicket and included an additional spinner Ish Sodhi in place of fast Henry Shipley to bowl out the home team for 182 in 43 overs.

Captain Babar Azam fought the lone battle for his 79 off 114 balls before Sodhi (2-38) wrapped up the game by having Babar stumped through some smart glove work behind the wicket from Tom Latham, and No. 11 Haris Rauf holed out at long off without scoring.

"We had Ish Sodhi, who has been bowling really well," Williamson said. "We knew it would be a tough chase. We knew we had to get little bit out of the surface ... and got to a par total in the end."

Pakistan won the first

match by six wickets and the teams will now meet in the series-decider on Friday at the same venue.

"When the spinners came on, it was turning sharply," Babar said. "The pitch in Karachi is always better in the second innings, but played differently today and the spinners were getting a lot more help."

Earlier, Naseem yet again gave Pakistan a perfect start when he had Finn Allen dismissed in his first over. But Conway and Williamson showed lot of aggression against pace and spin with Pakistan's fielders missing a number of chances.

Nawaz dropped a difficult return catch when Conway was on 29. Williamson was twice dropped in the space of Mohammad Wasim's four deliveries soon after he completed his half century when first Haris Sohail couldn't hold on to a sharp catch over his head at short midwicket and then Mohammad Rizwan dropped a low catch down the leg side as the ball brushed Williamson's gloves.

Conway accelerated more after completing his half century off 57 balls and needed a further 32 balls to raise his hundred as both batters bettered New Zealand's previous best second wicket-stand of 159

against Pakistan in an ODI shared between Williamson and Martin Guptill at Auckland in 2016.

But Pakistan came back strongly through Nawaz once Naseem returned and had Conway clean bowled with the ball that just moved enough to knock back the left-hander's off stump in the 30th over.

Nawaz dismissed Daryl Mithcell, Latham, Glenn Phillips and also knocked back the top of Williamson's stumps as he conceded just 14 runs in his last five overs and claimed four wickets. Mitchell Santner played a little cameo of 37 off 42 balls and helped New Zealand cross the 250-run mark before he got run out off the penultimate ball.

Pakistan couldn't recover once it lost Fakhar Zaman and Imam-ul-Haq for only nine runs against Tim Southee and the pace of Lockie Ferguson, who beat Imam with a 152kph short-pitched ball and had him caught off a top-edge.

New Zealand spinners Michael Bracewell (1-29) and Santner (1-34) then got plenty of assistance off the wicket and didn't allow even the experienced Babar to score freely before Pakistan got bowled out with seven overs to spare.



KARACHI: Tim Southee celebrates after dismissing Fakhar Zaman.

Australian Open Djokovic cuts short practice as 'not risking anything'

MELBOURNE (Agencies): Novak Djokovic said he "didn't want to risk anything" after a hamstring issue cut short his practice match with Daniil Medvedev before next week's Australian Open.

The Serb, 35, was practising at Melbourne Park for the first time since his deportation last year.

"I just want to avoid any bigger scares before the Australian Open," Djokovic told local broadcaster 9News Melbourne. "I just felt it pulling and I didn't want to risk anything worse."

He added that it had been the same hamstring that had troubled him last week on his way to the title at the Adelaide International 1.

"I played a set and apologised to [Medvedev] and he was understanding," said Djokovic, who is aiming for a record-extending 10th title at the Australian Open and a record-equalling 22nd men's major.

Fans told not to boo Djokovic received a warm reception from fans last week at the Adelaide International and will on Friday discover what the Melbourne crowd make of his return after last year's deportation and 10-day legal saga relating to his Covid-19 vaccine status that split public opinion.

He faces Nick Kyrgios in a practice match on Rod Laver Arena - which is a repeat of last year's Wimbledon final - three days before the Australian Open starts on Monday. Tickets for the match sold out in less than an hour.

Australian Open tournament director Craig Tiley said on Wednesday that fans who are disrespectful to Djokovic will be removed from Melbourne Park.

"If they disrupt the enjoyment of anyone else - boom, they are out," he told Australia's Herald Sun newspaper.

"We don't want them on site. They can stay away or we will kick them out."

Kvitova, Bencic advance to Adelaide quarter-finals

ADELAIDE (AFP): In-form Petra Kvitova reached the Adelaide International quarter-finals on Wednesday after her opponent retired and was joined by resurgent Olympic champion Belinda Bencic.

Two-time Wimbledon champion Kvitova saved three set points before claiming the opening set 7-6 (8/6) against China's Zheng Qinwen, who then retired with a left thigh injury.

It was the fourth win from four matches so far this year for the 32-year-old Czech as she prepares for next week's Australian Open, where she made the final in 2019.

"Of course this gives me some good confidence," said the world number 16. "Still a

few things to improve, of course, as always, but otherwise I'm happy."

American Danielle Collins, who lost to Ashleigh Barty in last year's Australian Open final, defeated Jil Teichmann 6-3, 7-6 (7/2) to also seal a berth in the final eight.

But it took her seven match points to break down the Swiss qualifier.

Fellow Swiss Bencic progressed with a straight-sets win over Anna Kalinskaya.

Bencic is now 3-1 for the year, having split her matches at the United Cup before defeating Garbine Muguruza in the opening round at Adelaide. The world number 13 has dropped only two sets

-- both to world number one Iga Swiatek -- in her last eight matches and is in buoyant mood ahead of the opening Grand Slam of the year.

"I'm absolutely ready," said Bencic, who won gold at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics.

"I'm really strong in the most important matches and in tight moments, so I definitely feel very confident about that. The more you win in those moments, the more it helps." In the men's draw, British youngster Jack Draper advanced to the quarter-finals with a 6-4, 6-4 win against American Tommy Paul, while Spain's Alejandro Davidovich Fokina beat home favourite John Millman 6-3, 6-3.

French soccer president steps back pending investigation

PARIS (AP): Noël Le Graët agreed to step back from his duties as president of the French soccer federation on Wednesday following an emergency executive committee meeting into his behavior.

The 81-year-old Le Graët has faced claims of sexual harassment and the soccer federation is the target of an investigation ordered by French Sports Minister Amélie Oudéa-Castéra. The federation said in a statement Wednesday that Le Graët agreed to step away from his role until the audit's findings have been fully reviewed by the executive committee.

That is expected to be by the end of January. Until then, he will be replaced in an interim role by federation vice president Philippe Diallo.

The federation added that director general Florence Hardouin has been temporarily suspended to allow for an investigation before eventual contract termination. No further details were given about Hardouin.

Le Graët recently extended France coach



Didier Deschamps' contract until July 2026, after he led the national team to the World Cup final in December. The executive committee said it has validated the contract.

On Tuesday, sports agent Sonia Soud accused Le Graët of improper conduct over several years, saying he only was interested in her sexually. Soud said in an interview with L'Equipe sports daily that Le Graët repeatedly tried to approach her from 2013-17.

Oudéa-Castéra piled yet more pressure on Le Graët on Monday, accusing him of "damaging the image of our country." Patrick Anton, head of the French soccer federation's ethics council, issued a statement Tuesday urging Le Graët to leave his post.

Le Graët has had a tumultuous week after say-

ing he "couldn't care less" about France soccer great Zinedine Zidane's future as a coach. He subsequently apologized for his comments after facing a barrage of criticism.

Le Graët and Hardouin also have senior positions at FIFA and UEFA.

Le Graët is currently a candidate for another four-year term on the FIFA Council, the soccer body's decision-making committee. He is being challenged for the seat by Portuguese soccer federation president Fernando Gomes. The election is set for April 5, when UEFA member nations meet in Lisbon.

Hardouin has the protected women's seat on UEFA executive committee, which expires at the April 5 congress in Lisbon. She could withdraw as a candidate by the Feb. 5 deadline.

Oudéa-Castéra ordered an investigation into the federation in September after the body said it would file a defamation lawsuit against So Foot magazine, which reported that Le Graët allegedly harassed several female employees.

Rashford double puts Man Utd past Charlton into semis



LONDON (Agencies): Marcus Rashford scored two late goals to take his tally for the season to 15 and put Manchester United into the Carabao Cup semi-finals at the expense of League One Charlton at Old Trafford.

Antony's superb first-half opener gave United the advantage but Dean Holden's visitors claimed plenty of credit for the way they continued to battle until second-half substitute Rashford found the net for a sixth successive game with goals in the 90th and 94th minutes.

Charlton's 9,000-strong travelling support, their largest ever for a midweek cup tie, applauded their side off, having backed them throughout, briefly raising hopes of an equaliser when Scott Fraser curled his free-kick straight at Tom Heaton.

For United, it means eight wins on the trot and a third last-four appearance in this competition in six seasons since they won it in 2017

under Jose Mourinho, their last domestic silverware.

They lost the last two to Manchester City, who United face in the Premier League at Old Trafford on Saturday (12:30 GMT).

United boss Erik ten Hag said after the game that he was "quite happy" with the first half an hour but was "was less happy we were not clinical in front of goal".

"We had to be in that semi final and we did the job," said the Dutchman. "I think we had to finish this off early on but in the end the objective was to get through so compliments to the team."

Eight on the trot for informal United

Eight successive wins for the first time since Ole Gunnar Solskjaer made such a brilliant start to his tenure in the middle of the 2018-19 season is a decent way for Ten Hag's side to approach the latest Manchester derby.

This triumph was achieved with a team missing at least seven players

expected to be part of United's starting line-up against City, with expectations high they will avoid the chastening first-half endured at Etihad Stadium, when they trailed 4-0.

The progress since then has been immense. And, in Antony, they have an £81.3m winger who has now scored in successive games and brings trickery to wide areas straight out of the United tradition.

The Brazilian's first-half opener owed much to Diogo Dalot. The Portugal full-back did not last the opening period due to injury but it was his off-the-ball burst into the Charlton penalty area that created the space for Antony to curl a superb effort from Fred's square pass into the far corner.

Fred smacked a thunderous shot against a post and Christian Eriksen brought an excellent save out of Ashley Maynard-Brewer before Rashford extended his scoring streak.

First he swept home a pass from debutant Facundo Pellistri before he beat Maynard-Brewer in the final minute of stoppage time with a precise finish.

The England man is arguably in the best form of his career and Pep Guardiola already knows the damage he is capable of inflicting on a City defence that will need to be on its guard every bit as much as their hosts'.

Miami Heat set free-throw record in 112-111 win over Oklahoma City Thunder



MIAMI (Agencies): Jimmy Butler led a record-breaking shooting display from the free-throw line as the Miami Heat claimed a 112-111 win over the Oklahoma City Thunder.

Miami made all 40 of their free throws, breaking the record of 39-for-39 made by Utah against Portland in 1982. With 23, Butler has tied with Dominique Wilkins for the second-highest number of foul shots in a game without a miss.

"We've been a very good free-throw shooting team all year, but that's crazy," said Heat coach

Erik Spoelstra. "I didn't realise we hadn't missed a free throw." Butler scored a game-high 35 points in total - his final free throw with 12 seconds remaining proving to be the game-winner as Shai Gilgeous-Alexander's attempted three-pointer for Oklahoma City bounced off the rim.

Miami trailed 111-106 with less than a minute remaining but fought back with a Victor Oladipo three-pointer and a Butler lay-up to tie the game.

Butler then extended his perfect record from the foul line to edge the Heat in

front and set an NBA record. "I had no idea," said the six-time NBA All-Star, 33. "I'm more excited that we won this game by one point." James Harden has the record of most free throws in a game without a miss, scoring 24 for the Houston Rockets in 2019.

Elsewhere on Tuesday, there were contrasting fortunes for Stephen Curry and Joel Embiid as they returned from injury. Curry was back from an 11-game absence with a shoulder problem and scored 24 points for the Golden State Warriors, including five three-pointers.

But that was not enough for the defending champions to avoid a 125-113 home defeat by the Phoenix Suns, for whom Mikal Bridges top-scored with 26 points.

Embiid had missed three games with a foot injury but scored 36 points in just 23 minutes on court as the Philadelphia 76ers romped to a 147-116 win over the Detroit Pistons.

LAHORE (APP): A 32-member delegation including 10 females from Balochistan, led by Director Youth Affairs Ejaz Ali, arrived at Nishtar Park Sports Complex under the youth exchange programme here on Wednesday.

Seven male and female national level karate, cricket and wushu players and 21 students from different colleges and universities are also part of the delegation, which is on a four-day visit of provincial metropolis on the invitation of the Youth Affairs and Sports Department Punjab.

The Balochistan delegation called on Secretary Youth Affairs and Sports Punjab Musarrat Jabeen at the Punjab Stadium. Talking to the delegation, the secretary said that the visit would definitely prove to be a useful activity. "This kind of trips play a key role in giving valuable exposure to young boys and girls of the country and this practice should continue in future," she said.

Musarrat Jabeen said that national solidarity would grow among the youth of different provinces through the youth exchange programme.

"There is no doubt that the youth are an asset to the country and the Youth Affairs and Sports Department Punjab is taking effective measures for training and grooming of young boys and girls in multiple fields," she added.

The members of Balochistan delegation visited different departments and sports facilities at Nishtar Park Sports Complex including Punjab Stadium, Tennis Stadium, state-of-the-art Tennis Courts, Punjab International Swimming Complex, NPSC Gymnasium Hall and National Hockey Stadium, E-Library, Punjab Information Technology board (PITB) and Punjab Safe Cities Authority (PSCA) office.

Director Youth Affairs Syed Umair Hassan gave a briefing about different departments and sports facilities being provided by the Youth Affairs and Sports Department.

Documentaries of Punjab Games, Youth Programmes and other achievements were also shown to the delegation members at the National Hockey Stadium.

Director Youth Affairs Syed Umair Hassan, Deputy Secretary Liaquat Ali Bhatti, Assistant Director Youth Affairs Nazish Noor, Assistant Directors Mohammad Sajid and Mohayyud Din were also present.

During their E-Library visit, members of the delegation were given briefing about multiple facilities, functions and features such as Youth Helpline and Co-Working Space, etc.

The director Youth Affairs welcomed the Balochistan delegation.

"Youth Exchange Programme will promote national unity and brotherhood among youth. Through this programme, the youth of Punjab and Balochistan will get an opportunity to learn from each other," he added.

The delegation members highly appreciated the performance, projects and achievements of the Youth Affairs and Sports Department. They expressed their pleasure to witness modern sports facilities in Nishtar Park Sports Complex. "E-library is the best project where students are quenching their thirst for knowledge," students said.

Following are the members of the delegation: Director Youth Affairs Balochistan Ejaz Ali, Assistant Director Youth Affairs M. Mustafa, Zeeshan Ali, M. Raza (officials), Shahzaib Khan, Waheedullah, Miss Mah Gul, Fakhru Nisa (karate players), Basit Ali, Mirwais Khan (cricketers), Miss Nargis Batool (wushu), Miss Saima Tareen, Miss Nissa Tabasum, Miss Nayab Batool, Miss Aqsa, Miss Shukria, Miss Zahra, Miss Saman Mushtaq (female students), Fawad Ahmed, Asmat Durrani, Faiz Muhammad, Syed Bilal Ahmed, Abdul Qadir, M. Ramzan, Sameer Ahmed, Yaseen Jaffar, Fida Hussain, Zeeshan Ali, Ammar Ayoub, Itaf Hussain, Yasir Nawaz and M. Shoaib (students).



In brief

Police resolve 97 pc complaints

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad police have resolved a total of 1,35,947 complaints received on the complaint management system during year 2022 and provided immediate relief to the citizens. According to police spokesman, "The complaint management system of Islamabad police is fully operational and working effectively to resolve public complaints on merit." During the last year, a total of 140,646 complaints were received on the complaint management system, out of which 135,947 complaints were resolved on merit. It is pertinent to mention here that citizens can file complaints related to FIR registration, traffic issues, misbehavior of police officials and non-satisfaction on investigation process. The citizens can get an e-tag number through their mobile phones without visiting the police station. The e-tag numbers are forwarded to the complainants through what's app and text messages. IGP Islamabad Dr Akbar Nasir Khan said, "Islamabad Police department is making all out efforts to provide facilities to the public at their doorsteps. He said the police is striving to make Islamabad a crime-free city by timely addressing complaints of the public."

IGP directs for smooth traffic flow

ISLAMABAD (APP): Inspector General of Police (IGP) Dr Akbar Nasir Khan has directed all police officials to ensure smooth flow of traffic on the highways during rush hours and deploy additional cops at the under-construction roads or sites in Islamabad. He visited different areas of the city and reviewed the security as well as traffic situation on the roads across the city. He checked the pickets installed at various places and directed for elaborate security measures. The Islamabad police chief also visited traffic headquarters, met the officials on duty, asked them about their nature of work and directed them to facilitate the public in every possible way. During the visit, Dr Akbar Nasir Khan said that it was their top priority to ensure protection of lives and properties of the citizens. "Presence of police gives the citizens a sense of security and all officials should perform their duties with commitment and dedication", he added. The IGP further said that Islamabad Capital Police was a professional force which "has dealt with all kinds of law and order, security and crime situations in the city." He said that he would conduct regular visits of different areas of the city, and senior police officers would be questioned for any negligence.

CTP issues rain advisory

RAWALPINDI (APP): The City Traffic Police, Rawalpindi has issued an advisory for road users urging them to exercise caution, adhere to safety rules and keep driving slow, during rainy weather. The advisory was issued on the special directives of Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Taimur Khan. Drivers have been advised to keep a proper distance from the next vehicle. "Motorcyclists should take special care on slippery roads. Avoid distraction, wrong overtaking and over-speeding, and use fog light in case of fog", the advisory read. The CTO directed the traffic police officials to perform their duties more diligently in order to maintain flow of traffic during rain, and urged the citizens to cooperate with them.



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

Transparency in disbursement of cash assistance hallmark of BISP: Kundi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety, Faisal Karim Kundi Wednesday said ensuring transparency in cash disbursement to deprived and underprivileged women is the hallmark of the working of Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP).

Faisal Kundi stated this while discussing various initiatives of the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) with the Ambassador of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) in Pakistan, Ms Dilsad Senol who called on the minister. The SAPM informed the visiting ambassador that BISP had recently released a tranche of over Rs. 55 billion as the first quarterly instalment for the year 2023 for disbursement among women registered under the Benazir Kafalat Programme.

An additional release of about rupees 13 billion has

been made separately for Benazir Educational Stipends, he continued.

He also apprised the visiting ambassador that Benazir Nashonuma Program has been extended to 118 districts across the country and 169 Facilitation Centers have been made operational so far. The Minister of State underscored that for complaint redress of the BISP beneficiaries, a Call Centre has been established in the BISP head office. Instructional videos for awareness and advocacy are also shared on social media platforms on regular basis, he added.

Rs. 70 billion have been distributed among the 2.8 million people who were affected by floods, Faisal Karim Kundi added.

The devastation of floods in Pakistan has pushed many people below the poverty line.

BISP has, therefore,

launched Dynamic Survey in the flood-affected areas as well as all over Pakistan for the inclusion of such people in the Benazir Kafalat Programme, Faisal Kundi said.

Ambassador Senol noted that floods have put an extraordinary burden on the government of Pakistan to the provision of relief to the affected people. She said that the whole world is exposed to climate changes and climate-related calamities and every country will have to face its consequences, however, the world is still not ready for it, she observed.

The visiting TRNC ambassador appreciated the Government of Pakistan for establishing diplomatic ties with TRNC and said that over ten thousand Pakistanis are living in TRNC and we feel that very soon cricket would be introduced in TRNC as well.

Marriyum grieved over demise of Majid Jahangir

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Wednesday expressed deep grief and sorrow over demise of renowned comedian and actor Majid Jahangir. The minister, in a condolence message, prayed to the Almighty to rest the departed soul in eternal peace and grant courage to the bereaved family to bear the loss with fortitude.

She said late Majid Jahangir gave remarkable performance in the popular television drama 'Fifty-Fifty' along with Ismail Tara. Marriyum said the void created by the death of legendary Majid Jahangir in the drama industry would never be fulfilled. His services for the drama industry would always be remembered.

Admin sets up 74 wheat flour sale points

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi District Food Department on Wednesday set up 74 wheat flour sale points in different areas of the district to facilitate the citizens and ensure regular supply of the flour on subsidized rates.

According to a Commissioner Office spokesman, earlier, 60 wheat flour sale points were set up by the administration while on the directives of Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Saqib Manan, the number of the sale points were increased to 74 in different areas of Rawalpindi including city, cantt and saddar.

He informed that all the flour mills of the district were directed to supply 500 subsidized wheat flour bags weighing 10 kg to the citizens daily. The administration was ensuring supply of nearly 37,000 wheat flour bags on daily basis in various markets and bazaars across the district.

He said the district administration teams were also monitoring all the exit points of Rawalpindi district to prevent the smuggling of wheat flour and action would be taken against the violators according to the law.

In line with the directives of the district administration, the food department had launched a crackdown on flour mills for not providing the required quota, he added.

‘World poses trust in Pakistan’s leadership in Geneva conference’

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister's Special Representative (PMSR) for Interfaith Harmony and Middle East Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi on Wednesday said the entire world had expressed confidence in the leadership of Pakistan in the Geneva conference.

Addressing a press conference here, he commended the unwavering efforts of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and his team for making the event a success story.

Ashrafi who is also the chairman of Pakistan Ulama Council thanked the international community and Islamic Arab countries particularly Saudi Arabia for supporting Pakistan beyond expectations in this difficult situation.

He said the Geneva conference was an eye-opener for those who were making propaganda against Pakistan's economic condition and making tall claims that it was moving towards bankruptcy instead of helping the situation to bring it on track.

He said making such propaganda for political and personal gains could have destructive impacts on the national economy. He expressed the hope that friendly

countries would never let Pakistan go default as they always helped Pakistan in crucial times.

Ashrafi proposed the political and religious leaders to remove their differences and strengthen the national economy with collective efforts. "We should take constructive steps to bring the country at par with developed countries beyond political and religious affiliation," he maintained.

He said it was easy to talk about the state of Madina but it was difficult to constitute a state on its pattern. The nation should be educated about the system of Khilafah Rashidah and the measures taken for the welfare of common people in the era, he added.

Shedding light on the significance of Khilafah system, he said everyone was accountable, no one was a sacred cow, justice was provided at the doorstep of people and no revenge was taken under this fabulous way of government.

He said the Pakistan Ulama Council and its affiliated parties had decided that the virtues of Syedna Siddiq-e-Akbar and the system of Khilafah Rashidah and the state of Madinah would be described in the Friday sermons across the country.

Commissioner directs authorities to facilitate tourists in Murree

RAWALPINDI (APP): Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Saqib Manan on Wednesday has directed the authorities concerned to ensure safety and security of the tourists coming to Murree to enjoy the weather as the hill station received snowfall.

He also instructed the officers concerned and traffic police to facilitate the tourists by regulating the traffic. The Commissioner advised the tourists visiting Murree and adjoining areas to take all possible precautionary measures. According to a Commissioner Office spokesman, the Commissioner had directed the authorities concerned to utilize all available resources to facilitate the tourists in Murree.

The spokesperson informed that on the special directives of the Commissioner, a control room had also been established in Jinnah Hall Murree and the tourists in case of any emergency can contact the control room on 051-9269015, 051-9269016, 051-9269018.

Murree District Administration had set up special facilitation centers at 13 sensitive points for tourist assistance and emergency response, he said. Due to the huge influx of tourists towards Murree, the administration and CTP Rawalpindi had issued an advisory here which appealed to the citizens to use their own line and avoid using the dual line as preventive measures.

According to the advisory, the tourists are requested to use petrol-based vehicles and strictly prohibited to use CNG-based vehicles which may cause problems in cars due to extreme cold in the snow.

In an advisory, families with infants and asthma patients are also advised to avoid travelling to Murree. The visitors are advised to come in warm clothes and full fuel tanks and avoid unnecessary travel after 8:00 pm.

Advisory further says that turn on your emergency lights and other lights of the cars as well and try to put a metal chain on one of your tyre.

It also asked the tourists to strictly follow one way and don't violate it for the smooth run of traffic. The CTP spokesman said that special traffic wardens had also been deployed on the main sites of Murree to ensure smooth traffic flow and avoid traffic mess. He requested the tourists to follow the advisory to avoid any kind of inconvenience or incident to have safe tourism. The Tourism Police and special squads were also directed to make coordinated efforts to provide the best facilities to the tourists, he added.

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Light to moderate intensity rain lashes twin cities; reduces fog

ISLAMABAD (APP): Light to moderate intensity rain lashing different parts of the country including the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad on Wednesday has subsided the foggy weather conditions and turned the weather cold.

After the westerly wave entered north Balochistan on Tuesday, the rain started on Wednesday morning in the twin cities as per the forecast of the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) and continued with gaps till the present, decreasing the temperatures significantly.

The cold weather has compelled the citizens to stay indoors most of the time and wear warm and cozy clothes to prevent themselves from seasonal diseases, especially cough and influenza.

The rain after long dry weather conditions during this winter season will also improve the air quality for the sensitive groups by reducing the level of pollutants in the air. The consistent rain has also increased the demand for popular winter season delights like chicken corn soup, doodh jalebi, gajar ka halwa, kashmiri tea, samosas, pakoras, fried fish, dry fruits, etc.

The snowfall accompanied by the rain spell in different hilly areas is attracting a number of tourists who are visiting these areas to enjoy the picturesque beauty of the

season. According to the PMD, the westerly wave affecting the upper parts of the country is likely to persist till Friday afternoon. On Thursday, the met office indicated chances of rain and snowfall in Islamabad, Potohar region, Kashmir, Gilgit Baltistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and upper Punjab.

Meanwhile, moderate to heavy rain with snowfall over the hills is likely in Murree, Galiyat, Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan, and upper Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The intensity of fog will be decreased in plain areas of Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and upper Sindh. During the last 24 hours, cold and cloudy weather prevailed over most parts of the country. However, rain occurred in north/west Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, central and south Punjab, and Kashmir.

Meanwhile, snowfall was also recorded in Kalam and Malam Jabba while foggy conditions prevailed in plain areas of Punjab and upper Sindh. The rainfall recorded till Wednesday morning was Balochistan: Quetta (Samungli 27 mm, Sheikh Manda 02), Kalat 12; Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Pattan 07, Kalam 06, Parachinar 05, Dir (Upper 04, Lower 03), Malam Jabba 04, Chitral, Saidu Sharif, Bannu 02, Balakot, Kakul, Drosh 01; and Kashmir: Garhi Dupatta 01mm.

ANF seizes over 1011 kg drugs worth US\$18.42m

ISLAMABAD (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) Pakistan has seized 1011.977 kg drugs, 15 bottles of alcohol and 122 cans of beer worth US\$18.42 million internationally, arrested 26 accused including a woman and an Afghan national, impounded 10 vehicles while conducting 23 counter-narcotics operations throughout the country during last week.

According to an ANF spokesman, the seized drugs comprised 14.896 kg heroin, 831.726 kg hashish, 11.155 kg methamphetamine (ice), 115.200 kg opium, 39 kg poppy straw, 15 bottles alcohol and 122 cans beer.

He informed that ANF Balochistan recovered 307 kg of drugs in two operations while arresting three persons including an Afghan national involved in drugs smuggling and impounded a vehicle. The seized drugs comprised 306 kg hashish and one kg methamphetamine (ice).

ANF Punjab recovered 85.7 kg of drugs in three operations while arresting five persons involved in drug smuggling and

impounded a vehicle. The seized drugs comprised 26.7 kg opium, 2.9 kg heroin and 56.4 kg hashish.

ANF KPK recovered 4.8 kg of methamphetamine (ice) in two operations and arrested two persons involved in drugs smuggling.

ANF Sindh recovered 162.31 kg of drugs, 15 bottles of alcohol and 122 cans of beer in four operations and arrested three accused including a woman involved in smuggling and impounded two vehicles. The seized drugs comprised 9.6 kg opium, 0.150 kg heroin, 150 kg hashish and 2.560 kg methamphetamine (Ice).

ANF North recovered 452.167 kg drugs in 12 operations, arrested 13 persons involved in smuggling and impounded six vehicles. The seized drugs comprised 11.846 kg heroin, 319.326 kg hashish, 79.200 kg opium, 2.795 kg methamphetamine (Ice) and 39 kg poppy straw.

All cases have been registered at respective ANF Police Stations and further investigations are under process.



ISLAMABAD: Cars splashing water after rain at Srinagar Highway in the Federal Capital.

Kabul-Ghor highway closed

GHOR (Agencies): Local officials of Ghor province on Wednesday said that the roads of six districts have been shut with the provincial capital due to heavy snowfall that also closed Kabul-Ghor highway. Ghor governor's spokesman said that the snowfall shut most routes of the province that created trouble for public transport. He added, that seven passenger vehicles which were trapped in Bakik area of Ghor province on Kabul-Ghor highway were rescued by a rescue team.

The Frontier Post

AFGHANISTAN

Jamadi-us-Sani 19, 1444 — Thursday, January 12, 2023

Illegal weapons discovered

KUNAR (Agencies): The intelligence forces of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan discovered and seized a number of illegal weapons and military equipment in Kunar province. According to reports, the forces of intelligence conducted operations in a number of districts of Kunar, as a result of which a large number of weapons and military equipment that were illegally kept were discovered and seized.

Closure of Afgan women businesses in Baghlan, Mazar untrue: Minister



MAZAR-E-SHARIF (Khaama Press): The Authorities of the Ministry for Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan stated earlier today that the reports on the closure of women-run shops in Mazar-e-Sharif and beauty parlors in Baghlan are untrue. Mohammad Sediq Akeef, the Spokesperson of the Ministry of Vice and Virtue has said in a series of Tweets that rumors regarding the closure of women-run shops in northern Mazar-e-Sharif and beauty parlors in Baghlan are incorrect. Mr. Akeef said that special efforts are underway to

allocate a proper place for women vendors, however, until then these shops will remain in the same location. Prior to this, the local media reported that the department of vice and virtue of Baghlan province had banned the operation of female beauty parlors. According to the reports, the IEA authorities had warned those beauty salons operating from their houses to abide by Islamic principles. Furthermore, the Taliban authorities in Balkh province had given women street vendors one week to cease their businesses, otherwise, they will be treated accordingly. This comes as the de facto authorities of

Afghanistan have completely banned women's university education and employment at government or non-government aid organizations in the recent past – accompanied by widespread condemnations and sparked protests in different parts of the country. How the ruling regime emphasizes creating a pure Islamic environment for women and girls before they are allowed to go back to school, university, or the workplace. The implementation of the gender-based restrictions has already adversely affected the living conditions of thousands of families across the country, who are in dire need of humanitarian aid for survival.

Mental illness cases increased

MAIDAN WARDAK (TOLONews): A number of women and girls in Maidan Wardak province said that after the ban on women's working and education, mental illness cases have increased among them. Qamar, a resident of Jalrez district in Maidan Wardak, said she worked as a teacher before facing the illness. She said she started having mental disorders after the Islamic Emirate's ban on women's work and education. "I am unemployed now, and my tailoring business is not going well. My mental issues have also become worse,"

Qamar told TOLONews. "The demand of girls was to go to school, madrasa and get an education," said Shekiba, a student. "I don't attend school. If I had, I would have advanced to class 10 this year. We are now at home, and there are many problems, life is difficult for me right now," said Maryam, another student. Meanwhile, a number of doctors in Maidan Wardak said that the number of women and girls suffering from mental problems has risen recently. "There should be peace and women should go to work.

We ask the Islamic Emirate to allow women to work," said Hekmat Wiar, a doctor. "Regarding women, we ask the Islamic Emirate to provide job and education opportunities for them," said Shah Hossein, a resident of Maidan Wardak. But officials in the province said that while the issue of women's employment and education is a matter for the leadership of the Islamic Emirate, the rise in mental illness is a problem that affects the whole world. "This is a universal challenge. In my opinion, this challenge exists not just in Afghanistan, but across the world," said Ahmadullah Nezami, the head of the provincial governor's office. This comes as there are reports about increased domestic violence in recent months due to the rise in poverty and unemployment in Afghanistan.

Power import contract renewed



KABUL (Agencies): Da Afghan Breshna Sherkat extended the electricity contract for the year 2023 with the National Electricity Company of Tajikistan. The Director of Information and publications of the Ministry of Energy and Water, Ghulam Jilani Haqparast said that a contract was extended for the import of power supply with a national Electricity Company of Tajikistan." The contract was signed

in the presence of Abdul Latif Mansoor, Acting Energy, and Water Minister, between Mullah Muhammad Hanif Hamza, Chief Executive Officer of Breshna Company, and Mohammad Omar Aesozada, Chairman of National Electricity Company of Tajikistan. Meanwhile, the Afghan Ministry of Energy and Water lately extended the electricity import contract from Uzbekistan for another year.

33kg opium discovered in Nimruz

NIMRUZ (Agencies): Local Nimroz security personnel discovered 33kg of opium in the Kang district of Nimruz province. The provincial 3th brigade commander Mullah Mohammad Nabi Mullah-wor said that their officers discovered and seized 33kg opium in kang district of the province. According to the source, one person arrested on charged with the discovered drugs. The detainee will be introduced to justices bodies after police investigation, source added.

Blast happened near Foreign Ministry

KABUL (TOLONews): A blast took place in front of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in downtown Kabul on Wednesday afternoon. A spokesman for the Kabul security department, Khalid Zadran, in a tweet said the blast caused casualties. He said the explosion happened on the street of the Foreign Ministry. Zadran added that security forces have arrived at the scene. Photos from the blast scene on social media show bodies of victims on the street. No group has claimed responsibility for the blast.

Scholars Council established

URUZGAN (Agencies): Under the decree of the supreme leader of the IEA, Mawlawi Abdul Ghaffoor appointed as the chairman of the council, and Mawlawi Hamid Akhundzada as the deputy of the council. Many other based on the council formation appointed. The council will be responsible to provide advice to the related officials of the province under Sharia rules for the better adjustment of the affairs of the said province according to its bill, said the statement. The local officials of Uruzgan province have also been accountable to act according to their bill on the advice of the council of scholars and to make full efforts in the execution of the bill, as well as the officials of the central financial administration and other relevant organs that the Council of Ulama's administrative formation and budget arrangement and go through the stages according to the principles.

Resistance against IEA continues in Afghanistan

KABUL (Khaama Press): The recent gender-based decrees issued by the Supreme leader of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan restricting women from working for NGOs and getting university and higher education, culminated the tensions among the Afghan people. The implementation of the ban completely erased Afghan women and girls from society, which prompted severe condemnations from the international community and the people of Afghanistan. Although some foreign governments, aid organizations, and other stakeholders called the de facto authorities to reverse the decision, nothing has changed so far. On the contrary, these gender apartheid policies

fueled the fire of hatred and resistance against the country's ruling regime. The notion of embracing everyone to form an inclusive government where people could see them represented in the government has long died. Discrimination against women, religious minorities, and ethnicities has been witnessed since the Taliban's return to power. The IEA authorities have been accused of monopolizing the power while giving no chance to others participating in the Islamic regime. The integration of all these issues causes people to resist the Taliban administration on different fronts, be it through social movements (protests), military resistance, or opposing the group through spreading anti-regime propaganda.

Recently, reports about intensive fighting between the Taliban and the forces of the National Resistance Front (NRF) in the last week of December surfaced online. The NRF is one of the only groups militarily resisting the Taliban administration. Concentrated in the Andarab, the NRF forces repelled both ground and air attacks from the Taliban with both sides facing heavy casualties. The group headed by Ahmad Massoud, the late Ahmad Shah Massoud's son, aims to set up a federal, decentralized, and democratic government in Afghanistan. The NRF currently pushes to drain the enemy, conduct targeted strikes and liberate more regions and accumulate resources so that they could

cause further threats to the Taliban in the long term. Since the Taliban's return to power several other armed groups have announced their presence in Afghanistan including the Afghanistan Islamic National and Liberation Movement, Soldiers of Hazaristan, Freedom Corps, the Liberation Front of Afghanistan, etc. Not much is known about their members or their presence on the ground, with their social media handles their propaganda against the Taliban regime. Despite all the odds, the resistance against the Taliban regime, be it social media propaganda, armed resistance, or protests, continues at different levels, leading to further tensions and chaos in the country in the long term.

MoHE seeks capacity development of country's universities

KABUL (Agencies): Acting Higher Education Minister, Neda Mohammad Nadeem, attending on a Scientific Council of Kabul University meeting stressed on the capacity development of the country's universities. Dr. Osama Aziz, President of Kabul University shared a series of problems, suggestions and proposals with the Acting Minister of Higher Education in mandate to improve specialties as much as possible, according to a statement. Minister Nadeem shared details on his business trips to different provinces, said that he met with two respected groups of society, scholars and professors of academic institutions, and both groups wanted there



was a gap between modern science and religion. He said that the Ministry of Higher Education is committed to equipping

and increasing the capacity development in the country's universities. The Acting Minister Nadeem visited the labora-

tories, public library, online resource center and other departments of this university, while attending the council Tuesday.

Displaced families in Khoshi district of Logar province face challenges

LOGAR (TOLONews): A number of displaced families in Khoshi district in Logar province said their problems have increased with the arrival of winter and recent snowfalls. They said they live under tents and have not received any aid this winter. "We are faced with many difficulties here... We left our homes and everything to save ourselves," said Hasibullah, a displaced family member. "The night was so cold,

and we heated our feet with boiling water," said Zahra, member of a displaced family. "One a wolf came nearby and my children were screaming. I asked them to keep calm and they will not get hurt," said Sabrina, a displaced person. Zainab and her husband live in a tent with their five children. She said their home was destroyed in summer floods and now they are faced with economic challenges but have not received assistance. "No one helps us. We urge the international community to help us and allow women to work so that they will help us," said Zainab. "We don't have anything in our home. Everything was destroyed by floods," said Bibi Aisha, a displaced person. Most of the displaced people complained about a lack of humanitarian assistance to them. "We spent the night in hunger in this tent and we don't have food, water and even electricity," said

Rajab Ali, a displaced. "When I look at these shelters, I cannot imagine how somebody lives here with no clothes, water and food," said Sayed Ahmad Silab, head of the Silab Charity Foundation. There is another camp in the Khoshi district that has housed at least 100 families. "The people's demand is that the problem of tents should be addressed and the distribution of land should be implemented so that people can find shelter,"

said Sayed Daud Mirzazai, a representative of the displaced people in Khoshi. Devastating floods last summer displaced at least 700 families in Logar. Local officials assured that efforts are underway to address the problems faced by displaced families. "The current government has a major responsibility, and we continue to talk with the central government to make shelter (for the families)," said Rahmatullah, the district governor of Khoshi.

Residents support rehabilitation centers

HERAT (TOLONews): The residents of Herat are helping the municipality and counter-narcotics department in treatment of drug addicts in the province. The counter-narcotics department said that all drug addicts will be rounded up from the city. "Today, we rounded up at least 200 people while we planned facilities for 250 people," said Hayatullah Rohani, head of the department. It is expected that the drug addicts will receive

skills training in addition to treatment. "They are provided with treatment programs and education to learn something," said Rashid Mubariz, Herat mayor. According to local officials, one percent of the salary of government employees will be allocated to rehabilitation centers. "In Herat, in the camp and other areas where they took us, the local communities alongside with municipality have joined hands to collect its fund from the

people," said Ahmadzia Mالدar, an official from a rehabilitation center in Herat. A number of drug addicts expressed concerns about their situation, saying that the cold weather has made life difficult for them. "The camps that are provided for us, should be in a good place and then, we should be provided with a job," said Zabiullah, a drug addict. According to official figures, nearly 80,000 drug addicts are living in Herat.



Economists worried over cash assistance suspension

KABUL (Pajhwok): Economists believe delays in provision of humanitarian aid will trigger an economic crisis in Afghanistan and the authorities should revisit the decision that has prompted the suspension of cash flows into the country. After last year's political change, Afghanistan's banking system came to a halt for some time and people faced severe economic problems. But later the international community started providing humanitarian aid to the needy Afghans. About 1.7 billion dollars reached the country in the form of 50 cash aid packages up to January 9, 2023. The caretaker government barred female students from higher education until further notice. It

was followed by another order banning women from working for non-governmental organizations. Following the ban on women NGO workers, reports say, a number of humanitarian aid agencies have either suspended or curtailed their activities in the country. Sources say aid delivery has been stopped after the interim government suspended higher education for girls and barred women from working for aid groups. According to reports, after the ban on women workers of NGOs, some charitable institutions have stopped operations. With regard to this situation, Pajhwok spoke to some analysts, who warned if the delay in delivery of

international humanitarian assistance continued, the Afghans and their country's economy would suffer. Zakaria Haidari, a professor of economics at Kabul University, claimed cash assistance and other humanitarian aid to Afghanistan had been stopped due to the suspension of women's work by the government. He reckoned 95 percent of the people of Afghanistan were faced with economic problems. Despite receiving humanitarian aid, people were still facing problems, he noted. If aid flows stopped permanently, he feared, controlling the economic crisis would become very difficult. He added: "From the economic point of view, the value of the afghani has

been kept stable artificially in the market. There are no dollar savings in the country, and if foreign aid stops, the value of the afghani would considerably depreciate." Should the local currency further plunge, the professor predicted, prices of essential items would skyrocket and people's problems would deepen as a result. Haidari urged the government to accept legitimate demands of the international community, allow women to work and reopen universities and schools for girls. Qais Mohammadi, another analyst, said cash aid packages did not come to Afghanistan from the global fraternity, but from the US. The incumbent

administration, therefore, should remain committed to all aspects of the Doha agreement. The acting government was unable to form an inclusive government in more than one year and a half, he noted, linking the aid halt was meant to mount pressure on the government to accept demands of the US-led international community. Some Taliban officials say they are striving to create a Sharia-based framework for women's education and work, but they stress there should be no strings attached humanitarian aid. Mohammadi said although cash assistance had a political aspect, it put a positive impact on people's lives. For instance, the

afghani is being kept stable with foreign aid that also kept the economy afloat. Should aid flows stop, he said, the afghani would be once again in a free fall. In case of aid suspension, the caretaker government might impose more taxes on the people to bridge revenue gaps, a move that would affect the masses, he maintained. Mohammadi called delays in humanitarian aid delivery an inhuman act that should not happen. But cash aid had a political dimension and was delayed for political reasons, he observed. In order to continue receiving aid, he opined the government must change its policies and accept legitimate demands of the international community and

Afghans. Tariq Farhadi, another economist, viewed the international community's warning of stopping cash aid to Afghanistan as a serious issue. The cash deposited in Da Afghanistan Bank was spent in Afghanistan by the UN, he said. After the Islamic Emirate barred women from working for NGOs, some aid groups suspended operations in Afghanistan. If the current situation persists, he thinks, only the organizations providing emergency aid will be able to work in Afghanistan and the rest will have to suspend their activities. He suggested the caretaker government prepare a draft law on women's employment and reconsider its decision. He also called

for lifting the ban on university and secondary school education, for girls. Pajhwok Afghan News shared emails on the issue with caretaker government spokespersons, who have not yet responded. But Taliban officials have repeatedly said religious scholars were looking for a solution to the ban on girls' education and women's work within the framework of the Sharia law. Some media outlets quoted a spokesman for the Da Afghanistan Bank as saying the international community had halted sending cash aid to Afghanistan. But in a statement, the DAB spokesman rejected media reports about the suspension of international humanitarian aid flows into the country.



ISLAMABAD: UK's outgoing High Commissioner to Pakistan, Dr. Christian Turner, called on President Dr. Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

PTI has become most popular party: KP CM

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mahmood Khan has said that PTI has become the most popular political party not only in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa but across the country adding that the imported federal cabinet have failed in denying the political stature of PTI. He said that PTI has proved that it is the only party that is representative of Pakistan and is currently fighting corrupt mafias in the country single handedly.

While addressing the joining ceremonies of different delegations of prominent political figures from district Tank, Haripur and D.I.Khan, Mahmood Khan clarified that Chairman PTI Imran Khan is the only hope for a prosperous and developed future of Pakistan.

According to details, Member Provincial Assembly from D.I.Khan Ihtesham Javed Akbar, ex-candidate of ANP from district Tank Ghulam Qadir Khan Battani, prominent leaders of ANP Malik Gulistan Battani, Haji Shumal Battani and Independent Candidate for Tehsil Chairman Jandola Haji Muhammad Aslam Battani called on the Chief Minister and formally announced to join PTI. Similarly, Haji Muhammad Rehman (Jahazoon Wala) from Tehsil Ghazi District Haripur alongwith other political workers also called on the Chief Minister and announced joining PTI. PTI Provincial President Pervez Khattak, Ex-Federal Ministers Ali Amin Ganda Pur and Umar Ayub, Provincial Minister Arshad Ayub, Special Assistant to CM on Information Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif, MPA Akbar Ayub and others were also present on the occasions. The Chief Minister welcomed the new comers to the fold of PTI and appreciated their confidence on PTI leadership.

The Chief Minister said that PTI will

sweep the polls in the next general elections throughout the country and will form government with a huge majority. He lamented that PTI government at centre was abolished through regime change conspiracy adding that imported rulers, who plotted the conspiracy against a democratically elected government by citing inflation, have in fact played havoc with the national economy.

"Infact they were never concerned with inflation or other public issues. They only wanted to come into power to abolish corruption cases against them and protect their looted wealth" he remarked and said that since the regime change at centre, inflation is increasing with each passing day; skyrocketing prices of essential commodities have made the life of citizens miserable.

The Chief Minister maintained that during PTI government at the centre, national economy was stabilizing and a number of public welfare initiatives were launched despite daunting challenges. Inshaas programme, sehat card, shelter homes, langar khanas, provision of financial assistance, nutrition programme and many more initiatives were taken despite covid-19, that hit the global economy badly. However, the political opponents could not bear this and resorted to a conspiracy and imposed a conglomerate of incompetent rulers on the country by toppling the democratically elected government of Imran Khan. The country is currently on the verge of default due to incompetence and self-centered policies of the incumbent federal government. The Chief Minister made it clear that whatever imported rulers do, we will never let them succeed in their nefarious ambitions. We will firmly stand for the rights of people and will form government with a huge majority in the upcoming general elections, he concluded.

Elahi to seek confidence vote shortly: Fawad

LAHORE (Agencies): PTI Vice President Fawad Chaudhry said on Wednesday that the PTI-PML-Q coalition had the requisite numbers for Punjab Chief Minister Chaudhry Parvez Elahi to secure a vote of confidence from the Punjab Assembly, adding that the proceedings would begin shortly.

Speaking on private TV channel from the assembly hall, where the session was extended by another hour, Fawad said: "The numbers for the confidence vote are complete." He said that the PTI-PML-Q alliance was currently waiting for some lawmakers who were en route to the PA from various other cities in the province. He said that the confidence vote would be held as soon as they arrived.

Fawad also said that from a legal perspective, the vote could be held at any time since the session was still under way. He commended lawmakers for rejecting bribes offered to switch their loyalties. Fawad said CM Elahi was also on his way to the PA and the PTI wanted to get the proceedings "over with".

When asked what about the plan of action if the confidence vote was held, Fawad said the party would then withdraw the petition from the high court and forward the summaries for dissolving the Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assemblies by tomorrow morning. Questioned about his thoughts on the possibility of the confidence vote not being held, Fawad said: "God willing we will take it. We are only waiting for two MPs [to arrive]". Meanwhile, Fawad also took to Twitter to say that the "number of 187 is complete".

Sherry flays Imran's remarks

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Climate Change, Senator, Sherry Rehman on Wednesday condemned Imran Khan's statement pertaining to Pakistan-Afghanistan diplomatic relations and terrorism during a seminar on the resurgence of terrorism via video link.

In a series of tweets, the minister criticised the former prime minister and chief of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) for making irresponsible statements on critical issues of national importance. Sherry Rehman said, "As a former prime minister, Imran Khan is not representing Pakistan but someone else. Imran Khan knows the security issues and history of the region as much as he knows the geography of Germany and Japan."

She criticised that the person (Imran Khan) under whose rule Pakistan became a victim of foreign isolation was today exhorting Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on foreign affairs. Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto's eight months of diplomatic achievements had no comparison to Imran Khan's four years of diplomatic isolation, Sherry Rehman said.

"Imran Khan had plunged the country into a diplomatic quagmire," she added. The PTI chief had claimed that the ill-equipped police could not confront well-equipped terrorists that had automatic weapons to curb terrorism during his speech at the seminar.

Parvez lacks trust of majority MPs: Sanaullah

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah said on Wednesday that a minority government was in power in Punjab as Parvez Elahi did not have enough numbers in the assembly to take the vote of confidence.

Talking to the media along with Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Interior and Legal Affairs Attaullah Tarar

here, he said that Parvez Elahi did not have confidence of 186 members in the Punjab Assembly, and at least six members of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) were out of the country currently. He said that the federal government had record of all PA members outside the country at the moment, adding that they had just 176 votes in the house but they were claiming strength of 186 members. He urged the Lahore High Court (LHC) to early decide the case about the vote of trust so that people of the province could get relief.

The minister congratulated Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and his team for successful achievements made at the Geneva conference. He said that several PTI activists wanted to join the PML-N due to hypocritical attitude of Imran Khan. He said that Imran Niazi was a blot on the national politics and the nation would soon get rid of him with the power of vote.

He said that Moonis Elahi had fled the country in a private plane, along with the looted money, and predicted that he would not return home now. To a question about the PTI claim that the government had bribed its MPs, Rana Sanaullah said that in such a situation, how come Fawad Chaudhry was claiming presence of 177 PTI members in the house. He said that already 22 days had passed when the chief minister was asked to take a vote of confidence; therefore, he demanded the LHC chief justice should not give the government more time. He hoped that

the decision would come according to the Constitution, as the LHC chief justice was a good judge.

He said that the Punjab government had occupied 20-22 thousand acres of land in the name of Ravi Urban Development, adding that billions of rupees were looted in the Lahore Master Plan, and Imran Khan was also involved in the scam through his front man named Enayat Lak. To a question about the death of a PTI activist in an attack on party's long march, he said that Moazzam was killed with a bullet, fired from the container in Wazirabad, while Naveed was the man who carried out firing on the container. However, he regretted that the PTI was doing propaganda that two more persons were involved in the attack. Attaullah Tarar told the media that there was no option left for Parvez Elahi now other than getting a vote of confidence, adding that otherwise he had to leave his office.

MPs being pressurised to part ways with PTI: Imran

LAHORE (INP): Former premier and Chairman Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Imran Khan made the statement while addressing a session of Punjab's parliamentary party.

He praised PTI Members of the Provincial Assembly (MPAs) for attending the session in large numbers despite facing difficulties in movement owing to the foggy condition in Lahore. The party chief said that he is fully aware of how PTI MPs are being pressurised and offered money to part ways with the political

party. He also praised Pakistan Muslim League Quaid (PML-Q) lawmakers and Punjab Chief Minister (CM) Pervaiz Elahi for not accepting the pressure.

"These people were also asked to part ways with the PTI and join the side of PML-N (Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz)," He alleged that PTI lawmakers and its allies are being told that they marked a red line on Imran Khan and they are going to minus Imran Khan.

"Pakistan belongs to the Pakistanis. Only Pakistanis can mark a red line on someone but anyone else. If some people are arrogant enough to think about redlining any personality then they have no sense of

politics, neither they read the history nor care for the country." He said that not a single political party gains such popularity in Pakistan as compared to the PTI. Khan said that those who are having any doubts should watch the videos of his 65 power shows. He said that millions of nationals came out of their houses to resist the toppling of the PTI government via a conspiracy.

He said that the nationals had also backed PTI in the Punjab by-polls and gave a clear message to the powerful circles. He said that all tactics were used to force the nation to accept the 'thieves' as their rulers, but they all failed.

President for increasing Pak-UK bilateral trade

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi Wednesday underlined the need to take tangible steps to increase bilateral trade between Pakistan and UK, which stood at \$3.1 billion in 2021, to US\$ 10 billion per year.

This could be achieved in a short span of time by fully utilizing the existing opportunities, exploring new avenues and markets, diversifying products and services, and ensuring economic and political stability in the country, he added. The President was talking to UK's outgoing High Commissioner to Pakistan, Dr Christian Turner, who called on him here at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Talking to the outgoing High Commissioner, the President said that enhanced bilateral cooperation to substantially increase trade and investment

of Trade Dialogue in the coming months. During the meeting, he appreciated that 120 British companies were operating in Pakistan with cumulative investments of around \$10 billion and noted that Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) increased by 22% in the financial year 2020-21 rising from US\$117 million to US\$143 million. The President also appreciated that over the last five years up to 2019, Pakistan averaged as the largest recipient of the UK's bilateral overseas development aid (ODA) in Asia.

He stressed the need to create bilateral Enhanced Strategic Dialogue (ESD) and Enhanced Strategic Partnership by developing a 10-year roadmap for taking relations forward in diverse fields, including trade, investment and climate change.

ment from the UK in Pakistan would also help in improving the economic conditions of the country, besides creating jobs to reduce unemployment and sustain higher growth rates in coming years.

He said that the UK's Developing Countries Trading Scheme (DCTS), which would replace the GSP in early 2023, would provide tariff reductions and simpler terms to Pakistan including duty-free exports of over 94% of goods from Pakistan to the UK.

The President appreciated the inclusion of Pakistan in the UK's Developing Countries Trading Scheme (DCTS) and expressed the desire to fast-track the progress on the signing of the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) to substantially enhance trade and signing of an agreement between the two sides for the launch

Israeli forces kill Palestinian man in raid

WEST BANK (Agencies): Israeli forces killed a 21-year-old Palestinian man on Wednesday during an incursion into the West Bank, Palestinian health officials said, the latest casualty as violence continues to surge in the occupied territory. The Palestinian Ministry of Health said that Ahmed Abu Junaid, 21, succumbed to a head wound from a bullet during an Israeli army raid into the Balata refugee camp in the city of Nablus, in the northern West Bank.

His death brings the number of Palestinians killed by Israeli fire so far in 2023 to five, including three children. The Israeli army said it was carrying out arrest raids across the West Bank early on Wednesday. In the Balata refugee camp, a firefight erupted between Palestinian fighters and Israeli security forces, the army claimed, acknowledging that a Palestinian was hit.

Palestinian health officials said that Israeli special forces surrounded a house in the congested camp and unleashed live fire, tear gas and stun grenades at a crowd of young men. The Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade – an armed coalition affiliated with Fatah, the secular political party that controls the Palestinian Authority – claimed Abu Junaid as a fighter.

Since March 2022, Israeli military raids have surged in the West Bank as the army cracked down on Palestinian men mostly in refugee camps. Several developments on the ground during the past year have indicated that the occupied West Bank is approaching a serious shift in the currently unsustainable political and security status quo, analysts told Al Jazeera.

At least 146 Palestinians were killed by Israeli security forces in 2022 in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, according to Israeli human-rights group B'Tselem. Last year's death toll was the highest since 2004, during the second Intifada, or Palestinian uprising.

While many of those killed during the past year were civilians, the Israeli army raids and killings are being conducted under the banner of crushing Palestinian armed resistance in the northern occupied West Bank. The Palestinians have viewed them as further entrenchment of Israel's 55-year, open-ended occupation of the West Bank. A new, far-right Israeli government sworn in last month has taken punitive measures against Palestinians, including a ban on their flag in public spaces.

Shehbaz hails US, UK, ADB and Germany for support

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday expressed gratitude to the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany and the Asian Development Bank for their pledges during the Resilient Pakistan Conference to support the reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts in the flood affected areas.

In a series of tweets, the prime minister acknowledged the US pledge of \$100 million through the USAID to support Pakistan's continued flood recovery and reconstruction efforts. "The assistance from our friends & partners is crucial to help us build back better from the devastating floods," he added.

The prime minister, in another tweet, thanked the United Kingdom for pledge of an additional 9 million pounds at the Resilient Pakistan Conference. "The aid will help in providing technical support for disaster & climate planning as well as for restoration of healthcare & educational services in flood-hit areas," he added.

The prime minister, in a separate tweet, gratefully acknowledged the aid commitment of 88 million by Germany during the Resilient Pakistan Conference to help Pakistan's flood recovery efforts. "With the global solidarity and partnership, we are resolved to build back better with resilience," he added.

Meanwhile, the prime minister, in a related tweet, said they were highly grateful to Board of Asian Development Bank for a commitment of \$ 1.5 billion at the Resilient Pakistan Conference for recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction post-floods. "We also acknowledge ADB's consistent support during Covid-19, which helped increase social protection," he added.

Nepra slashes K-Electric tariff

KARACHI (PPI): NEPRA has allowed K-Electric to reduce the electricity price by Rs7.43 per unit under the head of monthly Fuel Charges Adjustment for the month of November. The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority issued a notification in this regard on Wednesday.

According to the notification, K-Electric submitted an application seeking a Rs7.04/unit reduction in the electricity price for the month of November. The regulatory authority held a public hearing on the petition on Dec 27, 2022. Before this, the K-Electric reduced the electricity price by Rs2.45/unit for the month of October under the head of FCA.

NEPRA said that the November FCA is Rs4.98/unit which is less than October's FCA. The regulatory body said that the decision would be applicable only for one month. It further added that the decision would not be applicable on lifeline domestic consumers using less than 300 electricity units, agricultural consumers, and electric vehicle charging stations. On the other hand, NEPRA approved a hike in power tariff by Rs0.19 per unit for the rest of the country on account of monthly fuel adjustment. The hike in tariff was approved after the public hearing to consider the monthly fuel adjustment on a petition filed by the Central Power Purchasing Agency (CPPA-G). The NEPRA has issued notification of the increases in electricity prices and the recent hike will be charged in the bills for January 2023, it added.

Moonis's friend returns home

LAHORE (INP): A close friend of Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) leader Moonis Elahi returned home days after he was 'abducted' from Lahore's Garden Town. As per details, Ahmed Faran was left outside his house in Lahore, last night by unknown men driving two vehicles. CCTV footage of Faran's return has been acquired.

Zaheer has also confirmed the return of his brother Ahmed Faran. Later, he was presented before the Lahore High Court, which was moved against his 'disappearance'.

BD Opp holds rally seeking PM's resignation

DHAKA (Agencies): Thousands of supporters of Bangladesh's main opposition party have rallied across Bangladesh cities to demand Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's resignation and the formation of a caretaker government to conduct general elections. The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and its allies staged protests in the capital Dhaka and nine other cities on Wednesday, the latest of several demonstrations in recent months amid mounting anger over the rising cost of living.

The opposition and rights groups have criticised the Hasina government for cracking down on anti-government protests. Bangladesh is one of the fastest-growing economies in Asia, but rising global food and fuel costs linked to the war in Ukraine forced Hasina's government last year to impose lengthy power cuts and expand food handouts to the poor.

Several people were injured in the central city of Faridpur when supporters of the governing Awami League attacked protesters

while brandishing sticks and hurling Molotov cocktails. Al Jazeera's Tanvir Chowdhury, reporting from Dhaka, said the political crisis seems to be having a "new dimension". "This rally has been an ongoing movement, this particular day has been called by an alliance of 32 different political parties," Chowdhury said from a gathering among thousands.

He said people from "all walks of life" joined the demonstrations to protest against rising food prices and to express their dismay at how the government has handled crippling inflation. "It appears that the movement is going to continue until there is some resolution," Chowdhury added. "The time to cling to power by force is over," senior BNP leader Mirza Abbas said at a sit-in outside party headquarters in the capital.

"Let a neutral government hold an election." Police estimated up to 50,000 people attended the rally addressed by Abbas, who was released from prison on Monday a month

after a sweeping crackdown on opposition activists. BNP officials said hundreds of thousands had turned up in Dhaka alone, with thousands more joining sister rallies around the country.

"Living costs have always been a headache," university student Abu Nayem told the AFP news agency in Dhaka. "The government might not have a problem with this, but people like me are dying. I came to protest this carelessness apathy." The Bangladesh taka has depreciated by up to 25 percent, driving up the cost of food imports and making life harder for the country's poorest citizens.

Meanwhile, police said at least four people were wounded in the Faridpur clashes. "We fired rubber bullets to bring the situation under control," a senior city police officer told AFP, speaking on the condition of anonymity. Shama Obaed, a BNP leader at the Faridpur rally, told AFP that at least 100 people were wounded and more than 30 had been detained.

Police suspect Sara could have been murdered

KARACHI (INP): Days after they fished out her body from the sea after an apparent suicide, Karachi's police now suspect that a 22-year-old physical therapist cum receptionist working at an upscale pet care center in the city may have been murdered. Preliminary investigations had suggested that the victim, identified as Sara Malik, daughter of Ibrar Ahmed, had allegedly committed suicide by jumping into the sea near Karachi's Sea View beach on January 6.

After a two day search, her body was fished out of the sea on January. Malik, who was earlier termed a doctor, was in fact a receptionist and therapist at RPK Critter Care and Animal Hospital located in the upscale Defence Housing Authority Phase-VI. Speaking to reporters,

Karachi Police Surgeon Dr Summaiya Syed said that the victim's body was brought to Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre (JPMC) for autopsy on January 8 at around 12:30pm.

She added that a female medico-legal officer (MLO) performed the postmortem, and collected all the relevant samples, but unveiling cause of death has been withheld until all reports arrive and are duly analyzed. The MLO observed that the body brought for autopsy was still 'fresh' although the police team apprised her that the body had been fished out two after a two-day search.

Based on the observations of the MLO, the police have started probing other possible aspects of the crime, including the possibility that she could have been murdered.

"Observations of the MLO have raised concerns," South-Zone Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIGP) Irfan Baloch told.

According to the DIGP, the body of the victim looked fresh and the MLO was able to find some evidences on the corpse which suggested that she was murdered, and it was not a suicide. Baloch said that the MLO collected the samples during autopsy and the reports are also indicative of their doubts. Apart from digital evidence, oral evidence also suggest that Sana Malik might be murdered.

The DIG said that the victim was working at the veterinary center for the past two years, and that during her employment there, she had developed relations with her employer, Dr Shan Saleem.