

SC issues notices to CS

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The Supreme Court of Pakistan has issued notices to the chief secretaries of all the provinces on the disbanding of National Minorities Cultural Performance Award. The court has sought a reply from the provinces regarding the closure of the minorities' awards. A three-member bench of the SC headed by Justice Ijazul Ahsan heard a petition related to the conduct of National Minorities Cultural Performance Award.



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MACH: Police officials and local people gathered after Jaffar Express derailed during a blast.

Speaker accepts 35 more resignations of PTI MPs

ISLAMABAD (INP): National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervez Ashraf on Friday accepted resignations of 35 lawmakers of the Pakistan Tehreek-e- Insaf (PTI) as Imran Khan-led party plans return to the assembly to put Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to test through no-confidence vote bid.

The development comes a day after the speaker defended his previous move of accepting the resignation of 34 PTI MNAs and Awami Muslim League (AML) chief Sheikh Rashid Ahmed, saying he approved the resignation of lawmakers who provided valid reasons for quitting the assembly. The PTI MNA and allies submitted their resignations in April last after Imran Khan was ousted as prime minister through a no-trust vote. Resignations of Maleeka Ali Bokhari, Andaleeb Abbas, Makhdoom Khusró Bakhtiar, Syed Fakhr Imam and others have been accepted.

The move came forward amid threats from the PTI to return to parliament only to foil a vote of confidence, which the party hoped President Dr Arif Alvi would seek from Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. Earlier, NA speaker on Tuesday suddenly accepted long-awaited resignations of PTI members. The previous phase of approved resignations included names of Shah Mehmood Qureshi, Asad Umar, Shafqat Mahmood, Sheikh Rashid Ahmed and others.

ECP de-notifies 35 more PTI MNAs: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Friday de-notified 35 more Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) members of the National Assembly (MNAs) following the acceptance of their resignations by Speaker NA Raja Pervaiz Ashraf.

According to ECP notification, 31 general and four reserved seats of the National Assembly were now deemed vacant.

The de-notified PTI lawmakers include Dr Haider Ali Khan (NA-2), Saleem Rehman (NA-3), Sahibzada Sibghatullah (NA-5), Mehboob Shah (NA-6), Muhammad Bashir Khan (NA-7), Junaid Akbar (NA-8), Sher Akbar Khan (NA-9), Ali Khan Jadoon (NA-16), Engr Usman Khan Tarakai (NA-19), Mujahid Ali (NA-20), Arbab Amir Ayub (NA-28), Sher Ali Arbab (NA-30), Shahid Ahmed (NA-34), Gul Dad Khan (NA-40), Sajid Khan (NA-42), Mohammad Iqbal Khan (NA-44), Aamer Mehmood Kiani (NA-61), Syed Faiz ul Hassan (NA-70), Chaudhry Shoukat Ali Bhab (NA-87), Umar Aslam Khan (NA-93), Amjad Ali Khan (NA-96), Khurram Shahzad (NA-107) and others.

The move comes after National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf on Friday accepted the resignations of 35 more PTI MNAs amid reports that President Arif Alvi is all set to ask Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to take a vote of confidence from the lower house of the parliament.

8 injured as blast hits railway track in Bolan

QUETTA (INP): At least eight people were injured in an explosion near a railway track in the Paneer area of Balochistan's Bolan district on Friday, Pakistan Railways spokesperson in Balochistan, Muhammad Kashif, told media that the blast occurred when the Peshawar-bound Jaffer Express was passing by the area. The train was coming from Mach area. As a result of the blast, six bogies of the train derailed causing injuries to at least eight people, he added.

The injured were shifted to a nearby hospital while an emergency has been declared across all hospitals in the district. Meanwhile, Deputy Commissioner Kach Agha Samiullah also confirmed the incident while talking to media. He said it was a remote-control explosion that derailed multiple bogies of the train. He said rescue teams had been dispatched to the spot. Police have not yet issued a statement on the incident.

Remand of accused in Latif's case extended

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: An anti-terrorism court (ATC) in Peshawar on Friday extended again the physical remand of the prime suspect in the case of senior lawyer Latif Afridi's murder for one-day.

As per details from the court, Adnan Sami Afridi, prime suspect in Latif Afridi's murder case was presented before the Judge of anti-terrorism, Amir Nazir. Police informed the court that the anti-terrorism laws clauses have been included in the FIR registered against the accused and further remand was needed.

The ATC judge accepted the police request and handed over the accused in police custody on remand for one more day. The court, earlier on Thursday, had approved one-day extension in the Adnan Sami Afridi remand. Earlier, the court had granted two-day physical remand of the accused. Latif Afridi, the former Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) president was killed after being shot six times at the bar room inside the Peshawar High Court (PHC) on Monday last, in what police said was a family feud shooting.

Delegation of SC judges visits PHB, condoles death of Abdul Latif: A delegation of Supreme Court Judges on Friday arrived at Peshawar High Court Bar room here and condoled the assassination of former President of Supreme Court Bar Abdul Latif.

The delegation members included Justice Qazi Faiz Essa, Justice Mansoon Ali Shah, Justice Yahya Afridi and Justice Jamal Mandokhel met with the sons of late Abdul Latif at his house and expressed their condolences.

Govt taking steps for solarization of tubewells: Shehbaz

PM urges UAE businessmen to exploit immense business opportunities in Pakistan

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Friday said the government was taking measures for converting agriculture tubewells on solar energy. He was chairing a review committee regarding solarization of tubewells in the country and for implementation of the farmers package. He said the conversion of tubewells on solar energy would reduce per acre cost of farmers and would also reduce dependence on diesel and imported fuel, saving precious foreign exchange.

The PM praised the suggestions of the Minister of Power, Secretary Power and their team for converting tubewells on solar energy. He said implementation of farmers package was the top priority of the government. The government was taking steps for the progress of agriculture and prosperity of farmers, he stressed.

He said the farmers package included facilities for extending of loans to small farmers, timely provision of seeds, encouragement for introduction of modern machinery in agriculture and conversion of tubewells to solar energy. He directed that all organizations of farmers from across the country should be included in the consultation process regarding the farmers package.

He also said consultation and cooperation of provinces should also be ensured for the implementation of the package. A committee of experts should be formed for devising a strategy for increasing the production of edible oil, he ordered. He said a plan should be finalized for introducing a new and climate resilient seed for

increasing the production of cotton.

The Power Division told that the plan to convert diesel and electricity-run tubewells to solar-powered tubewells was in final stages and with this measure the country would save \$ 3.61 billion every year by reducing the use of diesel and imported fuel. The prime minister was informed about the details of farmers package, cultivation and production of wheat, introduction of new cotton seeds and about the steps taken for increasing the production of edible oil. It was told that the government's measures to facilitate small farmers in getting loans resulted in provision of loans amounting to Rs 816.5 billion.

The government was also taking steps to reduce prices of fertilizer and for increased use of modern machinery in agriculture. The participants were apprised that due to decisions of the government in the current year the seed of edible oil was planted on 632,000 hectares of land and the crop area would increase further next year. It was told that Ministry of National Food Security was in contact in international companies for introducing new and climate-resilient seeds and a positive development was expected in this matter.

The PM directed that the implementation on all these measures should be ensured in a stipulated timeframe. Former prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, Special Assistant to PM Jehanzeb Khan and officials concerned attended the meeting. Federal ministers Ishaq Dar, Marriyum Aurangzeb, Khurram Dastgir Khan, Tariq Bashir Cheema, Advisor to Prime Minister Ahad Cheema and chief secretaries of the four provinces attended the meeting

through video link.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has urged the businessmen of the United Arab Emirates to utilise the immense opportunities in Pakistan – a market of over 220 million people – offering its investors a strong and large consumer market.

"Energy, infrastructure, e-commerce, agro-based industry, and IT sectors are up for grabs," he said in an interview with Khaleej Times during his visit to the UAE last week and published on Thursday. Besides meeting the UAE leadership, the prime minister also witnessed the signing of three memoranda of understanding in the fields of combating human trafficking, information exchange, and cooperation between the diplomatic academies of both countries.

Asked about the UAE and Pakistan trade relations, Prime Minister Shehbaz pointed out that the bilateral trade with the UAE had increased by 25.40% during 2021-22 as compared to the previous year, amounting to US\$10.60 billion. However, he said, "the current level of bilateral trade is still not a true reflection."

"We are looking to further strengthen our existing economic, trade and investment ties." He said the average annual trade between the two countries stood at US\$8 billion making the UAE the largest trading partner of Pakistan in the MENA region. Responding to another query on new areas of cooperation, the prime minister said, "We find new avenues of economic cooperation to take our economic relations at par with our excellent political relations."

Azam Khan unanimously named caretaker KP CM

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In a surprising development, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government and the opposition have reached an agreement on the name for the interim chief minister in the province.

The name of former KP chief secretary Azam Khan was unanimously agreed upon in the meeting held to finalise the appointment of the province's caretaker CM. "Azam Khan is our consensus candidate for the post of caretaker chief minister. We have chosen a person who is acceptable to all," said Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Pakistan-Fazal (JUI-F) leader Akram Khan Durrani.

Commenting on the development, KP Chief Minister Mahmood Khan said the name of a caretaker chief minister was unanimously agreed upon for the first time in "history". "We agreed on Azam Khan in consultation with our leader," Khan said revealing Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chairman Imran Khan's nod for the candidate.

The nominee has held

the office of federal secretary for the ministries of religious affairs and petroleum. He had obtained his Bar at Law degree from the Lincoln's Inn, London. While the KP Assembly's dissolution took place much later than the Punjab Assembly, the unanimous decision of naming the caretaker chief minister was done more rapidly in the northwestern province.

Earlier the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mahmood Khan and former Governor Shah Farman held consultations for nomination of caretaker chief minister for the province. According to an official handout issued here on Friday, the Chief Minister and former Governor have developed consensus over two names.

However, the names were not mentioned. It said that their names would be sent to KP Governor after approval from the PTI chairman, Imran Khan.

Expedition the progress on Dir Motorway project directed: Chief Minister Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa Mahmood Khan has directed the concerned authorities to expedite the progress on Dir Motorway project and termed it as a major initiative towards sustainable development of District Dir and adjacent areas.

He urged upon authorities to avoid delays in the implementation of the project adding that all pre-requisites, including the land acquisition process, be completed as per the stipulated timelines so that the civil work on the project can be initiated. The Chief Minister issued these directives while chairing a progress review meeting held here at Chief Minister house Peshawar.

It is pertinent to mention here that 30 km long Dir motorway project would be constructed from Chakdara interchange, Malakand to Baroon, Dir Lower via Ramial and Och village. The project consists of 04 lanes (2 lanes each side) with 50 meters right of way and would also have 625-meter-long twin tube tunnel and 2 single tube tunnels with the total length of 6320 meters.

ATC grants pre-arrest bail to Zaidi

KARACHI (Agencies): An anti-terrorism court on Friday granted bail to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Ali Zaidi and directed Police to refrain from apprehending him in the matter.

Ali Zaidi, who was accused of vandalism and rioting in the DRO office at Keamari on the matter of local government election results, appeared before the court and filed a bail application. The ATC accepted PTI's leader bail application against a surety bond of Rs3-0,000 and restrained police from arresting him till Jan 28.

PTI's Bilal Ghaffar, Saeed Afridi and others have already secured bail in the case. Speaking to the media after approval of the bail application the PTI Sindh president Ali Zaidi said the party was in contact with Hafiz Naeemur Rehman of the Jamaat-e-Islami for the top slots in the local government. "Hafiz Naeemur Rehman is coming to meet us today. Matters will be finalised after the meeting," he added. Ali Zaidi claimed the Peoples Party was a "Zardari mafia" and there would be no dialogue with it.

IHC instructs FO to provide legal assistance for Afia's release

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): In the case pertaining to the return of Dr Afia Siddiqui — a Pakistani neuroscientist jailed in the United States — the Islamabad High Court (IHC) has directed the Foreign Affairs ministry to ensure assistance to Dr Fauzia Siddiqui, younger sister of the imprisoned scientist, at the legal front.

The government, while ensuring the provision of assistance for Dr Afia, apprised the court about its officials' meeting with the American Ambassador to Pakistan Donald Blome regarding the matter.

The government told the court that the case of the Pakistani national's release has been raised at the diplomatic level in the US. Last month, the court had directed the Foreign Affairs ministry to raise Dr Afia's matter with the American envoy while sharing its dissatisfaction towards the efforts for her release and sought a signed report from the ministry and its secretary.

Justice Sardar Ejaz Ishaq

Khan held the hearing of the plea filed by Dr Fauzia for her sister's return to Pakistan, while the petitioner arrived at the court with her counsel. Responding about the government's action in the case, Additional Attorney General Munawwar Iqbal Dogal said that Pakistan's officials had met the US diplomat following the court's orders.

Justice Ejaz said that "neither the foreign secretary nor the foreign minister is aware" of the court's orders. The court sought details of the meeting's proceedings questioning if it was merely held over "coffee and cake". "Any idea what happened in this meeting?" he asked Iqbal to which he responded by saying that the matter had been raised at the diplomatic level.

Dr Fauzia's lawyer informed the court about hiring another lawyer for Dr Afia in the US. "It seems the government is helpless in this matter," the counsel added. Giving remarks during the hearing, Justice Ejaz said: "This is the seventh or eighth hearing. The govern-

ment doesn't want to do anything in this regard. We also have jurisdiction and can only function within its limits." Adjourning the hearing till March 17, the court ordered officials of the foreign ministry to conduct a meeting with Dr Fauzia.

Hilal-e-Imtiaz for Sher Alam announced

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday announced the conferment of Hilal-e-Imtiaz (civil) posthumously for Secretary Kashmir Affairs late Captain (Retd) Sher Alam Mehsud.

The prime minister announced the national award for the late federal secretary in recognition of his remarkable public services. Sher Alam Mehsud passed away due to cardiac arrest during service.

Pakistan not to have talks with TTP, says Bilawal

WASHINGTON (APP): Accusing former Prime Minister Imran Khan's government of following a policy of appeasement towards the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has said that Pakistan's new leadership, both political and military, will have no talks with terrorist organizations that don't respect the country's laws and constitution.

"I am confident that if we can work with the Afghan interim government, which has influence over these groups, we will be successful in maintaining our security," he said in a wide-ranging interview with The Washington Post's senior Associate Editor, Lally Weymouth, in Davos, Switzerland where he is attending the World Economic Forum. The foreign minister said Imran Khan gave TTP a place to hide, not only did he release their prisoners who were in Pakistan's custody, but also engaged in a dialogue with them. "He (Imran Khan) has always been ideologically sympathetic to their point of view," he added.

To a question whether Pakistan

had hoped that the new Afghan government would act against the TTP, FM Bilawal said, "Our hope, and in fact their agreement, was that their soil would not be used for terrorism. We do hope to cooperate with them to deal with terrorists that are a concern to us. "We are both victims of terrorism. I don't believe that the Afghanistan government will be successful on their own against terrorism, and neither will we be successful on our own against terrorism. We have to work together."

Responding to question, he agreed that if Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, who was assassinated in 2007, had lived not only Pakistan would have been a different place, but the region would have gone in a different direction. "The entire purpose of the Pakistan People's Party has been for Pakistan to be a democratic country. We believe that democracy is the only way to take on extremism and terrorism." Also asked whether he could become prime minister this year, FM Bilawal said that he would have to win an election first.

"Obviously," he added, "my party

will be hoping that we win. My party has its own manifesto, and given the challenges that Pakistan faces, I believe that our manifesto speaks best to the country's key problems, such as inflation and unemployment. "However, I don't believe that any one party will be able to solve all of Pakistan's problems. If [our party wins the most votes], I will seek to form a government as prime minister and have a coalition."

Here are complete excerpts of the interview as published in The Washington Post:

Question: Are you worried that Washington is disengaging from the region?

Answer: It is true that President (Joe) Biden never spoke with the previous prime minister, Imran Khan. We are hoping going forward for more U.S. engagement with our prime minister, Shehbaz Sharif.

Q: Didn't President Biden make a bit of a mess of the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan?

A: I believe that whatever the situation is in Afghanistan, it is a reality that we all have to deal with. We need

to engage aggressively with the interim government in Afghanistan.

Q: Doesn't the terrorist group Lashkar-e-Taiba have bases all over Pakistan and Afghanistan? And don't they get support from your intelligence service, the ISI?

A: There is a whole alphabet soup of terrorist groups. Pakistan and America's interests vis-à-vis such terrorist groups are aligned. America has withdrawn from Afghanistan. Now we have to focus on the reality, which is that everyone in the region and around the world is concerned about the potential use of Afghan soil for terrorist activities.

Q: Terrorism is having a resurgence in your country. The Pakistani Taliban, the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, has made terrible threats against you and your prime minister recently.

A: You're right, I have been threatened by name by the TTP. I get threats all the time. ... Unfortunately, this is the reality of the world that we live in. There is clarity among the top military and political leadership in Pakistan, and I am confident that we

will be able to overcome these challenges.

Q: How grave a danger is posed by the TTP?

A: They were involved in the most heinous terrorist attacks in my country, including the assassination of my mother, Benazir Bhutto, in 2007, the attack on Malala Yousafzai in 2012, and the terrorist attack on a school in Peshawar in 2014. They carried out a whole host of terrorist attacks. Pakistan has been proud of the fact that we were successful in taking on these terrorists in our territory, the TTP and others, and we managed to break the backbone of these groups. Unfortunately, the government that preceded ours conducted a policy of appeasement toward the Pakistani Taliban.

Q: You mean the government of former prime minister Imran Khan?

A: Yes, he gave them a place to hide. Not only did he release TTP prisoners who were in Pakistan's custody, but Mr. Khan engaged in a dialogue with these forces. He has always been ideologically sympathetic to their point of view.

IHC grants bail to anchor

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) has granted tv anchor Shahid Masood a fourteen day protective bail in an FIR registered against him by Karachi police. Chief Justice Aamer Farooq heard the case filed by Shahid Masood. The petitioner adopted the stance that he wanted to appear before the relevant court in Karachi for relief but there was risk of his arrest by the police.

(Continued on Back Page)



15 dead, 1,096 injured in Punjab road accidents

LAHORE (APP): At least 15 people were killed and 1,096 others injured in 1,085 road traffic crashes (RTCs) in Punjab during the last 24 hours.

As many as 570 seriously injured people were shifted to different hospitals while 526 with minor injuries were treated at the incident site by the rescue medical teams.

The data analysis showed that 567 drivers, 39 underage drivers, 139 pedestrians and 405 passengers were among the victims of the road crashes. The statistics show that 241 accidents were reported in Lahore, which affected 247 persons, placing the provincial capital at top of the list, followed by 96 in Faisalabad with 93 victims and at third Multan with 77 accidents and 65 victims.

According to the data, 899 motorbikes, 71 autorickshaws, 127 motorcars, 30 vans, 16 passenger buses, 25 trucks and 91 other types of vehicles and slow-moving carts were involved in the road accidents.

Shah Enayat Qadari urs starts

LAHORE (APP): The 298th annual urs celebrations of Hazrat Shah Enayat Qadari started here on Friday.

Director General Auqaf Tahir Raza Bukhari inaugurated the urs celebrations while laying a traditional chador on the grave of the saint. He offered Fateha and special due for development, progress and stability of the country and freedom of occupied Kashmir. Auqaf officials and a large number of devotees were also present. The Auqaf Department had allocated special grant for the urs celebrations and lunger. Mehfil-e-sama, Naat Khwani, Quran Khwani are part of the urs celebrations, which would continue till January 22. Ulama and Musheikh will participate in spiritual ceremonies. Lahore police made fool-proof security arrangements for the visitors.

5th book club anniversary

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab University (PU) Library celebrated its 5th Book Club anniversary and arranged book introductory talks. Chief Librarian Dr Muhammad Haroon Usmani, Assistant Professor Dr Shahzeb Khan, faculty members and a large number of students were present.

Two books of the month were "Pothohar: Khata-i-Dilruba" by Shahid Siddique, and "What We Owe to the Future" by William Macaskill. Dr Haroon Usmani presented the talk on the Urdu biography 'Pothohar: Khata-i-Dilruba'.

95pc conservation work on Barkat Ali Islamia Hall completed

LAHORE (APP): The Walled City of Lahore Authority (WCLA) has completed 95 per cent conservation work on Barkat Ali Islamia Hall, situated in Mochi Gate on the main Circular Road of the Walled City. According to a press release, issued here on Friday, the conservation work was assigned to the WCLA by the Ministry of Auqaf and Religious Affairs Department and Government of Punjab, and Rs 16.8 million were allocated for the project.

The press release said the completed task included consolidation of wall cracks and re-plastering, colors and fresco lining, additional stairs for better access to mezzanine floor and restoration of architectural

CM announces Arfa Twin Tower Project

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Chaudhry Parvez Elahi announced Arfa Twin Towers Project in Lahore by laying the foundation stone of another mega project of Punjab.

The CM was given briefing about the Arfa Twin Towers Project. The CM apprised that state-of-the-art Arfa Twin Towers Project will be established on the adjacent land with Arfa Karim IT Park. Initial cost of this project has been estimated at Rs.12 billion, he added.

The CM said that the Punjab government is already constructing a hospital on the old vegetable market land, adding that motive behind Arfa Twin Towers Project is to promote software industry. The software industry will provide employment to the youth. He stated that the 17-storey twin towers will not only provide a shelter for the technology echo system but will also prove to be beneficial in generating a revenue. Offices of national and international companies will be established in Arfa Twin Towers, he added.

The CM highlighted that the technology echo system holds the importance of a backbone for the economy of various countries and underscored that Pakistan cannot afford to lag behind in the IT field, adding that it is his dream that latest facilities like Silicon Valley should be provided in the IT sector.

Yousuf Badozai, Chairman P&D Board, Commissioner Lahore Division,

Secretary Finance, Secretary C&W, DG LDA, Chairman PITB, DG E-Governance, DG IT Solutions, DG Protocol Ansar Nazir and concerned officials were also present on the occasion.

CM condoles demise of PA Secretary's elder brother: Punjab Chief Minister Chaudhry Parvez Elahi has expressed a deep sense of sorrow and grief over the death of an elder brother of Inayatullah Lak Secretary Punjab Assembly. In his condolence message, the CM expressed his heartfelt sympathy and condolence with the bereaved family.

The chief minister stated that he felt heartily grieved over the sad demise of an elder brother of Inayatullah Lak. He prayed that may Allah Almighty rest the departed soul in eternal peace and grant fortitude to the bereaved family members to bear this irreparable loss with equanimity.

CM chairs consultative meeting: Punjab Chief Minister Chaudhry Parvez Elahi chaired a consultative meeting at his office in which Speaker Punjab Assembly Muhammad Sibtain Khan, Senator Shibli Faraz, Raja Basharat, Hashim Jawan Bakht and Mehmood-ul-Hassan were present. The participants exchanged views about the nomination of caretaker chief minister and the political situation.

The chief minister said that the nomination for the caretaker chief minister was made with an open heart, in the best interest of the nation.

DC reviews performance of polio drive

LAHORE (APP): Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ali on Friday presided over a meeting to review performance regarding an anti-polio drive started on Jan 16.

The week-long drive had been launched to administer polio drops to more than two million children under the age of five years in the provincial capital.

The additional deputy commissioners,

assistant commissioners, officials of health department, Metropolitan Corporation Lahore (MCL) and others attended the meeting. The meeting was briefed that around 398,530 children had been administered drops on the fourth day of the drive while total 1.66 million children were administered drops with vitamin-A supplement till date.

7day Pakistan Youth Festival on Jan 23

KARACHI (APP): Arts Council of Pakistan, Karachi is going to kick start Pakistan Youth Festival on January 23 which will continue till January 29.

This was announced in a press conference by renowned intellectual and humorist, Anwar Maqsood, Arts Council President Muhammad Ahmad Shah, and Arts Council Secretary Ijaz Farooqui at Haseena Moin Hall here on Friday.

Ahmad Shah said Arts Council organizes 550 programmes in a year. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the youth festival missed a few episodes, but its now being kick-started on January 23.

The last festival was attended by some 50,000 youth. "Youth are the future of this country and Arts Council has always provided them with opportunities to develop their skills," he added.

He said the prize money for the successful youth in this festival has been increased to 200,000 rupees and those who cannot get the position will be

given a three-year diploma for free.

Ahmad Shah said all the students of the city universities and colleges are invited to participate in this festival. Talented youths, who are not studying at any institution and want to participate in any field, are also welcome. He said from January 23, auditions will be started in the fields, including essay writing, declamation Urdu & workshop, painting, photography, dance, singing, and acting. Various bands and singers including Asim Azhar, Ahmed Jahanzeb, Kaifi Khalil, Wahab Bugti, Natasha Baig, Sahir Ali Baga, Arman Rahim, Afaq Adnan, AUJ, and Kashmir Band will perform at the festival.

Anwar Maqsood said this is the first competition in which migrant youths are also participating.

Appreciating the Arts Council's performance, Maqsood said no matter what the law and order situation was in this city of 30 million people, the council always continued its work of providing opportunities to youth to showcase their skills and talent.



LAHORE: Students and visitors viewing the displayed paintings and different Arts work during the Master of Visual Art Artists exhibition (Degree Show 2022) by National College of Arts.

'PTI have to accept ECP decision on caretaker CM'

LAHORE (APP): Adviser to the Prime Minister on Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan Affairs Qamar Zaman Kaira said on Friday the Election Commission of Pakistan would appoint caretaker setup in Punjab and every party would have to accept it. Addressing a gathering at Pajian Pind near here, he said that provincial elections would be held before general elections.

Commenting on the statement of Pervez Elahi about the ECP, Kaira said that every party would have to accept the decision of Election Commission.

He said there was rule of the constitution which clarified that the ECP would decide about the caretaker chief minister in case the chief minister and the opposition leader failed to reach in consensus

on the name for caretaker CM.

He said the PTI knew its popularity especially after the local bodies elections in Karachi and hoped the PTI would face defeat in the provincial elections.

Kaira claimed that PPP would form government after winning the next general elections.

He said that when the PPP came into power, it gave employment to people and fought Kashmir case.

He said the PPP was a family instead of a political party, adding the PPP gave right to speech to the common man and raised the morale of forces.

He said that Benazir Bhutto Shaheed was a brave lady who did not bow to anyone and accepted martyrdom. Criticizing Imran Khan for telling lies, Kaira said that the

country was weakened during the Imran regime. He said that Imran Khan annoyed Saudi Arabia, UAE, Turkey, China and even Europe.

He said that son of Benazir Shaheed and grandson of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was successfully struggling to boost the image of country.

He said that it was true that inflation had increased, adding that Imran Khan made agreement with the IMF and then broke them which threw the country in the economic crisis. He said, whenever investors started to invest in the country, Imran began creating unrest.

Earlier, he welcomed Rana Dilshad Safdar, Rana Faisal and Rana Nadeem on joining the party.

PPP Lahore president Ch Aslam Gill said on the occasion that Imran Khan had destroyed the country

Pakistan maintaining poppy-free status since 2001: Senate told

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister of State for Interior Abdul Rehman Khan Kanju on Friday informed the Senate that Pakistan was maintaining a poppy free status since 2001, as recognized by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

Responding to the Pakistan Peoples Party's Senator Bahramand Khan Tangi, he said the last drug survey was conducted in 2013 and in this regard, the Bureau of Statistics had been approached to conduct fresh drug use survey in the country.

The minister said they were being partnered by National Institute of Population Studies and funded by UNODC.

True picture of increase

or decrease in the use of drug or prevalence of a particular drug among a particular stratum of society, would be developed based on the concrete figures collected after fresh survey, he added.

He said the government was making all out efforts to control the menace of drugs and presently, there were four rehabilitation centers working in the country.

He said that on supply side control, Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) had made 459.5 tons

seizures which were recognized in the World Drug Report 2022 of UNODC. "Pakistan's efforts are continuing to keep the country and the world safe," he maintained.

He said the ANF consisted of 3,600 employees out of which only 2,200 were operational and maintaining the law enforcement activity across the country including international borders including Iran, Afghanistan and India.

The minister said the

ANF actively performed duties at seaports, dry ports and airports to control drug trafficking. With the inadequate Human Resources, efforts were being made at grass roots level to snub the local drug traffickers/handlers and users, he added.

He said narcotics and psychotropic substances were being used for the manufacturing of medicine and there was a possibility that due to pilferage the same may be used for recreational activities as a drug.

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER PUBLIC HEALTH ENGINEERING DIVISION HAYATABAD PESHAWAR-I

NOTICE INVITING E-BIDDING

(Single stage Two Envelope E-Bidding System)

Public Health Engineering Department Peshawar Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa invites to Bids from eligible firms/contractors in accordance with KPRA Procurement Rules on Single Stage Two Envelop. Post qualification process. Contractors/firms must be registered with Pakistan Engineering Council and Provincial Enlistment Committee.

S.#	Name of Work	Estimated Cost (In Million)	2% Earnest Money with Stamp Duty
A	CONSTRUCTION OF WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION SCHEMES IN KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA ADP NO. 265/210473 (2022-23).		
1	Name of Scheme: SS at UC Lahori, Karimpura and UC Ander Shehr Sub Head: Street Pavement, Drainage System.	9.90	0.217
2	Name of Scheme: SS at UC Aasia, Jehangir Pura and UC Ganj Sub Head: Street Pavement, Drainage System.	9.882	0.217
3	Name of Scheme: SS at UC Wazir Bagh and UC Yakatoot-I Sub Head: Street Pavement, Drainage System.	9.946	0.218
4	Name of Scheme: SS at UC Yakatoot-II and UC Yakatoot-III Sub Head: Street Pavement, Drainage System.	9.930	0.218
5	Name of Scheme: SS at Kakshal-I and UC Kakshal-II Sub Head: Street Pavement, Drainage System.	9.843	0.216
6	Name of Scheme: SS at Kafoor Dheri, Panam Dheri & Joggani. Sub Head: Street Pavement, Drainage System.	12.667	0.273
7	Name of Scheme: SS at Ghari Sherdad, Shahi Bala, Mathra & Chaghar Marti. Sub Head: Street Pavement, Drainage System.	17.463	0.369

INSTRUCTIONS TO BIDDERS

- Bid Solicitation Documents can be obtained from the office of undersigned on any working day by depositing a sum of Rs. 2,000/- PKR (CDR) as 'non-refundable' in the name of Executive Engineer PHE Division Peshawar-1 from the date of publication of this advertisement in the newspaper till the last date of submission of bidding documents.
- The interested firm/contractor must submit technical bid and financial bid in separate sealed envelopes, clearly marked as 'Technical Proposal' and 'Financial Proposal'.
- Technical proposal must contain information as required/explained in Bid Solicitation Documents.
- Pre bid meeting is scheduled to held on **31-01-2023, 11:30 AM** at office of the Executive Engineer PHE Division Peshawar-I Plot No. 40 Sector B-II Phase-V Hayatabad Peshawar.
- Financially bids shall be submitted electronically through E-bidding not later than **14 February 2023 up to 12:00 Noon**. The 'Technical Proposal' shall be opened by Procurement Committee in the presence of firms/contractor, or their authorized representative who opt to be present, on the same day at **12:30 PM**. Date of financial bid opening shall be intimated accordingly.
- Bidders shall submit tender form fee i.e. 0.03% of the engineer estimate in the shape of Call Deposit Receipt (CDR) before closing date.
- The contractor/bidder must quote their bids as per KPRA Notification rules 2014 No. SRO(14)/Vol: 1-24/2021-22 dated: 10-05-2022.
- All other terms and conditions shall remain intact as per guidelines and rules framed/issued/notified by Provincial Government and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Public Procurement Regulatory Authority.
- Scan copy of call deposit of 2% earnest money may be upload on E-Bidding system. In case call deposit submitted at E-Bidding system is at variance to that submitted in hard copy, the bid shall be termed as non responsive.
- The advertisement is also available on KPRA website.
- The bidder must be registered with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority.

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EXECUTIVE ENGINEER

PHE DIVISION PESHAWAR-I, Phone No. 091-9217511

GOVERNMENT OF KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA SMALL INDUSTRIES DEVELOPMENT BOARD KOHAT ROAD PESHAWAR

NOTICE FOR INVITING REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Small Industries Development Board intends to engage consulting firms for providing consultancy services for the following Project to be executed through sale proceed of plots.

S.No.	Name of Project	Type of Consultancy Services
01	Establishment of Industrial Park Peshawar (IPP).	Full Time Construction supervision of construction of Main Gate, Roads, Bridge, Weighing Station, Drains, Culverts, Water Supply, Sewerage, Drainage System, Office Block, Tube Well, O/H Water Reservoirs, Landscaping & Flood Protection Work etc.

- Request for proposal (RFP) are invited from all approved/shortlisted consultant of (i.) KP-C&W, PEC & PCATP or (ii.) PEC and PCATP, who have renewed PEC/C&W and PCATP registration for the year 2022-23.
- A firm/Joint venture will be selected for the services under quality cum cost-based selection (QCBS) method under the procedure /criteria described in the RFP / Bid Solicitation Document/KPPRA Rules.
- They are invited to submit a comprehensive technical proposal in English (original + one copy) and a financial proposal (original + one copy) in separate sealed envelopes, for the services required under the terms of reference (TOR's) on or before **14-02-2023, till 02:00 P.M.**
- RFP/Bid Solicitation documents/TOR's are available in SIDB Directorate of Implementation and can be obtained on any working day during office hours at least three days before the closing date on cash payment of Rs. 3000/- (Non-refundable).
- All taxes will be admissible including withholding tax on services by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority (KPRA) as per prevailing regulations and notifications by the Government from time to time. The firms/Consultant/JV (both the firms) must be registered with KPRA in active status and a copy of the Consultant registration with KPRA must be attached with Technical Proposal.
- Incomplete/conditional bid(s) with unattested cutting/overwriting will not be accepted. Technical Bids will be opened on the same day i.e., **14-02-2023 at 02:30 P.M.** by the Consultant Evaluation/Procurement Committee in office of the Dy. Managing Director (Imp) in presence of the concerned consultants/their representatives who opt to attend. Financial Bids of the technically qualified bidders will be opened on the nearest possible date (to be intimated accordingly) in presence of the bidders or their representatives.
- The notice for inviting RFP is also available at KPRA website (www.kppra.gov.pk) and SIDB official website (www.sidb.kp.com).
- The Competent Authority reserves the right to accept/reject any or all the bids by assigning cogent reason as per KPRA Rules.

Managing Director

SIDB, Kohat Road Peshawar

INF(P) 284/23

آشہار بنیام: بجوارالت حرم قبرین نوید صلیبہ ڈسٹرکٹ اینڈ سیشن جیج، نیچرل گیس کوٹ-9، خیبر پختونخوا پشاور
فیڈرل جیڈ پی سی کیسٹس فیئر جیج، تجارت آباد پشاور
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PESHAWAR: Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mahmood Khan chairing a progress review meeting on Dir Motorway project.

Govt urged to supply electricity, gas to industries at low-cost

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Industrialists have demanded of the government to ensure low-cost and uninterrupted electricity and gas supply to manufacturing units to promote industrialization. Besides, the manufacturers also called for prompt steps to resolve the Letter of Credits (LCs) issue owing to which process of industrialization is near to complete halting.

These issues were taken up during the visit of Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ghulam Ali to Industrial Estate Hayatabad Peshawar, which he had paid on invitation of Industrialists Association Peshawar (IAP) Malik Imran Ishaq, said in a press release issued here on Friday. Governor KP Ghulam Ali and Mayor Peshawar Zubair Ali were received on lunch by President IAP Malik Imran Ishaq and Group leader Ghazanfar Bilour on behalf of IAP.

Malik Imran Ishaq, the association president in his opening remarks raised various issues of industrialists, which mostly related to electricity and gas, as well as collection of fixed billing charges, quarter tariff adjustment in power bills, etc. KP is producing natural gas in surplus quantity and new discoveries of gas were also reported in the province, the association chief said.

He added that the people of KP have first right to fully exploit natural gas under the constitutional article 158-A, despite the fact that electricity is being not supplied to industrial, commercial

and domestic consumers fully and at cheap rates. Similarly, he raised concern over fixed billing charges and quarter tariff adjustment in power bills, saying that KP is also self-sufficient in electricity production but electricity was unavailable to industrial and commercial consumers in the province.

The IAP president asked to immediately halt fixed billing charges and collection quarter tariff adjustment besides ensuring provision of cheap and uninterrupted power supply to industries. Ghazanfar Bilour while speaking on the occasion took up the issue Letter of Credits (LCs) before Governor KP, saying that the process of industrialisation is near to stagnation owing to non-opening of LCs issue. Besides, he added an unprecedented increase was also seen in the cost of industrial production.

A large number of goods trucks have been stuck up at Karachi port owing to non-opening of LCs, and heavy demurrage charges were being collected on daily basis, because of which industrialists have been faced with financial as well as production losses, Bilour informed. Former FPCCI president raised the question: How would the industries flourish when the process of export is being halted? He said industrialists have been forced to shut their units owing the prevailing circumstances.

Malik Imran Ishaq urged the the Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to lead their community as a representative. "If the issues were not resolved

amicably under your leadership then manufacturers would be compelled to stop production units due to unaffordable huge financial losses," the association chief added. Governor KP Ghulam Ali, assured the IAP president and industrialists that he would take up their issues at the central level efficiently and would make all possible efforts to resolve them promptly.

He invited the IAP president to come to Governor House and requested him to help them in writing letters to the central government regarding industrialists' matters and issues. Ghulam Ali, on the occasion assured that he will take up issues of industrialists in an upcoming meeting in Islamabad with federal ministers and relevant senior officials.

Mayor Peshawar Zubair in his remarks said assured to take up the issues of manufacturers related to provincial government with the relevant departments for an amicable resolution. Senior vice president of IAP, Ayub Zakori, vice president Ghulam Mohyy-ud-Din and Executive Members IAP, President SCCI Muhammad Ishaq, Fazal Elahi, Ex-Presidents IAP Malik Niaz Ahmed, Zarak Khan, Ex-Presidents SCCI Zahid Shinwari, Faiz Muhammad Faizi, Sherbaz Bilour, Hussnain Khurshid, Secretary General IAP and all member industries of IAP attended the event along with Ex-Senators and MNAs were present during the luncheon hosted by IAP in honour of Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Performance of CEO KP-EZDMC lauded

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chairman, Pak Steel Muhammad Aslam Farid and other industrialists from Industrial community of Hattar Economic Zone and Special Economic Zone have lauded the performance and initiatives began by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zones Development & Management Company (KP-EZDMC) under the leadership of Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Javed Iqbal Khattak, said a press release issued here on Friday.

In this connection a reception organized by the Chairman Pak Steel/Farid Steel in Hattar appreciated the positive and proactive role of the CEO KP-EZDMC saying the initiatives taken by him reflect the journey that started in 1940s and 60s with the inception of their first unit in Rawalpindi and Hattar and the troubles they had to undergo at that time.,

However, they appreciated the role KPEZDMC, particularly during last three years, towards the facilitation of the industrialists, and towards Ease of Doing Business, that has remained a hallmark of KP-EZDMC under his leadership. Members Board of Directors (BoD Mr. Hassan Farid, Zahid Shinwari, Muhammad Tayyab Swati, Inam Mughal and Sahibzada Salim urRehman along with other prominent and distinguished industrialists from Hattar, and dignitaries were also present on the occasion.

Speaking on the occasion, the CEO KP-EZDMC Javed Iqbal Khattak extended his gratitude for the continued support received from the industrialist community and termed Hattar as one of the top three industrial hubs of Pakistan, that has remained as backbone of the industry in Khyber Pakhtunkwa. He told that the company plans to

acquire additional 110 acres of land adjacent to the Special Economic Zone for expansion, which would enable the new and existing projects to expand their existing facilities. Hattar being in the proximity of Federal Capital Islamabad, and more importantly on CPEC route has significant potential to attract domestic and foreign industrial interests.

Khattak also spoke about the new five (5) new economic zones that are being worked at for launching to be launched within 12 to 18 months that would bring the total number of Economic Zones to nineteen (19) in the province. Guests and dignitaries also visited Hattar Special Economic to review progress on development, and the colonization in the Zone. He further expressed satisfaction and also appreciated the efforts of KP-EZDMC for rapid industrialization in the province.

Doctors protest against brutality of ASI police

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Young Doctors Association KP have recorded a peaceful protest against the alleged police brutality of Prof. Sikandar Hayat of Orthopedic Ward in Khyber Teaching Hospital.

Spokesman of YDA KP, Dr Faisal Barakzai told media persons that doctors protested against the alleged bullying of Assistant Sub Inspector Asif Ali in civilian clothes in the hospital. Doctors have given the following demand to the administration and IG Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and gave an ultimatum of 48 hours.

They said the official involved in the incident should be suspended and expelled from the premises of the hospital and DSP should also be transferred. A departmental first information report (FIR) should be lodged against ASI, they urged police high-up. Representatives of YDA KP threatened that if their demands were not fulfilled they would boycott elective services by Monday in government hospitals, Dr Faisal said, adding YDA is a representative organization in the entire province that will not compromise on the rights and honor of doctors.

CCPO visits chowkis

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Keeping in view the prevailing security situation, the Capital City Police Officer (CCPO), Mohammad Ijaz Khan visited Chowkis and check posts of far-flung localities, said a press release issued here on Friday. Concerned police officers also accompanied during the visit.

Talking to police officers during the visit, the CCPO said that the morale of the police personnel is high and ready for combating any situation. He said that terrorists would be given tit-for-tat responses at every front. He said security has been put on alert across the district and after terrorists' attacks, Capital City Police and security agencies have further accelerated targeted search operations in various localities of the city. Similarly, he said that the strict surveillance of the suspects is being carried out at especially established checkpoints at all entries and exits of the city allowing entry to suspects vehicles and persons after passing through complete scrutiny.



PESHAWAR: PPP workers in a group photo with Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Poverty Alleviation Faisal Karim Kundi at BISP office.

Reforms vital before holding fresh polls: ATP

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: As political parties are flexing their muscles to participate in likely snap elections in the country after dissolution of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab Assembly in a synchronized manner.

Have these political parties made initiatives for making legislation to block way of rigging and remove use of pressure and humiliation of public mandate vote?, Muhammad Faiq Shah, chairman of Amun Taraqqi Party (ATP), raised this question ahead of likely conducting of fresh elections, said in a statement issued on Friday.

Shah said reforms are imperative before holding snap elections in the country. He made it clear that electoral exercise sans reforms will produce the same results which were seen over the past several decades. The ATP chief

voiced concern over resurgence of terrorist activities and increasing lawlessness in Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the rest of the country.

He paid rich tribute to four security personnels who embraced martyrdom during a cross-border attack from Iran in Chukab, Panjgur, Balochistan. There was no precedence in the world of sacrifices being rendered by Pakistan's security forces in war against terrorism and extremism and efforts to make the whole region a cradle of peace, Shah remarked.

He asked the world to recognize these unmatched sacrifices of Pakistan. While commenting on the reportedly deferment of a \$1.1b loan to Pakistan by the World Bank, the party chief called it as a result of 'flawed' policies and ill-planning of the incumbent government.

He, however, said it is a matter of great satisfaction that Governor State Bank of Pakistan Jameel Ahmad had hinted about likely improvement in dollar inflow from next week that would help shore up the central bank's rapidly depleting foreign exchange reserves. Shah again emphasized that initiatives should be taken to exploit indigenous untapped natural resources, besides to bring improvement on trade, industries and agriculture and other potential sectors to avert the country's default-like situation.

"We have already given a holistic reforms agenda and forwarded to government and relevant stakeholders, "If the proposed strategy would be implemented that could remove rigging, beside use of pressure tactics would be eliminated and to ensure conduct of election in a fair and impartial manner."

Power suspension notified

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar Electric Supply Company (Pesco) on Friday notified that due to maintenance work power supply will remain suspended from 132 KV Jamrud Grid Station on 21st, 24th, 28th and 31st January from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. resultantly consumers of 11 KV Hayatabad 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, New Hayatabad, Health Care Hospital, Health Excellence North West Hospital, Kidney Center, RMI, Gulabad, PIC, Mohmand Steel, Northern Bottling, Hayatabad Surgical Hospital, Peshawar General Health Net Hospital, Shahkas 1 feeders will face inconvenience.

It said that power supply will also remain suspended from 132 KV Hayatabad Phase 7 Grid Station on 21st, 24th, 28th and 31st January from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. resultantly consumers of 11 KV Hayatabad 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, Hayatabad Old, Deans Heights, Shaukat Khanam, Hayatabad 4, PC Hotel, Frontier Caramix, Frontier Green wood, Cell Wood, Khyber 1, 2 feeders will face inconvenience.

The power supply will remain suspended from 132 KV Bannu Grid Station on 21st, 22nd and 23rd January from 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. resultantly consumers of 132 KV Bannu, Meer Ali, Meran Shah, Razmak, Kohat and 66 KV Kuam Ghari grid connected with 11 KV feeders will face inconvenience. The power supply will remain suspended from 132 KV Dalazak Grid Station on 21st and 26th January from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. resultantly consumers of 11 KV Pakha Gulam and Gulabad feeders will face inconvenience.

Murderer gets death on two counts in Khyber

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Sessions Court of Khyber district awarded death sentence on two counts to an accused for killing his sister and neighbor, police said on Friday.

Announcing the verdict in a double murder case of 13 November 2013, the

Sessions Court Judge, Hidayat Ullah Khan awarded death sentence on two counts and imposed a fine of Rs one million on accused Farooq for killing his sister and neighbor, Adnan over suspension that both had illicit relations.

The case was followed by the police in the court

with substantial evidence against the accused. Public Prosecutor, Shafiullah Khan proceeded the case on behalf of the police. After circumstantial evidence and confession by the accused, the court awarded the death sentence on two counts and a fine of Rs one million on the accused.



PESHAWAR: JI nominated candidate for Deputy Mayor Nasira Ibadat addressing a press conference.

PTI loses footing after prematurely dissolving KP, Punjab assemblies

PESHAWAR (APP): Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf (PTI) has apparently lost its footing after prematurely dissolving the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab assemblies as the party would now face a daunting challenge of mobilizing voters for the upcoming general election after shattering their confidence and leaving the province in a very difficult economic and post-flood situation.

The dissolution of the KP assembly where PTI enjoyed power for the last 10 years was being considered a big 'political blunder' by experts, who strongly believed that the party that came into power with the 'slogan of change' in 2013, would face great difficulty to regain power after leaving hundreds of thousands of flood victims alone and helpless besides poor service delivery and development work.

"Instead of sitting with the government for political dialogue for electoral reforms and strengthening the economy ahead of general elections, the PTI leadership has taken an illogical step by dissolving two provincial assemblies for which Imran Khan would pay a heavy price in the 2023 election," said Wajid Ali Khan, former Provincial Minister and Awami National Party (ANP) leader while talking to APP on Friday.

He said it would have been better for PTI leaders to use the proper forum of parliament and assemblies for the fulfillment of their early election demands rather than prematurely

dissolving the assemblies of KP and Punjab against the wishes and aspirations of the people.

Following the KP Governor's signature on the assembly dissolution summary by CM KP Mahmood Khan's cabinet all provincial ministers, advisers, and special assistants stand dissolved and cease to hold offices while the process of caretaker setup was started in the province for which the KP Governor had already written a letter asking CM KP and Opposition Leader Ikram Durrani to nominate a candidate for caretaker CM slot.

He said that it would have been better for PTI to help over 33 million people marooned by last year's summer's floods and rebuilding of their destroyed homes rather than wasting economic resources in the snap polls. Wajid Ali said the tenure of the present government would come to an end in August this year and the national general elections have to be held within three months after the completion of the mandatory period of the national assembly, Sindh and Balochistan assemblies. "Let the people of Pakistan decide about the fate of political parties on the basis of their election programs and past performance during the 2023 elections."

He said it was extremely unfortunate that yet another KP Assembly and Chief Minister did not complete his constitutional five-year term and CM Mahmood Khan has sacked his own government despite enjoying a

two-third majority to please Imran Khan. Hamaza Khan, PMLN Nowshera President said the dissolution of provincial assemblies showed that Imran Khan was unnerved after his corrupt practices were exposed in PTI's foreign funding and Tosha Khana cases by ECP.

"The double standard politics of PTI leaders were badly exposed before masses after resignations of PTI MNAs and they would now face people's wrath in the upcoming general elections, especially in KP and Punjab." Hamza Khan said Imran Khan had neither fulfilled the promise of construction of five million houses nor provided jobs to 10 million people and did not honor his promises of converting PM and Governor Houses into public universities and libraries.

He said a billion trees afforestation project was taken over by the NAB exposing PTI's tall claims of good governance while the construction cost of Arbab Niaz International Stadium at Peshawar and Kalam cricket ground in Swat was increased manifolds due to long delay in work during PTI's tenure. Professor Dr. AH Hilali, former Chairman Political Science Department, at the University of Peshawar said the dissolution of the KP assembly was beyond his understanding as CM Mahmood Khan's government was enjoying two third majority having still eight months left in his five years constitutional tenure. He said PTI's decision to dissolve KP

assembly would have serious political repercussions in the province's politics in the future.

"Pakistan has a long history of political intolerance where losing parties and candidates leveled serious rigging allegations against winning parties, which either led to premature dissolution of the national and provincial assemblies or mid-term election besides derailment of democracy four times in the past," he said. Recalling the government of former Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, he said the government of the founder chairman of PPP was overthrown after the nine religious-political parties of the joint opposition from the platform of Pakistan National Alliance (PNA) had launched a mass agitation movement claiming electoral fraud and systematic rigging during 1977 general election.

"PNA had launched an agitation movement after it bagged only 36 seats while PPP secured landslide victory with 155 seats and one seat was bagged by PML (Qayyum) and eight seats by independent candidates in total 200 seats of the Parliament during 1977 general election." Despite the strong denial of the rigging allegations by PPP, he said PNA's agitation movement sparked riots and unrest in the country after massive demonstrations and violent anti-Bhutto protests, and later democracy was derailed for a third time on July 5, 1977.

Citing another example of political

intolerance, Dr. Hilali said the elected governments of PPP and PMLN had been dismissed on allegations of corruption and rigging in elections during 1988-1999 and its negative outcome came before us in the shape of October 12, 1999, martial law. The nation still remembered the 2014 aimless sit-in staged by PTI Chairman Imran Khan and Pakistan Awami Tahrik (PAT) Chairman, Dr Tahirul Qadri who accused PMLN of rigging in the 2013 general election and not accepting each other's mandates.

PTI and PAT's allegations were later rejected by the high-powered commission led by former Chief Justice of Pakistan, Nasirul Mulk who declared that the 2013 elections were organized and conducted fairly and transparently in accordance with the law and constitution. The Commission had also ruled that PTI's request for a probe was not justified. Dr. Hilali said KP has a long history where the majority of Chief Ministers could not complete their five years terms due to political intolerance. The province's first CM Dr. Khan Sahib (March 8, 1946, to March 22, 1947), and other chief ministers including Sardar Abdul Rashid Khan (April 23, 1953, to July 18, 1955), Sardar Bahadar Khan (July 19, 1955, to October 13, 1955), Maulana Mufi Mahmood (May 1, 1972, to February 12, 1973) and Sardar Inayatullah Khan Gandapur (April 29, 1973, to February 16, 1975) could not com-

plete their five years tenure mainly due to political intolerance and not accepting each other mandates.

He said former Chief Ministers Nasurullah Khattak, Muhammad Iqbal Jadoon, Arbab Muhammad Jehangir Khan, Aftab Ahmed Khan Sherpao, Mir Afzal Khan, and Pir Sabir Shah had failed to complete their constitutional tenure. The latest victim of political tolerance was Chief Minister Mahmood Khan, who could not complete his five-year term despite enjoying a two-thirds majority and dissolving his own assembly a few days ago. Former Chief Ministers Akram Khan Durrani (November 30, 2002, to October 11, 2007, of JUIF) Amir Haider Khan Hoti (March 31, 2008, to Marcy 20, 2013 of ANP), and Pervaz Khattak (May 31, 2013, to June 6, 2018) of PTI completed their five years term.

The experts said most political parties were contesting elections to form a strong government on the basis of a powerful parliament to implement its election manifestos, fulfill promises made with electorates, and make legislations in the country's interest rather than prematurely dissolve the assemblies. They expressed the hope that the political parties including those in government and opposition would shun political differences and sit together for a broad-based and inclusive political dialogue for electoral reforms ahead of the general election and take the country out of existing difficult challenges.



In brief

Couple killed as roof collapses F.P. Report

KHAR: Man and wife killed when roof of their house collapsed due to cylinder blast in Tehsil Khar of Bajaur tribal district. According to Rescue 1122, a man, Zabihullah and his wife was killed when roof of their house buckled in due to a gas cylinder blast in Sadiqabad area of Khar. Their bodies were recovered from rubbles by rescue workers and locals by hectic efforts. Bodies have been shifted to District Headquarters Hospital for medic-legal formalities.

Missing children in Zamong Kor F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: These children, Abdullah Omar, Shahid Omar, Ali Omar and Nasir Omar, who are about twelve years old, live in Zamong Kor, Charsadda Road, Peshawar. It is emphasized to the heirs that they are staying at Zamong Kor Institute Charsadda Road Peshawar on court orders. Peshawar: 091-933-1937. Child Protection and Welfare Commission: 091-9217055. Helpline: 1121.

WAPDA union hold protest Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: The Wapda hydro electric union staged a protest against the privatization of the profit-earning organization, and new inductions of staff without pensions. The protesters from urban and rural marched from Happy Valley to the martyrs square where the leaders addressed them. They raised slogans against the government for following the guidelines of the IMF. A statement issued here on Friday said that speaking on the occasion the provincial deputy chairman, Younis Shah, divisional chairman, Badshah Khan, and Farman Shah totally rejected political appointments. They also termed the tariff increase directed by the IMF which was detrimental both for Pesco and the consumers.

Five Jhelum girls go missing

JEHLUM (INP): Five girls were allegedly abducted in different incidents in Jhelum during a week police sources said on Friday. The girls were 17 to 20 years old, police said. Alisha, Saira Salim, Pakeeza, Kareena, and Asma were among the kidnapped girls, they added. The police announced a reward of Rs50,000 for the recovery of Pakeezah, 20, Jhelum District Police Officer (DPO) Dr Fahad said that two suspects had been arrested and investigation was underway. "All the girls will be recovered soon," he pledged.

Three killed in road mishaps

CHINIOT (INP): At least three people were killed and 16 others including women injured in various road accidents in different localities of Chiniot, police said on Friday. Due to over speeding a motorcycle rammed into a truck moving ahead in Chiniot city resultantly Ilyas was critically injured but later succumbed to his wounds in hospital. Driver of trailer while reversing the vehicle crushed to death a motorcyclist identified as Muhammad Zafar. Another motorcyclist Muhammad Riaz was killed after hit by a dumper in suburbs of Chiniot. Meanwhile, 16 people including five women were reported injured in various road accidents in different localities of Chiniot. The bodies and injured were shifted to different hospitals and police after registering separate cases at concerned police stations started investigations.



JAMRUD: People offering dua after funeral prayer of a constable martyred in Jamrud blast. - F.P. photo

Upper Balochistan frigid in sub-zero temp

QUETTA (INP): Upper Balochistan is still receiving snowfall which has again disrupted several link roads in Chaman Kozak Top, Muslim Bagh, Ziarat and other upper areas in the province. Besides this, rain on Friday soaked many areas in Punjab including Lahore and Gujranwala, making weather nippy.

The roads in Chaman which were cleared for traffic a few days ago, have again been closed due to heavy snowfall. Quetta Chaman Highway has been closed for traffic owing to heavy snowfall in Chaman Kozak Top. Besides this, Muslim Bagh Ziarat, Chaman Sheela Bagh, Khawaja Imran Khanzuzai and Toba Achakzai roads have been shut after these areas received severe snowfall and rain.

There are reports that many people have been

trapped in Chaman Toba Achakzai, Toba Kakri, and Ziarat Luiband. Apart from this, many plain areas of Punjab which were in the grip of cold and dry weather for the last several days, received showers on Friday. The rain has added to the chill. The upper areas of the country are already receiving sleet and snow.

The silver snow has covered the whole of Murree giving it a spectacular white look. According to the Metrological Department's forecast, rain with thunder and lightning is expected at a few places in Upper Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Kashmir, Gilgit Baltistan, North Punjab and North Balochistan and snowfall in the mountains on Friday.

The Met Office has predicted that westerly winds are affecting North Balochistan which will

cover the upper areas from January 21 (night) and will continue intermittently till January 25. However, the weather in the last 24 hours has been extremely cold and dry in most parts of the country. However, rain was recorded at a few places in Balochistan, Upper Sindh and South/Central Punjab. Highest rainfall (mm): Baluchistan: Gwadar 25, Jiwani 21, Pasni 17, Turbat 11, Kalat 08, Panjgur 07, Quetta (Samingli 03, Sheikh Manda 01), Zhob 05, Sindh: Jacobabad 03, Sukkur 01, Punjab: 01 mm rain was recorded in Khanpur. The minimum temperature recorded today: Astur, Leh, Skardu minus 12, Kalam minus 10, Gopur minus 09, Bagrot minus 07, Malam Jabba minus 06, Ziarat, Parachinar, Deer minus 05 and Saydu Sharif recorded minus 04 degrees Celsius.

RDO chief shares report on budget transparency

F.P. Report

BUNER: The Chairman RDO Hakim Zada on Friday shared the CPDI prepared 3rd annual report with media persons at RDO office in Karapa Buner. The CPDI KP Coordinator Shansul Hadi and TMO Daggar attended. Besides the RDO male female members the civil societies heads the elected male female councilors largely participated.

He shared report based deficiencies during budget making for federal and provinces and demanded that proposals must share with citizen groups, stakeholders and departments so as their say and issues included in the budget for justice based distribution of

the national resources and help improve health education potable water and lively hood.

Hakum Zada claimed that CPDI for the decade was enhancing civil societies capacity for input in making budgeting process transparent. Hakim Zada elaborated as per CPDI report last year 150 applications were moved from citizens to departments to know about their participation and transparency but to no response on time that's disappointing.

Hakim Zada further shared that in budget making process the citizens participation ratio in the KP number on top, Punjab 2nd, Sindh 3rd, Baluchistan 4th and Federation at the end.

Hakim Zada shared demands list included removing hurdle and access to information, ensuring implementation this law that would help enhance budget transparency, increasing discussion period on budget proposals, legitimacy to citizens recommendations besides sharing information to make sure a transparent policy.

The special invitees the CPDI KPK Co ordinator Shamsul Hadi the TMO Daggar Amin Khan shared valued informations while the BPC GS A Abid Bunery assured supporting bridging between public and departments in the process of making budget public friendly and transparent.

Admn holds moot to conduct census F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: A gathering was organized in jirga hall, Landi Kotal to thoroughly discuss smoothly conducting a nationwide census (population and housing) to be scheduled from February 1st till 4th of March, 2023.

The moot was headed by Assistant Commissioner, Landi Kotal Irshad Mohmand while Assistant Additional Commissioner Rameez Ali Shah, district Khyber census head Shabeer Khan besides elders, councillors and members of civil society participated in it. The officials urged the attendants to convey the residents to take active part in the national interest activity as all the development funds and other facilities were provided keeping in view output of the census.

They called upon the elites and social mobilizers to educate the citizens pertaining to the importance of census and play their due role to carry out census successfully in the area. The participants assured the administrative officers that they would extend every possible help to conduct the census. The first census took place in Pakistan in 1951. A national census is mandatory by the Constitution of Pakistan to be held every ten years however since 1951 it has been only conducted six times (1961, 1972, 1981, 1998 and 2017).

Swat police arrest car-lifter Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: Swat Police arrested a car-lifter and recovered a stolen car during a successful operation against him, said a press release issued here on Friday.

According to details, Police Station Chapparyal received information of the lifting of an unregistered Axim Corolla X car, which prompted the District Police Officer (DPO) Shafiqullah Khan Gandapur to form a police team comprising DSP Matta Ghaniur-Rehman, SHO Chapparyal and other police officers to trace the accused and recover the stolen vehicle.

Using professional expertise, the SHO Police Station Chapparyal recovered the stolen vehicle within an hour and also the accused Sharifullah son of Mohammad Hayat Mubarak Shah, resident of Chapparyal. Further investigations from the accused were in progress.

Relief items distributed F.P. Report

QUETTA: Senator Samina Murtaz Zehri on Friday distributed relief items among the flood victims in the Uthal area of Balochistan. The relief items included ration bags, blankets, clean drinking water, warm clothes, and milk for children.

Speaking on the occasion, she said, "We believe in serving our people regardless of race and color. We will not leave our brothers and sisters alone in this difficult time and will continue to help them as far as possible."

PTI responsible for prevailing crises: Sherpao

F.P. Report

CHARSADDA: Qaumi Watan Party (QWP) Chairman Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao on Friday said the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly was dissolved to pave the way for Imran Khan's return to the power corridors. He was addressing a gathering in Tangi tehsil in the Charsadda district.

Aftab Sherpao said that the people were politically aware and they would not let the PTI come to power again. He said the PTI ruled Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for nine and a half years, but left the province buried under huge loans. He said the dissolution of the KP Assembly showed that this was a selected government and the PTI leaders had no concern for the problems of the people. He said Imran Khan wanted to satisfy his ego and was least bothered

to consider the challenges facing the country.

The QWP leader said the PTI government had been imposed on the country and the province under a conspiracy and the ones, who had helped Imran Khan become the prime minister, were also responsible for the prevailing mess. He maintained that the Pakistan Democratic Movement-led government was striving to revive the economy and to clear the mess left behind by the PTI government.

"The PDM has put its political capital at stake for the sake of the country," he added. He said the country could not afford political instability at this critical juncture, adding that political stability was necessary for economic stability. Aftab Sherpao said now the people would decide the future of the country through the power of their

votes. He said that serving the people was one thing while making claims on the social media was another thing.

He said the wrong policies of the PTI government led to the deteriorating in the law and order in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, adding that terrorism was once again rearing its ugly head in the province.

Holding the PTI responsible for the prevailing crises, he said that Imran Khan and his team ruined the economy and added to the woes of the common people. He said KP produced surplus gas and electricity, but its residents were facing prolonged outages of both the commodities. He said the PTI rulers could not secure the provincial rights. He added the people of the merged districts were also unhappy over the unfulfilled promises.

Awami Tehreek activists take out rally for rights

LARKANA (PPI): The activists of Awami Tehreek (AT), District Larkana, again took out a large rally here on Friday which after marching through various roads culminated at Jinnah Bagh against the passed resolution of the Sindh Assembly to hand over the lands, coastline, oil, coal, gas and power of the Sindh to the federation, and the new committee formed under the leadership of Khurshid Shah to create new provinces, conducting a digital census based on malafide intention and corruption counting foreigners as citizens of Sindh, the high price of flour, bringing an amendment bill in the National Assembly to change the domicile policy by PPP MNA Qadir

Mandukhel and against establishing a special ministry for Kashmiris in Sindh and deporting foreigners from Sindh.

They were holding large banners and party red flags in their hands and were shouting slogans in favour of their just demands. On this occasion, AT senior vice president advocate Sajid Hussain Mahesar, general secretary Tufail Jakhro, Muhammad Khan Chandio, Rajesh Kumar, Abdul Rahman Chandio, central president of Sujag Barira Tehreek Aitzaz Gaincho, Naveed Abbas Kalhor, Farhan Kalhor, Babul Soomro and others said that the Sindh Assembly consisting of landlords and jagirdars has broken the constitution by

passing the resolution to transfer the resources and lands of Sindh to the federal government.

They said that the 18th constitutional amendment has been killed by this resolution. They said that the Sindh Assembly should withdraw this resolution because the resources of Sindh are not the property of the jagirdars sitting in the Sindh Assembly but the collective property of the Sindh people. They said that the Sindh High Court and the Supreme Court should automatically take suo moto notice of this unconstitutional resolution and take legal action against the leaders of the Sindh Assembly who violated the 18th Constitutional Amendment and broke the constitution.



CHARSADDA: Chief of Qaumi Watan Party, Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao addressing party workers at Tangi.

Female Ombudsperson visits RO Multan

Sagib Mushtaq

BAHAWALPUR: Female Ombudsperson Punjab Nabila Hakim Khan visited Regional Office Multan, addressed a seminar at University Law College Bahaudin Zakariya University Multan, she reviewed the facilities in the Office of the Female Ombudsperson and the progress on the petitions.

Nabila Hakim Khan said that the work Women's Ombudsperson Department is playing an important role for the implementation of the law on women's harassment, inheritance rights, regional offices of the ombudsperson's office are being established to give women their rights, so that women can be brought to their doorsteps.

During the visit to the regional office, Commissioner Multan Division Ashfaq Ahmad Chaudhary, Federal Ombudsperson Advisor Mahmood Javed Bhatti, Vice Chancellor Bahaudin Zakaria University Multan Professor Dr. Mansoor Akbar Kundi, Secretary Forests Sarfraz Magi, Secretary Health South Punjab, Secretary Housing South Punjab, Dr. Abdul Saboor of Lodhran Pilot Project, Muhammad Akram Bhatti of Regional Office of Khatoon Ombudsperson and officers from other departments were present.

With the establishment of the regional ombudsperson office, the complaints about the harassment of women and deprivation of property will be solved quickly. He said that in Islam women have the highest honor and dignity. Division Ashfaq Ahmad Chaudhary said that the Property Rights Act is meant to ensure women's share in inheritance and opportunities will be provided to the women of

South Punjab to advance in every field. Strict action will be taken on complaints of sexual harassment in public and private institutions.

Instructions have been issued to all concerned officers in Multan division to cooperate with women ombudsperson for women's rights. Addressing a seminar on property rights and workplace harassment, female ombudsperson Nabila Hakim Khan said that the institution of female ombudsperson is a shield for women against psychological violence, harassment, early marriage and share in property.

Women who are deprived of ownership of property can file a complaint with the ombudsperson. On the direction of the provincial ombudsperson, the concerned deputy commissioner will be bound to conduct an inquiry within 15 days. An order will be issued within 60 days of filing the complaint. The Punjab Women Protection Act has proved to be a milestone in providing a favorable environment for women at the workplace.

Vice Chancellor Bahaudin Zakariya University Multan Professor Dr. Mansoor Akbar Kundi, Principal Gilani Law College Shamsa Fatima Professor Dr. Fawad Rasool, Professor Dr. Bilal and a large number of students also participated in the seminar while addressing the seminar Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Mansoor Akbar Kundi said that to prevent social inequalities, each person has to light the candle of his share. Principal Gilani Law College Shamsa Fatima said that graduates of Gilani Law College have held the positions of Chief Justice and Sessions Judges, Gilani. A large number of female students are studying law in the law college.

Members of Youth Parliament hold protest

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Members of Mardan Youth Parliament here on Friday held protest demonstration against the increasing price-high in the province. The protestors were led by general secretary of Mardan Youth Parliament, Syed Sher Shah Bacha. They were carrying banners and Placards inscribed with criticizing notes against the government for skyrocketing price-high.

The general secretary Syed Sher Shah Bacha and other prominent among the protestors addressed on the occasion. They urged the quarters concerned to take steps for decreasing prices of edible commodities and other items of daily routine. They said that the prices of food items were going out of control of general masses owing to speedy increase in the price-high.

They claimed that poor

were forced to commit suicide due to the price-high as they had to no other option but to end their lives. They blamed that both the government and opposition were busy to fight for gaining power, adding that they were not taking the issue of price-high as serious. They demanded of the relevant stake-holders to take measures to control the price-high as well as maintain the prices of items of daily-routine.



Moscow ready to send mission to Armenia-Azerbaijan border

MOSCOW/TBILISI (Reuters): Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Russia was ready to deploy troops to the Armenia-Azerbaijan border to quell tensions between the two countries, but Yerevan's hardline position had so far prevented it. Tensions have spiralled between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the blockade of the only road giving direct access to the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region from Armenia in recent weeks.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken spoke with Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, and the two discussed steps to restart bilateral talks with Azerbaijan, the US State Department said. Lavrov said Russia was still prepared to send a mission to the region within the framework of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO), a Moscow-led military alliance of which Armenia, but not Azerbaijan, is a member.

But Yerevan's previous insistence on including condemnations of Azerbaijan's behaviour had stood in the way. "We had difficulties related to the situation in Armenia, when our Armenian friends pushed the need to send a CSTO mission to the border with Azerbaijan to ensure some stability there," Lavrov told a news conference.

"We agreed on a document and on the parameters of the mission... but it was not possible to accept it, because Armenia started insisting that the document contain a harsh condemnation of Azerbaijan." Russia is an ally of Armenia, but also strives for good relations with Azerbaijan. The latest stand-off concerns a blockade of the Lachin Corridor linking Armenia to the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

The region is internationally



recognised as part of Azerbaijan but is controlled by its ethnic Armenian majority. It broke away from Baku's control in a war in the late 1980s and early 1990s, as the Soviet Union was disintegrating. In his call with the Armenian prime minister, Blinken "expressed deep concern for the worsening humanitarian situation in Nagorno-Karabakh, resulting from the blockade of the Lachin corridor," the State Department said. State Department spokesperson Ned Price said he expected Blinken to speak to Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev in the coming days.

Azerbaijanis who say they are environmental activists have blocked the road for more than a month

in what they say is a dispute over illegal Armenian mining. Yerevan says they are government-backed agitators. The impasse is being seen as a test of Russia's ability to calm hostilities in its backyard. Officials in Armenia have grown increasingly angry at Moscow's refusal to use its peacekeeping force in the region to end the blockade, while Moscow has criticised Armenia's attempts to have the European Union broker a settlement. "Despite the fact that we are allies... Armenia prefers to negotiate with the European Union," Lavrov said. He said any EU presence in the region without Baku's consent would be counter-productive.

US will resume border wall construction

SAN DIEGO (AP): The Biden administration agreed to lower part of a border wall planned in the southwest corner of the continental United States, advocates said, dismissing the concession as a token gesture. Opposition prompted a construction pause in August at Friendship Park, which was inaugurated in 1971 by then-first lady Pat Nixon as a symbol of ties between the US and Mexico. For decades, visitors to the oceanfront park between San Diego and Tijuana could easily converse and touch, but access gradually diminished from the US over the last 15 years.

After public feedback, US Customs and Border Protection agreed to lower a double wall for 60 feet (18.3 meters), about the length of a tractor-trailer, said the Rev. John Fanestil of Friends of Friendship Park. In that section, the height will dip to 18 feet (5.5 meters) from 30 feet (9.1 meters). CBP didn't respond to questions about the revised design. But it said in a news release that it "developed an approach that meets the border security needs of the area while also addressing feedback from the community." It expects construction to resume early this year and take about six months to complete.

Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas approved the changes, Fanestil said he was told by CBP officials.

Chris Magnus, who was ousted as CBP commissioner in November after less than a year on the job, paused work on the Trump-era contract, saying he wanted to first understand community concerns. The decision comes a week after Mexican President Andres Manuel López Obrador thanked President Joe Biden for building "not even one meter of border wall," which is not entirely true. While Trump built hundreds of miles, Biden has pursued small projects in Texas' Rio Grande Valley; Yuma, Arizona; and San Diego. The San Diego project involves 0.3 mile of double-layer wall that currently rises 18 feet, Fanestil said. Aside from its height, it will be made of tightly spaced steel bollards, which are more difficult to see through than current material.

"The proposal to 'dip' the primary border wall to 18 feet for a small stretch near the center of Friendship Park is a token and inadequate gesture," Friends of Friendship Park said in a statement. CBP agreed leave unchanged a policy to open the outer gate from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. for up to 25 people at a time to converse with people on the Mexican side through a barrier of steel mesh.

Poland reviews security after divers found near key port

WARSAW (AP): Poland's prime minister said that the country was reviewing the supervision of its gas and oil installations and other strategic locations after a weekend incident in which three foreign divers had to be rescued from near a key oil port where they had no authorization to be. Premier Mateusz Morawiecki also said he had requested the secret security services to produce a detailed report on the incident.

Police in northern Poland are facing questions over why they released the three divers rescued from near the Gdansk oil port without conducting a detailed interrogation of them. Security experts say the presence of the divers in the sensitive area of the Gulf of Gdansk last weekend raised concerns, given the high tensions with Russia over its energy deliveries. The divers had Spanish identity documents. According to Polish media, the divers were rescued after they sent a distress message when their unregistered small boat malfunctioned in stormy weather. They were equipped with professional diving gear and said they were looking for amber, but none was found in the boat.

US drops case against NYC cop accused of spying for China

NEW YORK (AP): Charges against a New York City police officer accused of spying on behalf of China were formally dropped after US prosecutors said they uncovered new information that warranted the dismissal. It ended a two-year ordeal for Baimadajie Angwang, a naturalized US citizen born in Tibet, who spent about six months in custody before being granted bail. He had been accused of spying on expatriate Tibetans in New York on behalf of officials at the Chinese consulate in the city.

Outside the federal courthouse in Brooklyn, Angwang, wearing a pin of the American flag on his lapel, thanked his family and his supporters, including those on the city's police force and the US Marine Corps, where he formerly served. During a brief court appearance, prosecutors said they were dropping charges "in the interest of justice." US District Judge Eric Komitee tried to prompt prosecutors to share what they could about their change of mind, but they declined to reveal what new information led them to do so. "The decision was based on all the evidence and information developed," Assistant US Attorney Matthew Hagans told the judge, adding that some of the information were too sensitive in nature to discuss in open court. The prosecution is among several brought by the Justice Department alleging spying for China that have fallen apart in recent years, though the details of Angwang's case differed from the others, which involved academics.

A year ago, federal prosecutors dropped their case against a Massachusetts Institute of Technology professor who had been accused of concealing ties to the Chinese government. In 2021, a judge acquitted a professor at the University of Tennessee who had faced similar charges. Those prosecutions were brought as part of an initiative, begun during the Trump administration but later dropped, to root out economic espionage by Beijing. In Angwang's case, the US attorney's office in Brooklyn had claimed that he began working as an agent for China in 2018 and was secretly supplying information on Tibetans pushing for their homeland's independence from the communist government. It said he had worked to locate potential intelligence sources and identify potential threats to Chinese interests. The government case partly relied on intercepted communications between Angwang and a consulate official — someone Angwang called "big brother" and "boss" — about how to identify dissenters in the independence movement.

There was no allegation that Angwang compromised national security or New York Police Department operations. When prosecutors filed their case in 2020, they

deemed him "the definition of an insider threat." Angwang initially traveled to the United States on a cultural exchange visa at age 17. He overstayed a second visa and eventually sought asylum in the United States, alleging he had been arrested and tortured in China partly because of his Tibetan ethnicity. In court filings, Angwang's attorney said any discussions with the Chinese consulate were meant to curry favor so he could obtain a visa to visit relatives in Tibet.

Beijing had called the case "pure fabrication." After proceedings, Angwang's attorney, John Carman, said his client was "innocent from the very beginning." "As an American, he is a great one," Carman told reporters. Angwang, 36, has worked at an NYPD precinct in Queens as a community liaison. His lawyer said they were still considering how to proceed to get him reinstated to the police force. After gaining asylum, Angwang became a Marine and served in Afghanistan before being honorably discharged, according to court papers filed by his attorney. Angwang went on to join the Army Reserve and the NYPD, earning a "Cop of the Month" award at his precinct in September 2018, according to the court filing. He is currently suspended, with pay from the NYPD, the department said. The US Army Reserve said Angwang was "administratively separated" on Jan. 21, 2021, but it didn't specify why. It said federal law allows some discharged reservists to reenter on a case-by-case basis.

US authorities continue to hunt for China's operatives. Last fall, federal authorities in New York charged seven people, including five in China, with what they said was a campaign of harassment against a Chinese national and his family living in the US to force him to return home. The US attorney's office alleged the threats and harassment continued for years and were part of "Operation Fox Hunt," characterized by the FBI as an illegal global effort by China to locate and repatriate alleged fugitives who flee to foreign countries.

In another case, two suspected Chinese intelligence officers were charged with attempting to obstruct a US criminal investigation of Chinese tech giant Huawei by offering bribes to someone they thought could provide inside information. Tibet has been an especially sensitive issue for communist China. China says Tibet has historically been part of its territory since the mid-13th century, and China's ruling Communist Party has governed the Himalayan region since 1951. But many Tibetans say they were effectively independent for most of their history and that Beijing wants to exploit their resource-rich region while crushing their cultural identity.

US SC declines to block New York gun curbs

WASHINGTON (Reuters): The US Supreme Court turned away a challenge by a group of firearms dealers in New York to numerous Democratic-backed measures adopted by the state last year regulating gun purchases that the businesses said hurt their businesses.

The justices, with no public dissents, denied a request by the dealers to block the laws, some of which imposed gun safety requirements on retailers, while their appeal of a lower court's decision in favor of New York proceeds.

The state's Democratic-led legislature passed some of the laws last June. Others were adopted in July after the Supreme Court the prior month struck down New York's limits on carrying concealed handguns outside the home in a landmark ruling expanding gun rights. New York officials have said the new gun restrictions, which face numerous legal challenges in lower courts, are needed to protect public safety. The Supreme Court has broadened gun rights in three key rulings since 2008. The jus-

tices on Jan. 11 rejected a separate bid by members of a gun rights advocacy group to block much of New York's Concealed Carry Improvement Act, signed into law by Democratic Governor Kathy Hochul on July 1.

In a statement issued with that decision, Justice Samuel Alito, joined by fellow conservative Justice Clarence Thomas, said he understood the court's action in that instance to be procedural rather than expressing any view on the merits of the case. Alito wrote that the New York law at issue "presents novel and serious questions" under the US Constitution's provisions on gun rights and free speech. That law banned firearms in a long list of "sensitive locations" including churches, medical offices, theaters, public parks and Manhattan's popular Times Square. It was passed in response to the Supreme Court's June 23 decision that declared for the first time that the Constitution's Second Amendment protects an individual's right to carry a

handgun in public for self-defense. The June ruling also required courts to evaluate if gun restrictions were "consistent with the nation's historical tradition of firearm regulation," making it harder to regulate guns in a country where mass shootings are commonplace.

Nine individuals who sell firearms in upstate New York and a gun collectors association sued state officials in federal court to challenge a series of laws regulating purchases. Some of the laws impact retailers, such as requiring security alarms and sales record-keeping. Others affect individuals, such as requiring background checks for ammunition sales and training for obtaining a concealed-carry license. A federal judge refused to block any of the challenged laws for various reasons, including that the Second Amendment protects individuals, not businesses. In December, the Manhattan-based 2nd US Circuit Court of Appeals also rejected the plaintiffs, but ordered their appeal to be fast-tracked.

France gripped by strikes over Macron's pension reform plan

PARIS (AFP): Strikes crippled much of France's public transport as protesters came out in force against a deeply unpopular pensions overhaul, with schools and media also heavily affected. Presented by President Emmanuel Macron's government last week, it would raise the retirement age for most from 62 -- among the lowest in the EU -- to 64. It would also increase the years of contributions required for a full pension.

France's trade unions called for a mass mobilisation, the first time they have united since 12 years ago, when the retirement age was hiked from 60 to 62. The unions are hoping for over a million demonstrators in more than 200 cities across France. But French media have reported that police had prepared for 550,000 to 750,000 protesters, including 50,000 to 80,000 in the capital. Macron was not in France. At a French-Spanish summit in Barcelona, he defended what he called a "fair and responsible reform", and said he hoped the protests would not derail into "violence".

In Paris, sanitation worker Hamidou, 43, was among thousands who gathered to demonstrate.

"Macron wants us to die on the job," he said. "We get up very early. Some colleagues wake up at 3 a.m. Working until 64 is too much." Nearby, 15-year-old Charlie Perrin decried an ever-retreating retirement age. "The way things are going, we'll be almost unable to walk or live by the time we're given the right to retire," she said. Almost one public sector worker in three was on strike by midday, the government estimated.

In the northwestern region of Brittany, carpenter and roofer Laurent Quere, 42, said he was fiercely opposed to having to work longer. "What client in their right mind would employ us on a work site aged 64?" he said. The strikes disrupted public transport in the capital, with one metro line closed and others running less frequently than usual, as many overland trains were cancelled throughout France. Many parents were looking after their children as some 40 percent of primary school teachers and more than 30 percent in the secondary system walked out, according to official estimates. Unions put strike participation much higher, at 70 and 65 percent respec-

tively. Strikers at state-owned energy provider EDF said they had lowered electricity output by 7,000 megawatts, while grid operator RTE put the figure at 5,000 MW -- enough to power two cities the size of Paris. But the CGT union federation said the reduction would have "no impact on users".

Philippe Martinez, head of the hard-left CGT union, told broadcaster Public Senat the planned pension reform "bundles together everyone's dissatisfaction" with the government, and that the rare, united front among worker representatives showed "the problem is very serious". "This will be a big day of mobilisation, especially with all the unions on the same page," Martinez said. "We all agree that the reform is unjust." Transport Minister Clement Beaune has warned it would be "a hellish", urging all those who can to work from home.

With Paris metros and buses in disarray, basketball fans could encounter trouble as they try to reach the sold-out NBA Paris Game between the Detroit Pistons and Chicago Bulls in the northeast of the city in the evening. Opinion polls show that around two-

thirds of French people oppose raising the retirement age, a move that comes amid high inflation and with the country still recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic's economic impact. Macron's last attempt at pension reform in 2019, aborted a year later when Covid-19 hit Europe, prompted the longest strike on the Paris transport network in three decades.

The 45-year-old centrist vowed to press ahead with plans to push back the retirement age during his successful re-election campaign last year, pointing to forecasts that the system could fall into deep deficits at the end of the decade. France's current retirement age is one of the lowest in the European Union. But unions are suspicious of the overhaul, eager to protect those who started working at a young age or have been toiling in physically demanding jobs. Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne has defended the reform, still to be debated in parliament, as a way to ensure more "justice" for retirees. "Four out of 10 French people, the most fragile, those of the most modest means, those who have tough jobs, will be able to retire before 64 years old," she has told parliament.

Indonesian mothers go to court over tainted cough syrup scandal

JAKARTA (Agencies): Five-year-old Shena has been in hospital since September. Her eyes move slowly when her mother calls her name but she is otherwise almost completely unresponsive. Her mother, Desi Permata Sari, says Shena's problems started when she fell ill with a fever. Concerned, she took her daughter to the emergency department of a Jakarta hospital. Doctors conducted blood tests and sent them home with paracetamol syrup.

"I gave her the medicine for two days, then she threw up and also said that she couldn't urinate. I initially thought she might be dehydrated," Desi said. "She was a healthy, smart girl. Suddenly this all happened just because of medicine. I am devastated." Shena was admitted to the paediatric intensive care unit. Her mother said she was a happy, talkative child who liked swimming and reading, and had even learned to recite the Quran at the age of four.

Now, she is fighting for her life. "Earlier on, she had heavy internal bleeding. She was having seizures, and blood was coming out from her nose and mouth, and sores all over her scalp. She was in a coma for one-and-a-half months. She was bleeding nonstop for three weeks and she was just skin-and-bone," Desi said.

"Which mother's heart wouldn't break...to see my healthy girl who used to run around... now she can only lie down and she needs a breathing aid. They had to make a hole in her throat. She drinks through a tube." This week, Shena cried during a physiotherapy appointment. It was the first time in months her mother had heard her make any sound.

"I was so grateful that she can cry. It made me so happy because otherwise her condition is unresponsive." The medical emergency has had a devastating effect on the whole family. With Desi caring for Shena in hospital and her husband working long hours as a security guard, and also spending most of his spare time by his daughter's bedside, their son has had to move in with a relative. The family has drained their savings to pay for Shena's medical care, and the cost of travelling to and fro from the hospital. He earns about \$300 a month. They have started eating smaller meals since Shena was admitted to hospital, to save money.

"My husband doesn't rest. He goes back and forth to work, then he comes here to look after Shena. Our savings are gone. She needs so many things which are not covered by public health insurance," she said. "In the beginning, I just wished to be hit by a car because I'm

so devastated. But I will fight for her, no matter how long it takes. I have to fight for my daughter." Desi and her husband are part of a class action suit launched by 25 families, suing government agencies and pharmaceutical companies after their children became seriously ill from taking contaminated medicines.

Almost 200 children have died from acute kidney injury since last year and more than 100 have been injured. Authorities later found two ingredients typically found in antifreeze and brake fluids -- ethylene glycol and diethylene glycol -- were linked to the children's conditions. The scandal in Indonesia came as dozens of children in The Gambia were reported to have died after taking similarly contaminated products. The families are suing the health and finance ministries, the drugs regulator, and several pharmaceutical companies and suppliers. One of the lawyers for the parents, Tegar Putuhena, told Al Jazeera they also want the Ministry of Health to classify the acute kidney injury outbreak caused by the syrups as an "extraordinary event", so all treatment expenses would be covered by the government.

"For those children still being treated now, there are many treatments that are not covered by public health

insurance. The government is turning a blind eye to it as if they have provided everything," he said. At the first hearing, a procedural step where administrative documentation was checked, Desi sat in the packed courtroom with three other mothers. They held hands and wept together as they waited for proceedings to begin.

Among them was Siti Suhardiati, the mother of Umar Abu Bakar who died two months before his third birthday and Solihah, the mother of four-year-old Azqira who loved to skate and sing. She died just days after ingesting the toxic medicine. And Safitri Pusparani, 42, wearing a yellow shirt with the words "my son is my hero" printed on it. Panghegar died in October. She showed Al Jazeera a video of him, taken a month before his death. It was Panghegar's eighth birthday. "It's my birthday, yippee!" he squealed, grinning at the camera.

"I don't want my son to just be a statistic without action. He is my hero. We need to make changes so this doesn't happen again," Safitri said. "As a mother, you can't ask, when will you stop being sad? When will you move on? I will never move on. With time, I don't think it will hurt any less but I will learn to adapt to the reality, that I am a mother who lost her son."

Strykers, Bradleys likely in huge US aid package for Ukraine

WASHINGTON (AP): The US is finalizing a massive package of military aid for Ukraine that US officials say is likely to total as much as \$2.6 billion. It's expected to include for the first time nearly 100 Stryker combat vehicles and at least 50 Bradley armored vehicles to allow Ukrainian forces to move more quickly and securely on the front lines in the war with Russia but not the tanks that Ukraine has sought. The officials said the numbers could change as the Biden administration goes through final deliberations on the package. An announcement is expected this week when defense leaders from the US, Europe and other regions gather in Germany to discuss military support for Ukraine. The aid is also expected to include

thousands of rounds of ammunition, including rockets for air defense systems.

The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because the aid has not yet been made public. The decision to send the Strykers, which could be delivered within weeks, comes on the heels of announcements by the British to send Ukraine battle tanks, which have long been sought by Ukrainian leaders. The Strykers and Bradleys are armored personnel carriers. Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Colin Kahl told reporters that a new phase of the war is shaping up as Russia gets more deeply entrenched, and that Ukraine will need mechanized infantry to break through those lines. "The Russians are really digging

in. They're digging in. They're digging trenches, they're putting in these dragon's teeth, laying mines. They're really trying to fortify that that FLOT, that forward line of troops," Kahl said. "To enable the Ukrainians to break through given Russian defenses, the emphasis has been shifted to enabling them to combine fire and maneuver in a way that will prove to be more effective."

Speaking at the World Economic Forum meeting in Davos, Switzerland, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy told political leaders that Western supplies of weapons must outpace Russia's attacks, urging the world to move faster because "tragedies are outpacing life; the tyranny is outpacing democracy."

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Maritime economy and execs’ Credo

CHIEF Minister Sindh, Syed Murad Ali Shah declared that the maritime sector is both financially and techno intensive and needed significant capital for building, operating, and making it economically profitable. The Chief Minister acknowledged that the Maritime sector has a lot of export potential, while PIMEC needs to provide a foundation to bring together stakeholders from diverse maritime industries to unleash those opportunities.

Pakistan is a blessed nation which has been gifted by nature with diverse geography, multiple seasons, variable weather conditions, arable land along with countless hidden deposits, and limitless opportunities with a conducive environment for farming, fishing, games, industries, and businesses. The country has over 63 percent unskilled and semi-skilled youth workforce that needs to be utilized in some productive activity to generate profit out of all those available resources. Unfortunately, Pakistan lacks sincere and capable leaders who steer the nation and use all occasions in the interests and benefit of the country. In fact, seven and a half decades are enough time to build a nation, raise an economy, strengthen society and achieve desired status and prestige among the nations of the world. Awfully, Pakistan could not achieve these objectives even after seven decades of independence, our nation could not attain excellence in any fields ranging from agriculture to Industry from trade to security, and from health and education to diplomacy and foreign policy. The Pakistanis are still in search of a sincere leader who steers the nation out of the current crises because Shah, his colleagues, and forerunners had brought the country to this day.

As far as the Blue economy is concerned, it relates to traditional ocean-related economic activities such as fisheries, coastal and sea tourism, and maritime transport as well as new emerging opportunities like off-shore renewable energy, aquaculture, deposit exploitation and seabed extraction activities. All such endeavors surely demand a significant financial investment, technical expertise, and time, however, we could not build a fishing industry on modern lines, and still, it lacks government backing and our fishermen are using old boats, worn-out fishing tools, and techniques, and working in miserable conditions.

Pakistani leaders and bureaucracy both are well versed with scholarly debates and miss practicability and sustainability in their course, which hurt the core objectives of the nation, and our national plans mostly left half-implemented and unrealized. As sea-bed exploration and aquaculture activities are somewhat difficult expeditions, Pakistani leaders must work for the development of the existing fishery industry, Sea Sports and Coastal tourism which are continuously witnessing a downward trend and do not compete with the region.

According to critics, the nationalization of industry was the real setback to Pakistan's economic growth, social uplift, and moral values that not only shattered the country's businesses and trade but also nurtured corruption and nepotism in the country. Businesses and trade are not the mandate of the government executives, while politicians must not decorate their politics through development projects and provision of services. Currently, Pakistan's most serious economic issues are the outcome of nationalization, thus the government must privatize government entities, ease up trade and business rules and remove bureaucratic hurdles from the industry so the economy grows and prosperity hails in the country.

UN attorneys and Guatemala’s villains

RECENTLY, the United Nations issued a statement expressing concern after the Guatemalan government announced an investigation against a former UN anti-corruption investigator assigned to Guatemala. According to the details, the Guatemalan regime is preparing to launch an inquiry against Iván Velásquez, a Colombian judge who led the UN's anti-corruption efforts in Guatemala from 2013 to 2019, on the alleged accusation of his illegal, arbitrary, and abusive acts during his assignment in Central American Nation.

The Republic of Guatemala, a Central American nation, is known for its Mayan civilization and decades-long instability, and civil strife, which not only led to weakness and ineffectiveness of government institutions but criminals gangs and drug mafias influenced the entire political system in the country during the late 20th century. Historically, the UN and Guatemala struck a deal to launch the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) to root out criminal groups believed to have infiltrated state institutions in the country. The Iván Velásquez-led UN commission pursued investigations into some of Guatemala's highest authorities, including the administration of then Guatemalan President Otto Perez Molina and his deputy. Reports suggest that the UN commission's investigations successfully uncovered at least 60 criminal networks that led to the sentencing of more than 400 people together including the former President and other officials.

Interestingly, the Guatemala government gradually not only backtracked from its deal with the UN and stalled the investigation in early 2019, but also prosecuted and sentenced several UN investigators on politically motivated and self-coined charges over the past few years. The United Nations categorically told Guatemalan authorities that its justice operators and officials from its former anti-corruption campaign continue to enjoy privileges and immunities besides the accomplishment of their mission, yet pro-gangs current regime is determined to take revenge from the law enforcers who fulfilled their responsibility in true letter and spirit.

In fact, the battle between good and bad, truth and false, police and crooks, as well as public leaders versus feudal and warlords, always exists since the very beginning of mankind several hundred thousand years ago. Law enforcers and nation saviours who upheld their duties always paid the price for loyalty through flesh and blood. Currently, the Guatemalan malefactor rulers are trying to malign men of character thus failure and humiliation would be their ultimate destiny.

Quote of the day

How can a nation be called great if its bread tastes like kleenex?

— Julia Child, American author & TV personality.

JOE Biden continues to hit anti-records of popularity. January 20 - two years from the date of his assumption of the presidency, half of the term. He fulfilled many campaign promises, but this does not help the ratings. About the intermediate results of Biden's rule - in the material of RIA Novosti.

People's dislike

According to January polls, more than half of Americans disapprove of the president's performance. Only 44% respond positively.

Two years ago, Biden was supported by 53%. Since then, ratings have steadily declined.

He won the election with an extensive socio-economic program. His team tried to sit on two chairs.

On the one hand, they took into account the success of Donald Trump's populist platform. So, following his slogan "Make America great again," Biden spoke out in favor of returning the production of goods to the United States. The ambitious "Buy American" plan was to spend \$400 billion on developing domestic industries.

On the other hand, Biden

actively played on Trump's weaknesses. In particular, he immediately abandoned odious ideas like building a wall on the border with Mexico, promised to increase corporate tax from 21 to 28 percent and not increase the fiscal burden for those whose income is less than 400 thousand dollars a year.

It was not possible to fully implement the pre-election program. The President had to deal with new problems, which he did not even think about then.

In 2022, inflation in the United States hit a 40-year high of 8.5%. Against this backdrop, Biden pushed legislation through Congress that would allocate \$430 billion for health care, green energy, the fight against negative climate change, as well as large subsidies for electric cars.

Ecology is one of Biden's trump cards. On the campaign trail, he promised to bring the US back into the Paris Climate Agreement, which Trump abandoned.

But there were still difficulties with overseas partners. Now the EU is working on a response to the US inflation law, which directly affects the interests of

Renat Abdullin

European automakers. And that's not Biden's only foreign policy issue.

US is losing the Middle East

The White House obviously did not calculate the risks of anti-Russian sanctions. Biden intended to compensate for losses in hydrocarbon supplies at the expense of traditional

The White House does not even hide this. The other day, Biden's national security adviser Jake Sullivan frankly stated that the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan made it easier to help Ukraine.

Middle Eastern partners. However, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates did not agree to play by American rules. In March, the Arabs did not want to discuss with Biden the increase in oil production in order to contain the rise in prices. A few months later, the US president visited the Middle East, but his personal visit was not crowned with success either.

Things are no better in the Iranian direction. Washington verbally still intends to revive the nuclear deal with Tehran. However, the Iranians are

demanding the lifting of sanctions, which the White House is clearly not ready for.

From Afghanistan to Ukraine

Following in the footsteps of former boss Barack Obama, Biden decided to end the Afghan venture. The exodus of Americans from the Central Asian country was perceived ambiguously in the world.

The Taliban seized power in Kabul. This dealt a heavy blow to Washington's reputation. And Biden took advantage of the Russian special operation in Ukraine to shift the foreign policy focus.

The White House does not even hide this. The other day, Biden's national security adviser Jake Sullivan frankly stated that the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan made it easier to help Ukraine.

Support for the Kyiv regime, coupled with anti-

Russian rhetoric, is most welcome for Biden. It was on the confrontation with Moscow that a bipartisan consensus was formed in Congress. It is significant that in the midterm elections, when everyone predicted a victory for the Republicans, the Democrats retained control over the upper house - the Senate.

However, these successes do not cancel the claims against Biden that ordinary Americans and political opponents have accumulated.

Age is a hindrance

Opinion polls show that the US population is not least concerned about the president's physical and mental health.

Reasons for excitement enough.

For example, during the traditional Easter reception in the spring of 2022 on the White House lawn, Biden was frightened by an animator in a bunny costume. After one of the performances, he "shaked hands" with the void - there was no one around at that moment.

And this is only a small part of the embarrassment. The head of state called Ukrainians Iranians, read clues from a teleprompter, fell off a bicycle and on an

airplane ramp, addressed the late congresswoman, and once "promoted" his deputy Kamala Harris to the post of president. Such "fails" gave rise to many memes, and reservations like the story of meeting his 12-year-old wife were scattered into quotes.

At the same time, the Democrats do not have a "bench". Now Biden is 80. If he still goes for a second term in 2024, he will leave the post at the age of 86. Before him, Trump was the oldest head of the United States.

At the end of last year, a medical examination of the president was hotly discussed on American social networks. His administration so stubbornly endured the standard, routine procedure that even within the ranks of the Democrats there were proposals to change the leader. Moreover, the Republicans, unlike the Democratic Party, already have politicians who are seriously contending for election in 2024. For example, 44-year-old Florida Governor Ron DeSantis. And if Biden's age difference with Trump is not critical (only four years), then the current leader may not survive against a young rival.

‘A terrible end is better than horror without end’

Victoria Nikiforova

TODAY, a meeting of NATO members and representatives of Ukraine will be held at the US military base Ramstein, located in Germany. In Washington, they saved up some home-made preparations for the meeting. The mouthpiece of the Democratic Party, The New York Times, published an article stating that the Biden administration is considering providing Kiev with weapons that will allow strikes in Crimea.

The party line was also confirmed by State Department spokesman Ned Price. He was asked if the US would support Ukrainian strikes in Crimea with Western weapons. "Ultimately, it is up to our Ukrainian partners to decide how and where best to use these weapons and supplies to defend their territory," Price replied. He also did not forget to emphasize that the US considers the peninsula to belong to Ukraine.

According to the logic of the white gentlemen, since they consider the Crimea to belong to Kyiv, it means that he can shell the peninsula with impunity. Everything is exactly as it was with the Donbass : they are, like, your citizens, so you can freely kill them to applause from Washington and Brussels.

I must say, this is really a new turn for the Washington administration. Until recently, they believed that the geographical position, the mood of the Crimeans and the defense capability of the peninsula make it an absolutely unattainable military target for Ukraine. There was no point in even thinking about it.

"Should Ukraine take Crimea by military means?" asked the influen-

tial edition of The Hill in November and came to the conclusion that, in principle, it is not worth it. "Landing on the fortified Crimean coast <...> could turn into a disaster (for the Armed Forces of Ukraine). <...> And in the West, not only Elon Musk is afraid that Russia will use its nuclear weapons in response."

"Take your time with Crimea," the Foreign Affairs administration admonished in December. "This could be a serious test for the coalition. While Eastern European partners tend to support Ukraine in everything and consider Putin's nuclear threats to be frivolous, <...> France, Germany and the United States are much more concerned about the risk of escalation."

All this did not prevent Kyiv from swinging the Crimean topic in the information field. Zelensky told his patrons some incredible stories about how the Russian military was running and running along the dilapidated Kerch bridge towards Russia. He promised to seize the Azov coast and shell the Crimea from long-range guns.

The Kyiv regime arranged various international gatherings on the topic of Crimea. The participants promised each other that they would "meet in Yalta" at any moment. The last time the topic was shaken by the Assistant Minister of Defense, telling the Sky News channel that the Armed Forces of Ukraine "presumably" will occupy the Crimea at the end of December. And the men did not know, as they say.

This zaboristoy narcotic delirium diligently sang along from Poland. Of course. Without control

over the peninsula, all wishful thinking about the Polish Intermarium is doomed to remain in the realm of non-science fiction. Andrzej Duda made a special speech at the latest "Crimean Platform" and stated that the return of Crimea to Ukraine is "absolutely mandatory."

For the time being, Washington treated all these initiatives with coolness. The article "Take your time with Crimea" was just the answer to the Ukrainian idea to go to Crimea at the end of December. Moreover, this happened against the background of the slowdown of the offensive of the allied forces and the withdrawal from Kherson.

Now the situation at the front is just the opposite. The Armed Forces of Ukraine left Soledar, they are about to lose Artemovsk. Their losses in recent weeks are simply monstrous. "Ukrainians tried to form reserves for a possible offensive in the southern direction. <...> These units died in Bakhmut (Artemovsk. - Ed.). Now the Ukrainians have a total of about 140-150 thousand combat-ready soldiers," he analyzed the situation at the front former adviser to the head of the Pentagon, Douglas McGregor. Earlier, he estimated the losses of the Armed Forces of Ukraine at 150,000 people.

Here, it would seem, to stop, look around. Ask yourself why it was necessary to send people to certain death? Moreover, even in Washington they already admit that "Ukraine will not survive in a long-term deadlock conflict with Russia." But no, instead they are trying to organize a

new round of escalation according to the principle "a terrible end is better than horror without end."

At a meeting at the White House, as a senior source told The New York Times, it was decided that since "Ukraine cannot survive in a stalemate conflict, then the only thing left is to organize a threat to Crimea." At the same time, the publication states in plain text that there are no hopes for the capture of the peninsula from the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

"(Since the beginning of the NMD) the Biden administration has taken a hard line to deny Kyiv the supply of weapons that could be used there for strikes in the Crimea. Now this line is being softened," leading military journalists of The New York Times tell us. High-ranking sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, told them: "The administration is beginning to admit that Kyiv will need forceful capabilities to strike the Russian shelter (this is how Crimea is called here - sanctuary, although the translation Ed.). Now the Ukrainians have a total of about 140-150 thousand combat-ready soldiers," he analyzed the situation at the front former adviser to the head of the Pentagon, Douglas McGregor. Earlier, he estimated the losses of the Armed Forces of Ukraine at 150,000 people.

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Several major developments mark Singapore’s socio-political landscape in 2022

Chang Yee Kwan

SEVERAL major developments marked Singapore's socio-political landscape in 2022. The government's annual budget affirmed a staged increase in the Goods and Services Tax (GST) from 7 per cent to 9 per cent over 2023 and 2024, along with other income and wealth tax increases — highlighting increased social spending needs amid an ageing population.

The budget also indicated optimism for a robust economic recovery, with limited extensions to enterprise and income support schemes introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic. It introduced new schemes to encourage skills retraining and upgrading and reduced household transfers at a fiscal deficit of 0.5 per cent of GDP.

The issue of renewal and succession in the ruling People's Action Party (PAP) was given some finality when Finance Minister Lawrence Wong was selected to head the party's fourth generation

(or 4G) leadership team in April, putting him in line to be the next prime minister of Singapore. He has since been appointed deputy prime minister and deputy secretary-general in the ruling party's top decision-making body.

In November 2022, the Parliament of Singapore passed a bill to repeal Section 377A of the Penal Code, a colonial-era law criminalising sexual activity between consenting male adults. At the same time, a constitutional amendment rendered Parliament the authority on the definition of the institution of marriage. The same amendment gives the government and other public sector agencies similar authority when exercising public policies like public housing allocations and the disbursement of financial benefits.

Total and resident unemployment returned to pre-pandemic levels of 2 per cent and 3 per cent, respectively. But economic recovery was relatively subdued. Revised estimates in

November expect economic growth for 2022 to be about 3.5 per cent.

This was despite the resumption of international travel and events like the annual Formula One race and the removal of most social distancing measures imposed during COVID-19. It also contrasts with the aftermath of both the Asian Financial Crisis and Global Financial Crisis where growth was 9.9 per cent in 20-00 and 4.9 per cent in 2011.

Of greater concern is that overall and core inflation are higher than historical norms at 6 per cent and 4 per cent, respectively. This stems from increases in global interest rates that directly affect domestic housing costs, higher global commodity and energy prices and supply chain disruptions from COVID-19 lockdowns in China.

An increase in high net worth immigrants placed further upward pressure on private housing prices and also impacted public housing, with repeated transac-

tions of 'million-dollar flats'. These developments led to debates on the pricing and affordability of public housing and on the necessity of the GST increase.

An offset package — the 'Assurance Package' — to mitigate the effect of the increase in GST was announced in the annual budget. But despite assurances of its compensating effects on cost of living increases from the GST rise, there will still be a greater immediate impact on lower-income and retiree households. The latter group is further affected by the resulting reduction in real values of retirement and pension savings balances.

While they constitute 7.5 per cent of households, a subset of retirees who are asset-rich but cash-poor also face higher wealth taxes with an increase in property tax rates. There was prior recognition of rising wealth inequality in Singapore and calls for a

wealth tax to mitigate this increase. But a lack of data means household wealth is typically premised solely on the rudimentary measure of housing values. Such households also face the prospect of higher tax burdens alongside the declining real value of their savings balances.

To mitigate the cost of living increases, two financial assistance packages of S\$1.5 billion (US\$1.1 billion) were introduced in June and October. These made provisions for enterprise and employment support, household utility subsidies and income transfers. But continuing retrenchments, particularly in the technology sector, with persistent unfilled vacancies in other sectors and lower growth expectations for 2023, will further heighten cost of living concerns.

Policy makers have regularly emphasised the need for re-training and re-skilling to ensure occupational relevance and employability. But participation and wage disparities between sectors are also

attributable to existing cultural emphases and prejudice to particular industries or occupations.

In addition, while numbers are likely to be small, the Overseas Network & Expertise Pass — which aims to attract global talent leaders and entitles the pass-holder and spouse to work across companies in Singapore — may also affect sentiment in the resident labour force.

Despite increased aggregate employment and incomes in 2022, concerns about housing and living costs will remain elevated in 2023. The biennial Singapore Public Sector Outcomes Review highlighted the need for further policy focus in ensuring mental and physical well-being and on Singapore's low fertility rate. But policymakers must recognise that these issues are intrinsically linked with immediate concerns of housing and living costs, employment and income equity and longer-term perceptions of social mobility and security.

‘One of the few bright spots’ in disarmament

TWO years ago, the first-ever nuclear weapons ban treaty entered into force. Despite fervent opposition from the world’s most powerful states, more than 50 countries had made the very possession of the ultimate weapon illegal.

Supporters of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) celebrated in small events across the world — an unfortunate necessity during the peak of the Covid pandemic. Some protested at nuclear bases and government offices, while others took part in educational events. In a brief video, United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres praised the moment as “a major step toward a world free of nuclear weapons.”

The occasion was a remarkable victory for the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), a small umbrella group that has led the movement to ban nuclear weapons since 2007. ICAN, which won a Nobel Peace Prize in 2017, had helped unite an army of activists and sympathetic diplomats in their fight against the bomb.

“There was a strong sense of injustice at the way that the nuclear-armed states had treated non nuclear-armed states,” recalled Tim Wright, ICAN’s treaty coordinator. “By failing to pursue disarmament[...], they were undermining the security of all countries.”

In a rare moment of unity, the UN Security Council’s five permanent members — the only states allowed to possess nuclear weapons under international law — attacked the ban treaty as a dangerous distraction. The United States even sent a letter to the nearly 50 countries that had ratified the TPNW, requesting that they reverse their decision and insisting that the pact “turns back the clock on verification and disarmament.”

The disarmament debate has become more urgent in the years since 2017, when 122 of the UN’s 193 states first voted in favor of the treaty. Tensions have grown dramatically between the U.S., China, and Russia, sparking fears of a new Cold War in the offing. All three have plowed billions of dollars into efforts to modernize their nuclear programs, and Beijing appears poised to expand its arsenal by as much as 300 percent over the next decade.

Meanwhile, many agreements that regulate nukes and help prevent accidents have been torn up or weakened. Former President Donald Trump pulled out of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, a 1997 pact with Russia under which both sides agreed to forswear all mid-range nuclear missiles. And the New START Treaty — the only active agreement that limits the size of Washington and Moscow’s arsenals — risks falling apart well before its 2026 expiration date.

Even the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) has fallen on tough times. Nearly every country is a party to the 1968 pact, which bans all but the five permanent UN Security Council states from having nuclear weapons. This wide uptake has led to the “universalization” of the agreement, meaning that its provisions are considered

binding on all countries.

Yet last week, South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol told reporters that, if the nuclear threat from North Korea continues to grow, Seoul would consider pursuing its own atomic arsenal. “We can have our own nuclear weapons pretty quickly, given our scientific and technological capabilities,” Yoon said.

These trends highlight the uphill battle that ICAN faces in its quest to end the nuclear era. Though the long-term goal is universalization, the TPNW’s supporters argue that it has already changed the global conversation about nukes, shifting the focus away from whack-a-mole non-proliferation and toward full disarmament.

The TPNW has helped persuade at least 58 financial institutions to fully divest from the nuclear weapons industry. (For reasons of ethics or risk-aversion, many investors opt against putting money in “controversial weapons,” especially those banned by a large treaty.) And it’s set to reach another milestone soon: By the end of the year, Wright expects that a majority of UN states will have signed or ratified the treaty.

Nuclear powers like France and the United States continue to put pressure on their partners abroad to not sign or ratify the deal. ICAN is emboldened by this opposition. For Wright, it shows that the treaty is “something meaningful.”

“If it were merely a piece of paper that had no real-world impacts, then I think that the nuclear-armed states would simply have ignored it,” he told RS.

There are two broad stories that one can tell about the nuclear era. For skeptics, the atomic age is best understood as a long series of brushes with Armageddon.

Wright emphasized the countless close calls from the Cold War that could have led to full-scale nuclear war. These include high-profile cases like the Cuban Missile Crisis and lesser known incidents like the 1961 Goldsboro crash, in which a B-52 broke up in midair and dropped two atomic bombs over North Carolina. (Only one failsafe mechanism stopped the bombs from exploding.)

“The fact that they haven’t been used in war for 70-something years isn’t the result of great strategy or wisdom,” Wright argued. “It’s luck.”

Skeptics also highlight that nuclear weapons come with serious tradeoffs. Take, for example, President Joe Biden’s trademark Build Back Better initiative. The plan includes \$570 billion in spending to fight climate change over the next decade, making it the single largest investment of its kind in American history. Meanwhile, Washington’s nuclear arsenal is projected to cost about \$634 billion in that same time period.

And the problems don’t end there. As ICAN campaigners often note, nuclear tests and use have caused permanent environmental damage and forcibly displaced indigenous people across the globe. Radiation in parts of the Marshall Islands — where the U.S. conducted a series of nuclear tests in the 1940s and 50s — remain up to

Connor Echols

1,000 times higher than levels in Fukushima.

Prominent advocates of nuclear skepticism include the governments of South Africa and Kazakhstan, both of which willingly surrendered their nuclear weapons in the 1990s, as well as Brazil, Austria, Indonesia, Mexico, and the Vatican.

There is, of course, another view. For nuclear optimists, the ultimate weapon is a sobering, relatively cheap remedy for the pathologies that plagued world leaders in the first half of the 20th century.

“Nuclear weapons took great-power war off the agenda of international politics,” said Michael Desch, a professor of international relations at the University of Notre Dame. For Desch, the logic is air-tight: Once two states have enough nukes to destroy each other’s military, nuclear deterrence kicks in, rendering direct war all but impossible and saving countless lives in the process.

And it’s hard to deny that he has a point. World War II killed no fewer than 60 million people — just under three percent of the world’s population in 1937 — and left large swathes of Europe and Asia in abject ruin. As tensions grew between the United States and the USSR, the prospect of a third world war loomed large in the minds of policymakers and civilians alike.

These concerns only grew when the Soviets got the bomb in 1949. But then something crazy happened; or, more precisely, something believed to be inevitable kept not happening. Despite decades of proxy battles, the superpowers never fought each other directly. And this is no aberration: No two nuclear-armed powers have ever gone to direct war with each other.

And, as optimists often note, efforts to pare back the world’s nuclear arsenals have been remarkably effective over the long term — a testament to the sobering effects of the atomic bomb. In a 2018 article in Commonweal, Desch noted that the total number of nuclear warheads has dropped from 65,000 in 1985 to roughly 10,000 today. “An 85-percent reduction is certainly a big deal, even if the remaining arsenals could still wreak unimaginable damage on the earth,” Desch wrote.

A version of this view is dominant among policymakers in nuclear powers and “umbrella states” — countries that nuke-wielding governments have vowed to defend. The Pentagon’s 2022 Nuclear Posture Review described nuclear weapons as “foundational to broader U.S. defense strategy,” adding that the primary responsibility of Washington and its nuclear-armed peers is to create a more peaceful global system that would “ultimately allow for” full disarmament.

“The United States does not share the underlying assumption of the TPNW that the elimination of nuclear weapons can be achieved irrespective of the prevailing international security environment,” the document concludes.

In May 2010, the parties to the NPT gathered in New York for their eighth review conference. The stage was

set for a clash between the optimists and the skeptics.

Nuclear-armed states were riding high after the United States and Russia had agreed to the New START Treaty just a month before the summit. The deal capped each state’s arsenals at their lowest levels in decades, which Washington and Moscow viewed as an important victory.

Others were less enthused. Two decades after the Cold War, many in the Global South argued that nuclear-armed states had failed to hold up their end of the NPT — specifically Article VI, which stipulates all parties to the treaty will make urgent, good faith efforts to seek complete disarmament.

“I am not saying that their nuclear weapon states have not done anything, but their progress in nuclear disarmament has been modest, to say the least,” said Maria Antonieta Jaquez, who worked on Mexico’s TPNW negotiation team and now serves as her government’s coordinator for disarmament and non-proliferation.

As Jaquez told RS, most Latin American states had long forsworn nukes, and it was time for others to catch up. If chemical weapons and cluster munitions have been banned, Jaquez wondered, then why should nukes get a pass?

Skeptics also resented what they saw as a narrow focus on non-proliferation. “We wanted to really focus on the reality of the weapons and the harm that they cause,” Wright of ICAN told RS. “I think that many countries have become complacent about the nuclear threat.”

As the conference came to a close, the skeptics managed to add a few lines into a joint document that expressed “deep concern at the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons.” But the more ambitious goal — a comprehensive nuclear weapons convention — would have to wait.

In the ensuing years, ICAN and its allies crisscrossed the globe building momentum for a ban treaty. The organization earned support from moral leaders like Pope Francis, Desmond Tutu, and the Dalai Lama, all while building a global network of grassroots volunteers. In 2012, ICAN campaigners from Hiroshima folded 1,000 paper cranes and sent them to the leaders of every UN member state.

“We were just random people doing some petitions, seminars, panels, emailing parliamentarians, nagging politicians, holding meetings,” Beatrice Fihn, ICAN’s executive director, told Time Magazine. “There are no TV shows about negotiators for a reason.”

ICAN quickly abandoned hopes of getting nuclear-armed states onboard, opting instead to deal with what Wright calls the “global majority” on the issue. “A few of the key negotiating states said to us that it wouldn’t have been possible in the past, but we no longer have a relationship of dependence on these powerful countries,” Wright said. The Netherlands, which falls under the United States’ nuclear umbrella, was the only nuclear state to participate in the talks.

After two rounds of negotiations in 2017, 122

states voted in favor of the final draft. The agreement included a comprehensive ban on nuclear weapons in member states; a time-bound plan for disarmament for nuclear powers that may join in the future; and assistance for those affected by tests or attacks.

The Netherlands cast the lone vote against the treaty. All other nuclear states boycotted the vote, signaling that they didn’t view the TPNW as legitimate.

Nikki Haley, then Washington’s UN ambassador, questioned whether states who favored the ban understood the nature of geopolitics today.

“You have to ask yourself, are they looking out for their people?” Haley said in 2017 during a press conference staged to protest the proposed treaty.

Desch agrees with Haley’s assessment. “I think it’s a good example of good intentions leading to a dumb outcome,” he argued, adding that the TPNW amounts to little more than “virtue signaling.”

Proponents of the treaty acknowledge its limits. “It’s not a panacea,” Wright told RS. “It can’t produce miracles.” But, he contends, it is “a very important tool that we have now for advancing the cause of a nuclear-weapon-free world.”

One benefit of the TPNW has been its impact on global discourse, according to Daryl Kimball, the executive director of the Arms Control Association, who called the treaty “one of the few bright spots” in disarmament today.

At the TPNW’s first meeting of states-parties, which took place as Russian leaders suggested that they could use nukes against Ukraine, members condemned “any and all nuclear threats, whether they be explicit or implicit and irrespective of the circumstances.” This stance, Kimball contends, “played a pivotal factor in building a stronger international consensus, including from nuclear-weapon states, against any and all nuclear threats.”

As evidence, Kimball pointed to last November’s G20 summit. The meeting’s participants declared that threats of nuclear use are “inadmissible” — an unusually stark statement from the powerful group.

Despite ICAN’s efforts, nuclear powers have shown little interest in changing their minds on the treaty. Late last year, Australia broke with its outright opposition to the treaty and abstained from a UN vote on the pact. The subtle shift drew a harsh rebuke from Washington, which warned that the TPNW “would not allow for US extended deterrence relationships.”

But, for ICAN and its allies, the road to utopia is paved with small victories. “The treaty is not going to be universal for a long time,” Jaquez told RS, quickly adding that she hopes to be proven wrong. “But that doesn’t mean that the treaty is going to disappear.”

As she pointed out, the TPNW kicked off the new year with a win as Djibouti officially signed on to the pact. “We’re very happy to have started the new year with a new signature,” Jaquez said. She noted that 92 countries have now signed on — just four short of a majority of UN states.



‘For things she didn’t actually say and ideas she didn’t actually express’

HOUSE Speaker Kevin McCarthy has pledged to remove several Democratic members from some of their most important committee assignments as a way of buying support from Republicans for his position. Among those targeted by McCarthy is Rep. Ilhan Omar of Minnesota, who has been in the crosshairs of hawks for years because she has been an outspoken critic of U.S. foreign policy.

Daniel Larison

wrongdoing.

Omar’s questioning of Blinken was important and revealing. It exposed the hypocrisy of the U.S. position on exempting itself and Israel from the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court, and it called attention to the lack of accountability for alleged U.S. and Israeli war crimes. This is exactly the sort of oversight that members of Congress should be exercising, and the House Foreign Affairs Committee is better for having someone like Rep. Omar on it. I suspect that McCarthy and his allies want her off the committee because she has been too effective in asking hard questions about the policies and actions of the United States and U.S.-backed states.

Despite the obnoxious backlashes against her, Rep. Omar has not stayed quiet on these and other important issues. She has been a vocal critic of human rights abuses by many other governments, including both Saudi Arabia and China. Omar has condemned Uighur genocide in Xinjiang and fought against U.S. support for the atrocious war on Yemen, and she has also denounced the illegal Russian invasion of Ukraine in the strongest terms.

Last year, Rep. Omar and her colleagues appealed to the Biden administration to reinstate the Group of Eminent Experts (GEE) to resume its work in investigating war crimes and human rights abuses by all parties to the Yemen conflict. The Saudi government had successfully lobbied to kill off the group to shield itself from international scrutiny, and Omar was one of the leaders in this effort to reverse this outrage.

She has been a consistent, principled opponent of the use of broad sanctions against other countries. While she has supported targeted sanctions against specific officials responsible for abuses, she rejects broad sanctions that mostly harm innocent people while doing little or nothing to the leadership. Rep. Omar has gone beyond most standard criticisms of broad sanctions to describe them as the form of collective punishment they are. Not content only to criticize existing policy, Omar has been at the forefront of seeking to reform how our government uses sanctions.

In the previous Congress, she used her position as vice chair of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee for Africa to urge the Biden administration to analyze the humanitarian effects of broad sanctions. As the letter that she and her colleagues sent put it, “Far too often and far too long, sanctions have

been imposed as a knee-jerk reaction without a measured and considered assessment of their impacts.” Almost two years since that letter was written, the need to address our government’s overuse of sanctions has only become greater. Far from scaling back the use of economic warfare, the Biden administration has continued and expanded it. The United States needs sanctions opponents like Rep. Omar in an oversight role if there is to be any chance of reining in these out-of-control policies.

The scholarly literature on sanctions has found that they are usually ineffective and destructive, and Rep. Omar has been unusual among members of Congress in taking these findings seriously. In an op-ed she wrote for The Washington Post in 2019, she made a solid case against broad sanctions for being both harmful and counterproductive: “Research has shown that sanctions rarely achieve their desired goals. In the worst-case scenario, they hurt the people of a country — generally the very people we’re purporting to help — without making a dent in the country’s behavior. And in the case of human rights abusers, research suggests that more abuses typically occur with economic sanctions in place than without them.”

Omar has also demonstrated real political courage in dissenting against reckless policies that had widespread support in Washington. When it was easy and popular to jump on the bandwagon for regime change in Venezuela, she was one of a very few members of Congress to oppose U.S. policy there. Four years later, the failure of the regime change policy is obvious and Omar’s principled opposition to regime change and economic warfare against Venezuela has been vindicated.

When Bolivian President Evo Morales was ousted in a coup in 2019, Omar was one of a handful in Washington to call it a coup and condemn it. In both cases, it would have been politically safer to stay quiet or to embrace the prevailing view in Washington, but Rep. Omar spoke out against a destructive U.S. policy in one country and an attack on democracy in another.

This is the sort of principled advocacy that Americans need from their representatives in Congress, and it is something that is missing far too often from the making of our foreign policy. If McCarthy succeeds in removing Rep. Omar from the Foreign Affairs Committee, he will be doing a grave disservice to the public and the country.

‘The defeat of a nuclear power in a conventional war may trigger a nuclear war’

THE New York Times ran a report on Wednesday saying that the United States was “warming” to the idea of helping Ukraine target Crimea.

Washington — while maintaining that the peninsula is a part of Ukraine — has to this point been hesitant to provide Kyiv with the necessary weaponry to strike against Russia in Crimea. If accurate, this report could mark a significant evolution in the thinking of American officials compared to a year ago when Russia invaded Ukraine and when, as the Times puts it “they were wary of even acknowledging publicly that the US was providing Stinger anti-aircraft missiles for Ukrainian troops.”

It is unclear what precise larger strategy the United States is pursuing. The leak

of this change in approach is perhaps an attempt to gain leverage. As the Times story notes, “the Biden administration does not think that Ukraine can take Crimea militarily (...) But, officials said, their assessment now is that Russia needs to believe that Crimea is at risk, in part to strengthen Ukraine’s position in any future negotiations.”

But even if the goal is to eventually gain leverage in negotiations, such a decision could carry risks in the short term. “Helping Ukraine to threaten Russia’s hold on Crimea is not in U.S. interests,” wrote James Acton, co-director of the Nuclear Policy Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, in a Twitter thread that laid out the possible rationales and ramifications of this report. The thread later read “For a

range of political and strategic reasons, I believe that the risks of Putin’s using nuclear weapons would go up significantly, if he believes his hold on Crimea is threatened.”

The reporting suggests that the administration’s possible pivot to what the Times calls “one of its boldest moves yet” is motivated in part by officials’ belief that the risk of Russia retaliating by deploying tactical nuclear weapons has diminished, though not disappeared. There is no clear evidence as to why this fear is reduced, and, as Stephen Wertheim, senior fellow at the Carnegie, argues on Twitter “the fact that Russia has not used nuclear weapons yet is poor evidence that it would not do so to protect Crimea.”

For its part, Moscow has continued its nuclear saber-rattling. In a post on the Telegram messaging app this week, former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev warned, “The defeat of a nuclear power in a conventional war may trigger a nuclear war.”

Blaise Malley

countries around the world have never recognized Russia’s purported annexation of parts of eastern Ukraine or its purported annexation of Crimea. (...) We have provided our Ukrainian partners with precisely what they need to take on the threat where it is raging most violently. Right now that is in the east, it’s in the Donbas. This has been the case for some time.”

The following day, Pentagon spokeswoman Sabri-n Singh doubled down, saying that the Department of Defense would continue its support of Ukraine as long as necessary. “That includes an operation in Crimea. That is a sovereign part of their country and they have every right to take that back.”

In other diplomatic news related to the war in

Ukraine:

—A high-level U.S. delegation, which included Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Colin Kahl, Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman, and Deputy National Security Advisor Jon Finer traveled to Kyiv on Monday to meet with President Zelensky and other senior Ukrainian officials. According to a Pentagon readout, the purpose of the trip was to “reaffirm the United States’ strong and steadfast commitment to Ukraine and its defense against Russia’s unprovoked aggression.”

—A number of countries are preparing to send sub-

stantial arms packages to Ukraine:

The United Kingdom will send fourteen tanks and other sophisticated military equipment; the U.S. is expected to announce a major new weapons package for Ukraine, including additional artillery, ammunition, and armored vehicles; the Netherlands plans to send a Patriot missile defense; and system Poland—which last week pledged to send Leopard tanks to Ukraine—and Lithuania pressured Germany to send their own tanks.

—Germany’s defense minister, Christine Lambrecht, resigned Monday, amid questions surrounding

Berlin’s response to the war in Ukraine.

—Top U.S. and European defense officials will meet at Ramstein Air Base in Germany on Friday to discuss the war in Ukraine. In RS on Thursday, Anatol Lieven laid out the key questions these defense chiefs should —but likely will not— be asking themselves.

—The Washington Post reported on Thursday that CIA director Burns had a secret meeting with Zelensky in Kyiv late last week to brief the Ukrainian president on expectations regarding Russia’s military plans in the coming weeks and months.

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Rupee extends losses against USD

ISLAMABAD (APP): The exchange rate of the Pakistani rupee depreciated by 51 paisa against the US dollar in the interbank trading on Friday and closed at Rs 229.66 against the previous day's closing of Rs 229.15.

According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 237.75 and Rs 240 respectively. The price of the euro increased by 99 paisa and closed at Rs

248.86 against the previous day's closing of Rs 247.87, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese yen remained unchanged to close at Rs 1.78, whereas an increase of Rs 1.21 was witnessed in the exchange rate

of the British pound, which was traded at Rs 283.88 as compared to its last closing of Rs 282.62. The exchange rates of the Emirates dirham and Saudi riyal increased by 14 paisa each to close at Rs 62.52 and Rs 61.14 respectively.

PSX loses 423 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed a bearish trend on Friday, losing 423.60 points, a negative change of 1.09 percent, closing at 38,407.98 against 38,831.58 points the previous day.

A total of 93,450,275 shares were traded during the day as compared to 157,822,378 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 3.508 billion against Rs

6,406 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 314 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 103 of them recorded gains and 194 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 17 companies remained unchanged. The three top-trading companies were Pak Petroleum with 8,309,230 shares at Rs 72.92 per share, WorldCall Telecom with 5,645,024 shares at Rs 1.11 per share, and Ghani Chem(B) with

5,054,500 shares at Rs 6.68 per share. Bhanero Textile witnessed a maximum increase of

Rs 82.00 per share price, closing at Rs 1,177.00, whereas the runner-up was Nestle Pakistan with a Rs 50.00 rise in its per share price to Rs 5,310.00. Indus Motor Co witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 58.15 per share closing at Rs 841.35, followed by Philip Morris Pak with Rs. 35.00 decline to close at Rs 530.00.

Monetary Policy Announcement F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) will meet on Monday, January 23, 2023 to decide about Monetary Policy. Governor SBP, Mr. Jameel Ahmad will announce the Monetary Policy decision at a press conference on the same day after the MPC meeting.

FCCI Chief urges to equip youth with emerging skills

FAISALABAD (APP): Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) President Dr. Khurram Tariq said on Friday that youth were an asset of the country and they should be equipped with emerging skills and technologies to compete with the developed countries. Addressing the students of Akhuwat Boarding School established under Tasneem Noorani Foundation (TNF) in Abbaspur near here, he said that Pakistan was a dynamic, emerging and robust country in the late 1950.

"A country like Germany was demanding human resources from Pakistan", he said and added that at that time PIA was one of the leading airlines of the world which nurtured many airlines of other countries. He said that international travellers preferred PIA only because of its quality service. The FCCI President said that Pakistan was a blessed country which had all seasons in addition to the most productive youth of the world. He told the students they were Pakistan's real future and all hopes were hinged upon them as they had the potential to drag Pakistan out of current crises.

able reduction in timing in consultation with retail sector and allow retail to remain operational until 10pm without any restrictions as retail sector was one of the largest job providers and paying taxes of hundreds of billions rupees to the exchequer. The secretary labour asked director general to complete initial working on PESSI arrears and directed for holding another meeting during the next week to amicably resolve the issue.

He said the Punjab government was already attentive to all the industry issues keeping in view the fast-changing business environment the world over. He said necessary measures are being adopted to facilitate the industry on issues faced by them especially in view of the current economic melt down and global recession. Secretary added that the Punjab government would leave no stone unturned to provide a business friendly environment to facilitate to grow their businesses which ultimately conducive to growth and wealth creation in the province.

The textile industry has already started voluntary payments of the principal amount as per mutually agreed schedule with the PESSI, he added. According to Zaman, a waiver of the penalty on voluntary payment of PESSI arrears would encourage the rest of the industries to pay their dues immediately. Senior Vice Chairman Kamran Arshad gave a detailed briefing on the background of the issue and promised that the whole amount of arrears would be recovered provided incentive of waiver of penalty was announced on voluntary payment of dues.

He also urged the secretary to include APTMA nominees to the PESSI and PWWF Boards besides sharing statistics on Labour Unions/CBAs as well as status of the implementation of labour related conventions required for GSP Plus status. On the issue of retail timings to ensure balanced energy conservation, Vice Chairman Asad Shafi proposed that the Punjab government should reach out a mutually agree-

Punjab govt assures APTMA of resolving industry's issues on priority

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab government has assured All Pakistan Textile Mills Association (APTMA) of resolving industry's issues on priority. The assurance was extended by Nabeel Javed, Secretary Labour, Government of the Punjab, during a meeting with the APTMA delegation on Thursday. The APTMA delegation consisted of Chairman APTMA North Hamid Zaman, Senior Vice Chairman Kamran Arshad, Vice Chairman Asad Shafi, Executives SM Nabeel, Ali Arshad and Secretary General Raza Baqir. Senior Punjab government officers were also present.

Chairman Hamid Zaman highlighted the problems being faced by the member mills regarding penalty on the payment of Punjab Employees Social Security Institution (PESSI) arrears. He said that APTMA member mills were seeking a waiver of the penalty levied under Section 23 of the PESSI Ordinance to voluntarily pay outstanding PESSI arrears in easy installments.



ISLAMABAD: A shopkeeper selling dry fruit and snacks at Aabpara market in Federal Capital.

Govt determined to introduce reforms to achieve economic stability: Dar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar Friday said that despite inheriting a weak economic legacy, the government is determined to set the economy in the right direction and introduce reforms in various sectors to achieve economic stability and growth.

Chairing the inaugural meeting of the Reforms and Resource Mobilization Commission (RRMC) here at the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), he highlighted the

importance of the Reforms and Resource Mobilization Commission in identifying issues and difficulties in the existing taxation system and suggesting reforms in existing revenue policies for resource mobilization, ease of doing business and tax payer facilitation to achieve sustainable economic growth.

SAPM on Revenue Tariq Mehmood Pasha, Chairman RRMC Ashfaq Yousuf Tola, Chairman FBR Asim Ahmed, Abdul Hameed Memon Dr. Mohammad Iqbal, Dr.

Veqar Ahmed, Ghazanfar Bilour, Ardsheer Saleem Tariq and Tauqeer Ahmed attended the meeting in person while Rana Munir Hussain President Pakistan Tax Bar Association, President FPCCI Irfan Iqbal Sheikh, Asif Haroon, Haider Ali Patel, Abdul Qadir Memon and Ziad Bashir virtually attended the meeting through zoom.

The minister welcomed the members of the Commission and highlighted the economic and financial outlook of the country.

The Finance Minister extended his best wishes and support to the Commission and emphasized the members to put their best efforts into fast-track activity of the Commission in introducing tax reforms for the financial and economic stability and enhancement of revenue generation. Ashfaq Yousuf Tola Chairman RRMC expressed his gratitude to the Finance Minister for taking a keen interest in notifying the Commission including all level stakeholders and for detailed ToRs for comprehensive reforms.

LCCI to present economic policy framework to govt

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) has started consultations to prepare an economic policy framework to help the government overcome grave challenges it is facing currently.

In this regard, LCCI President Kashif Anwar met a team of economists, led by Ali Salman, Managing Trustee, Policy Research Institute of Market Economy, on Friday and had a marathon discussion with them.

During the course of discussion, it was decided that a document would be prepared for the government to guide it about resolving the economic issues. Ali Salman gave a detailed briefing to the LCCI president regarding economic situation and said that the government should bring down rate of taxes to

increase revenue besides lowering the expenditures.

The LCCI president said that the current state of the economy required comprehensive solutions because the country was swiftly moving toward scarcity of almost everything essential for life. Due to continued repercussions from shocks like Covid-19 and the Ukraine war, Pakistan is one of the countries that are suffering the most. Pakistan's frail economy has suffered more than \$30 billion in losses as a result of the floods devastation.

All state stakeholders, political parties, entrepreneurs and citizens, must come together at this time to prevent the crisis from getting out of control and should sign a charter of economy.

LCCI President Kashif Anwar said that the major issue of shortage of sup-

plies, whether industrial or consumer items, is caused because of shortage of raw materials, and shortage always triggers inflation. The current pace of inflation is too high for our economy to handle, he added.

He said due to the non-opening of letters of credit (LCs), the containers with raw materials and machinery were stuck at ports and incurring rising detention costs. "We are aware that the country is short on foreign currency, and international donors like the IMF programmes are running behind schedule," said Kashif Anwar. "However, we must think creatively and ask our own citizens to support the economy," he added. "To do this, we must declare an amnesty, which will have a very positive impact," he suggested.

SECP issues 'Master Circular for Mutual Funds', CIsS, and IASs

ISLAMABAD (APP): In order to facilitate the asset management industry and to ensure compliance with statutory/regulatory requirements in an efficient manner, the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has issued an updated Master Circular for Asset Management Companies (AMCs) and Investment Advisors (IAs).

The Master Circular is a compilation of all applicable circulars, directions and clarifications issued by the SECP from time to time for regulation of collective investment schemes (CIS) /mutual funds/ investment advisory services (IASs), said a press release issued here on Friday.

The Master Circular covers matters related to digitization, advertisements, categorization of CIS and investment avenues, disclosure requirements, Constant Proportion Portfolio Insurance (CPPI) based schemes, exchange traded funds (ETFs), performance benchmarks for CIS, and selling and marketing of CIS.

It also covers sales load and expenses, valuation and provisioning, mandatory certifications for professionals of NBFCs and distribution of Units of CIS, outsourcing arrangements, risk management and compliance, merger of open-end schemes, procedure for unit holders meeting, separately managed accounts and closed end schemes. In case of any inconsistency between the Master Circular and the applicable circular, the contents of the relevant circular shall prevail.

Google parent Alphabet to cut 12,000 jobs

NEW YORK (BBC): Google's parent company Alphabet will cut 12,000 jobs, in the latest staff redundancies to hit the tech industry. Google and Alphabet CEO Sundar Pichai said he took "full responsibility" for the cuts, in an internal email. The cuts will affect 6% of Alphabet's workforce worldwide, in teams including recruitment and engineering.

This comes days after Microsoft announced 10,000 jobs would be lost, and

weeks after Amazon announced 18,000 job cuts.

Mr Pichai thanked staff for "working so hard" in their roles, adding that their "contributions have been invaluable".

He wrote: "While this transition won't be easy, we're going to support employees as they look for their next opportunity.

"Until then, please take good care of yourselves as you absorb this difficult news. As part of that, if you

are just starting your work day, please feel free to work from home today."

According to a recent filing with Companies House, Google has more than 5,500 staff in the UK. But it is unclear how many of these will be affected by the cuts. Mr Pichai announced severance packages for US employees, who will receive at least 16 weeks of salary, their 2022 bonus, paid vacations and six months of health coverage.



ISLAMABAD: A street vendor selling coal roasted sweet potatoes to earn some livelihood at his roadside setup.

Stocks rebound, yen slides tracking inflation fallout

LONDON (AFP/APP): Stock markets rebounded Friday after a rocky week dominated by uncertainty over whether the global economy will suffer recession this year as inflation remains stubbornly high.

Traders are weighing poorly-received US economic data and earnings against an expected boost from China's reopening after three years of painful lockdowns.

On currency markets, the yen slid one percent against the dollar, even as data showed Japanese inflation hit a four-decade high.

Analysts are not convinced that despite rising prices, the Bank of Japan will start to raise interest rates.

Oil prices meanwhile extended Thursday's gains as

investors focused on the recovery in demand from China, with suggestions that the country's Covid infections may have peaked adding to the optimism among commodity traders.

"The overarching concerns of a global slowdown remain, even though... investors are still pinning their hopes on a significant boost from the reopening in China," noted Richard Hunter, head of markets at Interactive Investor.

"This possible division of prospects between Asian and other economies is propping up Chinese markets in particular, albeit amid a rocky start to the year."

Google's parent company Alphabet on Friday announced plans to axe about 12,000 jobs worldwide.

The move comes a day after Microsoft said it would reduce staff numbers by 10,000 in the coming months. Similar layoffs by Facebook owner Meta, Amazon and Twitter have also been revealed as the previously unassailable tech sector faces a major economic downturn. On the upside, US streaming giant Netflix has said that it ended last year with more than 230 million global subscribers, beating analysts' expectations as hits such as "Wednesday" and "Harry & Meghan" enticed new viewers. Netflix became a publicly traded company in early 2002 at an opening price of \$15 a share.

Shares in the streaming television service were up nearly 7 percent to \$337.31 in

after-market trades that followed release of the earnings figures. London - FTSE 100: UP 0.2 percent at 7,758.75 points Frankfurt - DAX: UP 0.3 percent at 14,965.47 Paris - CAC 40: UP 0.5 percent at 6,989.69

EURO STOXX 50: UP 0.4 percent at 4,111.23

Tokyo - Nikkei 225: UP 0.6 percent at 26,553.53 (close)

Hong Kong - Hang Seng Index: UP 1.8 percent at 22,044.65 (close)

Shanghai - Composite: UP 0.8 percent at 3,264.81 (close)

New York - Dow: DOWN 0.8 percent at 33,044.56 (close)

Dollar/yen: UP at 129.21 yen from 128.40 yen on Thursday

'Solidarity, integrity of Pakistan linked with stable economy'

FAISALABAD (APP): Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) President Dr Khurram Tariq has said that solidarity and integrity of Pakistan is directly linked with a stable economy, and in this connection charter of economy is imperative to save it from unnecessary political upheavals.

Addressing a meeting of former presidents and executive committee members, he said that the government must realise the gravity of the situation and finalise the draft of a charter of economy by taking all stakeholders, including political parties, on board. He said that continuity of economic policies is imperative for uninterrupted and sustained industrial, commercial and business growth without derailling it with the change of governments. He explained his visits to Karachi and Islamabad where he had discussed the critical economic issues with the policy makers and business leaders. He also briefed the participants of the meeting

about the decisions taken in All Pakistan Chambers Summit-2023 organised by the RCCI. He said that Pakistan has to accept the conditionality of IMF to get a minor tranche of only one billion dollars. He said that the contribution of the business community is much more than the IMF and government must protect their legitimate interests. He said that an increase of two billion dollars per annum in trade is not a major issue provided the government take into confidence and facilitates the business community by ensuring a congenial and peaceful environment in the country. He said that only one ship is cleared out of five ships anchored at ports.

"The reason behind it is the shortage of dollars," he said and added that it has created a shortage of raw material which has further reduced the industrial, commercial and business activities in the country. He urged the political parties to sign the charter of

economy in the greater interest of the nation and country.

He warned that if political parties remained adamant, the business community would be forced to take stringent measures at its own including a countrywide call to boycott the election. He said that the election without the active participation of "bread earners" would have no constitutional, legal or moral standing as politicians alone could not save the country from the economic mess.

He said that the business community is committed to the charter of economy and is ready to play its proactive role to protect the greater economic interest of the country instead of falling prey to the politicking of selfish politicians. He requested the former presidents and executive members to sensitize the business community within their influential circles to get them ready to protect their economic interests.

**In brief****Leandro joins Gunners from Brighton**

Arsenal have signed Belgium international Leandro Trossard from Brighton for £21m plus add-ons. The 28-year-old forward's contract runs until 2027 and has the option of being extended by a year. He has scored seven goals and provided three assists in 16 top-flight games for Brighton this season. "He knows the league here and I think he can have an immediate impact in the team," Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta said. The Gunners say they have submitted the required documents and hope Trossard will be available to face Manchester United at Emirates Stadium on Sunday (16:30 GMT). "We're really happy to have him," said Arteta, who confirmed Trossard had trained with the squad on Friday. "He's a player we have followed for a while now and the opportunity came and we have the necessity to have a player in the front line that is versatile enough to play different positions." Trossard, who made three appearances for Belgium at the 2022 World Cup, will wear number 19 for Arsenal.

LIV players have right to play

ABU DHABI (AFP/APP): Henrik Stenson has insisted that players who signed up to the Saudi-backed LIV Golf series should be allowed to compete on the European Tour. Stenson, who was axed as Europe's Ryder Cup skipper last year after joining the new cash-soaked tour, believes the rebels who "earn the right" should be welcome on the European circuit, now known as the DP World Tour. "There's multiple tours in the world and as far as I'm concerned, as long as you fulfill your criteria and earn your right to be there, you should be able to play in as many tournaments as you like," said the Swede. "But I haven't had anyone step up to me personally and vent those thoughts," added the 2016 British Open champion. The fate of LIV players on the European Tour will be decided at a legal hearing next month. Stenson, playing on the regular tour for the first time since last July's Scottish Open, was four shots off the pace after the first round of the Abu Dhabi Championship on Thursday. Out in front is Luke Donald, the man who succeeded him as Europe's Ryder Cup captain for this year's clash with the United States in Rome.

Teen Gauff wins all-American clash

MELBOURNE (AFP/APP): Coco Gauff's bid to become the youngest Australian Open champion since 1997 gathered pace Friday with a straight-sets victory over fellow American Bernarda Pera. The 18-year-old won 6-3, 6-2 on Rod Laver Arena to set up a last-16 clash against the 2017 French Open champion Jelena Ostapenko. A maiden Grand Slam title for seventh seed Gauff would make her the youngest Melbourne champion since a 16-year-old Martina Hingis 26 years ago. Gauff headed into the first major of the year on a high after winning her third WTA title at the Auckland Classic earlier this month. She admitted she "got lucky" in her tight second-round victory over Emma Raducanu in a battle of tennis prodigies. But Gauff let her racket do the talking in her first meeting with power-hitter Pera, relentlessly soaking up some late pressure from the world number 41 when serving for the match at 5-2.

PSL 2023 to kick off with Multan Sultans vs Lahore Qalandars in repeat of last season's final

LAHORE (Cricinfo): Rawalpindi will host the most number of games in PSL 2023, which gets underway on February 13 in Multan with a contest between Multan Sultans and Lahore Qalandars, the defending champions.

A total of 11 matches will be played in Rawalpindi, while Karachi (nine), Lahore (nine) and Multan (five) will host the remaining games. The final, on March 19, as well as the playoffs prior to it, will all be played in Lahore. Three women's "festival games" have also been slotted midway into the PSL - in Rawalpindi on March 8, 10 and 11 - involving local and overseas players in what will be a case of the PCB testing the waters ahead of a full-fledged women's T20 league in the future. These will all be day games and be part of double-headers, with men's PSL games to follow in the evening. The PCB earlier had plans to have the inaugural women's league run concurrently to the men's PSL, but that was shelved. As things stand, the aim is to launch a standalone project in later this year. The new league - which will bear a different name - shall have four teams.

This season marks a return to four venues for the league after it was restricted to two centres in the past two seasons because of Covid-19. Najam Sethi,

PSL 2023 FIXTURES				
MATCH	DATE	TEAMS	VENUE	
Match 1	Feb 13	MS vs LQ	Multan	
Match 30	Mar 12	LQ vs KK	Lahore	
Qualifier	Mar 15	Team 1 vs Team 2	Lahore	
Eliminator 1	Mar 16	Team 3 vs Team 4	Lahore	
Eliminator 2	Mar 17	Eliminator W vs Qualifier L	Lahore	
Final	Mar 19	TBA	Lahore	

head of the PCB's new management committee, had earlier said that Quetta would be included in the list of venues for the first time, but the city has been omitted from the fixtures' list released on Friday.

Sethi, addressing a press meet, said "logistical concerns" had led to a change of plans for the PCB. It would have been the first time as a PSL venue for Quetta - the capital of Balochistan, Pakistan's least populous province but its largest by area - after the city staged its only ODI back in 1996, a three-wick-

et Pakistan win over Zimbabwe. Quetta has hosted domestic cricket since 1954 but has often been neglected because of a lack of infrastructure and the security situation over the years. Cricket has not been as popular in Balochistan compared to other regions of Pakistan, historically, and only one player from the province, Shoaib Khan, has represented Pakistan. He played four T20Is during a quadrangular in Canada in 2008.

"The PSL will be a massive event for the PCB, tak-

ing place at the four iconic venues with the world's best T20 cricketers in action," Sethi said. "We aim to make the league bigger, better and stronger than ever before with the overarching ambition to make it the first-choice event for leading T20 cricketers. Each of the six sides will enter the PSL 8 with lots at stake."

The PSL schedule was put in place in December, before Sethi replaced Ramiz Raja at the helm of the PCB, and the new PCB management hasn't made any major change to it. There was a suggestion that the opening ceremony be moved out of Multan and be held in Karachi, but that hasn't happened. The only tweak is that Qalandars, who had back-to-back games on February 19 and 20, will now play the games on February 19 and 21, with the original February 21 game between Quetta Gladiators and Peshawar Zalmi now taking place on February 20.

The schedule has been designed to allow four sides (Qalandars, Sultans, Karachi Kings and Islamabad United) to play five matches each in front of their supporters, one against each of the other teams. Quetta and Peshawar won't have any home games since their home venues are not ready to host high profile games, but the plan is to get them ready by PSL 2024.

Nida Dar: We need more international matches and leagues to be competitive

SYDNEY (Cricinfo): Allrounder Nida Dar has called for more opportunities for Pakistan's players at international and domestic level to bridge the gap between them and the best in the world.

Pakistan are currently touring Australia with the margins of defeat being wide in the first two ODIs - eight wickets and ten wickets - although they are far from the only side to suffer that at the hands of the immense strength and depth of the home side. Last year they reached the semi-final of the Asia Cup where they lost by one run against Sri Lanka having beaten India in the group stage.

Dar, who previously played for Sydney Thunder during the 2019 WBBL, has top-scored in both games with 59 and 24 - being unluckily run out in the second game when a straight drive deflected off Kim Garth's fingers into the non-striker's stumps - after starting the tour with 4 for 46 against the

Governor-General's XI. "We need more matches to minimise the gap with the best teams," Dar said in Sydney ahead of the final ODI. "We always wanted to play competitive [cricket] and we can only improve when we play a lot of matches against the best teams."

"Always wanted to play Australia and share the experience, learn from [them], but the thing is as a team we need more exposure and more matches against Australia. We definitely learn a lot and that's what we want."

The women's game is on the verge of an era-defining moment with the launch of the WIPL in March. The TV rights were sold this week for a huge sum, which equated to close to a US \$1 million per game and there is much interest in how the auction will play out with Australians expected to feature prominently.

However, Pakistan's players won't be able to feature in that competition

given the current political situation between the two countries, which makes other opportunities around the world even more important to them.

Key to that is the launch of the Pakistan women's T20 league, which had been planned to run alongside the men's PSL but has now been pushed back under the new PCB management with the hope it can begin in its own window in September.

That would put it at around the same time as the WCPL, which began last season as a three-event and featured Pakistan seamer Fatima Sana, and after the Hundred in the UK, which has become one of the major global leagues. The WBBL continues to sit in an October-November timeslot. While Pakistan's league continues to take shape, Dar said it was vital more players were given chances overseas. "Definitely it is very important for the players in Pakistan to play international leagues like Big Bash or Hundred to improve," she said.

Australian Open 2023 Andy Murray calls 4am finishes in tennis a 'farce'

Andy Murray says finishing his second-round match at the Australian Open at 4am was a "farce".

The 35-year-old's arduous five-set win over home favourite Thanasi Kokkinakis took five hours 45 minutes. That followed Murray's first-round win on Tuesday, when the Briton sealed victory in four hours 49 minutes against Italian Matteo Berrettini.

"I don't know who it's [the late finish] beneficial for," said Murray on court after the Kokkinakis match.

"We come here after the match and that's what the discussion is, rather than it being like, 'epic Murray-Kokkinakis match'. It ends in a bit of a farce.

"Amazingly people stayed until the end, and I really appreciate people doing that and creating an atmosphere for us. Some people obviously need to work the following day and everything," Murray was two sets down and looked to be heading out of the competition before digging deep to defeat 26-year-old

Kokkinakis, who is ranked 159th in the world, 4-6 6-7 (4-7) 7-6 (7-5) 6-3 7-5.

He will face Spanish 24th seed Roberto Bautista Agut in the third round.

The rowdy fans inside the venue were treated to a fine spectacle from both players - despite it approaching the six-hour mark - but Murray also highlighted another problem with overly-long matches. "If my child was a ball kid for a tournament and they're coming home at five in the morning, as a parent, I'm snapping at that. It's not beneficial for them," said the three-time Grand Slam winner.

"It's not beneficial for the umpires, the officials. I don't think it's amazing for the fans. It's not good for the players." The match start time of 22:20 was also an issue, according to Murray. "We talk about it all the time, and it's been spoken about for years," said the Scot. "But when you start the night matches late and have [cold] conditions like that, these things are going to happen." Tournament director Craig

Tiley said on Friday there was no need to change the schedule "at this point", pointing to the rain and extreme heat that delayed play earlier in the week. "We will always look at it when we do the tournament like we do every year," Tiley told Australia's Channel Nine.

"It was an epic match and when you schedule a match like that just before 10pm in the evening, you're not expecting it to go close to six hours."

Third seed Jessica Pegula, who is on the WTA Players' Council: "It is ridiculous to be asking people to be there at that time. I don't think there is any job where people are volunteering - such as ball kids - who are required to be there that late. It's not healthy for anyone. "It can affect the players going into the next round and at this stage - at such a high level - that stuff is really important, especially for someone like Andy who needs time to recover and physically feel right for the next round.



HEC opens trials' registration for volleyball, cricket, football

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Higher Education Commission (HEC) has announced the opening of trials' registrations for volleyball, cricket and football under Prime Minister Youth Programme "Talent Hunt Youth Sports League".

According to official sources, the trials' will be taken from both male and female nationals across all Pakistanis including AJK and GB.

As per eligibility criteria, the age of the players must be between 15 to 25 years on January 30, 2023.

It is informed that departmental players are not eligible for this sports hunt league.

The players are asked to must submit online applications at <http://pmyp.gov.pk/hec/SpotsForm>. Meanwhile on-spot registration facility will also be available at the trials' location.

The trials' locations are including Dera Murad Jamali, Sibi/Turbat, Khuzdar, Uthal/Hub, Quetta and Loralai from Balochistan, while Mirpur, Islamabad, Gilgit,

Muzafarabad and Skardu from AJK/GB divisions, and Bannu, Swat, Peshawar, Hazara and Mardan from Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. Similarly, Rawalpindi, Sialkot, Faisalabad, Lahore, Bahawalpur/Multan from Punjab, while Hyderabad, Karachi, Sukkur, Larkana, and Shaheed Benazirabad from the Sindh province.

It is worth mentioning here that registration for Table Tennis, Badminton & Squash are also open and the trials' for these sports will open soon.

Platinum Homes/MP, Remington Pharma in main final

LAHORE (APP): Platinum Homes/Master Paints and Remington Pharma qualified for the main final of the Maj Gen Saeed-uz-Zaman Janjua Memorial Polo Cup 2023 sponsored by JS Bank after winning their respective matches here at the Jinnah Polo Fields on Friday.

Three matches were decided and after tough contests, Black Horse Paints, Platinum Homes/Master Paints and Remington Pharma emerged as winners on Friday. In the first semifinal, Platinum Homes/Master Paints edged past Diamond Paints/Sheikhoo Steel by a close margin of 9-8. For Platinum Homes/Master Paints, Amirreza Behboudi played superb polo and fired in fabulous four goals while Qadeer Ashfaq and Sufi Muhammad Haroon banged in a brace each and Agha Musa Ali Khan struck one goal.

Nico Roberts though played well for Diamond Paints/Nagina Group and smashed in superb six goals and Lt Col Omer Minhas (R) thrashed in two goals, but their efforts couldn't yield fruit for their side, which lost the crucial match by 8-9. Raja Mikael Sami and Ahmad Bilal Riaz

supervised the match as field umpires. The second semifinal saw Remington Pharma defeating FG/Din Polo Team by 5-3½. Inform Hamza Mawaz Khan played excellent polo and smashed in superb five goals. His teammates Raja Jalal Arsalan and Shah Shamyil Alam also played well and converted two and one goal respectively. From the team FG/Din Polo, which had a half goal handicap advantage, Raja Jalal Arsalan thrashed in two goals while Shah Shamyil Alam converted one. Amirreza Behboudi and Raja Sami Ullah officiated the match as field umpires.

Earlier in the first match of the day, Black Horse Paints defeated Pindi Express team by a narrow margin of 5-4½. Hissam Ali Hyder and Adul Rehman Monnoo played outstanding polo for Black Horse Paints and hammered three and two goals respectively. From Pindi Express, which had a half goal handicap advantage, Raja Mikael Sami hammered a hat-trick and Nazir Dean Ali Khan struck one. Amirreza Behboudi and Raja Jalal Arsalan were the field umpires. A good number of players and families were present at the ground to enjoy the polo matches in the cold weather.

Commissioner inaugurates Stadium

BAHAWALPUR (APP): Commissioner Bahawalpur Division Raja Jahangir Anwar here on Friday inspected the Synthetic Athletics Project at Dring Stadium. The estimated cost of this project is Rs 370 million. This project includes the construction of the mini pavilion, synthetic track, athletic field, construction of toilet blocks.

Assistant Commissioner Bahawalpur City Dr. Anam Fatima, Divisional Sports Officer Aamir Hameed, officers, media representatives and a large number of athletes were present on the occasion. Commissioner Raja Jahangir Anwar said that after the installation of the synthetic track, national and international level competitions would be held here. He said that after completion of the synthetic track, all the related sports including running, high jump, long jump and javelin throw as well as excellent athletics facilities would be available.

The Commissioner said that ground has been prepared near Sir Sadiq Mohammad Khan Abbasi Hospital to provide cricket facilities to the youth. He said that a water filtration plant was also being installed. The Commissioner said that floodlights were being installed in the Women Cricket Stadium for the promotion of women cricket.



FAISALABAD: Lahore College for Women University (LCWU) has won All Pakistan 10th HEC Intervarsity Netball Women Championship 2022-23 at The University of Faisalabad (TUF).



In brief

IRSA releases 42,400 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Friday released 45,400 cusecs of water from various rim stations with an inflow of 40,500 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1498.26 feet and was 100.26 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 17,400 cusecs while outflow was 25,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1124.85 feet, which was 74.85 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded at 5,800 cusecs and 100 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded at 21,400, 24,700, 10,600 and 4,900 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 10,200 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera and 7,200 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.

Police arrest five gamblers

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi district Police arrested five gamblers and recovered Rs 12,230 stake money, five mobile phones and valuables from their possession here on Friday, a police spokesman said. He informed that Gujjar Khan police conducted a raid and arrested five gamblers namely Khalid, Shahid, Malik Arab, Masood and Adil who were allegedly involved in betting over quail fights. A case has been registered against them while further investigation is under process. Superintendent of Police, Saddar Muhammad Nabeel Khokhar said that gambling is the root cause of other evils and those involved in such crimes do not deserve any concession.

Police arrest 26 anti-social elements

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi District Police, in their ongoing operations against law-breakers, conducted raids in different areas and rounded up 26 drug peddlers, bootleggers, illegal weapon holders and other criminals besides seizing over nine kg charras, seven 30 bore pistols, a 12 bore gun, a 9mm pistol, ammunition and other items from their possession, said a police spokesman here on Friday. He informed that Kahuta, Dhamial, Race Course, Taxila, Saddar Wah and Mandra police arrested Naseerullah, Abdul Rehman, Ali Hassan, Khurram Shehzad, Asif, Shoab, and Karan and recovered over nine kg charras from their possession. Bani police in their operation against Proclaimed Offenders (POs) managed to net an accused namely Shehbaz Alias Shabi wanted in a murder case of two persons, Fahad and Ibrahim killed in 2016. Taxila police also rounded up two POs namely Badar Jahangir and Nasir, wanted in an attempt to murder case of a citizen, Azhar. Similarly, Taxila, Gujjar Khan, New Town, Gunghandi, and Saddar Wah police netted five bootleggers namely Irfan, Farooq, Altaf, Abdul Rehman and Munir and recovered 48 liters liquor from their possession. Rawalpindi District Police nabbed nine for possessing illegal weapons and recovered seven 30 bore pistols, a 12 bore gun, a 9mm pistol and ammunition. Meanwhile, Rawalpindi district police under their ongoing campaign against professional beggars rounded up 33. He informed that separate cases have been registered against the accused while further investigations are under process.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate, Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani receives Ambassador Of United States, Mr. Donald Blome at his residence.

Pakistan greatly values its multifaceted relationship with US

ISLAMABAD (APP): Senate Chairman Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani has said that Pakistan greatly values its multifaceted relationship with the United States and desires to further expand the friendly ties for the mutual benefit of the two sides. Senate Chairman expressed these views during a meeting with Ambassador of United States Donald Blome in Islamabad. A reception was also hosted in honor of the Ambassador at Sanjrani's residence. During the meeting, the dignitaries discussed matters of mutual interest, bilateral collaborations, and development in the region. The Senate Chairman thanked the US government for its cooperation and collaboration with Pakistan in various fields and appreciated the role of the US government in providing much-needed support to the Pakistani flood affectees. He also emphasized increasing trade links and enhancement of bilateral relations in different sectors.

NADRA terminates 43 staffers from service for 'illegal processing' in a year: Senate told

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister of State for Interior Abdul Rehman Khan Kanju on Friday informed the Senate that National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) had terminated 43 staffer involved in the illegal processing of computerized national identity cards (CNICs) during the period from July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022 across the country.

Responding to the question of Pakistan Peoples Party's Senator Bahramand

Khan Tangi, he said NADRA initiated 279 inquiries against employees involved in the illegal processing as per E&D Rules 2020 during the period. The minister said during the last three years, 181 CNICs, issued to non-nationals, had been canceled by NADRA. However, cases of 8,152 individuals were under process of national status verification, he added.

He said due to presence of a large number of illegal

immigrants in the country, NADRA had to be extra vigilant to encounter the menace of non-nationals' inclusion in database besides ensuring that only genuine citizens should be registered. He said in past, a few non-nationals succeeded in obtaining the CNICs by providing fake documents through connivance of NADRA employees. However, CNICs of such non-nationals were digitally impounded/canceled as and when reported, he maintained.

Turi arrives in Saudi Arabia to promote Pakistani manpower export

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Sajid Hussain Turi arrived in Saudi Arabia on a five-day visit, mainly to promote the export of Pakistani manpower to Saudi Arabia and enhance bilateral relations.

At the airport, Deputy Minister of Saudi Arabia, Dr Adnan Al Naeem, warmly welcomed the federal minister. The purpose of his visit he termed to explore maximum employment opportunities for labourers, skilled and highly skilled Pakistani professionals in Saudi Arabia, a news release said. Turi expressed his gratitude to Saudi Deputy Minister Adnan Al Naeem and said that Saudi Arabia was the destination of thousands of Pakistanis and center of the entire Muslim Ummah in terms of religious devotion. He said that between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, there were eternal friendly brotherly relations since the first day and Saudi Arabia has always helped Pakistan in difficult times.

Federal Minister Sajid Hussain Turi visited the Pakistani Embassy in Riyadh where Pakistani Ambassador Amir Khurram Rathore gave him a detailed briefing about the various departments of the embassy. On this occasion, the Federal Minister said, "Pakistan always regards its relations with Kingdom of Saudi Arabia high which is based upon Islamic brotherhood and mutual respect." He said that the current government is trying to further strengthen Pakistan's long-standing relations with Saudi Arabia and further

strengthen mutual economic and cultural cooperation between the two countries.

He urged the embassy staff to solve the problems of overseas Pakistanis on a priority basis and provide them with all kinds of facilities. He emphasized that solving the problems of overseas Pakistanis on a priority basis is the prime responsibility of his ministry and embassy. He also urged the Pakistani Embassy to provide all possible assistance to the Pakistani immigrants in KSA and the Pakistani Embassy in KSA to highlight the true image of Pakistan and encourage Saudi investors to invest in Pakistan.

Appreciating the efforts of overseas Pakistanis Minister said that they are not only feeding their children by working hard away from their country and families but are also strengthening the country's economy through foreign remittances. He said that he is well aware of the problems of overseas Pakistanis and is working day and night to solve all their problems. He assured the overseas Pakistanis that they can contact them whenever they want.

Federal Minister Sajid Hussain Turi visited the office of Technical and Vocational Training Corporation of Saudi Arabia in Riyadh, where he had a detailed meeting with the Governor, Dr. Ahmed bin Fahd Al Fahd. In the meeting, there was a detailed discussion and agreement on employment opportunities for Pakistanis, increasing exports of Pakistani manpower to Saudi Arabia and increasing cooperation in technical training of workers.

IESCO notifies power suspension programme

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Friday issued a power suspension programme for Saturday for various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work.

According to IESCO Spokesman, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period from 09:00 AM to 02:00 PM. Islamabad Circle, G-6, Burma, Tamer, T&T, Tramri, Service Road East, F-8, GOR, I-10/3, Bella Road, D-12/2, NIH, Kaldana, Beirut, Nimble, Patriata, Upper Topa, Bri Imam Feeders, Rawalpindi City Circle, Sixth Road, Sadiqabad, A-Block, Effendi Colony, National Market, Curry Road, Al Noor Colony, Tariq, Shaheed, Zafarul Haq, Arya Mohalla, Fuwara Chowk, Rajahabad, Amin Town, Eid Gah, Kayani Road, Race Course, Radio Pak, Bijnyal, Noon, BB Shaheed Feeders, Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, Haider Road, Jahangir Road, Makkah Chowk, Car Chowk, , RCCI Express, Scheme 3, Major Riaz, Chontra, Dharmyal, Garja.1, Ara Bazar, Dhok Awan, Zaraj, IST, Kahota City, 1, Kambili Sadiq, Fazl Ahmed, New Chawah, Ghazan Khan, Hamid Jhangi, Kalliam, Sukhu, Syed Kasran, Mahota, Mohra Nagyal, New Rawat, Pind Jatla, Jarrar Camp, Jhata Hatial, Shahigan, Adiala Jail, Shahpur, Khasala Feeders, Attock Circle, Mushtaq Hussain, Wahadat Colony, Kala Khan, ECHS D-18, Gulshan Sahat, Small Industrial Estate, Lal Zar, Khanabad, Lal Rukh, Islampur, Bara Zee, Visa, Kachhari, Dhok Fateh, Dar es Salaam, Hattian, Tan Mela, Bagh Nelab, Shah Dher, Karpa, Batiot, Bahtar, Pari, Mahfooz Shaheed, Gilyal, Fateh Jang, Laniwala Feeders, from 10:00 AM till 03:00 p.m. Chakwal Circle, Kriyala, Line Park, Mureed, Kaler Kahar, Islamia Chowk, Daulatala, Dhadial Express, Durgi Rajgan, Al Qadir Mill, Sarkal, Dandut, Dufar, Toba, PD Khan, Abdullahpur, Kot Chaudharyan, Kot Gula, Kot Shera, Akwal, Bilalabad, Dharmand, Malkwal Feeders, Jhelum Circle, Ajmal Shaheed, Sanaullah Shaheed, CMH Jhelum, F-3 Gul Afshan, Mandi Bhalwal.

42 journalists murdered in last 4 years: Senate told

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Javed Abbasi on Friday informed the Senate that 42 journalists were murdered in the last four years across the country.

Responding to the question of Jamaat-e-Islami's Senator Mushtaq Ahmed, he said that it was a critical situation and the government should take prompt action against the culprits and journalists should be provided special security.

Abbasi directed the Ministry of Interior to prepare a consolidated report on the matter and present it to the House within the period of two months.

Balochistan Awami Party's Senator Danesh Kumar pointed out that there were more than 10 journalists who were murdered in Balochistan instead of three shown in this report.

To this, the minister said that this report was compiled after a thorough consultation with all the quarters concerned of the provinces and if someone had given a wrong figure, he must be accountable as it was a sensitive matter.

Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl's Senator Kamran Murtaza proposed the minister that the journalists who had lost their lives

in line of their duty, should be properly probed on which subject they were working before their murder.

To this, the minister assured the House that the report would be a comprehensive one. According to the statistics, 15 journalists were murdered in Punjab while 11 in Sindh, 13 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and 3 in Balochistan.

Muhammad Saad, Safdar Ali, Muhammad Wajid, Zeeshan Ashraf Butt, Mirza Waseem Baig, Saeed Butt, Zia -ur-Rehman Farooqi, Rao Matloob, Husnain Shah, Mian Razzaq, Zahid Ali, Muhammad Nizam, Kashif Hussain, Lala Fazal Jan, Zia Kambho, Aziz Memon, Ajay Lalwani, Ali Sher Rajpar, Mureed Abbas, Ilyas Warsi, Zulfiqar Ali Mandrani, Noor Lanjwani, Nazim Jokhio, Murtaza Shar, Athar Mateen, Ishfaq Sodharo, Wahab, Zaman Mehsood, Haroon Khan, Javidullah Khan, Noonul Hassan, Iftikhar Ahmad, Tahir Hussain, Ihsan Ullah Sherpao, Waseem Alam, Abdul Wahab, Muhammad Sohail Khan, Aman Ullah, Qais Javed Maseeh, Abdul Wahid Raisani, Anwar Khethran and Shahid Zehri were the journalists murdered during the last four years across the country, he added.

Govt restores previous status of PMDC

ISLAMABAD (APP): The government has restored the previous status of the Pakistan Medical Council (PMC) after receiving assent of the President of Pakistan on Pakistan Medical and Dental Council Act, 2022 sent by the Parliament.

According to spokesperson of the council, after official signing of gazette notification, the PMDC bill has become now fully functional.

He said that now all matters of the PMDC will be handled as per the guidelines given in the passed bill which was signed by the President of Pakistan to reconstitute the Pakistan Medical and Dental Council in order to establish a uniform minimum standard of basic and higher qualifications in medicine and dentistry.

It is pertinent to mention here that the Joint Session of the parliament (Majlis-e-Shoora) passed the Pakistan Medical and

Dental Council Bill, 2022 on December 20, 2022. The bill was returned and raised objections by the President of Pakistan Dr. Arif Alvi for further amendments.

MNA Dr. Mehreen Razzaq Bhutto from Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) presented the bill to reconstitute the Medical and Dental Council in Pakistan (The Pakistan Medical and Dental Council Bill, 2022).

As per the commencement Pakistan Medical and Dental Council Act, 2022, shall stand dissolved and the Minister-in-charge of the Division shall look after the affairs of the council till the constitution of the new council under this act is elected by the council. The Minister-in-charge of the Division shall exercise the powers of the council during the transitory period. The National Assembly and Senate of Pakistan had already passed the PMDC Bill, 2022.

ANF arrested several suspects, recovered narcotics

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) in a crackdown against drug pushers across the country, arrested several peddlers and recovered a huge cache of drugs from their possession.

The force, in an operation here on Friday, held a man accused of smuggling drugs in educational institutions, and recovered 200 narcotic pills from his possession. In another operation near Gwadar, an under construction house was raided and 100 kg hidden hashish was recovered. It was learnt that the recovered drugs were about to smuggle abroad through sea route. Moreover, ANF and Frontier

Constabulary (FC) in a joint operation at Angoor Adda, seized 50kg hashish from a car. Almost 31 kg and 200 grams of hashish were seized in a similar operation, conducted near a hill of Killa Abdullah.

Besides this, two suspects were detained in different operations, at Bacha Khan International Airport Peshawar.

A Buner based resident, who was travelling to Jeddah, had 6 kg and 890 grams of ice in his trolley bag. Moreover, 1 kg and 304 grams of hashish was recovered from the trolley bag of an Abu Dhabi bound passenger during the search operation. He was the resident of Bannu.

BISP dynamic survey to be launched soon: Kundi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ministry of State for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety, Faisal Karim Kundi on Friday said that the dynamic survey would start very soon to register more deserving beneficiaries living below the poverty line, under the Benazir Income Support Programme. In a meeting with a women's delegation from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa led by Senator Rubina Khalid, the minister gave a detailed briefing about the BISP initiatives.

Speaking on the occasion, Faisal Kundi said that the BISP payment system was "fully transparent and digital". He said that around 8.8 million people had become part of the Benazir Kafalat program and were receiving the quarterly payment of Rs. 7000. The beneficiaries can withdraw quarterly installments from Bank Al-Falah and Habib Bank, he added.

Faisal Kundi said, "It is our responsibility to convey correct information about the programme to the people of Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa."

He stressed that all programmes including Benazir Nashonuma, Benazir Education Stipends, Benazir Undergraduate Scholarships were very important for the welfare of people. The queries of Senator Rubina Khalid and all members of the delegation about the BISP programs were responded in a satisfactory way.

The delegation members thanked the Minister of State and all officials of BISP for having this much-needed interaction.



ISLAMABAD: A labour filling concrete vases with clay for planting at Rawal Chowk.

Kabul-Jalalabad highway

KABUL (ToloNews): The reconstruction of parts of Kabul-Jalalabad Highway that were damaged by floods in recent years has been completed, the Ministry of Public Work said on Friday. According to the MoPW, the project cost 25 million Afs and was completed in over one and a half years. "The road was reconstructed with good quality. It starts from the Butkhak Roundabout (in Kabul) and ends at Hisark district of Jalalabad.

The Frontier Post

AFGHANISTAN

Jamadi-us-Sani 28, 1444 — Saturday, January 21, 2023

7th death anniversary

KABUL (ToloNews): Today, January 20, marks the seventh death anniversary of seven MOBY Group employees who lost their lives in an attack in Kabul in 2016. A blast targeted a vehicle carrying MOBY Group employees that left seven people dead, and more than 20 others wounded. The blast happened on January 20, 2016. Family members of the victims called on the Islamic Emirate to provide job and education opportunities for the people in the country.

Moscow discussed recognition with Islamic Emirate

British MPs emphasize on need to continue aid to Afghanistan



KABUL (ToloNews): The Russian Foreign Ministry said in a statement that during the visit of its envoy to Afghanistan, the two sides discussed recognition of the Islamic Emirate.

The statement said that Russian envoy Zamir Kabulov has also dis-

cussed strengthening of economic, cultural education relations between the two countries as well as issues of terrorism and prevention of narcotics.

"In the meeting, there was a considerable attention by the Russian envoy for Afghanistan for recognition and the diplomacy

of the Islamic Emirate by the international community," the statement reads.

The Islamic Emirate called recognition important for economic and political improvement in the region.

"Countries should understand that imposition of pressure and other

political pressures will not bring results.

It is better to engage with the Afghans," Islamic Emirate spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid said.

"They have discussed some of the issues. Russia is trying to make the Taliban busy in improvement of relations with Russia and show the Taliban that it is recognizing them," said Rahmatullah Bizhanpor, a political analyst.

"Russia will not recognize Afghanistan in the near future and if Russia is the only country to recognize Afghanistan, the problems of Afghanistan will not be solved" said Torek Farhadi, a political analyst.

It has been more than 16 months since the Islamic Emirate swept into power but is yet to be recognized by any country in the world.

KABUL (ToloNews): Referring to severe humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, several members of the UK Parliament stressed on the need to continue safeguarded aid to the country

This comes as many NGOs and aid organizations have suspended their operations after the Islamic Emirate banned women from working in non-government organizations.

Labour MP Dan Jarvis said that this "severe disruption comes at just the wrong moment as the country faces a terrible humanitarian crisis."

"Twenty-eight million people need aid and famine conditions are setting in. People are dying and more will die without women working in humanitarian relief," he said.

Meanwhile, the Andrew Mitchell, Secretary of State for International Development of the United Kingdom said that the approximately 47% of humanitarian organizations have currently either partially or completely



suspended activities as a result of the edict.

"Around 30% to 40% of all staff in NGOs across Afghanistan are women.

They are critical to humanitarian operations. They have access to populations their male colleagues cannot reach, providing critical life-saving support for women and girls," he said.

The World Food Program in an annual

report said that Afghanistan has faced unprecedented levels of hunger for over a year.

"The removal of jobs in Afghanistan and also drop in incomes caused a reduction in Afghan economy," said Darya Khan Baheer, an economic affairs analyst. Kabul residents meanwhile called for the aid to be provided through transparent ways.

"The people of Afghanistan need support. It is winter and there is no job. We need more aid," said Aminullah, a resident of Kabul. Earlier, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said that the humanitarian partners have helped more than 25 million people in Afghanistan in 2022.

UNESCO dedicates 2023 International Day of Education to Afghan girls, women

KABUL (ToloNews): The director-general of UNESCO, Audrey Azoulay, has decided to dedicate the 2023 International Day of Education (January 24) to Afghan girls and women.

On the occasion of an event organized at the UN headquarters, UNESCO will renew its call to immediately restore their fundamental right to education, UNESCO said in a statement.

Raihana, a nursing college student, said UNESCO and other international organizations need to take practical steps to overcome the problem for women and girls in Afghanistan.

"Only one day is not enough. UNESCO needs to try to talk with Islamic Emirate and lift all the restrictions," she said.

"Depriving women and girls of education means depriving them of their basic rights and it is not in favor of the country's



development," said Sayed Jawad Sajadi, a university lecturer.

Officials said that the Islamic Emirate is committed to ensuring the rights of all citizens of the country and values the cooperation of the United Nations with the people and the

Islamic Emirate.

"Some issues are temporary and efforts are underway to solve them. The cooperation of the UN is important for Afghan people and for the situation in Afghanistan," Islamic Emirate spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said.

UNESCO said that currently, 80% (2.5 million) of school-aged Afghan girls and young women are out of school, because of the decision of the officials of the caretaker government to deny them access to secondary schools and universities.

The plight of Afghan Journalists under the Taliban regime

It is extremely difficult to report under the Taliban-run administration, with strict regulations restricting journalistic activities and media freedom, according to Afghan journalists.

It is hard to continue doing journalistic activities under Afghanistan's de facto regime, because the Taliban do not allow journalists to cover security issues, such as explosion and suicide attacks, says local reporters.

Media workers can report what the de facto authorities want to be covered, and have to receive government approval before publishing reports.

Following the return of the Taliban to power in August 2021, they promised that media would be free and independent to operate across the country, however, a month later, a new set of rules were imposed that strictly monitor and censor the journalist and medial. The short-lived media freedom was gone after the initial weeks of the

Taliban-rule government.

More than 200 violation cases have been recorded against journalists in Afghanistan in 2022, which include arbitrary arrest, ill-treatment, harassment, threats, and intimidation according to the United Nations. Media freedom in Afghanistan has gone from bad to worse and journalists are suffering from low morale under the ruling regime. Many reporters

have been arrested, persecuted and threatened with death for reporting sensitive issues which are not to the likes of Taliban authorities across the country.

Taliban's return had a devastating effect on the media which are struggling to survive. A considerable number of radio and TV stations as well as news agencies have closed their doors, with some estimates indicating that more than 6,000 journalists

have lost their jobs. Worst of all, female Afghan journalists suffer from double pressure for being a journalist and a woman. The latest restrictions imposed by the Taliban administration restricting women from attending university, working with government or non-governmental aid organizations, and appearing in public places have turned the situation extremely for female journalists.



Most govt hospitals provide free test facility, medicines to patients



KABUL (Pajhwok): People are happy with free test facilities and medicines provided to patients at the Antani and Ataturk hospitals in Kabul, while the Ministry of Public Health says free health services are provided in all government hospitals except some.

MoPH spokesperson Dr. Sharafat Zaman told Pajhwok all 21 specialized hospitals in Kabul city, except stomatology hospital, had been providing free tests facility and medicines to patients since a year with the help of some aid giving agencies. Such free services are provided in specialized hospitals in provinces as well, he said.

When asked if free services were provided in other government hospitals like Wazir Akbar Khan hospital, he replied in the affirmative. He said it was their condition for aid organizations that tests and medicines should be provided free of cost in hospitals.

Pajhwok Afghan News talked to relatives of patients and doctors in

Antani and Ataturk hospitals. Some time ago, a laboratory was established and put into service in the Antani hospital with financial support of the World Health Organization. In the lab that consumed 400,000 US dollars, 17 types of diseases are diagnosed.

Ihsanullah Hakimi, trainer specialist of Kabul Antani Hospital, told Pajhwok that since last five months CBS, PCR, black and white jaundice, various liver tests (Electrolyte), Congo, dengue and some other tests were conducted free of cost with the help of WHO. Previously, patients would undergo these tests in private laboratories against a high price, he said, elaborating that PCR test cost 3000 afghanis, CBS 300 afghanis, Congo and Dengue 800 afghanis and some liver tests were done for 600 afghanis in private labs.

But in now in Antani hospital, CBS test fee is 20 afghanis, PCR 100 afghanis, Congo and Dengue 50

afghanis and liver tests only 30 afghanis, he added.

Zainab Faizi, a doctor at the emergency department of Antani Hospital, also said previously facilities in the hospital accounted for 40 to 50 percent, but now these facilities had reached 100 percent in terms of tests and free medicines.

She said the facilities had increased with the help of the World Health Organization (WHO).

Ramazan, relative of a patient, said his patient was admitted in the hospital about a week ago and so far tests advised by the doctors had been done free of charge in the hospital.

Another person Zabihullah said his patient underwent 15 tests during the past five days and all were done free of charge.

Abdul Aleem Adib Karimi, a pharmacist and general pharmacist at Ataturk hospital, also said that a year ago, only CBC, liver tests (Electrolyte) and fecal tests were performed in the hospital and patients had to visit private labs for

other tests.

But since one year, most of the tests were done free of cost in the hospital, he added. He said currently about 50 different types of tests were being conducted in the laboratory of Atatürk Hospital, including HBs, HCV, HIV, DLC and CRP free of charge to all patients. A mother, who had brought her child to Atatürk Hospital for treatment, was satisfied with the care at the hospital, saying patients were inquired after on time, their files checked and children were also given milk.

She said patients were checked free of cost, but sometimes when some tests were not available in the hospital, they visited private laboratories.

Medicines Ihsanullah Hakimi, trainer specialist at Kabul Antani Hospital, said now patients in the hospital were given medicines that they used to buy in the market.

Ramazan, a patient's relative, said his patient was given free medicines since his admission several days ago. Zabihullah, another attendant in Antani hospital, also said he had not purchased any medicine from the market and his patient was given any medicine he needed for free.

Arish Ahmadi, pharmacy manager at Atatürk Hospital, said there were about 140 types of medicines in the pharmacy department of the hospital and all were given free of charge to hospitalized patients. Mohammad Attai, a patient's relative, said most of the patients were given medicines free of charge, but sometimes they had to buy some medicines from private pharmacies if not available in the hospital.

Yangi Qala road closed due to frost, freezing cold

TALOQAN (Pajhwok): Some residents in the Yangi Qala district of northern Takhar province have complained against the closure of roads due to severe cold and frost and said their contact had cut off.

They said local people had started to clear this road with shovels and pickaxes in order to transfer their patients to the hospital. Rawajuddin, the resident of Yangi Qala, told Pajhwok Afghan

News earlier they suffered as a result of dilapidated road condition, the lack of bridge while currently they were suffering from freezing cold and everything had frozen.

He said as a result of road closure, many people could not travel to the district centre or provincial capital and government paid no attention to address their problem.

"The flood water of Badakhshan's Shahr-i Bozarg district and

Takhar's Cha Ab district went through this area and it had frozen currently, vehicles could not move easily and we transferred patients to the hospital bearing a lot of problems and difficulties," he said.

Mohammad Jawad, another local resident, told Pajhwok Afghan News as a result of recent snowfall, the road had been closed, tens of villages in area lost contact with the district centre. He said the previous govern-

ment assured the construction of bridge on the river but it never honored its promise and now the water is frozen and nobody could travel.

Mullah Ahmad Seyar, the provincial Disaster Management Department Director, said there was need for the construction of bridged on the river in Yangi Qala. The area get frozen in winter and it is not possible to travel. He said his department did not has fund to construct bridge there.





ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi visiting stalls at the Building Material Exhibition 2023.

Govt, Opp at loggerheads over Punjab caretaker CM

LAHORE (Agencies): The government and the opposition Friday remained at loggerheads over the appointment of Punjab's caretaker chief minister, with the matter to now be taken by the Election Commission of Pakistan.

The parliamentary committee — formed a day earlier — comprising three members from both sides met in Lahore today to deliberate on the important appointment. The members, however, could not reach a consensus on the matter. The committee included Mian Aslam Iqbal, Raja Basharat, and Hashim Jawan Bakht from the government; whereas, Malik Muhammad Ahmed Khan, Hassan Murtaza, and Nadeem Kamran represented the opposition.

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Malik, speaking to journalists after the meeting, said: "This was an opportunity to settle things politically, but that could not be done here." "When there are so many polarised positions, there can be no agreement." For his part, Murtaza confirmed the divide on the matter and said both sides could not agree on the appointment of the caretaker chief minister.

"It is a pity that we are leaving here without consensus," he added. The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leader also lamented the stalemate, saying, "when the house was small, the people were big; now the house has become big, while people have become small." "Unfortunately we could not agree [on a name], we are not leaving with good memories," he added.

It must be pointed out here that as per law, the parliamentary committee was formed under Article 224A of the constitution and comprises six lawmakers. The committee has three days to reach an

accord over a name for the top spot in Punjab. In case of disagreement, the matter will be decided by the election commission, which must then settle on a caretaker CM in two days. PML-N committee member Malik said that if the committee fails to reach an agreement the matter of selection will go to the ECP and a decision will be made according to the constitution.

However, outgoing Punjab Chief Minister Parvez Elahi has already declared that if the decision-making power is left to the ECP, he will take the matter to the Supreme Court. Defending the PML-N nominee Ahad Cheema, Malik reiterated his faith in him and asked: "What was the decision given in the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) case against him? Didn't Ahad build the metro in Pakistan and prove his mettle?" Ahad, known as the best administrator in the Shehbaz Sharif chief ministership, is also called the "Metro Man" among his close friends and political circles. However, he remained in NAB custody during Imran Khan's tenure and was acquitted of the charge later.

"NAB was used for political revenge under Imran Khan," Malik said. Malik also bolstered Mohsin Naqvi's nomination and said that Mohsin had built his credibility by working for CNN. Moreover, the PML-N MPA criticised the nominees forwarded by PTI and pointed to Naseer Ahmad Khan's dual citizenship as a reason that made him a less-than-ideal candidate.

"Parvez Ealhi has objections to the committee he himself has nominated," he told reporters. "Now, the matter will be resolved under 224A." He further criticised the PTI chief and said that "Imran Khan can have his politics if Saqib Nisar and Faiz Hameed are available."

High ranking cops reshuffled in KP police

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Inspector General of Police (IGP) on Friday ordered posting transfers of high ranking police officers including two DIG, two AIGs and officers of grade 18 and 17. Two different notifications issued here said that DIGs Dar Khattak and Tahir Ayub have been transferred and posted as RPO Kohat Range and RPO Hazara Range respectively.

Similarly, AIG Establishment Irfan Ullah Khan has been transferred and posted as DIG Police Internal Accountability while Deputy Commandant Special Security Unit Zaibullah Khan has been posted as DIG Investigation. The other notification said that PSP BS-18 officers Zahidullah has been posted as AIG Establishment, Abdul Rashid as DPO Mohmand, Imran Khan as DPO Buner, Saleem Abbas Kulachi as DPO Khyber, Sajjad Ahmad as Additional Superintendent of Police Operations Mardan and Syed Muhktiar Shah Deputy Commandant Special Security Unit. Similarly the BS-17 officers Arbab Shahfullah Jan has been posted as DPO Torgarh and Salah-ud-Din as CPO KP.

Number of Covid critical patients drops

ISLAMABAD (INP): The number of critical patients dropped as Pakistan posted 21 more Covid-19 infections with no death during the last 24 hours, showed the statistics released by the National Institute of Health (NIH) on Friday morning.

According to the NIH data, the death toll in the country remained the same at 30,640 whereas the number of total infections now rose to 1,576,147 after adding the fresh 21 cases. During the last 24 hours (Thursday), 3,627 tests were conducted throughout the country whereas the positivity ratio shot to 0.58 percent. The number of patients in critical care stood at 09.

As Covid-19 rips through China's vast population, making millions sick and fuelling a shortage of drugs, many are turning to old-school traditional medicines to battle the aches and pains of the virus. President Xi Jinping has promoted traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) since the start of the pandemic, while health officials have hailed its "important role" in fighting the coronavirus.

Encompassing a range of treatments from herbal remedies and massages to acupuncture and diets, TCM has been used for thousands of years to treat all manner of ailments. Critics say it is pseudoscience and ineffective in treating actual illness, and there is little peer-reviewed data to back claims of its efficacy. But millions in China use it, often in conjunction with modern medicine to alleviate symptoms.

Beijing consultant Yu Lei, 38, had a fever after catching Covid, so he made a herbal tea with reputed anti-inflammatory properties featuring cassia twig -- a kind of Chinese cinnamon -- peony roots, liquorice, jujubes and ginger. "In our family, we often use Chinese medicines," he told reporters, adding that his fever subsided after drinking the brew. According to followers like Yu, TCMs have fewer side effects and work slower to regulate the body, rather than Western medicines that "fight the symptoms but rarely the source of the illness".

would be structured in a way it had mutual economic benefit for both countries. "The process to be completed within March 2023."

They decided to strengthen energy cooperation, enhance energy trade and broaden energy infrastructure investment based on strategic and favorable commercial terms. The Commission also agreed to work on a Comprehensive Plan for Energy Cooperation, which would form the foundation for future work and was to be finalized in 2023.

The IGC agreed that Pakistan Stream Gas Pipeline Project should be considered in terms of a comprehensive infrastructure which was economically viable for sustainable gas infrastructure development ensuring affordable gas supplies. The Russian side was invited towards potential projects of the federal and provincial governments of Pakistan, including in PPP mode and requested the Russian businessmen to explore these possibilities.

countries, as well as the region. Both the sides proceeded from the discussions and decisions of the seventh IGC and carried the process forward, as well as explored additional avenues of cooperation.

The IGC agreed to further strengthen and enhance collaboration in the fields of trade and investment, energy, communications and transport, higher education, industry, railways, finance and banking sector, customs, agriculture, science and technology, and information technology. Both sides observed and noted the positive prospects for implementable and concrete projects in above mentioned sectors of economy with a huge potential for the socio-economic development of both countries.

The Commission agreed that the relevant ministries and departments from both sides would vigorously follow-up to exploit this potential for common prosperity. The two sides agreed that after consensus on the technical specifications was achieved, the oil and gas trade transaction

Marriyum: Imran' pushed country towards bankruptcy

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Friday said the biggest achievement of the coalition government was to rid the country of "Project Imran". In her reaction to Imran Khan's statement, she said the incumbent government freed the country from "the biggest foreign agent 'fitnah' and mafia".

She said the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) had always steered the country and its economy out of crises. "The 'Project Imran' pushed the country towards economic bankruptcy," she added. The minister said by the end of its previous tenure in 2018, PML-N had

brought about historic economic stability in the country. During its era, prices of edible items, electricity, gas, and petrol were also affordable, she added.

PML-N had created employment opportunities for the youth besides the initiative of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and the generation of 14,000 megawatts of additional electricity. Above all, the minister added, PML-N had made Pakistan a terrorism-free country. Moreover, she went on to say, the country was given a historic 6.2 percent growth and the IMF programme was completed successfully.

Taking a jibe at Imran Khan, she said Imran's four-year regime made the

youth unemployed and pushed the country into a quagmire of poverty and inflation. Today, the high rates of wheat, electricity, gas, flour, and other commodities in the country were due to Imran's inefficiency.

"The ongoing IMF programme having strict conditions is Imran's gift to the people", she maintained. She questioned Imran's demand for early elections, asking what will happen if, after four years of destruction and the storm of inflation, the elections are held now. The minister said Imran Khan could talk about the 2018 elections when he was imposed on the country, but not about the upcoming elections.

Pakistan, Russia agree to boost energy cooperation

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The eighth session of Pakistan-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission (IGC) on Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation concluded on Friday, reaffirming the commitment to a strong and comprehensive bilateral economic relationship.

The three-day IGC meeting, co-chaired by Russia's Energy Minister Nikolay Shulginov and Pakistan's Minister for Economic Affairs Ayaz Sadiq, was attended by senior level delegates including ministers and officials from both sides. The two sides, working under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Russian President Vladimir Putin, took the opportunity to reaffirm their commitment to a strong and comprehensive economic relationship, said a joint statement issued after the IGC meeting. They reiterated that such a relationship contributed to the economic well-being of the two

President for adopting green and sustainable building practices

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Friday called for adopting green and sustainable building practices in the country's housing and construction sector, promoting sustainable living and moderate consumption to conserve energy and limited natural resources. Rethinking, redesigning, rebuilding and reusing materials and resources had become critical for promoting climate-friendly and resilient infrastructure in the country, he added.

The President expressed these views while addressing inaugural ceremony of the Building Materials Exhibition 2023 organized here by the Institute of Architects Pakistan (IAP's) Rawalpindi Chapter. Chairman IAP, Architect Saad Mehmood Khan, Chairman IAP Rawalpindi/Islamabad Chapter, Architect Fawad Suhail Malik, architects, graduates, and members of the housing and construction industry attended the ceremony.

Earlier, the President also inaugurated the Building Materials. The President said that the discipline of architecture was important as it provided the basis for the construction industry and provided quality and aesthetically pleasing accommodations to the people. He said that the buildings should be designed with in-built mechanisms to make them differently-abled person friendly as well as by making rooftops usable by growing vegetables and greenery, besides installing solar panels to provide green and clean energy.

The President said that construction and development activities by

the public sector contribute greatly in increasing economic activity and injecting liquidity into the system which further helped in the growth of industry and providing employment to the people. He quoted the examples of the Mughal dynasty and Sher Shah Suri who invested public money in developing roads, buildings, monuments, and other public places which greatly contributed to the prosperity of the Indo-Pak sub-continent.

The President said that the trend of parking money in buying plots and buildings prevented its circulation for promoting business, trade and investment, and contributed to slowing down the economic and financial activities in the country. He said that buildings and houses should be constructed with the underlying objective of providing decent and affordable living to all segments of society, including the poor and the underprivileged. He said that the use of black money for buying plots and buildings and investing in the construction sector should be checked and discouraged, besides systems should be strengthened to disallow the creation of black money at all.

The President said that it was surprising to note that almost \$13 billion of Pakistani wealth had been blocked and invested in Cyber currency which was depriving the economy of much-needed liquidity. He said that in Pakistan, frequent amnesty schemes had been announced to bring black money into the formal economy but instead of offering such schemes, efficient systems should be developed to tax the wealthy and convert the entire informal economy into the formal economy which would help in

overcoming the financial and economic difficulties. The President said that water was a precious commodity and Pakistan was facing unpredictable fluctuations in the weather patterns, nonetheless, Pakistan received sufficient water through the weather system which needed to be preserved and efficiently utilized.

He proposed that all buildings should be designed to harness and preserve rainwater to recharge the aquifers. He said that only a limited volume of water should be allowed to be discharged into the sea as was necessary to protect mangroves and prevent the encroachment of sea into the land while the rest should be efficiently utilized. He also stressed the need to set up water purification and sewerage treatment plants in every industry to prevent the discharge of toxic chemicals, pollutants and waste into the sea as it was negatively affecting the marine flora and fauna.

The President further said that in Pakistan there was a trend to first encroach on state land, build on it unlawfully, and later through various means get it regularized. He said that this phenomenon should be stopped and discouraged to prevent these illegal constructions. Architect Saad Mehmood Khan, on the occasion, said that IAP had been very active in organizing events in different cities, including hosting conferences, symposia, workshops and lectures, and international architectural exhibitions, to sensitize the governments and the public on issues of environment, architectural education, sustainable building practices, building bye-laws, and city planning.

Imran blames Gen Bajwa for 'crises'

LAHORE (Agencies): As the country is facing enormous economic and political challenges, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan blamed former army chief General (ret'd) Qamar Javed Bajwa, claiming the uncertainty started the day his government was overthrown.

"Due to the decision of one person, the PTI-led government was toppled and the crisis started," the former prime minister said while addressing the "Rule of Law" conference via video link on Friday. Khan was ousted from power through a vote of no-confidence in the National Assembly in April last year.

Without naming former army chief Gen (ret'd) Qamar Javed Bajwa, he said: "One person decided to change the [PTI] regime and hatched a conspiracy." The coalition government, he said, had failed to tackle the economic crisis as "it does not have any plan" to restore the economy. The PTI chief said that never in the country's history had Pakistan faced a worse economic crisis than the one it "faces these days". He insisted that the crises were "deliberately manufactured". "It is not a natural crisis."

Interestingly, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supremo Nawaz

Sharif also blamed General Bajwa and Lieutenant General (ret'd) Faiz Hameed for the current mess in the country. "Everyone [in the government] is hoping to get money from Saudi Arabia and China," Khan said, adding that the rulers, in Geneva, requested the international community to provide them funds in connection with the devastation by the environmental

Until the 90s, Pakistan's economic indicators remained largely positive in the Subcontinent, the PTI leader said, adding that no one could have imagined that the "country's economy could fall to such levels". Referring to the deepening economic crisis, Khan said the country's reserves had fallen to a historic low, adding, "We do not have money to open the Letters of Credits (LCs)."

"No one is ready to give funds to Pakistan," he further said. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) will come to rescue Pakistan only when its conditions are accepted, the deposed prime minister said. He, however, added that inflation would further rise in the country if the conditions of the international lender are "accepted".

"The prices of petrol and diesel will surge if the Pakistani currency is deval-

ued against the US dollar," Imran Khan said. "Notorious dacoits were brought to power under a conspiracy." Lambasting the collusion government, he also said, "Major dacoits are given key posts in the country." Amendments, he said, were made to National Accountability Bureau (NAB) laws to end cases against the rulers.

He claimed former president retired Gen Pervez Musharraf gave them NRO-I and later ex-COAS Gen Bajwa gave them NRO-II. Seeking the attention of the judicial fraternity, the PTI chairman said the struggle to uphold the rule of law is "jihad". "Who is blocking justice?"

Khan once again criticised the state machinery for the brutal torture of PTI Senator Azam Khan Swati, 70, in front of his grandsons and granddaughters. He added that the senior lawmaker was humiliated just because of "one tweet". Talking about the problems being faced by the former premier to lodge an FIR about the assassination attempt on his life even when his government was in power in Punjab, Khan asked: "Who is blocking justice?" The JIT [joint investigation tribunal] tasked with probing the assassination bid on his life is being sabotaged, he added.

Pakistan not to have

(Continued from Page 1)

"the butcher of Gujarat." You were referring to his term as chief minister in that state during anti-Muslim riots in 2002.

A: Those remarks were in the context of the fact that the Indian foreign minister made some remarks about my country that were inaccurate. In my response, I reminded them about the Gujarat riots and the history that surrounds them. But having said that, we don't want to focus on the past. We want to look to the future. It is in both our countries' interests — countries that are both nuclear powers, countries that face incredible challenges as far as poverty and climate are concerned. Our peoples want to live in peace as peaceful neighbors.

'Butcher of Gujarat', 'epicentre of terror': A war of words at UN

Pakistani minister calls India's Modi 'butcher of Gujarat' after Jaishankar said Pakistan is 'epicentre of terror'...

Q: As you mentioned, your mother, Benazir Bhutto, was assassinated in a terrorist attack in 2007. Some people say that had she lived, Pakistan would be a different place.

A: Oh, I think absolutely. I think that not only would Pakistan be a differ-

ent place, but our region would have gone in a different direction. She had a vision and a clarity that no one had at the time.

Q: She wanted to make Pakistan a more democratic country?

A: Absolutely. The entire purpose of the Pakistan People's Party has been for Pakistan to be a democratic country. We believe that democracy is the only way to take on extremism and terrorism. She was the best answer to all the terrorists and all the extremists. She spoke with a clarity and a bravery that all the male politicians put together at the time could not.

Q: Where were you when she was assassinated?

A: I was a freshman at Oxford.

Q: It must have been hard for you to decide to go into politics in Pakistan.

A: My mother used to say that she didn't choose this life, it chose her. I feel much the same way. Following my mother's assassination, my party thought that it was important for me to take a ceremonial role leading the party to keep our party united.

Mr. Khan was elected prime minister in 2018, and he conducted himself in a manner that undermined

our democracy and constitution and everything that my party and my mother believed in. At that time, I started taking an active role in Pakistani politics. I was in the opposition against him and played a significant role in convincing our allies to bring about the vote of no confidence against him. We were ultimately successful in removing him from power. Now, I want to work with other political parties to strengthen democracy in Pakistan, address our problems on the international stage, address our economic issues, and work towards that unfulfilled mission that my mother had.

Q: Do you think you could become prime minister this year?

A: I would have to win an election first. Obviously, my party will be hoping that we win. My party has its own manifesto, and given the challenges that Pakistan faces, I believe that our manifesto speaks best to the country's key problems, such as inflation and unemployment.

However, I don't believe that any one party will be able to solve all of Pakistan's problems. If [our party wins the most votes], I will seek to form a government as prime minister and have a coalition.

S Arabia rules out Israel normalisation sans two-state solution

RIYADH (Agencies): Saudi Arabia will not normalise ties with Israel in the absence of a two-state solution with the Palestinians, the kingdom's top diplomat has said, according to a tweet by the foreign ministry on Friday.

The comments by Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos came as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu discussed normalisation with Saudi Arabia in talks with White House National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan in Jerusalem on Thursday. "True normalisation and true stability will only come through... giving the Palestinians a state," Prince Faisal told Bloomberg at the summit.

Saudi Arabia, the world's largest oil exporter, is a close partner of the United States but it has repeatedly refused to normalise ties with US-ally Israel due to its occupation of Palestinian territories. The US-brokered Abraham Accords in 2020 saw the kingdom's neighbours — the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain — establish full diplomatic ties with Israel. Netanyahu has repeatedly expressed his desire to see Saudi Arabia join the list.

In their talks on Thursday, Netanyahu and Sullivan discussed "measures to deepen the Abraham Accords... with an emphasis on a breakthrough with Saudi," the Israeli leader's office said. The West Bank and the Gaza Strip plus Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem were long touted as the basis of a Palestinian state in a "two-state" solution to the long-running conflict. But that goal has become ever more distant, with the occupied West Bank fragmented by Jewish settlements. Netanyahu plans to pursue a policy of increased settlement expansion in the West Bank, with ultra-Orthodox Jewish parties in his coalition advocating the annexation of some of the territory.

LHC rebukes FIA

LAHORE (Agencies): The Lahore High Court (LHC) has reprimanded an officer of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) for submitting an unsatisfactory report in a case related to inclusion of the name of the wife of former federal minister Moonis Elahi in the "no-fly list".

Justice Shehram Sarwar Chaudhry expressed displeasure while hearing a petition moved by Tehreem Elahi after she was barred from boarding her reserved flight on Jan 10 by the immigration official at the Lahore airport for having her name on the no-fly list.