

2 CTD officers shot dead

KHANEWAL (INP): Two officers of the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) were gunned down by unidentified assailants in Khanewal city of Punjab province. According to details, the incident took place at a hotel in Khanewal city, wherein unidentified assailants opened fire at two officers of CTD, killing them on the spot. In a statement, AIGP Shahzad Sultan vowed to arrest the suspect involved in the killings.

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Cabinet okays ‘National Energy Conservation Plan’

Markets to close by 8:30 pm, wedding halls 10 pm; Prices of 20 medicines reduced up to 30 per cent

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Cabinet on Tuesday approved the National Energy Conservation Plan, introducing certain measures to ensure judicious utilization of national resources.

"The approval to the conservation plan has been accorded in line with the advice of the Power Division. It will come into force at once across the country," Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif said said while unveiling the salient features of the austerity plan here at a media briefing after the cabinet meeting.

He was flanked by Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb, Minister for Energy (Power Division) Khurram Dastgir Khan, Minister for Housing and Works Maulana Abdul Wasay, Minister for Climate Change Senator Sherry Rehman and Minister for Defence Production Israr Tareen.

Elaborating the main contours of the plan, Khawaja Asif said restaurants, hotels, and markets would close down by 8:30 p.m. and marriage halls by 10 p.m. "With this initiative, which has been taken in consultation with trade bodies, there will be a saving of around Rs 62 billion [annually]. He said additional duty would also be imposed on inefficient electric fans, whose production would be halted from July 1, 2023.

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

Khawaja Asif said the government was in negotiation with motorcycle manufacturing companies for the production of electric bikes. "The motorcycles that run on petrol will slowly

be phased out. We have already been importing e-bikes and had started negotiations with motorcycle companies for the modification of existing ones [...], this will help save us around Rs 86 billion." He expressed the hope that with the introduction of e-bikes, the prices of existing motorcycles would considerably decrease. However, the government would ensure a price check on the e-bikes, he added.

If all the energy conserving measures were translated into action, the country would hopefully save billions of rupees, the minister remarked. He said the Ministry of Information would be running a campaign on social media, electronic and print media to create awareness among the public about the measures being taken under the austerity plan.

The minister urged the nation to "normalize" its behavioural patterns as the country was in a 'grave economic crisis'. "The country can't afford the culture of waste [available national resources] of its citizens anymore." He said all stakeholders, including the traders' community, were taken on board about the decisions to be made by the cabinet for the conservation of energy, which would have long-term effects.

Khawaja Asif said the other countries had already adopted ways and means to change the lifestyle of their people, which the incumbent government intended to introduce in Pakistan. "The lifestyle of Pakistanis is totally different from the rest of the world in terms of market and office timings, and use of energy, including oil and power. The sustainable best practices observed in this regard elsewhere in the world are different from Pakistan." He noted that Pakistan was blessed with bright sunlight 365 days a year - a huge renewable energy potential but it was bearing heavy cost for energy produced on imported fuel.

"Today, symbolically no light was on in the cabinet meeting room, with

all curtains removed from window pans, and the cabinet members worked in daylight," the minister added. He suggested architectural changes for more vibrantly luminous houses. The prime minister, he said, had directed that all the Federal Government departments should ensure 30% decline in energy use as there was no other choice. "He (prime minister) also advised to abstain from unnecessary use of electricity," he added.

The minister underlined that some 29,000 megawatts (MW) electricity was consumed during the summer and 12,000 MW in the winter. Approximately 17,000 MW more electricity was used in the summer, including 5,300 MW by air conditioners and 12,000 MW by fans. For reducing electricity consumption by fans, the government was working on a programme to introduce energy efficient fans, he added. "No production of incandescent bulbs will be allowed after February 1, 2023 and a duty will also be imposed on them," Khawaja Asif said. Only two factories were producing the above bulbs, one in Lahore and the other near Peshawar, and there would be no effect on their business as they also produced other quality bulbs, he added.

The decision, he said, would help the country save Rs 22 billion per annum, whereas the Federal Government departments would have to install energy efficient electric gadgets, including fans and LED bulbs to avert excessive power consumption. Moreover, a restriction was imposed on use of inefficient electric instruments in all Federal Government departments, he added.

The minister said reforms were underway in housing societies' by-laws and building codes to ensure energy efficient infrastructure. He said installation of conical baffles in geysers within year was made mandatory. The baffle provided cost intensive heating for warm water as



"it traps heat using less energy", which would help save Rs 92 billion per year.

The street lights, as a symbolic measure, would be illuminated only at 50% capacity and it would provide an incentive to the public for energy conservation and would help save Rs 4 billion per year, he said. The minister mentioned that electric bikes would be introduced across the country to reduce petrol consumption as motorbikes alone consumed \$3 billion petrol per year. "A gradual phase-out plan will be implemented for the existing motorcycles," he said.

E-bikes with dual-battery, he added, would be introduced, which would be though costly but the government was working on a financing plan for the same. The loan amount would be easily paid by the bike owner as he / she would get respite in the fuel charges. He underlined that a mass awareness campaign would be made on the Energy Conservation Plan through print, electronic and social media. The Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) would ensure that all private and radio channels earmark 10% of their commercial time for public awareness messages, he added.

The cabinet also decided that the

National Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority (NEECA) would run a comprehensive public awareness campaign for water and energy conservation and PEMRA would ensure its compliance by the media. For water conservation, he said, wholehearted measures would be taken, including review of water tariff for rural and urban areas. The building control authorities were directed to ensure water conservation measures in housing societies, incorporating the same in their by-laws.

As regards work from home, he said a committee under the leadership of prime minister would closely look into the matter from all aspects and finalize its suggestions within next 10 days for cabinet decision. "The Federal Cabinet after the recommendation of the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination approved reduction in the maximum retail prices of 20 medicines," Khawaja Asif said.

He said the cabinet also directed the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) to issue a separate tax directory of the parliamentarians so that the masses could know how much tax the policy makers pay. Responding to media queries, he said a delegation of feder-

al ministers visited Quetta and Karachi to consult provincial government officials and business community representatives on energy conservation measures, including markets closure timings. "There was a by and large consensus among them on the austerity measures. A Traders' Association delegation also had a meeting here and majority of them supported the step."

He said President Arif Alvi was also briefed on the plan and he not only supported it but also gave more constructive recommendations. The minister said the energy conservation plan would be a permanent feature and to be enforced at par with the world. Speaking on the occasion, Minister for Climate Change Senator Sherry Rehman said the country was already late to take the decision regarding energy conservation.

"The world has introduced such measures decades ago. The behavioural change is a must and the media support is imperative in this regard. When there is no acceptance from society then it will be difficult to reap its (plan's) benefits," she added. She said despite decline in water resources the country was among the world top five nations having excessive per capita water usage.

Imran must introspect & issue white paper on his ‘evil deeds’: Marriyum

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Tuesday said instead pointing a finger at others Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan should better introspect and issue a white paper on the corruption, loot and wrongdoings during his four-year misrule.

The minister, in a media talk, rejected the white paper issued by the PTI on the current economic situation, saying those who had pushed the country to the brink of default should be ashamed of themselves for their own "misadventures". "This is not the white paper rather a record of Imran Khan's own evil deeds which were already being exposed every other day," she said, asking the PTI chief to apologize to the nation for rendering a lot of countrymen unemployed, unleashing extreme inflation, taking record foreign loans and ruining the national economy during his government from 2018 to April 2022.

The white paper seemed to be an attempt on his part to hide his "sinister deeds", but it would not help legitimize his "family corruption", she added. "Imran Khan should stop staging dramas as the people fully know about his corruption, wrongdoings, loot and plunder, and conspiracies against the country," the minister said.

Marriyum accused Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi of "doing black magic". Their "evil deeds" had put the country on the verge of

default." She said the economic growth rate was at 6 percent, with inflation at the lowest level, the China Pakistan Economic Corridor in full swing and terrorism fully wiped out when the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's (PML-N) previous government completed its tenure.

Pakistan, she added, was progressing at a fast pace and was self-sufficient in energy resources, with wheat flour being sold at Rs 35 per kilogram and sugar at Rs 52 per kg in 2018, but the situation got worsened when a "fascist, propagandist and incompetent person" was imposed on the country. The minister said Imran Khan should have issued a white paper on the performance of his government, which was marred by a negative growth rate, high inflation, diplomatic blunders, corruption, and incompetency. Whether he would let the people know about the worst economic situation of the country from 2018 to April 2022, she asked.

Marriyum said Imran Khan's wrong economic policies brought the growth rate to -1.6 percent from 6 percent in the first year of his government, as the electricity tariff was raised to Rs 26 per unit from Rs 11 per unit and the foreign debt jumped to Rs 45 trillion. The terrorism, which was wiped out from the country due to the inclusive steps of PML-N leader Nawaz Sharif, was rearing its head again due to Imran Khan's government policies, she said. Not a single counter-terrorism department was set up in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where the PTI had in in government for the



last nine years, the minister added.

She said he (Imran Khan) should have shared all such details in the white paper instead of the performance of the coalition government which had been in power for only six months. Marriyum said the PTI remained in government at Centre for three and a half years and had been ruling Punjab for the last four years, but instead of highlighting their performance, its leader had the audacity to issue a white paper on the coalition government's working. She asked Imran Khan to issue a white paper with a comparative analysis of his own government with the others. Imran Khan believed that he could mislead the nation but he was destined to fail as the people knew who had traded off Kashmir and ruined the economy to fulfill the commitments in exchange of foreign funds.

Six die as roof collapses in Bajaur

F.P. Report

KHAR: As many as six killed including five children while five others injured in roof collapse near Eid Gah Masjid area of Khar district Bajaur.

According to details, the deceased are relatives among each other while killed when Muhammad Sultan residence roof collapsed at late night. The tribesmen briefed by mishap and large number of people from every walk of life were present during the funeral prayers.

The deceased identified as Nida Bibi eight months of age, Rabia four years of age, Umaira, Fatima and 10 years of Ayesha along with Ismail of 18 years son of Muhammad Sultan. The injured were identified as Saddam, Husna, Ayesha, Taudhi, Shzima and Saima Bibi. Rescue 1122 along with tribesmen conducted rescue operation and evacuated victims from roof collapse and shifted to nearest hospital and autopsy.

Swati released from sub-jail

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Senator Azam Swati, who had been in detention since late November over his controversial tweets about senior military officers, was released from an Islamabad sub-jail on Tuesday.

Earlier on Tuesday, Swati's lawyers presented a copy of the IHC's ruling in the court of Special Judge Central Azam Khan as well as the receipt of the surety bonds. The judge subsequently issued Swati's release orders following which the PTI leader's lawyers went to the Crime Intelligence Agency (CIA) building, which had been declared sub-jail in November, to complete the legal formalities. Speaking to the media after being released, Swati alleged that the country's justice system was "on the ventilator". He also questioned the registration of multiple FIRs against him. "How is it possible that FIRs were lodged against me in the entire country but the justice system was sleeping?" He also blamed those responsible for the case against him of running the country's institutions into the ground.

Stoppage of funds of province KP cabinet flays Fazl's statement

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Cabinet in its meeting held here on Tuesday with Chief Minister Mahmood Khan in the chair strongly condemned PDM president Maulana Fazlur Rahman for his statement with regard to advocating the stoppage of funds to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and declared that such statements and acts by Maulana tantamount to enmity with the people of this province.

The meeting besides the cabinet members was also attended by the Provincial Chief Secretary, Senior Member Board of Revenue and Administrative Secretaries of various government departments. The cabinet took strong exception to the derogatory statement of Maulana Fazlur Rahman and termed it disrespectful to an elected government. Such actions on the part of Maulana has unveiled his real face in front of the masses, observed the cabinet.

Addressing the meeting, the Chief Minister Mahmood Khan directed the Finance Department to approve the SNEs for all the completed schemes in the province within a week time and meetings be convened with all the relevant departments forthwith, so that the benefits of the schemes could reach the masses. He also directed implementation of the E-Tendering for schemes and said that he would soon formally inaugurate the process.

The cabinet approved the formation of a sub-committee to be headed by the Food Minister and comprising of Finance Minister, Local Government Minister and other relevant authorities as its members to fix rates for wheat. The cabinet also deliberated upon the hardships faced by the consumers due to closure of CNG stations in the province and the Chief Minister assured that he will take the matter with the quarters concerned to provide relief to the masses.

The cabinet also approved the proposal with regard to declaring Peshawar and Termiz Uzbekistan as Sister Cities and authorized the Mayor/ Administrator of the Capital Metropolitan Government

Peshawar to sign the Model Sister City Agreement with Termiz Uzbekistan in this regard.

The cabinet accorded approval to the amendments in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Village Council and Neighbourhood Council Rules of Business 2022. According to the amendments, the remuneration of the Tehsil Mayors and Chairmen have been enhanced and Pol @200 liters per month have been fixed.

The cabinet further approved the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Domestic Violence Against Women (Prevention and Protection) Rules, 2022 to prevent and protect women from violence at their working and living places as guaranteed under the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. The cabinet also granted ex-post facto approval to the charges incurred on fuel, transportation and other allied matters/expenditures for carrying out relief activities and survey process in various areas of the province affected by the recent monsoon rains and floods. Emergency was declared in various flood affected areas of the province by the Relief, Rehabilitation & Settlement Department under Section 16 (A) (1) of the National Disaster Management (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) (Amendment) Act, 2019 upon the request(s) of the concerned District Administration and recommendation of the PDMA.

The cabinet also approved the establishment of Sessions Divisions and Civil Divisions in the newly-bifurcated districts of Upper South Waziristan and Lower South Waziristan. The Court of Sessions shall be holding sittings in Spinikai Raghazai and Wanna in Upper South Waziristan and Lower South Waziristan Districts respectively. Similarly, the Civil Courts will also be holding sittings in Spinikai Raghazai and Wanna in Upper South Waziristan and Lower South Waziristan Districts respectively.

The cabinet also approved the transfer of state land measuring 01 kanal and 07 marlas in mouza Miandam, Tehsil Khwazakhehla, District Swat to Elementary & Secondary Education Department for expansion of GHSS Miandam District, Swat.

ECP allowed to continue contempt proceedings against Imran

ISLAMABAD (TLTP): The Supreme Court has allowed the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to go ahead with the contempt proceedings against former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan and other party leaders.

A three-member bench headed by Chief Justice Umer Ata Bandial and comprising Justice Ayesha A Malik and Justice Athar Minallah heard the ECP's

petition seeking transfer and consolidation of cases filed by the PTI with different high courts challenging its contempt notices. The TLTP learnt that during the hearing, the SC asked ECP to continue contempt proceedings against PTI chief Imran Khan, Fawad Chaudhry and Asad Umar.

"ECP should decide on objections raised by PTI according to law," said SC and added, "Sindh and Lahore High Courts did not

stop ECP from contempt proceedings against Imran and others." "The election commission is a constitutional body, how could a stay order be given on its proceedings," SC questioned.

The ECP in its petitions has pleaded to the apex court to lift the stay orders issued by high courts against the electoral watchdog's contempt notices to PTI Chairman Imran Khan, Asad Umar and Fawad Chaudhry.



Four including street criminal, bike lifter arrested

KARACHI (APP): District West Police on Tuesday claimed to have arrested four accused, including a street criminal and a motorcycle lifter, in separate actions by different police stations. According to a spokesman for West police, an alleged motorcycle thief identified as Salman was arrested from Orangi Town and a stolen motorcycle was recovered from his possession.

The recovered motorcycle was stolen from the limits of Madina Colony police station. The arrested accused had been handed over to Anti-Vehicle Lifting Cell (AVLC) for further legal proceedings.

Surjani Town police station, during routine patrolling, arrested an alleged street criminal, Arif, from Al-Ghafoor Society near Northern Bypass. The police recovered arms, ammunition, and cash from his possession. The Pirabad police station arrested two involved in the business of hazardous gutka/mawa. The arrested persons were identified as Qais Khan and Samiullah and more than 6 kg of gutka was recovered from their possession.

Cases against the arrested accused had been registered and further investigations were underway.

Foreigner held with 300gm heroin

LAHORE (INP): The Anti-Narcotics Cell of Lahore Police arrested a foreign national after recovery of 300 gram heroin here on Tuesday. According to details, the Gulshan-e-Iqbal Narcotics Cell on a tip-off regarding drugs supply conducted operation.

During action, a Nigerian national identified as Chougezi Mathew who was going to supply 300 gram heroin was held.

The police took recovered heroin into custody and after registering a case against the detainee started an investigation.

SSP Investigation Husnain Haider said that actions against elements involved in drug supply and business was being carried out without any differentiation of nationality and references.

650 headmasters found cheating in promotion exam

LAHORE (NNI): The Chief Adviser Curriculum Wing cancelled the results of 650 headmasters after they were found conveniently cheating in the exam held for their promotion by the Punjab Department of School Education.

According to details, 650 headmasters of (BPS-17) appeared in the exam conducted by School Education Department for their promotion. However, the Provincial Institute for Teacher Education (PITE) had let the headmasters cheat in the exam.

The Chief Adviser Curriculum Wing completed the inquiry and cancelled the results afterwards. Two deputy directors, PITE director, and officers including Mir Hasan Dahri, Nisar Ahmad Dahri and Farzana Mallah were held responsible.

CM chairs meeting on wheat procurement, supply

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Chaudhry Parvez Elahi chaired a meeting regarding wheat at his office on Tuesday.

Flour Mills Association officials Muhammad Shafiq, Khaliq Ahmad, Sajid Abdullah, Wajid Abdullah, Muhammad Fayyaz and Zaheer were present along with former principal secretary GM Sikandar, secretary agriculture, secretary finance, secretary food, director food, former BoP president Hamesh Khan and others. The CM mentioned that a record reduction of 100 billion rupees had been made in the wheat procurement-related debt of the provincial government. This would help in the next wheat procurement drive. Subsidies would be given to the common man through Ehsaas Program so that all and sundry could benefit from it, he added. The farmers would be able to make immediate payments through the Punjab government's "Go Punjab App" and they would not face any problems, he said.

The CM noted that the daily wheat quota had been increased to 23 thousand metric tons.

Talking about the poultry industry, the chief minister said that the trial of the best seed had been started to overcome the soybean shortage; in one year, all the local requirements of soybean would be met from Punjab, he said. A targeted subsidy

was being given through Punjab Ehsaas Program to provide cheap-priced wheat to the people, he said. The Punjab government had already ensured the supply of flour at cheap prices to deserving people through Ehsaas Program, he said and added that one can join the Ehsaas program through a CNIC card number to get a targeted subsidy on flour.

The CM directed that the administration should take all possible measures to ensure the availability of flour to the people at a fixed price. Strict monitoring should be done to prevent inter-provincial transportation of wheat and flour and police and administration should take action without discrimination to stop it, he added.

Meanwhile, Punjab Chief Minister Chaudhry Parvez Elahi has paid tribute to the sacrifice of officers who were martyred in the firing near Khanewal and extended sympathies to the bereaved families.

Taking notice of the tragic incident, the CM has sought a report from the IG police. He said that the accused persons involved in the shooting incident should be brought to justice without delay. He saluted the martyrs' sacrifice and termed them as the brave sons of the soil. All the sympathies of the Punjab government are with the bereaved families, he concluded.

Regularization of 14,055 teachers recommended

LAHORE (APP): A special ministerial committee constituted by the Punjab government, in its first meeting chaired by Provincial Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, Environment Protection and Cooperatives Basharat Raja, has approved recommendations to regularize services of 14,055 contract teachers across Punjab.

Minister Higher Education Raja Yasir Humayoun Sarfraz, Minister Schools Education Dr Murad Raas, President Secondary School Educators Regularization Movement Ch Muhammad Sarfraz, Convener Muhammad Imran and General Secretary Rana Liaquat Ali also participated. These teachers included secondary school educators (SSEs) and assistant education officers (AEOs).

Chairman Committee Muhammad Basharat Raja said that under the recent act passed by the Punjab Assembly, the Chief Minister was authorized to decide on regularization cases, so these recom-

mendations will also be sent to the chief minister and the cabinet for approval. SSEs and AEOs have been exempted from taking the Punjab Public Service Commission examination for regularization.

Minister Schools Education Dr Murad Raas said that these teachers were on contract for 10 years so they should be regularized. Higher Education Minister Raja Yasir Humayoun said that the services of contract teachers were recognized by the Punjab government by deciding to regularize them.

On this occasion, the representatives of Secondary School Educators Regularization Movement thanked Chief Minister Punjab Ch Pervez Elahi and the members of the committee.

Later, the representatives of the organization met Provincial Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Basharat Raja in his office and presented him a bouquet.

SMBR reviews anti smog measures

LAHORE (APP): A meeting was held in the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) committee room regarding anti-smog measures under the chairmanship of Punjab Relief Commissioner and Senior Member Board of Revenue (SMBR) Naveed Haider Shirazi.

Director General PDMA Faisal Farid, Secretary Revenue Mehr Shafatullah Mushtaq, directors of PDMA, and representatives of transport, district administration, urban unit, traffic police and line departments were present.

The relief commissioner was briefed on the elimination of smog by the line departments.

Naveed Haider Shirazi said that PDMA would lead line departments to eliminate smog in light of Lahore High Court orders. The short-term and long-term plans should be submitted to PDMA immediately and the number of vehicles and lists of teams should be submitted to the PDMA, he added.

He said that help of citizens should also be taken for the elimination of smog, and the process of preparing the app for citizens was going on and the citizens would be able to register complaints about factories and public vehicles causing environmental pollution on

the app.

He said that the environment and other line departments should work diligently and increase operations to eliminate smog. The traffic police should also hold a crackdown with the help of Punjab Safe Cities Authority cameras, he added.

SMBR Naveed Haider said that the transport department should share the fitness certificate of vehicles with the traffic police, and concerned agencies should deal strictly with those who caused environmental pollution.

He said that actions should be expedited and the ongoing construction work on the roads of Lahore should be completed as soon as possible so that there was no problem of traffic jams on any road. All departments should ensure close liaison and do their best to eliminate smog.

He said that the orders of the Lahore High Court would be followed and a zero tolerance policy would be followed against the burning of crop residue, garbage and kilns working without zigzag technology.

Smoke control devices should be installed in factories immediately and indiscriminate action should be taken against violations, he concluded.



LAHORE: Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Ahsan Iqbal calls on Governor Punjab Baligur Rehman at Governor House.

Tarar terms Wazirabad attack JIT illegal

LAHORE (APP): Special Assistant to Prime Minister Attaullah Tarar said on Tuesday the joint investigation team (JIT) formed to probe the Wazirabad incident was illegal.

Talking to the media at the Lahore High Court, he said that Wazirabad JIT was not formed under any law or the constitution and the people were being kept in illegal custody in the name of attack case. He said that two workers of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz Mudassar and Ahsan, who are real brothers, were arrested by the police in last two months but their custody was being denied, whereas, video footage of their arrest was available. He said that it was a very dangerous trend to keep the people in illegal custody, without declaring their arrest and producing before the court. "We approached the Lahore High Court against their illegal custody, who had sought a report from the DPO Wazirabad about the matter, within 15 days", he added.

He submitted that police did not

have any evidence or witness against the brothers, adding that they were peaceful citizens and there was no police record against them.

He said that Lahore Capital City Police Officer Ghulam Mehmood Dogar, who also heads the Wazirabad JIT, had a special mindset. He said that the JIT head had kept Mudassar and Ahsan in illegal custody as no progress was being made in investigations of the Wazirabad incident. Can anybody question Ghulam Mehmood Dogar that why he kept the two sons of a mother in illegal custody, he questioned.

Criticizing, he said that Moonis Elahi, wanted to please Imran Khan by subjecting such innocent persons to oppression. He said that Punjab police wanted to make a case of missing persons, while appealing to the inspector general of police (IGP) Punjab to take notice of the situation.

If you wanted to declare their arrest then do so, he said, adding that the approach of picking up innocent

persons and keeping them in illegal custody would not work any longer.

He said that green areas had been abolished in the master plan of Lahore and illegal housing societies were regularized. "You are playing in billions and doing corruption but fear the complaint of the mother whose two sons were kept in illegal custody", he added.

He said: "We will not remain silent until Mudassar and Ahsan were either released or produced before the court", adding that a delegation would also meet the IGP in this regard as he was head of the police and also answerable in the matter.

He said that if Moonis Elahi wanted to please Imran Khan then he must do it but illegally detained brothers should be returned to their mother. He said that millions of rupees were transferred from accounts of Chaudhry Pervez Elahi and Moonis Elahi, adding that investigations were in progress and they had to give account of it.

Haleem says 'imported rulers' least concerned about public problems

KARACHI (PPI): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf PTI senior leader and leader of the opposition in Sindh Assembly Haleem Adil Shiekh said on Tuesday that the country was facing more crisis with every passing day and people were protesting over price hike, but the 'imported rulers' were least concerned about the pressing problems.

Addressing a press conference in Sindh Assembly, he said that in the darkness of nights, anti-people conspiracies were hatched in the Bilawal House and the Governor House. He said the Governor House was made a new 'Nine Zero'.

Haleem said new delimitations were not the real issue of MQM but its real issue was getting due share from 'corruption money'. He said a MP of MQM raised slogan of 'Let us eat together' on the floor of Sindh Assembly. Haleem said this was the

real motive of the PPP and MQM. "These both parties are responsible for destruction of the megacity Karachi and now they are again hatching conspiracy to plunge the megacity into darkness," he added.

The PTI leader said when 13 parties of the PDM could not compete PTI, the MQM even after unification of its three factions could not compete it. He said MQM would be politically wiped off from Karachi in coming polls.

He said in elections of 2018, PTI was winning with a simple majority but its seats were given to some other parties on pretext of fault in RTS system. Haleem said citizens of Karachi had rendered great sacrifices for Pakistan. He said the present delimitations were done to give benefit to the PPP. However, now both MQM and PPP were running away from the

general elections.

He said Imran Khan would visit Sindh in the mid of January. He said Sindh badly needs a change. The people of Sindh should be freed from oppressors. Bilawal should tell people where are 199 plane loads of relief goods and Rs130 billion received in aid for flood affectees, Haleem questioned.

The PTI leader said flood affectees were still sitting on roads in many towns. He said prices of all commodities, especial edibles, were on the rise. He said no relief was being given to the poor masses. He said utility stores were also not facilitating masses. He welcomed SUP on joining GDA.

PTI MPA Dua Bhutto, ILF Karachi president Advocate Zahoor Ahmed, trader leader Aman Shah and others were also present.

Alkhidmat conducts exams for inmates in Central Jail

KARACHI (NNI): Alkhidmat Karachi recently conducted exams for prisoners taking courses in Computer Information Technology (CIT), English language, Chinese language and Computer Graphics at its Computer and Language Center in Karachi's Central Jail.

Students included 137 inmates who took the exams for Chinese language, earning Alkhidmat the privilege of conducting a Chinese language course for jail inmates for the first time in the nation's history. Inmates were given registration cards and roll numbers especially for the exams.

Alkhidmat Karachi's Senior Manager Manzoor Alam and Rizwan Edhi along with SSP Central Jail Abdul Kareem Abbasi and senior jail officers were present at the examination venue and expressed their satisfaction at the arrangements.

Speaking on the occasion, SSP Abbasi thanked Alkhidmat Karachi for its activities in the jail and disclosed that such examinations were being held every year regularly. Executive Director Alkhidmat Karachi Rashid Qureishi said that Alkhidmat Karachi was conducting these courses in jail with the intention to educate prisoners and impart skills to help them lead a respectable life after their jail terms.

Ishaq Dar gets his Gulberg residence back in 'bad condition'

LAHORE (NNI): Finance Minister Ishaq Dar's house in Gulberg area of Lahore was returned to him but in a "bad condition".

Ishaq Dar's secretary said that the officials of the district administration damaged the house, adding that many valuable items in the house were missing. "All the ACs in the house are missing. All the valuable chandeliers installed in the house are also broken," he said.

"Crockery and kitchen items are missing. Sanitary items and wash basins in the

washrooms are also broken," he added. "The house was with the district administration. The electric water cooler outside the house is also missing," he stated.

On the other hand, the Lahore deputy commissioner sent a summary for the return of the frozen assets of Finance Minister Ishaq Dar. The deputy commissioner sent a note to the chief secretary for the return of Rs509 million worth of frozen assets to Ishaq Dar. After the approval of the Finance Department, the frozen assets will be paid to Ishaq Dar.

Ministry asked to submit PC-I for Teacher Training Institute in ICT

ISLAMABAD (NNI): the Teacher Training Institute in ICT which is the dire need of the hour," said the minister.



KOHAT UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
Kohat 26000, Khyber Pukhtunkhwa, Pakistan
(Ph: 0922-5291501, 5291502 - Ext: 4790) Works Directorate

CORRIGENDUM

In continuation of our Tender notice published in daily The Frontier Post and Daily Aaj on dated December 17, 2022. It is for the information of all interested Firms/Companies/Contractors that tender documents for the project "DESIGN, BUILD AND INSTALLATION OF 320 KW ON-GRID TURNKEY PHOTOVOLTAIC (PV), SOLARIZATION OF VARIOUS BUILDINGS (MAIN LIBRARY, ADMINISTRATION BLOCK, HEALTH CARE CENTRE AND INSTITUTE OF COMPUTING / INSTITUTE OF NUMERICAL SCIENCES) AT KUST (PHASE-I)" may be obtained upto to 18-01-2023 from the office of PA to Vice chancellor, KUST. The pre-bid meeting shall be held on 13-01-2023 at 11:00am in the committee room, KUST. Bidders are invited to attend the meeting. The tender may be submitted on or before 19-01-2023 (11:30am) which will be open on the same date i.e 19-01-2023 at 12:00Pm.

All others terms & conditions are the same.

Director Works

Kohat University of Science & Technology, Kohat
Ph #, (0922)52914790 (Ext-4790)
Website: www.kust.edu.pk



LAHORE: Students from different universities are coming to see the artworks of the students from Fatima Jinnah University Rawalpindi at Al Hamra Art Gallery.



KP Governor for strengthening political harmony

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ghulam Ali on Tuesday emphasised upon the political parties to strengthen political harmony and unity to pull the country out of present crises.

He was talking to provincial Chairman of Qaumi Watan Party Sikandar Sherpao who called on him here at the Governor House.

They discussed the country's current political, developmental and economic situation and reiterated the resolve to fight together at every forum to end the political and eco-

nomie crises in Pakistan.

Meanwhile, a 39-member delegation of Lions' club of Peshawar, Dera Ismail Khan, Mardan and Nowshera under the leadership of Muhammad Asif on Tuesday called on Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ghulam Ali here at Governor House.

They congratulated the Governor on his appointment and also gave him honorary membership of the club by pinning the badge of the club.

The Governor said that the axis of his successful life is selfless service to the people and he always

looked forward to meeting with the organizations and individuals engaged in public and social services.

Ghulam Ali also presented a certificate of appreciation to Muhammad Asif for his 50-year of social services.

The delegation told the governor that the Lions Club is the largest social service organization in the world, which has been engaged in social services in the country since 1956.

The Governor assured full support to the Lions Club and said that the Governor House would always welcome them.



PESHAWAR: Inspector General of Police Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Moazzam Jah Ansari addressing to media. — F.P. photo by Ghulam Murtaza

Korean Consul condoles sad demise textile tycoon

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Honorary Consul of Republic of Korea for KP at Peshawar Afan Aziz along with Dean Honorary Consular Crops KP & Sitting Chairman KP Textile Mills Association and Muhammad Kamran Shah, Vice Chairman KP Textile Mills Association offered profound condolences on the sad demise of Mr. Muhammad Yunus Tabba, Chairman, Yunus Brother's Group Pakistan.

In their condolence message Afan Aziz and Muhammad Kamran Shah deeply grieved on the sad demise of Muhammad Yunus Tabba who played

prominent role in the development and progress of textile industry in Pakistan. They also appreciated the efforts well taken by him for the growth and development of his Industrial Group which is not only providing employment to thousands of workers but also playing its roll for the economic development of Pakistan in general and the provinces of KP & Sindh in particular.

They also expressed that the Textile industry has lost a real jewel whose services will be remembered long. Afan Aziz further said that Mr. Muhammad Yunus Tabba was a very good human being and always

busy for the betterment and wellbeing of the people and the workforce employed in his group.

He started so many charity programs in his life time and operated successfully and hoped that his family members would continue the noble work with the same zeal. He further said that Tabba played his role very effectively for the development of textile industry.

Afan Aziz and Muhammad Kamran Shah prayed to the Almighty Allah for His utmost blessings to the departed soul and to give courage to all the bereaved family members to bear this irreparable loss.

CM felicitates newly elected cabinets of PPC, ACWA

PESHAWAR (APP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Mahmood Khan has felicitated the newly elected cabinets of Peshawar Press Club (PPC) and Abaseen Column Writers Association (ACWA).

In a message issued here on Tuesday, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister congratulated Arshad Aziz Malik and Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi for being elected as presidents of PPC and ACWA, respectively.

The Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mahmood Khan expressed the hope that newly-elected cabinets of both journalistic bodies would play an active role in highlighting true problems faced by society members and guide the government for the resolution of these issues.

Similarly, he added, both bodies will extend cooperation to the government for collective efforts in the development of the country in general and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in particular.

JUI-F suspends political activities

PESHAWAR (APP): Jamiat-e-Ulama-e-Islam (Fazl) has announced to suspend all the political and social activities of the party related to the participation of central leader Maulana Fazl ur Rehman till further order due to his bad health.

A press release issued here by Jamiat-e-Ulama-e-Islam (Fazl) on behalf of Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haidri said that the health condition of Maulana Fazl ur Rehman was not good from a long time and doctors had time and again advised him to take rest but he continued political and social activities.

It said that now as per the advice of doctors the central cabinet of Jamiat-e-Ulama-e-Islam (Fazl) had decided to suspend all the political and social activities of the party involving participation of central leader Maulana Fazl ur Rehman till further order.

It requested people to pray for early recovery of JUI-F central leader Maulana Fazl ur Rehman instead of visiting him or contacting him on telephone.



PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mahmood Khan chairing 85th meeting of Provincial Cabinet.

Disable quota: PHC orders KMU to argue on 10th Jan

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Justice Ijaz Safi of Peshawar High Court (PHC) has issued notice to Khyber Medical University (KMU) in writ regarding declaration students as disable who were declared fit (not disable) in previous 2021-22 session to argue the petition on 10th January, on Tuesday.

The writ petition filed by

Haroon Hameed who is enrolled in Bachelor of Dentistry Sciences (BDS) while challenged admission of Haris Zaman and Jahangir Bacha in MBBS on disable quota.

The counsel for petitioner Zia-ur-Rehman Tajik Advocate informed that Haris Zaman and Jahangir Bacha were declared fit (not disable) by KMU's medical in session 2021-22 while in

this session the same declared them as disable.

The counsel Zia-ur-Rehman Tajik Advocate argued that once Haris Zaman and Jahangir Bacha as declared by KMU's medical board in 2021 session then in the current session who the same body declare the respondents as disable and granted admission in MBBS degree.

The counsel argued that

if the Haris Zaman and Jahagir Bacha excluded from disable merit list then the petitioner will stand on 5th position in merit list and will be able to obtain admission in the discipline of MBBS degree at KMU.

PHC's single bench comprised of Justice Ijaz Safi ordered KMU to argue the petition on 10th January while issued notices to respondents after initial arguments.

IGP directs high ups for fool proof security to polio team

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Inspector General of Police Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Moazzam Jah Ansari has directed police high ups to further pull up their sleeves for fool proof security to the polio teams and preempt and prevent any untoward incident with iron hands.

These directives were issued to all Regional Police Officers and District Police Officers in a video link conference held at Central Police Office Peshawar on Tuesday.

Additional IGPs Invest-

igation, Headquarters, Operations, Commandants

Elite Force and FRP, DIGs

Special Branch, Headquarters, Traffic, CTD, Operations and AIG Training

attended the conference while CCPO Peshawar,

Regional Police Officers and District Police Officers participated via video link from their respective command areas.

In the conference one point agenda, security of polio team was thread

barley discussed and necessary

instructions were issued to the participants. The police

chief pointed out that complete eradication of polio

was an important national obligation and directed the

participants to perform their duty with missionary

zeal and spirit, personally

participate in all meetings

being held for this purpose

at district level with full

preparation and present

valuable input in it.

They were also directed

to personally work out

security audit and administrative

audit of polio teams and

implement the security

plan in its true spirit so that

in case of any untoward

incident the miscreants

could not escape from

police security network.

They were also directed for

intelligence security of the

area before starting of the polio campaign, depute manpower as per requirements and sensitivity of the area and educate the police jawans of their duty and send them with full protective gear and measures.

The police high ups were

further directed to make

standardized accommodation

and food arrangements

for the jawans deputed for

the polio duty and personally

supervise and check all

necessary arrangements.

The IGP made it clear

that protection of life, honour and property was the prime responsibility of the police and directed them to be extra-vigilant and agile during the polio duty and must achieve the targets against the miscreants without any loss.

The IGP vowed that

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

police would play their

pivotal role in eradication

of the menace of polio so that

the country could be

included in polio free

nations of the world.

IGP congratulate newly elected PPC office bearers

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Inspector General of Police, Moazzam Jah Ansari here on Tuesday visited Peshawar Press Club and congratulated its newly elected office bearers including President Arshad Aziz Malik. Accompanied by senior police officers, the IGP was welcomed by newly elected President, Arshad Aziz Malik, General Secretary Nasir Muszai, Finance Secretary Amdad Waheed and former president of PPC, Muhammad Riaz Khan besides others. The IGP expressed the hope that the newly elected cabinet would utilize all their energies for promotion of constructive and healthy journalism besides resolution of problems of journalists' community.



PESHAWAR: A view of thick fog at morning time that engulfs whole city.

WAPDA issues inflows, outflows in rivers, dams

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

According to a spokesperson of the authority,

inflows and outflows in Indus River at Tarbela were 16700 cusecs and 5000 cusecs while inflows and outflows in Kabul River at Nowshera were 8900 cusecs and 8900 cusecs respectively.

Similarly, inflows and outflows at Khairabad Bridge were recorded 15800 cusecs and 15800 cusecs and inflows and outflows in Jhelum River at Mangla were 5100 cusecs and 4000 cusecs and inflows and outflows in Chenab River at Marala was 5400 cusecs and 5400 cusecs respectively.

Meanwhile, inflows and outflows in Jinnah Barrage were 14900 cusecs and 10900 cusecs, Chashma (inflows: 14600 cusecs and outflows 12000 cusecs), Tauna (inflows 17500 cusecs and outflows 17500 cusecs), Guddu (inflows 15100 cusecs and outflows 9900 cusecs), Sukkur

(inflows 11300 cusecs and outflows 500 cusecs), Kotri (inflows 2400 cusecs and outflows 2400 cusecs), Trimmu (inflows 8400 cusecs and outflow Nil cusecs while in Panjnad the inflows and outflows were recorded 4800 cusecs and Nil cusecs respectively.

Furthermore, Tarbela Dam was operating at level 1492.19 feet against minimum operating level 1398 feet and maximum conservation level 1550 feet. Live storage on Tuesday morning was 2.836 million acre feet (MAF).

Mangla: Minimum operating level 1050 feet, present level 1118.65 feet, maximum conservation level 1242 feet, live storage on Tuesday morning was 0.754 MAF.

Chashma: Minimum operating level 638.15 feet, present level 640.40 feet, maximum conservation level 649 feet, live storage on Tuesday morning was 0.030 MAF.

The inflows and outflows of River Indus at Tarbela, Jinnah and Chashma, River Kabul at Nowshera and River Jhelum at Mangla have been reflected as mean flows of 24 hours, whereas the other flows have been gauged at 6.00 a.m.

ADC's Khyber Reader passed away

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Reader of Additional Deputy Commissioner Khyber Mukaram Khan Afridi has passed away due to cardiac arrest. Rasm-e-Qul of deceased will be offered at his ancestral village Shagai Hindkiyan. Deceased was son of Haji Khaista Jan Afridi and nephew of Malik Aman Ullah.



Govt to establish NCC to develop user-friendly online database

PESHAWAR (APP): The federal government would establish a national compliance centre (NCC) to develop a user-friendly online database for compliance related information and maintaining an inclusive repository of requirements of an international compliance.

According to official documents, the proposed centre would help collabo-

rate with an international standards organizations and economic blocs for obtaining desired information besides disseminating data regarding regular outreach activities including workshops, trainings and facilitate public-private sector dialogue for benefits of all provinces including Azad Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan.

The centre would keep

an effective liaison with the concerned institutions, agencies and organizations pertaining to information sharing particularly in awareness campaigns besides developing capacity building and business development strategies and assist SMEs.

The NCC secretariat's headquarter would be established in the ministry of commerce Islamabad

while trade development authority of Pakistan (TDAP) and provincial TICs would serve as secretariats for provincial compliance centres (PCC) headed by the secretary commerce.

NCC would be headed by Chief Compliance Officer reporting to a project steering committee headed by the secretary finance.

Dr. Mohibullah administered oath to newly elected DOWA cabinet



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The oath taking ceremony of Dir Officers Welfare Association (DOWA) was held at Islamic Center, Agricultural University Peshawar last evening. It was largely attended by the former and present members of assemblies, senators, officers of various government and autonomous departments, professors, writers, poets from both districts of Dir, opinion leaders from various walks of life, journalists, doctors, engineers and lawyers.

Patron-in-chief of the Association and prominent ENT specialist Dr. Mohibullah Khan, presi-

dent-elect and chief executive of Paraplegic Center Peshawar Dr. Syed Mohammad Ilyas, outgoing president and former director general of health services Dr. Shamsul Haq and general secretary DOWA Karam Elahi in their speeches on this occasion, reiterated the commitment that the association will continue its welfare activities more actively and the development of the two backward districts and the service of the poor people there, especially poor students who get admission in professional institutions on merit and patients will continue to get all possible assistance and the treatment in hospitals.

On this occasion, Patron-in-Chief Dr. Mohibullah Khan administered the oath to the newly elected office bearers, while in the ceremony there was also an interesting mushaira of prominent poets under the leadership of renowned poet and scholar Prof. Dr. Abasin Yousafzai.

All the poets received great applause from the audience for reciting their meaningful poems.

Similarly, multimedia reports on the history and culture of Dir districts and three-year welfare activities of the association were also presented.

Commendation certificates were also given to the

outgoing office bearers in recognition of their outstanding services.

Patron-in-chief of the association Dr. Mohibullah, businessmen and industrialists Karam Elahi, Fazal Karim Khan and Shahid Hussain, senior vice president of Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI), while appreciating the welfare services of the association expressed hope that its welfare activities will get momentum with passage of time.

The speakers also pledged that the association will cooperate with the government in every way for the development and prosperity of the backward districts of Dir.



In brief

BPC elects Abid as general secy F.P. Report

BUNER: Buner Press Club (BPC) elected new cabinet as Mohib-ul-Haq and Abdur Rahman Abid as president and general secretary respectively for the year 2023, on Tuesday. The senior journalist Shaukat Ali elected as finance secretary, Sultan Ghani as Vice President and Moammar Zaman chose as joint secretary. All of the office bearers won their slots unopposed. The election committee supervised by vice president Buner Bar Israr Ahmed Advocate and general secretary Mehboob-ur-Rehman advocate and announced the fresh cabinet. The election committee members Saeed-ur-Rashed, Syed Bacha Termizi and Imran Ullah assisted. The newly elected President and General Secretary said in their brief chatting that the cabinet will play its part in the welfare of the Press Club and its members and would best highlight the problems of residents of Buner.

Teenage boy shot dead

HYDERABAD (PPI): A teenage boy was shot dead during an engagement function in Hyderabad, turning merriment into mourning on Tuesday. Reportedly, during an engagement function in Khursheed Town in Hyderabad, some men opened fire and killed an 18-year-old boy identified as Awais. Police arrested four accused who opened fire during the function. Further investigations were underway. Two injured robbers held during police encounters. Police arrested two alleged robbers in injured condition from Korangi. In two different police encounters in Korangi, the law enforcers arrested two dacoits who got hurt during the encounters. According to police, the accused used to rob citizens. Police recovered weapons, a motorcycle, cash and other stolen articles from their possession. Korangi SSP Sajid Sidozai informed that the encounters were held near Coast Guard Korangi and Korangi Dhari Number.

15 injured in rivals firing

SHEIKHPURA (INP): At least 15 people suffered bullet injuries in a firing between two rival groups here at District court on Monday. Police said that two rival groups-Arif Khan group and Kambah brothers opened indiscriminate firing over domestic issues. Consequently, 15 people sustained injuries. The injured were identified as -Muhammad Arif, Mazhar Iqbal, Rasheed, Qurban Ali, Rehman Ali, Muhammad Warbani of Arif Khan group and Maqsood Alam, Mehboob Alam, Mehmood Alam, Abid Hussain, Sajid, Abdul Jabbar, Ibrar, Farooq and Tariq of Kambah group. They were shifted to DHQ hospital, while further investigation was underway.

Pak progressing towards prosperity F.P. Report

ABBOTTABAD: Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Javed Abbasi on Tuesday said that Pakistan was progressing towards prosperity under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. He expressed these views while talking to the delegations of his constituency at his residence. The minister said, "We will fulfill all of our election promises, all sui gas provision projects those were started during my previous tenure were capped by the PTI-led government and would be started soon."

Farmers demand availability of fertilizer

Hafiz Aziz-ur-Rehman

HAFIZABAD: Deputy Commissioner Hafizabad Touqeer Ilyas Cheema held monthly Revenue Open Court at District Complex, on Monday on directions of the Punjab government for addressing people's grievances under same roof without any hurdle. AC Hafizabad Rab Nawaz Chadhar and officers of Land record centres, domicile branch and other subordinate officers of revenue department were also present on this occasion.

DC listened problems of people related to revenue department and issued appropriate directions to concerned officers to resolve problems of the applicants on merit. Farmers of different areas of the district take up unavailability of urea fertilizer in the open court and demanded the DC to ensure provision of urea fertilizer on subsidies prices. DC was assured the farmers that district administration would ensure provision of urea fertilizer to farmers according to their requirements on fixed prices while strict action was being taken against hoarders and profiteers in the district.

Meanwhile, Special Price Magistrates fined Rs. 181700/= to 481 shopkeepers and three cases were also get registered against shopkeepers involved in receiving arbitrary prices from consumers during last

month (December) in the district for controlling artificial dearth. This was stated by the ADCR Abdul Rauf.

He warned the shopkeepers to refrain from violating price list issued by the District Consumer Committee with the consultation of business community and representatives of consumers.

Chemist & druggist association elects cabinet: Azhar Qayyum Cheema and Khalid Akhtar elected unopposed president and general secretary of Chemists and Druggists Association Hafizabad respectively. Other office bearers are include Petron-in-Chief Nadim Iqbal, Vice Petron-in-Chief Rasheed Ahmad, Senior vice president Ghulam Serwar Gorayya, Vice presidents Hafiz Muhammad Amanat Ali, Waseem Ahmad, Jhanzaib, Joint Secretary Muhammad Azam, Secretary Information Muhammad Owais, Finance Secretary Khalid Pervaz.

Alleged culprit injured from friend's firing: An accused of robbery injured due to firing of his own accomplices. According to police report, Sanwal Itaf was going to village when he reached near village Chuchak in precinct of police station Sadar Pindi Bhattian, four unidentified accused stopped him on gun point and snatched one lake of rupees cash and

mobile phone and fled from the crime scene.

Later, the accused were allegedly quarrel on issue of distribution of looted money and they injured their own accomplice and fled away. Police have shifted the injured accused Faheem Abbas son of Muhammad Aslam to Trauma Centre Hafizabad.

Meanwhile, unknown accused looted a milkman on Jagganwala Road. According to report, Hafiz Ali Akbar milkman resident of Kot Bukhtawar was on its way to his village after selling milk in the city. On the way near Jagganwala drain bridge, two unidentified accused deprived him from Rs. 22000/= cash and sped away from the crime scene. Police is engaged in investigation.

Al-Yasar club becomes hockey champion: Victory Hockey Club won First Quaid-e-Azam under 20-Hockey Tournament to defeat Al-Yasar Hockey Club Hafizabad. The final match of the tournament was played between Victory Hockey Club Karriala and Al-Yasar Hockey Club Hafizabad. Victory Hockey Club Karriala secured four goals while other team could score two goals. Olympian Javed, National Player Asif Hanif and DSP Motorway Mian Zaighumir Rehman distributed prizes among players of winner team. A large number of spectators witnessed the final match.

Two outlaws arrested after police encounters

FAISALABAD (INP): The police arrested two suspects after separate encounters in Faisalabad here late last night. Police said on Tuesday that Saddar Tandlianwala police signaled two suspects riding on two motorcycles near Chak no.612-GB bridge but the outlaws accelerated their bikes. The police chased them and directed to

surrender but they opened indiscriminate firing. The team retaliated and during the gunfight, one of the outlaws received injuries and fell down on the ground whereas his accomplice managed to escape from the scene under the cover of darkness.

The police arrested the injured criminal-Imtiaz and recovered two motorcycles,

one pistol and other items. Meanwhile, City Jaranwala police arrested one robber who was identified as Hasnain while his two accomplices managed to escape after an encounter near 240 Mor Jaranwala. The accused were wanted by police in robbery, dacoity and other cases. Concerned police launched investigation.



KHAR: Rescue 1122 officials giving treatment to an injured child after roof collapsed in Bajaur. — F.P. photo

Tribesmen slam excessive power off

F.P. Report

BARA: The tribesmen of Aka Khel suspended frontier road against unscheduled and prolonged power off here sheen drang market, subdivision Bara, district Khyber on Tuesday.

Led by their elite Noorzali Afridi, a number of locals appeared at the road and initiated a protest sit-in on the main road, suspending it for all kinds of traffic. The protestors were of the view that until acceptance of their demand of ensuring smooth flow of

electricity to them, they would not give up their agitation.

Speaking on the occasion their leader Noorzali Afridi categorically condemned the injustice and irresponsible attitude of the Tesco and Wapda officials towards their misery and said that for the last weeks, the supply of the power to Aka Khel area had been cut off.

Besides intensifying the problem of potable water accessibility, the Tesco officials had left them on the mercy of Allah in the chilly

weather, he remarked. He further added that they conveyed their grievance to the highup however they turned blind eyes towards their problem.

The protestors threatened that till assertion of the concerned officials for supply of electricity, they would continue their agitation. Due to road blockage exports and transit transportation to Afghanistan was temporarily halted and long queues of vehicles were witnessed at both sides of the barricade point.

Muhammad Abid r/o chak 163 NB, was traveling on a car when a speeding truck coming from opposite direction hit the vehicle. Consequently, Khawar died on the spot while Abid suffered injuries.

collision between a car and a truck on Sargodha-Khushab road in the jurisdiction of Jhal Chakhan police station here on Tuesday.

Police said that Muhammad Khawar r/o chak no 55 NB along with



MINGORA: KP Minister for Housing Dr. Amjad Ali Shamozaai inaugurating Rural Health Unit at Chongi area, Swat.

Demo for payment of timely salaries held

QUETTA (PPI): All Balochistan Municipal Workers Association on Tuesday demanded of the authorities to ensure payment of salaries in respect of permanent, casual employees and pensioners on first date of each month, pay gratuity to the retired and heirs of deceased employees of QMC, ensure payment of charcoal and boat allowance to the Beldars, increase salaries of casual employees in accordance with the notification issued by the government of Balochistan.

These demands were made in the protest demonstration held in the premises of Quetta Metropolitan Corporation under the aegis of All Balochistan Municipal Workers Ahere on Tuesday. Addressing the protest demonstration, speakers said that the authorities had turned a deaf ear to the genuine demands of Quetta Metropolitan Corporation despite the fact that employees of QMC had been on strike for the last many days.

Demanding the authorities to ensure payment of salaries in respect of permanent, casual employees and pensioners of QMC on first date of each month, pay gratuity to the retired and heirs of deceased employees, ensure payment of charcoal and boat allowance to the Beldars of QMC, increase salaries of casual employees in accordance with the notification issued by government of Balochistan, they said that if genuine demands of the employees of QMC were not entertained, strong protest movement would be launched.

The protest demonstration was addressed by Muhammad Rahim Baloch, President, All Balochistan Municipal Workers Association, Nadeem Khokar, General Secretary and others.

Performance polio teams inspected F.P. Report

LAKKI MARWAT: Deputy Commissioner Lakki Marwat Fazal Akbar paid visits to the basic health units in different localities on Tuesday to check the performance of polio teams. Accompanied by health officials, Fazal met vaccinators, checked security arrangements and the progress of mobile and fixed teams. He directed the authorities concerned to focus on coverage of refusal cases and pursue reluctant parents on immunization of children. "The district administration will extend full support to the health department and its partners' organization to ensure vaccination of the targeted population during the ongoing anti-polio drive", he added. In Bannu, additional deputy commissioner Islahuddin inaugurated the five days polio eradication campaign by administering anti-polio drops to several children under the age of five.

Additional AC Wazir subdivision Khayyam Nasir, Deputy DHO Dr Zafar Iqbal and other officials were also present. On the occasion, the additional DC asked the parents not to believe in misconceptions about anti-polio vaccine and immunize their kids against the crippling disease.

New tourist destinations established in Malakand

Shaif Ullah

MINGORA: Commissioner Malakand Division Shaukat Ali Yousafzai has said that special attention is being paid to the promotion of tourism in Malakand Division, making Swat a tourism hub is among the priorities of the provincial government. Introducing new tourist destinations is to attract tourists to the tourist areas, Malakand Division consists of beautiful and picturesque tourist areas, the hospitality of the people of Swat and Malakand Division draws tourists to these tourist areas, in Swat and Malakand Division.

Commissioner expressed these views while talking to Chairman of Swat Press Club Shireen zada and senior journalist Ghafoor Khan Adil and other media men in his office Saidu Sharif, he said that The presence of large number of tourists is a clear proof that tourists

are fully protected here said that tourist within the country are invited to enjoy the beautiful sights of Malakand Division, tourists should visit these tourist areas and enjoy these beautiful sights.

He said that the focus is on the promotion of tourism in Swat and Malakand division, a heavy responsibility is placed on local journalists and media to promote regional tourism and attract more tourists to these beautiful valleys. We all have to play our key role.

Police trace theft case, recover stolen cash: Swat Police arrested alleged thieves and recovered stolen cash from the possession, said a press release issued here on Tuesday. A complainant Wali Khan son of Mohammad Zarawar, resident of Pathaney (Mingora) had registered a report of the theft of a cash amount of Rs.0.8 million

from his house with Police Station Mingora.

The victim had sold his Daina (truck) at the rate of Rs.1.150 million, out of which he had spent an amount of Rs.2,70,000/- and the remaining amount was put in the draw of his room. But, when he checked the draw, the cash was missing.

Taking notice of the incident, District Police Officer (DPO) Swat, Shafiqullah Khan Gandapur tasked the Additional SP Swat, Raheem Hussain Khan for speedy tracing of the case, who under the supervision of SDPO City Circle, Badshah Hazrat formed a police team. The team while following modern scientific technology traced the accused Amjad son of Iqbal and Amjad son of Barkat Ali, resident of Pathaney and recovered looted cash amounting to Rs.0.8 million from them. Furthermore investigations were in progress.

Youth killed on resisting robbery in Lower Dir

F.P. Report

TIMERGARA: A youth identified as Muhammad Izhar son of Muhammad Amin, a resident of Nawy Kaly in Batkhela was killed when he resisted a robbery case on the Chakdara bypass road.

The deceased told the Chakdara police in injured condition that the unknown accused stopped his car and forcibly took Rs15000 and a smart mobile phone. He said the accused opened fire on him when he tried to resist them. As a result he was seriously injured. The accused escaped after snatching away the money and his mobile phone. The injured was shifted to the THQ hospital Chakdara from where he was referred to Peshawar but succumbed to injured and died on the way.

The Chakdara police registered a case on the report of his father Muhammad Amin against the unknown accused and started investigations. Similarly, a man identified as Gul Azim Khan son of Mashuq, a resident of Shahikhel Kotkay died due to a rock sliding in the Zardali Banda mountain in the limits of Mayar police station. Another man Shah Islam was injured in the

incident who was brought to the DHQ hospital Timergara. It is said both the men were working in the hill when the incident occurred.

Residents to stand shoulder with shoulder with armed forces: Utman Khel nation will stand with Pakistani Army for the security and protection of the country. The brave men of UtmanKhel have made sacrifices by taking part in the freedom of Kashmir and Jihad against the British and the UtmanKhel tribe has a glorious tribe in Pakhtoon.

Despite being rich in natural resources, the Pakhtuns are not being given authority over their resources and the young people here are forced to go to the Gulf countries for laboUr and Punjab is occupying the resources of the Pakhtuns. A percentage of the population consists of the UtmanKhel tribe. A separate district should be approved under the name of the UtmanKhel tribe. These views were expressed by the president and member of the provincial assembly of the UtmanKhel tribe of Lower Dir, Haji Bahadur Khan, senior vice president, principal Haji Jan Muhammad, of Lower Dir.

General Secretary Fazal Malik Advocate, Central General Secretary Ilyas Mandal, Prof. Dr. Fakhru Salam, District Collector Sher Muhammad Khan, Dir Bala District President Khurshid Khan, Malik Bahadur Khan, Former Provincial Minister Nawazbada Mehmood Zaib Khan, Maulana Nabi Shah, Imran Thakur, Haji Mohammad Nazeef and others at Timergara Rest House Speaking at a grand ceremony on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the establishment of the UtmanKhel, he said that the UtmanKhel tribe has settled in Afghanistan, India and various countries around the world including Pakistan.

He said that the UtmanKhel tribe is a peaceful and patriotic tribe and They want to live in peace and brotherhood with other nations with respect and honor to the people of other tribes but will not allow anyone to do injustice to their tribe. He urged the community to equip their children with good education because development and prosperity is not possible without education, he said. He will give all possible help to the poor, needy people.

PO involved in 20-yr old murder case nabbed

F.P. Report

KOHAT: The district police on Tuesday claimed to have arrested a proclaimed offender (PO) Gul Zameer of Orakzai district, who was involved in a 20-year old murder case and had been dodging the police to avoid his arrest.

SHO Jangal Khel Sakhi ur Rahman along with his team apprehended the criminal in an intelligence based operation. The PO was wanted to Doaba, Police district Hangu in a murder case registered in 2003. The arrested criminal would be handed over to Hangu Police after fulfilling codal formalities.

Rescue 1122 Kohat receives 99,647 unnecessary, fake calls in 2022: Rescue 1122 Kohat office in the year 2022 received a

total of 145,045 calls out of which 99,647 were unnecessary and fake calls while 46,864 were information based calls. Spokesperson Yasir Khattak on Tuesday said that rescue teams responded to 3,994 different types of accidents in a timely manner and provided facilities to the public during emergencies this year.

Under the leadership of District Emergency Officer Kohat Muhammad Jawad Khan Khalil issued a report for the year 2022 in which they responded to 3,994 different types of accidents in a timely manner and provided facilities to the public during emergencies.

During this time Rescue 1122 handled 3,994 different types of emergencies including 2,896 medical,

591 road traffic accidents, 186 fire , 226 different types of recoveries, 6 gunshots, 7 house collapses, 14 cylinder blasts and 7 drowning incidents. A total of 4,441 patients were given first aid and transported safely to hospital while 219 people died on the spot. Rescue 1122 teams provided rescue service to a total of 4,660 people.

District Emergency Officer Jawad Khan Khalil said that in the year 2022, the construction of four rescue stations and one South Region Office of Rescue 1122 was completed in which the rescue service has been started. By the end of 2023, the construction of Dara Adamkhel and Lachi station would also be completed, he added.



China media plays down COVID severity as WHO seeks detail

BEIJING/HONG KONG/GENEVA (Reuters): State media in China played down the severity of a surge of COVID-19 infections ahead of an expected briefing on Tuesday by its scientists to the World Health Organization, which is hoping for a "detailed discussion" on the evolution of the virus. China's abrupt U-turn on COVID controls on Dec. 7, as well as the accuracy of its case and mortality data, have come under increasing scrutiny at home and abroad.

China's foreign ministry labelled travel entry curbs imposed by some countries as "simply unreasonable", saying they "lacked scientific basis". "We are willing to improve communication with the world," foreign ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning told reporters in Beijing. "But ... we are firmly opposed to attempts to manipulate the epidemic prevention and control measures for political purposes, and will take corresponding measures in different situations according to the principle of reciprocity."

China's shift away from a "zero-COVID" policy that had been championed by President Xi Jinping followed protests that had marked the strongest show of public defiance during his decade in power and had coincided with the economy's slowest growth in nearly half a century. As the virus spreads unchecked, funeral parlours have reported a spike in demand for their services and international health experts predict at least one million deaths in China this year. China reported three new COVID deaths, taking its official death toll since the pandemic began to 5,253.

On Tuesday, the People's Daily, the Communist Party's official newspaper, cited Chinese experts as saying the illness caused by the virus

was relatively mild for most people. "Severe and critical illnesses account for 3% to 4% of infected patients currently admitted to designated hospitals in Beijing," Tong Zhaohui, vice president of the Beijing Chaoyang Hospital, told the newspaper. Kang Yan, head of West China Tianfu Hospital of Sichuan University, said that in the past three weeks, a total of 46 patients had been admitted to intensive care units, or about 1% of symptomatic infections.

The emergencies area at the Zhongshan Hospital in Shanghai was packed with patients on Tuesday, a Reuters witness said. Some were in beds in the corridor receiving IV treatment while dozens were queuing around them, waiting to see a doctor. It was unclear how many were there with COVID. The World Health Organization has urged Chinese health officials to regularly share specific and real-time information on the outbreak.

The WHO has invited Chinese scientists to present detailed data on viral sequencing at a technical advisory group meeting on Tuesday. It has also asked China to share data on hospitalizations, deaths and vaccinations. Ahead of the meeting scheduled for Tuesday afternoon Geneva time, a WHO spokesperson said that a "detailed discussion" was expected about circulating variants in China, and globally, with Chinese scientists expected to make a presentation. But some experts doubted that China would be very forthright.

"I don't think China will be very sincere in disclosing information," said Alfred Wu, associate professor at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at National University of Singapore. "They would rather just keep it to themselves or they would say nothing happened, nothing is new. My own sense is that we

could assume that there is nothing new ... but the problem is China's transparency issue is always there." The United States, France, and others will require COVID tests on travellers from China, while Belgium said it would test wastewater from planes for new variants.

European Union health officials will meet on Wednesday on a coordinated response. China will stop requiring inbound travellers to go into quarantine from Jan. 8. But it will still demand a pre-departure test. As Chinese workers and shoppers fall ill, concerns mount about near-term growth prospects in the world's second-largest economy, causing volatility in global financial markets.

A survey released on Tuesday showed China's factory activity shrank last month. December shipments from Foxconn's Zhengzhou iPhone plant, disrupted by worker departures and unrest amid a COVID outbreak, were 90% of the firm's initial plans. A "bushfire" of infections in China in coming months is likely to hurt its economy this year and drag global growth lower, said the head of the International Monetary Fund, Kristalina Georgieva.

"China is entering the most dangerous weeks of the pandemic," warned Capital Economics analysts. Mobility data suggested that economic activity was depressed nationwide and would likely remain so until infections subside, they added. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism said the 52.71 million domestic trips during the New Year holiday generated 26.52 billion yuan (\$3.84 billion), up 4% year-on-year but were only about 35% of the last pre-pandemic year in 2019. Expectations are higher for the big Lunar New Year holiday, late this month, when some experts predict infections will have peaked in many places.

Protests near German village vacated

BERLIN (AP): Scuffles broke out outside a village in western Germany that is to be razed to allow the expansion of a coal mine, a plan that is drawing resistance from climate activists. Activists threw fireworks, bottles and stones at police outside the village of Luetzerath before the situation calmed down and officers pulled back, German news agency dpa reported.

Protesters previously had set up a burning barricade, and one glued his hand to the access road. The hamlet is to be demolished to expand the Garzweiler lignite mine, despite protests from environmentalists who fear millions more tons of heat-trapping carbon dioxide will be released into the atmosphere. Activists have been living in houses abandoned by former residents.

The Heinsberg county administration has issued an order barring people from Luetzerath and, if they fail to leave, authorizing police to clear the village from Jan. 10 onward. Officials have called for a non-violent end to the activists' occupation. In October, the federal and regional governments — both of which include the environmentalist Green party — and energy company RWE agreed to bring forward the exit from coal use in the region by eight years to 2030. But, amid concerns about Germany's energy security following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the agreement also foresees the life of two power plant units that were supposed to be switched off earlier being extended until at least 2024 and Luetzerath being razed to enable further mining.

"As I leave for Beijing, I will be opening a new chapter in our comprehensive, strategic cooperation with China," he told officials and diplomats, including the Chinese ambassador, prior to boarding his flight from an air base in the capital. "I look forward to my meeting with President Xi as we work towards shifting the trajectory of our relations to a higher gear that would hopefully bring numerous prospects and abundant opportunities for peace and development to the peoples of both our countries," he added.

Hunt for inmates turns deadly

MEXICO CITY (BBC): At least seven people have been killed in a shoot-out in Mexico as officials searched for 30 inmates who staged a bloody prison break. Gunmen opened fire on state investigators who were hunting the escapees, killing at least two of them. Five gunmen also died in the shoot-out, but it is not yet clear if any of the escapees were among those killed.

A gang called Los Mexicles, which has links to the Sinaloa cartel, is thought to be behind the violence. Prison break in Ciudad Juárez was one of the deadliest in recent times, leaving 10 guards and seven inmates dead. Suspected members of Los Mexicles took advantage of the busy visiting as relatives flocked to the jail to wish their loved ones a happy new year. They arrived in several armoured cars and opened fire on the guards at the entrance, according to local media.

At the same time, inmates set mattresses alight inside their cells to create confusion and distract the guards. At first, officials said two dozen inmates had escaped, but the head of the state prison system has since announced that the number was "at least 30". Among those who escaped is the leader of Los Mexicles, Ernesto Piñón de la Cruz, also known as El Neto. El Neto, 33, has been in prison for 14 years serving a sentence for kidnapping and murder. An attempt by his gang to free him during a prison transfer in 2010 failed and he was injured. He appears to have wielded enormous power from behind bars, where he enjoyed a more luxurious life than less well-connected prisoners. Mexico's defence minister said 10 "VIP cells" had been "discovered" during a search of the jail. El Neto's cell boasted a jacuzzi, a plasma TV and a safe containing 1.7m pesos (\$87,000; £73,000). Police also found 16kg of marijuana, 4kg of crystal meth and 1.5kg of heroin, as well as several weapons.

Federal officials say the state of Chihuahua, in which the prison is located, is to blame for the lack of oversight, while Chihuahua officials say their requests to have El Neto moved to a federal institution with higher levels of security had been turned down. Residents of Ciudad Juárez told local media they were terrified after the breakout, as El Neto is believed to have been behind a wave of killings in August 2022 known as "Black Thursday", in which 10 people without any links to criminal gangs were killed across the city.

Philippines' Marcos Jr. heads to China amid sea disputes



MANILA (AP): Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. flew to China on Tuesday for a three-day state visit, saying he looks forward to his meeting with Chinese leader Xi Jinping as they work to boost bilateral ties.

"As I leave for Beijing, I will be opening a new chapter in our comprehensive, strategic cooperation with China," he told officials and diplomats, including the Chinese ambassador, prior to boarding his flight from an air base in the capital. "I look forward to my meeting with President Xi as we work towards shifting the trajectory of our relations to a higher gear that would hopefully bring numerous prospects and abundant opportunities for peace and development to the peoples of both our countries," he added.

Alluding to the two countries' territorial dispute in the South China Sea, he said he looks forward to discussing bilateral and regional political and security issues.

"The issues between our two countries are problems that do not belong between two friends such as Philippines and China," he added. "We will seek to resolve those issues to mutual benefit of our two countries." China claims virtually the entire South China Sea and has ignored a 2016 ruling by a tribunal in

The Hague that invalidated Beijing's claims to the waterway. The case was brought by the Philippines, which says China has since developed disputed reefs into artificial islands with airplane runways and other structures so they now resemble forward military

bases.

Most recently, a Filipino military commander reported that the Chinese coast guard forcibly seized Chinese rocket debris that Filipino navy personnel had retrieved in the South China Sea last month. China denied the forcible seizure. Marcos said he would seek further clarification on his visit to Beijing.

Accompanied by a big business delegation, Marcos said they will seek cooperation in various areas including agriculture, energy, infrastructure, trade and investments, and people-to-people exchanges. He said they expect to sign more than 10 key bilateral agreements during the visit. China accounts for 20% of the Philippines' foreign trade and is also a major source of foreign direct investment.

EU to try again for coord on China Covid policies

BRUSSELS (AP): European Union nations will try again on Wednesday to mold a coordinated approach on if and how authorities should check incoming airline passengers from China for any new COVID-19 variants after several member nations announced individual efforts over the past week.

Belgium said it would be checking wastewater from planes coming in from China to see if it yields new clues about any potentially dangerous variants. It said that it would urge visitors from China who do not feel well to take a COVID-19 test. More should be done, but only in a coordinated approach among the 27 member states, said Belgian Health Minister Frank Vandenbroucke. "It would be a good signal

toward China if all EU nations would say together: 'If you come to Europe you have to be tested first,'" he told VRT network.

Sweden, which holds the rotating EU presidency, said officials from the member states will hold an Integrated Political Crisis Response meeting on Wednesday to see if entry requirements throughout the bloc are necessary. "It is important that we get the necessary measures in place quickly," said Swedish Health Minister Jakob Forssmed.

EU nations France, Spain and Italy have already announced independent measures to implement tougher COVID-19 measures for passengers arriving from China. France's government is requiring negative tests, and is urging French

citizens to avoid nonessential travel to China. France is also reintroducing mask requirements on flights from China to France.

Spain's government said it would require all air passengers coming from China to have negative tests or proof of vaccination. Italy was the first EU member in requiring coronavirus tests for airline passengers coming from China, but several others have said such measures might not be the best option to protect local populations since new variants now coming from China have already been around in Europe, often for many months. The United States announced new COVID-19 testing requirements Wednesday for all travelers from China, joining some Asian nations that had imposed restrictions because of a surge of infections.

Wave of migrants in Florida Keys is a crisis

KEY WEST, Fla. (AP): At least 500 migrants have arrived in small boats along the Florida Keys over the last several days in what the local sheriff's office described as a "crisis." Economic turmoil, food shortages and soaring inflation in Cuba and other parts of the Caribbean is spurring the most recent wave of migration. Over the weekend, 300 migrants arrived at the sparsely populated Dry Tortugas National Park, about 70 miles (113 kilometers) west of Key West. The park was closed so that law enforcement and medical personnel could evaluate the group before moving them to Key West, the park tweeted.

Separately, 160 migrants arrived by boats in other parts of the Florida Keys over the New Year's Day weekend, officials said. At least 30 people in two new groups of migrants were found in the Middle Keys. In a news release, Monroe County

Sheriff Rick Ramsay criticized the federal response to the uptick in migrant arrivals, saying they were stretching local resources. US Border Patrol told the sheriff's office that the federal response to some of the migrants arriving may have to wait a day, the news release said.

"Refugee arrivals require a lot of resources from the Sheriff's Office as we help our federal law enforcement partners ensure the migrants are in good health and safe," said Ramsay, whose office's jurisdiction encompasses the Florida Keys. "This shows a lack of a working plan by the federal government to deal with a mass migration issue that was foreseeable."

Officials at Dry Tortugas National Park said they expected it be closed for several days because of the space and resources needed to attend to the migrants. The national park is at the southern tip of the

continental US — and attracts scuba divers and snorkelers for its coral reefs, nesting sea turtles, tropical fish and shipwrecks.

"Like elsewhere in the Florida Keys, the park has recently seen an increase in people arriving by boat from Cuba and landing on the islands of Dry Tortugas National Park," the National Park Service said in a news release. In addition to landing at the national park over the weekend, 160 other migrants arrived in the Middle and Upper Keys. At least 88 of the migrants are from Cuba, US Customs and Border Protection said in a tweet. US Border Patrol and Coast Guard crews patrolling South Florida and the Keys have been experiencing the largest escalation of migrations by boat in nearly a decade, with hundreds of interceptions in recent months, mostly of people from Cuba and Haiti.

Russian fury grows over strike that killed dozens of troops

MOSCOW (Reuters): Russian nationalists and some lawmakers have demanded punishment for commanders they accused of ignoring dangers as anger grew over the killing of dozens of Russian soldiers in one of the deadliest strikes of the Ukraine conflict. In a rare disclosure, Russia's defence ministry said 63 soldiers were killed on New Year's Eve in a fiery blast that destroyed a temporary barracks in a vocational college in Makiivka, twin city of the Russian-occupied regional capital of Donetsk in eastern Ukraine.

Russian critics said the soldiers were being housed alongside an ammunition dump at the site, which the Russian defence ministry said was hit by four rockets fired from US-made HIMARS launchers. Ukraine and some Russian nationalist bloggers have put the Makiivka death toll in the hundreds, though pro-Russian officials say those estimates are exaggerated. Rallies to commemorate the dead were held in several Russian cities, including Samara, where some came from, RIA Novosti news agency reported. Mourners laid flowers in the centre of Samara.

"I haven't slept for three days, Samara hasn't slept. We are constantly in touch with the wives of our guys. It's very hard and scary. But we can't be broken. Grief unites ... We will not forgive, and, definitely, victory will be ours," RIA quoted Yekaterina Kolotvinkina, a representative of a women's council at an army unit, as telling one of the rallies. The strike on Makiivka came as Russia

was launching what have become nightly waves of drone attacks on Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in his nightly video address that the attacks were aimed at "exhausting our people, our anti-aircraft defences, our energy".

Ukrainian officials said Russia had struck Ukraine-controlled parts of the Donetsk region, hitting the village of Yakovlivka, the city of Kramatorsk and destroying an ice rink in the town of Druzhkivka. The governor of Ukraine's Luhansk region, which along with neighbouring Donetsk forms the industrial Donbas claimed by Moscow, said on Tuesday Ukrainian forces had made steady advances in the direction of Russian-held Svatove and Kreminna.

"(Russian forces) are used to having a complete advantage in both artillery and shells. Now we have reached parity and our artillerymen are shooting better, hitting more ammunition depots and barracks, while firing far fewer shots," Governor Serhiy Haidai told Ukrainian television.

Elsewhere, Ukraine's military General Staff said a Dec. 31 strike on a Russian-held area of the southern Kherson region had killed or injured some 500 Russian troops.

Reuters could not independently confirm the battlefield accounts. Ukraine's presidential administration said three people had been killed and 10 wounded in Russian strikes over the past 24 hours, two of them in Kherson region and one in Donetsk region. The governor of Donetsk, Pavlo Kyrylenko, said in a

Tuesday morning update for his region that Russian forces had attacked Ukrainian positions overnight along the front line.

Reuters footage showed a team of Ukrainian volunteers known as "Black Tulip" exhuming dead soldiers' bodies near the front line in Donetsk region. "Whenever you dig up a boy, you live through his nightmare and the horror he went through in his last moment, when he understood that this is the end," said volunteer Oleksii Lukov, 37. "This is very, very difficult because you understand that you're about to tell his family that their close one is gone." Russian military bloggers said the extent of the destruction at Makiivka was a result of storing ammunition in the same building as a barracks, despite commanders knowing it was within range of Ukrainian rockets.

Igor Girkin, a former commander of pro-Russian troops in eastern Ukraine who is now one of the highest-profile Russian nationalist military bloggers, said hundreds had been killed or wounded. Military equipment stored at the site was uncammouflaged, he said. "What happened in Makiivka is horrible," wrote Archangel Spetznaz Z, a Russian military blogger with more than 700,000 followers on the Telegram messaging app.

"Who came up with the idea to place personnel in large numbers in one building, where even a fool understands that even if they hit with artillery, there will be many wounded or dead?" he wrote. Commanders "couldn't care

less", he said. Ukraine almost never publicly claims responsibility for attacks on Russian-controlled territory in Ukraine and Zelenskyy did not address the Makiivka strike in his nightly speech. The fury in Russia extended to lawmakers. Grigory Karasin, a member of the Russian Senate and former deputy foreign minister, not only demanded vengeance against Ukraine and its NATO supporters but also "an exacting internal analysis".

Sergei Mironov, a legislator and former chairman of the Senate, Russia's upper house, demanded criminal liability for the officials who had "allowed the concentration of military personnel in an unprotected building" and "all the higher authorities who did not provide the proper level of security". Unverified footage posted online of the aftermath of the blast at the Russian barracks in Makiivka showed a huge building reduced to smoking rubble. Having suffered defeats on the battlefield in the second half of 2022, Russia resorted to mass air strikes against Ukrainian cities.

Ukraine said it had shot down all 39 drones Russia had launched in a third night of air strikes on civilian targets in Kyiv and other cities. Ukrainian officials said their success proved that Russia's tactic in recent months of raining down missiles and drones to knock out Ukraine's energy infrastructure was increasingly failing as Kyiv beefs up its air defences. Russia denies targeting civilians in what it calls a "special military operation" against its southern neighbour launched on Feb. 24.

Brazil's Lula welcomed back by Latin American leaders

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP): Latin American leaders converged on Brazil to meet with President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva on his first full day in office, welcoming him back to power and hoping his country assumes a great role on the international stage. Lula's predecessor, Jair Bolsonaro, rarely traveled abroad or received visiting heads-of-state and found himself increasingly isolated.

But South American heads of state — some of them fellow leftists, though not all — clearly welcomed Lula's third term in office and want greater participation from the continent's largest economy. "It was a very powerful symbol of desire in the region that leaders want Brazil to be back," according to Oliver

Stuenkel, a professor of international relations at the Getulio Vargas Foundation, a university. "Latin American leaders want an active, engaged Brazil."

Lula met with presidents Argentina's Alberto Fernández, Bolivia's Luis Arce of Bolivia, Ecuador's Guillermo Lasso, Chile's Gabriel Boric and Colombia's Gustavo Petro. Other leaders also traveled to the capital, Brasília, and congratulated Lula on his inauguration, including Uruguay's President Luis Alberto Lacalle Po. Lula also met with Wang Qishan, the vice president of China, by far Brazil's biggest export destination. Although Bolsonaro toned down his attacks on China in the latter half of his administration, it is impor-

tant for China to dialogue with Lula's administration and ensure Latin America's biggest nation remains a true partner, Stuenkel said.

Lula is later scheduled to receive the president of Angola and representatives from Cuba, Venezuela and Peru.

Belgium to test wastewater

BRUSSELS (Reuters): Belgium will test wastewater from planes arriving from China for new COVID variants as part of new steps against the spread of the coronavirus as infections in China surge, the government announced. "This will be an additional monitoring objective to verify that the data we receive from China is accurate," Steven Van Gucht of the Sciensano national public health institute told Reuters.

He said Belgium was aware that some COVID-infected passengers might not use the toilet during their flights, and therefore the new measure was "not meant to track people but to track independently what is happening in China." Belgium is also asking travellers from China to test themselves for COVID-19 if they show symptoms seven days after arriving, but will not enforce this measure. At a press conference announcing the new measures, Belgian Health minister Frank Vandenbroucke said that a European Union-wide policy was needed towards China's COVID surge.

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Current fiasco and national resolve

PAKISTAN has been struck with a gruesome situation as the country is facing multiple problems with extreme gravity while no clear track and savior is in sight so far that leads the nation to its ultimate destiny through the logical resolution of the challenges ahead. From law and order to justice delivery, from economy to national security, and from politics to governance all sectors are in a state of chaos and frailty whereas leaders are chasing their political agendas instead of lobbying for unity and public mobilization on national issues. Amid such critical conditions, the NSC, the topmost decision-making body of the country held its session on Monday that was attended by relevant Federal Cabinet members, the Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, all Services Chiefs, and heads of intelligence services. The forum undertook a comprehensive view of the ongoing economic situation vis-à-vis challenges being faced by the public, the prevailing security situation, and the recent upsurge in terrorist incidents in KP and Balochistan. As said, the forum decided to deal with terrorism with full force and all necessary steps would be taken in this regard.

Historically, our country has not moved a single inch over the past seven decades and we still stand at the position of day one. The same security concerns, same economic woes, lack of resources, and piles of problems from corruption to bad governance and overpopulation to poverty, instead produced several biases and are now self-sufficient in extremism, terrorism, ethnic rivalries, moral depletion, etc. The question arises that what our leadership had sown in the past and what we are harvesting in the current world. Unfortunately, as a nation, we never learned a lesson from our mistakes nor determined the reasons and responsibility for the setbacks that shattered our nation and put us on the list of the most backward and dangerous countries in the world.

Realistically, no nation can afford such rash behavior in matters about its national security and economic sovereignty that without identifying the causes of past failures one initiates another thorny voyage. The nation has paid a heavy price for the insane policies of its leaders and it does not want the re-occurrence of massacres.

Taiwan's remorse over China's rife

ACCORDING to the media, Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen has expressed her nation's willingness to assist China to deal with its COVID-19 upsurge after Beijing eased its headline approach last month. In her new year message, Taiwan's leader told her staunch rival that her countrymen are willing to provide necessary assistance to China if needed, so more Chinese can better fight the pandemic and have a healthy and peaceful new year. According to Tsai ZING-wen, war is not an option to solve problems, while dialogue, cooperation, and the common goal of fostering peaceful development and regional stability can bring security and happiness to their people.

The Republic of China (Taiwan) and the People's Republic of China (PRC) are not on friendly terms since the pro-west Tsai Ing-wen assumed the office of the Taiwanese President a few years ago. Beijing considers the self-ruled Island a breakaway province that has to join mainland China one day. Whereas, a vast majority of Taiwanese desire a sovereign status and democratic rule in their territory. The decades-long dispute has intensive after, the US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and British lawmakers visited the Island nation in August last year, that enraged Chinese authorities who consider western diplomatic incursion fatal for the Chinese influence on the self-ruled Democratic Island.

Recently, China abandoned its restrictive zero-COVID policy after nearly three years, ending snap lockdowns, contact tracing, scrapping mandatory testing and quarantine that led to a sudden outbreak of the pandemic and an unprecedented wave of infections spread out across China and over one million Chinese likely to contract the infection. The Chinese government withdrew all restrictions for in and outbound travelers. After the latest upsurge in the pandemic, several other nations including the United States, Japan, and South Korea imposed a ban on Chinese travelers due to the fear of the epidemic. The Taiwanese Supremo expressed grief out of humanity but her feelings were to unlikely change the plan of the aggressor who does not care about the virus but is a resolute challenger of Taiwan's independence.

ONE of the more curious — and frustrating — features of the foreign policy debate in the United States occurs when figures who generally advocate realism and restraint make a stark exception with respect to the People's Republic of China (PRC).

Such deviations are evident in both the academic community and among some political leaders. It is an inconsistency that may cause significant credibility issues for the realism and restraint camp.

Among respected academics, University of Chicago Professor John J. Mearsheimer, considered the dean of the realist faction, is a prominent example. Mearsheimer has been an outspoken critic of Washington's regime-change wars in the Middle East. He also was an early, vocal opponent of NATO expansion toward Russia's border, warning correctly that the move would poison relations with Moscow. More recently, he has placed much of the blame for the growing tensions

between NATO and Russia over Ukraine, culminating in the current war, on Washington and its allies.

Even earlier, however, Mearsheimer took a rather hard line toward Beijing, rejecting any notion of a major U.S. military draw-down in East Asia. He warned that China was likely to attempt to "push the United States out of the Asia-Pacific region," in part by driving the U.S. Navy out of the ocean between China's coast and the first island chain.

Mearsheimer's perspective regarding the PRC has hardened over the years, and it encompasses opposition to the growing bilateral economic ties. Writing in 2021, he condemned Washington's policy of close economic engagement with Beijing. "Since a mightier China would surely challenge the U.S. position in Asia and possibly beyond, the logical choice for the United States was clear: slow China's rise. Instead, it encouraged it." Mearsheimer added that "engagement may have been the worst strategic blunder any

country has made in recent history: there is no comparable example of a great power actively fostering the rise of a peer competitor. And it is now too late to do much about it."

In the political arena, Sen. Josh Hawley (R-Mo.) echoes many of Mearsheimer's views. Hawley is a prominent proponent of avoiding unnecessary U.S. entanglements (especially military entanglements) in the Third World and even in Europe. Indeed, he was the only member of the Senate to vote against admitting Sweden and Finland to NATO in 2022. His criticism of the Biden administration's unconditional support of Ukraine also has become increasingly vocal, and it seems to be gaining some traction within the Republican congressional delegation.

Yet Hawley is an outspoken hawk on matters relating to China, whether the issue involves trade policy, support for Taiwan, or the U.S. military posture in the Pacific. In his Senate floor

Ted Galen Carpenter

speech opposing adding Sweden and Finland to NATO, he explained his underlying rationale:

"Expanding NATO will require more United States forces in Europe, more manpower, more firepower, more resources, more spending. And not just now, but over the long haul. But our greatest foreign adversary is not in Europe. Our greatest foreign adversary is in Asia. And when it comes to countering that adversary, we are behind the game. I'm talking, of course, about China, the communist government of Beijing has adopted a policy of imperialism. It wants to dominate its neighbors, dictate to free nations, it's trying to expand its power at every opportunities, and that includes power over the United States."

Hawley also drew a contrast between U.S. interests in Europe and those in East Asia. He voiced the need for Washington to adopt a more cautious, limited policy in Europe and instead focus more on the Chinese

threat: "Finland and Sweden want to join the Atlantic Alliance to head off further Russian aggression in Europe. That is entirely understandable given their location and security needs. But America's greatest foreign adversary doesn't loom over Europe. It looms in Asia. I am talking of course about the People's Republic of China. And when it comes to Chinese imperialism, the American people should know the truth: the United States is not ready to resist it. Expanding American security commitments in Europe now would only make that problem worse—and America, less safe."

More recently, Hawley explicitly urged Secretary of State Blinken to prioritize arming Taiwan instead of giving military aid to Ukraine. In his view, Ukraine is (at most) a marginal U.S. interest, while Taiwan constitutes a crucial one.

One can certainly make the case that China is a more plausible threat than such adversaries as Syria, North Korea, or even Russia to America's security

and overall interests. Nevertheless, being in the forefront of the faction that pushes a hardline, confrontational posture toward Beijing does not enhance the credibility of Hawley (or any other figure who advocates realism and restraint elsewhere in foreign affairs.)

A hawkish stance toward the PRC poses far more serious dangers to the United States than such a stance toward small rogue states does. Indeed, it exceeds even the considerable risks that Washington has incurred in using Ukraine as military proxy to bleed Russia. Defending an assortment of U.S. allies and clients in East Asia, especially Taiwan, means risking a direct war with China. Yet Hawley is AWOL when it comes to applying the strategy of realism and restraint to the most crucial situation of all.

It is an unfortunate lapse that limits his potential as a political leader who might be able to transform U.S. foreign policy into a more prudent and sustainable posture in world affairs.

It is definitely not worth sprinkling ashes on your head

Sergey Savchuk

doubt that

We will return to the consequences of the European choice, but for now, together with the power engineers, we will turn our gaze to the east.

At the moment, Russia has concluded two agreements with China for the supply of natural gas. The first is being carried out under the Power of Siberia gas pipeline, whose capacity is 38 billion cubic meters, although, according to the Russian side, the gas pipeline will reach this figure approximately in 2025.

Exactly one year ago, in February 2022, an agreement was signed on the supply of gas from the Far East fields. Under the terms of the contract signed by Gazprom and the Chinese CNPC for a period of 25 years, ten billion cubic meters of gas from the Kirinskoye and Yuzhno-Kirinskoye fields located on the Sakhalin shelf should go abroad annually. Especially for this case, the 1800-kilometer gas pipeline Sakhalin - Khabarovsk - Vladivostok was built, which will then enter the Chinese province of Heilongjiang, and then go to Jilin, Liaoning and Beijing. No one made a secret of the fact that Far Eastern gas would be used to cover the energy needs of the Chinese capital itself and the metropolitan region, one of the largest and most densely populated agglomerations on the planet.

A couple of noteworthy facts that add a fair amount of conspiracy theory and a hint of a detective to our dry narrative.

The Yuzhno-Kirinskoye gas condensate field has proven reserves of 611 billion cubic meters of gas, and this is Gazprom's main resource in the Far East. So significant that after its opening in 2010, it was immediately considered as the main resource base for supplies to all of Europe, naturally, in the form of LNG, that is, if necessary, they were ready to build a

liquefaction terminal for it. 22 wells were built directly on site, 14 of which are production, that is, it is from them that the coveted hydrocarbons will be obtained. At the same time, long before the start of the NWO in Ukraine, it was stipulated that the operation of the field would begin in 2023. Given everything that has happened in the energy markets, this is either a very lucky coincidence or very smart planning.

Fact number two is that it is the Yuzhno-Kirinskoye field that has been under personal US technical sanctions since 2015. They prohibit the supply of high-tech equipment in the interests of the operating organization and are designed to prevent the site from reaching its design capacity. The sanctions were introduced literally six months after the coup d'etat in Ukraine, which at an accelerated pace began to be pumped up with weapons, raising the degree of Russophobia and preparing for a direct military clash with Russia. Vladimir Putin repeated dozens of times in his speeches that our country was simply forced to start a military operation, depriving it of any other choice. Looking at such coincidences, you involuntarily begin to feel the depth of geopolitical chess, where the game goes on at once on dozens of levels with a step depth for years to come. In this case, it looks like

In total, at the beginning of the year there is a loss of sales in Europe in the amount of 85 billion cubic meters and the prospects for increasing supplies to China in the amount of 48 billion, but this figure will still need to be reached.

However, it is definitely not worth sprinkling ashes on your head.

Alexey Miller focused on the supply of fuel in excess of contractual norms, and on the fact that Gazprom is an absolutely

reliable supplier. The Russian gas giant is ready (and definitely will) expand its presence in the world's largest market, Asia, where China alone buys over 160 billion cubic meters of natural gas annually. And the consumption of this type of fuel in China is growing exponentially.

This year, we should expect the most substantive negotiations within the framework of the Power of Siberia-2 project with a capacity of 50 billion cubic meters, and the project for pumping gas through the territory of Mongolia will also be clearly removed from the pause. At the end of 2021, the Mongolian agency Montsame, citing the Deputy Prime Minister of the country, reported that the feasibility study for the Soyuz Vostok gas pipeline project at that time was 70 percent. Here, again, it can be assumed that the developers of project documentation have made significant progress over the past time, and in the new year we will see substantive negotiations, the result of which will be the start of the physical construction of the highway as early as 2024. That is, the eastern gas vector will increase by an additional 50 billion cubic meters of gas.

Adding the figures above, we get the required one hundred and fifty billion cubic meters of gas, which previously went to Europe, where the Americans are now in charge.

Of course, everything looks smooth only on paper, but in real life, the construction and launch of projects of such complexity and length will be associated with various difficulties, the main of which will be the race against time. At the same time, Russia, in the worst case, only loses money until the launch of the eastern routes, while Europe, after their start, finally turns into a clinically secondary region, from where there is already an outflow of production to Asia.

The fact that these are

not our fantasies is evidenced by a number of publications in the foreign press. For example, Bloomberg conducted a survey among the British and found that for this New Year, six out of ten inhabitants of the islands have significantly reduced their spending on gifts. The Bank of England announced an inflation rate of two percent a year ago, but the kingdom entered 2023 with five times the rate. Just the other day, the British Ceramics Manufacturers Association, which produces a wide range of products - from refractory bricks to artificial joints, came out with a statement that due to a ten-fold increase in energy prices, it is forced to cut production, and many factories have already begun layoffs and are considering going bankrupt.

The German publication Handelsblatt reports that the cost of electricity for the population will increase by 115 percent in the new year, and Austrian Defense Minister Claudia Tanner warns that massive blackouts are guaranteed in Europe, they will affect up to a third of the population, which will not be able to meet their vital needs. And that's just one day's postings.

At the same time, Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak says Russia will increase crude oil exports if necessary. The US Treasury simultaneously publishes a communiqué stating explicitly that Russian crude oil that has been processed abroad is not subject to sanctions and will not be subject to the so-called price ceiling.

A big game is going on, most of the events of which take place not at all at the front, but behind the scenes of world politics. In this case, the result will become visible in a few years - and these results will determine the new face of the world. It will be determined by the world superpowers: Russia, the USA and China. Europe is no longer on this list.

Vietnam's economy makes a strong comeback in 2022

AFTER two years curtailed by COVID-19 and marked by GDP growth of between 2 per cent and 3 per cent, Vietnam's economy made a strong comeback in 2022. Projections forecast real GDP growth of about 7.5 per cent for 2022, slowing down from the 8.8 per cent GDP growth seen in the first nine months of the year.

Exports from January through to November 2022 grew more than imports — with growth of 13 per cent for exports and 10 per cent for imports — so there is a modest trade surplus. Tourism has rebounded from 2021's low levels, supporting strong growth in the service sector.

Manufacturing and industry grew by nearly 9 per cent through to the end of November — a slower rate than earlier in the year. There was a slowdown in export orders and hundreds of thousands of factory workers may be facing lay-

offs according to unofficial reports. This is a serious concern, especially if the trend intensifies in 2023. Vietnamese firms provide limited unemployment compensation, especially for workers with only a few years of service.

Corporate bonds are also in trouble, especially those of real estate companies. There are billions of dollars of bonds denominated in Vietnamese dong that need to be refinanced in 2022 and 2023. Most of these were sold through private placement and then sold to local investors. With tight credit, caused in part by the use of Vietnam's foreign exchange reserves to support its currency, it is difficult for companies to refinance.

Vietnam's anti-corruption drive has begun looking into some land transfers by real estate companies, throwing doubt on their ability to receive full legal ownership or control of land needed for their projects. This makes it hard for banks to finance the proj-

ects or for foreigners to buy the assets. This could cause distress for many companies unless some resolution is reached. But these real estate problems are not nearly as large as those in China and should be manageable in Vietnam.

There are strengths to offset these challenges. Inflation is reported in the low single digits, though many complain that inflation is really higher. The currency has depreciated by only about 5 per cent against the US dollar as of early

December 2022, less than in many other countries.

Fiscal policy has been restrained. With a few exceptions, most Vietnamese banks are in a strong position with adequate capital. High inflows

and realisation of foreign investment suggest that as the global economy recovers there will be a continuing flow of workers from low-productivity agriculture to higher-productivity manufacturing. This will

increase demand for real estate in cities, despite lower population growth. Foreign direct investment into the manufacturing sector will also support growth and add to the structural transformation of the economy. Plans to cease or curtail the construction of new coal-fired powerplants will avoid stranded assets and pollution. Meanwhile, participation in trade agreements is giving Vietnam access to

David Dapice

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economy. Plans to cease or curtail the construction of new coal-fired powerplants will avoid stranded assets and pollution. Meanwhile, participation in trade agreements is giving Vietnam access to

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world markets — though the Vietnamese government is hoping that China-US trade tensions do not prevent them from taking full advantage of their position as a supply base acceptable to the United States while relying on imports of intermediate inputs from China.

In 2023, it is anticipated that the drivers of the economy will no longer be exports or even consumer spending, which has seen 15 per cent growth during 2022. Instead, a further rebound in tourism as

the drivers of the economy will no longer be exports or even consumer spending, which has seen 15 per cent growth during 2022. Instead, a further rebound in tourism as

China unwinds its COVID-19 protocols along with sharp increases in government investment are intended to catapult Vietnam's economy towards a target of 6.5 per cent GDP growth. This is an ambitious target and one that may be difficult to reach if the world economy, or at least Vietnam's major export markets of the United States, European Union and China, are softening.

Foreign direct investment may remain strong if companies continue to move out of China, reflecting concerns about the perceived instability of Chinese policy due to COVID-19 lockdowns and continuing concern with China's tensions with other major economies.

Indeed, Vietnam may find that later this decade it is running out of rural labour that wants to leave for the factories. Farm workers numbered 24.5 million in 2014 and only 14.2 million in 2021, repre-

senting a decline of nearly 1.5 million each year according to data from the Asian Development Bank.

If that rate continued for another five years, those left in agriculture would be about as productive as those in manufacturing and many of them would be older workers not interested in factory work. The 'motor' of fast growth for the last decade would sputter and labour force growth would slow down. At that point, GDP growth would decrease to 5 per cent or less unless productivity across the economy grew more quickly.

This is the medium-term challenge for Vietnam — to switch its sources of growth to those based on productivity rather than labour reallocation through migration. But in 2023, assuming there are no major natural disasters, it should be possible for Vietnam to keep its economy's momentum up as long as the global environment improves over the year.

What, then, is the object of America's chip war against China?

CHRIS Miller's Chip Wars tries to combine a chatty history of the chip industry with a strategic assessment of Sino-American tech rivalry and fails at both. Absent from both facets of Prof. Miller's book is an appreciation of what made chips so important in the first place. His account draws on more than a hundred interviews with Silicon Valley types and incorporates their bias towards futuristic AI applications rather than practicable industrial and military applications.

The book's publication coincided with the October 2022 announcement of the most comprehensive ban on US technology exports since the Cold War, and in some ways the most radical. Sales to China account for about 30 percent of the revenue of US makers of semiconductor manufacturing equipment, and the Biden Administration's attempt to de-globalize the industry has the makings of a Wagnerian tragedy—a Twilight of the Gods (Götterdämmerung) of free trade. But a Chipperdämmerung is not in the offing, despite Miller's best efforts to dramatize the issue.

"From swarms of autonomous drones to invisible battles in cyberspace and across the electronic spectrum, the future of war will be defined by computing power," Miller asserts, adding:

China has fielded an array of weapons that systematically undermine U.S. advantages. China's precision anti-ship missiles make it extremely dangerous for U.S. surface ships to transit the Taiwan Strait in a time of war, holding American naval power at bay. New air defense systems contest America's ability to dominate the airspace in a conflict. Long-range land attack missiles threaten the network of American military bases from Japan to Guam. China's anti-satellite weapons threaten to disable communications and GPS networks.... China might try to jam American communications and blind surveillance systems, leaving the U.S. military unable to see enemies or communicate with allies.

This is correct, and the US Defense Department's 2022 report on China's military explains it more vividly, noting that the PLA has the "capability to conduct long-range precision strikes against ships, including aircraft carriers, out to the Western Pacific." China meanwhile has doubled its satellite coverage of the theater since 2018, the Pentagon notes.

Miller jumps from this correct observation to the dodgy assertion that "China is still staggeringly dependent on foreign semiconductor technology—in particular, U.S.-designed, Taiwan-fabricated processors—to

undertake complex computation." He implies that denying advanced chip technology to China can vitiate its military ambitions. That is misleading: older-generation chips power missiles, satellite sensors, and other systems that give China a decisive advantage for defense of its coasts out to 1,000 kilometers or more, as recent RAND Corporation report details.

China concentrates its military resources massively on its coasts, and the US Navy has no effective defense against its conventional missiles, let alone its new hypervelocity missiles. Such a defense would require space-based antimissile systems, directed energy weapons (e.g., lasers), and other weapons that require breakthroughs in high-energy physics, not just computation. The AI venture community Joneses for government money in the field it knows best, but that has little to do with the military balance in the Taiwan Strait.

Think of the military role of railroads in the nineteenth century. Whether they ran at 40 or 70 miles an hour was less important than their reach. With 2,000 advanced shore-based missiles, 1,000 fourth- or fifth-generation aircraft, sixty submarines, and a layered satellite network, China dominates its own theater with the chips it can manufacture at home. Technology controls against China have no bearing on America's ability or lack thereof to defend Taiwan in the foreseeable future, as the Defense Department knows all too well.

Prof. Miller suggests that Beijing may assault Taiwan simply because "China's ruling party has no higher goal than asserting control over Taiwan." US officials, including Secretary of State Antony Blinken, have asserted that China is "speeding up" plans to seize Taiwan, without explaining why China would take the risk. It is hard to find an example in Chinese history of a government risking war for what it might accomplish without war. Two million of Taiwan's 12 million working-age citizens are employed on the mainland, and Taiwanese businesses have invested \$200 billion there.

For China's Communist Party, and indeed for any government that proposes to rule China's multi-lingual, multi-ethnic people, the prospect of a renegade province supported by a foreign power represents an existential threat. China has broken up into warring provinces too many times in its long and tragic history, and Beijing will go to war to forestall Taiwanese sovereignty. Absent that threat, Beijing will maintain the status quo. With the world's lowest birth rate (next to South Korea), Taiwan's workforce will shrink by two-thirds in the

David P. Goldman

course of the present century, and the issue of independence will become moot.

What, then, is the object of America's chip war against China? In his report on Washington's campaign to suppress Huawei, China's national champion in telecommunications, Miller gets the story right: the issue was not Huawei's alleged spying, but American chagrin at China's preeminence in a decisive field of technology.

Theft of intellectual property may well have benefited [Huawei], but it can't explain its success. No quantity of intellectual property or trade secrets is enough to build a business as big as Huawei. The company has developed efficient manufacturing processes that have driven down costs and built products that consumers see as high-quality. Huawei's spending on R&D, meanwhile, is world leading.

The issue with Huawei went far beyond the debate over whether the company helped tap phones or pilfer data.... the real issue was that a company in the People's Republic of China had marched up the technology ladder—from, in the late 1980s, simple phone switches to, by the late 2010s, the most advanced telecom and networking gear. Its annual R&D spending now rivaled American tech giants like Microsoft, Google, and Intel. Of all China's tech firms, it was the most successful exporter, giving it detailed knowledge of foreign markets. It not only produced hardware for cell towers, it also designed cutting-edge smartphone chips...The pressing question was: Could the United States let a Chinese company like this succeed?

Miller adds, "The point was less that Huawei was directly supporting China's military than that the company was advancing China's overall level of chip design and microelectronics know-how." This is a remarkable conclusion. For the past four years, US intelligence officials have insisted in behind-the-scenes briefings that Huawei's alleged ability to spy on US communications represented an existential threat to national security, despite the fact (as Miller notes) that Britain's equivalent of the NSA, the GCHQ, concluded that data integrity could be maintained on Huawei's systems. I reached a conclusion like Miller's in my 2020 book on China's technology.

If the Austro-Hungarian empire was a tyranny tempered by incompetence, the Biden Administration's attempt to limit China's access to high-end chips and chip-making technology is a provocation mitigated by lobbying. Two years ago, when the Trump

Administration banned sales of advanced chips to China's telecommunications giant Huawei, Harvard's Graham Allison wrote:

Could the U.S. attempt to enforce that ban become a twenty-first-century equivalent of the oil embargo the United States imposed on Japan in August 1941? While many people may not remember what happened, and while it was certainly not what the United States intended or anticipated, that action precipitated Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor four months later—and America's entry into World War II.

Allison, whose 2015 Atlantic essay on the "Thucydides Trap" warned of prospective war with China, raised a false alarm. Unable to make state-of-the-art smartphones, Huawei—then the world's largest handset producer—ceded the 5G phone market to its rivals, but worked around US export controls to continue its broadband infrastructure business.

But on Oct. 6, the Biden Administration extended the ban to all Chinese firms, a far greater provocation—at least according to the headlines. American semiconductor firms, who sell about a fifth of their wares to China, are still going over the fine print with their lawyers, but the hastily and sloppily written guidelines from the Commerce Department offer enough loopholes to maintain most business as usual.

Nvidia makes the A100 microprocessor that powers most data centers and Artificial Intelligence applications. On Nov. 7 it announced that by lowering the chip's clock speed and rebranding the product as the A800, it could avoid losing hundreds of millions of dollars in annual sales to China while staying within the Biden guidelines. According to industry sources, the Commerce Department guidelines were written inexpertly and clumsily, such that a competent lawyer could find a way around most of them.

Miller's account of the emergence of the chip industry is full of entertaining anecdotes, but suffers from critical omissions. Unmentioned for example is the technology that made fast, small and energy-efficient chips ubiquitous after the 1960s, namely CMOS (complementary metal-oxide semiconductors, invented at Fairchild Semiconductors in 1963 and commercialized by RCA). CMOS made it possible to pack large numbers of transistors onto a chip. With Defense Department funding during the mid-1970s, RCA Labs built CMOS chips that powered lookdown radar on American fighters, decisively shifting the strategic balance at the peak of the Cold War.

Dr. Henry Kressel, who headed RCA Labs during

the 1970s, reports that perfecting the CMOS process took a decade's worth of R&D before it took off. The technology was understood in the 1960s, but dismissed as impractical. Physicists, engineers, and line production personnel combined to prove the skeptics wrong. The industrial-scale collaboration turned a clever idea into a world-beating practicality.

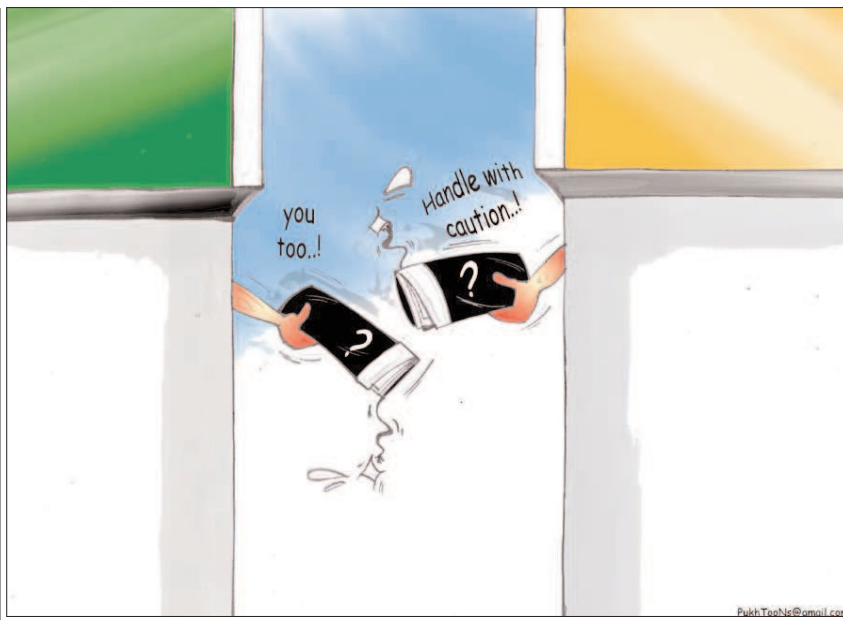
The CMOS example is especially egregious, but it betrays a deeper flaw in Miller's understanding of why chips are important. Their development depended on the industry's ability to create new products that needed them. Only in passing does Miller mention the Internet of Things, that is, the use of cheap chips that allow devices of all kinds to communicate.

And nowhere does he mention the Fourth Industrial Revolution, namely the application of Artificial Intelligence to manufacturing, logistics, and transportation.

Chips are a means, not an end. They are the railroads of the twenty-first century. In 1870, Germany and France had built roughly the same length of railways, but Germany learned how to use its rail system to move troops and munitions, giving it a decisive advantage in the 1870 Franco-Prussian War. France had more tanks and military aircraft than Germany in 1940, but Germany learned how to coordinate armor with air and infantry, and crushed France in six weeks.

By the same token, Apple can pack 57 billion transistors onto its latest 5-nanometer chip, while Huawei's handset business has atrophied without access to high-end semiconductors. But the American technology industry has made its money in consumer applications, while China envisions a Fourth Industrial Revolution driven by semiconductors. China already has taxi services running on autonomous vehicles, fully automated factories where robots communicate over 5G networks, mines where remote-controlled machines take the place of workers underground, and ports where robotic cranes pick containers from freighters, place them in autonomous trucks, and deliver them to warehouses to be unpacked and sorted by other robots.

It isn't the clock speed or the gate width of the chips that will determine who dominates the industrial revolution of the twenty-first century, but the design and execution of large-scale systems—civilian as well as military—that employ the chips. China may be two generations behind in its domestic production of semiconductors, but it is ahead of the United States in semiconductor applications to industry. That's what US policymakers should worry about.



Did Joe Biden administration miss an opportunity to democratise two American adversaries?

Doug Bandow

THE Biden administration tried to sell the Russo-Ukraine War as a fight between autocracy and democracy, but that characterization fell flat in the Global South.

Indeed, it is not even a persuasive sell for Washington, after the president's recent submissions to Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. Every U.S. administration has sacrificed principle for security, even though that trade-off often has proved false.

Nevertheless, the sight of Iranians and Chinese rising up against oppressive governments cannot help but enthrall those watching. Unfortunately, neither regime was prepared to give way. Protests continue in Iran but have failed to reach critical mass sufficient to oust the incumbent regime. In China, demonstrations quickly died away. Did the Biden administration miss an opportunity to democratize two American adversaries?

This is, in fact, a common complaint of Washington's kettle of military hawks. The Obama administration was roundly criticized for not doing enough to advance Iran's 2009 "Green Movement," featuring mass demonstrations claiming election fraud. Similar complaints have been made about countries as varied as Cuba and Russia. The presumption appears to be that the president, any president, need merely whisper his command and regimes will fall.

Yet Iran 2009 suggests otherwise. Although claims of election fraud were plausible, perhaps even likely, they were not proved. Nor did those hoping for the regime's overthrow consider the widespread backing for Islamic rule in the more traditional countryside.

Finally, the U.S. had no obvious means to foster the regime's overthrow in the face of a brutal clerical establishment. Mere expressions of support could not change the internal balance of forces. At the extreme, attempting to provide weapons would be no easy feat and the establishment was well-armed. If the West managed to encourage a civil war, that "success" could be disastrous: Syria illustrates the huge human cost that could result.

Many of the most fervent supporters of intervention care little about democracy and human rights. Rather, they see such doctrines simply as a weapon for use against governments they dislike. During the Cold War the U.S. routinely backed authoritarian regimes of almost any character while criticizing communist states. Realpolitik may have made geopolitical sense, but it resulted in a gaggle of ugly bargains.

This bias continues today, without serious security justifications. The crimes of friendly despots, like Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, infamous for the murder and dismemberment of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, are ignored when convenient.

Still, Iran and China treat their people horribly (though Freedom House ranks Saudi Arabia even worse).

Ousting these tyrannical leaderships seems like a worthy goal.

For instance, Jianli Yang, a Tiananmen Square survivor and founder of Citizen Power Initiatives for China, and Bradley A. Thayer, head of the Center for Security Policy's China program, urged the "administration to boldly demonstrate support for civil society and popular movements in China, to build up human rights and, ideally, help the Chinese people to overthrow" the Chinese Communist Party.

But how? The authors suggest voicing support for the demonstrators, endorsing protests in the West, and highlighting Chinese human rights abuses. Such steps are fine and, indeed, are already followed by the human rights organizations with which the authors desire to collaborate, as well as "Western media and universities." Anyone interested in China already should be aware of the oppression of Xi's China, as well as his predecessors, most notably Mao Zedong. Hyping Western government support for Chinese demonstrations unfortunately could reinforce the regime's otherwise ludicrous charge that the protests reflect outside interference.

The authors also advise friendly states to "encourage the use of technologies that allow Chinese citizens unfettered access to the internet and ... assist with building civil society in China." The first is a good idea, though tech companies are best able to develop such stratagems. The second is likely to prove a bust after Beijing's crack-down on even the most harmless NGOs, domestic as well as foreign.

Out of all this Yang and Thayer imagine the CCP's demise: "If the global community, led by the Biden administration, seizes this opportunity to embolden the protesters to take stronger action against the CCP, they might just build a coalition that can bring about the downfall of a repressive, aggressive regime."

Alas, outsiders matter little to this "coalition." And if the denizens of Zhongnanhai believe the West is promoting their overthrow, they would most likely begin with a Tiananmen Square "solution," rather than dawdle, treating a new round of demonstrations with the relative moderation initially shown last time.

Similar sentiments have been expressed regarding Iran, though no one has come up with serious practical steps for defenestrating the bad guys.

For instance, argued Victoria Coates and Robert Greenway, of the Heritage and Hudson Institutes, respectively: "rather than assume that the protests are a lost cause, we must try to take advantage of them in the hopes that things might just turn out differently this time around." Frank Gaffney, the Center for Security Policy's founder, went further, writing: "America must stand with the people of Iran and help them bring down the mullahocracy that brutalizes them—and threatens us."

For the brutal regime deserves to go. But, again, what to do? The current demonstrations, though enjoying welcome longevity, remain smaller than those of 2009. The working class has not come out in great numbers. One of the critical ingredients of the 1979 overthrow of the Shah, widespread labor strikes, is missing today.

Unfortunately, outsiders cannot provide what is lacking to oust the current leadership and replace the Islamic Republic. Gaffney leaves practical steps up to the imagination. Coates and Greenway express hope that the Biden administration will "recognize that ignoring oppressed people in their fight for freedom against dictatorial U.S. adversaries is a political loser." However, their "to do" list for overthrowing the well-entrenched Islamist regime is awfully short.

Iran's protestors want media coverage, which they have received. Complaints that Americans are ignoring the issue fails to recognize that most pay little attention to the world beyond in general.

Coates and Greenway, among others, suggest licensing communications and internet firms to sell in Iran. Starlink satellite dishes are now being smuggled into the country. Breaking the information blockade should be a priority for anyone hoping to help. Alas, that's where the authors stop.

Both governments and NGOs can help embarrass oppressive governments. The U.S. and other democratic states were able to get Iran kicked off the UN Commission on the Status of Women. But this isn't likely to contribute to regime change. Expelling diplomats has been suggested, but then, why not kick out diplomats of Russia, China, and Saudi Arabia, plus scores of other authoritarian regimes? Anyway, it is more important to talk with dangerous adversaries than docile friends.

Finally, there is the go-to policy of sanctions. However, with Iran there is little left to do. Tehran survived Donald Trump's economic onslaught, which his administration apparently expected to bring the Islamic Republic to its knees. Today Iran is likely to benefit from enough Chinese and Russian support, if necessary, to keep it afloat.

The world will be a better place when the Chinese and Iranian regimes disappear into history's fabled dustbin. However, a little humility in Washington is warranted. There is not a lot that people in the West can do. There is even less that governments in the West should do.

The best way for Americans to protect human rights and democracy abroad is to live their principles at home. U.S. officials also should avoid the ostentatious hypocrisy and sanctimony that so often dominates American foreign policy—and fuels foreign tyranny and wars.

Finally, good people the world over should look for practical means to help victims of oppression. Some day the Chinese and Iranian peoples will be free.

American medicine prescribes LGBT terror

THE most interesting thing in this story is not in the document that imposes real LGBT terror on American schools, but in who compiled and distributes this document. But more on that later, first, all the same, about the recommended (yes, yes, by no means mandatory) prescription, which is sent to all US schools, private or public.

This document provides a list of everything that every school should serve to promote "inclusion", that is, how to punch into the throats the obligatory cult of gays, transgenders and many others.

The list is as follows: teachers and other school staff should provide the necessary manuals for all classes, avoid words indicating the gender of the child, hang visual propaganda everywhere, be in constant contact with the clouds of activists promoting the LGBT agenda. Each school worker must fill out a questionnaire, from which he will understand what category of LGBT promoters he is in - the highest, average or very weak. The document is huge, with tables, pictures and other things. It was first published in 2020, and these days it has only been re-released, with some improvements and additions.

And now about who created it: CDC - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which is a federal agency under the US Department of Health.

What? And what does this office have to do with both school education and the promotion of non-traditional relationships?

But the fact is that this office, as it turns out in recent years, is related to a lot of things. Moreover, its clones can be traced in many states - and if we are talking about the collective West, then everywhere such services play, to put it mildly, an amazing role in the life of society and the state. A role that is not necessarily indicated in their statutory documents and service instructions, and in general - well, just think, eleven thousand employees across America and some miserable ten billion budget. By the way, formally, this office seems to be subordinate to the Ministry of Health, although in reality it's not the other way around.

But the CDC is only a key part of the mechanism that imposes on the Western (and far from only the Western) world a new and terrible way of life through medical terror or, let's say, through the imposition of punitive mandatory medicine to change the lifestyle

Dmitry Kosyrev

of hundreds of millions of people. And we all simply need to know all these mechanics, at least to understand what kind of world they want to impose on us by force in recent years.

This mechanism includes many more services and organizations, which seem to be separate, independent or simply private from each other. But they work heart to heart. And here is one of the latest examples from the allegedly left in the past story about the "covid reset".

A scandal is connected with the identity of Anthony Fauci, who retired last month (nickname - Doctor Death). For some reason, everyone is sure that he headed the CDC. But formally this is not the case, he was the chief infectious disease specialist and chief medical adviser to President Joe Biden, in addition, he led the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), which, although it communicates with the CDC, is not included in it. In any case, we repeat, we are talking about one mechanism, albeit with a complex internal structure.

One way or another, it was Doctor Death who turned out to be the most

public character of the entire team that imposed unimaginable methods of dealing with the coronavirus we all know about America (and not only it). Now Fauci is defending himself in court on one episode of this story, on a very private lawsuit - in the case of censorship.

The crux of the matter is that the CDC has compiled a list—a list again! - statements and opinions about the coronavirus, which should not be. It should not be anywhere, but first of all in social networks, in Google, and, of course, in the Democrat-controlled media. That is almost all over the world. To develop an algorithm for the mechanical cleaning of platforms, an Indonesian IT company was involved, which worked out the mechanics of detecting those very statements. In general, censorship in its purest form, only censorship is prohibited in the United States.

But some of the banned coronavirus opinions belonged to thousands of world-famous virologists. Dr. Fauci was involved in the creation of this list, it doesn't even matter in which of his qualities and positions.

Which is now protected in a very simple way: he does not remember. He had many cases and thousands

of documents in the mail, and he does not remember what censorship instructions he personally gave and to whom. Protected millions of lives, and the details faded into the fog of memory.

The implications of this story are numerous and sad. Forget dark-spectacled dictators backed by well-armed, olive-coated thugs. This is the last century. Terror is not spread like that today. Forget also about the network of "human rights organizations" that is choking the whole world - also the last century. And here is the same network of people standing, as it were, on the side of the most humane medical profession - this is our century. This is a network that, like human rights activists, brings pure goodness and health, but in fact it is working out the mechanics of mass suppression and intimidation of people.

Moreover, this public has long been boldly going beyond the scope of health as such - here is at least a document on planting an LGBT agenda in all schools. Although it says that school doctors and other medical staff should be especially attentive to this instruction. Actually, that's why this thing came out under the patronage of the CDC.

Important Notice

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Pakistan Stock Exchange's 100-index loses 185 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bearish trend on Tuesday, losing 185.26 points, with a negative change of 0.45 percent, closing at 40,630.64 against 40,815.90 points on the previous day.

A total of 201,058,817 shares were traded during the day as compared to 242,173,251 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 4.977 billion against Rs 7.278 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 333 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 113 of them recorded gains and 192 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 28 companies remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were Hascol Petrol with 20,576,000

shares at Rs 6.64 per share, WorldCall Telecom with 16,289,075 shares at Rs 1.24 per share, and Sui North Gas with 14,289,433 shaes at Rs 41.58 per share.

Premium Textile witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 39.68 per share price, closing at Rs575.03, whereas the runner-up was Colgate Palm with a Rs 30.01 rise in its per share price to Rs1900.01.

Sapphire Textile witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 66.17 per share closing at Rs 1100.00, followed by Sanofi-Aventis with Rs 44.40 decline to close at Rs 955.60.

Rupee extends loss against dollar

The exchange rate of the Pakistani rupee depreciated by 50 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading on Tuesday and closed at Rs 226.93 against the

previous day's closing of Rs 226.43.

According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 233.2 and Rs 235.5 respectively.

The price of the euro decreased by Rs 1.71 and closed at Rs 239.59 against the previous day's closing of Rs 241.30, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese yen gained two paises to close at Rs1.73, whereas a decrease of Rs 2.17 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British pound, which was traded at Rs 270.90 as compared to its last closing of Rs 273.07.

The exchange rates of the Emirates dirham and Saudi riyal gained 13 paises each to close at Rs 61.78 and Rs 60.37 respectively.

Gold price up by Rs500 to Rs187,700 per tola

The price of 24 karat per tola gold witnessed an increase of Rs 500 on Tuesday and was sold at time high at Rs187,700 against its sale at Rs187,200, the last trading day.

The price of 10 gram 24 karat also increased by Rs 428 and was sold at Rs 160,922 against Rs160,494; whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat went up to Rs147,512 against its sale at Rs147,119, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola increased by Rs50 to Rs2,150 whereas that of ten gram silver went up by Rs42.86 to Rs1843.27.

The price of gold in the international market increased by \$9 and was sold at \$1833 against its sale at \$1824, the association reported.

Rs113.8b being spent on gas transmission system up-gradation

ISLAMABAD (APP): The two state-owned companies, SNGPL and SSGC, are expected to spend over Rs 113.8 billion on the up-gradation of gas transmission and distribution systems in their respective operational areas across the country during the current fiscal year.

"The gas companies have planned to invest Rs 27.669 million on transmission projects, Rs 77.484 million on distribution projects, and Rs 8.746 million on other projects bringing the total investment of Rs 113.899 million during the fiscal year 2022-23," according to an official document available with APP.

The Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL) has planned to lay 9,605 kilometer transmission and distribution pipelines, while Sui Southern Gas Company (SSGC) 1,102-kilometer pipelines to improve their efficiency and smooth supply of gas to domestic, industrial, and commercial consumers.

The available statistics indicate that Pakistan has an extensive gas network with more than 13,513 KM transmission, 155,679 KM distribution, and 41,231 KM service gas pipelines to cater to the requirement of millions of consumers. The number of consumers has increased from 10.3 million

to more than 10.7 million across the country.

The companies are also executing at least three strategic projects to supply gas to two Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and an industrial park in their respective areas to boost industrial production.

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

The SSGC is laying a pipeline to supply 10 MMCFD (Metric Million Cubic Feet per Day) Re-

gasified Liquefied Natural Gas (RLNG) to Bostan Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in Balochistan Province with an allocation of Rs 100 million for the current fiscal year, and a dedicated line to provide 13 MMCFD RLNG to Bin Qasim Industrial Park, located in Karachi city of Sindh province, with Rs 74.71 million funds.

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

Stock markets rally on New Year boost

LONDON (AFP/APP): Global stocks rallied Tuesday thanks to a New Year boost, which is clouded however by rising interest rates, recession worries and Russia's war on Ukraine.

While 2022 was painful for investors, there is a fear that this year could be worse, with International Monetary Fund chief Kristalina Georgieva warning a third of the global economy could slip into recession.

Yet London jumped two percent as traders returned from a holiday weekend to play catch-up with Frankfurt and Paris, which logged gains on both Monday and Tuesday.

Starting 2023 with a bang

"UK shares kicked off the New Year with a bang despite gloomy predictions from the head of the IMF that one third of the global economy will be hit by

recession this year," said AJ Bell investment director Russ Mould.

London's heavyweight energy sector was boosted by recent oil-price gains, although crude futures fell Tuesday.

Investors' eyes remain on China, where the swift removal of most zero-Covid measures has sparked a massive surge in infections that has filled up hospitals and left crematoriums overloaded.

China's new outbreak has fanned fresh concerns for the economic outlook as businesses are being forced to shut down, after having already been battered by the strict containment measures put in place for almost three years.

However, after a negative start to the day, Asia's markets shifted higher with the gains spilling over into Europe.

Analysts said infections

may have already peaked in major cities including Beijing, where activity is picking back up.

But there are fears that travel over the Lunar New Year holiday at the end of the month could see cases spread to the countryside and further impact the economy.

Hong Kong stocks rallied on hopes for the city's economy ahead of an expected reopening of the border with China next week, while there were also gains in Shanghai, Taipei, Manila and Jakarta.

Bracing for rate hikes

Investors are now bracing for another series of central bank rate hikes in the early months of the year as policymakers battle decades-high inflation.

The sharp increase in borrowing costs last year was a key reason for the major pain suffered by equity markets as traders

contemplated the end of years of cheap cash.

The Fed and others have suggested they will slow their pace of increases, but they are tipped to take rates higher than previously expected and not start to cut until later in the year or even 2024.

Friday's release of US jobs data will be closely followed for an idea of how the Fed will move next, with a strong reading likely to put pressure on the bank to keep lifting for some time.

In foreign exchange, the yen extended gains to hit 129.52 per dollar -- its highest level since June -- after a Bank of Japan policy shift hinted at the country finally seeing a rate hike.

The dollar rallied against the euro and pound, rebounding from losses in December following the festive break.



PESHAWAR: Vendor selling and displaying peanuts to attract customers.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Shipping activities reported at the Port on Monday, where three ships namely, MSC Rania, Maersk Boston and High Sea carrying Containers and Palm oil, berthed at Qasim International Containers Terminal and Liquid Cargo Terminal respectively.

Meanwhile four more ships, Irenes Ray, ChemSinyoo, Bai Lu Zuo and Elise carrying Containers, Palm oil and Mogas also arrived at outer anchorage of the port during the last 24 hours.

A total of 06 ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them three ships, MSC Rania, Maersk Boston and Al-Salam left the Port on Tuesday morning, while a containers ship 'Irenes Ray' is expected to sail on today in the afternoon.

A Cargo volume of 109,311 tonnes, comprising 84,015 tonnes imports cargo and 25,296 tonnes export cargo, including containerized cargo carried in 2,411 Containers (923 TEUs Imports and 1,488 TEUs export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

There are 21 ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them, 02 ships, HansaSealancer and Irenes Ray & another ship 'Conti Chivalry' carrying Gasoline and Containers are expected to take berths at FOTCO and QICT on Tuesday.

RCCI to convene conference

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Chamber of commerce and Industry (RCCI) on Tuesday announced to call the All Pakistan Chambers Presidents Conference in view of the prevailing economic situation on January 16 to 18.

Talking to the media, RCCI President Saqib Rafiq said that the economic activities were at a standstill due to uncertainty.

The conference's purpose was to unite all the chamber presidents under one roof to devise a joint strategy.

He welcomed the discussion in the National Security Council on the economy and said that the biggest issue at this time was inflation; the purchasing power of the common man had been wiped off.

ICCI demands lenient import policy to promote business activities

ISLAMABAD (APP): Faad Waheed, Acting President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry has lauded the initiative of State Bank of Pakistan for relaxing some restrictions on imports and allowing imports pertaining to HS Code Chapter 84, 85 and certain items of Chapter 87 from 2nd January 2023.

He said it would facilitate in improving manufacturing and business activities. However, he said that the economy of Pakistan needs to boost exports for which it is important that the SBP should further relax import restrictions and adopt a more lenient import policy as many export-oriented industries have to import raw materi-

als and intermediate goods to produce the finished products.

He expressed these views while talking to a delegation of the business community. Group leader Khalid Iqbal Malik, Mian Shaukat Masud, Muhammad Ejaz Abbasi, and others were in the delegation.

Faad Waheed said that the collection at the import stage contributes almost 50 percent of the total revenue collection.

However, the restricted imports policy is badly affecting the tax collection of the country as the loss in revenue collection at the import stage varies between Rs.30 billion to Rs.50 billion per month.

He said that if the

imports are not further relaxed, the contractionary policy will further impact the revenue collection in the coming months. He urged the SBP to take the major chambers of commerce and industry of the country including ICCI on board to make further relaxations in imports so that the business activities can flourish and exports can be further increased to improve the meagre forex reserves of the country.

Engineer Muhammad Azhar ul Islam Zafar, Vice President ICCI said that the outcomes for the economy and irked the SBP to consider making it more lenient to promote business and investment activities in the country.

GO installs RO Water Filtration Plant Near GO Mahmoodkot Terminal

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Gas & Oil Pakistan Ltd. (GO) has installed a large size RO Water Filtration Plant, with capacity of 3,600 gallons per day at Pateyvala Basti, Qasba Gujrat about 200 metres from GO Mahmoodkot Terminal.

It was inaugurated jointly by Mr. Ali Akber Khaleel, Col. Muhammad Anwar Khurshid and Mr. Muhammad Fasihuddin. Locals of the area are highly

pleased and over joyous on this welfare measure by GO. It shall go a long way in winning the much-needed good will of the local community of the area.

Commenting on the occasion, COO of GO, Mr. Zeeshan Tayyeb said, "The importance of clean drinking water cannot be overemphasized as it is a basic requirement of the people for healthy life. Therefore, GO has been making all out efforts to install as many 'RO Water

Filtration Plants' as possible for both; the employees and the general public especially for those living in surrounding areas of our installations."

Water is a fundamental human right, and access to clean and safe drinking water can change the lives of human beings for the better. However, in this era of global water scarcity and stress, getting clean drinking water at all is considered a blessing for most people, especially in Pakistan.

PSQCA stops production in four illegal steel mills

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Standards & Quality Control Authority (PSQCA) on Tuesday stopped four illegal and unlicensed steel mills from production, and seized huge quantity of deformed steel bars and other products in the provincial capital.

According to PSQCA

spokesman, following the direction of Federal Minister for Science & Technology Agha Hassan Baloch and Secretary Ghulam Muhammad Memon, PSQCA Director

General Zainul Abedin constituted a special team headed by Deputy Director Asghar Ali for crackdown.

The teams raided Harbanspura, Misri Shah, Baghbanpura, Kala Khatai Road and seized huge stock of deformed steel bars and other steel products from four mills.

Director General Zainul Abedin asked all steel mills to submit their applications for license to avoid legal action, adding that PSQCA would provide maximum technical support to the

industry following the government's policy "ease of doing business".

He added that crackdown would continue till the last steel mill apply for license.

The PSQCA has so far taken action against 23 steel mills from which 10 have applied for PSQCA license while cases against nine other steel mills had been sent to the court.

However, owners of another five steel mills have also applied for licenses.

Turkey's inflation rate slows sharply to 64.3 per cent

ISTANBUL (AFP/APP): Turkey's annual inflation pulled back further in December from a two-decade high, official data showed Tuesday, helping President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's chances in elections due by June.

Consumer prices rose by 64.3 percent in December from the same time last year, the state statistics agency said, compared to an 84.4-percent increase in November.

Analysts attribute the sharp slowdown to the so-called base effect, which makes price increases look smaller when compared to extremely high rates 12 months earlier.

The lira began to lose value almost immediately, as consumers rushed to buy up gold and dollars to protect their savings.

But it fulfils Erdogan's

campaign promise that inflation will start falling at the start of the year after reaching the highest levels since 1998 last year.

Erdogan hailed the data as a sign of a "rapid recovery". "We will see that the downward trend in inflation will continue," he said in a televised address.

"Our goal this year is to completely burst the bubble of inflation and remove the issue from our country's agenda as of next year."

Turkey's economy has been going through convulsions since Erdogan launched an unusual experiment in September 2021 that tried to fight inflation by bringing down borrowing costs.

The lira began to lose value almost immediately, as consumers rushed to buy up gold and dollars to protect their savings.

The price of imports such as oil and gas soared, creating an inflationary spiral that the nominally independent central bank fed further by continuing to lower interest rates.

The annual inflation rate peaked at 85.5 percent in October 2021.

But polls show that most Turks lost trust in the official data when Erdogan replaced the head of the state statistics agency in the wake of a particularly dire inflation report last year.

A separate study released by Turkey's ENAG research institute showed the rate slowing to 137.6 percent in December from 170.7 a month earlier.

The crisis forced Erdogan to alter his foreign policy, resuming economic alliances with petrodollar-rich rivals in the Arab

world and ramping up trade with Russia, despite its war on Ukraine.

These deals have helped to prop up Turkey's hard currency reserves, allowing it to stabilise the lira. The government has additionally forced exporters to convert 40 percent of their dollar revenues into liras, further supporting the Turkish currency.

The lira's stabilisation has helped temper the pace of price increases.

But analysts warn that a wave of populist social support measures that Erdogan announced heading into the election make the current economic policies unsustainable.

He has tripled the minimum wage in the past year, raised state salaries and hiked pensions for millions of Turks.

Asian markets struggle out of gate for new year

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Most Asian markets bounced from early losses and the yen hit a seven-month high Tuesday to start the year on a positive note, but ongoing worries about interest rates, China's growth and the Ukraine war continue to dampen the mood.

While 2022 was painful for investors, there is a fear that the next 12 months could be worse, with the head of the International Monetary Fund warning a third of the global economy could slip into recession.

Eyes are on China, where the swift removal of most zero-Covid measures has sparked a massive surge in infections that has filled up hospitals and left crematoriums overloaded.

The widespread outbreak has fanned fresh concerns for the economic outlook as businesses are being forced to shut down, after having already been battered by the strict containment measures put in place for almost three years.

Analysts said infections may have already peaked in major cities including Beijing, where activity is picking back up.

But there are fears that

an expected spike in travel over the Lunar New Year holiday at the end of the month could see cases spread to the countryside and further impact the economy.

"With the ongoing Covid tidal wave, investment sliding to a 10-quarter low, and new orders continuing to get battered, a meaningful first-quarter recovery is increasingly unrealistic," Derek Scissors, of CBBI, said.

And IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva said with China's economy looking shaky just as the United States and European Union edge towards contraction, the outlook for the world was downbeat for 2023.

She told CBS's "Face the Nation" that this year will be "tougher than the year we leave behind".

While the United States may avoid it, she warned half the 27-nation European Union will be in recession, as the bloc is "very severely hit" by the Ukraine conflict. China's economy will likely be at or below global growth for the first time in 40 years, she added.

However, after a negative start to the day, Asia

markets turned brighter as it progressed.

Hong Kong was lifted two percent by hopes for the city's economy ahead of an expected January 8 reopening of the border with China. Macau-based casino shares led the rally as investors bet on a recovery in revenues, with MGM China up 14 percent and Wynn Macau soaring eight percent.

The Hang Seng Index's rise came after it suffered its worst year since 2011.

There were also gains in Shanghai, Taipei, Manila, Mumbai and Jakarta, though Sydney, Seoul and Singapore remained in the red.

Investors are now bracing for another series of central bank rate hikes in the early months of the year as monetary policymakers battle to rein in decades-high inflation.

The sharp increase in borrowing costs last year was a key reason for the major pain suffered by equity markets as traders contemplated the end of years of cheap cash.

The Fed and others have suggested they will slow their pace of increases, but they are tipped to take rates



In brief

Pakistan ODI squad

KARACHI (INP): Pakistan's ODI squad for the three-match ODI home series against New Zealand will be announced tomorrow. According to the detail, the head of the Men's Interim National Selection Committee, Shahid Afridi, will name a 16-member national squad for the upcoming white-ball assignment from the list of 24 probables selected by the board. "Consultation has been made with head coach Saqlain Mushtaq and captain Babar Azam regarding the players' selection for the One-Day squad," Afridi said. Last week, the interim selection committee for the national men's team initially named 21 probables for the home ODI series. Later, fast bowler Mohammad Hasnain and batters Haris Sohail and Fakhar Zaman were added to the list. It is pertinent to mention here that the three-game ODI series will commence on January 9 (Monday) after the conclusion of the ongoing second Test on Friday.

Basketball C'ship from January 25

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Basketball Federation (PBBF) said on Tuesday that Inter-departmental National Basketball Championship will commence on January 25 at Liaquat Gymnasium, Pakistan sports Complex, Islamabad. Organizing secretary of the championship and the Associate Secretary of PBBF, Ouj-e-Zahoor, in a statement said that all the arrangements had been completed to hold the five-day championship in a befitting manner. He said the event would be held under the supervision of the Federal Basketball Association (FBBAA). The teams had been divided into two groups: Defending champions Pakistan Army, Pakistan Ordnance Factory (POF), Pakistan Railways, and Pakistan Navy have been placed in Group A, while Pakistan Air Force, WAPDA, and Police would be in Group B. Ouj-e-Zahoor said that the inaugural match of the championship will be played between Pakistan Army and Navy. The semi-finals of the championship will be played on January 28, while the final will be held on January 29, he added. Schedule: January 25 (Day-1): Army vs Navy; POF vs Railways; Wapda vs Police January 26 (Day-2): Army vs Railway; PAF vs Police; POF vs Navy. January 27 (Day-3): Army vs POF; PAF vs Wapda; Railway vs Navy. January 28 (Day-4): Semi-finals January 29 (Day-5): Final.

'New Year resolution to win a World Cup'

MUMBAI (INP): Winning a world title in any format is top of Hardik Pandya's target list as he leads a new-look India T20 team against Sri Lanka, he said. All-rounder Pandya was appointed captain of the 16-member side, who will be without regular skipper Rohit Sharma and star batsman Virat Kohli, for the three T20 matches starting on Tuesday in Mumbai. Both Rohit and Kohli will return for the three ODIs to follow as India begin preparations to host the 50-over World Cup later this year. "The biggest new year resolution is to win the World Cup," Pandya told reporters on the eve of the Sri Lanka series. India would try to "go out there and give everything," he said, adding: "I think things are looking bright."

Imam steers Pakistan fightback after New Zealand's last wicket adds 104 runs

KARACHI (APP): Pakistan's top-order batting woes continued in the new year before Imam-ul-Haq rescued his side from a complete collapse on the second day of the second Test against New Zealand at the National Bank Cricket Arena on Tuesday.

Abdullah Shafique once again fell while hooking. Shan Masood's aggressive approach against the spinners led to his downfall and Babar Azam was run-out in a terrible mix-up with Imam-ul-Haq as Pakistan slipped to 99 for three before finishing the day at 154 for three.

Pakistan's response came after New Zealand was bowled out for 449 after starting the day at 309 for six and having been reduced to 345 for nine.

Abdullah managed 19 off 32 balls with four fours, Shan scored 20 from 11 balls with four fours and Babar hit three fours and six in a 41-ball 24 before returning to the dressing room to leave Pakistan in dire straits.

However, Imam held the innings together and in part-

nership with Saud Shakeel, he has so far added 55 runs for the unfinished fourth wicket. The left-hander, who turned his back at Babar after the skipper had sprinted for the third run, was batting on 74 from 125 balls with nine fours and a six, while a consistent Saud was 13 not out from 75 balls. For New Zealand, Matt Henry picked up the wicket of Abdullah and Ajaz Patel dismissed Shan.

Earlier, Henry and Patel had combined to frustrate Pakistan for 92 minutes during which they added 104 runs in 149 balls for the 10th wicket to lift New Zealand to 449.

No.10 batter Henry notched up his third career half-century in the 18th match when he returned unbeaten on an attacking 81-ball 68 with eight fours and two sixes, while Patel was the last batter to be dismissed after scoring a Test-best 35 from 78 balls and four fours.

Overnight batters Tom Blundell and Ish Sodhi, along with skipper Tim Southee, were back in the

hut with the addition of 36 runs as New Zealand slipped to 345 for nine before the last-wicket partnership helped the visitors reach a decent score.

Blundell, who began the day at 30, was dismissed after scoring 51 from 108 balls with six fours, while Sodhi failed to add any run to his overnight score of 11 before he was castled by Naseem Shah (three for 71).

Abrar Ahmed picked the remaining three wickets to finish with figures of 37-5-149-4. Abrar now has 27 wickets in seven innings of four Tests.

Scores in brief:

New Zealand (1st innings) (overnight 309-6) 449 all-out, 131 overs (Devon Conway 122, Tom Latham 71, Matt Henry 68 not out, Tom Blundell 51, Kane Williamson 36, Ajaz Patel 35, Henry Nicholls 26; Abrar Ahmed 4-149, Naseem Shah 3-71, Salman Ali Agha 3-75)

Pakistan (1st innings) 154-3, 47 overs (Imam-ul-Haq 74 not out, Babar Azam 24, Shan Masood 20, Saud Shakeel 13 not out).



KARACHI: Imam-ul-Haq was unbeaten on 74 on second day.

More matches decided in Amanullah Memorial Tennis C'ship

PESHAWAR (APP): Several matches were decided on Tuesday in the 9th DIG Amanullah Memorial KP Tennis C'ship, attended by Chairman Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tennis Association Prof. Dr Muhammad Tahir as chief guest.

Secretary of Provincial Tennis Association Umar Ayaz Khalil, Tennis coaches Shehryar Khan, Ruman Gul, Nauman Khan and Zakirullah were also present. In the main single, Dr Farhat Abbas defeated Tahirullah of Pakistan Air Force by 6-1 and 6-4; Inam Gul of KP defeated Hamid Asrar of SNGPL by 6-4 and 7-6 (6-6); Saqib Mujtaba of Air Force defeated Faisal of KP by 6-3, 3-6 and 6-4; Barkatullah of KP Police defeated Zakirullah of KP 6-1 and 6-3.

In Boys U18, Arsalan of KP beat Muhammad Ali by 6-3 and 6-4; Arsalan of PAF beat Zain Roman of KP by 6-3 and 6-2. KP's Waqas Janus qualified for the next round by defeating number seven seed Junaid Khan 6-2, 6-3.

Pak team to participate in Asian Tenpin Bowling C'ship

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Tenpin Bowling team will participate in the 26th Asian tenpin bowling championship 2023, slated to be from January 8 to 18 in Hong Kong.

President Pakistan Tenpin Bowling Federation Ijaz ur Rehman told APP that the training camp for the preparation of the event was underway at Leisure Bowling Club Rawalpindi.

Six players are taking part in the training Camp including Ijaz ur Rehman, Ali Suria, Afzal Akhter, Shabeer Lashkarwala, Amjid Mehmood and Amir Mehmood. Men and Women players from 19 countries will take part in the Asian Championship. Five events will be contested – Singles, Doubles, Trios, Team of five and the prestigious Masters for men and women divisions.

Murray loses to Korda in Adelaide first round

ADELAIDE (Agencies): Andy Murray's first match of 2023 ended in a straight-set loss to American Sebastian Korda in the Adelaide International.

The Briton, 35, ranked 49 in the world, 16 places below his opponent, was beaten 7-6 (7-3) 6-3.

Murray had recovered from a break down in the opening set to force a tie-break but Korda, 22, took control of that and went on to dominate the second set.

Murray's fellow Briton Kyle Edmund also exited the tournament on Tuesday.

Edmund, who is ranked 582 in the world but was using a protected ranking to enter the event after a series of injuries, lost 6-3 6-2 to Italian sixth seed

Jannick Sinner.

Earlier, Novak Djokovic swept to victory over France's Constant Lestienne in his first singles match on Australian soil since being deported a year ago.

The Serbian 21-time Grand Slam winner was given a warm welcome when he played a losing doubles match on Monday and received similar treatment on a packed centre court in his 6-3 6-2 win.

"For the first match I can't complain, I played very well," said the 35-year-old, who is now the world number five and will be seeking a record-extending 10th Australian Open men's singles title later this month.

"Thank you all for coming out today. Thank you for giving me the welcome that I could only wish for. "If I have to pick one country where I've had the most success, which treated me in the best way in terms of tennis, it's here, definitely."

Djokovic was deported before the 2022 Australian Open because of his Covid-19 vaccination status but his three-year visa ban was overturned in November, allowing him to enter the country.

Russian Daniil Medvedev, who lost to Djokovic in the 2021 Australian Open final and was beaten by Rafael Nadal in the Grand Slam decider 12 months ago, saved nine set points on his way to a 7-6 (8-6) 2-1 win over Italian Lorenzo Sonego, who retired injured.

Damar Hamlin: NFL player in critical condition after cardiac arrest

WASHINGTON (Agencies): American football star Damar Hamlin is in a critical condition after suffering a cardiac arrest during a primetime US National Football League game.

The Buffalo Bills player, 24, fell to the ground after colliding with an opponent during the first quarter of a match against the Cincinnati Bengals. He received on-field medical attention for more than 30 minutes before being taken to a local hospital.

The NFL suspended the game for the night about an hour after the incident.

His team, the Buffalo Bills later confirmed the cardiac arrest in a statement and said that his heartbeat was restored on the field.

In a tweet early on Tuesday, the team said Hamlin is undergoing further testing and treatment and is currently sedated.

The emergency sparked an outpouring of support for Hamlin and brought attention back to the dangerous nature of America's most popular sport as the NFL season approaches its climactic play-off stages.

Hamlin was tackling



Bengals receiver Tee Higgins in the stadium in Cincinnati, Ohio, when Higgins' helmet appeared to hit Hamlin in the chest. After initially getting to his feet, he fell on his back.

Players from both teams gathered around Hamlin as emergency medical staff gave CPR and oxygen. Several were seen visibly distressed, with many kneeling to pray and some in tears. Television coverage repeatedly broke away from the scene on the field, while the crowd in Cincinnati remained silent during the ordeal.

Jordon Rooney, Hamlin's representative, wrote on Twitter: "His vitals are back to normal and they have put him to sleep to put a breathing tube down his throat. They are currently running tests.

We will provide updates as we have them."

NFL games are rarely suspended because of injury. Commentators said the fact that gameplay had stalled was a sign of the shocking and severe nature of the emergency.

The two teams are among the top Super Bowl contenders this year, with their head-to-head coming in the primetime Monday night slot in the penultimate week of the NFL's regular season.

The league's players' association wrote in a statement: "We have been in touch with Bills and Bengals players and with the NFL. The only thing that matters at this moment is Damar's health and well-being." Hamlin, a native of McKees Rock, Pennsylvania, was drafted from the University of Pittsburgh by the Bills in 2011.

He has drawn praise for hosting annual Christmas toy drives in his hometown since before he was a paid athlete. An online GoFundMe page for the toy drive was reshared after Hamlin collapsed on Monday and has raised nearly \$3m (£2.5m).

China's Xintong, Jiankang suspended in snooker fixing probe

LONDON (Agencies): Former UK champion Zhao Xintong and Zhang Jiankang have become the latest Chinese players to be suspended from the World Snooker Tour during an investigation into alleged match-fixing, it was announced Tuesday.



Zhao, who beat Luca Brecel to win the 2021 UK Championship title, and Zhang, the world number 82, have been banned from

attending or competing on the Tour with immediate effect, with 10 Chinese players bow suspended as part of an ongoing investigation.

Former Masters champion Yan Bingtao and seven other Chinese players had already been suspended by the World Professional Billiards and Snooker Association (WPBSA), the sport's global governing body. A WPBSA statement issued Tuesday said: "This decision is part of an ongoing investigation into allegations of manipulating the outcome of matches for betting purposes in breach of the WPBSA conduct regulations."

"The suspension will remain in place until the conclusion of the investigation or any subsequent

charges that may or may not be brought. Both Zhao and Zhang have the right to appeal this decision."

"The WPBSA can confirm that the wider investigation is now at an advanced stage, and it is anticipated will be completed shortly at which point any potential charges will be considered. "No further comment will be made at this time, except in the event of any significant further developments."

Lu Ning, Li Hang, Zhao Jianbo, Bai Langning, Chang Bingyu, Yan Bingtao and Chen Zifan were all suspended in December after world number 56 Liang Wenbo became the first Chinese player to be suspended as part of the investigation in October.

Peshawar Zalmi unveiled its kits for the eighth edition of PSL

F.P. Report

CCO Peshawar Zalmi.

PESHAWAR: Peshawar Zalmi unveiled its kits for the eighth edition of Pakistan Super League, which is available for pre-order today. In collaboration with Gym Armour and Red Bull Records, the Kit Reveal Video showcases Babar Azam in a fashion like never before.

Peshawar Zalmi has deeply focused towards the passion points of its fanbase and with music and fashion being the foremost ones along with sports, collaborating with Gym Armour and Red Bull Records was a natural partnership altogether.

"Peshawar Zalmi has meticulously crafted its series of partnership. With an increasing fanbase, consistent performances on the field and getting record brand & media evaluation from Nielson Sports and YouGov both, it makes sense for Peshawar Zalmi to work with the market leaders of every category that gel well with the passion points of our fans. The Kit Reveal Video is a reflection of that, forming a mix of music, sports and fashion altogether," said Mr. Nausherwan Effandi,

Inspired by the contemporary and progressive nature of the brand Peshawar Zalmi is, the Home Kit is an elegant combination of tuscany yellow with a classic and complementing addition of black. The bold yet minimalist design is reflective of the contemporary design philosophy practised by Peshawar Zalmi. The colour yellow is symbolic to the loyal and intensely passionate fanbase of Peshawar Zalmi – The Yellow Storm.

The front of the jersey features a mandarin collar in black, and uniquely woven and embedded intricate geometric pattern in hues of lemon yellow, each clustered together, symbolizing the connection Peshawar Zalmi holds with its fanbase. The geometric alliance gets bolder on the sleeves, further accentuating the black base. To oomph the character of the silhouette, details can be seen in the form of a yellow placket sewn against the sleeves. The hem of the jersey holds a sleek addition of fabric, with sinuous linear play in gold.

An imperative addition to the jersey is the badge of authenticity. Peshawar Zalmi has ensured



the finest quality and authenticity for its fans. The emblem crafted in velvet holds the Peshawar Zalmi logo embedded into it with a sheen that adds to the element of authenticity.

The Training Kit for Peshawar Zalmi is a combination of dark values in indigo accompanied with vibrant chroma of crimson and tangerine. The kit is an ode to the city of flowers and the warm colour palette reflects its people. The jersey has a consistent textual print fraught over the base, with a linear disruption travelling on the sides, across the shoulders.

The Training Kit is a testament to the fact that Peshawar Zalmi is consistent with the fashion trends of the year.

With popping hues and bolder prints taking over, Peshawar Zalmi ensured that the kits stand out to be statement pieces for the fans as well.

Peshawar Zalmi always has something in the pipeline and this year, the franchise has revealed the third kit, being the Alternate Kit for PSL Season 8. A classic, timeless, and elegant amalgamation of darker values of black and gold, the Alternate Jersey features a curated and meticulously sought deck of design elements. While staying true to the minimalist spirit, the alternate jersey features the horns of a markhor, the national animal of Pakistan and the mascot for Peshawar Zalmi as well. The uniquely crafted sil-

houette is further enhanced with the presence of a standing ban collar with 'yellow storm' on it. The attention to detail not only adds soul to the silhouette, but also character.

The kits were revealed in a video featuring Babar Azam with Sail by Awolnation as the official background score. The globally celebrated track was in collaboration with Red Bull Records. Upbeat, contemporary, and conceptual – the Kit Reveal Video featured Babar Azam in a fashion like never before and has left the Peshawar Zalmi fans immensely excited for what the brand has in store for them.

Peshawar Zalmi has introduced the narrative of sports being fashionable and cricket is more than a sport, but a national sentiment and Peshawar Zalmi is only making it better. Featuring Babar Azam with Sail by Awolnation as the official background score in collaboration with Red Bull Records, we see an upbeat, contemporary, and conceptual integration of Red Bull. Attired in Peshawar Zalmi Kits with bright and complementing accessories, the characters in the teaser are seen with

cans of Red Bull in their hands.

Sail is the most commercially successful song by the band Awolnation. Featured in The History Chanel's Vikings, and commercials by global brands such as BMW, the song is now a part of Peshawar Zalmi's Kit Reveal Video courtesy of Red Bull Records. The band Awolnation has earned a diamond certification by the Recording Industry Association of America for the song Sail, that has been a mega-hit single and has crossed over 10 million units. It is the third independent release to have received this accolade.

Sail's abrasive tone adds to the stormy atmosphere created in the video and has left the fans excited for the final release. Written by Aaron Bruno, the founder of Awolnation, the song carries symbolic meaning resting in the song is a representation of zest, determination, and passion and an honest expression of emotion. Gelling truly well with the Yellow Storm, the Kit Reveal Video has left the fans anticipated for what more Peshawar Zalmi will have in store for its fan for the 8th Season of HBL PSL.



In brief

IRSA releases 23,800 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Tuesday released 23,800 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 36,600 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1492.19 feet and was 94.19 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow in the dam was recorded as 16,700 cusecs while the outflow as 5,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1118.65 feet, which was 68.65 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water were recorded 5,100 cusecs and 4,000 cusecs respectively. Whereas, the release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 11,000, 17,500, 9,900 and 500 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 8,900 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera and 5,900 cusecs was released from River Chenab at Marala.

10 held for possessing illegal arms

RAWALPINDI (APP): The police, during a crackdown against illegal arms holders, arrested 10 persons and recovered arms and ammunition from their possession, informed a police spokesman on Tuesday. According to the details, Kalar Syedan police held Jawad and recovered a pistol with 30 rounds from his possession. The same police recovered a carbine with 12 rounds from Ijaz, a rifle with 12 rounds from Shehzad, a rifle with 12 rounds from Sohail, 30 rounds from Nasir, and an MP-5 rifle from Tahir. Similarly, Bani police recovered a 30-bore pistol each from Jahanzeb and Tahir Habib. Saddar Wah and Rawat police also recovered a 30-bore pistol each from Omar Hayat and Faisal respectively. Police have registered separate cases against the accused and further investigation was in progress. SSP Operations Wasim Riaz Khan said that those who endanger the lives of citizens will not escape from the grip of the law. He said that crackdown against illegal arms holders will be continued without any discrimination.

Power suspension programme

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Tuesday issued a power suspension programme for Wednesday for various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work. According to IESCO Spokesman, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period from 09:00 AM to 02:00 PM. Islamabad Circle G-6, Malik Altaf, Zia Masjid, Tufail Shaheed, Marvi, G-8, Tiramari, Highway, F-10 Park, G-9/4, H-8, Police Line, Belaur, New Shahullah Dutta, Pindi Point, Kohala, Pearl Cantonment, Kotli Sattian, Balawara, Trat, Anguri, Shahpur, Shahdara, Mangate, Desto, T&T, Trat, Bhara Kaho, II, Golf City, NCP, Mengyal, Iqbal Street, Peer Suhawah, Quaid-e-Azam University, Punjab House, Bri Imam, Mandala, Athal Feeders, Rawalpindi City Circle 4th Road, E-Block, Commercial Centre, Shamsabad, Khurram Colony, Gulzar Quaid, Service Road, Zafarul Haq, Arya Mohalla, Forah Chowk, Mingtal, Ali Market, Sardar Bagh, People's Colony, Askari XI, Officer Colony, G-15, G-15/1&4, Bhadana, Saham, Range Road, BB Shaheed Feeders, Rawalpindi Cantt. Circle, Bank Roadoon.



ISLAMABAD: Member National Assembly Syeda Nausheen Iftikhar calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

Aviation sector gets Rs494.97 mln for 15 projects in 5 months

ISLAMABAD (NNI): The government has so far released funds amounting to Rs 494.97 million, under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP 2022-23) against a total allocation of Rs2.484 billion to execute 15 different projects and schemes aimed at ensuring improved aviation sector services in the country. Out of the total authorization/disbursement of Rs 494.97 million, around Rs366.25 million have been utilized on the aviation sector projects during a five-month period (July-November) of the current fiscal year, according to official data available with APP. As per the PSDP document, an amount of Rs 2,303 billion had been allocated for 10 ongoing schemes, out of which Rs 60 million were meant for construction of Airport Security Force Camp at Islamabad International Airport, Rs 29.871 million for building barrack accommodation for ASP personnel

along with Mess and allied facilities, ladies rest room, MT, Store, Kote Magazine, Quarterguard and OC accommodation/room at Skardu Airport, Rs4 million for construction of Barrack accommodation for ASF personnel along with Mess and allied facilities, MT, Store, Visitors Room, Ladies Rest Room, Kote Magazine, Quarter Guard, and OC accommodation/Room at Chitral Airport, Rs 5 million for construction of double storey Barracks for ASF at Faisalabad Airport, Rs 5 million for construction of Rain Water Harvesting Kasana Dam at Islamabad International Airport, Rs 25 million for for installation of Weather Surveillance Radar at Karachi, Rs580 million for installation of Weather Surveillance Radar at Multan, Rs 10 million for installation of Weather Surveillance Radar at Sukkur, Rs 2 billion for new Gwadar International Airport (NGIA project), Rs 150

million for up-gradation of ASF Academy, Karachi and Rs 15 million for up-gradation of ASF Academy, Karachi (Feasibility & Supervision). Similarly, Rs 181 million had been earmarked for five new schemes, out of which Rs 61 million had been specified for the construction of ASF (Airport Security Force) Accommodation at Turbat Airport, Rs10 million for the construction of Kote Quarter Guard & Magazine at Panjgur Airport, Rs 5 million for the establishment of Basic Aerodrome Facilities at Mansehra – Acquisition of Land for Construction/Establishment of Airport at Mansehra, Rs 5 million for the establishment of New Meteorological Observatory at Naran and Hostel for Operational Staff at Balakot and Rs100 million for extension/up-gradation of Bannu Airport for A320/B737 or equivalent Aircraft Operation Phase-I (Land Acquisition).

PBM releases first payment to deserving families under OWSP

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal (PBM) has released the first payment to deserving families under the "Orphans and Widows Support Programme (OWSP)" during a ceremony held in Karachi on Tuesday. According to a news release issued here, President of PPP Women Wing and Member Sindh Assembly, Faryal Talpur, launched the programme by releasing the initial payments in the presence of Senator Waqar Mehdi and Managing Director PBM Amir Fida Paracha. Faryal Talpur, in her address, said the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) truly reflects the sympathetic approach of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto towards the downtrodden segments of the country.

Admiring the OWSP project for educating and empowering poor women and girls of the country, she appreciated the PBM chief for achieving the set targets in the Social Protection Field in a short span of time. Addressing the ceremony, Senator Waqar Mehdi appreciated the PBM's pro-poor initiatives and said along with the other measures for orphan children, PBM's ongoing task encompasses the unique idea of accommodating poor widows and their school-going daughters. Highlighting the project, PBM MD Amir Fida Paracha said the widows registered under BISP have been connected with OWSP with the condition of having one or more

school-going orphan girls. He said the initiative translates the distinctive and compassionate idea of protecting orphan girls by providing them with education and other basic needs of life. "Ensuring transparency and efficacy in this project, the payments are released through UBL OMNI Digital Banking," he added while explaining that a monthly stipend of Rs 8000 is being granted to the mother of a school-going orphan girl while Rs 12,000 per month is given to the mother of more than one school-going orphan girls. Paracha also reiterated his passion to materialize the vision of Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Shaheed for the well-being of the vulnerable populace of the country.

CTP issues 204,339 driving licenses during 2022

RAWALPINDI (APP): The City Traffic Police (CTP) Rawalpindi issued 204,339 driving licenses during 2022. According to a Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Rawalpindi Taimoor Khan, a total of 148,271 citizens got learner permits from the department while 12,190 applicants were issued new licenses besides 1751 international licenses during last year. He said that 37,221 driving licenses were renewed during the period besides 3337 of other districts of the province. He said that 838 citizens got duplicate licenses while 731 licenses were also endorsed. The four licensing facilities of the city including of CTP headquarters and six set up in 'Khidmat Marakaz' of the tehsils were providing all driving licensing services to the citizens. The CTP Licensing Branch had been directed to ensure merit and transparency, CTO said adding, the CTP were issuing computerized driving licenses under a transparent procedure. He said that in order to provide driving license facility to the residents at tehsil level, CTP had inaugurated driving license facilities in six tehsils of the district.

The CTP Licensing Branch was providing all services under one roof at One Window Operation of CTP headquarters. He said that the citizens should directly contact the licensing branch of the traffic police and get all required information in this regard so that they could not face any difficulty regarding issuance of driving license. In case of any difficulty in getting driving license, the citizens could also contact CTP's help line 1915 and 051-9272616. The CTO informed that the driving license branch is corruption free and working in transparent way. To attain a learner permit or the driving license the applicant has to visit and get it from Rawalpindi driving license office in CTP Headquarters. If the applicant has the ID card with address of Rawalpindi district then he is eligible to get driving license from here. The CTP also offers the international driving license along the motorcycle, car, jeep, LTV, HTV and the PSV types of license. For an international driving license the applicant should have a passport and a valid visa stamp on it.

Technical, vocational varsity to be set up in Saudi Arabia

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development (OP&HRD) Sajid Hussain Turi on Tuesday said that Pakistan with the cooperation of the government of Saudi Arabia would establish a technical and vocational university for Overseas Pakistanis in Saudi Arabia. Talking to APP, he said, "Saudi Arabia is the home of some 2.3 million Pakistanis who were working and living there for a long time and Turi reiterated that Overseas Pakistanis were playing a key role in the development of Pakistan hence, the development of the welfare of Pakistanis is paramount and a top most priority of the present government."

He said, "Pakistan has given technical and vocational training to several workers, to meet the requirement of the International labour market to earn maxi-

mum remittances.

He further elaborated that with the collaboration of OPF a facilitation desk would be established in order to resolve the problems of Pakistanis and their dependents.

To a question, he said that overseas Pakistanis would not be deprived of voting rights. "A new plan is being created where constituents will be selected to represent them in Parliament," he added.

Turi said that he has already discussed the importance of trade and the implementation of cross borders trade, and the deliverance of maximum employment opportunities for Pakistanis with the relevant authorities.

The minister underlined that a series of projects have been launched for the prosperity and development of the country and Overseas Pakistanis.

Prices of 20 medicines reduced up to 30 percent

ISLAMABAD (APP): The federal government on Tuesday approved the proposal to reduce the prices of 20 medicines up to 30 percent in order to give relief to the masses.

According to the spokesperson of the Ministry of National Health Services, the federal cabinet made this decision on the recommendation of Minister for National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination Abdul Qadir Patel. He said that the ratio of price reduction of most

medicines remained at 30%, adding that the government had also approved the price fixation of 54 other medicines.

On the occasion, in a statement, Qadir Patel said that this step will give relief to those patients suffering from various diseases and regularly need related medicines for the treatment of ailments including blood pressure, cancer, eye diseases and other medical complications.

Unfortunately, the past government increased the prices of medicines up to

700 percent, he claimed.

The minister assured that the government was committed to taking innovative steps to ensure the provision of best medical care to the people and was also undertaking measures for ensuring transparency and merit in the affairs of the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP). He said that several innovative steps had been taken in the health sector and ensuring the provision of quality medicines to the people of the country was the top priority of the government.

Trains punctuality ratio improves from 63 to 80%

ISLAMABAD (APP): The overall punctuality ratio of train services has improved from 63 to 80 percent owing to close monitoring by Pakistan Railways at divisional and ministry level.

"With the punctuality of trains and concrete measures taken by the present government in last nine months, the number of passengers have increased by over 20 million, which is ample proof of department's achievement," an official in the Ministry of Railways told APP.

He said the punctuality of passenger trains, was around 60 percent during the tenure of previous government of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf which was now improving day-by-day on the directives of Minister for Railways Khawaja Saad Rafique. He official said the present government had taken several steps to end the deficit of department including introduction of RAABTA an initiative towards enhanced customer facilitation.

"RAABTA platform lets customers plan the trip, check train status, choose seat, purchase seat, order car rental, meals and refreshment, and book hotels," he added.

To facilitate passengers, he said a mobile application Pakrail live has been launched for real time tracking of trains.

The official said the high capacity/high speed hopper trucks have been inducted in the current fleet for swift movement/unloading of coal and new high capacity high speed rolling stock coaches and wagons are being procured.

He said the online E-Ticketing through Jazz Cash, UBL Omini and credit cards has been introduced to facilitate passengers at door step and to attract more passenger through outsourcing of noncore activity. "A policy for transfer of technology is being pursued collaboration with People's Republic of China for indigenization of Railway Rolling Stock in Pakistan Railways facilities," he added.

Govt releases funds for various water resources schemes

ISLAMABAD (APP): The government has released an amount of Rs22,859.62 million for various water resources schemes under Annual Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) till November 2022. According to the data of the Planning Commission, the government has specified a sum of Rs 97,559.38 million for various projects in PSDP 2022-23. Out of total release amount, the local component stood at Rs 17,859.08 million while foreign aid component was 4,581.62 million.

The Ongoing schemes included 13 hydel and 61 water sector projects, whereas the new projects were only 13 in total. The allocation of ongoing hydel projects included Rs 55,383 million for Dasu Hydropower Project (2,160 MW), Rs 12,083 Neelum Jhelum Hydropower Project (696 MW), and Rs 12,000 million for Tarbela 5th Extension Hydro Power Project (1,410 MW).

Among the ongoing water sector projects, Rs 20,000 million each was allocated for Diamer Basha Dam Project and K-4 Greater water Supply Scheme (260 MGD), Rs 12,060 million for Mohmand Multipurpose Dam Project, Rs 7,000 million for Diamer Basha Dam Project (Land Acquisition

and Re-settlement), and Rs 5,000 each for Nai Gaj Dam Project Dadu (Sindh) and Kaachi Canal Project (Phase-I) Dera Bugti, Naseerabad, Bolan and Jhal Magsi. The major allocation for new schemes included Rs 500 million for the Chashma Right Bank Canal Left Cum Gravity Project and Rs 300 million each for the construction of five Small Dams Salari-2 Dam, Rai Jo Da Dam, Shalmani Dam, Garwari Dam and Amari Dam in Kohistan Dadu, for construction of six dams including Densi, Kcodal, Kambowah, Khirpura and others; for construction of six smalls dams in District Zhob and Sherani.



ISLAMABAD: Pigeons picking up food throwing by the people for mercy at F9 Park in the Federal Capital.

Ministry rejects remarks

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Defense reacted to recent comments about the presence of TTP and the possibility of a raid on them in Afghanistan, saying that the Islamic Emirate is prepared to protect the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The Ministry of Defense in a statement called the remarks provocative and baseless and said that any issues or problems should be resolved through understanding.

The Frontier Post

AFGHANISTAN

Jamadi-us-Sani 11, 1444 — Wednesday, January 04, 2023

Drug dealers arrested

KABUL (Agencies): The Anti-narcotic officers arrested 7 people on charge of drug dealing and drug use in 4 provinces. The Interior Ministry in a statement, said that the Anti-narcotic officers arrested 7 people. One arrested in Khost, 2 Herat, 3 in Badakhshan, and one other in Bamyan, added the Ministry's statement. The Interior Ministry, added saying that a an amount of drugs has been discovered from the detainees.

IEA's supreme leader meets scholars

KABUL (Agencies): The supreme leader of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Mullah Hibatullah Akhundzada, held a consultative meeting with the heads, deputies and secretarial officials of the Council of scholars of Kandahar, Helmand, Zabul, Nimroz, Farah, Paktika and Paktia provinces.

In this meeting, the Deputy Minister of Hajj and Religious Affairs, the Supreme Court Deputy and some members of the Religious Publications Supervision and Inspection Agency were also attended,

said a statement.

The Supreme Leader called consulting important in Islam said consult could bring unity and consensus among Muslims is strengthened.

The supreme leader praised the activities of the religious scholars, said that many problems of the people have been addressed by the councils and they should always pay attention to addressing the problems of the people and pay more attention to their responsibilities in this regard, adding that religious scholars are the group whose

responsibility does not end until the Day of Resurrection.

Meanwhile, religious scholars shared details on their religious scholar's council's responsibilities and also shared some other issues and suggestions with supreme leader.

According to a statement, the scholars have provided important advice on establishing a permanent relationship between the Islamic Emirate and the people, addressing people's problems, bringing reforms in provincial institutions and further development.

Over 1b Afs collects in revenue from Shir Khan Bandar

KABUL (Agencies): Local customs officials of Shir Khan Bandar of Kunduz say that from the beginning 1401 solar year, up to now 1.1 billion Afghanis were collected from this port.

The provincial head of customs office of Shir Khan Bandar, Mawlawi Fazl Mohammad Ishaq said that on average, 8 to 9 million Afghanis are collected.

Goods from Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, export and import vehicles between Kazakhstan, Pakistan and Iran daily over 100 trucker.

The Shir Khan Bandar is one of the important ports of the country, which is located 65 kilometers far from Kunduz city on the border with Tajikistan, which currently provides employment to hundreds of people.

29 children heart patient introduces to hospitals

KABUL (Agencies): The Afghan Red Crescent Society, introduced 29 children for treatment to private hospitals in Kabul.

The Afghan children with heart infections introduced to Basit and Global hospitals in Kabul, where the expenses of the patients paid by the Afghan Red Crescent Society, according to the report.

The Afghan Red Crescent Society termed funding the treatment of children with heart hole one the organization priorities.

The ARCS claims that the organization introduced 508 children with heart infections to hospitals inside and outside in the past months.

The cost for each patients with heart hole is about 201000 Afghanis, which is funded by the Afghan Red Crescent Society.

4 abductors killed in Kabul operation

KABUL (Agencies): Late Monday night abductors tried to kidnap a man from 4th police district of Kabul, which faced security clash. Businessman has been freed from the grib of kidnappers in the capital Kabul and 4 kidnappers have been killed during security operation.

The security forces have killed 4 abductors their operation and recused the man, said Khalid Zadrani the Kabul police spokesperson.

Meanwhile, the security forces rescued several persons from the grib of abductors in several security operations across the country.

Construction work of two schools complete

NANGARHAR (Agencies): The construction work of two schools worth over 21 million Afghanis has been completed and put into exploitation in Nangarhar province.

The provincial Education officials said, that this school has built in the Achin and Kot districts of the province. The provincial Education head Mufi Habib Hazrat Haqqani said in the inauguration ceremony that a female school built with the financial support of the Swedish committee worth 10.22 million Afghanis in the Achin district of the province.

In the meantime, another school was built with the financial support of the Swedish Committee worth 10.92 million Afghanis in the Kot district of the province. The provincial Education head thanked the cooperative organizations that help in the construction work of these schools in the province.

Review of curriculum for literature faculties started

KABUL (TOLONews): The ministry of higher education has kicked off the review of the curriculum for literature faculties in private and public universities.

In a meeting at Kabul University on Tuesday, Acting Minister of Higher Education Neda Mohammad Nadim said they want religious and modern subjects and that both are needed.

"The curriculum revision and attention to progress are necessary for our society and is the way to forward," said Neda Mohammad Nadim.

Lotfullah Khairkhwah, Deputy Minister of Higher Education, said the curriculum will be prepared based on religious and national values with international educational standards.

"We ask our university lecturers to make a curriculum that can protect our nation and religious values," said Khairkhwah said.

Officials said the curriculum will be revised in all faculties of universities.

A number of university lecturers said that quality, balance, and harmony with international norms should be considered in the development of academic curricula.



"Taking into account the

actual needs of the labor market and coordinating with global methods is one of the necessary criteria for the curricula," said Sayed Jawad Sajjadi, a university lecturer.

"We hope the process is implemented on the basis of scientific and academic

criteria," said Fazl Hadi Wazin, a university lecturer.

This comes as the ministry of higher education has banned women from attending universities until "the next announcement." The decision has triggered global reactions.

Taliban security forces rescue a national businessman in Kabul

KABUL (Khaama Press): The Taliban security officials rescued a national businessman abducted by kidnappers in the Taimani area, provincial district four of Kabul city.

After a short clash, all four criminals were killed and the businessman was safely rescued by the officials of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan in

Taimani area of the capital Kabul.

According to local people, the security personnel reached just in time and conducted a successful operation by shooting down the criminals before they get a chance to leave the area.

"I truly appreciate the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan security officials' quick operation who did not only reach in time at the scene but also save my life from the abductors," the businessman said.

Kabul's Police Chief said in a recorded audio clip to Ziyar Radio that kidnappers wanted to abduct a national businessman, who was safely rescued by the National Security Forces ending to death of the criminals.

This comes as the security situation has deteriorated throughout the county over the past couple of weeks, making life further complicated for ordinary people. Criminal incidents including suicide bombing, gunfire, target killing, and abduction of businessmen have become regular targets for criminals.

85 university professors returned to country

KABUL (Agencies): The Deputy Minister of Higher Education Dr. Latifullah Khairkhah, met with the professors of the country's universities who had traveled to Pakistan to participate in the capacity building Seminar and joint scientific programs at the invitation of the NUST University of that country.

During a meeting, the professors participating in the seminar shared details with Deputy Minister of Higher Education about the aforementioned studies and their trip to Pakistan and visiting the NUST University of that country.

They said that both institutions



are committed on sharing the scientific programs with Afghanistan.

The scientific studies seminar lasted for three weeks and about 85 professors from different universities of the country attended the program.

Kabul residents concerned over pause in issuance of passports

KABUL (TOLONews): A number of Kabul residents expressed concerns over the longtime stoppage of passports issuance, saying that they have been facing big challenges due to lack of the national documents.

The distribution of passport was stopped three months ago.

"I applied for passport even before the Ramadan, but I have not received it yet. The process of passport distribution has been stopped," said Sulaiman, a

resident of Kabul.

"The distribution of passport should begin, this is the right of every citizen," said Bilal, a resident of Kabul.

Hamidullah, a passport applicant, said he went to Kabul from the northern province of Balkh to apply for a passport but the process was stopped.

"Some say they have been waiting for one month or 20 days, but I have been waiting for two weeks, and they said my

documents have been referred," he said.

Some of the students who are seeking to study overseas have also been unable to receive their passports yet.

"Even if the distribution of passport is allowed for patients and students, it has been very slow progress. I call on the Islamic Emirate to take serious actions in this regard," Rashid said.

A spokesman for the Department of Passport,

Norullah Patman, said that the technical problems within the distribution process have yet to be addressed but efforts are underway to resume passport issuance.

"Efforts are underway in this regard. The reasons for the repeatedly stoppage of passports distribution have been varied," he said.

The issuance of passports for some certain individuals such as patients and students has been normal.

Girls' education needs a permanent solution



KABUL (Agencies): The country's acting Interior Minister Khalifa Sirajuddin Haqqani met with UNNAM envoy Markus Potzel, and Scott Smith Deputy Director for Political Affairs.

According to the Ministry of Interior, Mr. Potzel thanked the leadership of the Ministry of Interior for their cooperation and the improvement of the security

situation and shared his concerns with the Acting Minister about the education of girls and the imposition of other restrictions.

For his part, Interior Minister Haqqani said in this meeting that the leadership of the Islamic Emirate thinks for the well-being of the people and is committed to it.

He added that efforts are

being made to solve the problems and a reasonable and permanent solution is being worked on; to be consistent with Sharia rules and the culture of our people.

The UN Secretary General's special representative and his delegation met with some other senior officials of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.

No travel ban for Islamic Emirate ministers

KABUL (TOLONews): The acting minister of energy and water, Abdul Latif Mansour, who returned from a trip to Uzbekistan, said that ministers of the caretaker government are not faced with any restrictions in traveling and they can travel for humanitarian purposes.

"There hasn't been a specific restriction by the world on trips by Islamic Emirate ministers that are conducted for humanitarian purposes," he said. "If there

were any restrictions, that would have been implemented on the current trip."

Mansour said he traveled to Uzbekistan to extend the contract of the imported electricity to Afghanistan and address power shortage in Kabul and other provinces. "Based on the contract, they will provide us 440 megawatts of power," Mansour said.

The country's power distributor, Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat (DABS),

asked national and foreign investors to invest in the energy sector in Afghanistan.

"The Chamber of Investment of China's representatives arrived a while ago. They expressed interest in investment in coal-fired power," Maiwandi said.

Afghanistan imports 80 percent of its power from Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Iran. Around 20 percent of power is produced in the country.

Retirees in Kabul protest unpaid pensions



KABUL (TOLONews): Dozens of retired officials held a protest in Kabul to criticize unpaid pensions, saying they have not been paid over the past 16 months.

The rally was conducted by retirees from military and civil servants of previous governments who said they are faced with severe challenges amid freezing winter.

"There is nothing to heat our rooms. I pay 4,000 Afs for house rent and we are three families. I have my daughter in laws with me, and we have nothing to eat," said Alina, a former government employee.

The rally members

called on the Islamic Emirate to pay their pensions.

"If we say their children are affected by malnutrition, you can go and check it at their houses," said Meer Alam, a retiree.

"It has been around one and a half years since the Islamic Emirate gave us promises to pay our pensions, but we are yet to be paid," said Zabiullah, a retiree.

"We have served this country with honesty. We are all facing economic challenges and all of us have families," said Mohammad Omar, a retiree.

The Ministry of Finance said it has prepared a plan

for payment of pensions to the retirees and that they are waiting for its approval by relevant authorities.

"We have allocated around four billion Afghanis for the retirees in the (fiscal) budget of the current year. We are waiting for its approval. The payments will be the same as in the past based on accounts and their cards," said Ahmad Wali Haqqani, a spokesman for the Ministry of Finance of Afghanistan.

Based on statistics by the Ministry of Finance, at least 149,000, including 10,000 women, have not yet received their pensions for the past year.



ment Khairkhah provide necessary advice and instructions to improve their activities.

Lately, Actin Information and Culture Minister, Mullah Khairullah Khairkhah, met with the head of

Information and Culture of Kandahar, Mawlawi Noor Ahmad Saeed, in his office in Kabul.

Bilawal blames PTI chief for resurgence of TTP militancy

F.P. Report

DADU: Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari Tuesday said Tehreek-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) was being funded in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), while Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan had himself admitted reintroducing TTP militants back in the province they were repelled from.

Talking to the media in Dadu, the Foreign Minister (FM) said the PTI government freed the Army Public School (APS) attackers. "Neither the nation nor he will forgive the perpetrators of the APS attack," says Bilawal. Talking about the devastations of the floods, Bilawal said that the global community aided Pakistan amid the disaster adding that every platform, from the United Nations to the COP27 conference in Sharm-ul-Saikh, had admitted Pakistan's losses.

The PPP chief added that the rehabilitation process would speed up after January 9, adding that it was just the start of the rehab process. "Whatever they collect at the International

Donors Conference in Geneva on January 9 will be used for flood rehabilitation," said Bilawal. He said many areas of Sindh and Balochistan were still underwater, and people still needed relief goods such as blankets and clothes for winter.

Bilawal added they would provide stipends to flood-affected people in light of surveys, adding that the affected would also be given interest-free loans and allotted lands. The government would build an infrastructure that could survive such a disaster in the future. Bilawal added they could not repair such gigantic damage quickly but would hasten the rehab process after January 9. He added that they would build solar and wind energy zones under public-private partnerships in Sindh.

The FM advised the PTI chief to return to the Parliament, saying all his strategies, including two long marches, failed. "Imran's politics is harming not only him but the country too," said Bilawal. He added that they could not call for an election because

of Imran Khan's stubbornness and egocentrism.

"The PTI lawmakers claim they want to resign from the assemblies, but they disappear when the national assembly speaker summons them to verify their resignations," said the PPP Chairman. He added that the PTI chief was marching toward the capital while one-third of the country had been suffering from floods.

Talking about the recent rift with the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) over the delimitation of constituencies in Karachi and Hyderabad, the PPP leader said that they wanted to deal with them according to their agreement. He added that they had disagreements with the MQM-P and would have them in the future, but they were ready to talk to them about anything.

Bilawal said they wanted to improve the local government system and were ready to engage with every party over the issue, as the local government (LG) polls had already been postponed multiple times.

'PTI pushing country towards instability'

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Federal Minister for Planning and Development, Ahsan Iqbal has said that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) is pushing the country towards political and economic instability by doing politics of chaos.

He stated this while speaking during a meeting with Governor Punjab Muhammad Baligh ur Rehman at Governor House Lahore on Tuesday. During the meeting, the overall political situation of the country and issues of mutual interest were discussed. Ahsan Iqbal said that the constitutional order asking Punjab Chief Minister Pervaiz Elahi to take a vote of confidence was the need of the hour.

The federal minister said that the coalition government has not come into government for any political gains, but for public interest only. He said that the politics of anarchy is not in the interest of the country. He further said that PTI has done nothing but spread despair in the country.

Talking on this occasion, Muhammad Baligh ur Rehman said that those who are bent on creating instability and disorder in the country will face failure, Insha Allah. He said that the previous government took record loans, and pushed the country towards economic crisis. He said that Muslim League (N) started many public welfare projects during its tenure, which were ignored by the previous government.

The Governor Punjab said that distribution of laptops on merit to the students, establishment of technical education institutes for economic empowerment of the youth, record funding to Higher Education Commission, for higher education, establishment of first women's university for women empowerment and later many universities for the women were established during the Muslim League (N) era. He said that, Insha Allah, the journey of public service will continue.

Pakistan, Malaysia vow to boost ties

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Malaysia have reaffirmed the commitment to further strengthen their historic ties anchored in strong economic and trade cooperation. The understanding came in a telephonic conversation between Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim on Tuesday.

The Prime Minister felicitated the Malaysian counterpart on his election as the Prime Minister. The two leaders expressed satisfaction over the momentum of Pakistan-Malaysia relations and agreed on the importance of regular high-level exchanges to strengthen bilateral dialogue and cooperation. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif underscored Pakistan's desire to forge a broad-based relationship with Malaysia with robust political dialogue and trade and economic linkages. The two leaders also discussed the devastating climate-induced floods in Pakistan and the upcoming International Conference on Climate Resilient Pakistan taking place on January 09, 2023 in Geneva.

ECP servers warning to political parties

KARACHI (INP): As the lawmakers from the ruling and opposition parties continued to violate the Code of Conduct for the LG polls in Karachi and Hyderabad, the ECP issued notices and warnings to political parties on Tuesday. The relevant District Monitoring officers (DMOs) in some cases issued warnings while others were summoned to explain their position for announcing projects in UCs.

"The public office-holders including president, prime minister, chairman/deputy chairman senate, speaker/deputy speaker of an assembly, federal ministers, ministers of state, governors, chief ministers, provincial ministers, and advisers to the prime minister and the chief minister, mayor/ chairman/ Nazim, their deputies, cannot participate in the by-polls campaigns," according to ECP code of conduct.



JERUSALEM: Israeli forces shifting heavy arms and ammunition in the mountains of Golan.

President gives assent to PIMS Bill 2022

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Tuesday gave his assent to Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences Bill 2022. The bill provides for repealing the Federal Medical Teaching Institute Act 2021.

Earlier, the president, under Article 75 (1) (B) of the Constitution, had returned the bill on November 8, 2022 for reconsideration. The parliament had passed the amended bill in its joint session on December 20, 2022. The president gave his assent to the bill under Article 75 of the Constitution.

Meanwhile, the President Dr Arif Alvi on Tuesday expressed his displeasure over callous and heartless act of the Federal Urdu University of Arts, Science, and Technology (FUUAST) to withhold the issuance of a transcript and degree to a BBA student

due to procedural hiccups between the university and Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal (PBM).

While rejecting the representation against the decision of the Wafaqi Mohtasib (WM), the president directed PBM to redress the grievances of the aggrieved student. He directed FUUAST to issue the degree and transcript to the student within 15 days. The president observed that the university was well aware that the student was pursuing his education on a need-based scholarship under the Ehsaas Scholarship Programme paid by PBM directly to the University.

But instead of resolving the late fees payment issue with PBM, the FUUAST unfairly and unjustly withheld the issuance of degree and transcript to the student who had no role in the payment of fees. President Alvi upheld the Wafaqi

Mohtasib order wherein the Mohtasib had remitted the impugned matter to the PBM chairman for its resolution directly with FUUAST and notwithstanding its resolution, issue the transcript and BBA degree to the aggrieved student.

As per details, student Abad-ur-Rehman (the complainant) had preferred an appeal seeking interference of WM for issuance of the BBA degree and transcript which was withheld by FUUAST due to non-payment of outstanding dues of Rs 122,500 which was payable by PBM directly to the FUUAST without any involvement of the student. Wafaqi Mohtasib passed the order in favour of the student. The PBM, however, preferred a representation before the president against the WM's order, which was rejected by the president.

Imran stresses need for 'strong institutions'

LAHORE (INP): Former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan has asserted that strong institutions were imperative to curb corruption, saying that the country's economy can be restored only with the implementation of law.

According to details, the former premier made these remarks while addressing a seminar as Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf issued white paper on country's state of the economy. Imran Khan reiterated that political stability was a must to revive the country's 'deteriorating' economy, adding that 'transparent and immediate' elections were the only way out of the prevailing challenges.

He regretted that two political families – Sharifs and Zardaris – had plundered the country for 30

years. The PTI Chairman said he feared the direction the country was heading, recalling that there was no example of what happened in the last eight months as more than 700,000 people left the country.

Speaking about the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Imran Khan stated that approaching the IMF would cause the country discomfort, adding that if the country received loans from the Fund, it would be difficult to make independent decisions.

Referring to the economic survey, the former prime minister said that after 17 years, it was his government that delivered for the country with perfection. Talking about the exports, he said there was a dire need to resolve issues of the exporters, claiming that the former Pakistan Muslim

League-Nawaz (PML-N) government left the country in a historical deficit.

He questioned how the country can be transformed into an 'Asian Tiger' if exporters were not considered important. He slammed the coalition government, saying those involved in activities such as money laundering were now teaching the country a lesson. Imran Khan also expressed concern over the 'rising' inflation, saying that the prices of essential commodities – including petroleum products and power – have increased by up to 200 percent. He further claimed that almost 1.5 million people were left unemployed in the field of the textile sector. The former premier also expressed concern over the rupees' depreciation against the US dollar.

Iran vows to avenge Soleimani's killing

TEHRAN (Agencies): Senior Iranian officials and commanders have renewed a vow to avenge the assassination of top general Qassem Soleimani in Iraq three years ago. Soleimani, the commander of the Quds Force of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and a main architect of Iran's regional influence, was hit by a drone strike claimed by the United States shortly after touching down in Baghdad on January 3, 2020.

During events to mark the third anniversary of his death on Tuesday and in the days leading to it, a series of top figures in the Islamic Republic pledged that they remain fully committed to their promise of "harsh revenge" for the slain general. "We have not and will not forget the blood of martyr Soleimani. The Americans must know that revenge for martyr Soleimani's blood is certain, and the murderers and perpetrators will have no easy sleep," President Ebrahim Raisi told an audience of thousands in Tehran on Tuesday.

Speaking at the Grand Mosalla, where public demonstrations had been encouraged through banners across the city for

days, the president said Soleimani was a "champion of fighting terrorism and global arrogance" who "dragged the US hegemony in the region to defeat". In addition to senior Iranian authorities, a number of officials and commanders – including those from Iraq and Lebanon – that form the "axis of resistance" supported by Tehran across the region were also present at Tuesday's event.

The Iranian foreign ministry and the judiciary also vowed to continue their efforts to avenge Soleimani and hold to account perpetrators from other countries such as Israel, the United Kingdom and Germany that Iran believes assisted with the assassination. A new batch of sanctions that the foreign ministry imposed in mid-December targeted current and former UK and German officials and commanders, in addition to several entities including the UK's Royal Air Force base in Menwith Hill, North Yorkshire that was allegedly involved in the assassination.

Judiciary spokesman Masoud Setayeshi told reporters on Tuesday that the judiciary has identified 154 suspects in the case of Soleimani's assassination,

96 of whom are US citizens. To follow up on prosecuting suspects, he said the judiciary has sent letters to nine countries. Setayeshi added that prosecution notices were sent to the addresses of the 96 Americans while Iran has requested Interpol "red notices" for dozens, including former US President Donald Trump.

Trump ordered Soleimani killed, saying he was planning an "imminent" attack on US military personnel in the Iraqi capital. Iran's state television on Tuesday carried live footage from Tehran and Soleimani's hometown of Kerman, showing thousands marching while holding banners bearing his image and chanting slogans. Banners depicting Soleimani and his handwriting have been set up in Tehran and cities across the country in the past week. "Martyrdom is the medicine for my pain" was one of the messages.

Iran has been gripped by months of ongoing protests that began in mid-September after the death of Mahsa Amini following her arrest by morality police for allegedly flouting a mandatory hijab rule for women.

Imran attack case: ATC reserves verdict

GUJRANWALA (TLTP): A special court of the anti-terrorism court (ATC) in Gujranwala has reserved verdict on JIT's plea for physical remand of the prime suspect Naveed Meher in Imran Khan attack case. The prime suspect Naveed Meher was produced before a special court of the ATC Gujranwala in Imran Khan attack case. Strict security arrangements were made during his production to the court.

The TLTP learnt that the JIT formed to probe the Wazirabad attack asked the court for the fifth physical remand of the prime suspect Naveed Meher in the Imran Khan attack case. The special court of anti-terrorism court (ATC) reserved the verdict in the case.

Earlier, a special court of the anti-terrorism court (ATC) in Gujranwala granted 12-day physical remand of the prime suspect Naveed Meher in the Imran Khan attack case. It is pertinent to mention here that Imran Khan and several other PTI leaders were injured after a man opened fire near the PTI reception camp at Allahwala Chowk during the party's long march. In the shooting on PTI Chairman Imran Khan's container in Wazirabad, a party worker was killed and six people including Imran Khan were injured.

Maryam names SVP of PML-N

ISLAMABAD (INP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, who is also president of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, has appointed Maryam Nawaz as senior vice president of the party. Federal Information Minister Mariyum Aurangzeb has shared a notification on her Twitter handle, stating that Mr Sharif had announced major administrative decisions.

"Pursuant to the powers conferred under the Constitution of Pakistan Muslim League -N, the undersigned is pleased to appoint Ms. Maryam Nawaz Sharif as Senior Vice President" with immediate effect," the notification reads. "She is hereby authorized to re-organize the party at all functional tiers/levels as 'Chief Organizer,'" it added.

IHC raises objection over PTI petition

ISLAMABAD (TLTP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) has raised objection over the contempt petition filed by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) against Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and ECP members. As per details, PTI has filed a contempt plea against the chief election commissioner, and four ECP members for not holding the local government (LG) polls in Islamabad.

The TLTP learnt that the IHC Registrar's office raised the objection that how can a contempt petition be filed against the chief election commissioner. The PTI has made the chief election commissioner, four ECP members and secretaries of interior and Cabinet Division, respondents in the contempt plea.

Anti-Covid vaccination of children directed

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday directed to ensure on an emergency basis one hundred percent anti COVID-19 vaccination of children aged five to twelve. Chairing a meeting regarding COVID-19 situation in the country, the Prime Minister said screening of people at the country's borders and airports should be made more effective. He said a third party audit of the screening system should be carried out and a report be submitted to him.

Expressing satisfaction over the Covid-19 situation in the country, the Prime Minister said no death has been reported from the pandemic in Pakistan in

the last fifteen weeks which is a welcome development. He also expressed satisfaction over the low rate of Covid-19 infection but said we have to be prepared all the times. Shehbaz Sharif commended the efforts put in by all the relevant officials and NCOC to prevent the spread of Covid-19. The meeting was informed in detail about the current situation of Covid in the whole world including the region and in Pakistan, new variants of the pandemic, measures taken to prevent them and the vaccination.

It was informed that there is no apparent threat to Pakistan from the new variant of Covid-19 as ninety percent of the country's population is fully vaccinated and ninety five

percent of the population is partially vaccinated. The vaccination rate among thirty five million children aged 5 to 12 years is 25 percent, while it will be increased to 100 percent in the coming months. The average rate of infection in Pakistan is 0.2 to 0.5 percent and there has been no death from the pandemic over the last fifteen weeks.

The meeting was also informed that effective arrangements have been made at the border to prevent the spread of the new variant of COVID-19. The rate of random sampling at airports has been increased to two percent and screening of passengers has been made more effective along with fumigation of aircraft arriving from affected countries.

NIH: No case of Omicron detected so far in Pakistan

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The National Institute of Health (NIH) on Tuesday clarified that no case of Omicron's sub-variant BF.7 is detected in Pakistan so far.

According to the spokesperson of NIH, since its appearance, a total of 29 cases of XBB (Omicron) have been reported from Pakistan and made it clear that this is not the BE.7 variant which is spread in the neighboring country. Clarifying the news circulating about the new COVID variant, the spokesperson said that such news was not accurate as the reported variant in some areas of the country is XBB which is an old variant of Omicron.

Based on observations, BF.7 is more contagious than other sub-variants of Omicron but less virulent. Infection with BF.7 has a much lower risk of hospitalization and severe Covid. However, BF.7 infection

can be severe in those with high blood pressure, kidney diseases, diabetes, or other comorbidities and in those aged over their sixties. According to health experts, BF.7 is a sub-lineage of the Omicron variant – the dominant variant circulating globally of the Sars-CoV-2 coronavirus. It has a 4.4-fold higher neutralization resistance than the original D614G variant.

This means, in a laboratory setting, antibodies from a vaccinated or infected individual are less likely to destroy BF.7 than the original virus first detected in the Chinese city of Wuhan in December 2019. This sub-variant also has a shorter incubation period and a higher capacity to cause reinfection or infect even those vaccinated.

The XBB.1.5 variant of Covid is actually a sub-variant of XBB. It is made of a combination or say mutation of BA.2.75 and BA.2.10.1. BF.7 is a

BA.5.2.1.7 mutation of Omicron BA.5. The variant BF.7 has an R346T mutation in the spike protein of the virus and can evade antibodies originally derived from the Wuhan virus, particularly vaccines such as the Sinovac.

The XBB.1.5 variant is said to be more dangerous as it is more contagious than BF.7 and its cases are 56% more than BF.7. XBB.1.5 scales up to 120 percent faster than BF.7 and XBB.1.5 is not only affecting the vaccine and the body's antibodies but also weakening it. The symptoms of BF.7 infection are similar to those of other Covid-19 variants, such as fever, sore throat, runny nose and cough. Some patients may also experience diarrhoea and vomiting. While the variant may not cause severe complications, early detection and isolation of cases is crucial, because it is spread more easily.

Kyiv: A survivor rebuilds life

KYIV (Agencies): The explosion Ulvi Zulfili witnessed in the southern Ukrainian city of Mariupol made him stutter for days. In mid-March, hundreds of civilians, including children, thronged the basement of Mariupol's drama theatre, hiding from incessant Russian shelling that was killing hundreds of people a day. Even though two signs saying "children" had been drawn in metres-long letters near the theatre, a Russian fighter jet bombed it on March 16.

As many as 600 people were killed, according to Ukrainian officials and media reports. Russia denied carrying out the attack, saying Kyiv staged it from within the building. On that gloomy, cold morning, Zulfili biked to downtown Mariupol to look for formula for his friend's newborn son, whose stressed-out mother was unable to produce breast milk.

He saw how the white

theatre with marble columns was hit by a cruise missile. A mushroom of smoke and dust rose up twice as high as the nearby supermarket. He was transfixed by horror – and could not hear a sound.

"The strangest moment was when you see a picture but don't hear it," the 26-year-old told Al Jazeera. "You can't understand whether you're alive or not." "In a moment, the sound reaches you with the blast wave. It almost rips the clothes off you. And you understand that you are alive and need to run away," he said in a cafeteria, now safe and sound in Kyiv. Days after Al Jazeera interviewed him mid-December, Mariupol's Moscow-installed authorities razed what remained of the theatre.

Zulfili's stutter is now gone, but so is the life he lived in Mariupol. He arrived there from Azerbaijan at age four and can still recall moments of his early childhood – "riding

a horsie" and seeing oil derricks that made his South Caucasus homeland one of the world's oldest oil producers. But his father, Elshad, did not want his son to grow up and die in the war that scarred Azerbaijan. In the early 1990s, a conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, an Armenian-dominated enclave in Azerbaijan, became the first open war between two former Soviet republics.

Russia declared itself Armenia's "protector" and brokered a truce in 1994. But almost yearly border fighting kept interrupting one of the ex-USSR's "frozen conflicts". Elshad Zulfili opened a grocery store in Mariupol, a city of 500,000 people that seemed like a tranquil backwater west of the Russian border. The Azov Sea port was dominated by two mammoth steel factories, which employed tens of thousands of people and filled the city with smoke.