

PM's son-in-law gets bail

LAHORE (TLTP): An accountability court in Lahore has granted bail to Haroon Yusuf, son-in-law of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, till January 12 in the money laundering reference. The court granted him interim bail on the condition of submitting surety bonds of Rs500,000. It also ordered Haroon Yusuf to become part of the investigation. It also sought a report from the authorities of NAB on the next hearing.



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SOHBATPUR: Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif interacting with students after inaugurating new building of Govt Boys Secondary School, Ghulam Rasool, Jia Khan Sohbatpur, Balochistan.

PTI's white paper misleading, devoid of context, says Dar

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The economic managers of the country here on Wednesday termed the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf's (PTI) white paper on state of economy selective, misrepresented and devoid of economic context. "The PTI's presentation [white paper] is selective and misrepresented, showing misleading economic indicators," Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar told a press conference.

He was flanked by Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal, Federal Minister for Energy Khurram Dastgir Khan, Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb, and Minister of State for Finance and Revenue Ayesha Ghaus Pasha. The finance minister said the comparisons made in the white paper were incorrect and devoid of economic context.

He said the economic situation since April 2022 was strongly influenced by the legacy that the new government got from the previous regime, hence what did the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) led government received should be a denominator for comparison. "This context", he said, was totally missing in the PTI's presentation while it had

also ignored international economic situation, the commodities super-cycle, Russia-Ukraine war impacts and the catastrophic floods in the country. "These realities should have been kept in mind for making a fair analysis," he added.

Ishaq Dar said the International Monetary Fund (IMF) had predicted that one-third of the globe would be facing a serious recession problem in the year 2023 and Pakistan was no exception. The Fund had projected Pakistan's economic growth at 2.7 percent of the GDP (Gross Domestic Product). It is pertinent to mention that the PTI in its white paper on Tuesday had painted a bleak picture of the national economy.

The finance minister categorically rejected the PTI's claim of increase in prices by 100 to 200 percent for being factually incorrect. Since the PDM government took over the charge, he said, the prices of wheat increased by 33%, cooking oil 21%, pulse Masoor 19.5%, pulse Mash 35%, tomato 13.7%, petrol 47%, electricity 0.5%, and vegetable ghee 14.9%. Ishaq Dar said the PTI's claim of creating 5.5 million jobs during its government was also incorrect. The official data showed that some 3.2 million jobs were created from 2019 to 2022.

He said the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's (PML-N) previous government collected Rs 2,255 billion in its first year and Rs 3,844 bil-

lion in the last year (FY 2018). The PTI government on the other hand started its first year with negative growth in revenue collection by collecting Rs 3,829 billion while the revenue collection in its fourth year remained Rs 6,148 billion, the minister added.

He said during the first six months of the financial year 2022-23, the revenue collection increased by 17.5% to Rs 3,429 billion as compared to the same period of previous year. He also expressed the government's resolve to achieve the current year's target of Rs 7,440 billion. With respect to revenue percentage to GDP, the minister said the PML-N's last government left with revenue collection at 9.8% of GDP and the PTI government at only 9.2% of GDP in its last year.

Agriculture credit, he said, had increased from Rs 351 billion in 2013 to Rs 972 billion in 2018 while the PTI government took it to Rs 1,419 billion in its last year. "We will take the credit to Rs 1,819 billion by end of the current fiscal year," he added. He said during the PML-N government's last year (2018), trade deficit stood at Rs 30.9 billion while the PTI government left it at Rs 39 billion. Similarly, he said, the Current Account Deficit was Rs 3.1 billion in the first year of the previous PML-N government, which was brought down to Rs 19.2 billion in 2018.

Pakistan wants TTP to surrender

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Interior Rana Sanaullah Khan on Wednesday handed over a cheque amounting to Rs10 million as compensation to the family of Police Head Constable Syed Adeel Hussain, who sacrificed his life in the line of duty by intercepting a suicide bomber in the Federal Capital's I-10/4 Sector on December 23.

"Besides, the government will provide a housing unit to the family of its own choice, worth Rs 12.5 million, a full pension coupled with allowances to the martyr's widow and bear educational expenses of the children, under the Prime Minister's package," the minister said while paying tribute to the martyred policeman here at a news conference.

He said the incumbent government had fully acknowledged the services and sacrifices of Islamabad Police, which was evident from the fact that it had paid arrears amounting to Rs 1.22 billion in 'one go' to the heirs/families of the martyrs, pending for many years. In addition, the minister said, the government had

brought salaries, allowances and other facilities of the Islamabad Police personnel at par with the Punjab Police so that they could perform their duties in a more conducive environment with professional dedication.

"Now the Islamabad Police are performing their duties in a more professional way than ever. The timely and effective action of police officials did avert the Federal Capital from an eventual disaster on December 23," Rana Sanaullah said he had issued directives that a Superintendent of Police (SP) would hold a weekly sitting with the heirs of martyrs to solve their problems on priority.

He said it was unfortunate that some elements wanted to fan terror in society by spreading fake security-related threats like the attack on the Parliament House through media. Such accused had been apprehended and were being investigated. "Details of the investigation will be shared with the media after its completion in due course of time."

The minister said Shehbaz Sharif, as Punjab's chief minister, had initiated the process to set up the Counter



Terrorism Department (CTD) in the province, which had been proven effective in controlling terror incidents in the country. While condemning the recent attack on CTD officers in Khanewal, the minister said martyr Naveed Sadiq Sial had completed several daunting tasks during his duty.

"All the personnel of law enforcement agencies are playing their role in foiling terrorist attacks and their sacrifices for the motherland will not go in vain," he added. Rana Sanaullah said it was decided in the National

(Continued on Back Page)

Toll from Kyiv strike rises to 89: Moscow

MOSCOW (Agencies): The toll from a Ukrainian New Year strike in Makiivka has risen to 89, Moscow said Wednesday, after Russians gathered to mourn the troops in a rare public display of anger and grief. Russia said in the early hours of Wednesday that more bodies had been found under the rubble in the town of Makiivka in the Russian-controlled region of Donetsk and the toll had risen to 89.

The defence ministry declared that the tragedy had taken place because Russian troops had used cell phones, giving away their location to Ukrainian forces. Russia said on Monday that 63 troops had been killed, the biggest loss of life from a single strike report-

ed by Moscow since the start of the offensive in February.

"The number of our dead comrades has gone up to 89," Lieutenant General Sergei Sevryukov said in a video statement released by the defence ministry early Wednesday. More bodies had been found under the rubble, he added. Ukraine struck a temporary base in Makiivka at 12:01 am local time on January 1, using US-supplied HIMARS rocket systems, Sevryukov said. Russian President Vladimir Putin had just delivered his traditional New Year's address. The Kremlin chief hailed "our heroes" fighting in Ukraine and declared that "historical rightness is on our side." Ukraine has taken responsibility for the strike and said the toll could be much higher. Russian war correspondents said many of the victims were reservists recently mobilised into the army. The admission of the heavy losses came after the war correspondents, who have gained influence in recent months, accused Russia's top commanders of fatal incompetence.

Sevryukov said Wednesday that it was the use of cellphones by soldiers that had led to

the deadly strike. "Currently, a commission is working to investigate the circumstances of what has happened," he said. "But it is already obvious that the main reason for what has happened was the turning on and massive use by personnel of mobile phones within reach of enemy weapons contrary to the ban."

He said measures were being taken to ensure such incidents would not happen in the future, and all those responsible will be punished. The new announcement came after mourners gathered in several cities of the Volga region of Samara -- where some of the servicemen came from -- to mourn the dead. Some 200 people laid roses and wreaths in a central square in the city of Samara as an Orthodox priest recited a prayer. Soldiers also fired a gun salute at the commemoration, where some of the mourners could be seen holding flags for the ruling United Russia party. "It's very tough, it's scary. But we cannot be broken. Grief unites," Ekaterina Kolotvinkina, head of a group of army spouses, said at the ceremony.

Sevryukov also said that Russia had destroyed Ukraine's multiple launch rocket

system used in the attack on Makiivka. Russian strikes had also destroyed four more HIMARS launchers and killed 200 Ukrainian and foreign mercenaries in the town of Druzhkivka in the eastern region of Donetsk, he said. Earlier in the day Ukrainian authorities said that Russian strikes on Druzhkivka killed one person and destroyed an ice rink. The deaths sparked heavy criticism in Russia of the army's senior command, including from nationalist commentators favourable to the military intervention in Ukraine. There have been reports that the servicemen were quartered in an unprotected building which was destroyed because munitions were stored on the premises and detonated in the strike. Russian war correspondents have accused Russia's top commanders of not learning from past mistakes and seeking to shift the blame on the troops.

The Telegram account Rybar, which has around a million followers, said it was "criminally naive" for the army to store ammunition next to sleeping quarters. But much of the criticism was focused on the incompetence of Russia's top brass and not President

Vladimir Putin who sent troops to Ukraine on February 24 last year.

Putin has not yet reacted publicly to the Makiivka strike, which comes during a holiday season before Orthodox Christmas that many Russians spend with their families. At the gathering in Samara, Kolotvinkina said she had asked her husband to "avenge" the victims. "We will crush the enemy together. We are left with no choice," she told mourners. A little-known group, dubbed Soldiers' Widows of Russia, urged Putin to announce general mobilisation.

Ukraine said it had faced waves of Russian drone and missile attacks since New Year's Eve, mainly targeting energy and other critical infrastructure. On Tuesday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said he had spoken by phone with the leaders of Britain, Norway and the Netherlands and pointed to "the risks of escalation on the front". The hardest fighting is raging around the city of Bakhmut in eastern Ukraine -- a location with little strategic importance that Russian forces led by the mercenary group Wagner have been trying to capture for months.

PML-N MNA gets bail

LAHORE (TLTP): An anti-corruption court in Lahore has granted bail to PML-N MNA Chaudhry Muhammad Ashraf in a land fraud case. Earlier, the court had reserved its verdict on the PML-N MNA Chaudhry Muhammad Ashraf's bail plea in a land fraud case. The TLTP learnt that Ashraf got bail against surety bonds of Rs100,000. The PML-N MNA was sent to jail on judicial remand by the district and sessions.

Women become a symbol of courage, says Marriyum

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Wednesday urged the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) to initiate legal action against those elements who were involved in the character assassination of female actresses on the social media networking sites.

The minister, in a news statement, strongly condemned the campaign against the female actresses. "The entire society must condemn those who are promoting the culture of such malicious campaigns aimed at character assassination and spreading insolence and incivility."

Marriyum said the artists were not only assets of the country, but also its identity at the international level as they earned a status in society through their sheer hard work and got stardom after facing many challenges. She regretted that the character assassination of a woman got started whenever she achieved a sublime status either in journalism, politics, art or any other fields. The women became target of such smear campaigns just due to their gender.

Instead of acknowledging women's struggle, capabilities and hard work, she regretted, some elements were trying to discredit them. The women had become a symbol of courage and determination and such smear campaigns would not stop them from attaining successes. "The mentally retarded people" only cared about the honour of their own mothers and sisters, but not of the others, she said. The way some persons abused others for a difference of opinion, launched vile attack on women and involved in disrespecting & harassing others' mothers and sisters, showed how they themselves had been brought up, she added.

PTI chief moves LHC against ECP

LAHORE (TLTP): Former prime minister and Chairman Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Imran Khan has moved the Lahore High Court (LHC) against the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP).

PTI Chairman Imran Khan filed a petition in the LHC against the election commission's proceedings to remove him as party chief. The TLTP learnt that in his petition, he stated that the ECP while acting beyond its jurisdiction, was trying to remove him from party chairmanship.

The petition stated that the ECP illegally issued a notice to remove him from the position of PTI chief. The ECP started its legal proceedings on Dec 7, 2022.

Nonetheless, the PTI chairman has declared all his assets before the commission, the petition added. The petitioner requested the court to suspend notice sent to him by the ECP and also order the commission to halt any proceedings against him till the final decision of the court.

Rehabilitation to cost billions of rupees: PM

Shehbaz optimistic of civilised society's support at Geneva conference; announces 12 Danish Schools for Balochistan

F.P. Report

SOHBATPUR: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday expressed the hope that civilized societies would come forward to support the reconstruction and rehabilitation of flood-hit Pakistan at the International Conference on Climate Resilient Pakistan scheduled to be held in Geneva on January 9.

The prime minister, while addressing a public gathering here after the inauguration of reconstructed Government Boys Secondary School of Kili Jia Khan, said he was constantly contacting the leadership of the friendly countries to invite them to the conference.

"Yesterday, I talked to Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim ... He assured of sending a delegation to the conference. He will also join through Zoom," he said and mentioned his telephonic interactions with the leaders of Turkey, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) for the purpose. The prime minister said he would co-chair the moot with United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

However, he said, the government and the people

Govt to support modern education at seminaries

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday said that the government would extend its maximum support to the seminaries to help them impart education in accordance with modern-day needs.

The prime minister, in a meeting with a delegation of Ittehad-e-Tanzeemat-e-Madaris, also assured them for providing maximum administrative autonomy to the seminaries and easing their registration process. Lauding the services of the seminaries for religious education, he said that around five million students were studying there free of charge. The seminaries also teach the students to memorise the Holy Quran besides playing their active role to protect Pakistan's interests.

He said half of the students enrolled in seminaries were girls and thousands of them were orphans. The students were also getting free books and education at the seminaries. Calling the seminaries Islamic or Pakistani NGOs, the prime minister said the government desired to extend its support to them in their social services.

of Pakistan would have to put in their efforts for rehabilitation. The government, he added, had already distributed Rs100 billion among the flood-affected people through BISP (Benazir Income Support Programme), but more funds were still needed to pay compensation for one million houses destroyed by the flood and many people were yet awaiting assistance for their rehabilitation.

The prime minister, who earlier unveiled the plaque of the newly built school building, announced to develop the facility at par with the Danish Schools of Punjab. He had committed to inaugurate the upgraded school on March 23, to be equipped with information technology facilities, including e-library, solar energy and playgrounds. He also announced the construction of 12 Danish Schools across Balochistan to provide equal educational facilities to the poor children of the province.

Tourism to create employment: KP CM

Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mahmood Khan on Wednesday paid a day long visit to district Swat where he participated as the chief guest in the passing out parade of the first batch of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tourism Police and distributed shields amongst the police personnel who achieved prominent positions in the training. He also attended and addressed the Prize Distribution Ceremony of the Sports Festival 2022-23 which was held by the Elementary & Secondary Education department. 37 different games were organized in which 56000 students participated from all over the province.

The Chief Minister during his visit laid the foundation stone for the Khapal Kor Nursing & Health Science College which is being established under Khapal Kor Foundation. The provincial government has provided a grant of Rs 150 million for the project.

The Chief Minister also performed the groundbreaking of Paraplegic Center in Barikot. The project will be completed at an estimated cost of Rs 1.38 billion which will consist of 110 bedded ward, 40 private rooms, Physical Therapy OPD, Pathology Lab, Pharmacy, Pediatric Rehabilitation unit and other allied facilities.

Addressing the groundbreaking ceremony of Nursing and Health Science College, the Chief Minister said that free educational facilities will be imparted to orphan students in the proposed nursing college. The Chief Minister said that his government is working for the welfare of the vulnerable segment of the society as per the vision of chairman PTI Imran Khan. He said that Imran Khan has gone all out to help and facilitate the venerable segment of the society. Shaukat Khan Hospital is no doubt a land mark achievement which is providing state of the art

treatment facilities to the cancer patients. Besides, he launched Ehsaas program under which multiple welfare measures have been initiated.

Later on, in the passing out ceremony of the first batch of Tourism Police, the chief minister congratulated 173 passed-out police personnel and hoped that they will play proactive role in facilitating tourists in the province. The Chief Minister said that introducing Tourism Police Force is a unique initiative, with the purpose to provide a peaceful, safe and conducive environment to the tourists coming to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He made it clear that the Tourism Police will be different from the traditional police adding that its basic responsibility is to protect tourists at tourist destinations.

Touching upon the other tourism related initiatives, the Chief Minister said that the provincial government is working to develop tourism as an industry. The steps undertaken by his government to this effect will not only attract national and international tourists towards the scenic sites of the province but also create employment opportunities for the local people and will also help in portraying the soft image of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the world. The Chief Minister said that the provincial government has increased the budget of the tourism sector manifold. The initiatives taken by the provincial government have started yielding positive results as the government had generated a revenue of Rs 66 billion from the tourism sector last year.

Criticizing the poor policies of the incumbent federal government, the chief minister said that the current situation of law and order in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is due to the incompetent imported government at centre. The Defense Minister of the Federal Government is a non-serious person who is criticizing our police and CTD just to cover up their incompetence and injustice.

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Governor discusses problems of KP varsities with VCs

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ghulam Ali called on Wednesday convened a meeting with Vice Chancellors (VCs) of provincial public sector universities here at the Governor House and discussed financial and administrative problems being faced by the universities.

All the Vice-Chancellors involved in the conference discussed the problems faced by the universities, restriction on appointments and improvement of educational quality and presented suggestions.

The Governor said that the purpose of the meeting was not only to know their problems and the overall situation of the education system in the universities

but also to know the overall situation of the education system. A consultation was held for the improvement and especially for the provision of educational facilities to the students.

The Governor directed VCs to get prior permission from his office for any need based jobs in administration with the need and explanation in writing.

The Governor said that in the second phase he would hold a conference with the vice chancellors of other public universities after which a committee would be formed regarding the opinions and suggestions of all the universities and an action plan would be prepared.

“We all have to set up

such a higher education system through mutual consultation in which we can provide quality education to the youth of the province so that they cannot only make a name for themselves in their field but also become a source of pride for the country and the nation,” he remarked.

Representatives of the Higher Education Department, Finance Department, Establishment Department, Higher Education Commission were also present in the Vice Chancellors’ Conference while former Provincial Secretary Interior Dr. Syed Akhtar Ali Shah, Adnan Jalil and Hafiz Abdul Ghafoor also attended the conference on special invitation.

‘PTI pushing KP towards economic degradation’

PESHAWAR (APP): Provincial General Secretary JUI-F, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Maulana Atta-ul-Haq Darwais has said that by following the footsteps of the PTI chief Imran Khan, the Chief Minister KP Mahmood Khan is pushing the province towards economic degradation.

In a reaction to the statement of the KP Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtu-

nkhwa here on Wednesday, the JUI-F leader stated that the out-rightly of reconciliatory policy by the PTI chief has played havoc with the national economy.

He said that beside polarization, the dissolution of the provincial assembly and confrontation with the federal government is not understandable.

He said that those who have committed corruption,

nepotism, loot and plunder during the period of last 9 years rule in the province, should be ashamed over their deeds.

He said that by committing corruption to the tune of billions of rupees in BRT and Malam Jaba scams, the PTI government in the province has triggered a curse of price-hike against the people of the province.

QWP attributes flour crisis to poor PTI policies

PESHAWAR (APP): The Provincial Chairman, Qaumi Watan Party (QWP), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sikandar Hayat Khan Sherpao has expressed concern over flour crisis and attributed the unbridled increase in the prices of the commodity in the province to poor policies of the PTI government.

Talking to various delegations here on Wednesday,

he said that as compared to other provinces, flour prices in KP are higher and 20-kg bags are being sold at the rate of Rs.2600/-.

He said that due to incompetence of the provincial government of PTI, the province is once again facing a flour crisis. He asked the PTI government to abandon its tradition of holding others responsible for their own

misdeeds, saying that if Punjab is not supplying flour where the PTI has its own government.

Sikandar Hayat Khan Sherpao reminded that the provision of flour to the people at subsidized rate is the responsibility of the provincial government and instead of escaping from performing; it should fulfill its constitutional obligations.



PESHAWAR: Provincial Minister for Health and Finance Taimur Saleem Jhagra presiding over a meeting.

95th birth anniversary of Bhutto observed

PESHAWAR (APP): PPP Peshawar chapter on Wednesday observed 95th birth anniversary of party’s founder chairman and former Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto with great zeal and enthusiasm and recalled his services, struggle, ideology and sacrifices for the people and country.

On the occasion collective prayers were offered for the departed souls of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Benazir Bhutto and other party leaders and workers.

Speaking on the occasion former president of PPP Peshawar Muhammad Humayun Khan said that Zulfikar ’s struggle, theory and sacrifices are unparalleled and eternal.

He was the leader of the people, who laid the foundation for making Pakistan’s politics, economy and state friendly for the first time, PPP KP.

He said that Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was a great benefactor of Pakistan, a hero of the Islamic world and a world leader.

He said the judicial killing of Bhutto was to cut the aorta of national harmony, economic development and social growth of Pakistan. Asif Ali Zardari and Bilawal Bhutto would complete the unfinished mission of the Bhutto.

HMC reveals annual report

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: As many as 13, 500, 00 patients in MTI-HMC including 390, 000 in Institute of Kidney Disease (IKD) and 60, 000 patients in Burn and Plastic Surgery center received medical treatment in 2022, said an annual report being released.

The media department of HMC while sharing details said that more than 800,000 patients were brought to HMC’s accident and emergency department, while 30,000 Afghans benefited from the health facilities at the hospital.

As per the administration, 550,000 people received OPD while 40,000 people received treatment through Sehat Sahulat Program, on which more than one billion 280 million were spent, it added.

The report further stated that 102, 507 patients were admitted in HMC Peshawar for provision of the various medical facilities while more than 500,00 surgeries were performed, including more than 200, 00 major surgeries.

According to the report 30 percent of patients were referred to HMC from other hospitals of the province, including the private hospitals of Peshawar for better treatment, the report stated.

Apart from the Sehat Sahulat program, the hospital provided free medicines worth 400 million rupees during the year 2022.

It may be noted that HMC is the only public sector hospital in the province to provide diagnostic facilities through 1.5 Tesla MRI machines and in 2022 advanced CT scan and 3D mammogram were installed to further improve diagnosis.

The report added that providing cardiology services during 2022 some 400 open heart surgeries, 4428 angiography and 2086 angioplasty performed while the facility of heart link was introduced in CRC through which the treatment facility is being provided to patients through video link in Chitral. Furthermore, 5 cath labs and modular operation theaters provided facilities to cardiac patients throughout the year.

Institute of Kidney Diseases (IKD) being a specialized hospital for kidney diseases, facilitated 390,000 patients including 27,552 dialysis procedures. Similarly, 60, 000 patients were treated in the Burn and Plastic Surgery Unit, of which 20, 000 received burns treatment and 60, 000 underwent plastic surgery services.

Amir Muqam meets Governor

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali called on the advisor to the Prime Minister Engineer Amir Muqam at the latter’s residence.

The political and law and order situation of the province was discussed in detail. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister’s statements are unnecessary propaganda against the federal government and the worsening law and order situation in the province was discussed.

The advisor and governor agreed to decide on a common course of action.

Amir Muqam later held a Khuli Kacheri at his residence and listened to the problems of the people and held meetings with Muslim League and coalition leaders from different districts of the province.

He met the provincial president of Pakistan People’s Party Najamuddin Khan, parliamentary leader of Muslim League-N in KP Assembly Sardar Mohammad Yousuf, member of provincial assembly Jamsheed Khan Momand, Nasir Kamal Khan from Lucky Marwat and his brothers met many leaders.

While talking to the delegations, he said that the false face of Imran Khan is now being exposed in front of the people. He said that Imran Khan has caused irreparable damage to the entire country especially Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He directed the party workers and officials to speed up public contact movement.

PHC stops transfer of UET funds

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court (PHC) has stopped transfer of funds as well as changes in project and sites of University of Engineering and Technology (UET) Dir campus, on Wednesday.

The counsel for petitioner Malik Muhammad Ajmal Khan Advocate informed that establishment of UET Dir campus was approved in 2016 while 96 Kanal and 10 Marla land was acquired for the desired project but no progress is seen till today.

The counsel further informed that in 2016 classes of UET Dir campus was announced to be held at Govt. College of Management Sciences Wari while 2023 is started but no stone is turned on Dir campus construction despite current government inaugurated the project in 2018.

The counsel Malik Muhammad Ajmal Khan Advocate argued that now provincial government is diverting UET Dir campus funds to another project while requested for stoppage of transferring funds.

PHC’s single bench comprised of Justice Dr. Khurshid Iqbal has stopped transfer of UET Dir Campus funds to other projects and adjourned further hearing till date to be fixed.

PHC stops transfer of UET funds

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly noted that climate change has taken a dangerous form and a lot of effort is needed to deal with it.

In the meeting, useful suggestions were made to promote the growth of wildlife and solve the problems of the employees.

The committee members expressed resentment for not taking them into confidence about the recruitment of class-IV officials, workshops, seminars and plantation campaigns and other necessary events.

In the meeting, suggestions were given to remove the complaints and concerns of the needy people by providing permits for



PESHAWAR: Advisor to Prime Minister Engr. Amir Muqam meeting with Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali.

Govt decides to establish CFCs at VC and NC level

PESHAWAR (APP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Local Government and Rural Development Department on Wednesday decided to establish Citizen Facilitation Centers (CFCs) at the village councils (VCs) and neighborhood councils (NHCs) level throughout the province including the merged districts.

Under this scheme, apart from birth, marriage and death certificates, all municipal facilities will be available and provided from one place of VC or NHC office as per the one-window operation policy of the provincial government.

In this regard, a joint meeting of Local Government Department and

NADRA officials was held under the chairmanship of Secretary Local Government and Rural Development Syed Zaheerul Islam Shah, at the Local Government Secretariat Peshawar, wherein the above mentioned centers would be connected with the database of NADRA relating to the provision of municipal and all other facilities.

The meeting took stock of all matters and issues for early implementation of this scheme in detail and some necessary decisions were also taken.

The Local Government Secretary revealed that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has started the process of digitization of all

government affairs and services, which is being implemented rapidly and its aim is to ensure the provision of all kinds of facilities and services to the people at their doorsteps.

He said that due to these government initiatives, very soon any citizen will be able to get the services and facilities of the provincial government with in the blink of an eye by just clicking a finger on personal mobile phone and will not bother in future to go to different government offices for his necessary works like in the past and waiting for weeks or months therein.

He said that now the services of local government department and rural

development will be available online and all citizens will be able to utilize certifications and other LG services of local government department.

The Local Government Secretary however hoped that the NADRA authorities would cooperate with the Local Government Department in implementing the scheme and plan of setting up Facilitation Centers at Village and Neighborhood Council level as soon as possible so that all government facilities related to the government departments are available to the people at their doorstep level and thus the dream of a welfare state becomes a realization in the real sense, he concluded.

Development, protection of forests areas: Body directs department to take serious steps

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Standing Committee for Environment department on Wednesday directed the department to take serious steps for development and protection of forests areas to mitigate the effects of climate change.

The committee meeting held here under the chairmanship of MPA Shafiq Sher Afridi and attended by members of the committee MPAs Muhammad Khan, Muhammad Shafiq Afridi, Mirkalam Khan, Sajida Hanif, Madiha Nisar and Sumi Falknaz along with the concerned officers of the Department of Environment, Forests and Wild-

life, Finance, Law and Assembly noted that climate change has taken a dangerous form and a lot of effort is needed to deal with it.

In the meeting, useful suggestions were made to promote the growth of wildlife and solve the problems of the employees.

The committee members expressed resentment for not taking them into confidence about the recruitment of class-IV officials, workshops, seminars and plantation campaigns and other necessary events.

In the meeting, suggestions were given to remove the complaints and concerns of the needy people by providing permits for

the proper use of wood at the local level and to prevent illegal hunting and illegal forest cutting.

In the meeting, it was also decided to visit Bannu, DI Khan Sheikh Badin and North Waziristan to review the forests, environment and wildlife development and protection, while the members of the assembly were informed about the forest department employees risk alliance, billion tree project, professional allowance.

On this occasion, the chairman of the committee appreciated the government’s projects like Pollution Prevention, Billion Tree Project and Climate Change Policy 2022-23.

DC chairs meeting IDPS

PESHAWAR (APP): Deputy Commissioner Peshawar Shafi Ullah Khan on Wednesday chaired a high level meeting on Intra District Performance Scorecard (IDPS) and assessed intra district performance on key education for the month of September, October and November, 2022.

Additional Deputy Commissioner Saniya Safi, Additional Deputy Commissioner (F&P) Naveed Akbar, District Education Officers (Male/Female), Assistant Director (IT) Asif Wahab, SDEOs, circle ASDEOs, SRSP staff and others participated in the meeting.

Inclusive Education Officer EHS Project Almas Khan gave a presentation to the participants and informed them about the progress of various indicators. The objectives of the scorecard was to assess intra district performance on key education indicators in line with targets set for the year under district education plans, introduce reward and penalty mechanisms to encourage better performance and to promote intra district learning to accelerate performance.

At the end of the meeting certificates were awarded to the top performers and low performers were directed to work-hard and improve their shortcomings.

Minister LG congratulates PPC cabinet

PESHAWAR (APP): Provincial Minister for Local Government, Elections and Rural Development, Sardar Faisal Amin Gandapur on Wednesday heartily congratulated the newly elected office bearers of Peshawar Press Club (PPC).

He expressed hope that the PPC new cabinet would not only work for the welfare of the journalist community but the reformation of social problems and the identification of public grievances while maintaining the traditions of the press club and the media in KP.

“Out media will continue helping out government and will fully cooperate in solving issues of the poor masses”, he maintained.

In the same way, he further expressed the hope that the journalist community will not be stingy in highlighting the candid measures and poor-friendly policies of our government for the overall development and prosperity of the people, and even will play the role of our vanguard in this mission, he added.

42 rehabilitated drug addicts handed over to families

PESHAWAR (APP): Under the second phase of the drug-free Peshawar campaign led by Commissioner Peshawar Division Riaz Khan Mehsood, another 42 rehabilitated and fully recovered addicts after 3 months of treatment were handed over to their families here on Wednesday.

On the special instructions of Commissioner Peshawar Division Riaz Khan Mehsood, a ceremony was held at the Rehabilitation Center Anjuman Social Welfare Center Peshawar, wherein Assistant Commissioner Political Gul Rehman Marwat was the chief guest.

The administrator of the rehabilitation centre and well-known psychiatric Dr. Khawaja Yunus, the families of the 42 recovered persons participated in the ceremony.

Speaking on the occasion, the chief guest urged the families to take special care of the recovered persons and ensure that he does not fall back into addiction.

She advised the families to immediately contact the Drug Control Room in case of any problem so that they do not relapse into addiction.

Dr Khawaja Yunus, Assistant Commissioner Uzza Arshad and others also addressed the event.

One arrested for filling Fongas in vehicles

District administration Peshawar sealed a gas centre for filling Fongas in vehicles on Wednesday.

According to details, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Peshawar, Shafiullah Khan has received a tip that fongas are being filled in vehicles in Board Bazaar,

which prompted him to direct the Area Magistrate to take immediate action.

In this connection, Additional Assistant Commissioner Syeda Zainab Naqvi inspected Board Bazaar wherein Kainat Gas Centre was found filling Fongas in vehicles. The proprietor of the business was arrested from the spot and the shop was also sealed.

Speaking on the occasion, AAC Syeda Zainab Naqvi said that filling Fongas in vehicles is highly risky and can become a cause of explosion any time. She said the arrested owner of the business will face legal proceedings.

DC Peshawar has directed all administrative officers to inspect gas centres and shops in their areas of jurisdiction and take legal action against those filling Fongas in the vehicles.



PESHAWAR: Provincial Spokesperson of ANP Samar Bilour presenting a bouquet to newly elected president of Peshawar Press Club. — F.P. photo



In brief

Police seize 36 kg Hashish Amjad Ali Afridi

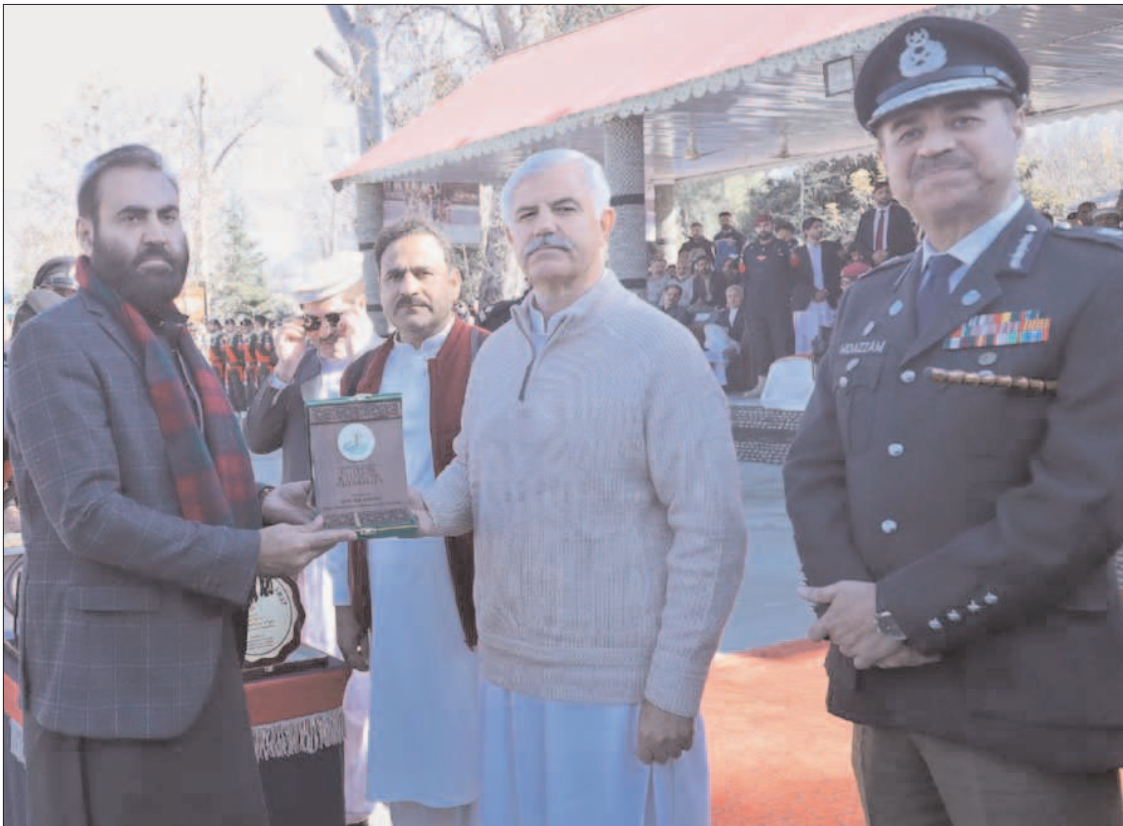
JAMRUD: District Khyber Police have seized 36 kilograms of hashish and five kilograms of heroin and arrested two alleged smugglers in two separate operations against narcotics smugglers, said a press release issued here on Wednesday. According to details on the directives of the District Police Officer (DPO) Khyber, Imran Khan, a vigorous crackdown on narcotics sellers and smugglers is continued in the district. In this connection, on a tip the Station House Officer (SHO), Jamrud Police Station, Khalid Khan recovered 36 kilograms of hashish from a motorcar bearing Registration No.KTA 5333 and arrested an alleged accused Zewar Shah. In another similar check in the jurisdiction of the same police station, Police have recovered 5 kilogram of heroin from a Suzuki Pickup No.N-5113 and arrested the accused identified as Bilal. Further investigations in both cases were in progress.

Three killed as cars collide

SAHIWAL (INP): Poor visibility led to the collision of 4 cars near Qadiurabad Toll Plaza in Sahiwal, killing three people and injuring five others. "Due to dense fog, many vehicles collided with each other near Qadirabad toll plaza," the police said. The deceased also included women and children, police say. On being informed of the accident, a team of Rescue 1122 reached the spot, provided first aid to the injured and shifted them to a nearby hospital. Punjab Minister Chaudhry Parvez Elahi expressed grief over the unfortunate incident and sought a report from the authorities concerned. He ordered legal action against the bus driver at fault for the accident and the provision of the best medical aid for the injured. It is pertinent to mention here that foggy weather conditions and poor visibility continued to disrupt road operations across the country.

Couple suffocated to death

WAZIRABAD / OKARA (INP): A couple was asphyxiated while sleeping without turning off the geyser in Muhammad Nagar area of Wazirabad on Wednesday. The police and Rescue officials reached the spot and investigated the matter. It was learnt that the couple, Muhammad Azam and Fehmida, fell asleep without turning off the geyser and they died due to suffocation caused by gas leakage. Two people died while three were injured as a trailer, mini-Mazda and a bus collided with each other on the National Highway in Okara due to poor visibility caused by thick layer of fog on Wednesday morning. Three ambulances and rescue vehicles of Rescue 1122 immediately reached the accident site after receiving information. According to rescue officials, the collision left two people dead on the spot while three people suffered injuries. The rescue teams provided first aid to the injured and shifted them to DHQ City Hospital for further treatment. One of the deceased was identified as Khanke Pattoki resident Muhammad Kashif s/o Ashraf while the other, who was about 30-years-old, could not be identified. The rescue teams also removed the dead bodies of the deceased to DHQ City Hospital after completing legal formalities.



MINGORA: KP Secretary for Tourism and Culture Muhammad Tahir Orakzai presenting a shield to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mahmood Khan during Tourism Police Passing Out Parade.

Ulema urged to play role against social evils

Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: District Police Officer Kohat Abdul Rauf Babar Qaisrani on Wednesday emphasized upon Ulema to play a joint role against social evils and maintaining peace in the district.

A delegation of religious scholars from throughout the district led by District Khateeb Shafiullah met the DPO at his office. In the meeting, issues of mutual interest and increasing bilateral relations and cooperation were discussed in detail.

District Police Chief Abdul Rauf Babar Qaisrani urged the participants of the delegation of prominent Ulema to play their role in the reformation of the society. He said that the goal of the police and the Ulema is the same, so the responsibility of reforming society is also imposed on them. The DPO said that the purpose of the meeting with the religious scholars is to eliminate social evils and to protect the future of the new generation from immoral gatherings.

Bid to smuggle narcotics foiled; two peddlers arrested: District police on Wednesday apprehended two drug peddlers and recovered 116 gram ICE drug and 4415 gram hashish from their custody.

SHO City Sohail Shah along with his police teams conducted raid in Sawalakh graveyard area and confiscated 1115 gram hashish from a drug peddler Sajjad while in another crackdown drug seller Munib Khan was nabbed along with 116 gram ICE and 3300 gram hashish. Police registered cases and started investigation.

Snow festival concluded

F.P. Report

CHITRAL: Chitral Snow Festival 2023 has concluded with enthusiasm in which both male and female teams from various educational institutions participated in large number, on Wednesday.

According to details, teams of male and female students from various educational institutions of Chitral participated in the festival. The final match of the event was played between Bonny Environmental Academy and Purwak Academy, Lower Chitral. On this occasion, an official from the Canadian High Commission performed the duties of umpiring for the final match. Prizes were distributed to the players who performed well in the closing ceremony.

DPO assumes charge

F.P. Report

WANA: Newly posted District Police Officer (DPO) South Waziristan, Shabir Hussain Marwat has taken charge of his office on Wednesday.

After assuming charge, he paid an emergency visit to Sub-Division Wana Headquarters and issued directives to police jawans and also inspected security arrangements for the anti-polio campaign.

Talking to police officers and jawans, he said that no compromise would be made on security for the polio eradication campaign and fool-proof security would be ensured for the polio teams.

Probe into audio leaks demanded

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The Jamiat Ulema Islam Fazl Lower Dir chapter on Wednesday demanded the federal government to probe into the alleged audio leaks against the former premier and take actions against him without any further delay if the allegations proved true. Speaking at a news conference at the Timergara press club the JUI-F provincial leader Qazi Ayazud Din, district chief Sirajud Din, general secretary Haji Javed Iqbal and others said the audio leaks were leading the young generation toward volatility.

About the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government they said the province had been facing the worst kind of mismanagement as the PTI government had been unable to utilize its funds properly. The JUI-F leaders said the KP government issued no funds to the tehsil governments in the province in order to prove them unable in the eyes of the people.

They said the provincial government was interfering in the affairs of local government. About the local issues they pointed out that the people of Dir had been facing civic problems like clean drinking water,

incomplete development projects and excessive power outages.

They also demanded the federal government to lift the ban on provision of gas connection and closure of CNG stations. They said that most of the ongoing development projects in the district like Talash bypass road, Koto Hydro power station and link roads had been incomplete for years due to lack of funds.

They said that the provincial government had failed to overcome the artificial price hike in the province due to weak administrative setup. The JUI-F leaders also raised fingers on the distribution and quality of subsidized flour and said that blue eyed political workers were being benefitted. They said the JUI-F would start mass contact if the government did not take notice of their demands.

Youth killing case traced: The Lower Dir on Wednesday claimed to have arrested five accused allegedly involved in the killing of a youth on the Chakdara bypass road within 48 hours. Briefing local journalists at the Chakdara police station the district police officer Ikramullah said the youth Muhammad

Izhar s/o Muhammad Ami, a resident of Naway Kaly Batkhela was killed for an honour related case occurred in the Daro village of Maidan some days ago. The DPO clarified that it was not a robbery case but the deceased had been killed in the name of family honour.

He said that a police team comprised of SP investigation Mushtaq Ahmad, DSP Farooq Jan, DSP Amjad Khan and SHO Chakdara Muhibullah Khan worked professionally on technical grounds and arrested the accused identified as Imadullah, Ziaullah, Asmatullah, Inamullah and Liaquat Ali, all residents of Maidan.

The DPO said that a girl was killed in the name of honour in the Daro Maidan village on suspicion that she had illicit relation with the deceased Muhammad Izhar. He said the 30 bore pistol and the car used during the crime were also recovered from the arrested accused. He said the dead body of the victim girl would be exhumed for autopsy for further investigations. He said that a case under section 302, 324, 311 ppc had been registered against the arrested accused.

Anti-car-lifting cell Mardan recovers 24 vehicles

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Police station Sadar and anti-car lifting cell conducted successful operations, recovered 24 stolen vehicles worth crores of rupees and arrested two suspects.

Anti-car-lifting cell Mardan recovered 20 stolen vehicles worth crores of rupees from different provinces of the country. In which 13 vehicles from Punjab province, 02 vehicles from Islamabad, 01 vehicle from Azad Kashmir and 04 tampered vehicles are included. Recovered vehicles will be referred to

their rightful owners after completion of legal proceedings.

Similarly (City Circle) Sadar Police Station under the supervision of DSP Adnan Azam and under the leadership of SHO Abdus Salam Khan, two suspects of the inter-provincial car theft gang, Muhammad Farooq son of Abdul Haq Residents Khawaja Town Mardan.

And Nawes son Zulfikar Residents Mosam Korona Par Hoti Mardan was arrested during the interrogation on his identification and 04 stolen motor cars were recovered from differ-

ent places of Punjab province including other districts.

In this regard, DPO Mardan Haroon Rasheed Khan, while giving details to the media press conference, said that the arrested accused had stolen vehicles from Punjab province. In various bargains of Malakand district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, they used to sell stolen vehicles to simple citizens by deceiving them as non-customs paid vehicles. The investigation of the arrested accused is going on, from which more important revelations are expected.

Rickshaw drivers hold strike against closure of CNG

F.P. Report

NOWSHERA: Rickshaw Drivers Union (RDU) observed strike against closure of Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) which has compelled more than 80 thousand drivers for starvation, on Wednesday.

RDU president along with cabinet claimed that closure of CNG not only effected rickshaw drivers but whole industry is collapsed because thousands of

mechanics and daily wagers became unemployed. RDU further argued that the drivers are guardians of their families and now their livelihood is at risk.

RDU argued competent authorities to reopen CNG sector or provide alternate employment opportunities for rickshaw drivers for their livelihood. RDU threatened that if their demanded will not fulfilled then they will be compelled to arrange protest on larger scale.

Islamia Varsity announces admission in 11 disciplines

Saqib Mushtaq

BAHAWALPUR: Pro Vice-Chancellor Islamia University of Bahawalpur Prof. Dr. Naveed Akhtar, Dean Faculty of Pharmacy and Faculty of Medicine and Allied Health Sciences said that admissions are going on in 11 academic programs in both faculties during spring admission.

He said that the Faculty of Medicine and Allied Health Sciences was established in recent years according to the vision of Vice Chancellor Engr. Prof. Dr. Athar Mahboob. After establishing this faculty, the Islamia University of Bahawalpur has gained a

unique position in the field of allied health sciences among universities across the province.

The Islamia University of Bahawalpur is world-renowned in the field of pharmacy. The University Nursing College was established on direction of the Vice Chancellor and since its inception has been one of the best nursing colleges in the country.

All departments of both faculties have experienced teachers with Ph. D and laboratories are also equipped with modern equipment. He said that all these educational programs are very popular in the job market and graduates of these fields are in

high demand both domestically and abroad.

These programs include BS Human Nutrition and Dietetics, Doctor of Physical Therapy, BS Medical Laboratory Technology, BS Forensic Science, BS Public Health, Certificate in Health Professional Education, Diploma in Cupping Therapy, Post Graduate Diploma in Alternative Medicine and Health Products Manufacturing, Post Graduate Diploma in Acupuncture and Pain Management and Post Graduate Diploma in Aesthetic Health Sciences. At the moment, the spring admission campaign is in full swing in these fields.



SHANGLA: KP Minister for Labour and Parliamentary Affairs Shaukat Yousafzai addressing a gathering at Shahpur.

Status of girls' education in merged districts of erstwhile Fata

Arshad Wazir

EDUCATION is a fundamental right of every citizen. If it is so, then who is responsible for the miserable condition of the female literacy rate in the whole Pashtun tribal areas especially in Waziristan? According to the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the government has to make sure that every citizen gets an opportunity to educate himself and contribute to the development of a society.

Here the question arises that, what proper measures are taken by government to ensure girls education in the mentioned area. Sadly said, that the government has failed not only to build quality educational institutions but also failed to provide an enabling environment where parents feel encouraged to send their daughters to school.

It is not the case that they do not want to go to school, but

they are compelled by prevailing circumstances to bury their dreams. It was more than shocking when the female students of Waziristan finally broke all shackles in the shape of a protest for education, a fundamental human right. On the 8th of November, girls of GDC Wana recorded the first-ever protest by females in the history of Waziristan. Having different slogans in their hand they warned not only the government but also the locals, saying, "Education is our basic right and we will snatch it, if not given".

It is, I believe, no exaggeration to say that Waziristan's girls can secure top positions in almost all competitions across the country if given proper education. Advocating my claim, I would bring few examples. Miss Wazir, Additional Deputy Commissioner Nowshera, belongs to South Waziristan, is awarded the best officer award of 2022. Zarmina Wazir, hailing

from South Waziristan, a brilliant daughter of Ayaz Wazir ached the CSS exam in 2017 with the top position among the candidates from FATA. Ayesha Mehsood, is a brilliant daughter of the soil and is a 21-grade officer working in the Judicial Academy of Pakistan. There are many other success stories about the brilliance of Waziristan's girls.

This fact must not be denied that militancy had not only affected other areas of life but hugely affected the field of education in the Newly Merged Tribal Districts of erstwhile Fata. Many of the girls' schools were demolished, and girls were banned from going to schools by militants a decade ago. They had no opportunity to realize their dreams like choosing a profession, choosing their life partner, and contributing to their families and then to society at large. Now enough time has passed and no result-giving steps have been by

the government so far.

Erstwhile Fata's merger with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was an important step by the government of Pakistan to tackle the prevailing security issues, promote female education, and bring peace and prosperity to the region at large. The female literacy rate in ex-FATA is in the miserable condition about 7.8 percent. According to the FATA annual education census 2017, only 37 percent of girls were attending school at the primary level and 5 percent of girls at the secondary level, compared to 49 percent of boys at the primary level and 17 percent of boys at the secondary level. It was also reported that 14.7 percent of girls between ages 3 and 13 had never been enrolled in any school. People of the mentioned region had a lot of expectations after being merged with KPK. They believed that the government will take some speedy initiatives for the welfare of the people, especially for girls' educa-

tion. Contrary to their expectations, the government has turned deaf ears to the genuine issues, so rightly said that "expectation kills".

Women's rights movements in the shape of female journalists, Razia Mehsood, Marina Wazir, and many others have been working for girls' education and demanding the government to promote female education and an end to conservative thinking/behavior towards females. Although, awareness campaigns by societies, organizations, and media workers are launched, still the people opposing female education have a strong grip on their stance. Efforts are being made but are useless until opponents lose their influence in the area.

At the primary level, the ratio of male and female students is approximately the same but the female ratio decreases as they enter the middle level. This massive dropout of girls is quite alarming. Lack of middle and

high schools, conservative thinking, and militancy are the basic reasons behind girls' illiteracy. Parents do not consider girls' education more important than that of boys. Although, poverty is the main hindrance to girls' lack of education but parents are also not ready to invest in girls' education. Girls are treated like guests for a few days because they have to leave the home after being married by the choice of their parents.

We have failed in providing education to the girls. We have darkened their future, ruined their future, and played with their expectations. Now both, the government and makes the dominants of society need to make collaborative efforts so that girls' education is ensured and their dark future is saved. Substantial initiatives, huge investments, awareness campaigns, and seminars can surely bring fruitful results regarding girls' education in tribal areas.



Myanmar army leader touts election plan on Independence Day

BANGKOK (AP): Myanmar's ruling military leader pardoned over 7,000 prisoners, including some political detainees, and detailed plans for an election later this year during a ceremony Wednesday marking the 75th anniversary of independence from Britain.

Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing urged other nations and international organizations, as well as his country's own people, to support "the genuine, discipline-flourishing multiparty democratic system," a concept the ruling military has defined as its goal since it ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in February 2021. The army's takeover reversed nearly a decade of progress toward democracy after 50 years of military rule.

The plan for a general election is widely seen as an attempt to normalize the military's seizure of power through the ballot box and to deliver a result that ensures the generals retain control. The military will control the entire process and has spent the past two years enfeebling any credible opposition. There was no sign the pardoning of 7,012 prisoners, along with a partial commutation of the sentences of other inmates not convicted of serious crimes, included Suu Kyi. She has been held virtually incommunicado by the military since it seized power.

The 77-year-old Suu Kyi is serving 33 years imprisonment after being convicted of a series of politically tinged prosecutions brought by the military. They include illegally importing and possessing walkie-talkies, violating coronavirus restrictions, breaching the official secrets act, sedition, election fraud and corruption. Her supporters and independent analysts say the cases against her are an attempt to discredit her and legitimize the military's seizure of power while keeping her from taking part in the election that the military has said would take place by August this year.



At Insein Prison in Yangon – Myanmar's most notorious – relatives thronged the gates and celebrated as loved ones were driven out of the compound on buses. Asked how he felt about his release, a former information officer for Suu Kyi's political party, Htin Lin Oo, was restrained in his response. He was arrested on the morning of the army takeover and in February last year sentenced to three years in prison for incitement.

"What really matters is whether it's a real freedom or not. I want a real kind of freedom," he said. "I don't just want to be released from jail but I also want freedom for all of my life, all of my hopes, my family and all the new generations." The first real move toward elections could occur at the end of this month, when the latest six-month extension of a state of emergency declared by the military is completed.

"Upon accomplishing the provisions of the state of emergency, free and fair elections will be held in line with the 2008 constitution, and further work will be undertaken to hand over state duties to the winning party in accordance with the democratic standards," Min Aung Hlaing said in his speech in the capital, Naypyitaw, where he also presided over a large-scale parade. The military justified its

takeover by claiming massive fraud in the 2020 election, though independent election observers did not find any major irregularities.

Military units and civil servants marched in formation close to the grandiose parliament complex while fighter jets, bombers and helicopters flew overhead. Although not officially outlawed, Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy has effectively been broken up, its leaders and many members either jailed or in hiding. All forms of dissent are suppressed by security forces, sometimes with lethal force.

The party won a second successive landslide victory in the 2020 general election, a result that triggered its overthrow by the military the following year. The military action led to peaceful nationwide protests that security forces quashed, triggering armed resistance that some UN experts characterize as civil war. Myanmar's history even before the 2021 takeover was marked by decades of armed conflict between the central government and ethnic minorities seeking greater autonomy, mostly in border regions.

That conflict still rages through most of the country, and Min Aung Hlaing stressed that "the cessation of internal armed conflicts to ensure national solidarity and peace, which are absolute necessities for our country and strenuous efforts, are being made towards that end." Min Aung Hlaing's government's toppling of democracy and fierce repression of all opposition have also made it a pariah state, and many countries have slapped political and economic sanctions against the ruling generals. "It is seen that some organizations and countries had meddled in the internal affairs of Myanmar. However, we have decided to stand firm globally, while adhering to our foreign policy in order to safeguard the sovereignty, security and interests of our nation," he said.

Manila seeks to cleanse police force of drug ties

MANILA (AP): The Philippines' interior secretary announced Wednesday he has asked all police generals and full colonels to submit their courtesy resignation to clean the ranks of ties to illegal drugs. Around 300 officers are covered by the directive, which was recommended by the national police chief, who will also submit his courtesy resignation, Interior Secretary Benjamin Abalos Jr. said in a news conference.

"It appears that there is a big problem in our police force. It appears there are generals and colonels involved in drugs," he said. "We need to clean our ranks. We need the trust of the people." More than a dozen police officers were arrested or relieved from their posts and put under investigation last year for their involvement or suspected involvement in the drug trade. Abalos cited a recent case of law enforcers selling drugs in their office.

The Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency was also subject to raids, arrests and dismissals in recent months. Former President Rodrigo Duterte has earned international condemnation for his lethal war on drugs, which — according to police data — left over 6,200 suspects dead. Human rights groups have cited higher death tolls and accused some police officers of fabricating evidence to make it appear that victims violently resisted arrest.

In November, Philippine National Police Chief Rodolfo Azurin Jr. said he directed law enforcers to minimize killings of people engaged in drug activities. Abalos said it's difficult to fight a war against illegal drugs if supposed allies could shoot your back, and the resignations aim to prevent erring officers from covering their tracks or filing trumped-up charges. A committee will be formed to review the records of police officials to determine if they are involved in the illegal drug trade, he said, adding that those who are not involved have nothing to worry about.

UN SC welcomes new members

UNITED NATIONS (AP): Ecuador, Japan, Malta, Mozambique and Switzerland got a formal welcome into the UN Security Council, taking the two-year seats they won unopposed in June. In a tradition that Kazakhstan started in 2018, the five countries' ambassadors installed their national flags alongside those of other members outside the council chambers.

Mozambique's Pedro Comissário Afonso of Mozambique called it "a historic date" and Swiss Ambassador Pascale Baeriswyl said she felt "a deep sense of humility and responsibility" as their countries marked their first-ever terms on UN's most powerful body. Malta joined for a second time, Ecuador a fourth and Japan a record 12th. China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States are permanent, veto-wielding members of the group. Its 10 other members are elected by the 193-nation General Assembly for staggered, two-year terms. They're allocated by global regions.

Concern at repair of Taiwanese mily device in China

HONG KONG (BBC): There are calls for greater safeguards in Taiwan after at least one device used by the military for its missiles was sent for repair in China. An optical instrument used for launch measurements for Taiwan's Hsiung-Feng III anti-ship missiles was shipped to its manufacturer in Europe.

It was then sent back to Taiwan from Shandong province in eastern China, Taiwanese media reported. Last year Beijing intensified military activity around the island. China sees Taiwan as part of its territory and has vowed to unify to it by force if necessary. Self-ruled Taiwan sees itself as distinct from the mainland. President Tsai Ing-wen has announced new plans to bolster Taiwan's defence in the event of an attack from Beijing, including extending mandatory military service from four months to

one year.

In a statement, Taiwanese missile developer the National Chung-Shan Institute of Science and Technology said the device had been shipped to Switzerland by the company that had originally supplied it to the Taiwanese military. From there it was diverted for repair at the manufacturer's Asia maintenance centre in the Chinese city of Qingdao, it said. The institute said it had removed memory cards before sending it to Europe and had also run information security checks on the device after its return and had no concerns over possible information leaks. Dr Su Tzu-yun from Taiwan's Institute of Defence Security Research said the optical devices were not direct missile components but said Taiwan had to be more careful anyway. "Taiwan must be more strict and careful in its con-

tract management," he said. "Of course we would not want such equipment to be sent to China for repair."

The tool, a theodolite, is used to measure precise geographical location for missile launches as well as the angle and direction of the launchers, Dr Su said. "It's like when you buy a computer, it's a device you put on the desk to go with the machine," he said. He suggested that the manufacturer had not been aware the devices, purchased by a supplier in Taiwan, had subsequently been used for military purposes.

It is not the first time concerns over the security of Taiwan's missile programme have been raised. Last year, three people at two Taiwanese suppliers were sentenced to between four and 10 years in prison for using products from China to fake missile compartments supposedly to be made by US manufacturers.

SK warns of ending mily pact after North intrusion

SEOUL (Reuters): South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol said on Wednesday he would consider suspending a 2018 inter-Korean military pact if the North violates its airspace again, his office said, amid tension over a recent intrusion by North Korean drones.

Yoon made the comment after being briefed on countermeasures to North Korean drones that crossed into the South last week, calling for building an "overwhelming response capability that goes beyond proportional levels," according to his press secretary, Kim Eun-hye. "During the meeting, he instructed the national security office to consider suspending the validity of the military agreement if North Korea stages another provocation invading our territory," Kim told a briefing.

The 2018 deal, sealed on the sidelines of a summit between North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and South Korean President Moon Jae-in, calls for ceasing "all hostile acts", creating a no-fly zone around the border, and removing landmines and guard posts within the heavily fortified

Demilitarised Zone. The government has not said how many mines and posts were removed, citing security concerns. Abandoning the pact could mean the return of the guard posts, live-fire drills in the former no-fly zone and propaganda broadcasts across the border - all of which drew angry responses from Pyongyang before the pact. Inter-Korean relations have been testy for decades but have grown even more tense since Yoon took office in May pledging a tougher line against Pyongyang. During the election campaign last year, Yoon said Pyongyang had repeatedly breached the agreement with missile launches and warned he might scrap it. He said after taking office that the pact's fate hinges on the North's actions.

Yoon has criticised the military's handling of the drone incident, in part blaming the previous administration's reliance on the 2018 pact. He has urged the military to stand ready to retaliate, even if that means "risking escalation." Yoon ordered the defence minister to launch a comprehensive drone unit that performs multi-purpose

missions, including surveillance, reconnaissance and electronic warfare, and to set up a system to mass-produce small drones that are difficult to detect within the year, Kim said.

"He also called for accelerating the development of stealthy drones this year and quickly establishing a drone killer system," she said. South Korea's army operated two drone squadrons within its Ground Operations Command since 2018, but they were primarily designed to prepare for future warfare. The defence ministry has said it plans to launch another unit focusing on surveillance and reconnaissance functions, especially targeting smaller drones.

"The upcoming unit would carry entirely different tasks, conducting operations in various areas," Defence Minister Lee Jong-sup told parliament last week. To boost its anti-drone capability, the ministry announced plans last week it would spend 560 billion won (\$440 million) over the next five years on technology such as airborne laser weapons and signal jammers.

Canada grants record residency permits in 2022

OTTAWA (Reuters): Canada set an immigration record last year by granting more than 437,000 foreigners permanent residency, the government said, as it ramps up immigration to fight a tight labor market. The government had set a target to welcome 431,645 new permanent residents in 2022, and the immigration ministry said Canada has reached that target to make it the largest annual intake of people in Canadian history.

The tally for last year is about 9% higher than 2021, when Canada surpassed the previous record set in 1913, and comes as Canada seeks to bring in 1.45 million new permanent residents by 2025-end. Immigration is a key part of the solution as Canada focuses on

addressing an acute labor market shortages, the ministry said. People with permanent residency permits can typically apply for citizenship after five years.

Immigration accounts for almost 100% of Canada's labor force growth and by 2036 immigrants will represent up to 30% of Canada's population, up from 20.7% in 2011, the statement said. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government has relied on immigration to boost the Canadian economy and support an aging population since coming to power in 2015.

Shortage of skilled workers in industries like healthcare is acute and the most recent official data shows there were 871,300 job vacancies in October, down from a record high

of over a million open roles in Canada in May. To tackle that, Ottawa is planning targeted draws for skilled immigrants for the first time in 2023, allowing it to cherry pick applicants with the most in-demand skills for the regions of the country that most need workers.

But many immigrants still struggle to find work in their chosen field, and some advocates say supporters have not grown in pace with the number of new permanent residents. Canada has also struggled to keep up with a surge in applications after COVID-19 pandemic related restrictions eased as the number of processed applications doubled to about 5.2 million in 2022 from the previous year, the ministry said.

Car bomb hits convoy in Nigeria; four killed

ABUJA, Nigeria (AP): Four security officials were killed in a car bomb targeting a former government official in southeast Nigeria, authorities said. Three police officers and a paramilitary official were killed in the attack in Imo State on a convoy carrying the former governor Ikedi Ohakim, Police Commissioner Mohammed Barde said.

"The man (Ohakim) was ambushed and he was able to maneuver and escape," said Barde. The four security personnel were killed in a different car, he said. The attack was an unfortunate setback to government efforts to restore peace in some of Nigeria's conflict-ridden southeastern states, said Barde. Southeast Nigeria has experienced a rise in violent attacks in recent years, often blamed on separatists trying to break away from the West African nation to form an independent country. The separatists who identify themselves as the Indigenous People of Biafra have become more violent amid calls for a referendum. Their attacks often target prominent people and security forces in the southeast, say conflict experts.

A manhunt to arrest the assailants has begun, said authorities. The attack has raised fears among local residents who are concerned that security will be threatened in the area during the country's presidential elections in February. The violence comes months after an ambush on a lawmaker in the southeastern Anambra State which killed four police officers in September.

Soldiers' widows group calls on Putin

MOSCOW (Reuters): A little known patriotic group which supports the widows of Russian soldiers has called on President Vladimir Putin to order a large-scale mobilisation of millions of men and to close the borders to ensure victory in Ukraine. Putin, Russia's 70-year-old paramount leader, is under intense pressure to deliver victory in Ukraine more than 10 months since he sent troops as part of an operation he says was intended to defend Russians in eastern Ukraine.

"We ask our President, Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin, to allow the Russian Army to carry out a large-scale mobilisation," the Soldiers' Widows of Russia group said in a post on Telegram. "We ask our President, our Supreme Commander-in-Chief, to prohibit the departure of men of military age from Russia. And we have a full moral right to do this: our husbands died protecting these men, but who will protect us if they run away?"

After ordering what he cast as a "partial mobilisation" on Sept. 21, Russia's first since World War Two, around 300,000 additional men were drafted, though several hundred thousand more Russian men fled abroad to avoid being called up. The Kremlin did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the appeal from the widows' group. Putin said last month that there was no need for an additional mobilisation.

A representative of the widows' group told Reuters that all fit Russian men

should be mobilised to defend the Motherland. "The coming war will require completely different resources: human, psychological, economic," she told Reuters. "Protecting the Motherland is a duty."

Putin has for months been casting the war as part of a much wider historical struggle between Russia and the West which the Kremlin chief says wants to carve up and destroy Russia. Western powers deny they aim to destroy Russia. In a grim New Year's Eve message, Putin said that defending the Motherland was the sacred duty of all Russians and promised victory in Ukraine.

Ukraine and the West say Putin has no justification for what they cast as an imperial-style war of occupation. The widows group began work about two months ago to assist the wives of soldiers killed in Ukraine and has contacts with the Kremlin administration, its representative said. "We are in constant contact with the presidential administration, and if necessary, we transmit requests to it in order to receive this or that support," the representative said.

Invoking Soviet leader Josef Stalin, the group said that now was the time for tough measures to defend called up. The Kremlin did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the appeal from the widows' group. Putin said last month that there was no need for an additional mobilisation.

A representative of the widows' group told Reuters that all fit Russian men

Poland says Germany refused talks

WARSAW (Reuters): Germany has rebuffed the latest push by Poland's nationalist government for vast reparations over World War Two, saying in response to a diplomatic note that the issue was closed, the foreign ministry in Warsaw said. A spokesperson for the German foreign ministry said it had responded to a letter sent by Poland on the subject in October and did not comment on the contents of diplomatic correspondence.

Poland estimates its World War Two losses caused by Germany at 6.2 trillion zlotys (\$1.4 trillion) and has demanded reparations, but Berlin has repeatedly said all financial claims related to the war have been settled. "This answer, to sum it up, shows an absolutely disrespectful attitude towards Poland and Poles," Arkadiusz Mularczyk, Poland's deputy foreign minister, said in an interview with the Polish Press Agency.

China pledges 'final victory' over Covid as outbreak raises global alarm

BEIJING (Reuters): Global health officials tried to determine the facts of China's raging COVID-19 outbreak and how to prevent a further spread as the Communist Party's mouthpiece newspaper on Wednesday rallied citizens for a "final victory" over the virus. China's axing of its stringent virus curbs last month has unleashed COVID on a 1.4 billion population that has little natural immunity having been shielded from the virus since it emerged in the central city of Wuhan three years ago.

Many funeral homes and hospitals say they are overwhelmed, and international health experts predict at least one million deaths in China this year, but China has reported five or fewer deaths a day since the policy U-turn. "That is totally ridiculous," a 66-year-old Beijing resident who only gave his last name Zhang said of the official death toll.

"Four of my close relatives died. That's only from one family. I hope the government will be honest with the people and the rest of the world about what's really happened here." China has rejected foreign scepticism of its statistics as politically motivated attempts to smear its achievements in fighting the virus. "China and the Chinese people will surely win the final victory against the epidemic," the People's Daily, the Communist Party's official newspaper, said in an editorial, rebutting criticism of China's three years of isolation, lockdowns and testing that triggered historic protests late last year.

Having lifted the restrictions, Beijing is hitting back against some countries demanding that visitors from China show pre-departure COVID tests, saying the rules were unreasonable and lacked a scientific basis. Japan became the latest country

to require a pre-boarding negative test, joining the United States, Australia and others. European Union health officials are due to meet on Wednesday to discuss a coordinated response to China travel.

Willie Walsh, head of the world's biggest airline association IATA, also criticised the what he described as knee-jerk measures that he said had proven to be ineffective in preventing the spread of COVID. China, which has been largely shut off from the world since the pandemic began, will stop requiring inbound travellers to quarantine from Jan. 8. But it will still demand that arriving passengers get tested before they begin their journeys.

World Health Organization officials met Chinese scientists amid concern over the accuracy of China's data on the spread and evolution of its outbreak. The UN agency had invited

the scientists to present detailed data on viral sequencing, hospitalizations, deaths and vaccinations.

The WHO would release information about the talks later, probably at a Wednesday briefing, its spokesperson said. Last month, Reuters reported that the WHO had not received data from China on new COVID hospitalisations since Beijing's policy shift, prompting some health experts to question whether it might be concealing the extent of its outbreak. China reported five new COVID deaths, bringing the official death toll to 5,258, very low by global standards. British-based health data firm Airfinity has said about 9,000 people in China are probably dying each day from COVID. There were chaotic scenes at Shanghai's Zhongshan hospital where patients, many of them elderly, jostled for space in packed halls between makeshift beds where

people used oxygen ventilators and got intravenous drips.

A Reuters witness counted seven hearses in the parking lot of Shanghai's Tongji hospital on Wednesday. Workers were seen carrying at least 18 yellow bags used to move bodies. With COVID disruptions slowing China's \$17 trillion economy to its lowest growth in nearly half a century, investors are now hoping for policy stimulus. China's yuan hovered at a four-month high against the dollar on Wednesday, after its finance minister pledged to step up fiscal expansion. The central bank has also flagged more policy support.

UBS analysts expect the "big bang" approach to re-opening to cause a "a deeper but shorter setback" to the economy, but also predicted that activity would recover from February. Despite the new restrictions in some countries, interest in travelling abroad

is reviving, Chinese media reported. International flight bookings have risen 145% year-on-year in recent days, state-run China Daily reported, citing data from travel platform Trip.com. Before the pandemic, global spending by Chinese tourists exceeded \$250 billion a year but the number of flights to and from China is still a fraction of pre-COVID levels.

Thailand expects at least five million Chinese arrivals this year. More than 11 million Chinese visited Thailand in 2019, nearly a third of its total visitors. But there are already signs that an increase in travel from China could pose problems abroad. South Korea, which began testing travellers from China, said more than a fifth of the test results were positive. Authorities there were searching for one Chinese national who tested positive but went missing while awaiting quarantine.

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The re-invention of PIMS

RECENTLY, President Dr. Arif Alvi gave his assent to the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) Bill 2022. The bill provides for repealing the Federal Medical Teaching Institute (MTI) Act 2021. Earlier, the President returned the bill to the Parliament for reconsideration, while the incumbent government again get the approval of the bill from the joint session and sent it back to the President.

There had been a series of reversals of past government policies by the coalition government over the past eight months. Ranging from Single National Curriculum (SNC) to Medical Teaching Institute Act-2021, the reorganization of Pakistan Medical Commission (PMC) to changes in the MDCAT, conversion of Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) to the Eassass Program and vice versa, reversal and reinstatement of Sehat Card in Punjab, along with undoing and redoing of multiple departmental policies, inter ministries procedures and regulations that not only hurt the normal functioning of businesses and common public but also caused a financial and administrative burden on the state. The PTI government introduced multiple innovations in various sectors including education, health, sports, IT and other sectors. Some of those initiatives were productive and need of the hour while others had been originated on cartels persuasion and out of politics.

Unfortunately, the coalition government is entirely folding all policies and decisions of the past rulers, without weighing the pros and cons of the changes which is a biased and counterproductive behavior. The government must hold a public debate, and consult relevant stakeholders and experts before making decisions about the reversal, amendment, and continuation of any nationwide policy. So, the most beneficial, cost-effective, and state-of-the-art services could be provided to the public across the country.

Although, democracy is the government of the people, by the people, and for the people, however, the way Pakistani rulers had always governed the country, this mechanism surely seems to be the Kingly government by a particular faction of the society. Policy making and legislation always require a wider debate in the parliament, media, and civil society as well as department and ministry recommendations to reach a consensus regarding sensitive and most important issues concerning the entire nation.

The Pakistani Nation and state have multiple issues including poverty, public health, education, and others but the state neither funds the bulk of nationwide free-of-cost healthcare through the Sehat Card Plus scheme nor it can satisfy public care needs through the existing health system in the country, which put millions dying every day before the death. Thus, the authorities must conceive a plan for public-private partnerships, and individual participation so that free-of-cost treatment facilities could be provided to the masses without adding more burden to the national exchequer.

The World Bank and other global financial institutions have forecasted downward trends in the global economy during the current year while the global energy crisis is likely to worsen in the coming months. Pakistani leaders should adopt rational decisions while keeping their political philosophies aside so the nation can safely survive through the prevailing economic turmoil. If each party started transforming the nation as per its party manifesto then no institution would remain safe and functional, and chaos will prevail everywhere.

Beijing-Manila rapprochement

THE newly throned Philippines President, Ferdinand Marcos Jr. is currently on a three-day state visit to China, which aims at boosting bilateral strategic ties with the Philippines' first-door neighbor and the second-largest economy in the world. Marcos ambitiously looks forward to working with President Xi to shift the trajectory of their bilateral relations to a higher gear that can bring numerous prospects and opportunities for peace and development to the people of both countries.

The two South Asian neighbors have relatively strained relations because of a territorial dispute in the South China Sea, which is a contentious bone between the two Countries. China claims the entire South China Sea, whereas the Philippines claims the area adjoining its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). The Philippines took the dispute to the Hague-based International Court of Justice (ICJ), which invalidated Beijing's claims to the waterway in 2016. However, Beijing still contests the possession of highly sensitive waterways because China has constructed disputed reefs into artificial islands with air-plane runways and military structures. The militarization of crucial water channels subsidized the regional states while global Sheriff, America also despatched its lathel aircraft carriers to ensure so-called freedom of the so-called Sea lines of Communication and rule-based order.

At times, the Philippines is battling the worst inflation, poverty, and a continuous economic downturn while the country's political landscapes are also not feasible for Marcos. The western nations are coaxing Manila to join their club and play the role of a front-line state in the ongoing US-China tussle in the Indo-Pacific region. However, the son of a former military Dictator worked proactively and set his first diplomatic voyage to the neighboring nation, in a bid to forge a friendship and trade partnership to realize his economic dreams. Manila's leader intends to resolve issues through negotiation and is ready to forge friendly ties with China.

Presently, the western bloc is peddling anti-China propaganda to fail the Beijing-Manila rapprochement at this point when west China's containment drive is at its peak. Hence, the effectiveness of Chinese diplomacy would be visible through the outcome of Ferdinand's crusade.

Quote of the day

The search for a scapegoat is the easiest of all hunting expeditions.
— Dwight Eisenhower, American general & President.

THE past year 2022 has become a year of serious trials for American politicians. An elderly president, inflation, the Ukrainian conflict, and internal contradictions are just some of the problems the US is facing. About what America is entering 2023 with - in the material of RIA Novosti.

Biden's anti-records

Polls show that most Americans do not want a second term for Joe Biden.

The depressing results of public opinion surveys are commonplace for an American leader. A year ago, he beat anti-records of popularity, sometimes even bypassing his predecessor, Donald Trump.

The situation is aggravated by the fact that not only the traditional opponents of the Democrats, the Republicans, oppose Biden. Members of the same party are also not enthusiastic about his leadership.

The main reason is age. Biden is 80 years old, if he decides to run and become president, then by the end of his second term he will be 86. Even now, American citizens fear for the health of the head of state. He talks every now and then, confuses places and positions, and in general behaves not quite adequately.

Therefore, it is obvious that the president's ratings will continue to fall: people are afraid of deterioration. Biden is trying to win back points with the help of domestic political steps.

And to some extent he even succeeds.

The battle against inflation

The main achievement of Biden's domestic policy can be called the law to reduce inflation, which was passed by both houses of Congress in the summer. The act, tied to the climate agenda, approves measures for the transition of the United States to green energy.

The document provides for subsidizing local suppliers of electric vehicles and batteries. For buyers of cars manufactured entirely in the United States, tax breaks will be introduced.

As planned by the authors, this will reduce the burden on both manufacturers and customers.

In addition, the act includes a reduction in drug prices for Medicare recipients, as well as a significant increase in taxes for corporations and wealthy Americans.

The population liked the law, as evidenced by the slightly increased ratings of the president. Analysts note that Biden and his associates have partially adopted the strategy of former President Donald Trump: "America first." However, such a reversal caused discontent among the European partners of the United States.

Divorce from the EU

When Biden took office, his message to the European Union sounded hopeful. "America is back!" he said, meaning that US-EU cooperation will return

to pre-Trump levels.

After the start of the Russian special operation in Ukraine, this is exactly what happened. United in the face of a common enemy, America and Europe successfully negotiated sanctions packages.

The first signs of the crisis appeared as winter approached. In the American press, publications about the growing dissatisfaction of the Brussels with Washington's "adventures" began to flicker more and more often. If the United States is relatively independent in energy matters, which the White House also admits, then for the EU, anti-Russian gas and oil sanctions turned out to be painful.

But the last straw that overflowed Europe's patience was the very anti-inflationary law. In the EU, Biden's act was considered protectionist, discriminatory, violating WTO rules and splitting the West. It was with such theses that French President Emmanuel Macron spoke during his visit to Washington at the end of November. We decided to continue negotiations within the framework of the Transatlantic Trade and Technology Council (TTC). Biden's brainchild, symbolizing America's unbreakable economic connection with Europe. But even there, Brussels did not get concessions from Washington.

Renat Abdullin

As a result, by 2023 the US and the EU came with contradictions much deeper than under Trump. Given that the anti-inflationary law comes into force in January, and the Europeans did not wait for concessions, the split will obviously only intensify.

All Quiet on the Eastern Front

The fatigue of Europeans from the Ukrainian crisis does not affect the American authorities in any way. Washington is still ready to provide Kyiv with any possible assistance. And in this sense, Biden untied his hands by reviving the lend-lease law of the Second World War in the spring.

Although not without unpleasant incidents. According to the American press, during one of the telephone conversations with Vladimir Zelensky, the President of the United States allegedly raised his voice to the Ukrainian colleague - because of Kyiv's regular complaints about insufficient support.

But by the end of the year, the heads of state spoke again by phone. According to official reports, they coordinated their positions and reached significant agreements.

What these "agreements" are is still unclear. But what is known is Biden's clear intention to avoid direct US involvement in the Ukrainian conflict. Therefore, despite

Kyiv's regular promises to join NATO, Washington does not force this issue.

Congress divided

But the main test for the American political establishment was not so much inflation and external crises as the traditional midterm elections.

US citizens in November re-elected the House of Representatives (lower house of Congress) and a third of the members of the Senate (upper house).

The entire 2022 situation was deplorable for the Democrats: they had full control over Congress, but risked losing it entirely. In many ways, the positions of the "donkeys" (Democratic Party) were influenced by Biden's negative ratings. The "elephants" (Republicans) had every chance for absolute leadership.

However, the triumph of the conservatives did not happen. In the House of Representatives, they won less than two dozen seats, still gaining a majority, and in the Senate they even lost one figure - that is, the leadership there remained with the Democrats.

The new composition of the congress will begin work in January. With the loss of full control over the Democrats, it will be more difficult for Biden to push initiatives through a hostile lower house, but he has room for bargaining in the upper house.

Therefore, the results of the midterm elections for the Democrats are much

less painful than for the Republicans, who are now forced to regroup.

Trump didn't come back

A serious blow to the "elephants" were the criminal cases against Donald Trump. He remains one of the most popular politicians in the US and easily overtakes Biden in the polls. However, the reputation of the ex-president was shattered by an investigation into the removal of secret documents from the White House.

In the congressional elections, Trump provided declarative and even financial support to the majority of Republican candidates. He himself considered the results of the vote positive, but in the party, where more impressive results were expected, they did not hide their disappointment. And hastily began to look for a replacement.

One option is Ron DeSantis, the 44-year-old governor of Florida. He performed well in the midterm elections, and age is on his side, as opposed to the elderly Trump and Biden.

It is DeSantis that can become the main problem for the incumbent president. After all, preparations for the election campaign of 2024 will actually start in 2023, and in it a relatively young candidate has great chances of success. The future of American politics also depends on how Biden, who did not speak too convincingly in the past year, behaves.

‘We can handle it’

Elena Karueva

Hollande simply could not dislike double-dealing - by virtue of his nature and behavior.

But one can also imagine the reasons why the ex-chancellor went for such a thing. The weight of the foreign trade balance of Germany at that moment was provided to a very significant extent by American consumption of German household appliances and the automotive industry. The slightest increase in tariffs, and simply threats to raise them - and the vaunted surplus of the German budget could come kaput.

Berlin, after weighing the pros and cons, agreed to the performance. Paris rushed onto the stage, weighing nothing, right behind their senior European partner.

What happened next is history. In the worst sense of the word. In the most monstrous sense and meaning, if we remember that as a result of this bloody big top for many years, hiding behind points and details, Moscow and the people of Donetsk were deceived, and every word of this lie eventually turned into blood, injuries and death of innocent people.

The lives of which "enlightened" pan-Europeans" did not take into account at all. But who are they, these Donetsk residents, to even think about them?

But, having lied once, it is difficult not to lie twice. Lies, you know, are addictive. Just as in the case of

Russia, Paris and Berlin, each in their own way, began to lie to their own fellow citizens. For almost any significant reason.

This could relate, for example, to military operations against IS in Syria. In which the same Paris, violating, among other things, the EU embargo on the supply of arms, supplied weapons and sent army instructors wherever it considered necessary.

This could also apply to the reception of Syrian refugees, Hollande, testifying at the trial about the terrorist attacks in Paris (then, in November 2015, more than a hundred people died from terrorist bullets), said: he and his ministers "knew that terrorist attacks were being prepared", "we also knew that participants in the upcoming attacks mixed with the flow of refugees, as well as the fact that the masterminds of the attacks are in Syria."

The authorities, knowing everything, did absolutely nothing not only to protect their voters, but at least to warn them that the IS group is capable of conducting hostilities in Paris too.

What did Merkel say when she ordered the opening of the EU borders in the summer of 2015?

"We can handle it," the ex-head of the federal government said. "Let's do it!"

turned out to be, to put it mildly, a lie. The terrorist attack on the Christmas market in the capital of Germany (more than a dozen people died, more

than fifty were seriously injured), when an IS militant posing as a refugee sent a previously stolen truck (the terrorist shot the driver) at a crowd of passers-by - probably the most striking confirmation of another lie.

Within a few years, any restrictions (external) and restrictions (internal) on the use of lies in the public space of European politics were removed.

It was easy and pleasant to lie in the eyes and behind the eyes. We can say that lies have become the only, but the most effective means of manipulating public consciousness in those European countries that have positioned themselves and are positioning themselves as a chamber of measures and weights, where the canons of truth, goodness, light and justice are stored.

Lies could touch almost any area of life. For example, during the pandemic, millions of French people were forced to quarantine because they were told: "We are at war with the coronavirus, only solidarity can help us all survive." True, this is already Macron, but the essence does not change from a change in personalities.

In fact, those twenty-odd thousand beds in hospitals, plus the doctors who worked there, should have helped to survive.

But seats in the chambers needed to be reduced to maintain budgetary discipline - this was demanded by Brussels.

Well, how can I tell the

truth? So I had to lie. Again and again.

Then I had to lie about why there is no personal protective equipment. Then - why there is no own vaccine. Then - why the vaccine was not effective enough.

Lying turned out to be not just an obsession, it has become so habitual that today any statements by the highest political echelon of European authorities, those that decide the fate of hundreds of millions, cannot be taken seriously.

In all words, no matter how intelligently they are pronounced, one should see a meaning that is exclusively the opposite of what was said.

Where lie and lies rule, the seeds of betrayal sprout perfectly.

Today, practically jungles have grown from these grains, as in the Amazon. Such that you can not pass and not pass.

It is good that our country looks at this empire of lies built on quicksand with due irony. And today Russia is unraveling the intercontinental knot of lies tied up with lies. With patience and calm. And, be sure, unravel it for sure.

Not only according to the criteria of military superiority, which the Nadys were so afraid of (we remember that cowardice is the worst of all vices) "enlightened" pan-Europeans", but according to the norms of truth, truth and justice. Which are universal for everyone. That is why these norms are always stronger in the end.

US-Cuban ties appear to be better today than at any time

William LeoGrande

THE next nine months offer a window of opportunity for improving U.S.-Cuban relations if leaders in Washington and Havana have the political will and courage to seize it.

Diplomats in both the State Department and Cuban Foreign Ministry profess to want to build a more constructive relationship to replace the poisonous one President Donald Trump created, and they express guarded optimism about the possibilities. But time is short. By next fall, the U.S. presidential election season will be gearing up, making any major policy change politically perilous and much less likely.

Over the past nine months, both Washington and Havana have taken small steps to reduce tensions. Last April, Washington agreed to resume the semi-annual migration talks mandated by the 1994 U.S.-Cuban migration agreement, but broken off by Trump in 2018. With tens of thousands of Cubans arriving on the U.S. southern border monthly and thousands more landing on Florida's south coast and keys, the Biden administration had an urgent interest in regularizing Cuban immigra-

tion.

Since then, there have been two rounds of talks which both sides describe as constructive and productive. Washington has restaffed its embassy and reopened consular services so that, for the first time in five years, the United States met its obligation under the 1994 agreement to provide Cubans with 20,000 immigrant visas annually. Cuba agreed to accept flights of deportees who enter the U.S. illegally along the southern border. The success of the migration discussions has led to a resumption of diplomatic dialogues on a range of issues of mutual interest.

Last May, facing pressure from Latin Americans over his decision to exclude Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela from the Ninth Summit of the Americas, President Biden lifted Trump's restrictions on remittances and restored the people-to-people travel license under which most U.S. residents visited Cuba before Trump abolished it. More still needs to be done to make these policy changes effective, but remittances and income from foreign visitors are two of the main sources of income for the Cuban economy as it struggles to recover from the COVID-

19 pandemic.

In response, Cuba took the politically difficult step of giving in to U.S. pressure to replace the financial institution processing remittances from one managed by the armed forces to an alternative civilian firm. That's a step Havana had resisted ever since Trump blocked U.S. companies from doing business with the military firm, forcing Western Union to close hundreds of offices across the island. Although Western Union has yet to resume operations, U.S. sanctions no longer proscribe it. The Treasury Department recently granted a small travel agency in Miami a license to wire remittances through the new Cuban civilian firm.

After Hurricane Ian tore through western Cuba in October, the State Department offered two million dollars in humanitarian assistance to rebuild homes and, for the first time, President Miguel Díaz-Canel gratefully accepted.

In November, Biden appointed former Senator Christopher Dodd as Special Presidential Advisor for the Americas. Biden and Dodd served together in the U.S. Senate for almost 30 years. "Chris

and I have known each other for a long time," the president said in 2021. "We truly are really good, close friends." When Biden chaired the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in the decade before becoming vice-president, Dodd was chair of the Western Hemisphere Subcommittee and, in Biden's words, "a leading voice on engagement with Latin America and the Caribbean."

Biden has turned to Dodd repeatedly to manage important, politically sensitive tasks. Dodd led the team that selected then-Senator Kamala Harris as Biden's running mate. In 2021, Dodd went to Taiwan on Biden's behalf to reassure its leaders of U.S. support as tensions with China mounted. In early 2022, with the Summit of the Americas at risk of collapse due to a boycott led by Mexico's Andrés Manuel López Obrador, Biden asked Dodd to salvage it. In the end, López Obrador and several other heads of state stayed away, but the leaders of the other major Latin American countries attended, avoiding an embarrassing diplomatic debacle.

Asking Dodd to take on the new role of Special Presidential Advisor for the

Americas is a tacit acknowledgement by Biden that his Latin America policy is in disarray. At the center of that disarray is his ill-advised retention of Trump's sanctions policy aimed at starving Cuba into submission — a policy rejected by every major country in Latin America (not to mention Canada and the European Union).

Dodd knows perfectly well that the policy of hostility and regime change toward Cuba is a costly failure; during his Senate career, he consistently advocated ending the embargo. In Dodd's new role, Cuba is high on the agenda — in particular, finding ways to build on the progress that has been made in bilateral relations over the past nine months. Washington should take the initiative because it was Washington, under Trump, that ruptured the relationship President Barack Obama built.

There is no shortage of steps Biden could take to improve relations. Many of the sanctions Trump imposed are still in place, crippling Cuba's economy, immiserating Cuban families, and aggravating the migration crisis. The most obvious first step is to take Cuba off the list of state sponsors of international

terrorism — a designation that had no factual or legal basis, yet makes it extremely difficult for Cuba to engage in routine international financial transactions.

But if Biden is to weather the political flak he will get for changing his Cuba policy — flak both from Republicans and from another old Senate friend, current Foreign Relations Committee Chair Bob Menendez (D-N.J.) — the president will need to show that the Cubans are willing to address Washington's concerns. For Biden, the top concern is the heavy prison sentences given to several hundred people arrested during the island-wide demonstrations on July 11-12, 2021, and the subsequent imprisonment of several prominent dissidents. Cuban diplomats suggest that Havana is willing to talk with Washington even about "sensitive issues," but that any change on their side would have to be part of a broader agreement covering a range of issues, not a unilateral concession.

Prospects for a significant improvement in U.S.-Cuban relations appear to be better today than at any time since Biden entered the White House. Both

(Continued on Page 7)

The right to silence you

“A lot of people will say, ‘Well, hold on a second, partisanship and division, we’ve had that many times throughout history,’” said Tristan Harris, the filmmaker who produced the eye-opening 2020 documentary, *The Social Dilemma*, which detailed the negative impact of social media on society. “Also, has partisanship in television and radio preexisted social media? Yes. Have we ever wired up the most powerful artificial intelligence in the world, pointed it at your brainstem to show you the most enraging content on a daily basis, and the longer you scroll, the angrier you get? We’ve never done that before!”

The impact of Big Tech, specifically social media, on society has become a hot-button topic of late. Ever since the unlikely election of Donald J. Trump to the presidency in 2016, both political parties in America—for different reasons—have made attacking social media a new tradition in American politics. Big Tech is not just another industry struggling to overcome unfair government regulation. The products that are being produced by Big Tech and used by most people are unique, with real, negative, and lasting health impacts.

Unlike previous technological inventions, such as radio, television, or the telephone, social media has changed the way in which Americans talk to one another. Communication has been, in Harris’ estimation, “colonized and privatized” by social media firms. Over the last decade, the various social media firms have enhanced their product design with the aim of maximizing their profits. Yet, there are some products that, if not regulated by the government, will do long-lasting damage to the country and our people. Social media specifically, and Big Tech more generally, represent just the kind of industry that requires regulation. It’s a type of regulation that is anathema to many—notably those who describe themselves as “libertarian.”

An Algorithm from Hell

Social media uses powerful algorithms to sort and program its vast number of users globally. The use of these algorithms paired with increasingly sophisticated programming, makes social media platforms far different from most other products available to the public. These programs are designed to target and antagonize, preying upon the tribal nature of human beings and luring all of its users into an “us vs. them” mentality. Those who dominate this new field of socialization are what Harris accurately derides as “division entrepreneurs.”

Once you are separated into your digital tribe by the algorithm, the algorithm

then entices its users to enhance the social media platform’s ad revenue by promoting extreme content that activates certain parts of the human brain and triggers visceral responses. Over time, the brain becomes accustomed to these electronic provocations and, as many scientists argue today, the user becomes addicted to the frothy rage. This is social programming on a level that Orwell himself could not have fully envisioned. The rage, in turn, begets more rancor among users on the platform and creates “viral” moments that are intended to normalize the extreme, unhinged behavior and views.

Pew Research Center has determined that roughly 69 percent of adults and a staggering 81 percent of young people use social media daily in the United States. And it is that last figure that should concern parents and policymakers alike. Studies of teenagers who use social media heavily (in 2019, 40 percent of ages 18-22 and 37 percent of ages 23-38 in 2019 self-reported that they believe they are addicted to social media) have been found to struggle with a variety of mental health and physical ailments as a direct result of their use. Meanwhile, young teenage girls, according to some studies, have suicidal ideations as a result of negative body images of themselves being exacerbated by the algorithm that governs social media platforms.

Scientists studying the impacts of the various social media platforms have determined that the more prolonged exposure to these apps that one has, the more one’s brain changes. In one study, researchers determined that prolonged social media use “shrinks parts of the brain associated with maintaining concentration.” According to a 2018 study in the United Kingdom, “The [social media platforms] are designed to be addictive and are associated with anxiety, depression, and even physical ailments.” Human beings are creatures that operate on incentives. If certain behaviors are rewarded, we tend to continue engaging in those behaviors. Dopamine, the chemical in the brain that allows you to feel pleasure—and is associated with food, sex, for example—is released which serves to positively reinforce your desire to replicate this behavior.

There are other products that are similarly addictive. Cigarettes come to mind. So, too, does alcohol. Or narcotics. What do all these things have in common? They are all either heavily regulated or are, in the case of certain narcotics, banned outright. Social media damages the entire society which has become heavily reliant on these platforms as a means of social interaction. Social media has

Brandon Weichert

proven toxic to our national discourse; it has an undue amount of influence over our political opinions as well.

The Right to Silence You

Social media firms are perhaps the most dangerous insofar as they regulate political discourse. Today, most people do not get their news from the television or radio. Instead, they get news from their “newsfeed” on whichever social media platform they prefer. The stories in that newsfeed are curated by increasingly prescient algorithms that are intended to evoke an emotional, dopamine-filled response from the user rather than to inform someone about an event. Social media is ubiquitous. It links us together in a digital community that far surpasses the way that email, telephones, or any other mode of communication.

More dangerously, the bulk of these social media firms are led by dyed-in-the-wool Leftists who are naturally inimical to center-Right opinions. This reality creates a grave imbalance in our political discourse. Leaving regulation of these powerful social media platforms in the hands of the corporate stakeholders whose entire business model is predicated on making divisive and harmful algorithms all the more dangerous, is akin to letting the fox guard the henhouse. Only government regulation can be used to enforce standards and norms that will protect Americans from what has been proven to be a toxic product. Beyond the potential toxicity of the product, the fact that these hugely influential platforms are overwhelmingly Leftist ensures that the Leftist and policy debates could be swayed—unfairly—by censorship.

The censorship these firms are engaged in transcends the political realm as well. During the COVID-19 pandemic that gripped the world in 2020, social media platforms exerted control over their users’ free speech with wanton abandon. Anyone—not only influencers with massive followings—who typed a comment questioning the still-unknown origins of the disease that ran counter to the official narrative, or who dared to utter a skeptical word about the efficacy of mRNA-based vaccines, was systematically censored by social media companies. While some reading this may shrug and say that these social media firms are private businesses and therefore allowed to regulate content, the fact is that these same firms are given special regulatory exemptions by the federal government because social media firms tell the government that they are not publishers. Yet, the fact that these firms regulate content—and that

they have been proven to regulate that content with political biases—implies that they are, in fact, publishers and should be regulated as such. These companies cannot have it both ways, especially when the stakes are so high.

Furthermore, Big Tech is using its vast power to squelch dissent that may impact its bottom line. Consider this: Mark Zuckerberg’s Facebook funded British-based pharmaceutical company GlaxoSmithKline’s COVID-19 cure to the tune of \$100 million. While the search for a cure to this pernicious plague is admirable, the fact that Zuckerberg’s Facebook was censoring anyone who appeared skeptical of the new vaccines should give people pause. Users who were deleted or silenced unfairly had no recourse. Scores of people were unable to share information and ideas with each other during a time when almost everyone was locked down, and digital communication was the best available form of socialization. Information that could have been shared about vaccines was manipulated by companies that had a financial interest in downplaying potential risks of experimental vaccines.

What Is to Be Done?

The first thing that must be done is for Congress to impose regulations upon social media firms. Barriers to entry should be employed. Then, Congress should follow through on previous threats to remove some of the protections that Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act provides social media companies. Removing Section 230 protections would be the first necessary step toward forcing these firms to respect the First Amendment rights of their users in America. Beyond that, because social media has become the dominant form of socialization in America today, it might be time to regulate these companies in the same manner that we regulate power companies or telephone companies. While this will create certain inefficiencies in a business standpoint, imposing such regulations upon these companies would force them to treat their vast number of users with greater equity.

The negative health effects alone warrant greater government regulation of these companies and the dangerous algorithms they “inject directly into the brainstem[s]” of their users, in Harris’ words. It’s very telling that ByteDance, the Chinese company that created the world’s most popular social media platform to date, TikTok, sells two versions of their app. One version is tightly regulated and allows its teenage and young adult users limited access to features of the program. It relegates its young users to educational materials, as well as patriotic con-

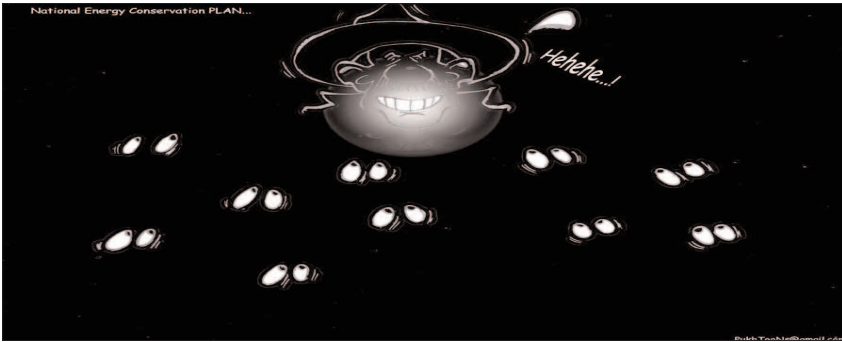
tent. Meanwhile, the other version that is sold to the United States is the version that allows its users of all ages to have total access to any content on the app—including grossly inappropriate things. Plus, TikTok has been proven to be one of the most unhealthy social media platforms available to Americans today.

What’s more, TikTok’s popularity, combined with the fact that it is a Chinese product poses potential national security risks. A Pentagon investigation revealed that the private data of US military personnel who use the application was sent back to servers in China—where the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) and the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP) can gain access to it. Grave warnings about the security risks this program posed to US military personnel were quickly sent out to all members of the United States Armed Forces. Yet, the app remains widely available in America. Although, in the waning months of 2022, multiple states have either announced their intention to ban the TikTok app, Virginia has already banned TikTok from state government computers. The US military is seeking to curb TikTok usage for its members on government devices as well because of these national security concerns.

Judging from the health risks and the national security threat posed to the country by this particular social media app, one would think that this program would be far more regulated by the US government than it is. Sadly, it remains widely available to the public. Shortly after China initiated an illegal attack on Indian troops patrolling the Sino-Indian border in 2020, the Indian government recognized TikTok for the security threat that it is and completely banned the product in their country. Since that time, India has reported no deleterious impacts. In essence, India’s ban on the program did little to harm the freedom of their people and may have enhanced both their national security as well as the mental health of their people from an inherently harmful product, like ByteDance’s TikTok.

The United States finds itself living in a new age that its government and people are completely unprepared for. It is an age in which we are physically isolated from one another yet increasingly connected across a digital domain. Yet, that digital domain is unregulated, and the technological mediums are designed to maximize division among its users, with profoundly negative health impacts on the general public. That’s to say nothing of the national security implications of using apps that are created by rival nations like China.

It’s time to regulate Big Tech.



The ‘pacing benefit’

CRITICS on both the Left and the Right have called for rather significant changes to the application of existing laws surrounding s-cial media platforms. But this is not the first time r-rapid technological change has ignited calls for government action. In fact, it has not been uncommon for the early leaders in n-ew businesses to gain r-rapid success, such that th-ose in adjacent or increasingly obsolete industries begin clamoring for regulation to “protect” themselves from the new innovators. Is this era of technology different, and what can we learn from the past when determining the appropriate response to such concerns?

Innovation moves at a rapid pace—typically much faster than traditional policymaking can move. This dichotomy has been referred to as the “pacing problem,” but perhaps, a better term for it is the “pacing benefit.” Rather than languishing in bureaucratic red tape, many innovators and entrepreneurs are able to focus on fine tuning a product that meets a need or desire others haven’t previously realized because they do not have to seek government permission to do so.

America has enjoyed much of this “pacing benefit” thanks to a more permissionless approach to innovation for many areas. While there are notable exceptions in areas such as transportation or medicine, where higher risks motivate higher regulatory burdens on innovation, in many cases, disruptive innovation is presumed allowable until proven otherwise. In contrast, Europe has taken an approach that presumes the need for guidelines and restrictions before new innovations become widely available.

Despite these calls, however, technology often develops faster than the regulations proposed. Regulation is often difficult and cumbersome to undo, so we end up with blocked innovation.

For innovations facing regulatory barriers that may be proven to be outdated, it can take significant time to remove or reform such barriers, thus halting critical developments. This is most commonly seen in heavily regulated industries, such as healthcare and transportation. In such scenarios, policymakers should regularly examine the necessity of existing regulations, weighing them against the benefits of innovation, and seeking to find balanced approaches through policy tools such as sandboxes. But many of the technologies receiving the most policy attention today are not in heavily regulated industries, but rather in those industries which have flourished with minimal regulation.

In many cases, the most prudent action may be for policymakers to refrain from reacting hastily and instead respond only to those agreed-upon harms for which rulemaking can provide objective redress. There are a few reasons for a restrained approach. Looking at the matter through a pragmatic lens, the length of time needed for policy development may mean, as discussed above, that technological development may already have advanced past the intended regulatory remedy. Second, it is often not a technology itself but a particular application of it that raises concerns. In many cases, existing laws may already provide redress for the harms in question, such as concern about the potential for artificial intelligence and machine learning to be abused by those looking to engage in discriminatory practices. Finally, regulation tends to benefit the incumbents in an industry who can absorb or pass along the cost of needed changes while creating new barriers for new, smaller entrants, making it more difficult to compete.

But there is another reason to allow innovation to prosper that is often overlooked: innovation, not intervention, is often the best competition policy. It is often hard to predict what innovations will revolutionize an industry, or find unprecedented consumer demand. History is littered with examples, and the phenomenon is particularly pronounced in cases where regulators desired to intervene in an unpragmatic fashion. For example, while regulators were stopping Blockbuster and Hollywood Video from merging, the home entertainment industry was changing with the emergence of new players like Netflix and YouTube. During the “browser wars,” mobile emerged such that Microsoft missed the window to be largely competitive in it. And while working to block the XM-Sirius merger, radio broadcasters ignored the real threat of iPods.

In the above cases, the market may have been wrongly defined in a way that in retrospect makes it look like a mere choice at a time new competition was emerging. But what would be worse would be to change competition law to achieve a policymaker’s preferred outcome in the industry. Such an approach would exacerbate the problems above while also negatively impacting consumers who would be unable to benefit from the natural evolution of the market.

So if the answer is a policy of prudence, and this same frustration has happened before, why are many across the political spectrum calling for intervention in the tech industry? I would posit that anger towards tech is a symptom of underlying concerns about society and culture rather than the industry. This is applicable regardless of where on the political spectrum an individual falls. For the Left, these concerns are often focused on the rise of hate speech and extremism, while for those on the Right, they are largely grounded in concerns that their opinions are being purposely silenced by those in power and that religious or traditional viewpoints are being wrongfully labeled as hate speech or otherwise maligned. On both sides, many express concern about the next generation and their use of technology. The result is that many different policymakers and pundits now call for intervention into technology generally.

Many of these concerns have been dealt with in the past, with other technologies or issues. We may not always agree on the outcome or how we got here, but in time, we’ve generally developed societal norms and used regulation to address real harms. For example, the camera was extremely disruptive when it first emerged and led to many of our ideas around privacy today. However, we did not seek to ban the camera, but we developed societal norms around its appropriate use and regulations around its most harmful uses.

Innovation in the communications space has been viewed as disruptive throughout the development of technology. For example, there were complaints about the problems of how quickly news could travel with the invention of the telegraph. One could play Mad Libs with any number of technologies when it comes to today’s concerns about misinformation being spread and the disruptive impact on the status quo. Today’s technology has increasingly democratized speech by allowing any individual to communicate one to many as one to one. Many of the concerns about online speech on both sides of the aisle come from laying bare the wide array of views held. But along with the views found as distasteful and problematic, this democratization of speech has been incredibly powerful for many who would have struggled to have their voices heard in a prior era where only a few individuals made decisions about

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whose voices could be heard. Similarly, the concerns many see in alleged anti-conservative bias can also be seen in other forms of media, like television and movies. But just as Fox News provided an alternative to MSNBC in the news market, new websites such as Rumble and Truth Social provide alternatives for those seeking different types of content.

Some concerns, however, are not related to speech but to the impact of technology on the next generation. Many are concerned about the apparent decline in youth mental health and see technological change as a cause. The concerns about the next generation and technology too have historical parallels from past innovations. While well-meaning, these concerns rarely if ever turn out to be as truly problematic as initially perceived. From novels to comic books to landline telephones, any number of technologies have raised concerns that they are corrupting or harming the next generation.

Perhaps the most recent memorable example was the concern over violent video games leading to real-world violence or other harms. Video game systems increased in popularity at the same time as growing concerns about youth violence, so many claimed that violent video games were connected to increased aggression. But any number of studies have since rejected this connection. Today, data remain mixed on the connection, if any, between social media and youth mental health. As we’ve seen with other, similar concerns, there are often much less restrictive tools that can be led by the industry, empowering parents to better meet the individual needs of particular young people rather than embracing a one-size fits all approach that is not fully backed by data.

So, what should we think about how to approach our current technological age in a way that most benefits society? Our current situation suggests 3 key proposals: 1. Innovation can often be disruptive in unpredictable ways, and policy should remain flexible to allow for dramatic, unprecedented, and unforeseen changes. If we only look for the “next Facebook,” we may miss the entirely new ways in which social media and connections are developing.

2. The market for ideas is still a market, and many of the concerns around online speech and content moderation are not limited to our online experiences. There continues to be a need for greater tolerance and understanding that allows individuals with different viewpoints to communicate with respect. However, it can also be beneficial for different and specific groups to be able to connect with each other. The current approach to online content moderation may create discomfort, but ultimately, it provides the best opportunity for the most speakers.

3. We should consider a full spectrum of tools and not rush to demand regulation or government intervention, particularly for issues without objective data to back them up. Education is often an under-utilized policy tool that can support consumer choice in a complicated market. Similarly, there are opportunities for the development of industry best practices and support from the government for better studies to understand the underlying concerns.

The tech policy debate these days is often focused on these incredibly polarizing issues, but as a result, we may be missing opportunities for very important policy debates on topics like data privacy or ensuring the opportunities for innovation in currently heavily regulated industries. And the past tells us that while new technology may make us very anxious and afraid, we tend to maximize the benefits and come out on the other side with minimal harm.

Will US and China enhance their capacity to manage points of contention and control the risk of escalation?

AT the start of 2022, China’s economy appeared strong, Beijing seemed to have contained the spread of COVID-19, Sino-Russian relations were deepening and there was growing talk of autocracies stealing the march on democracies across the world. China’s leaders were proclaiming that ‘time and momentum’ were on China’s side in its great power competition with the United States.

Meanwhile, the United States was mired in partisan paralysis, with President Joe Biden’s ‘Build Back Better’ agenda seemingly stuck. Washington was reeling from the reputational damage of the United States’ chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan. Within Asia, talk was growing louder of China dominating the 21st century.

A year later, the script reads differently. China’s economy has turned sluggish, pulled down by expanding state intervention in the economy, waves of COVID-related lockdowns, a property sector slowdown and softening international demand for Chinese exports. Beijing’s messy exit from its zero-COVID policy has exacerbated domestic stressors. Even as China remains the largest trading

partner for most of the world, its economic lustre has dimmed amid declining economic growth.

China’s international image in most of the developed world has also suffered. Part of this owes to China’s rhetorical support for Russia amid Moscow’s barbarism in Ukraine. China’s plummeting image is also attributable to its hardening authoritarianism at home, its nationalistic ‘wolf warrior’ diplomacy and its growing military activity along its periphery, including in the waters and airspace around Taiwan.

By comparison, Biden’s political position has strengthened. At home, the Biden administration secured passage of the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, the CHIPS and Science Act and the Inflation Reduction Act, which together add up to over US\$1 trillion in government spending. Though elements of these investments favouring domestic manufacturing have generated friction with US trading partners, they represent a generational investment in US innovation. Technology companies such as Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company, Samsung, Micron, SK Hynix, Intel and IBM announced investments in

Ryan Hass

semiconductor production in the United States exceeding US\$100 billion.

The United States also strengthened its position abroad. Transatlantic unity deepened under the stress of the joint response to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. Coordination strengthened in other purpose-driven groupings, such as the Quad and AUKUS. The G7 bolstered its relevance as its members acted with greater cohesion on global challenges, including financing Indonesia and Vietnam’s clean energy transitions. US-ASEAN ties were elevated to a comprehensive strategic partnership. The United States’ relationships with Pacific Island countries also advanced, including through the release of the White House’s Pacific Partnership Strategy.

Looking ahead, several potential flashpoints will require careful management in 2023, including North Korea’s nuclear program, China-India border flare-ups and rising tensions in the Taiwan Strait. A key question will be whether the United States’ progress and China’s relative setbacks over the past year create conditions conducive for Washington and Beijing to lower the temperature of

bilateral relations.

Biden will face domestic political pressure to maintain an unyielding posture on China. China’s President Xi Jinping, similarly, is unlikely to relent on issues that are aggravating tensions. Still, from a strategic standpoint, the United States’ global partners would welcome efforts by Washington to cool tensions, even if they do not yield reciprocal actions from Beijing.

US officials are receiving consistent demands from foreign counterparts to responsibly manage competition with China. Many countries around the world are more focussed on addressing proximate challenges, such as rising sea levels and mounting debt, than they are on great power competition. They want to see the United States galvanise global efforts to tackle common challenges rather than grow fixated on tit-for-tat games with China.

The Biden administration entered office believing it needed to invest at home and deepen relations with partners to put the United States in a ‘situation of strength’ to deal directly with China. Now that it has made historic investments in US innovation and strengthened bonds with global partners, a key question is whether the Biden

administration will address differences directly with China.

US policymakers cannot separate their regional strategy from their China policy. Just as Washington cannot get China policy right without situating it within a strong regional strategy, the same is true in reverse. A good Asia strategy without a sound China policy will produce an incomplete approach to the region.

The United States will host the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum’s economic leaders meeting in San Francisco in November 2023. President Xi will likely use his participation in the summit as an occasion to make an accompanying visit to the United States.

If this visit materialises, it will shed light on central questions for the year ahead — will the United States and China enhance their capacity to manage points of contention and control the risk of escalation? Will they figure out how to act in mutual self-interest by pooling capabilities toward addressing common challenges such as climate change, macroeconomic stabilisation and public health? Or will their differences define the limits of the possible for addressing regional and global challenges?

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(Continued from Page 6)

sides recognize that the animosity Trump fostered does not serve the interests of either country, both have an

incentive and stated willingness to pursue at least a limited rapprochement, and both have taken modest steps in that direction.

But to make major

progress in the next nine months, both sides will need to step up the pace of dialogue and be willing to make some tough political decisions. There isn’t time

to waste with an Alphonse and Gaston routine, dithering over who should act first or whose turn it is to act next. If they are to accomplish anything of

consequence before the window of opportunity closes, both President Biden and President Díaz-Canel have to grasp the fierce urgency of now.

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Pakistan Stock Exchange's 100-index loses 91 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) lost 91.34 points on Wednesday, witnessing a negative change of 0.22 percent, closing at 40,539.30 against 40,630.64 points on the previous day.

A total of 142,881,828 shares were traded during the day as compared to 201,058,817 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs4.334 billion against Rs4.977 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 325 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 128 of them recorded gains and 173 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 24 companies remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were Dewan Motors with 10,850,000

shares at Rs15.54 per share Sui South Gas with 10,734,500 shares at Rs11.06 per share, and Al Shaheer(R) with 9,350,854 shares at Rs1.07 per share.

Rafhan Maize witnessed a maximum increase of Rs499.00 per share price, closing at Rs9599.00, whereas the runner-up was Premium Tex. with a Rs34.97 rise in its per share price to Rs610.00.

Nestle Pakistan witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs100.00 per share closing at Rs5750.00, followed by J.D.W Sugar with Rs14.66 decline to close at Rs405.33.

Rupee remains flat against dollar

The exchange rate of the Pakistani rupee depreciated by 01 paisa against the US dollar in the interbank trading on Wednesday and closed at Rs226.94 against

the previous day's closing of Rs226.93.

According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs233.75 and Rs236 respectively.

The price of the euro increased by 99 paisa and closed at Rs240.58 against the previous day's closing of Rs239.59, according to the State Bank of Pakistan.

The Japanese yen gained one paisa to close at Rs1.74, whereas an increase of Rs2.25 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British pound, which was traded at Rs273.15 as compared to its last closing of Rs270.90.

The exchange rates of the Emirates dirham and Saudi riyal remained unchanged to close at Rs61.79 and Rs60.35 respectively.

Gold price up by Rs900 to Rs188,600 per tola

The price of 24 karat per tola gold witnessed an increase of Rs900 on Wednesday and was sold all time high at Rs188,600 against its sale at Rs187,700, the last trading day.

The price of 10 gram 24 karat also increased by Rs772 and was sold at Rs161,694 against Rs160,922; whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat went up to Rs148,220 against its sale at Rs147,512, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola and ten gram remained unchanged at Rs2,150 and Rs1843.27 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market increased by \$29 and was sold at \$1862 against its sale at \$1833, the association reported.



MULTAN: Daily wages workers unloading onion bags from delivery truck at vegetable market.

Exports to Afghanistan increased

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's export of goods and services to Afghanistan witnessed an increase of 2.83 percent during the first five months of current fiscal year (2022-23) as compared to the exports of corresponding period of last year, State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) reported.

The overall exports to Afghanistan were recorded at US \$213.282 million during July-November (2022-23) against exports of US \$207.407 million during July- November (2021-22), showing growth of 2.83 percent, SBP data revealed.

On year-to-year basis, the exports to Afghanistan however decreased 23.46 percent from \$48.686 million in November 2022, against the exports of \$37.263 million in November 2021.

Meanwhile, on month-on-month basis, the exports to Afghanistan also dipped by 23.73 percent during November 2022 as compared to the exports of \$48.860 million in October 2022, SBP data revealed.

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

On the other hand, the imports from Afghanistan into the country during the period under review was recorded at US \$ 11.523 million against US \$73.120 million last year, showing decline of 84.24 percent in July- November (2022-23).

On year-on-year basis, the import for Afghanistan witnessed also decreased by 94.58 percent from US \$25.368 million in November 2021, against the imports of US \$1.373 million in November 2022.

On month-on-month basis, the imports from Afghanistan into country dipped by 31.03 percent during November 2022, as compared to the imports of US \$1.991 million during October 2022, according to the data.

Traders urged to take advantage of Indonesia's emerging market

RAWALPINDI (APP): Indonesian Ambassador to Pakistan Adam Tugion Wednesday urged Pakistani businessmen to take advantage of Indonesia's emerging market.

During his visit to the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI), he said that Indonesia wanted to increase bilateral trade with Pakistan and strengthen business relations.

Adam said that Indonesia could provide opportunities to Pakistan for trade and economic activities in the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) market with a population of 623 million, enhancing trade

growth between the two countries.

He said that Pakistan and Indonesia already had a preliminary agreement on the Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA), which had boosted bilateral trade in various sectors.

"Pakistan has a lot of potential in traditional herbal medicines and pointed out that herbal medicines are receiving a very positive response from the world population."

The Ambassador said that the Indonesian Embassy would participate in the food festivals and exhibitions organized by the Chamber.

RCCI President Saqib Rafiq briefed the

Ambassador about the ongoing activities of the Chamber. He said that there was a need to enhance links between the two countries at the Chamber level and between the private sectors to increase the trade volume.

Saqib expressed the hope that after signing the Free Trade Agreement (FTA), bilateral trade and economic activities between both the countries would be increased.

The RCCI president highlighted vital areas, including IT, Tourism, pharmaceuticals, education and culture, where bilateral cooperation could be increased through chamber platforms.

Trade deficit narrows by 32.65% in 1st half of FY23

ISLAMABAD (APP): The trade deficit witnessed a decline of 32.65 percent during the first half of the current fiscal year as compared to the corresponding period of last year, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported.

The trade deficit during July-December (2022-23) was recorded at \$17.133 billion against the deficit of \$25.438 billion in July-December (2021-22), a decline of 32.65 percent.

The exports during the period were recorded at \$14.249 billion against \$15.125 billion last year, showing a decline of 5.79 percent.

On the other hand, the imports witnessed a sharp decline of 22.63 percent by falling from \$40.563 billion

last year to \$31.382 billion during the current fiscal year.

On year-on-year basis, the exports from the country witnessed a decline of 16.64 percent and were recorded at \$2.304 billion in December 2022 against the exports of \$2.764 billion in December 2021.

The imports also decreased to \$5.161 billion in December 2022 from \$7.580 billion in December 2021, showing negative growth of 31.91 percent.

On month-on-month basis, the exports during December 2022 declined by 3.64 percent when compared to the exports of \$2.391 billion in November 2022.

The imports into the country also declined by

0.41 percent in December 2022 when compared to the imports of \$5.182 billion in November 2022, according to the data.

Meanwhile, the services' exports went up by 3.97 percent during the first five months (July-November) of the current fiscal year as compared to the same period of last year.

The service trade during the period under review was recorded at \$2.259 billion against the exports of \$2.172 billion last year.

Likewise, the import of services witnessed 11.83 percent decrease by going down from \$3.483 billion last year to \$3.071 billion during the current year, according to PBS break up of figures.

'Financing schemes initiated by SBP' held

SIALKOT (APP): A seminar on the Financing Schemes initiated by the State Bank of Pakistan was arranged in the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry here on Wednesday.

The event was organized in collaboration with the Small and Medium Enterprises SCCI and the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) in which heads of various banks including commercial, Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry Sialkot (WCCIS) Senior Vice President (SVP) Gulzaib Waqas Awan, Member Executive Committee WCCIS Syeda Shabina Gillani and a large number of business community participated.

Chairman departmental committee Shafique-ur-Rehman welcomed all distinguished members and gave various suggestions to SCCI members to expand their business.

CDA urged to cancel slaughterhouse construction

ISLAMABAD (APP): Agro Trade Promotion Committee of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) expressed concerns over the Capital Development Authority (CDA)'s plan to construct a slaughterhouse in Sector I-11/4 of Islamabad at an area of over five acres of land.

The fruit and vegetable businesses need a hygienic environment while the existence of an abattoir near Sabzi Mandi (vegetable market) would create unhygienic conditions and negatively impact the health of fruit and vegetable consumers, they said.

Therefore, they strongly opposed this move and called upon the CDA to cancel this project immediately in the larger interest of the citizens.

Addressing the meeting, ICCI Acting President Faad Waheed said that fruits and vegetables businesses need a neat and clean environment, but the construction

of a slaughterhouse in the vicinity of Sabzi Mandi in Islamabad would be against the interest of these businesses as it would create a bad smell in the area and affect the environment.

He said that the concerns of the business community of Sabzi Mandi are genuine and stressed that the CDA should reconsider its plan of constructing an abattoir near the largest fruits and vegetables market of the twin cities and move this facility out of the city to save the businesses and citizens from its unhealthy consequences.

ICCI Vice President Engineer Muhammad Azhar ul Islam Zafar said that according to the SOP of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (UNFAO), the slaughterhouse should be away from residential areas and emphasized that CDA should follow the international practice for setting up this facility away from

the city.

Tahir Ayub, Convener, Agro Trade Promotion Committee of ICCI said that the I-11/4 sector is already facing the issue of water shortage while an abundant supply of potable water and adequate facilities for treatment and disposal are required for a slaughterhouse, which is not possible in the said area.

He urged the CDA to immediately withdraw this project to save the Sabzi Mandi businesses from its harmful consequences.

He further said that Sabzi Mandi is also facing double taxation from the Market Committee and CDA, which is unjustified.

He said that after the establishment of the Market Committee, CDA is not doing any developmental works in Sabzi Mandi due to which the condition of its infrastructure and other services has deteriorated.

Pakistan's trade with UAE to surpass US \$10.6 billion in 2023, says envoy

ISLAMABAD (APP): The bilateral trade between Pakistan and United Arab Emirates is expected to grow up to double from the US\$10.6 billion volume achieved in 2021-2022, Pakistan's top diplomat in the UAE said on Wednesday.

The last calendar year recorded a US\$10.6 billion in trade "the highest volume Pakistan had in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region," he added.

"The potential is much more. I have been tasked by the political leadership of my country to increase trade, promote business opportunities, investment and elevate cultural interaction between Pakistan and the UAE," Pakistan Ambassador to the UAE Faisal Niaz Tirmizi said in an interview with Emirates News Agency.

The Ambassador said that the UAE and Pakistan were enjoying historic relations. "Pakistan was the first country to send its ambassador six months before the formation of the UAE.

"We sent our economic, agriculture, and defence advisors way before that," Tirmizi said.

"Pakistanis consider the UAE their second home and vice versa. The close geographical proximity between the two countries gives a great opportunity to work together," he further stated.

Around 1.6 million Pakistanis are residing in the UAE and during 2020-2021, they sent \$6.11 billion in remittances.

The Ambassador confirmed that Pakistan has started negotiations on the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with the UAE and hoped to have significant progress by the year's end.

"Yes, we are working on this, it is very important. The Ministry of Commerce of Pakistan is in touch with the relevant authorities in the UAE and hopefully, we will make some significant progress on this agreement before 2023."

The UAE is the biggest trading partner of Pakistan in the MENA region, he said, adding that CEPA would provide an opportunity for the two countries to increase their bilateral trade many folds.

The Ambassador highlighted three sectors namely Fintech, IT, and Startups, where Pakistan and the

UAE can further collaborate.

"Last year, our exports increased to US\$3 billion in these sectors. We have skilled manpower and new startups. I will be focusing very closely on this, because I think there are immense opportunities between the UAE and Pakistan to further collaborate."

Ambassador Tirmizi said that the UAE was the most generous country that provided humanitarian relief to flood-affected areas in Pakistan, thanking President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, for his noble gestures.

The UAE established an air bridge to transport humanitarian aid to the people affected by the unprecedented floods. "They have sent over 70 flights carrying relief items," he said. "This was critical for those people affected by the floods."

The ambassador said that the UAE has taken a lead in climate change as it is hosting COP28 in November 2023, and has the headquarters of IRENA, which is an inter-governmental organisation supporting countries in their transition to sustain-

able energy.

"Climate change is something that is really impacting the lives and livelihood of so many people," he noted, adding that Pakistan is only contributing less than 1 percent to global greenhouse gas emissions and is one of the most vulnerable countries to the impacts of climate change.

"We have one flood in 10 - 20 years and in 2010 and 2011 we had two floods and now the latest flood. Glaciers in the north of the country are disappearing," he said, stressing that climate change should be addressed "as climate and environment are the common heritage of our planet".

He said that as chair of Group 77, Pakistan negotiated the establishment of loss and damage fund at the Sharm el-Sheikh Climate Change Conference (COP 27). "We will be carrying forward the same thing that those countries who have been badly impacted by the effect of climate change, their issues have to be addressed."

The Ambassador said that the UAE has taken a lead in clean energy. "They are investing both in tech-

nology and in projects like solar, wind or other renewables."

"Pakistan will be working closely with the UAE, and you will see very soon the fruition of these negotiations that have already started between the two countries," he added. "Hopefully, we will see a big project in renewables in Pakistan."

The ambassador identified some sectors where the two countries can increase their cooperation, saying that Pakistan's Indus valley civilisation has contributed richly to the world heritage.

We have Gandhara civilisation, a rich Islamic heritage, and a Sikh heritage that we would like to promote in the UAE. Pakistan pavilion at the Expo 2020 Dubai depicted the strong culture and civilisation of Pakistan, he said and added, We want to promote culture, music, and art footprint in the UAE and vice versa.

"We will encourage Emiratis as well as other nationalities to visit Pakistan and enjoy the rich diversity, the natural beauty of the country, and most importantly the warmth of the people," the Ambassador said.



In brief

Pant to have surgery in Mumbai

NEW DELHI (Agencies): India wicket-keeper Rishabh Pant is to be flown to Mumbai by air ambulance to undergo surgery after being injured in a car crash last week. Pant has been receiving treatment at Max Hospital in Dehradun. The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) said the 25-year-old will also have "subsequent procedures for ligament tears". Police said Pant's car flipped over twice and caught fire after he "dozed off" and lost control. In a statement, BCCI secretary Jay Shah said: "The Board will make every effort to aid and expedite the recovery process of Rishabh and will provide him with all the support he needs during this period." Pant crashed on 30 December between Mangalaur and Nursan, close to his hometown of Roorkee in the northern state of Uttarakhand. Reports in India said the Delhi Capitals player suffered injuries to his head, back and leg.

Messi returns to club duty

PARIS (Agencies): Seventeen days after guiding Argentina to an epic World Cup final victory over France, Lionel Messi reported back to work on Wednesday, his French club Paris Saint-Germain announced. The 35-year-old seven-time Ballon d'Or winner reported back to the club's training ground as they prepare for Saturday's French Cup tie at third tier side Chateauroux. Messi scored twice as Argentina drew 3-3 with France in the Qatar final, before prevailing in the penalty shoot-out. Since then he has been celebrating in Argentina and spending time with his family. On Wednesday, he was given a guard of honour by his teammates at the training ground, before being presented with a small trophy by PSG's sporting director Luis Campos, according to images posted by the club on its Twitter account. Messi's teammates Kylian Mbappe, who scored a hat-trick in a losing cause in the final, and Morocco's Achraf Hakimi returned to club duty just three days after the final with Brazil's Neymar checking in a day later. Messi is unlikely to play this weekend, more probably making his return in the home Ligue 1 match against Angers next Wednesday.

'Man City will struggle'

LONDON (Agencies): Pep Guardiola believes Manchester City have it all to do if they are to overhaul leaders Arsenal at the top of the Premier League table. Reigning champions City can move back to within five points of the Gunners away to Chelsea on Thursday after Arsenal dropped points in Tuesday's goalless draw with Newcastle. "We have to reduce the gap by playing good and winning games, but they (Arsenal) get more than 100 points if they keep this average and we will not catch them," Guardiola told a pre-match press conference on Wednesday. "We have to be almost perfect and hope they drop points. Last night they were still excellent." Chelsea have won just one of their last seven Premier League games but Guardiola still expects a difficult encounter at Stamford Bridge. "It's the Premier League," the Spaniard said. "They're all tough. They're a tough side, well-managed. It doesn't matter what position you are when you go to Stamford Bridge. It is always difficult."



KARACHI: Saud Shakeel, right, celebrates with Sarfraz Ahmed after hitting a boundary during the third day of the second test cricket match between Pakistan and New Zealand.

Pakistan off to a winning start at British Junior Open

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's Ahmad Rayan Khalil, Nauman Khan, Azan Ali Khan and Huraira Khan got off to a flying start at British Junior Open (BJO) Squash Championship 2023 as they all registered identical wins in the first round matches of their respective categories in Birmingham, UK on Wednesday.

According to information available here by Pakistan Squash Federation, Ahmad Rayan beat England's Aaron

Suthi 3-0 in boys U13 category in a one-sided affair by a game score of 11/2, 11/2 to proceed to the 2nd round.

In another boys U13 fixture, Nauman beat Kylen Calder of England 3-0 by a game score of 11/6, 11/2, 11/1.

Azan Ali overpowered Thero Motshubi Botswana 3-0 in boys U15 category by a game score of 11/4, 11/7, 11/5.

Huraira edged passed Hennery Parkinson of England 3-0 in boys U17

category by a game score of 11/2, 11/7, 11/7.

Pakistan's Noor Zaman is scheduled to feature in boys U19 category, while Mahnoor Ali is to feature in girls U11 category. The BJO is widely considered as the second most prestigious junior open squash competition after the World Junior Squash Championships, which are held for U19s only, leaving the BJO as the de facto World Championship for the U11, U13, U15 and U17 grades.

Djokovic set to miss key US tournaments

LONDON (Agencies): Novak Djokovic is set to miss Indian Wells and the Miami Open after the United States extended its requirement for international visitors to be vaccinated against Covid-19.

Proof of vaccination will be required to enter the country until at least 10 April but Serbia's Djokovic has previously said he is unvaccinated.

Indian Wells and the Miami Open - two of the most prestigious tournaments on the tennis calendar outside the Grand Slams - start on 6 and 20 March respectively.

Former world number one Djokovic, 35, is currently in Australia - 12 months after he was deported from the country before the Australian Open because of his vaccination status.

Australia dropped its vaccine requirements in July and Djokovic's three-year visa ban was overturned in November.

He is through to the second round of the Adelaide International as he continues his build-up to the Australian Open, the first major of the season, which starts on 16 January.

Djokovic is a nine-time champion in Melbourne and is just one Grand Slam title shy of Rafael Nadal's men's record of 22.

Speaking about his 2022 experience in Australia, in which he was detained and forced to stay at an immigration hotel, he said: "You can't forget those events. It's one of these things that sticks with you, it stays with you for I guess the rest of your life."

"It was something that I've never experienced before, and hopefully never again."

Chitral Snow Festival 2023 has concluded

F.P. Report

CHITRAL: Chitral Snow Festival 2023 has concluded with enthusiasm.

Teams of male and female students from various educational institutions of Chitral participated in the festival.

The final match of the event was played between Bonny Environmental Academy and Purwak Academy, Lower Chitral. On this occasion, an official from the Canadian High Commission performed the duties of umpiring for the final match.

Prizes were distributed to the players who performed well in the closing ceremony.



Saud Shakeel strokes maiden century but New Zealand strike back with late wickets

KARACHI (APP): Saud Shakeel registered his first Test century in fifth appearance but Pakistan threw away his labourious innings by losing four late wickets for 12 runs on the third day of the second Test against New Zealand at the National Bank Cricket Arena on Wednesday.

Pakistan were on course for closing out the day in a comfortable position when they reached 385 for five. But as it has been a few times this season, they dramatically lost four wickets for 12 runs in 26 balls to end the day at 407 for nine, while replying to New Zealand's 449. The home side still trails the visitors by 42 runs in the first innings.

Resuming at the overnight score of 13 in Pakistan's 154 for three, the 27-year-old local lad finished the day at 124 not out. He has been batting for over eight hours, during which he has received 336 balls and struck 17 fours.

The former Pakistan Shaheens captain reached his half-century from 173 balls, while he took 67 balls to score the next 50 runs to reach the magical figures for the first time in his ninth

innings and that too at his home ground. The left-hander's only blemish was when at the score of 102, he played a loose shot but got away with it when Tom Latham dropped a simple catch at point off Tim Southee.

Saud made his debut this season in the first Test against England in Rawalpindi and had scores of 37, 76 (Rawalpindi), 63, 94 (Multan), 23, 53 (Karachi) and 22, 55 not out (Karachi v NZ, 1st Test) before this Test.

While Saud went on to complete a memorable century, his overnight partner Imam-ul-Haq could only add nine to his last evening's score before being caught at the wicket off Tim Southee for 83. Imam and Saud put on 83 runs for the fourth wicket in 215 balls.

Following Imam's departure, Saud found a reliable ally in Sarfraz Ahmed as the two batters put on 150 runs for the fifth wicket in 238 balls.

Sarfraz, who scored 86 and 53 in the previous Test - his first since January 2019 - was unfortunate to be declared stumped off Daryl Mitchell after scoring an attractive 78 off 109

balls with 10 elegant fours.

Saud then put on 53 runs for the sixth wicket with Salman Ali Agha. The partnership ended when Michael Bracewell took a brilliant reflex action catch in the slip off Ajaz Patel, who later accounted for Hasan Ali (four). Ish Sodhi then dismissed Naseem Shah (four) and Mir Hamza on successive deliveries as Pakistan slipped to 385 for five to 397 for nine.

Patel finished the day at three for 88, while Sodhi scooped two for 94. Southee, Matt Henry and Mitchell picked up a wicket each.

Scores in brief:

New Zealand (1st innings) 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) (overnight 154-3) 407-9, 132 overs (Saud Shakeel 124 not out, Imam-ul-Haq 83, Sarfraz Ahmed 78, Salman Ali Agha 41, Babar Azam 24, Shan Masood 20; Ajaz Patel 3-88, Ish Sodhi 2-94).

Minority Games kick off at Islamia College Peshawar



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The final round of Inter District Games kicked off here with Member Provincial Assembly Wilson Wazir's team won football match by scoring a decisive goal against his opponent team.

In cricket match, MPA Ranjit Singh's team scored 120 runs in 12 overs while winning the toss and choosing to bat first. Wazir team was bowled out on 82.

The matches were organised in connection with the final round of inter-district games organized by the Directorate of

Sports Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa in Peshawar. Matches of minority teams were held on Islamia College ground here.

A special ceremony was also held in this regard where apart from Vice-Chancellor Islamia College University Professor Gul Majeed, Adviser to the

Chief Minister on Minority Affairs Wazir Zada, Provincial Assembly Members Wilson Wazir, Ravi Kumar, Sardar Ranjit Singh, Focal Person Nadeem Khan, Deputy Director Sports Jamsheed Baloch, Sajid Afridi, Director Sports Islamia

College Ali Hoti and other personalities were present.

In Le Ball, Wazir's team defeated Ravi Kumar team. Members of the provincial assembly in their addresses lauded the provincial government and the sports directorate for organizing the games. They said the such games were organised for the first time wherein players from minority communities participated.

There have been opportunities to play on such grounds where the best facilities were provided. Vice-Chancellor Islamia College University Professor Gul Majeed welcomed the players and organisers and said doors of Islamia College are open for minority players and students.

The games were organised to carry forward vision of Chief Minister Mehmoood Khan, Provincial Sports Minister Muhammad Atif Khan and DG Sports Khalid Khan. They said such opportunities would explore talent in different games.

Mardan, Peshawar secure win in PM Youth Talent Hunt Women Hockey League

PESHAWAR (APP): Spirited Mardan and strong Peshawar recorded opening day victory in the Prime Minister Muhammad

Shehbaz Sharif Youth Women Talent Hunt Hockey League which got underway here at Abdul Wali Khan sports Complex on Wednesday.

Former national athlete Mariyyah Samin, Deputy Director Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University formally inaugurated the Championship with representative and Assistant Project Manager Higher education Commissioner (HEC) Iftikhar Alam. Teams from Bannu, Mardan, Peshawar, Swat and Hazara are taking part in the event which will continue till January 10.

In the opening match, Mardan defeated Hazara by 3-0 in which Nida, Mehaq and Asma scored one goal each in the 45th, 59th and 66th minute on the field attempt. Both Mardan and Hazara tied the tally till the end of the first two quarters but these were the two last quarters in which Mardan kept up the pressure and scored three goals.

Hazara team members played well but their front line missed some sure goals and thus giving opportunities to the Mardan team to strike back. The Hazara goalkeeper Muqadas was the pick of the pack who saved

some sure goal chances. Muqadas Jadoon was also declared as the best player of the match.

In the second match, Peshawar defeated Swat by 2-0, Momina and Malika scored one goal each against Swat. The Swat team tried their hardest to level the match but failed and thus Peshawar won the match by 2-0. Muhammad Waseem, Muhammad Ali supervised the match while Qazi Najum and Kaleem Ullah acted as field judges.

Earlier, the two-day Prime Minister of Pakistan Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif Youth Talent Hunt Program Girls' Hockey training and coaching camp under qualified coaches concluded at the same venue of the Astro-Turf of the Abdul Wali Sports Complex, Charsadda.

A total of 125 selected girls players from Hazara, Malakand, Mardan, Bannu and Peshawar Division attended the camp.

Adviser to the Prime Minister on Sports, Youth, Culture and Political Affairs for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Engr Amir Muqam, Directorate General Sports Higher Education Commission (HEC), Directorate Sports Shaheed Benazir Bhutto, Vice Chancellor Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University (SBBWU) Professor Dr. Shafia

Ahmad, Deputy Director Sports SBBWU Mariyyah Samin and Assistant Miss Nousheen, Salma Faiz supervising the Hockey League.

The training and coaching hockey camp is attended by 125 hockey players who are selected in the first phase under the program at the regional level from Bannu, Peshawar, Swat, Mardan, Hazara and Charsadda.

Talking to the media, the Coordinator for Women Hockey, Mariyyah Samin said that all arrangements have been made and the girls players were accommodated in Abdul Wali Khan Sports Complex Hostel. She said after the camp, League Hockey is being played among all five teams and the best players out of the league would be selected for the National Hockey League. The two national selectors from Karachi and Lahore are also coming to select 36 for 18 members each team who would represent

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the National Hockey League.

She said the best teams from different zones are participating in the National League. The aim of which is to prepare the best hockey teams of Pakistan who will represent the country not only at the national but also at the international level in the future.



In brief

IRSA releases 23,100 cusecs water
ISLAMABAD (APP): The Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Wednesday released 23,100 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 36,900 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbella Dam was 1492.66 feet and was 94.66 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow in the dam was recorded as 16,500 cusecs while the outflow as 5,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jehlum at Mangla Dam was 1118.85 feet, which was 68.85 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water were recorded 6,300 cusecs and 4,000 cusecs respectively. Whereas, the release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 10,000, 16,400, 9,500 and 500 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 8,700 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera and 5,400 cusecs was released from River Chenab at Marala.

Deadlock with MQM will end soon: Zubair

ISLAMABAD (APP): PML-N leader Muhammad Zubair on Wednesday said that our discussion with Muttahida Qaumi Movement (Pakistan) MQM-P is going on, hopefully, the deadlock will end in a few days. Talking to a private media channel, Muhammad Zubair said that the federal government delegation would hold talks with MQM-Pakistan leaders and is also likely to meet the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leadership in order to find a way out. Answering a query, regarding Maryam Nawaz return, Zubair said that she will come back very soon and will re-organize the party at all functional tiers as chief organizer. On economic crises, Muhammad Zubair said that to overcome the economic crisis, the government should take bold decisions and move forward adding that very soon they will be able to provide relief to the people.

Power suspension programme

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Wednesday issued a power suspension programme for Thursday for various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work. According to an 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 CDA Flats, Shaheed Millat, Pandorian, Athal, Ghori Garden, UC Road, F-10, G-10 Center, I-8/3, I-10/4, G-13/2, E-11/2, NIH, AQ Khan, Khadana, Beirut, Nimbal, Patriata, Upper Topa, Bri Imam, Sohtran Road Feeders, Rawalpindi City Circle City, F-Block, Abdul Rehman, Shaheed Mohammad Deen, Khanna II, Muslim Town, AFOHS, Tamasamabad, Liaquat Bagh, Gulshanabad, Sarafa Bazar, Jinnah Road, Iqbal Road, Quaidabad, Abubakar, Kayani Road, Captain Aamir, EME Complex, P&T Wini, Zeeshan Colony, MH-1&2, NLC, I-16/1, Ratta Feeders, Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, Hyder Road, Cantt, Dhok Farman Ali, Jail Park, Swan Garden, II, Lar View, Topi Pump, Lal Karti, 502 Workshop, Dharmial, Quaid-e-Azam Colony, RA Bazar, New GHQ, CMH.I, Army Flats, New Rawat, Kahota City, Khawaja, Ghazan Khan, Mandara, LTC, Hameed Jhanghi, Mandara.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Climate Change, Senator Sherry Rehman meeting with Pakistan Humanitarian Forum (PHF), Secretariat Team and Members Executive Committee.

Pakistan Railway ready to speed up from 120km to 160km per hour: Saad

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Railways Khawaja Saad Rafique Wednesday said that all the coaches imported from China are perfectly fit and compatible with the Pakistan railways system.

"All the coaches are well inspected by Pakistan Railways, found completely fit, and will be operated with Green Line which was set to be started during the current month," said the minister in a tweet.

The minister said that all the coaches were inspected thoroughly and after which they were approved to run on a trial basis.

Saad Rafique said that after the successful trial, all the coaches were now ready to run and will be seen running on the railway tracks in couple of days.

He said false and baseless propaganda by the sponsored pages to under-

mine Pakistan Railways' image and efforts to facilitate the passengers.

The minister said that Pakistan Railways would take legal action against the pages spreading fake news about the department.

It is pertinent to mention here that Pakistan Railways has received the first batch of around 46 of the total 230 high-speed modern coaches from China which would not only help modernize the railway operations rather generate enhanced revenue for the department.

"The new coaches will have the capacity to run at a speed of 160 kilometers per hour whereas the current maximum speed limit of trains is about 120 kilometers per hour. These coaches will significantly improve train service."

The modern coaches would offer an improved

train travel experience in the country to 220 million people, many of whom rely on trains for long journeys. "The new coaches comprise economy, AC standard, and AC parlour classes for passengers and luggage and brake vans.

Pakistan Railways had carried out a test run of the new coaches on the Main Line-I (ML-I) starting from Karachi to Peshawar via Rohri, Sukkar, Bahawalpur, Khanewal, Lahore, and Rawalpindi before beginning the commercial travel.

After receiving 46 completely built units (CBUs) manufactured in China, Pakistan Railways would soon begin manufacturing of 184 similar coaches at its carriage factory in Islamabad with the assistance of Chinese engineers under the technology transfer agreement.

Zardari felicitates supporters on ZAB's birth anniversary

ISLAMABAD (INP): President Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians (PPPP) Asif Ali Zardari on Wednesday felicitated the supporters of the Party on the birth anniversary of the founding chairman of Pakistan Peoples Party Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Quaid-e-Awam was still ruling over the hearts of millions of people even after 43 years of his judicial killing, he said in his message issued by his office.

President Zardari said the graves of the murderers of the people's leader, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and those who were involved in his assassination conspiracy were deserted. President Zardari said Quaid-e-Awam was a gift bestowed upon the people that had been oppressed and exploited for a long time and added that Quaid-e-Awam taught the people how to think, speak and live with dignity.

He said the Quaid-e-Awam clashed with the powerful forces of the world for Pakistan's nuclear capability. Asif Ali Zardari said that Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto gave right to have a passport to every citizen, so they could make their country proud in any corner of the world.

Sanjrani favours Tayyip Erdogan for Nobel Peace Prize

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Senate Sadiq Sanjrani through a letter has officially registered the nomination in favour of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan for the "Nobel Peace Prize". In a letter addressed to the Norwegian Nobel Committee on Wednesday, Chairman Senate has favours Turkish President for his efforts to resolve the Ukrainian crisis, said a press release issued.

Chairman Senate said that Russia-Ukraine war had quickly turned into a nuclear flashpoint that could have ended in catastrophe for the whole world. Due to his untiring efforts, timely and effective interventions with both sides, Tayyip Erdogan single-handedly averted a global disaster, he said. He further added that President Erdogan is a true statesman and leader, who always strives for the betterment and prosperity of not just his country, but the region and the world in general.

Kaira urges UN to ensure true implementation of self-determination resolution for Kashmiris

ISLAMABAD (APP): Adviser to Prime Minister on Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Qamar Zaman Kaira has urged the United Nations on the occasion of Kashmir Right to Self-Determination Day to ensure the implementation of its resolutions passed for the right of self-determination of Kashmiris.

Thousands of Kashmiris have sacrificed their lives for the great cause, said a press release. He said that today, apart from implementing the resolutions of the United Nations, India is flouting human rights in the occupied valley and not a day passes in Occupied Kashmir when innocent Kashmiri youths are not martyred.

He said that India is pursuing Israeli-style policies in Occupied Kashmir and is changing the demography of Occupied Kashmir under the illegal and unilateral measures of August 5, 2019 to reduce the proportion of Muslim population in Occupied Kashmir.

He said that India is trying to achieve its nefarious goals through extrajudicial killings and genocide of Kashmiris.

Adviser on Kashmir Affairs said that all

these actions of India are in open violation not only of the United Nations but also of all international laws and the Fourth Geneva Convention.

He urged the United Nations and the international community to take immediate steps to prevent Indian state terrorism in Occupied Kashmir and fulfill their responsibilities to give Kashmiris their right to self-determination.

Qamar said that he will continue to raise his voice for the Kashmiris' right to self-determination and will not back down even an inch from their support.

He said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari are fighting for the rights of Kashmiris at all world forums.

He said that India is not paying attention to these efforts and this is the reason why there was a protest against Bilawal Bhutto Zardari in India.

The series of fighting on the forums will continue until the full implementation of the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council for the right of Kashmiris to self-determination.

HEC reviews performance of 133 universities so far

ISLAMABAD (APP): Higher Education Commission (HEC) was performing the quality assurance review of the universities on regular basis and so far, 133 universities across the country have been reviewed on standards set forth by HEC.

According to official sources, HEC by its ordinance was empowered to cause evaluation of the performance of institutions. The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) of HEC was mandated to initiate several programmes to safeguard minimum standards of quality among Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) across the country. Institutional Performance Evaluation (IPE) was one of the key components of QAA-HEC Pakistan to safeguard standards and provide a platform for improvement and promote a culture of quality in the higher education sector across Pakistan.

IPE was a holistic evaluation program that provides a platform to have an institution-wide review of the HEIs.

It was a Peer Review Process that aims

at improving the overall institutional quality. IPE consists of eleven (11) standards and these standards are used to review overall institutional development and the effectiveness of teaching and learning.

The standards include Mission Statement and Goals Planning and Evaluation, Organization and Governance, Integrity, Faculty, Students, Institutional Resources, Academic program and Curricula, Public Disclosure and Transparency, Assessment & Quality Assurance, and Student Support Service.

IPE review was a five-year cyclical activity to evaluate institutional performance on the aforementioned standards. IPE (the review process) was divided into three steps: the first being the pre-review step (data collection process through University Portfolio Report (UPR)).

The second step was the execution of the review (physical inspection) and the third step was post-review activities that includes sharing of the IPE review report with the universities.

World Braille Day observed as reminder to uplift blind persons

ISLAMABAD (APP): World Braille Day was marked on Wednesday around the globe, including Pakistan as a reminder for providing accessibility and independence to the blind/visually-impaired persons.

Talking to APP, in connection with World Braille Day, Director of Pakistan's first ever Braille Book Corner 'Gosha-i-Noor' Raja Javed Iqbal said that National Library of Pakistan (NLP) opened a library for special persons in 2018, marking the birth anniversary celebrations week of Louis Braille - the inventor of Braille system for visually impaired persons.

He said more than 50 braille books, including copies of The Holy Quran have been placed in this corner, while around 7,000 other books were available, "and the number is being increased gradually."

He said that computers

EOBI launching one window operation soon

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Employees Old Age Benefits Institution (EOBI) here on Wednesday briefed the National Assembly Standing Committee on pension payment criteria of EOBI pensioners and deliberation on the establishment of one window operation in all EOBI offices to cater to the old age pensioners/windows. He also explained that for one window operation, the steps are to be initiated from the bigger cities, said a press release.

In this regard, a proper strategy needs to be devised in consultation with Operation Team for the consolidation of benefits cycles in mega center. The NA body meeting on Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development (OP & HRD) was held here under the Chairmanship of Sheikh Fayyaz ud Din, MNA, at Parliament House. Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Overseas Pakistanis was also present in the meeting. The Secretary Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis & Human Resource Development briefed the Committee on appointment, deputation and re-appointments for the last four years.

INGOs collaboration imperative for building climate resilient Pakistan: Sherry Rehman

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Climate Change Senator Sherry Rehman said that collaboration of international organizations was imperative for building climate resilient Pakistan as the country was gearing up to support rehabilitation and recovery, amid funding constraints of 33 million affected population devastated by unprecedented floods of the history.

The Minister said this in a meeting with the delegation of country directors of International non-governmental organizations (INGOs) on the panel of Pakistan Humanitarian Forum (PHF) as part of consultations for the International Conference on Climate Resilient Pakistan, scheduled to be held in Geneva on January 9, 2023, said a news release received here on Wednesday.

Talking with the delegation, Senator Rehman said, "This high-level Conference in Geneva aims to marshal international support for the people and

Government of Pakistan to move forward on recovery as soon as possible after the country went through the world's worst climate event in living memory."

"The plan to rehabilitate, recover and rebuild with resilience is urgent, but we faced a huge funding gap even for first order recovery needs, given that we are servicing rehabilitation and relief for 33 million people. This is too large a number for any country to rehabilitate on our own," she added. The minister underlined that the government's costing of \$16 billion for reconstruction of damaged infrastructure in a flood-resilient mode was not enough to cover full climate resilience, adding, "but we cannot wait, as another season of extreme weather could well hit us before we even begin rebuilding."

To this end, she said the government of Pakistan was co-hosting an international climate resilient Pakistan conference where its objective would be to present the Resilient Recovery, Rehabilitation

and Reconstruction Framework (4RF), comprising of plans and arrangements for the post-floods' recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction and forging long-term partnerships for building Pakistan's climate resilience and adaptation.

"The conference will be co-chaired by the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mian Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif and Secretary General of the United Nations, Antonio Guterres. We are grateful to the support of our international partners and we are looking forward to exploring concrete ways and means to build Pakistan's long-term climate resilience and adaptation including the articulation of provincial perspectives."

The federal minister commended the humanitarian relief efforts done by the INGOs in Pakistan, especially in the aftermath of the catastrophic floods that impacted 33 million people.



LAHORE: First Secretary Development Australian High Commission, Danielle Cashen chaired the meeting at Primary and Secondary Healthcare Department.

Reconstruction completed

LOGAR (Agencies): Education officials of Logar province on Wednesday said that the reconstruction work of 12 school buildings has completed in the province. The Provincial Education spokesman said that the reconstruction work of nine school buildings was funded UNICEF with an amount of 100,000 USA dollars and the repairing of three other school buildings that cost 1.5 million Afghani paid by the Ministry of Education.

The Frontier Post

AFGHANISTAN

Jamadi-us-Sani 12, 1444 — Thursday, January 05, 2023

21 drug dealers arrested

KABUL (Agencies): The Interior Ministry, reported arresting 21 people across the country on charge of drug dealing, trafficking and using alcoholic beverages. Anti-narcotics police arrested twenty-one people on charge with drug trafficking and alcohol use during separate operations in Nangarhar, Sar-i-pl, Kapisa, Takhar, Badakhshan, Khost and Nimroz provinces said the Ministry Interior in a statement Wednesday.

Afghanistan exports 5,000 tons of pine nuts

KABUL (TOLOnews): The Ministry of Industry and Commerce (MoIC) on Wednesday said that Afghanistan has exported at least 5,000 tons of pine nuts worth \$53 million in the past nine months.

The ministry said that most of the pine nuts were sent to China through the air corridor.

"At least 2200 tons of pine nuts have been exported to China and 700 tons of pine nuts were exported through the air corridor,"

said Akhundzada Abdul Salam Jawad, a spokesman for the ministry.

Investors said that the country's pine nuts are one of the most demanded products in the world markets and that the resumption of the air corridor helped the exports to increase.

"Pine nuts are the biggest export materials for our country and the most demanded products in the world markets," said Mahbubullah Mohammadi, an investor.

Analysts said that Afghanistan can have more income through increased pine nuts exports to world markets.

"We will have more income if we have exports directly from Afghanistan to other countries," said Az-rakhsh Hafizi, an analyst.

Figures from the pine nuts producer union show that Afghanistan produces at least 10,000 tons of pine nuts every year, most of which are produced in Khost and Paktia provinces.

IE leaders to pay attention on edu sector

KABUL (Agencies): Deputy Prime Minister of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Mawlawi Abdul Salam Hanafi met with figures and elders of Kabul and Takhar.

According to a statement, their elders, during a meeting called for the attention of the Islamic Emirate on the country's education sector.

They termed it important building consolidate relations between the Islamic system and the people.

Hanafi hailed elders of the mentioned provinces, and called Afghanistan the common home for all Afghans, adding that currently there are no restrictions for any person in the country and all members of the society enjoy complete freedom.

He assumed education is the most important issue in the country and stated that the officials of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan pay special attention to the issue of education.

Youths given with job opportunities

BAGHLAN (Agencies): The Rural Rehabilitation and Development Department in cooperation with the private organizations has created job opportunities for 290 people in Baghlan province.

The provincial Rural Rehabilitation and Development department spokesman Nasir Ahmad said that the department has created work opportunities for 290 people, who have suffered from the economic crisis in the province.

These people were employed in several development projects and received a monthly payment of 8500 Afghani by the World Food Programme in the province. The people will be employed for Nine months until the project's completion in the province.

IEA committed addressing trade unions' problems



KABUL (Agencies): The Deputy Prime Minister, Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, in a meeting with a number of truck unions' members, said that the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan is committed addressing the problems of all trades unions in the country.

According to a statement released by Arg, the Deputy Prime Minister, Kabir, met with a numbers truck unions members in Sepadar palace.

The head of trucks unions, Samiullah said that with the regain sovereignty of the Islamic Emirate, easy services have been provided in the activity of cargo vehicles, extortions have been eliminated, the security of supply and the speed of work have increased.

In the meantime, he also raised some of the problems of truck owners and drivers, during the meeting with Deputy Prime

Minister, Kabir.

For his part, Deputy PM Kabir, said that the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan will address their problems, reminded them that he will share their suggestions and with the relevant authorities.

Based on another news, Mawlawi Kabir, met with the leadership members of the Rish khor People's Council of Kabul.

The head of the People's Council of the Rish khor

area, shared some of the problems of their community with deputy Prime Minister, according to a statement.

Deputy Prime Minister, Kabir, assured the members of the leadership council of Rish khor, that he will share their problems with the relevant authorities of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and take the necessary measures to address their problems.

Displaced families received cash assistance



BAGHLAN (Agencies): in cooperation United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation distributed cash aids to eight hundred displaced families in Baghlan province.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHRC) in coordination with the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation started distributing winter aid to hundreds of displaced families in Baghlan, and 820 displaced families received cash aid in the province, said a statement released by the Ministry.

Each family received 275 US dollars after a survey conducted by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHRC) and in cooperation by the ministry of refugees and repatriation.

Woman opened her own food production factory



BAGHLAN (Agencies): A woman opened a food factory production in Baghlan, with a cost of two million Afghani. For starters the factory provided job opportunities to 30 other women in that province.

A manager in the Khurasan factory, Zarmina Nawabi said that in this factory, all kinds of pickles, jams, pastes, and about fifteen types of sweets, including cakes, Cookies, etc., are produced. She assured on the quality of the food produced in this factory, said that all the products is natural here in the production of food and domestic raw materials are used.

Meanwhile, Ms. Nawabi complained on the poor sales market, but she said

that she is happy to provide work for several women in the city of Pul Khomri. She asked the citizens to use pure national products to grow and strengthen the financial base of the country.

Small female production factories as important in the growth of women's economy said Farkhunda an employee of the factory, said that we were suffering from unemployment and strangeness at home; It's been a while, we have been working at home, we have learned business and help in the family economy.

In addition to the Khurasan production factory, several other small food and non-food production factories for women are active in the city of Pol Khomri.

70 drug addicts recover

PUL - E - KHUMRI (Xinhua): A total of 70 drug addicts have recovered and rejoined their families in Afghanistan's northern Baghlan province, provincial police spokesman Mawlawi Shir Ahmad Burhani said on Wednesday.

Talking to reporters here, the official said that police rounded up 70 drug addicts 45 days ago and shifted them to a drug rehabilitation center in the provincial capital Pul-e-Khumri for treatment.

Rehabilitation of a drug addict requires at least six months, the official said, adding "fortunately the 70 addicts in the Zindagi Dobra treatment camp have been recovered" and sent to their homes very recently.

A total of 1,240 drug addicts have been treated and recovered in the rehabilitation center of Baghlan province over the past several months, Burhani said.

More than 3 million drug addicts reportedly have been living in the war-ravaged Afghanistan.

The Taliban-run administration, which has banned poppy cultivation and drug trafficking, has vowed to keep the country from drug menace and addiction.

Al-Gharafa releases 80 missile birds in wild



FARAH (Agencies): A Qatari foundation Al-Gharafa 80 rare birds in the wild in Farah, while the head of Tourism Department of the Ministry of Information and Culture were present.

The CEO of Al-Gharafa charity foundation, head of Environmental Protection, and some other local officials of Farah province were present while, the

charity releasing the rare birds in the wild in that province, according to reports.

80 rare birds from the farm of this camp were released in the open air for breeding after one year of training, said reports.

Officials of the Department of Environmental Protection said that according to the procedure and agreement of the National

Environmental Protection Agency with Al-Gharafa Charity Foundation, several more birds will be released in the desert of Farah province in the future.

Missile birds in Farah is one of the deeds of Al-Gharafa organization, that every year more than 200 birds from the group of these birds are released in the wild life.

Residents complain lack of drinking water

TALOQAN (Pajhwok): A number of residents of Kh-waja Ghar district in northern Takhar province have complained against the lack of clean drinking water.

They said their children suffered from kidney problems due to consuming unhealthy water.

Islamuddin, a resident of Hazar Bagh area, told Pajhwok Afghan News: "We have been deprived of safe drinking water for years, my children have been affected by kidney problems for the last two years, and I'm unable to treat them."

He said he visited hospitals many times and diagnosis showed dehydration.

Faizullah, another resi-



dent, said: "I'm 40 years old now, I have not been benefited from clean drink-

ing water so far, we had several times shared the issue with previous govern-

ment but had no result."

People of this area collected water from snow and

rain due to lack of potable water, he added. He urged the caretaker government to address the problem in the earliest possible.

Abdul Karim, another resident, said: "Due to lack of clean drinking water, our children were suffering from different diseases in the four seasons."

However, Mohibullah Hamid, head of rural rehabilitation and development department, acknowledged the issue of lack of water in Hazar Bagh area.

He termed negligence of the former government the cause behind the matters and gave assurance the department would take action.

Second winter under Taliban:

Pneumonia cases in Afghanistan spike as families struggle to keep themselves warm

KABUL (Agencies): Afghanistan is witnessing a steep rise in pneumonia cases, with the disease having spread rapidly in children under the age of five last year as the country continues to weather a second winter under the Taliban rule.

Data shared exclusively by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) showed pneumonia cases in the country surged by 35 per cent in 2022, compared to the caseload just two years ago.

While a total 157,732 cases were reported in 2021 in the 33 hospitals supported by the ICRC in Afghanistan, this number increased to 213,049 last year.

The reported pneumonia cases in children under five almost doubled from 87,895 in 2021 to 135,056 last year, according to the international agency.

A near 16 per cent spike was reported in pneumonia cases among individuals over five years, with 80,993 cases last year compared to 69,837 cases in 2021.

Winter has also contributed to increased incidence and severity of respiratory infections, said the World Health Organisation (WHO).

The global health agency said it also observed a significant surge in cases of pertussis, also known as whooping cough, caused by the highly contagious Bordetella pertussis bacterium, and measles.

According to the WHO, a total 64 suspected pertussis cases were reported in November last year while at least 2,396 newly suspected measles cases, including seven associated deaths, were reported in the same time – a jump of 15.3 per cent from a month earlier.

The majority of the cases were reported in children under five years of age, as per the WHO.

Raising concerns about the challenges faced by patients in the country, ICRC says malnutrition is one of the reasons leading to an increase in respiratory diseases in children in Afghanistan.

"Child malnutrition cases are already 90 per cent higher this year compared to all of 2021, rising from 33,000 cases to over 63,000 so far this year," explained ICRC's Afghanistan-based spokesperson Lucien Christen.

"And it is widely known that malnutrition is a leading contributor to respiratory diseases," he adds.

"Over the past few years, the country has observed a significant increase in malnutrition and this is directly related to economic turmoil in the country."

"People don't have enough money, as a result, they don't have enough means to buy food or clothes or wood to keep themselves warm," he shares. "Even children are forced to work in the streets and turn into breadwinners for their families"

The humanitarian situation in the country "remains critical," the WHO said.

"Despite the efforts of WHO, UN and other health partners, there are

still more than 13 million people (about 32 per cent of Afghans) living in areas with no access to basic health services," says Dr Luo Dapeng, the agency's representative in Afghanistan.

"Twenty eight out of 70 major public hospitals are currently without funding," he shares, adding that over 1,200 health facilities and more than 11,000 health workers are not covered through predictable support. "This includes 40 public hospitals used to provide Covid-19 treatment."

The unprecedented level of malnutrition is especially worrying, Dr Dapeng said.

He warned that a combination of factors, including widespread malnutrition, measles, Covid, acute watery diarrhea and a struggling health system "will lead to an increase in preventable illness and death unless urgent action is taken."

"Afghanistan has the highest number of people in emergency food insecurity in the world," he

says. "One in two people do not know where their next meal is coming from, one in four pregnant women and one in two children are malnourished."

"Malnutrition leaves people with weakened immunity, which makes them more vulnerable to illness and to severe complications and death from diseases like measles and other infectious diseases such as pneumonia – especially children."

While he lauds the international community for help in preventing the collapse of the country's health system, he says there is "much more" to support "availability, quality and affordability of services for all Afghans."

The WHO needs up to "\$350m to scale up the response to ongoing emergencies and emerging health needs", including the expansion of coverage and bettering health-service delivery, especially in underserved areas, as well as eradicating polio, he explained.



ISLAMABAD: Female Pakistani Medical studying in Afghanistan holding protest in favour of their demands after female education banned in Afghanistan.

Govt chalks out outsourcing plan for airports

ISLAMABAD (INP): The federal government has prepared the outsourcing plan for Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi airports, sources said on Wednesday. The Civil Aviation Authority has finalized the framework on the instructions of the prime minister, sources said. "A tender will be published in international journals for outsourcing of the airports," sources said.

According to sources, the government has decided for outsourcing of Karachi, Islamabad and Lahore airports. "The government has planned to prefer friendly countries for airports' outsourcing," according to sources. "The firms from Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, China and Turkey will be invited on preferential grounds," sources said. Sources citing the Planning Division have said that the country will earn 250 to 300 US million dollars in a year from outsourcing of airports.

The government will contract to outsource airports for 25 years, sources said. Under the agreement airport terminal services, parking, airport storage, cargo handling and cleaning sections will be outsourced, sources said. The civil aviation will keep the airport security and air traffic control with it. The CAA earns Rs 30 bn per annum from three largest airports of the country, sources added.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in December directed to initiate the outsourcing process of three major airports under the public-private partnership. The concerned authorities were ordered to initiate the process of outsourcing Jinnah International Airport Karachi, Allama Iqbal International Airport Lahore and Islamabad International Airport. The prime minister directed that in the outsourcing process all concerned departments should take steps efficiently.

Pakistan wants TTP to surrender

(Continued from Page 1)

Security Council (NSC) meeting that there would be zero tolerance against the terrorists who wanted to destabilize the country.

All the institutions, he added, were working effectively to root out terrorism from the country and the nation should rest assured that terrorists would be dealt with iron hands. Regarding the terrorist attacks during the last year, the minister said around 67 percent incidents of terror had occurred in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and 31 percent in Balochistan, while only one percent took place in Punjab and two percent in Sindh.

Rana Sanaullah appreciated the role of CTD Punjab and said that all the CTDs of other provinces should put maximum efforts to prevent terrorist attacks. The minister assured that the Federal Government would provide maximum support and training especially to the CTDs of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan so that they could play their due role in curbing terrorism. He said the Afghan Government was a reality. Pakistan wanted the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) to surrender and efforts were underway to bring them on the negotiating table for the purpose, he added.

Fast-growing IT sector Foreign companies welcome to invest: Alvi

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Wednesday said that Digital Transformation was at the heart of country's vision to create a conducive environment for technology development and growth.

The president, talking to a delegation of DigitalOcean, led by its CEO Yancy Spruill, who called on him, said the conducive environment would include inviting and facilitating foreign investment in the IT sector and transforming the youth bulge into Information technology-savvy human resource for large-scale entry of the country into the fast-growing international IT market.

This, he said, would help in building Pakistan's image, harnessing its business potential and promoting the export of the country's IT services and products around the world. President Alvi said that a high level of commitment, taking the right decisions at the right time and implementing policies and decisions on a timeline basis was needed both at the federal and provincial levels to create a well-integrated and functional IT ecosystem in Pakistan.

This would help fully capitalizing the vibrancy of the youth, improve Pakistan's IT exports by further improving the investment climate and imparting speedy but quality IT computer programming, artificial intelligence and computing skills to huge youth bulge which was already contributing to the growth and progress of the IT sector in Pakistan.

The president urged the need for the bureaucracy to assist all investors including foreign established and well-reputed IT firms and companies, keep their doors open, welcome investors warmly, help them complete their procedural requirements on a timeline basis and resolve their issues with due diligence on a top priority basis. President Alvi said that the government was focusing to review the entire education system of the country to transform it from a non-market to a market-oriented system by imparting market-oriented knowledge, techniques, and skills to graduates to enable them to be readily absorbed in the market and play their role

in the development of the country.

The president appreciated DigitalOcean for investing in Pakistan by acquiring a Pakistani IT company at \$350 million, which was the largest IT acquisition in the history of Pakistan. He said that the step would help in the exponential growth of Pakistan's IT companies, besides helping IT professionals and companies to promote and enlarge their businesses, services, and outreach.

The president emphasized that DigitalOcean should take tangible steps for imparting high-quality training to the youth which would provide them with an excellent resource for their operations, besides helping the start-ups to scale up their existing ventures and encouraging other IT companies to benefit from the services of DigitalOcean. He said that DigitalOcean's slogan "IT for All" would help in the large-scale entry of Pakistan's youth into the fast-growing international IT market, besides helping build Pakistan's image, harnessing its business potential and promoting the export of the country's IT services and products around the world.

He also cited the example of PM's digiskills programme where 2.5 million people from different educational backgrounds participated and 1 million completed their training and were earning decent livelihoods. He said that Presidential Initiative on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Computing (PIAIC) sensitized the youth and IT-skilled persons regarding the importance of AI and Computing for the growth and development of all sectors of the economy.

During the meeting, the CEO of DigitalOcean Yancey Spruill briefed the president about DigitalOcean, its growth strategy in Pakistan, future investments, and tripling its business size in Karachi. The delegation also exchanged ideas on areas of social impact that the company should especially focus on in Pakistan. DigitalOcean is a US multinational technology company and cloud service provider that provides developers, start-ups, and Small and Medium Businesses with could infrastructure-as-a-service platform.

SHC seeks ECP reply over LG administrators appointment

KARACHI (TLTP): The Sindh High Court (SHC) has directed the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to submit its report by January 09 over appointment of district administrators after election schedule announced.

During the hearing, the high court bench comprises of Justice Iqbal Kalhoro questioned that if any transfer or postings of officials happened after announcement of the election schedule." The TLTP learnt that the Sindh government has submitted its reply. The election commission has sought time for submitting

its reply, the court observed.

The ECP should look into transfer and postings after announcement of the local government election schedule, court said. The bench adjourned further hearing of the case until January 09. The court had earlier issued notices over a challenging appointment of district administrators on political grounds after announcement of the election schedule for local government polls in Karachi and Hyderabad.

According to the petition, Furqan Utaib, Syed Shakeel Ahmed, and

Muhammad Sharif have been appointed district municipal administrators. "These administrators are also members of the MQM Rabita Committee," the petitioner said. "The appointment of these officers on political grounds, has been an effort to influence the results of the local government elections," petitioner pleaded. "The Sindh government in collaboration with the MQM violating electoral laws," petitioner said. Petitioner seeks the court to declare the postings in violation of the electoral rules as unlawful and void.

US backs Pak's stance for cross-border attacks in Afghanistan

WASHINGTON (Agencies): The United States has supported Pakistan's plan to launch cross-border attacks in Afghanistan, saying the country has the right to defend itself against terrorism.

Addressing a news briefing in Washington, State Department spokesman Ned Price has maintained that Pakistan has the right to defend itself from terrorism as the country has suffered tremendously from terrorist attacks. He said "We're aware of the recent statement by the Pakistani National Security Committee. The Pakistani people have suffered tremendously from terrorist attacks. Pakistan has a right to defend itself from terrorism."

The statement from the US comes a day after Islamabad threatened to target the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) militants in Afghanistan if Kabul does not take action to dismantle them. The National Security Committee (NSC), under the chair of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, had asked the government in Kabul not to provide safe havens to Pakistani terrorist groups on its soil.

Pakistan has witnessed a sharp rise

in terror incidents, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, and a suicide blast in Islamabad during the past couple of months after the TTP declared an end to the ceasefire with Pakistan. Ned Price said the US called on the Taliban to uphold the very commitment they have made to see to it that Afghan soil is never again used as a launch-pad for international terrorist attacks. "These are among the very commitments that the Taliban have been unable or unwilling to fulfil to date," he said.

The spokesman said that it has been repeatedly said that there will be a response from the United States. "The Taliban have made commitments to the international community. But more importantly, they have made commitments to the Afghan people. Those are the commitments we care most about. Among the commitments, the Taliban have made but have repeatedly broken when it comes to their own people is an emphasis on human rights," he stressed.

The State Department's spokesman continued, "As long as the Taliban are not able to fulfil these commitments, we will respond in a way that registers

our strong condemnation while continuing to support the Afghan people. And we're going to be very careful not to do anything that could further imperil the humanitarian well-being of the Afghan people." Here are the excerpts of New Price's new briefing about Pakistan and Afghanistan:

Question: As you mentioned, unfortunately we didn't celebrate New Year because of Afghan girl and Afghan women in Afghanistan. They are crying. Even if you watch the TV – now we are living in globalization, immediately we get news. Any update to bring or influence, as of course you guys have influences to Taliban? Any change? Because still the Taliban keep the commitment; they say this is Sharia law, they are not going to open the schools.

And number two, the second question: Pakistan announced that they are (going to) attack to Afghanistan because they said that Afghan Taliban encourage Pakistani Taliban to do something in their country. I don't know if they attack in Afghanistan in this situation. It's really crisis in Afghanistan.

Mr. Price: I don't need to tell you

Pakistan rejects India's 'baseless, frivolous' accusations on terrorism

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan on Wednesday rejected the "baseless and frivolous" accusations made by Indian External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, calling the Indian official's tirade a "reflection of growing frustration" over New Delhi's failure to malign and isolate Islamabad.

Earlier this week, the Indian minister made a veiled attack on Pakistan during a press conference in Vienna along with his Austrian counterpart Alexander Schallenberg. "We spoke on the threats to international peace and security that are posed by terrorism, including its cross-border practices, violent extremism, radicalisation and fundamentalism. Their effects cannot be contained within a region especially so when they are deeply connected to narcotics and illegal weapons trade, and other forms of international crime. Since

the epicentre is located so close to India, naturally our experiences and insights are useful to others," he alleged.

Responding to media queries today, Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zehra Baloch said: "Pakistan rejects the baseless and frivolous accusations made by the Indian External Affairs Minister. His latest tirade is a reflection of growing frustration over India's failure to malign and isolate Pakistan." She said that for the last several years, India has engaged in a malicious campaign to mislead the international community through a fictitious narrative of victimhood and vile anti-Pakistan propaganda. "This practice must stop."

The official added that India's continued anti-Pakistan diatribe cannot hide its brazen involvement in fomenting terrorism on Pakistan's

soil; nor can it conceal the reality of state-sponsored terrorism in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). "Instead of pointing fingers at others, India should itself end its involvement in terrorism, subversion, and espionage against Pakistan."

Only a few weeks ago, she said, a dossier was released containing irrefutable evidence that substantiated India's involvement in the 2021 terrorist attack in a peaceful Lahore neighbourhood. "From the death of over 40 Pakistani nationals on Indian soil in the 2007 Samjhota Express tragedy to the arrest of Kulbhushan Jadhav, a serving Commander of the Indian Navy, from within Pakistan in 2016, the evidence of Indian involvement in terrorism and sabotage is irrefutable and spans over decades and geographies," she recalled.

Imran attack: 'Shooter was sent to kill suspect Naveed'

LAHORE (INP): Former information minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Fawad Chaudhry has asserted that a shooter was sent to kill suspect Naveed – who attacked former prime minister and party chairman Imran Khan during Long March at Wazirabad.

Addressing a press conference in Lahore, the former federal minister claimed that a plan was chalked out to kill the suspect Naveed to give religious colour to the assassination attempt. "In this regard, a shooter was sent to kill suspect Naveed during the rally," he added.

Fawad Chaudhry – while citing the forensic report of Imran Khan attack – claimed that PTI worker was martyred by 'shooter's bullet', who was sent to kill Naveed. "The investigation has revealed that three suspects fired bullets at the former prime minister," he said, adding that the sole purpose of the 'pre-planned attack' was to kill Imran Khan.

Speaking on 'religious fanaticism' behind the Wazirabad attack, Fawad Chaudhry said that the issue started on August 24, 2022. "Journalist Waqar Sethi accused Khan of committing blasphemy in a tweet," he said, adding that later, federal ministers including Rana Sanaullah and Marriyum Aurangzeb termed the attack 'case of religious extremism'.

Recalling the incident, the PTI leader said that the initial investigation of the assassination attempt revealed that three suspects fired bullets at former premier. He noted that no shots were fired by Khan's guards while a forensic was conducted of their weapons. "A confessional video was released soon after the attack, which was shared by several politicians and journalists," Fawad Chaudhry said, adding that station house officer (SHO) Gujarat recorded the video on the instructions of DPO.

However, he said, the district police officer (DPO) was not becoming part of the investigation. "After all, who was preventing the DPO from being part of the investigation," he asked. He regretted that during the assassination attempt, the security in Gujarat was also inadequate. "Who was stopping Terrorism Department (CTD) from presenting the records and documents", he added.

Int'l moot on Climate Resilient Pakistan on 9th

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will co-host, along with United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres, the International Conference on Climate Resilient Pakistan in Geneva on 9 January 2023.

The Conference will serve as a platform to marshal international support for the people and Government of Pakistan to build back better in a resilient manner after the recent devastating floods, as the country transitions from the rescue-and-relief phase towards the monumental task of recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction.

Pakistan will present the Resilient Recovery, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Framework (4RF) at the Conference, and seek international support and long-term partnerships for its implementation. The 4RF document

outlines a prioritized and sequential Plan, defined at the Federal and Provincial levels, and includes the financial mechanism and institutional arrangements for its execution in an open, transparent and collaborative manner.

The Conference programme will feature a high-level opening segment, to be co-chaired by the Prime Minister and the UN Secretary General, followed by the official launch of the 4RF document and partner support announcements. The Prime Minister and the UN Secretary General will also hold a joint press stakeout.

At the Conference, the Prime Minister will outline Pakistan's vision for rehabilitating the affected population and reconstructing the damaged infrastructure in a resilient manner, with the support of development partners, and the country's transition towards a more dynamic and sustainable economic development

model. Federal Ministers from Pakistan will elaborate on the 4RF document and also present Pakistan's long-term plan for building climate resilience and adaptation. The perspectives of the four provinces will be articulated by their representatives.

Heads of State and Government, Ministers and high-level representatives from several countries and International Financial Institutions, Foundations and Funds, as well as from international development organisations, private sector, civil society and INGOs will participate in the Conference.

The Conference will help Pakistan in forging a long-term partnership with its friends and development partners on the basis of the 4RF document, and serve as a demonstration of international solidarity with the people of Pakistan as they commence the journey towards rebuilding their lives and livelihoods.

Biden urges Republicans to 'get act together'

WASHINGTON (Agencies): United States President Joe Biden has called on Republicans to "get their act together" and elect a speaker to the House of Representatives after the GOP majority failed to agree on a new leader to preside over the chamber. The country is practically without a functioning House for the first time in nearly 100 years after Kevin McCarthy, the top House Republican, fell short of securing a majority to become speaker in three different rounds of voting.

"It's not a good look. It's not a good thing. It's the United States of America, and I hope they get their act together," Biden told reporters on Wednesday before the House reconvened again. The US president also stressed that the crisis is a Republican issue. "That's not my problem. I just think it's really embarrassing it's taking so long." The previous House was dismissed on Tuesday. New members elected in the November midterm elections had convened to elect a new speaker, an effort ending with 20 members of the Republican caucus voting against McCarthy in the final ballot Tuesday.

Without a speaker to pre-

side over it, the House is effectively paralysed, and new lawmakers cannot be sworn in; they still hold the title of representative-elect. Amid Republican infighting, Democrats unanimously united behind their leader, Hakeem Jeffries, on Tuesday. Legislators met once more on Wednesday to try to elect a speaker, but it remains unclear whether Republicans, who hold a narrow majority in the chamber, have agreed on a leader. The House and the Senate make up Congress, the US legislative branch, which passes laws and allocates funds for the federal government among other essential tasks.

"The Republican Party in the House is deeply divided, and they have a number of members who not only don't like their party's nominee for speaker, but are willing to block that nominee on the floor – and in doing so, break a norm that has been followed for a century," said Matthew Green, a professor of politics at Catholic University in Washington, DC. Many Democrats argued after the vote on Tuesday that the early crisis for the new House majority shows Republicans' inability to lead. "The problem

is...this isn't just today. This is going to be everyday in the House Republican majority," Democratic Senator Chris Murphy wrote on Twitter on Tuesday.

"It's not just that they won't be able to govern. It's that they are going to be an embarrassing public train wreck while they refuse to govern." Jeffries – with Democrats united behind him – received more votes than McCarthy. In the third ballot, Jeffries had 212 votes, McCarthy 202 and Ohio Republican Jim Jordan 20. If all 434 members vote, a candidate would need 218 votes to reach the 50 percent to be elected speaker. If members abstain or vote present, then the number to reach a majority could change.

Jordan, a far-right firebrand, has said he is not seeking the speakership and voted for McCarthy himself. Despite the impasse, McCarthy – a California conservative who served as House minority leader for the past four years – has remained defiant. Asked by reporters late on Tuesday whether he will drop out of the race, McCarthy said, "I'll let you know when that happens – OK – but it's not going to happen."