

Haidari meets Ch Shujaat

ISLAMABAD (NNI): A Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) delegation led by its central leader Senator Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haidari on Sunday called on Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) supremo Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain. Abdul Ghafoor Haidari enquired about the health of Ch Shujaat Hussain and discussed the overall political situation of the country in the meeting.



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Millions of flood-devastated Pakistanis looking for compassion, solidarity: PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday said that millions of Pakistanis, affected by unprecedented devastation due to floods, looked for compassion and solidarity to build back better.

"Humanity is at an inflection point in world history. Our actions today will shape the resilient future for our succeeding generations, the prime minister posted on his Twitter handle. In a related tweet, the prime minister said that he was leaving for Geneva today to co-host International Conference on Resilient Pakistan, being held on January 9, along with the UN Secretary-General. He said that he would take the opportunity to present the case of flood victims before the world. "I will also throw light on steps my govt. has taken for relief & rehabilitation," he

PM leaves for Geneva to co-host 'Climate Resilient Pakistan' conference

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday departed to Geneva along with a high-level delegation to co-chair an international conference on 'Climate Resilient Pakistan', along with UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, being held on January 9.

Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Minister for Finance Ishaq Dar, Minister of Climate Change Sherry Rehman and Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marryyum Aurangzeb accompanied the prime minister, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

In the conference, Pakistan will outline the framework vision for rehabilitation and reconstruction and emphasis upon the need for global support and long-term partnership to implement it.

In the inaugural high-level opening segment, the official document would be unveiled over reconstruction and rehabilitation of the flood-affected areas, and feature partner support announcements.

The prime minister and the UN secretary general will also hold a joint press stakeout.

Leaders and high-level representatives from several countries and international financial institutions, foundations and funds are expected to attend the conference, both in person and virtual format.

further posted.

The prime minister said that in the conference they would place a comprehensive post-disaster framework plan for recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction with resilience before development partners and friendly countries.

"Bridging funding gap is key to restore critical infrastructure, rebuild lives & livelihoods & revive economy," he added.

Pakistan to unveil post-disaster framework plan at international conference today

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan would place a comprehensive post-disaster framework plan for recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction before development partners and friendly countries at the International Conference on Resilient Pakistan in Geneva on January 9.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will co-host the conference along with the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

Leaving before Geneva. The prime minister in a statement said, "Bridging the funding gap is key to restore critical infrastructure, rebuild lives and livelihoods and revive economy."

He said that millions of Pakistanis, affected by unprecedented devastation due to floods, looked for compassion and solidarity to build back better.

"Humanity is at an inflection point in the world history. Our actions today will shape the resilient future for our succeeding generations, the prime minister posted on his Twitter handle.

He said that he would take the opportunity to present the case of flood victims before the world. "I will also throw light on steps my govt. has taken for relief and rehabilitation," he further posted.

In Pakistan, record monsoon rains and melting glaciers last September displaced some 8 million people and killed at least 1,700

in a catastrophe blamed on climate change.

Most of the waters have now receded but the reconstruction work, estimated at around \$16.3 billion, to rebuild millions of homes and thousands of kilometres of roads and railway is just beginning and millions more people may slide into poverty.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, will present the recovery framework at the conference where United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres and French President Emmanuel Macron will also speak.

Guterres, who visited Pakistan in September, has previously described the destruction in the country as "climate carnage".

"This is a pivotal moment for the global community to stand with Pakistan and to commit to a resilient and inclusive recovery from these devastating floods," said Knut Osby, United Nations Development Programme's Pakistan Representative.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday departed to Geneva along with a high-level delegation to co-chair the conference along with UN Secretary.

Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Minister for Finance Ishaq Dar, Minister for Climate Change Sherry Rehman and Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marryyum

Aurangzeb accompanied the prime minister, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

During the conference, Pakistan will put emphasis upon the need for global support and long-term partnership to implement the framework plan.

In the inaugural high-level opening segment, the official document would be unveiled for reconstruction and rehabilitation of the flood-affected areas and feature partner support announcements.

The prime minister and the UN secretary general will also hold a joint press stakeout.

Leaders and high-level representatives from several countries and international financial institutions, foundations and funds are expected to attend the conference, both in person and virtual format.

The conference will bring together governments, leaders from the public and private sectors and civil society to support the people and the government of Pakistan.

The reconstruction framework to be presented before the conference will lay out a multisectoral strategy for rehabilitation and reconstruction in a climate-resilient and inclusive manner.

Secondly Pakistan will try to secure international support and forge long-term partnerships for building Pakistan's climate resilience and adaptation.

ECP to announce verdict on Karachi-Hyderabad LG polls today

ISLAMABAD (PPI): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) will announce the reserved decision on holding the repeatedly-delayed local government elections in Karachi and Hyderabad tomorrow (Monday).

The ECP had reserved verdict on petitions filed by MQM-Pakistan, Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) over local government elections in Karachi and Hyderabad. A three-member ECP bench, headed by Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja, reserved the verdict after hearing arguments of the MQM-P and other parties.

During the hearing, the Sindh government sought a week to submit arguments in the case as Additional Advocate General Fausia Zafar appeared before the ECP unprepared. The CEC abolished the defence right of the provincial government after its lawyer showed up in the case without preparation.

In a petition, the Jamaat-e-Islami called upon in Election Commission of Pakistan to fulfil its constitutional responsibility by holding local government elections in Karachi and Hyderabad on time. PPP-led Sindh government and MQM-Pakistan had moved ECP over delay in LG polls due to delimitations issue. It is pertinent to mention here that the new phase of the Sindh LG polls are scheduled for January 15 in Karachi Division after its postponement six times.



BEIJING: Passengers push their luggage through the international arrivals hall at Beijing Capital International Airport after China lifted the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) quarantine requirement for inbound travellers.

Imran voices concern over country's situation --Assails counter-terrorism policy

LAHORE (NNI): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan said on Sunday that the country was facing the biggest crisis in its history.

Addressing a women's convention via video link, the deposed premier said the country could both lead to prosperity and decline. He went on to say that the country was at a crossroads. Going back to the 1990s, Mr. Khan said the country started to face a crisis after the 1990s.

Mr Khan recalled his demand of free and fair elections, adding that only with transparent polls, there be the possibility of a legitimate government. Mr. Khan slammed the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), saying that the plan to install the PML-N's government in Punjab is now underway. He reiterated that there only strong government could take the country out of the quagmire.

Speaking about the country's difficulties, Mr Khan stated that only one person was to blame for the current situation. He also warned that the crisis within the country will intensify in the coming days.

"I made a prediction on the prevailing crisis in the country, seven months ago," added Mr. Khan.

Mr Khan lashed out at the PML-N and PPP leadership, saying, "For 20 years, both of these two ruling families have been hurling allegations at each other."

Mr Khan took a dig at the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM), saying the performance of the PDM leadership was only visible in advertisements and propaganda.

Mr. Khan expressed his thoughts on political engineering, stating that it was not intended to solve problems.

Mr Khan lamented that the masses were deprived of flour, claiming that people were losing their lives for the sake of flour, and that people were being forced to flee the country under the current circumstances.

Taking a dig at the coalition government, Mr Khan recalled that the incumbent government came into power to fulfill the agenda of the enemies of the country.

Mr Khan warned the state institutions that if the situation was not controlled, the country would be dragged

into a quagmire, following in the footsteps of Sri Lanka.

To highlight the inflation, Mr Khan stated today that the country was experiencing the record inflation in its 50-year history, and that it was not going to stop.

Talking about his struggle, Mr Khan stated, "We are pouring onto the streets for the sake of the country, not the ministries."

Meanwhile, while condemning terrorist acts and threats, former prime minister and PTI Chairman Imran Khan has criticized that there is a complete vacuum of a cohesive counter-terrorism policy which is giving rise to terrorism in which our security personnel are being targeted specifically.

In a tweet posted on Sunday, PTI Chairman Imran Khan wrote: With a complete vacuum of a cohesive counter terrorism policy and a bizarre intel focus on manufacturing doctored audios & videos, we are seeing a dangerous rise in terrorism with our security personnel being specific targets. We strongly condemn these terrorist acts and threats.

More Baloch leaders meet Asif Zardari, join PPP

KARACHI (NNI): The wind of political change is picking up speed in Balochistan as more leaders opted to join Pakistan People's Party (PPP).

A number of key Baloch political personalities had a meeting with former president and PPP Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari and later announced to join the party. Prominent among those who joined the PPP ranks were former federal minister Sardar Fateh Muhammad Hassani, former provincial ministers Nawabzada Ghazain Marri and Tahir Mahmood.

Coordinator of Balochistan

Minister Nawabzada Jamal Raisani, Mir Farid Raisani, Mir Abdullah Raheja, and Mir Allah Bakhsh Rind also joined the PPP. Asif Zardari congratulated the political leaders of Balochistan who joined the PPP.

"Balochistan and the PPP have a historical relationship. The PPP has always fought for the rights of Balochistan," former president Asif Zardari said. "The PPP is the strongest party in the politics of Balochistan."

The PPP will never compromise on its struggle for the rights of the common man of Balochistan," he vowed.

Karachiites throng the PPP rally against price hike

KARACHI (NNI): A large number of Karachiites warmly participated in a rally of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) against the price hike on call of Chairman Imran Khan. The rally started from Quaidabad Malir, led by former Sindh Governor Imran Ismail and the leader of opposition in Sindh Assembly Haleem Adil.

It marched on different roads of Malir and reached Pipri Football Ground where a big Jalsa was arranged hosted by PPI leader Dr Masroor Siyal. A large number of citizens participated in the Jalsa and raised slogans against the imported government. In

his address, Imran Ismail said that election in Malir was snatched from PTI by hooligans of PPP. He said Imran Khan said absolutely not and sacrificed his government for the national cause. He said when wheat flour was at Rs55 per kilogramme these people would use to hold protest rallies and today they are silent spectators. He said prices of flour and chicken have already gone out of the reach of common man.

Haleem Adil Shiekh said that the people should protest in every area again the neck break price hike. He said the imported government is responsible for the plights of poor masses.

China reopens borders to tourists after three years of Covid closure

BEIJING (BBC): China has reopened its borders to international visitors for the first time since it imposed travel restrictions in March 2020.

Incoming travellers will no longer need to quarantine - marking a significant change in the country's Covid policy as it battles a surge in cases.

They will still require proof of a negative PCR test taken within 48 hours of travelling.

The move has been welcomed by many eager to reunite with family.

In Hong Kong, 400,000 people are expected to travel into mainland China in the coming weeks with long queues for flights into cities including Beijing and Xiamen.

On Sunday, double-decker coaches packed with travellers arrived at the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge to catch buses to the Guangdong province - among them were college students returning home.

One man told the BBC he hadn't seen his extended family in five years and could not hold back his excitement, having just bought a ticket back to China. A woman told news agency Reuters she had not seen her parents in years - despite one of them suffering from colon cancer - and said she

was "so, so happy".

The country's reopening comes at the start of "chun yun", the first period of Lunar New Year travel. Before the pandemic, it was the largest annual worldwide migration of people returning home to spend time with family. Two billion trips are expected to be made this Lunar New Year, double the number that travelled last year. Li Hua, who travelled from the UK to China - where her family lives - for the festival said it had been "too long" since she had returned, "I'm so happy to be back, and breathe Chinese air. So happy, so happy".

Mark Clayton returned home to Zhuhai, in Guangdong, with his wife and baby after visiting Hong Kong. He told the BBC his trip home had been "nearly as smooth as it used to be pre-Covid". "We didn't even show them the PCR, we simply scanned a code and put in a very quick customs declaration... And then straight through," he said. But there is concern from some that opening the borders will result in more transmission of Covid-19.

Some local bus drivers at the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge told the BBC they are worried they might get the virus from incoming travellers,

and want their companies to provide them with more protection.

Over the past three years China had one of the world's strictest Covid health policies that saw numerous lockdowns, frequent testing requirements and had a significant impact on the nation's economy.

The government recently walked back that policy after mass protests across the country, triggered by a fire in a high-rise block in the Xinjiang region that killed 10 people. Many Chinese believed the long-running Covid restrictions contributed to the deaths, but authorities denied this.

Since China abandoned the key elements of its Covid zero policy there have been reports of hospitals and crematoriums being overwhelmed, but the country has stopped publishing its case numbers and reported only two deaths on Saturday. On the same day, the Chinese government banned over 1,000 social media accounts critical of its handling of the virus. The anticipated surge in cases and travel out of China has prompted many countries - including the UK - to impose requirements for a negative COVID-19 test on people arriving from China, drawing the ire of the Chinese government.

E.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mahmood Khan has said that the provincial government had introduced reforms and development initiatives in the education sector keeping in view the market needs so as to promote entrepreneurship and enable our graduates to play their role in strengthening the national economy.

Owing to the needs based initiatives, the trust deficit between parents and public sector educational institutions has been bridged up significantly.

Mahmood Khan clarified that various steps have been taken, including establishment of educational institutions, recruitment of new teachers and lecturers, provision of free textbooks to students in schools, provision of scholarships and other similar steps, due to which the literacy rate in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has increased.

In a statement issued here from the Chief Minister's Secretariat on

Sunday, Mahmood Khan said that the provincial government is investing in human capital due to which education standards in the public sector educational institutions have improved significantly.

He said that during the period of last four years various steps have been taken in Elementary & Secondary Education sector including establishment of Education Monitoring Authority, regularization of 58000 teachers, provision of free textbooks and school bags to 631,376 students, provision of scholarships to 2.1 million girls, establishment of 141 schools, upgradation of 174 schools, reconstruction of 89 schools, standardization of 90 schools, provision of furniture to 68141 units, construction of 400 additional class rooms, renovation of 1585 class rooms in public sector schools, establishment of cadet colleges in South Waziristan and Mohmand districts, launching of second shift in public sector schools, hiring of around 3000 school leaders, and many more.

Similarly, the provincial government has also taken a number of initiatives in the higher education sector. In the current ADP, 89 projects of higher education have been reflected which include 66 ongoing and 23 new schemes.

Some of the mentionable developments in higher education sector during the last four years include establishment of Pak-Austria Fachhochschule Institute, University of Shangla, Agriculture University Swat, Veterinary University, Institute of Criminology & Forensic Sciences, establishment of Technology Development Centre in University of Agriculture Peshawar, recruitment of 1900 new lecturers, launching of BS program in different colleges of the province etc. The Chief Minister said that owing to the reforms initiatives and developmental strategy of the provincial government the education sector is being developed on modern lines so as to enable our graduates to play an effective role in national development.



17 dead, 840 injured in road accidents

LAHORE (APP): At least 17 persons were killed and 840 others injured in 825 road traffic crashes in Punjab during the last 24 hours. As many as 444 seriously injured people were shifted to different hospitals while 396 with minor injuries were treated at the incident site by the rescue medical teams.

The data analysis showed that 395 drivers, 27 underage drivers, 99 pedestrians and 363 passengers were among the victims of the road traffic crashes. The statistics show that 174 accidents were reported in Lahore, which affected 178 persons, placing the provincial capital at top of the list, followed by 76 in Faisalabad with 81 victims and at third Multan 53 with 49 victims. According to the data, 670 motorbikes, 53 auto-rickshaws, 107 motor-cars, 14 vans, 11 passenger buses, 23 trucks and 79 other types of vehicles and slow-moving carts were involved in these road accidents.

Necessary steps being taken to ensure provision of flour at fixed rate

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Chaudhry Pervez Elahi said on Sunday that all necessary steps were being taken to ensure the provision of flour at fixed rate at provincial and district levels.

According to official sources, the CM said that subsidy was being provided to common man through Ehsaas Programme so that people of urban and rural areas could be facilitated.

He said the Punjab government was ensuring provision of inexpensive flour to deserving people through Ehsaas Programme. Entry in Ehsaas Programme could be made through CNIC to get targeted subsidy on flour, he said and added that daily official quota of flour had been doubled. Pervez Elahi said that sale points had also been doubled across the province.

He said that 1,840,000 bags of 10 kg flour would be available on daily basis

in Punjab at government fixed rate.

Ch Pervez Elahi said that from tomorrow 26,000 tonnes of wheat would be released to flour mills more than their demand. Increase in government wheat quota would reduce prices of private wheat and flour reasonably, he added.

CM condole demise of Maulana Ehteramul Haq Thanvi: Punjab Chief Minister Chaudhry Pervez Elahi has expressed a deep sense of sorrow and grief over the death of an prominent religious scholar Maulana Ehteramul Haq Thanvi.

In his condolence message, he expressed heartfelt sympathy and grief with the heirs of Maulana Ehteramul Haq Thanvi (Late).

The CM paid tributes to the religious services of Maulana Thanvi and stated that his religious services would always be remembered.



LAHORE: Adviser to Prime Minister for Political, Public Affairs, National Heritage and Culture Engr. Amir Muqam addressing at the event organized by the Pakhtun Welfare Trust at Aiwan e Iqbal.

Efforts on to resolve issues facing Pakhtuns: Amir Muqam

LAHORE (APP): Advisor to Prime Minister on National Heritage and Culture Engineer Amir Muqam said on Sunday that the coalition government, led by Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), was making sincere efforts to resolve the issues facing the Pakhtuns in the country, as they all were patriotic Pakistanis.

He was addressing an oath-taking ceremony, organised by the Pakistan Pakhtun Welfare Trust (PWT) Punjab at Aiwan-e-Iqbal on Sunday. He said sacrifices rendered by the Pakhtuns for stability and security of the country would always be remembered, adding that "We always stand by our Pakhtun brethren". He said he, as a representative of Pakhtuns, would always raise voice for their rights, adding that every ethnic group in the country should work for betterment of the country by setting aside its per-

sonal differences. He said that issues pertaining to issuance of passports and computerised national identity cards (CNICs) were taken up with the authorities concerned and soon all such issues would be resolved. The law-enforcement agencies should deal with Pakhtuns living in Punjab in polite and professional manner, he advised. He said it was a mission of the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) led government to steer the country out of the crises and put it on the way to progress and development.

He condemned Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan's diatribe against the state institutions, saying that former premier was interested in getting power at any cost.

He said the PDM-led coalition government was working for well-being of people and reviving the

country's economy. He said that the nation should stand united and reject the so-called narrative of the PTI leaders, who were bent on creating unrest and instability in the country.

PML-N leader and MPA Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan, PWT Punjab President Haji Nadir Khan, Chairman Qayyum Zada, General Secretary Saleem Ullah, Senior Vice Chairman Haji Baghi Jaan, Senior Vice Presidents Safdar Khan and Azam Khan, Finance Secretary Bhadrar Taj, Information Secretary Dr Naem and a large number of people from Pakhtuns tribe were present.

Rana Mashhood Ahmad said the PML-N had always advocated the rights of Pakhtuns and took practical steps for their welfare and uplift. Later, the PWT president gave honorary shield to the PM's adviser.

Pak-Afghan religious acholars voices support for Afghan girls' education

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The return of the Taliban in Afghanistan meant that the nature of relevant stakeholders in the region had changed, and so did their agency. The current theocratic system of governance in Afghanistan calls for the inclusion of religious fraternity in the dialogue on the issues of public concern - given their potential of influence on Taliban leadership and relying on them to advocate for the protection of fundamental human rights of Afghans.

For the last several years, the Center for Research and Security Studies (CRSS) has been successfully engaging Pak-Afghan Track 1.5/II actors on regional peace and security, economic and cultural connectivity, human rights, youth development issues, through its multitask diplomacy initiative Beyond Boundaries.

As part of Beyond Boundaries (V), given the changes in context and nature of stakeholders post-August 15, 2021, the Center engaged religious scholars from Afghanistan and Pakistan to discuss and devise recommendations on

issues of mutual interest. The discussions keenly focused on the state of women's rights in Afghanistan, economic repatriation and unfreezing of Afghan assets, an all-encompassing system of governance including all ethnic groups, and regional peace and security.

Throughout the dialogues held in 2022, the religious scholars voiced ardent support for Afghan girls' and women's rights to education and work. They also remained open to the idea of including religious fraternity in matters beyond the issues of vice and virtue, for instance, bilateral trade, human rights, peace, security and tolerance in the region, governance, etc. The major watershed in the engagement with the religious fraternity is a comprehensive joint statement - issued by the eminent religious stakeholders and institutions from both countries - underscoring the need for more synchronized cooperation on core bilateral issues, stabilization of the Afghan economy and social infrastructure, and normalizing education for girls and women.

The signatories of the joint statement

include scholars and heads of eminent religious institutions from Pakistan and Afghanistan, namely Mufti Noman Naem (Jamia Binoria, Karachi), Mufti Shoukatullah Haqqani (Dar-ul-Uloom Haqqania, Akora Khattak), Molana Tayyab Qureshi (Chief Khateeb, Mahabat Khan Mosque, Peshawar), Dr. Faryal Umbreen (Dawah Institute, Islamabad), Abdul Waheed Waheed (Afghan academician), Abdul Hakim Mujahid (Former Afghan Envoy to Pakistan), Mufti Shams-ur-Rehman Frotan (Chairman Sharia Board, Afghan Central Bank), and Raza Khan Seerat (Religious program host, Shamshad TV).

The signatories from Pakistan, such as Dar-ul-Uloom Haqqania and Jamia Binoria, are highly revered by the Taliban as some of their notable leaders have either remained affiliated with or graduated from these schools. Hence, the Center deems that such voices - reiterating bilateral cooperation and normalizing female education - carry some magnitude and can amplify the message among the right partakers and decision-makers

JI Karachi unveils Vision 2023-2027 for progress, development of mega city

KARACHI (NNI): Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Karachi on Sunday unveiled Vision 2023-2027 for the progress and development of the mega city at the much awaited Karachi Declaration Convention, demanding 15 percent of the revenue collected by Karachi as the city contributes 95 and 55 percent respectively to the budget for the Sindh and the center.

JI Karachi Ameer Engr Hafiz Naemur Rehman has announced the vision of the JI for the next five years. According to the Vision 2023-2027, tertiary care hospitals in each district, chest pain centers and welfare diagnostic centers will be established in each and every town of the city. In order to address the transportation crises in the city, the Vision suggest a comprehensive mass transit system with light train, circular railway and restoration of the network of roads and underpass, apart from a fleet of thousands of busses.

The vision also addresses the chronic water crises in the city and vow to complete S-3 and K-4 water supply projects. It also emphasizes to devise a master plan for the city, catering its needs for the next five decades. For the trade and industry sector, the JI's Vision suggest restoration of supportive infrastructure on war footing basis, proper provision of water and sewerage facilities, and

mechanism for supply of gas and electricity. It also suggests to review the scope and mechanism for the KDA, MDA and LDA. The JI also demanded of the government to place all these authorities under the city government. It also addressed the issue of sports in the city and suggested sports complex, other facilities and talent hunt programs in each and every district of the mega city.

Talking about the Karachi Declaration, Engr Naemur Rehman highlighted the deadliest street crimes and skyrocketing lawlessness in the city and demanded of the government to make it easy for the citizen to acquire license and legal weapons for self-defense.

He said that the JI would be establishing a dedicated cell to counter the menace of narcotics in the society in general and educational institutes in particular. The cell will be taking the police, Rangers and other law enforcement agencies onboard in order to ensure punitive action against the narcotics mafia.

He said that the government was ruining the public health and educational institutes. He directed the party cadres to constitute committees in order to oversee the health and educational facilities. He also demanded dedicated busses for students (points) and decrease in educational expendi-

ture. On the occasion, he said that 21000 youth have registered themselves in the JI's volunteer program. He continued that the JI workers and volunteers will come forward to ensure corruption free dealing in governmental offices that becomes hub of bribery and corruption. He also announced to launch a campaign against corrupt and bogus housing societies and builders. Talking about livelihood, he said that the JI will be facilitating 100 thousand youth in order to equip them with skills and provision of job opportunities.

The JI leader demanded of those in the corridors of powers to empower the local government setup, bring an end to quota system, and hold fresh census in Karachi. He also demanded of the government to also bring an end to recruit public sector employees on the bases of fake domiciles. He also demanded direct election of the city mayor and to scrap the Local Government Act 2013 as it violates the Article 140-A of the constitution of Pakistan. On the occasion, the JI also presented the women charter, suggesting two dedicated universities for women in the city. The women charter also demands secure, economical, honorable and dedicated transport facilities, recreational centers, for women and emphasized to resolve the issue of gender based unequal salaries.

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah in an attempt to purge the city of street criminals, has directed IG police to mobilize the SSU force and Reserve Police on the roads to support the district police.

"I want the city police to make their mission successful and eliminate street crime", he said. In case of failure, he directed the IG to immediately transfer or remove the concerned SSP and SHOs.

The Chief Minister directed the IG to deploy the police, reserve and SSU force at the hotspots and intensify police patrolling for vigilance and keep sharing their photos, location as well as deployment

plan with him.

Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shahalso instructed the IG to keep him informed about the actions taken against the criminals along with the number of their arrests, so that necessary instructions could be given to the prosecution department for bringing them to book.

Murad Ali Shah directed the IG police to intensify the crackdown against repetitive, habitual street criminals, drug peddlers who have either been bailed out or at large.

Shah said that the people of Karachi have already seen worst law and order, mayhem at the hands of terrorists as well as other criminals.

"After a lot of sacrifices endured by the police and other law enforcement agencies in the line of their duty, the government restored law and order with the support of Karachiites", he said and added that now, the people of this city could not be left at the mercy of street criminals and we have to develop sense of security amongst the citizens by eliminating the street crime all together."

The Inspector General of Police, Ghulam Nabi on the directives of Sindh Chief Minister, has issued necessary instructions to the city police, SSU and Reserve Police for their mobility in the aid of district police, Karachi.

IGP orders DPOs to maintain high alert, speed up search operations

LAHORE (APP): Inspector General of Police (IGP) Punjab Aamir Zulfiqar Khan has ordered the regional police officers (RPOs) and district police officers (DPOs) to maintain high alert and speed up search-and-combing operations for improving security situation in the province.

Through a letter, he directed all the DPOs to expedite search-and-combing operations with the help of the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) and Special Branch and monitor the activities

of banned organisations and the persons included in the Fourth Schedule.

Aamir Zulfiqar directed the officials concerned that reports of search, sweep, combing and intelligence-based operations in each district should be sent to the Central Police Office (CPO) on daily basis. He said that the process of checking hotels, bus stands, inns and other sensitive areas including slums should be sped up and Hotel Eye should also be fully utilised in this regard.

The IGP stressed legal action over violation of tenancy registration. He said that special attention should be paid to security of sensitive religious places, churches and minority places of worship in all districts and supervisory officers should regularly inspect the security arrangements made for sensitive places.

The Punjab police chief said that combing-and-search operations should be intensified to bring terrorists, anti-social elements and their facilitators to justice.

Ombudsman mediates to provide Rs 87.5 million financial relief to 16 complainants

LAHORE (APP): The Ombudsman Punjab office provided cumulative financial relief of more than Rs 87.5 million to 16 applicants belonging to different districts by redressing their complaints related to provincial government departments.

A spokesman for the Ombudsman Punjab office said here on Sunday that on the intervention of ombudsman office, Afrah Ejaz of Lahore had been given pension dues worth Rs 2,777,226 by the district education authority Faisalabad while the University of Agriculture Faisalabad paid Rs 4,223,826 to Hafiz Saqib Nawab. Similarly, Sheikh Adnan Ahmad got outstanding dues amounting to Rs 7,922,520 from the district

health authority Sheikhpura after the involvement of the ombudsman office. In a similar development, the

spokesman mentioned that a plaintiff Muhammad Tayyab Azeem Tariq received a total pending dues of Rs 21,429,000 from Mayo Hospital Lahore, while Naseer Ahmad succeeded in obtaining emoluments of Rs 15,379,756 from the school education department after the ombudsman office interposed to resolve their issues.

Following the instructions of the ombudsman office regarding the redressal of public complaints, the education department paid Rs 2,973,651 to Irshad Fatimah of Bahawalpur while deciding her family pension case and provided pension dues of

Rs 3,022,371 to Khalida Parveen of Jhang.

Similarly, financial assistance of Rs 2.2 million and Rs 2.5 million had also been given by SED to Adil Aftab and Faiz Elahi of Multan after the disposal of their cases, the spokesman noted. The spokesman reported that the mediation of the ombudsman office had resulted in a payment of employment dues valuing Rs 2,411,703 to Sheikhpura-based plaintiff Naveeda Kauser by the highways department. It also paid road contract dues of Rs 12,296,594 to Bahawalpur-based applicant Muhammad Afzal and gave Rs 3 million to Nasreen Akhtar of Hafizabad as employment

dues of her late husband.

In a similar development, the spokesman added the C&W Department had paid employment dues worth Rs 2,679,174 to Muhammad Amjad of Vehari, while DG Khan-based widowed Riffat-un-Nisa had been given long-awaited dues of her late husband amounting to Rs 2.2 million.

Lost & Found

It is notified for the information that my original qualifying certificate of Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering of the year 2009-2013 and Roll Number 09-EE-86 issued by UET Taxila is lost. If found or seen by anyone please contact 0307-5273381



KARACHI: Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Sajid Hussain Turi attended and addressed the Labour Conference 2023.



QWP criticizes PTI for staging protests against inflation

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Qaumi Watan Party (QWP) Chairman Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao on Sunday criticized the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) for staging protests against spiraling inflation and said the recent price-hike was the result of the wrong policies of the previous government.

He stated this while speaking at a gathering in Watan Kor where scores of women political workers announced joining the QWP. "It is ironic that the ones whose flawed policies caused inflation are now protesting against it," he remarked.

He said the PTI could

not deceive the people through such tactics.

He said PTI leader Imran Khan must face the reality and accept his failure instead of blaming others. He said the economic situation started worsening during the PTI government due to its incompetence.

Aftab Sherpao said the PTI had pushed the country towards bankruptcy and its leaders were now bent on creating anarchy, which was not good for the economy. He maintained that political stability was a prerequisite for a strong economy.

He also expressed concern over the rising price-hike and said the incumbent federal government should take pragmatic steps to pro-

vide relief to the people.

Expressing concern over the worsening law and order and attacks on the police in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, he said the provincial government should pay heed to this issue or else the situation could spin out of control.

He said his party was in favour of empowering the women through education so that they could play their role in the development of the country. He said the QWP would spare no effort to help resolve the issues being faced by the women.

Known political figures Murad Ali Tajik and Dr Gohar Ali Shah also announced joining the QWP on the occasion.



PESHAWAR: Chairman Qaumi Watan Party Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao addressing on oath taking of City District arranged by QWP.

CPSP delegation visits KTH

PESHAWAR (APP): An inspection team from the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Pakistan visited the Department of Orthopedic Spine Surgery specialty at Khyber Teaching Hospital for the accreditation of FCPS training.

In compliance with the vision of BoG KTH/KMC/KCD and Dean Khyber Medical College Prof. Dr. Mahmud Aurangzeb, upon the request of the Associate Dean (postgraduate) and Chairman Orthopedic department Prof. Dr. Muhammad Shoaib Khan the CPSP inspection team

comprising of Major General Prof. Dr. Asad Qureshi and Prof Dr. Waqar Alam Jan, Regional Director CPPS Peshawar.

The inspection team undertook a detailed visit that included OPD, Laundry, CSSD, Modular Operation Theaters, and Orthopedic Spine Surgery ward.

During the visit the Associate Dean (postgraduate) and Chairman Orthopedic Department Prof. Dr. Muhammad Shoaib Khan, Medical Director Asst. Prof. Dr. Muhammad Siraj, representatives of Hospital Director and potential spine

Surgery Supervisor Prof Dr. Muhammad Ayaz briefed the team regarding the 24/7 availability of the requisite facilities of spine surgery in KTH including Human Resource, ward Space and infrastructures, OPD and dedicated operation theatres along with spine patients work load.

The team expressed full satisfaction and appreciated the efforts of the BoG Dean KMC, Hospital Administration and Department chairman for taking keen interest in recognition of sub-specialties and super specialties in KTH.

Jalil calls for payment of taxes with honesty

PESHAWAR (APP): Former vice president, Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), Mohammad Adnan Jalil has urged on the people to pay their taxes with honesty and timely to generate resources for the progress and development.

In a statement issued here on Sunday, he said that the prevailing economic situation of the country will not remain the same and we will soon come out soon of the current crisis.

Mr. Jalil, who has also served as president, Peshawar Chamber of Small Traders and Industries, said that the current situation is not developed in few months, rather was triggered by the Covid pandemic, devastated floods and confrontational politics.

He said that Pakistan is a beautiful country and its various regions and provinces have separate potentials and particularly mentioned the huge potentials of tourism and cheap hydel power generation of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Similarly, he said that CPEC and Riqo Deck are also game changers' projects to earn billions of dollars and clear our liabilities with international financial institutions.

Similarly, he has also called for the utilization of the oil and gas potentials of districts Kohat and Karak of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to control the energy crisis in the country.

He also called for arrest of the devaluation of the rupee against dollar and asked the central bank to play its due role in this

regard to prevent price hike and multiplication of the woes of the people.

He further called for bringing improvement in the governance system to arrest corruption. He also stressed need for political stability and urged all political party to sign a charter of economy on the pattern of Charter of Democracy between to bring the current political instability to an end. He appreciated the lifting of ban on the opening of the LC and was hopeful that the step will usher positive change and restore the confidence of stock exchange and business community.

ADC expresses anger

PESHAWAR (APP): Additional Deputy Commissioner General Tank Tanveer Khan expressed his annoyance over MS and MT of the Basic Health Unit Dabarra for their absence from duty.

According to details, the ADC along with Additional Assistant Commissioner Revenue Shahab Ahmed Khan visited BHU Dabarra following the orders of the provincial government.

During their visit, they checked the attendance register and found MO to be absent for three days. The stock register and medicine inspection could not be done as the MT was also absent.

Apart from this, there was no check-up record of the patients from January 4 to 7, on which the ADC expressed his anger and issued instructions to complete the record register.

CM to talk with Punjab govt over stoppage of flour supply

PESHAWAR (APP): Provincial General Secretary JUI-F Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Maulana Ataulhaq Darwesh on Sunday called upon Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mahmood Khan to come forward and negotiate with Punjab government for imposing ban on flour supply to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and take immediate steps against the illegal practice of PTI government in Punjab.

In a statement issued here, he criticized the policies adopted by the provincial government and said that the Chief Minister and all the administrations was failed to provide relief to masses by spending nine years in power.

He said that stoppage of supply of flour and wheat among all the districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was the political revenge of PTI government and said that PTI government was responsible for creating an economic crisis.

He said, however, all the politicians of the country under the leadership of JUI-F chief Maulana Fazalur Rehman have changed the PTI's desires into ashes.

He also called upon the JUI-F workers to stage protests against stoppage of flour supply to their districts by both the provincial and Punjab governments.

DPO directs personnel to keep check on suspects

PESHAWAR (APP): District Police Officer Nowshera, Mohammad Omar Khan visited the far-flung check post at Sabirabad (Nizampur) of the district on Sunday and checked the record of the post.

On this occasion, he issued security related directives to police officers to remain alert on duty and keep strict checks on suspects. He also inspected the lock-up, residential rooms and facilities available to them and security arrangements. Later, he also visited Sabirabad, Khairabad and adjacent localities and reviewed the security situation.

Boy died, father injured

PESHAWAR (APP): A boy was killed and his father got injured after a motorcycle they were riding on was hit by a bus near Muryali Morr, Dera-Multan Road in the limits of Cantt Police station.

According to the details, a boy namely Muhammad was going somewhere along with his father on a motorcycle. All of a sudden, their two-wheeler was hit by a bus here at Muryali Morr on Dera-Multan Road. As a result, the boy died on the spot while his father got injured. The bus that hit their bike was said to be of a private sugar mill.

Later, the funeral of the boy was offered here in the Wensum College ground which was attended by a large number of people.



PESHAWAR: PTI leaders Ali Amin Gandapur and Sherharyar Afridi meeting with Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mahmood Khan.

Construction work on 69MW Lawi Hydropower Project resumed

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has taken a bold step by keeping the Pakistan-China friendship as a priority and resumed construction work on the Lawi Hydropower Project 69 MW in Chitral district that has been suspended due to some security and financial issues since last 9 months.

A financial package has also been announced and security issues have been resolved. Similarly, the 40.8 MW Koto power project in Lower Dir district has also entered the final stage of completion.

The cheap electricity generated by the project will generate an annual income of more than Rs. 2 billion to the province and create new employment opportunities.

These views have been expressed by the Secretary Energy and Power Nisar Ahmad Khan and Chief Executive PEDO Engineer Naeem Khan during an emergency visit to the project sites of ongoing Lawi HPP, Shishi HPP and Koto HPP in Dir Lower and Chitral districts, said a press release issued here on Sunday.

On this occasion, Project Director Koto Engr. Sultan

Room and Deputy Director Engr. Muqem uddin informed about the progress on the project and said that due to security reasons, several workers of the Chinese engineer's team working on the project had left their work and returned back to their country.

He expressed that now after the security situation has improved, Chinese staff are working fast again and the machinery has been brought back while the project is in the final stages of completion.

The Secretary Energy Nisar Ahmad Khan, while inspecting the Lawi Power Project site at Chitral,

issued strict instructions to the project's contractors, consultants and field staff, saying that the project should be completed early by covering the past delaying months of project working.

The security and financial issues faced by the Chinese team have been resolved, now the excuse of any kind of delay is unbearable.

The Chief Executive Officer PEDO Engr. Naeem Khan said that it is in everyone's interest to complete the Lawi project soon by benefiting from the package of the provincial government.

Stoppage of flour supply in KP: JUI announces protest from January 8th to 15th

PESHAWAR (APP): Provincial Ameer Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Senator Maulana Attaur Rehman on Sunday announced province-wide protest from January 8 to 15 against stoppage of flour supply by the Punjab government led by PTI.

In a statement issued here, Maulana Attaur Rehman urged JUI's sub organizations to hold protest demonstrations in their respective areas in the district

headquarters of the party.

He alleged Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government with the help of hoarders has created price-hike crisis. He said that silence by the KP government over the decision of stoppage of flour supply by the Punjab government was proof of the incompetence of PTI government.

He said the 20Kg sack of flour was available in the entire Punjab province at the rate of Rs 1,300; while

the same sack was not available in the markets and was selling at the rate of Rs 3,300 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Maulana said that all the district administrations failed to provide relief to masses and appealed to the general public to participate in the JUI's protests throughout the province against stoppage of flour supply and against incompetence of provincial government in service delivery.

DPO visits check posts

PESHAWAR (APP): District Police Officer (DPO) District Kurram, Abdul Samad Khan visited the police stations and check posts of far-flung areas the central Kurram, said a press release issued here on Sunday.

The areas which were visited by the DPO were included Police Lines at Sadda and various police stations and check posts of Lower Central and Upper Kurram and Pak-Afghan border at Teri Mangal, Koi, Khar Lachi, Torsa, Roza and police stations of lower and upper Kurram.

During these visits he was accompanied by DSP Central Kurram, Inayat Khan, Sub-Inspector Saleem Shah, Security Incharge Ifthikhar Hussain and others.

The DPO reviewed the security of police stations and police lines and direct-

ed the police personnel to remain alert. He also checked the official record of all police stations and also visited the residential barracks, guard posts and other sections.

He further directed the Muharrars of police stations and police lines and said that these facilities are like houses, therefore, keeping them clean and neat is their responsibility.

Similarly, he said that the compiling the record of the official documents and equipment and assets is also their responsibility and issued especial directives to the personnel on Pak-Afghan border at Mangal Koi and Khar Lachi to remain alert for 24 hours.

DC N Waziristan visits Ghulam Khan border

Deputy Commissioner North Waziristan, Rehan Gul Khattak visited

Ghulam Khan border and reviewed trading activities, said a press release issued here on Sunday.

During the visit, the Deputy Commissioner also met with civil and military officials and commended trade activities at the border. He expressed the hope that with these positive activities, North Waziristan would progress and develop.

On this occasion, an official of the district administration gave him a briefing on matters relating to trade and security at Ghulam Khan border.

The Deputy Commissioner also visited the Training Centre for Digital Census and highlighted its importance and utility and termed the census a possible mean for progress and development of any district or locality.

Snowfall disrupt routine life

PESHAWAR (APP): Incessant rain and long-anticipated snowfall in Kalam, Chitral and Malakand disrupted routine life by confining locals into their houses, the locals said on Sunday.

According to Regional Meteorological Department, the intermittent downpour started in the morning with 4 inches of snowfall recorded in the above-mentioned districts.

Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) has also issued necessary directives to all the departments to ensure essential equipment during snowfall and to clear the link roads.

The temperatures of hilly areas decreased up to below minus level. The minimum temperature level in Kalam was recorded -5, Parachinar -6, Dir Upper -2, and in Malam Jabba was decreased up to -1.

All the link roads were closed due to heavy snow while traffic flow on main roads also affected due to landsliding and snow daubing.

The routine life was disturbed due to snowfall and disrupted the power supply in different areas while Wapada officials were working to restore the electricity.

People in upper areas were confined to their homes while business activities were also affected. The met office also predicted more rain and snowfall in upper parts of the province during the next 24 hours.

RPO visit police station

PESHAWAR (APP): Regional Police Officer Kohat Region Tahir Ayub along with Commissioner Kohat Mahmood Aslam and District Police Officer District Kurram Abdul Samad Khan Sunday paid a surprise visit to the Sada Police Station in Kurram District.

RPO Kohat Region Tahir Ayub along with the Commissioner Kohat Mahmood Aslam have thoroughly checked the registers and other documentary records of the Police Station besides meeting the officials and Jawans of the Police Station.

The Regional Police

Officer went to different parts of the Police Station and inspected the lockup rooms and also checked the accommodation and food facilities of the Policemen in the barracks. He also met the police officers on duty in the police station and learned about the problems and difficulties faced by them.

Regional Police Officer Kohat, on the occasion of his visit to Sada Police Station, gave strict instructions to the concerned police officials to take special care of the cleanliness of the Police Station and to keep all the records completely organized.

KMU conducts centralized test for admissions in allied health sciences programs

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Medical University (KMU) Peshawar conducted centralized tests at Peshawar and Islamabad for admissions in various BS programs. A total of 1201 candidates participated in the said test, out of which 851 appeared in Peshawar and 350 in Islamabad. The result of the test will be declared within 48 hours.

According to the details, two separate test centers were established in Peshawar and Islamabad for the said test. In Peshawar test center 851 students participated in the test while in Islamabad 350 candidates appeared in the test. It is essential to keep in mind that for admission to all allied health sciences programs affiliated to KMU, it is mandatory for every student to appear in KMU-CAT, without which no institute is allowed to take

admission in any discipline.

Meanwhile, KMU vice-chancellor Prof. Dr. Zia ul Haq has said that the purpose of conducting this test was to save the future of those students aspiring for admission in allied health sciences programs who, for whatever reason were not able to participate in the previous tests of KMU and now they were facing difficulties in admissions to KMU-affiliated institutes.

He said that private institutes of allied health sciences affiliated to KMU are our main stakeholders, so protecting their interests and solving their problems is our top priority. He said that the decision to hold the recent KMU-CAT was taken only on the request of the private sector, which would give them an opportunity to fill their vacant seats.

The vice-chancellor said that the peaceful and transparent conduct of the test is



a testament to the hard work and professionalism of the entire staff of KMU, for which we are deeply grateful to Allah Almighty. He said that various fields of allied health sciences are of fundamental importance

in the health system that is the reason KMU is taking all possible steps to improve the quality of these disciplines.

Prof. Dr. Zia ul Haq said that by holding a centralized entrance test for

admissions in allied health sciences, if on one hand, talented students will get an opportunity to come forward in these fields, on the other hand, it will also improve the overall quality of the healthcare system.



In brief

Two die separately

SARGODHA (INP): Two persons were killed in two different road accidents here on Sunday in the jurisdiction of Esakhail police limits. The police said that first incident occurred near Namal area where Muhammad Shamas r/o Esa Khail was travelling on a motorcycle, when he reached near Esa Khail Namal Morr, a dumper hit his bike. Meanwhile, in another incident, Muhammad Yamin (45) r/o Ditta Khail was traveling on his car, when a speeding truck hit the car near Chowk Sargodha Road. Resultantly, he sustained fatal injuries and died on the spot. The area police reached the spot and shifted the bodies to nearby hospitals. Further investigation was underway, police said.

Five held with narcotics

SIALKOT (INP): Ugoki police claimed on Sunday to have arrested five drug peddlers and recovered narcotics and illegal weapons from their possession. In a crackdown against criminals in different areas, the police arrested Ali Raza with 2. 20 kg hashish and 50 gram ice, Khaliq with a pistol, Akhtar with four motorcycles, Bilal and Yar Muhammad with three motorcycles, two mobile phones and two pistols. Cases have been registered against the accused.

Two suspects arrested

HYDERABAD (APP): The police have arrested two suspects in different operations and seized liquor, heroin from their possession. According to the district police spokesperson, Maki Shah police on the direction of SSP Amjad Shaikh, arrested two suspected accused Kamran alias Kami and Muhammad Umair alias Dodo Abbasi while conducting separate raids near Maki Shah Dargah and the Cantt Graveyard. The police have seized 100 sachets of heroin from the accused Kamran and 10 bottles of liquor from Dodo Abbasi and cases registered against them, the spokesman said.

Man held for stealing money

MULTAN (APP): Police arrested a man on Sunday who had fled away from a bank after stealing money from his boss. According to police sources, a citizen namely Noman Ahmed went to a bank along with his servant Mehran Sajjad to deposit Rs 2.4 million in cash to his bank account. In the meantime, his servant Mehran Sajjad fled away from the bank with the cash. Old Kotwali police registered the case and started investigations into the incident. On Sunday, a police team under the supervision of SDPO Gulshat division Ghulam Fareed, raided a place and arrested the accused. Police have also recovered the stolen cash from his possession. Further investigations were underway from the criminal, police sources added.

11 notorious POs arrested

MULTAN (APP): Police arrested 11 notorious proclaimed offenders (POs) during a special crackdown launched by the proclaimed offender staff of police here on Sunday. In line with the special directives of CPO Shakir Hussain Dawar, the PO staff police launched a crackdown against criminals and arrested 11 notorious proclaimed offenders wanted to police in different cases of dacoity, robbery, theft, and others. The arrested criminals have been handed over to the concerned police stations where further investigations were underway, police sources added.

F.P. Report

UPPER KHANPUR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Irrigation Arshad Ayub Khan has said that Central Imported Govt is deliberately not paying 190 billion rupees to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the form of NFC award, due to which the province is facing economic problems which is affecting the common man. The central government is punishing the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for supporting PTI. He expressed these views while addressing the inauguration ceremony of different projects in Upper Khanpur in which Govt Degree College Kohala Bala at cost of Rs.47 crores, PCC Road to Neelan Hilli at cost of Rs. 5.5 million, four Viresh Bridge at a cost of Rs. 8.3 Million and flood protection wall to be constructed at a cost of Five million.

On this occasion, former Federal Minister Umar Ayub Khan, leader of Tehreek-e-Insaf Yusuf Ayub Khan, XEN C & W Muhammad Bilal, XEN Irrigation Taimur Khan, officers of other departments, residents and clans of Upper Khanpur were presented.

Provincial Minister Arshad Ayub Khan said that it will not be a common College but technical education will be given in it along with BS, MS, when boys are equipped with the jewel of higher education, the lives of their families will change and development of human beings always done through education. He further said that the establishment of the college is a project through which the people of the area will get change and

prosperity in the coming generations.

He gives instruction to C&W department to complete work in given time frame so the college should be functional on time and classes can be launched immediately.

He said that time is not far when the children of the people living here will become army generals, doctors and engineers, establishment of such institutions has far-reaching effects. During our 4-year tenure, there has been so much development in this area which has not happened in last 71 years. They kept electing and sending people but these representatives always made false promises to the people. The people of Khanpur were very kind to me and I will always remember it. He said that in the upcoming election, you should cast

your valuable vote keeping in mind the development of your area, our family will always serve you.

Addressing the ceremony, the former provincial minister and leader of Pakistan Tehreek insaf Yousaf Ayub Khan said that since 2018 till today, developmental works in this area has not happened in the last 71 years. After establishment of Degree College, children of the residents here will be equipped with higher education. Because of this, a new era of development will begin here. There was no development work here in 71 years before the 2018 election, there was backwardness everywhere, before there was no education, health, electricity. There were no water, roads and other facilities. Women here used to carry water on their heads from miles away to drink.

the construction of Kohala Shah Maqsood Lora Chowk road at a cost of two and a half billion rupees, the construction of the Kohala to Pir Soha and Pir Soha road to Islamabad at a cost of 10 crores. The construction of intermediate and Degree College at a cost of Rs 47 crores today are significant projects for the development of this backward area.

He said that in these four years, there is no such village in Upper Khanpur in which roads have not been constructed and the construction of primary, middle, high and higher secondary schools has been build. He said that in these four years, 70 crores of rupees have been spent in Khanpur Tehsil for education purpose.

He told the public that you can guess for yourself that as many events as have

happened in our four-year period have not happened in the last 71 years. He said that this area is the most prosperous area of Haripur district, but unfortunately it was the most backward, no one paid attention to its development. These young people are conscious, they will not be deceived by anyone.

Addressing the ceremony, former federal minister Umar Ayub said that it is not easy to get such large amount of funds. Before our rule, the Upper Khanpur area was very backward, now this land is selling at the price of gold. Due to the construction of roads, it is 45 minutes from here to Islamabad. Similarly, electricity, water, education, health and other works have been done. He said that God willing, if you elect us twice in the next election, it will not be more

than that. He said that the country's economic situation is very bad. In this country, there is a storm of inflation, we had left the electricity at 17 rupees per unit, now it is 45 rupees, while it will become more expensive and will go up to 80 rupees per unit.

Everything has been imposed on us, which has nothing to do with the people, but the federal government has come to apologize for its cases, it is lying and deceiving the people. They are because they know that if the elections are held, the people will reject them.

The people of the whole country are making a single voice that they should save us from these cruel thieves. PTI will win again in the upcoming election from the whole country and Imran Khan will be elected as the Prime Minister of this country with the power of vote.

HESCO to provide employment to youth

BALAKOT (APP): Special Assistant to Prime Minister Sardar Shahjahan Yousuf Sunday said that Hazara Electric Supply Company (HESCO) will not only resolve the electricity problems but also provide job opportunities to more than 20000 youth of the region. He expressed these views while addressing all parties conference at Balakot.

The SAPM further said that Hazara division is playing its role in the provision of electricity to the country as most of the major dams are situated here and at present, three new dams are under construction in Tehsil Balakot alone which would provide a huge amount of clean energy to the national grid after completion.

Shahjahan Yousuf while talking about the issues of Tehsil Balakot including New Balakot city and property acquired for dams, Suki Kinari Dam affectees said that the recommendations of the all-parties conference would be sent to the federal government and would get help to resolve them.

He said that he will raise his voice on the issues of Tehsil Balakot on every forum, the advisor also showed his concern over the delay on the New Balakot city project and said that from last provincial government of KPK did not complete this much-needed project despite the clear orders of Supreme Court of Pakistan.

On the occasion former Tehsil Nazim Balakot Junaid Qasim, Qazi Khaleel Ahmed, former MPA Zia ur Rehman and member local bodies also addressed the conference and demanded to provide payments against the land acquired for dams according to market and provision of employment to the youth of the area.

Pending projects' completion top priority

SARGODHA (APP): State Minister for Production and Industries Tasneem Ahmed Qureshi said on Sunday that completion of pending development projects was top priority of the coalition government, and elections would be held on time.

Talking to the media at Editorial Block, Company Bagh Sargodha, he said all mega projects in Sargodha were completed during the PPP era in the past. He said there was a plan to buy 100 acres of land in Sargodha to build an industrial zone,

which was abandoned by the previous government. A gem precious stone factory had been set up during Pakistan People's Party government period, but work was stopped on it during the PTI government. He said his first priority was to complete all pending projects at the earliest.

The state minister expressed his optimism that the PPP would win the upcoming elections across country. He said Imran Khan's government had pushed the country's economy to the brink of destruction. He said that the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) government was working day and night to improve the national economy.

Tasneem Ahmed Qureshi said PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari apprised the world of Pakistan's importance during his recent visits to different countries.

A large number of civil society members, journalists and officials attended the function.

DC for implementation on anti-dengue SOPs

NAROWAL (APP): District Emergency Response Committee (DERC) meeting was held under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Narowal Muhammad Shah Rukh Niazi in DC office.

The meeting was attended by Assistant Commissioners (ACs) Zohaib Ahmed Anjum, Shiza Rehman, Dr. Arshad Watto, ACHRM Muhammad Jamil including officers of the Health department, Agriculture, Livestock, Environment, Population, Education, Rescue-1122, Civil Defence, Industries, Food, Forest, Municipal Committee members.

Addressing the meeting participants DC(Narowal) directed the officers of all concerned departments to strictly fulfill their responsibilities in dengue surveillance and issued instructions to ensure the implementation of dengue SOPs.

He said that the tyre shops should be strictly monitored, officers should improve their performance practically while dengue surveillance should also be uploaded on daily basis. Negligence during dengue surveillance is not tolerated, dc said. He said that the ACs should closely monitor the teams under their supervision.

Focal person Dr Muhammad Tariq while giving a briefing to DC said that during this week, 64,567 dengue activities were done by 414 indoor teams of the Health department and 13,506 by 74 outdoor teams along with 1373 hotspots were checked.

Later in the meeting, DC issued necessary instructions to AD Environment, DD Agriculture and Secretary RTA regarding anti-smog.

Police special squads arrested 694 'criminals'

FAISALABAD (APP): The special squads of police including Dolphin and Elite force arrested 694 suspected criminals from various parts of Faisalabad during the outgoing year 2022.

A police spokesman said here on Sunday that the Dolphin force took action against the suspected criminals and arrested 594 alleged outlaws including 122 proclaimed offenders and 472 others involved in different cases of dacoity, robbery, theft, murder, drug-trafficking and illicit weapons.

He said that Dolphin force also reunited 33 missing children with their parents and relatives during the outgoing year.

The Elite force arrested 100 suspected criminals and recovered 100 pistols, two rifles, one Kalashnikov and other items from them during this period, he

added.

One killed, two injured in road accident: A motorcyclist was crushed to death while his 2 pillion-riders sustained serious injuries in a road traffic accident in the area of D-Type Colony police station.

Rescue 1122 spokesman said here on Sunday that a motorcyclist all of sudden changed his lane while travelling on Samundri Road near Al-Aziz Hotel when a speedy bus coming from its rear side hit the two-wheeler severely.

As a result, motorcyclist Danish Ashraf (14) resident of Niamat Town received serious injuries and died on the spot.

Rescue 1122 shifted two pillion riders Waqar (19) and Akbar Nawaz (12) to DHQ Hospital where their condition was stated to be critical.

The police took the body

into custody while further investigation was underway, he added.

Owners of 4 marriage halls booked: AC City Waqas Safdar Sikandri has booked the owners and managers of four marriage halls on the charge of violation of one dish and Marriage Functions Act.

A spokesman for the administration said here on Sunday that the official inspected various marquees and marriage halls and found the administration of four halls violating the one dish and marriage act laws. He got registered cases against them and imposed fine on them, he added.

13 habitual beggars caught, shifted to Panahgah: Thirteen habitual beggars were caught from different parts of the city during the last 24 hours and shifted them to Panahgah.

PMA for resolving mobile phone signals issue

MULTAN (APP): A delegation of Pakistan Medical Association called on DIG Prisons, Mohsin Rafiq, for getting settled mobiles phone signal issue at Nishtar Hospital and students hostels owing to jammers in district jail.

Patients, attendants, doctors, paramedics, NMU students, College of Physicians and Surgeon employees and staffers of Nishtar Institution of Dentistry (NID) have been facing cell phones signals problem since long due to jammers in district jail which is located near the health facilities.

NMU VC, Dr Rana Altaf Ahmed and PMA president Dr Masood Hiraj led the delegation and it was consisted of Dr Abdul Khaliq Sheikh, Dr Zulqarnain Haider, Dr Zeeshan Fareed and others and they met DIG Prisons and discussed the issue and its possible solution.

Rafiq listened the delegation reservations and ensured them to resolve their issues soon especially mobiles signal problem in the area.

Foolproof security arrangements being ensured

MULTAN (INP): City Police Officer (CPO) Shakir Hussain Dawar said that foolproof security arrangements were being ensured at churches to avoid any untoward incident.

In a statement issued here on Sunday, he said the best security arrangements have been made at churches to provide a peaceful environment for the Christian community to perform their religious activities.

He said that walk-through gates have been installed at entry points of the churches while lady police officials have also been deployed. The CPO added that all SDPOs and SHOs were monitoring the arrangements at churches in their respective areas, however, he himself was monitoring the security arrangements. He directed police officials to remain alert while performing security duty at churches. He urged them to keep a vigil on suspicious persons and activities in the surroundings of the churches.

Fog affects traffic flow in different parts of country

QUETTA (PPI): Cold and cloudy weather is expected in most parts of the country. However, rain/snow is likely in north Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan, Pothohar region and Kashmir.

A thick layer of fog has enveloped many cities in Punjab including Lahore, paralysing routine life and disrupting road traffic. The dense fog has badly affected the flow of road traffic in several cities. According to a Motorway spokesperson, the Motorway M2 from Lahore to Kot Sarwar, Lahore-Multan Motorway M3 from Faizpur to Rajana, Motorway M4 from Faisalabad to Abdul Hakim and Motorway M5 from Shershah to Zahir Pir have been closed for all kind of

traffic.

The Motorway police have appealed the drivers to use Grand Trunk (GT) Road for travelling. They have also urged the drivers to drive slowly and switch on fog lights.

The Motorway police have also requested the people to stay home and avoid unnecessary travelling. Dense fog has also disrupted traffic at several places in the province at the National Highway due to low visibility.

Flour crisis worsen in Balochistan

The Balochistan government appears to be helpless regarding the flour crisis as per kilogram flour was being sold at over 150 Rupees in the local market.

The Balochistan government had not procured the allocated quota of wheat to provide the commodity to its masses and overcome the problem of shortage of wheat in the province.

According to media reports, the provincial government claimed that the federal and Punjab governments were not providing wheat to Balochistan.

The provincial government failed to provide flour to the masses at official prices. The long queues of people can be witnessed outside all utility stores and flour mills across Balochistan for getting flour.

The local people urged the authority's concerns to take strict action against wheat hoarders and ensure the commodity at a fair price.

Work on uplift projects in Daska to begin this month

SIALKOT (APP): Deputy Commissioner Abdullah Khurram Niazi said on Sunday that Rs 1.766 billion would be spent on development projects in Daska in collaboration with the Punjab government and the World Bank during the current month.

Under the project, rainwater drainage from the city, construction of major highways, installation of streetlights and machinery for Solid Waste Management Company (SWMC) would be provided.

He expressed these

views while addressing the meeting along with Member Provincial Assembly (MPA) Bao Rizwan.

AC Daska Iqbal Sanghera, CO Municipal Committee Abdul Have Bhatti, XEN Public Health Abrar Ahmed were also present.

Addressing the meeting, Deputy Commissioner Abdullah Khurram Niazi said the city had been divided into four zones for rainwater drainage at a cost of Rs 933 million.

Under the project, new drains would be constructed, old drains would be

rehabilitated and temporary and permanent pumping stations would also be constructed as per the requirements.

The Deputy Commissioner said that a project had been prepared at a cost of Rs 715 million for the construction of roads and beautification of intersections in Daska.

He said that machinery for SWMC had been purchased at a cost of Rs 192 million, while Rs 107 million had been allocated for the installation of streetlights.

CEO health inspects THQ Hospital, RHCs

FAISALABAD (APP): Chief Executive Officer District Health Authority Dr Saqib Munir conducted surprise checking of Tehsil Headquarters Hospital Tandiianwala and Rural Health Centres Kanjwani and Mamonkanjan, here on Sunday.

He went to THQ Hospital and interacted with the patients and their attendants. He also asked them about availability of health facilities and directed the hospital administration

to improve health service. He checked cleanliness in various wards of the hospital and ordered for improving it.

The CEO health also visited dialysis centre, pediatrics ward and biomedical waste & infection control centre and directed the hospital staff to improve their performance. He said the government was spending huge money on provision of quality health facilities to people. Therefore, no negligence, lethargy and

delinquency would be tolerated in this regard, he added.

Later, the CEO health also visited RHCs Kanjwani and Mamonkanjan and checked working status of entire machinery in addition to inspecting medicine record in the centre stores.

He also expressed dismay over cleanliness condition of washrooms and directed the centre in-charge to ensure implementation of all health indicators.



19 killed, 20 injured in road accident in eastern China

BEIJING (AFP/APP): Nineteen people died and 20 were injured Sunday in a road traffic accident in eastern China's Jiangxi province, state media reported.

The "major road traffic accident" took place just before 1:00 am (1700 GMT) in Nanchang County, state broadcaster CCTV reported, citing local authorities.

"The cause of the accident is under in-depth investigation," CCTV added.

Local news outlet Jimu, affiliated with the state-owned Hubei Daily Media Group, reported the accident took place when a truck hit a funeral procession.

People had been carrying out a roadside offering to the dead before planning to head to the crematorium Sunday morning, a local woman surnamed Deng told the outlet.

They were then hit by a truck, the report said, with most of the dead and injured being funeral attendees.

Another local man, surnamed Gong, told the outlet his wife had been killed in the accident and that they had been attending the funeral.

The truck had suddenly crashed into the back of the line, tearing through the group before finally reaching the hearse, he said.

Around an hour after news of the



accident emerged, Nanchang County traffic police issued travel tips to drivers saying the area was experiencing "foggy weather".

"Driving visibility is poor, there is low visibility, which can easily cause traffic accidents," it said.

"Please pay attention to fog lights... slow down, drive carefully, keep a safe distance from the car in front, avoid pedestrians, do not change lanes and overtake," it added.

Road accidents are common in China due to a lack of strict safety controls.

Last month, one person died during a highway pile-up in central China that involved hundreds of vehicles and was caused by low visibility in fog.

And in September, 27 passengers died after a bus transporting them to quarantine facilities in southwestern Guizhou province flipped over on a motorway.

Greece to build 140-km-long steel wall along border with Türkiye: Minister

GUMULCINE (AA/APP) : Greece will build a 140-kilometer- (87-mile-) long steel fence along with Meric River, said the country's citizen protection minister on Saturday.

Speaking to local Skai TV, Takis Theodorikakos said his ministry has launched a project on building a

fence to prevent migrant crossings.

In December, Greece announced that it would deploy 250 border police to tighten patrol and surveillance measures near the Meric (Evros) region on the Turkish border.

On Tuesday, Türkiye's National Defense Ministry revealed that a

Turkish naval drone recorded footage of Greek forces illegally pushing back a boat carrying irregular migrants to Turkish territorial waters.

The illegal Greek pushback was recorded north of the Greek island of Midilli (Lesbos) in the Aegean Sea on Dec. 30, the ministry said in a tweet.

Dozens killed in Senegal bus accident

DAKAR (AFP/APP): At least 38 people have died and scores were injured when two buses collided near the town of Kaffrine in central Senegal on Sunday, according to the president and the fire services.

In response to the "grave" accident, President Macky Sall announced three days of national mourning beginning Monday.

In a tweet Sunday he also said there had been 40 deaths and "many serious injuries".

"I am deeply saddened by the tragic road accident," he said on Twitter.

"I extend my heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims and wish a speedy recovery to the injured."

The Senegalese prosecutor said in a separate statement that 38 people had been killed.

Public prosecutor, Cheikh Dieng, said that early investigations suggest-

ed that the accident was caused when "a bus assigned to the public transport of passengers, following the bursting of a tyre, left its trajectory before colliding head-on with another bus coming in the opposite direction."

Colonel Cheikh Fall, who is in charge of operations for the West African country's National Fire Brigade, had earlier told AFP that 38 people had died and 87 were injured in the accident.

The accident took place around 3.15 am local time (0315 GMT) Sunday morning, Fall told AFP, adding that all the victims have been evacuated to a hospital and medical centre in Kaffrine.

The wreckage and demolished buses have since been cleared and normal traffic has already resumed on the road, he said.

The governor and local officials

have already visited the scene, he added. President Sall said after the period of national mourning finished, a government council will be held to "take firm measures on road safety".

Road accidents are common in Senegal, largely because of driver indiscipline, poor roads and decrepit vehicles, say experts.

However this is one of the heaviest death tolls from a single incident in recent years.

In October 2020, at least 16 people were killed and 15 more injured when a bus collided with a refrigerated lorry in western Senegal.

The bus, with a 60-seat capacity, was heading to Rosso near the border with Mauritania, the fire brigade said, adding that the number of people onboard was unknown. Local media said at the time that the truck was hauling fish to Dakar.

Sweden can't meet some Turkey demands for NATO bid: PM

SÅLEN (AFP/APP): Turkey, which has for months blocked NATO membership bids by Sweden and Finland, has made some demands that Sweden cannot accept, Sweden's prime minister said on Sunday.

"Turkey has confirmed that we have done what we said we would do, but it also says that it wants things that we can't, that we don't want to, give it," Ulf Kristersson said during a security conference also attended by NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg.

"We are convinced that Turkey will make a decision, we just don't

know when," he said, adding that it will depend on internal politics inside Turkey as well as "Sweden's capacity to show its seriousness."

Sweden and Finland broke with decades of military non-alignment and applied to join the US-led defence alliance in response to Russia's February invasion of Ukraine.

But Turkey has refused to approve their bid until the two countries take steps, including joining Turkey's fight against banned Kurdish militants. Most of Turkey's demands have involved Sweden because of its

more robust ties with the Kurdish diaspora.

Finland's foreign minister said that the country would join NATO at the same time as its neighbour.

"Finland is not in such a rush to join NATO that we can't wait until Sweden gets the green light," Pekka Haavisto, told reporters at Sunday's conference.

In late December, Turkey praised Sweden for responding to its security concerns but stressed more was needed to win Ankara's full backing for Stockholm's stalled NATO membership bid.

Mexico metro crash kills 1, injures 57

MEXICO CITY (AFP/APP): Two metro trains collided in a Mexico City tunnel Saturday, killing one person and injuring 57, authorities in the megacity of 20 million reported.

Television footage showed injured passengers being treated in ambulances following the crash, which occurred on the north-south Metro Line Three.

"There are 57 injured people,

some with minor injuries, who in any event went to the hospital, and unfortunately one death," Mexico City Mayor Claudia Sheinbaum said in a brief statement from the scene of the accident. The train conductor was the most seriously injured person in the collision, which occurred between the Potrero and La Raza stations, she said.

Inaugurated in 1969, the

Mexico City Metro covers 226 kilometers (140 miles) with 195 stations on 12 lines.

Authorities estimate it moved a total of 837 million passengers in 2021. However, the metro system is often criticized for inadequate maintenance. In the most serious of several failures, a metro bridge collapsed in May 2021, killing 26 people and injuring dozens.

1,000 irregular migrants deported from Türkiye from Jan. 1 - 5: Immigration agency

ANKARA (AA/APP): More than 1,000 irregular migrants were deported from Türkiye in the first five days of 2023, the immigration agency said Saturday. A total of 1028 irregular migrants were

deported from Jan. 1 - 5, the Presidency of Migration Management wrote on Twitter.

During that period, 1,889 irregular migrants were prevented from entering Türkiye, it added. A total

of 20,497 irregular migrants remain in repatriation centers, it said, adding that the number of irregular migrants whose procedures continue under invitation to leave was 91.

Ana Montes: Top spy freed in US after more than 20 years

NEW YORK (BBC): Ana Montes - among the best-known Cold War spies caught by the US - has been released from prison after more than 20 years in custody. The 65-year-old spent almost two decades spying for Cuba while employed as an analyst at the Defence Intelligence Agency.

After her arrest in 2001, officials said she had almost entirely exposed US intelligence operations on the island. One official said she was among "the most damaging spies" caught by the US.

Michelle Van Cleave, who was head of counterintelligence under President George W Bush, handed a 25-year prison sentence, with the sentencing judge accusing her of putting the "nation as a whole" at risk.

However, unlike other high-profile spies caught during the cold war, Montes was motivated by ideology, not personal gain. She agreed to work for Cuban intelligence in part based on her opposition to the Reagan Administration's activities in Latin America. In particular, a report from the defence department's



information that she acquired to other powers." After her arrest, Montes was accused of supplying the identities of four US spies and oceans of classified material. She was handed a 25-year prison sentence, with the sentencing judge accusing her of putting the "nation as a whole" at risk.

Inspector general found, she is believed to have been angered by US support for the Nicaragua Contras - a right-wing rebel group suspected of committing war crimes and other atrocities in the country. She was initially approached by a fellow student at Johns Hopkins University in 1984 after expressing outrage at US actions in Nicaragua. She was later introduced to a Cuban intelligence agent and at a dinner in New York City she "unhesitatingly agreed to work through the Cubans to 'help' Nicaragua", the inspector general's report said.

After travelling to Havana the following year for training, she joined the Defence Intelligence

Agency, where she would eventually become the organisation's senior analyst on the island's communist government.

For almost two decades she met with Cuban handlers every few weeks at Washington DC restaurants and sent coded messages containing top secret information to them via pager. She received her orders by transmissions sent over short-wave radio. She was finally detained in September 2001 after US intelligence officials received a tip that a government employee seemed to be spying for Cuba. One of the FBI agents who arrested her said she had appeared stoic upon her arrest.

Montes will remain under supervision for five years after her release and will have her internet usage monitored. She will also be banned from working for the government or contacting foreign agents without permission. But Pete Lapp, one of the FBI agents who arrested Montes, told CBS News that he thought it was unlikely that she would try to re-establish contact with Cuban agents.

Excitement at Hong Kong's China border as quarantine lifted

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Hugging her boyfriend goodbye, student Yuri Tan was among hundreds excitedly heading north across Hong Kong's border with mainland China on Sunday as pandemic travel restrictions were mostly lifted, finally allowing separated families to reunite.

"I am going back because I don't have to undergo quarantine anymore," an elated Tan told AFP, clutching luggage containing a few boxes of fever medication for family. Tan, 23, was planning to travel to Shenzhen just across the border from Hong Kong and then take a connecting flight to her hometown of Yangzhou in eastern China, a journey that until recently would have meant weeks in mandatory isolation first.

China lifted quarantine rules for all international visitors on Sunday, ending almost three years of self-imposed isolation.

On the same day, the border between mainland China and Hong Kong also did away with most

restrictions. Around 60,000 people are now allowed to travel each way daily.

On Sunday morning there were large crowds at the Lok Ma Chau border crossing heading north, but noticeably fewer people heading south into Hong Kong.

With the Lunar New Year two weeks away, many said they were going for family reunions.

Chinese student Galen Liu said he had been studying for a doctorate in Europe, making a return home all but impossible until now and leaving him feeling "helpless".

Two weeks ago he flew into Hong Kong and waited for the border to reopen so he could reunite with his parents and sister in neighbouring Guangdong province.

"I am really excited," Liu told AFP. "Now I can finally go home and I don't need to take a flight -- I can just cross the border overland."

Liu was carrying medicine for family, most of

whom he said had been recently infected after China abruptly abandoned its strict zero-Covid strategy.

Cases have soared in the world's most populous nation, with hospitals and morgues under huge pressure, although authorities have given little data on infections or deaths.

A housewife surnamed Dong, who was returning to Hong Kong from Shenzhen, was stoic about the explosion of cases.

"It's inevitable when the restrictions are relaxed. People have to be able to move around or the economy cannot grow. We must treat it more calmly," she said.

Those using the Hong Kong-mainland border must have proof of a recent negative test, a requirement Beijing has criticised other nations this week for imposing on travellers from China.

Mainland entrepreneur Alex Zeng was among those headed into Hong Kong, a city that long served as a business gate-

way to China before it was cut off by Covid.

The sports equipment manufacturer said he planned to attend an exhibition there before travelling overseas for much-needed meetings with clients.

"It was quite inconvenient when I could not travel and meet my customers face to face," Zeng told AFP.

"When my clients

wanted to check out a sample, we could only do it via video link."

Hong Kong's economy is in dire straits, mired in recession and desperate for crowds to return. Prior to the pandemic, mainlanders accounted for about three-quarters of arrivals.

An 80-year-old traveller surnamed Liu said he was returning to Hong Kong to celebrate the Lunar New Year with family.

"I hope the procedure can be further simplified, like scrapping the test result requirement," Liu told AFP. "It's a bit complicated for an 80-year-old man like me."

Iranian held in Germany suspected of chemical terror plot

BERLIN (AFP/APP): An Iranian has been arrested in western Germany suspected of preparing a chemical bomb attack using cyanide and ricin, police and prosecutors said Sunday.

Muenster police and the Duesseldorf prosecutors' office said in a press release that officers searched a residence in the town of Castrop-Rauxel for "toxic substances" intended to carry out an attack.

The 32-year-old Iranian was "suspected of having prepared a serious act of violence threatening the security of the state by

obtaining cyanide and ricin with a view to committing a terrorist attack, said investigators.

The arrest was carried out shortly before midnight on Saturday evening, a spokeswoman for the police said. Another person, said to be the main suspect's brother, was also taken into custody during the operation, she said.

The 32-year-old suspect will be presented in the coming days to an investigating judge ahead of possible pre-trial detention, police said.

Ricin is a highly toxic substance, which is classed

as a "chemical weapon" in Germany. Similar to cyanide, ricin can be lethal.

According to local media reports, the raids were carried out by agents wearing protective suits, due to the chemical hazard.

German authorities were tipped off to the risk of an attack with a "chemical bomb" several days ago by a foreign intelligence service, the German daily Bild reported.

In 2018, a Tunisian man and his wife were arrested on suspicion of planning a biological bomb attack in Germany.

The couple, who sympat-

hised with the Islamic State group, were found in possession of 84 milligrams of ricin in their Cologne apartment.

The man was sentenced to 10 years in prison in 2020, while his wife received an eight-year sentence.

Germany has been targeted in recent years by several terrorist attacks, including a 2016 truck attack on a Christmas market, that killed 12 people and left dozens injured.

A 13th victim died five years later having suffered serious injuries in the assault.

7.0-magnitude quake strikes Pacific nation of Vanuatu

SYDNEY (AFP/APP): A 7.0-magnitude earthquake struck just off the coast from the Pacific nation of Vanuatu late Sunday, the US Geological Survey said, triggering a tsunami warning for the region.

The shallow quake hit around 11:30 pm local time (1230 GMT) around 27 kilometres (17 miles) deep, said the USGS, which placed it about 25 kilometres from the village of Port-Olry.

A tsunami warning was issued for Vanuatu, New Caledonia and the

Solomon Islands but later cancelled about an hour and a half after the quake.

"Tsunami waves reaching 0.3 to one metre above the tide level are possible for some coasts of Vanuatu," the NWS Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre in Hawaii said.

Waves smaller than 0.3 metres were possible for New Caledonia and the Solomon Islands, it added.

The French embassy in Vanuatu advised people to stay away from the coasts in a post on Facebook.

Residents reported on

social media that there had been damage.

"A Big One!!" one person posted on Facebook. "Lots of things broken all around."

New Zealand's National Emergency Management Agency said there was no tsunami threat to its country.

Vanuatu is part of the Pacific "Ring of Fire", where tectonic plates collide, and experiences frequent seismic and volcanic activity.

The Solomon Islands, an island nation just north of Vanuatu, was hit in

November with a 7.0-magnitude quake, though there were no reports of serious injuries or major structural damage.

In 2018, a 7.5-magnitude quake and subsequent tsunami in Indonesia's Sulawesi island left more than 4,300 people dead or missing.

Vanuatu is ranked as one of the countries most susceptible to natural disasters like earthquakes, storm damage, flooding and tsunamis, according to the annual World Risk Report.

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Mission ProPublica and Monarchial Legislation

Recently, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) has challenged the Aircraft, Helicopter bill approved by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Assembly in Peshawar High Court. Earlier, the PTI-led government in KP passed a bill from the Assembly to allow the use of aircraft or helicopters by the functionaries of the government at public expense for personal gains. The bill empowers the chief minister to allow any minister, advisor, public, and government servant to utilize the facility at the public expense effective from November 1, 2008. Ironically, the so-called public saviors also enlisted in the legislation that the subject legislation could not be challenged or undone by anyone after its approval.

There had been an unprecedented uproar in the media regarding the use of KP's government's helicopter by the former Prime Minister for attending PTI public rallies during the PTI anti-government campaign after the ouster from power. Before PTI's rivals move to the courts to file a petition against the misuse of government helicopter for nongovernment activities by the KP government, the PTI government in the province moved the KP Ministers Salaries, Allowances and Privileges (Amendment) Bill 2022 in the Assembly to forestall the issue. The bill was hurriedly passed by the KP Assembly amid hoe and cry by the opposition without any deliberation in the relevant standing committee, while the opposition termed the bill an NRO and blanket immunity for the PTI for its own misdeeds over by past eight years in office. Currently, the ball has reached the court that would decide the legality of the bill or otherwise.

Realistically, public representatives are answerable to the public for their conduct both in their personal lives as well as the public domain particularly dealing with government matters. Although, legislation is the prime responsibility of the legislature, however, legalizing their colleagues' misconduct or coverup of the sins of their predecessors is not mandatory for them and unlawful under all conditions and pretexts. Being a lawmaker does not mean impunity from the constitution or some kind of relaxation from the state law for the public representatives. In fact, legislation must be in the interest and well-being of the country and the nation instead of the protection of any particular political group, trade cartel, or other influential.

The Pakistani nation has given unparalleled support and a heavy mandate to Pakistan Tahreek-e-Insaf (PTI) during the 2018 election because of its fascinating political manifesto whose important points were the rule of law, merit, and transparency, eradication of corruption and promotion of human rights and civil liberties in the country. The recent legislation of the KP Assembly regarding the Ministers' Salaries, Allowances, and Privileges (Amendment) Bill renewed the legacies of the famous Mughlai era when great Mughlai Emperors were used to throwing away massive rewards in the shape of jewels, diamonds, villages, districts, and states not only to their men but to their forerunners and successors in recognition of their services to the kingdom. Apparently, such kind of personalized legislation had badly damaged the PTI's core values and decades-long narrative which always revolves around the common public instead of feudal and grandfathers. Hopefully, the adjudicators will correct the course of the leaders through a lawful appreciation of the controversial legislation.

Tact of Philippines Powerful Ruler

Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has replaced the Philippine Military Chief, General Bartolome Bacarro with a retiring military officer Lt. Gen. Andres Centino as the new Army Chief, a move that was very unusual and surprising for many as General Bacarro hold office five months ago, and his three years term was supposed to end in August 2025. Interestingly, Lt General Centino was due for retirement next month and he has been raised to the post after superseding over a dozen senior generals of the Philippine military.

Philippine President Ferdinand Bongbong Romualdez Marcos Jr. commonly known as Bongbong appointed General Bacarro as Army Chief about five months ago and now suddenly reversed his decision and posted a junior general in the topmost position of Manila's armed forces. The move comes after the Philippine President returned home after a controversial four-day state visit to Beijing amid the ongoing tense situation at the Philippine-China sea borders along with decades-long territorial disputes in the South China Sea. After landing home Manila's ruler replaced the country's military chief as the most urgent job, which clearly indicates conflicting ideologies of both leaders regarding Philippine's defense priorities vis-a-vis Manila's bilateral relations with Beijing. The Philippines military has a history of restiveness, failed coups, coup attempts, drug trade, and corruption scandals, while successive leaders launched multiple efforts in the past to instill professionalism in the military and insulate it from politics and corruption, yet the men in uniform fear the rulers and Bongbong changed the Army Chief to secure his seat.

Like all other leaders, Bongbong is currently consolidating his rule in the country through multiple recipes including the recruitment of Vloggers for image-building, enrollment of social media campaigns for character assassination of political opponents, and the appointment of his trustful office bearers in government departments to smoothly and securely sail through his term in office. Meanwhile, Manila's Ministry of Interior has asked nearly 1,000 police and military generals and colonels to quit and allow a committee to investigate and weed out top officials involved in illegal drug trading. After applying all tactics and tools, Manila's powerful ruler resorted to weed out all senior bureaucracy in the armed forces by posting his blue-eyed junior officers so they always obliged him and cause no problem for his rule throughout their service.

Quote of the day

How many times do you have to get hit over the head until you figure out who's hitting you.
— Harry Truman, American President [1945-1953]

“I put you in the saddle, now if you please, ride on your own”

In that wonderful era, which is now irrevocably fading like a dream from memory, we were taught that democracies do not fight among themselves. At least one of the parties to a military conflict must necessarily be undemocratic. If both are democratic, then all disagreements are resolved peacefully and to mutual satisfaction. Thus spoke Zarathustra.

Modern Poland and Germany are obviously democracies. They are allies in NATO (although this is still a completely convincing argument - Turkey is also a member of NATO, as well as Spain during Franco), and also in the EU, which, according to its officials, stands for all good things, and most importantly, for democracy.

And now, since the fall of 2022, two equally respected countries have not yet been conducting hostilities, but are increasingly bickering over the issue of Germany's payment of reparations for World War II. Poland demands 6.2 trillion zloty -

about 1.3 trillion euros, which is equal to three annual budgets of Germany. In Berlin they answer: "God will give." What is perceived by Warsaw as extreme disrespect.

And not just perceived. Warsaw at the end of December already turned to the Council of Europe with a request to influence Germany and force it to pay indemnity, and on January 3 asked for similar support from the UN: let it create a platform for negotiations on this issue, then the FRG obviously, will not dare to ignore the demands Poland.

Furthermore. The Polish government's commissioner for reparations, Deputy Foreign Minister Arkadiusz Mulyarchik, intends to visit the United States this month to lobby for Polish demands before Congress, as well as before the "polonium", that is, the Polish diaspora. Which is quite influential in America.

All this is reminiscent of the American sanctions practice. Having once decided to achieve the fulfillment of their demands,

the Americans can weaken or increase the pressure, but they will not give up their claims. See the long history of the Jackson-Vanik amendment (concerning difficulties with leaving the USSR), adopted in 1974 and outlived this same USSR by a quarter of a century. According to the principle "Where a horse with a hoof goes, there goes a cancer with a claw," the Polish lords intend to show Berlin (probably Moscow for company) that now they will never leave their own. "If I decide something, then I will definitely drink."

Although the Polish demands themselves are quite unprecedented. World War II ended more than seventy-seven years ago. Those born in 1945 are now very old people. But here:

"You were rude to me eight decades ago,

I haven't forgotten that,

Explaining such vindictiveness, Polish politicians point out that in 1953 Poland and Germany agreed to refuse repara-

Maxim Sokolov

tions. In their opinion, this agreement is void, since the then Polish People's Republic was a Soviet satellite and, therefore, did not have sovereignty.

True, there are two difficulties here. By 1992, Poland already had full sovereignty. As well as reunited Germany. What prevented us from demanding reparations even then, without postponing the matter for thirty years? Furthermore, Warsaw did not mention reparations either in 1999, when it became a member of NATO (and thus an ally of Germany), or in 2004, when it strengthened the bonds of friendship and cooperation by joining the EU.

And, by the way, having received then long-term and significant - about seven billion euros a year - European subsidies, which were mostly paid for by that same Germany. True, now the period of subsidies is ending - "I put you in the saddle, now if you please, ride on your own."

Obviously, this explains the fact that the pans remembered the historical guilt of Germany only now: the money is very needed.

But there is a problem here. If the PPR did not possess sovereignty, and therefore its renunciation of reparations in 1953 is insignificant and in no way binds the current Rzeczpospolita, then was the PPR sovereign when it annexed Danzig, Stettin, Breslau, East Prussian Allenstein? According to legal logic, the acquisition of Silesia, Pomerania, etc. must also be declared null and void. And just in the fall of 2022, Chancellor Scholz, having received a Polish note on reparations, transparently hinted that such a turn was also possible. Reparations are also possible, but then Germany was within the borders of 1938 (with the exception of the Kaliningrad region, since Russia did not declare the agreements signed by the USSR null and void).

With such a turn, the clairvoyant lords would only have to object to the Germans, perhaps in the

spirit of "We play here, we don't play here, we wrap the fish here." Not the strongest negotiating position. Berlin's answer here can be either the canonical German Lecken mich im Arsch (that is, "Kiss my ass"), or - more politely, still a true ally - the wish to receive Ucho od sledzia, "an ear from a herring".

The most mysterious thing here is - why do panamas need it? Yes, the FRG under the current red-green government deserves to publish (as it was under Napoleon) the pamphlet "Germany in its greatest humiliation", but still not in such a way as to bend even before Poland. It can be objected that even more grey-haired politicians are sitting in Kyiv. But Kyiv has nothing to lose, and they can proceed from the fact that in the current global battle, the winner takes all. But the panamas seem to still have something to lose, and exorbitant demands in all respects - both from a totalitarian enemy and from a democratic ally - can only be called a delusion of reason.

Sri Lanka is banking on an IMF bailout to get the economy back on track

In 2022 Sri Lanka faced its deepest ever economic and political crisis. The country's descent into chaos accelerated from March, sweeping away high-level bureaucrats and political leaders held culpable for implementing the misguided economic policies at the heart of the country's problems. The political casualties failed to allay public disaffection with prolonged power outages, queues and shortages of essential commodities.

The primary target of public unrest was Sri Lanka's elected president, Gotabaya Rajapaksa. His ouster in July was achieved amid outbreaks of violence and the occupation of key government buildings by protesters. For a while, there were real concerns that Sri Lanka would descend into a state of anarchy. The fact that it was averted — with a transfer of power to a new president elected by a majority of votes in parliament —

speaks not only to the country's tradition of democracy but also a desire to avoid repeating past experience of violent upheavals.

The parliament's appointment of Ranil Wickremasinghe as Sri Lanka's eighth president was not without controversy. Wickremasinghe, the nominated candidate of the departing Rajapaksas, and his party had also been roundly defeated at the parliamentary polls in August 2020. Yet he was still seen as the safest pair of hands to carry Sri Lanka through what promises to be its toughest economic setback since independence. Complex negotiations with creditors on debt restructuring following a sovereign foreign debt default in April, and an International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailout program, demanded a sound grasp of global economic forces and geopolitical relations. A seasoned politician who has held the post of prime minister on numerous occasions, this was territory

familiar to the new president.

Wickremasinghe lacks an assured parliamentary majority to carry through painful reforms — as well as the legitimacy of having been elected by the people to do so. These could prove serious drawbacks as Sri Lanka struggles to regain its footing in 2023 and beyond.

A cost-of-living squeeze — that placed Sri Lanka in the top five countries with the highest food price inflation for much of 2022 — tipped many vulnerable Sri Lankans into poverty. Poverty is set to swell, even as job and income losses signal the country's plunge into a prolonged recession. In 2022, GDP is expected contract by close to 9 per cent and the latest estimates suggest that the economy will contract by 3–4 per cent in 2023.

With few policy choices, Sri Lanka is banking on an IMF bailout to facilitate access to bilateral and mul-

Dushni Weerakoon

tilateral financial support to get the economy back on track. The IMF's four-year US\$2.9 billion program provides limited provision of liquidity. What matters is the program's ability to catalyse other official lenders, private investors and creditors confidence in coming to the party. But the standard IMF policy prescription that demands stringent financial discipline means that adjustment costs will be front-loaded, preventing the government from spending its way out of recession. Accordingly, taxes are being hiked and expenditures are being cut.

Even at the best of times — with a strong and stable government at the start of an electoral cycle — this kind of reform agenda is politically fraught. An economic crisis can sometimes be the catalyst of a major economic overhaul, but in the absence of political stability the downside risks are significant. Governments have far

fewer resources in hand to compensate those who are bound to lose out from reforms. The loss of faith in political leaders and institutions, with the Sri Lankan public having clearly demonstrated its readiness to punish those who have failed to deliver, amplifies the perils.

The best hope for Sri Lanka is a swift conclusion to the debt restructuring negotiations. The evidence is sobering in today's complex creditor landscape. For Sri Lanka, having China, India and Japan as its largest bilateral creditors alongside primarily US-based private bond holders adds a layer of complexity in working out treatment that is comparable and acceptable to all. China has been unwilling so far to take a cut in principal repayments, preferring to refinance payments with fresh loans. Sri Lanka will have to call on all its diplomatic skills to persuade creditors to arrive at a mutually agreeable formula in 2023.

Even if everything goes according to plan, it will be another two or three years before the Sri Lankan public feels any real improvement in economic conditions. The erosion of real wages and the introduction of higher taxes are squeezing disposable incomes, prompting exit by many to seek better living standards overseas.

With Sri Lanka's economic progress set back by years by the debt crisis, the government can only hope that people will have enough patience to wait until painful austerity-inducing reforms start to work. With all the uncertainties, next year will be crucial for Sri Lanka as it gears up for the all-important presidential elections in 2024. Meanwhile, containing public disaffection amid calls for early elections — while ensuring that political uncertainty does not delay economic decision-making — is set to test the skills of even the most hardened and experienced political leader.

Historians argue: Will it be possible to find a cache of Nazi treasures

A World War II document revealing a cache of coins and jewels hidden by German soldiers has been leaked online by Dutch archivists. This treasure map has sparked a buzz around the search for a £15 million Nazi treasure.

As the Nazis fled occupied Europe in the final days of World War II, four German soldiers buried a treasure trove of gold coins and jewels in the middle of nowhere in the Dutch countryside, writes The Observer. Nearly 80 years later, hopes of finding the buried loot were raised after the National Archives of the Netherlands released a plethora of documents - and a map of the hoard with a cross marked.

The hoard - four chests of ammunition filled with coins, watches, jewelry, diamonds and other precious stones - is believed to have been worth at least 2 million or 3 million Dutch guilders in 1945, equivalent to about £15.85 million today, money.

"A lot of researchers, journalists and amateur archaeologists are really interested and excited," says Annette Waalkens, an advisor to the National Archives, who released more than 1,300 historical documents last week. Whether any would-be treasure hunter will be able to find these boxes is another matter. Among the array of World War II documents is a 7cm-thick folder that chronicled the Dutch state's fruitless efforts to recover Nazi-looted treasures after the war.

Researchers believe that the treasure was buried in April 1945, when the Allies were on the verge of liberating Arnhem in the eastern Netherlands. The German

soldiers fled. "They decided to bury the treasure because it was getting too hot under their feet and they were starting to get scared," Annette Waalkens tells The Observer.

The precious cargo was buried in poplar roots at a depth of 70-80 cm near the village of Ommeren, about 25 miles from Arnhem. Wealth could have disappeared from historical records forever, if not for the chatty German soldier

was a bit taciturn in Berlin," says Waalkens, and he soon caught the attention of the Dutch authorities in the occupied German city. They passed the information on to the Beheersinstituut (Dutch Institute for Asset and Property Management, the body responsible for managing the wealth of people who disappeared during World War II, including

Andrey Yashlavsky

zinc ammunition boxes. In 1946-47, the Beheersinstituut conducted three searches. The first failed because the ground was frozen. The second, with the help of primitive metal detectors of that time, did not give anything. For the third attempt, they called in the help of Helmut S. from Germany, but despite his knowledge of eyewitnesses and the map



Helmut S., who took part in burying the treasure.

The National Archives is hiding his full name, as Helmut S., born in 1925, may still be alive, although no one has been able to track him down.

Of the other three soldiers, two did not survive the war, and another simply disappeared.

Helmut S., however, remained on the radar. "He

deported Jews, Dutch spies and German citizens who lived in the Netherlands).

According to Helmut S., the treasure was discovered when the Arnhem branch of the Rotterdam Bank was bombed in August 1944. The safe was broken, leaving jewelry, coins, and other riches strewn across the street. His comrades pocketed what they could see and later hid the loot in

provided by him, the excavations were unsuccessful.

Archivists are not sure who made the map, but they believe it was done by one of the German soldiers. After Helmut S. handed it over, the map ended up in the archives of the Beheersinstituut with the proviso that it would not be published for many years to protect the financial interests of the property owners.

said, 'Well, we don't know what you're doing, but please mind your own business, it's our business,'" Waalkens says.

Joost Roosendaal, assistant professor of history at Radboud University Nijmegen, told the Observer that looting was common on both sides. In October 1944, at least five banks in Arnhem were looted by German soldiers.

The historian doubts that the treasure will ever be found. The area around Ommeren was heavily bombed on the night of 24 April 1945 by the British Royal Air Force. He suspects that the cache was "destroyed by this bombardment", allowing the treasure to be discovered by locals or Allied troops, or the Germans moved it to another location.

"I really hope the treasure is still there," says Annette Waalkens. "And that when it is dug up, perhaps we can track down some of the rightful owners."

break the blockade

The battle at height 3234 became one of the most heroic and tragic episodes of the Afghan war. Thirty-five years ago, a company of paratroopers entered into an unequal battle with the numerically superior forces of dushmans. Many myths arose around this. About how everything was in reality - in the material of RIA Novosti.

Break the blockade
From November 23, 1987 to January 10, 1988, the 40th Army conducted the last major combined-arms operation in Afghanistan - "Magistral". The soldiers and officers were given the task of breaking through the long-term military and economic blockade of the Khost district. The armed opposition was going to seize this territory from Kabul and create an independent state there. These plans had to be thwarted.

The situation was complicated by the fact that the terrain is very inaccessible - mountains are everywhere. In addition, the region borders on Pakistan, which helped the Afghan dushmans.

The command attracted 5600 military personnel to the operation. A special role in subsequent events was played by the 1st and 3rd battalions of the 345th Separate Guards Airborne Regiment (345th OPDP). The "winged infantry" was given the task of taking control of the dominant heights along the strategi-

cally important route between the cities of Gardez and Khost.

No one promised an easy walk to the fighters - the province was teeming with militants. In the mountains - caches, firing points, mortar positions.

The third battalion operated in close proximity to the Afghan-Pakistani border. The eighth and ninth companies were ordered to occupy several enemy lines, from which artillery fire was corrected. Including - two nameless heights, marked on the maps as 3234 and 3228. From there, the route was visible for 20-30 kilometers.

The paratroopers took both positions on December 27-28, 1987. The commander of the 345th Opdp, Valery Vostrotin, concentrated all three platoons of the ninth company at a height of 3234 as the most tactically significant. The paratroopers, without wasting time on celebrating the New Year, set about equipping firing points, equipping field fortifications and mining approaches.

The company was reinforced with the crew of the Utyos heavy machine gun and the artillery spotter of the second howitzer battery of the artillery battalion of the regiment. Soviet fighters quickly gained a foothold at the height in accordance with all the rules of military science.

Machine gunner's feat
For more than a week, the enemy practically did

Andrey Kots

not show himself. However, the paratroopers repeatedly heard the noise of helicopter propellers - it was obvious that Pakistan was sending reinforcements to the hidden "spirits".

Everyone knew that an attack was being prepared. And on January 7, at about 15:30, massive shelling began. The enemy hit the ninth company with mortars, recoilless rifles and grenade launchers. An hour later, the infantry went into battle.

Junior sergeant Vyacheslav Alexandrov, the crew commander of the "Utes" heavy machine gun of the guard, was the first to discover the "spirits" rising to the top of the mountain range, warned his comrades and opened fire. The militants, who were trying to take the height impudently, lay down. Climbing a 12.7 mm "Utes" with optics would be suicide, so the spooks changed tactics and began to hit from three sides with grenade launchers.

The junior sergeant of the guard sent the crewmen into cover, and he continued to shoot, although a fiery hell raged around the machine-gun nest. When the "Cliff" was damaged by shrapnel, Alexandrov threw several grenades and died from return fire.

He managed almost single-handedly to contain the enemy, who had a huge numerical superiority. This allowed the comrades to prepare for the defense of

other directions.

Twelve attacks

The first attack was followed by others. The enemy climbed to the height, regardless of the losses. Using dead zones, under dense fire, the "spirits" approached from three directions, including through a minefield.

On the western slope, the Mujahideen advanced 50 meters, in some areas - to throw a grenade. Under these conditions, artillery spotter Ivan Babenko provided invaluable assistance to the company. He aimed the regimental howitzers directly at the battle formations.

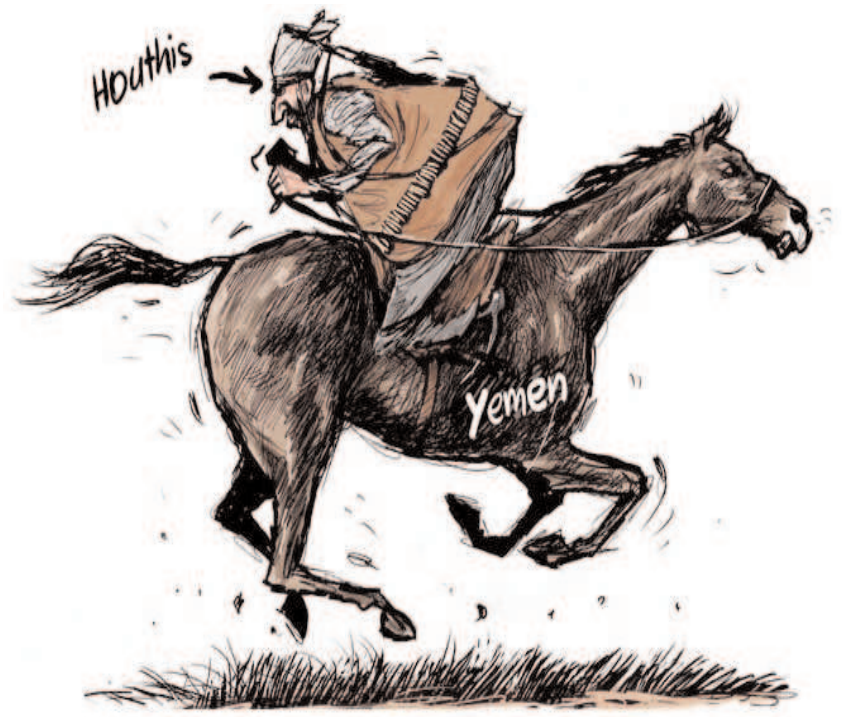
The battle for 3234 ended on January 8, at about four o'clock in the morning. Thirty-nine Soviet soldiers and officers repelled the onslaught of 400 militants, losing six killed. 28 paratroopers were injured, nine of them were severe. A total of 12 enemy attacks were repulsed. The enemy has hundreds of dead.

"These were not only dushmans, but also well-trained Pakistani mercenaries," recalled Sergeant Vladimir Schigolev, a participant in the battle. "In the morning, the whole mountain was littered with their corpses. One or two more attacks, and the end, we would not have been there. There were practically no ammunition left : they threw all the grenades and even threw stones. Our - both dead and wounded - we dragged into one heap,

without understanding. I remember how in the morning, in between attacks, we, the surviving boys, envied the dead. They no longer it was scary, they would not be killed and would not be taken prisoner."

Director Fyodor Bondarchuk, who filmed this story in 2006 (the film "9th Company"), kept silent about many things, focusing on the fact that the paratroopers were allegedly forgotten in the mountains. In fact, the command of the 345th regiment was watching the battle from a nearby height. At a critical moment, a reconnaissance platoon of the 3rd Airborne Battalion made its way to the company - 12 people under the command of Senior Lieutenant Alexei Smirnov with ammunition, medicines and water. A stable connection with the unit was provided by a repeater aircraft loitering over the combat area.

A few days later, a Su-25 attack aircraft patrolling the nearest gorges spotted rotating lights below. They were Pakistani helicopters trying to evacuate wounded militants. Soviet troops delivered a massive blow to their positions from Uragan multiple launch rocket systems. Oily black smoke rose from the gorge for three days. Artillery put an end to the battle. And the first automobile columns moved into the besieged Khost. Operation "Magistral" ended with the complete victory of the 40th Army.



What awaits Europe in the new year

The European Union continues to be under pressure - from within and without. The past year has particularly brightly highlighted the contradictions between the countries of the continent. Added to this was the aggressive policy of the United States. On the problems of the EU - in the material RIA Novosti.

Sanctions as a unity factor

At a recent summit of heads of state and government of the EU, the next - the ninth - package of anti-Russian sanctions, personal and sectoral, was agreed upon.

And the first was approved on February 25th. The blacklists included President Vladimir Putin, Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin, Deputy Head of the Security Council Dmitry Medvedev, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov.

EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell called it "the toughest restrictive measures."

Brussels then acted in parallel with Washington. This unity continued for many months. But for subsequent packages, there were fewer and fewer

Renat Abdullin

EU

Despite the declared commonality of views, some European countries oppose the course of Brussels.

Poland plays the main role. Warsaw was one of the first to refuse Russian energy supplies. And regularly calls for the strictest restrictions for Moscow.

Polish experts occupy leading positions in Western think tanks, and the US and EU have to reckon with them.

At the same time, the Poles have specific goals of their own. Chief among them is the unfreezing of assets that Brussels has deprived Warsaw of due to unpopular internal reforms. So far, the EU does not go towards Poland, which only intensifies the split within the union.

The second European enfant terrible (fr. "difficult child", the term is often mentioned in the European press when discussing the EU) is Hungary. Unlike Warsaw, Budapest is reserved in relation to Moscow, but critical of Kyiv.

The Hungarians have banned the supply of weapons to Ukraine

the USA and Europe. America, relatively independent in matters of energy supply, actually forced the allies to join the anti-Russian sanctions. The Western press admits that Brussels has started to get tired of Washington's geopolitical adventures.

Even more shocking was the "Inflation Reduction Act" passed by US President Joe Biden. The act implies protectionist measures for American manufacturers of electric vehicles and batteries, primarily in the form of subsidies. In Europe, these steps were called discriminatory. Macron, standing up for the entire European Union, tried to get concessions from Biden, threatening to split the West. However, he did not succeed - and at the level of the union they decided to develop response measures, which were discussed at the summit of the union in mid-December. However, the Europeans have far less money than the US to subsidize their producers and consumers.

The American law will come into force in January. When its economic consequences become tangible for the EU, the tension between the allies, obvious-

After the departure of Angela Merkel from the post of chancellor, Germany has lost its traditional role as the "locomotive" of the EU. The new head of government, Olaf Scholz, does not have the experience and authority of the ex-chancellor, and his trust ratings among the population are hitting anti-records. Under these conditions, France declared itself as a European leader.

options. At the same time, contradictions intensified in the EU: some wanted more rigidity, others wanted restraint. French President Emmanuel Macron had to act as a mediator.

Change of leadership

After the departure of Angela Merkel from the post of chancellor, Germany has lost its traditional role as the "locomotive" of the EU. The new head of government, Olaf Scholz, does not have the experience and authority of the ex-chancellor, and his trust ratings among the population are hitting anti-records.

Under these conditions, France declared itself as a European leader.

Macron won his second presidential election in the spring, and before that, with the beginning of the Russian NWO, he also became the hero of Internet memes. "Makron got through" - this joke has spread all over the world. Its essence is simple: the French president admitted that since December 2020 he had at least 100 hours of telephone conversations with Vladimir Putin. Slightly less Macron spoke with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.

The efforts of Paris did not bring results, but at least secured France's leading diplomatic role, which also involves the pacification of the "problem" members of the European Union. And they react differently to anti-Russian sanctions: from the desire to tighten them to calls for a compromise with Moscow.

"Difficult children"

through their territory, they oppose a number of anti-Russian sanctions, primarily energy ones. In December, the country's Foreign Ministry called the idea of imposing a price ceiling on oil and gas from Russia "harmful and dangerous."

Budapest's antipathy towards Kyiv is connected mainly with Transcarpathia, where the Ukrainian regime oppresses the Hungarian community, and with Moscow the situation is even simpler. Hungary is not able to provide itself with energy resources without Russian participation. The EU is in no hurry to help the most vulnerable members.

The structure of the European Union does not allow the forced exclusion of one of the participants in the association. Therefore, both Poland and Hungary have the right to advance their positions. German Chancellor Scholz admitted that the EU needs fundamental changes - up to the abandonment of the right of veto, according to which one country can block the decisions of the entire union. But for such reforms, the consent of all participants will again be required. Neither Warsaw nor Budapest, according to polls, are ready to leave the EU. This means that Brussels will have to make more efforts to reconcile partners. But it is not only within the EU that compromises must be sought.

Overseas discrimination

The energy crisis has become a serious blow to the cooperation between

ly, will only increase.

Vague plans

At the end of December, President of the European Parliament Roberta Metsola, Czech Prime Minister Petr Fiala (and since July 1, 2022 the Czech Republic is the President of the EU Council) and the head of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen signed a joint declaration on priorities for 2023-2024. It was assumed that the document would consolidate progress in the work of the union, but the final wording turned out to be very vague.

As Roberta Metsola stressed, European leadership is now most needed. Among the primary tasks is the support of business, citizens and green energy.

Fiala, in turn, declared his readiness "to uphold democratic principles, contribute to the further development of a well-functioning single market and meet the expectations of citizens."

Ursula von der Leyen focused more on continuing to support Ukraine.

In the general statement, there was no place for the most pressing issues, such as the confrontation between the various EU members and the union itself - America. Demonstration of universal unity is a standard technique for Brussels.

But now the problem is that in 2022 the split among the Western powers that Macron hinted at in Washington has become too obvious. And even portraying unity becomes problematic.

You don't get a second chance to make a first impression holds true

The GOP has stumbled at the starting line of the new Congress, squandering a moment of rare opportunity.

Having won a House majority, albeit a slim one, most Republican members were eager to turn up the heat on President Biden and advance the agenda on which voters elected them. Instead, they have spent almost a week embroiled in a debacle, only finally electing Rep. Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) as Speaker in the 15th round of voting soon after midnight Saturday.

Even then, the core problem of disunity between McCarthy's supporters and opponents was on vivid display, with pro-McCarthy Rep. Mike Rogers (R-Ala.) having to be restrained from a physical confrontation with one of the most fervent hold-outs, Rep. Matt Gaetz (R-Fla.).

Enmity had bubbled all week between the two camps, with McCarthy supporters like Rep. Dan Crenshaw (R-Texas) branding the dissenters "clowns."

One major strand of the frustration was a stark fact: the internecine squabble was preventing anything else from getting done.

Rep. Don Bacon (R-Neb.) told the Omaha World-Herald that the anti-McCarthy members were

"making demands and acting like they are more righteous and pure than anyone else... We're tired of it."

Bacon added, "At some point, if they refuse to play at all, we have to find another way to govern."

One group of center-right members, the Republican Main Street Partnership, even launched a digital ad campaign with the goal of "reminding Americans across the country that the majority of the House Republican Majority is ready to get to work for the American people."

The problem is, the reminder was needed in the first place.

The chaos in which the GOP has become enmeshed is especially galling for many Republicans because their opponents are in a vulnerable position.

Though Democrats did better than expected in November's midterm elections, they are hardly riding high.

Biden's approval ratings remain stubbornly under-water.

The weighted average maintained by polling and data site FiveThirtyEight had Biden winning the approval of roughly 44 percent of Americans as of Saturday evening. Fifty-one percent disapproved of the president's performance.

Niall Stange

There are several specific issues that are sore spots for the administration, particularly inflation and immigration.

Biden is expected to make his first visit as president to the southwestern border on Sunday, when he will go to El Paso.

The visit - together with a plan released Thursday aimed at curbing the rush of migrants from Cuba, Haiti and Nicaragua - reflects an awareness within the White House that the administration needs to do more to get on top of the issue.

Border Patrol agents had almost 2.4 million encounters with unauthorized migrants at the southwestern border during the 2022 fiscal year - an all-time high.

The numbers have overwhelmed shelters and other facilities in the region, and have caused stress farther afield.

New York City is currently accommodating more than 20,000 migrants in its shelter system.

A recent poll from The Economist/YouGov indicated that just 31 percent of Americans - and a mere 18 percent of those who identify as independent - approve of Biden's handling of the immigration

issue.

But instead of pressing the case against Biden this weekend, Republicans will, at best, be having to explain why the process of electing a Speaker took more rounds of voting than it has done at any point since the Civil War.

"It's not a great look, it doesn't set a great tone," GOP strategist Dan Judy told this column shortly before McCarthy was elected.

Judy emphasized that memories of this week's mayhem could fade if the House Republicans get down to more "substantive" business soon.

But he also acknowledged a more pessimistic scenario in which "this could certainly set the tone for a conference that is dysfunctional and divided."

Some moderates fear exactly that outcome, in part because of the compromises McCarthy has made to get himself over the finish line.

McCarthy won the gavel at the price of a number of concessions, including making it much easier for members of try to topple a sitting Speaker.

Democrats, meanwhile, can hardly believe their luck.

Several, including Reps. Ted Lieu (D-Calif.) and Bill Pascrell (D-N.J.), had made

gleeful references to eating popcorn while watching Republicans vainly try to unite earlier in the week.

After Rep. Kat Cammack (R-Fla.) alleged Democrats had been drinking amid the proceedings, Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.) tweeted back, "If only! If Dems took a shot every time McCarthy lost a Republican, we'd all be unconscious by now."

Even Biden and Vice President Harris seem bemused by events at the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue, agreeing amid smiles at a Thursday news conference that they were paying close "attention" to the goings-on.

Democratic strategist Basil Smikle told this column, "The juxtaposition between the disarray on the right and the consensus on the left is glaring for the voter. Voters don't mind divided government but what they care about is a functioning government."

The picture could yet change. Now Republicans have finally elected a Speaker, the political focus will shift.

But if the old saying that you don't get a second chance to make a first impression holds true, the GOP will have plenty of cause to rue the events of this week.

the president and I'm sure he's listening carefully to what she's advising on his next steps."

Jen O'Malley Dillon The White House aide has been one of the few outsiders to crack Biden's inner orbit after serving as his general election campaign manager.

In the halls of the West Wing, O'Malley Dillon, who serves as a deputy chief of staff, has been quietly laying the groundwork for another political run along with other aides.

She has been speaking with interest groups to keep them engaged and working on expanding the digital strategy for 2024.

In an interview with The Washington Post last month, she said, "The idea is not just to meet people where they are, but it's to meet people everywhere they are."

Biden allies say she knows what a second run will entail for Biden and is a major part of the launchpad for another run.

"She knows exactly what to expect," one ally said.

President Joe Biden is expected to announce he will run for reelection in the coming weeks

President Biden is expected to announce he will run for reelection in the coming weeks after spending some time consulting with his family and his closest advisers over the holidays.

Many of those advisers have been by Biden's side for years - if not decades - making up his all-important brain trust.

Who is Biden leaning on as he revs up for another run?

Ron Klain Biden's chief of staff has the most outward visibility of anyone in his inner circle.

He has a constant presence on Twitter and routinely makes the rounds on cable and network news and with good reason: He not only has a mastery of Biden's politics and policy, but most importantly he is entrenched in every part of the operation at the White House, Biden allies say.

Klain has kept a steady ship at the White House even during the rockiest of times. Biden's Cabinet is the same at the two-year

marker as it was at the start, and the West Wing has seen very little turnover in the first couple of years.

He's also the one who has dropped the biggest hints to date about Biden's intentions: "I expect the decision will be to do it," Klain said last month at the Wall Street Journal's CEO Council Summit.

Steve Ricchetti

The White House senior adviser is known as the "Biden whisperer." But in many ways, he's also the president's chief dealmaker in key moments on Capitol Hill - including the big infrastructure deal in 2021.

"He was the closer for us, full stop," said one Biden ally. "He knows the president, the president trusts what he says. But he also earned the trust of folks on the other side of the negotiating table too."

Having served as chief of staff to Biden during his time as vice president and chief strategist during the 2020 presidential campaign, Ricchetti understands how to frame a potential race for Biden and what he might be up

Amie Parnes

against.

"He's the Biden whisperer because he has a sense of what the landscape looks like," one donor said.

Mike Donilon

At the end of the year, Biden's senior adviser - who has been by the president's side since 1981 - circulated a memo to "interested parties" about the successes of the administration in its first two years, something that sent a clear message about the president's political prospects.

In the memo, Donilon, who is known for the major role he plays in speeches and the overall spoken word disseminating from the White House, made the case for why Biden should run again.

"In November, the President and the Democrats saw an historic midterm outcome - far stronger than the disastrous 'Red Wave' that had been predicted," Donilon wrote.

"The result has been a strong jolt of momentum for the President as we move into the New Year.

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APBF for taking serious measures, as depleting reserves hit economy hard

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The All Pakistan Business Forum (APBF) has stressed the need for taking serious measures, as the current economic situation, marred by depleting foreign reserves, has also forced commercial banks to be selective in opening LCs even for sectors such as healthcare, as it has been unable to open Letters of Credit (LCs) as per its usual banking cycle.

APBF President Syed Maaz Mahmood lamented that the economists foresee an imminent humanitarian and healthcare crisis in Pakistan unless prompt actions are taken by the State Bank of Pakistan, Ministry of Finance and other institutions to avert the disaster.

He said that the rupee still continues to witness volatile trend in the process of trading against dollar and other major currencies. He observed that having a clear policy to curb the volatility in exchange market, the

central bank should be fully geared to act and monitor the movements more vigilantly and should be ahead of the curve as they have more information than an average market player.

APBF Chairman Ibrahim Qureshi observed that the foreign exchange reserves held by the central bank fell to \$4.5 billion after Pakistan returned over \$1 billion loans of two foreign commercial banks, hardly enough to finance 25 days of import. Referring to the reports, he said that two separate repayments of \$600 million and \$415 million have been made to two Dubai-based commercial banks, according to reports. After the loans repayments, Pakistan is left with less than 25 days of import cover.

Ibrahim Qureshi observed that the economic activities in the country have already been severely affected due to depleting reserves, devaluation of local currency and non-opening of letter of credits (LCs) for private companies. Major industries, including car manufacturing companies, have temporarily closed their plants due to import restrictions. According to reports,

Pakistan is expecting to raise around \$1.5 to \$2 billion worth of funds in foreign aid during Geneva Conference to be held next week for the country's flood victims. Besides, efforts are also underway to arrange loans from Saudi Arabia and China. It is expected that Pakistan and International Monetary Fund will hold discussion next week for the completion of the pending 9th review of the program.

Maaz Mahmood said that the 9th review talks have been pending since Oct last year, resulting in the withholding of a \$1.1 billion loan tranche. Pakistan is keen to complete the 9th review so that the World Bank and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) may also release their loans.

He said that Pak Suzuki Motor Company Ltd has extended plant shutdown from Jan 9-13 due to a continued shortage of imported parts. Due to the continued shortage of inventory level, the management of the company has decided to extend the shutdown of the automobile plant from January 9, 2023. Earlier, the company

suspended production activities from Jan 2-6. The firm stated that its supply chain is affecting due to restrictions of the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The export consignments are affecting due to the conditional permission, said the company, adding that the restriction damaged the inventory. Previously, the Indus Motor Company had announced to shut down its manufacturing plant for 10 days due to the imposition of a ban on the imports of completely knocked down kits by the central bank.

Pakistan's biggest agricultural machinery manufacturer, Millat Tractors, said that it would remain closed from January 6 till further notice, citing reduced demand and cash flow problems. A number of auto part vendors have suspended operations in recent months, citing reduced demand and import curbs imposed by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) — that were lifted last week — among other issues. Some textile companies have also partially suspended production recently due to demand destruction and market conditions.



ISLAMABAD: Artisans displaying their products on their stalls during the “BEHBUD Art & Craft Bazaar” at Pak-China Friendship Center.

Admn set up stalls for wheat flour sale

HYDERABAD (APP): On the directives of Deputy Commissioner Fuad Ghaffar Soomro, the Food Department has set up 12 stalls for sale of subsidized wheat flour at different places across the district.

Under the supervision of concerned Food Inspectors, different Roller Flour Mills have established stalls for the sale of wheat flour at subsidized rate of Rs.65 per kilogram.

As per the list shared by the district administration, stalls were set up at Phulleli chowk, Mahar Ali Chowk, Latifabad 12, Rabiul Awal Chowk, Isra University Chowk, Tando Jam City, Sheedi Goth Qasimabad, Hussainabad Chowk, Hyder Chowk, Naseem Nagar Chowk, Shoro Goth Rajputana hospital, Pathan colony and Guru Nagar Chowk, the statement said.

Roller Flour Mills including M/S Sukkur RFM, Ghauri RFM, Hyderabad RFM, Al Noor, New Mehran, Sun Shine, Gul Sher, New Sindhi, DM RFM, Preet, Sunway and M/S GS RFM will provide wheat flour on government subsidized rates and flour will be sold at the rate of Rs.650 per 10 kg.

PM's resolve to meet IMF conditionalities lauded

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Former Vice President of FPCCI Atif Ikram Sheikh on Sunday lauded the resolve of Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif to meet International Monetary Fund (IMF) conditionalities.

Prime Minister has expressed resolve to complete the terms of the IMF Extended Fund Facility programme which is a step in the right direction as it will subside anxiety in the market, he said.

Atif Ikram Sheikh who has also served as Chairman of PVMA said that the PM has assured the Managing Director of the IMF to complete the terms of the IMF's program and explained Pakistan's economic difficulties after the devastating floods.

IMF delegation will come to Pakistan soon which is also a piece of good news which will tackle fears among the investors and masses as some elements are busy spreading rumours about default, he added.

Pakistan entered a \$6 billion IMF programme in

2019, which was increased to \$7 billion last year. The programme's ninth review, which if completed successfully, would result in the release of \$1.18bn to Pakistan.

The review is currently pending as the government did not comply with the agreement which prompted IMF to suspend the tranche.

The IMF review has earlier been put off for two months due to the PML-N-led government's unwillingness to accept certain conditions placed before it

by the Fund, and the disagreements have yet to be resolved.

The business leader said that the international community seems unconcerned about the plight of people in Pakistan hit by floods.

Large parts of the Sindh and Balochistan provinces remain inundated. The number of food-insecure people in Pakistan has doubled to 14 million and another 9 million have been pushed into extreme poverty.

Sports goods exports witness 29.36 per cent increase

ISLAMABAD (APP): Sports goods exports during the first five months of the fiscal year of 2022-23 increased by 29.36 percent as compared to the exports of the commodity during the corresponding period of last year.

During the period from July 22-Nov 22, Sports goods were worth US\$174,676,000 as compared to exports of US\$135,034,000 during the same period, last year.

According to the data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, the exports of gloves increased by 2.73 percent, worth US\$30,857,000 in the current fiscal year, as compared to the exports of US\$31,724,000 during the same period of last year.

Meanwhile, other exports also increased by 5.56 percent as the exports recorded during the current fiscal year were US\$41,843,000 as compared to the exports during the same period of last year which were US\$39,639,000.

Turkish stocks up

ISTANBUL (APP): Türkiye's benchmark stock index opened at 5,555.99 points on Sunday, up 0.59%, or 32.50 points, from the previous close.

Borsa Istanbul's BIST 100 index was down 1.83% to close Wednesday at 5,523.49 points, with a daily trading volume of 124.7 billion Turkish liras (\$6.65 billion).

The US dollar/Turkish lira exchange rate was at 18.7504 as of 10.15 a.m. local time (0715GMT), the euro/lira exchange rate stood at 19.8883, and a British pound traded for 22.5499 Turkish liras.

Brent crude oil was selling for around \$78.61 per barrel, while the price of an ounce of gold was at \$1,858.40.

Asia shares rise

TOKYO (APP): Asian shares are mostly higher following a rally on Wall Street as investors assessed minutes from the Federal Reserve's latest meeting of policymakers and welcomed encouraging data on US jobs, the AP reported.

Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 rose 0.4% to finish at 25,820.80. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 edged up nearly 0.1% to 7,063.60. South Korea's Kospi added 0.6% to 2,269.71. Hong Kong's Hang Seng jumped 1.3% to 21,055.60, while the Shanghai Composite gained 1.1% to 3,156.44.

In energy trading, benchmark US crude rose \$1.09 to \$73.93 a barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. It dropped \$4.09 on Wednesday. Brent crude, the international pricing standard, rose \$1.11 to \$78.95 a barrel. US crude oil settled 5.3% lower on Wall Street.

In currency trading, the US dollar fell to 132.42 Japanese yen from 132.56 yen. The euro cost \$1.0617, up slightly from \$1.0610.

TDAP hailed for exploring new global trade markets

MULTAN (APP): Director General of Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP), Punjab, Rana Shehzad Ahmad said that TDAP was striving hard for increasing exports and bringing economic stability to the country.

He expressed these views during a zoom meeting with Multan Chamber of Commerce and Industry members here on Sunday.

Rana Shehzad said they had made a 180 days plan under which Pakistani trading companies and exporters will participate in international trade exhibi-

tions and trade fairs to explore new trade markets.

He said that TDAP was contacting all chambers of commerce across the country and urged the MCCI to convey trade delegations and concerned departments about it and that TDAP Multan office was ready for cooperation.

Speaking on the occasion, Sheikh Asim Saeed, Khawaja Muhammad Hussain, and Syed Ifthikhar Ali Shah said the MCCI hailed the efforts of TDAP to explore new global trade markets and wanted to participate in trade exhibitions

of over 50 countries in that regard.

They suggested that TDAP should appoint its representative in the chamber who could assist the members in resolving the problems and could devise a future plan.

They also proposed that TDAP should also inform the chamber about its annual exhibitions and programmes schedule so that members of the chamber could be conveyed timely for participation in it.

They also invited DG TDAP to visit the Multan chamber.

Economy facing worst crisis as State Bank reserves drop to critical level

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry's Businessmen Panel (BMP) has warned that economy is presently facing one of its worst crisis as foreign exchange reserves held by the central bank has fallen to a highly critical level of \$4.5 billion after Pakistan paid back more than \$1 billion loans, hardly enough to finance less than one month of import.

FPCCI former president and BMP Chairman Mian Anjum Nisar expressed the fear the number is likely to drop further amid debt repayment obligations of more than \$8 billion in the first quarter of 2023.

According to reports, repayments of \$600 million and \$415 million have been made to two Dubai-based

commercial banks, and after the loans repayments Pakistan will be left with less than 25 days of import cover.

FPCCI former president observed that the country has been reeling from economic distress amid fast-depleting foreign exchange reserves, weakening rupee, and worsening macroeconomic cues, as the gap between inter-bank and open-market US dollar rates has widened by over Rs24, highlighting the difference in how the greenback is being valued in two formal marketplaces in Pakistan.

The customers are being charged Rs50-60 to the US dollar for a transaction when the closing inter-bank rate was quoted by the State Bank at Rs226 — a massive gap of Rs30.

Mian Anjum Nisar said that the current economic situation in Pakistan, marred by rapidly-depleting foreign exchange reserves, has also forced commercial banks to be selective in opening LCs even for sectors such as healthcare, as it has been unable to open Letters of Credit (LCs) as per its usual banking cycle.

He lamented that the economists foresee an imminent humanitarian and healthcare crisis in Pakistan unless prompt actions are taken by the State Bank of Pakistan, Ministry of Finance and other institutions to avert the disaster.

The BMP Chairman said that at the same time, the country has failed to secure much-needed funding from friendly nations and struggled to restart its International Monetary Fund bailout program.

The struggle has left policymakers in Pakistan

scrambling to arrange foreign exchange amid heightened worries over the country's economic health.

Moreover, market rumors of a possible default by Pakistan are also making rounds but the government remains optimistic that Saudi Arabia will offer crucial support for foreign exchange reserves.

The FPCCI former president said that the currency market continued to stay engulfed in a massive dollar shortage, as customers struggled to get their hands on the greenback. Dollars are not available in the market as the economic situation remains vulnerable, while foreign exchange reserves remain low.

However, there is no shortage of other currencies, as UAE dirhams, Euros, and Saudi Riyals remained readily available at the counters of various

Exchange Companies.

The shortage comes at a time when the rupee, according to the State Bank of Pakistan, has remained largely stable in the inter-bank market, hovering around Rs225-226 for almost a week. The spread, which at times of stability hovers between Rs1-3, has now reached Rs7-9. However, there is another simultaneous prevalence of an informal or grey market, where actual transactions are taking place, as the rates being quoted even in the open market vary significantly from the rates being actually offered.

At the same time, the US dollar is being traded at Rs250 in the grey market, as the spread between the inter-bank and open market has also widened because of the shortage while the smuggling of dollars to neighboring countries

remains rampant, leading to a high leakage, he said.

Pakistan's external risk remains very high, as reserves have fallen to a 4-year low. The rupee needs to fall in order to reduce the existing spread — this would direct customers back towards the formal channels, he said. Moreover, stringent border control measures need to be implemented to curb smuggling, he said.

Pakistan is currently in the midst of a financial crunch with policymakers running from pillar to post to secure additional funds for a country reeling from flood disaster. Authorities in Islamabad and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are also engaged in discussions over the 9th review of the Extended Fund Facility, despite the fact that the government's domestic

debt rose by 6 percent during the first five months of this fiscal year.

For the past one year, the country is facing a serious financial crunch that forced the federal government to obtain fresh loans from domestic, as well as, from external resources to meet its financial needs.

Total domestic debt stocks reached historical level of Rs 32.929 trillion at the end of Nov 22 compared to Rs 31.037 trillion in June 22, depicting an increase of Rs 1.9 trillion. Year on Year basis, the country's total debt surged by 23 percent or Rs 6 trillion, as it was Rs 26,827 trillion in Nov 21. Within domestic sources, the government mainly relied on commercial banks to adhere to its commitment of zero fresh borrowing from SBP in line with the SBP Act.

Prospects of blue economy for Pakistan

Mansoor Bhatti

Covering more than 70% of the planet's surface, 95% of the biosphere, serving as home to many complex ecosystems, and producing half of the planet's oxygen, the ocean and its well-being are crucial to our own well-being. Besides being the cheapest medium for transportation of goods, oceans contribute towards world's economy through tourism, fishing, renewable energy production, aqua culture and seabed resources. Economic activities in the oceans are expanding rapidly, driven primarily by growing population and globalization. Reliance on oceans has led to diverse economic interactions clubbed under the term 'Blue Economy' which covers industries focused on sustainable utilization of ocean based resources. Individuals and nation-

states now are resorting to the oceans as earthbound reserves become depleted. But this precious resource (Ocean) is also suffering the effects of human activities, including climate change, acidification, overfishing, pollution and much more. The blue economy has diverse components, further bolstering the fact that a blue future has to embrace innovative technology and skills to achieve economic, environmental and social sustainability.

Though the phenomenon of the blue economy is quite nascent globally but still the height of incongruity over it is that the policymakers along with the populace in Pakistan are yet sea blind undermining the potentials that could be tapped from the oceans and seas. The people and the decision making elite thus need to understand that the oceans are not limitless carrying bounties of resources

and also the oceans those are not healthy and resilient are not able to support economic growth. Pakistan's coastal region is brimming with innumerable marine resources. The coastal and marine areas have great potential of sustainable development of both living and non-living resources.

The marine resources such as ocean energy, minerals, water, petroleum hydrocarbons and fisheries; recreational and tourism potential stands largely untapped. The appraisal and investigation of these assets is fundamental for the economic growth of the nation. Pakistan's prospects for sustained economic growth can only come to fruition if viable policy measures are crafted and implemented.

Pakistan's coast is over 1000 km long extending from Sir Creek to Jiwani. Pakistan also utilizes its 290,000 sq km of Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) for

numerous purposes including fishing, mining, exploration and marine research. Over 15 million barrels of crude oil is shipped right across the Pakistani coast from the Gulf States daily through the Persian Gulf. Pakistan also provides the shortest sea access to Afghanistan, Central Asian States and China. This adds not only to the importance of Maritime Economy potential of Pakistan but also highlights its geo-strategic significance.

Pakistan's coastal areas have significant potential for the energy/ fuel generation from marine plants or other organic materials, hydrogen generated from a variety of ocean renewables and marine geothermal power. There are additionally open doors for hybrid projects, such as combination of offshore wind and wave or even wind and natural gas. Likewise, coastal tourism is a major global

industry.

Being cognizant of the maritime potential of Pakistan, Pakistan Navy has taken various initiatives such as maritime security workshops, maritime conferences, visits and briefing to policy makers, engagements with media house and business community, inclusion of maritime related curriculum, maritime awareness and publicity campaigns, and observing world ocean and environment days, to harness benefits of Blue Economy. Across the globe, maritime exhibitions provide an ideal platform to showcase various marine related products, systems and services, leading to beneficial business partnerships.

On the same lines, Pakistan International Maritime Expo and Conference (PIMEC) is an initiative of Pakistan Navy being organized under the patronage of Ministry of Maritime

Affairs in order to jumpstart development of maritime sector in Pakistan and spur Blue Economy. PIMEC is scheduled from 10 to 12 Feb, 2023 at Karachi Expo Centre. The exhibition will bring together stakeholders and companies from diverse maritime fields to exploit and explore the potential of Blue Economy. It is actually to venture new chapter where we explore the true potential of much more that is to follow. Not only will it give us livelihood and vibrancy to our economy but also provide opportunities to mitigate climate change effects.

PIMEC will focus on investment and collaboration in the fields of port operations, maritime logistics, sea transportation, ship building and repair, ship-breaking, fisheries and aqua culture, sea-bed resource exploration, maritime training and education, coastal

tourism, renewable energy, environmental protection, marine engineering equipment, and real estate development along the coast. The objectives set forth for PIMEC are; to provide opportunities to maritime industry to display products at single forum and interact directly with international maritime industry; to invite international maritime and defence manufacturers for joint ventures, transfer of technology, and research to provide impetus to Pakistan's industrial setups; and to highlight Pakistan's vast potential for Blue Economy, reinforce efforts in the realm of maritime diplomacy.

In order to achieve the objectives of this national level event, support of relevant ministries, departments and business community will be essential during planning as well as execution stages. PIMEC will provide an ideal opportunity for interactions

between the target customers and maritime industry representatives. A large number of trade and industry participants from local and international maritime sector are therefore being invited to attend the event. During PIMEC, an exclusive international maritime conference will also be held under the auspices of National Institute of Maritime Affairs. Eminent speakers will exchange views on latest trends and scientific approach to various challenges related to maritime industry.

To sum up, PIMEC is a distinct event which will help in promoting sustainable, economically viable and mutually beneficial business relationships between maritime stakeholders across the globe. In addition, it will highlight the potential of maritime sector in Pakistan and help in capitalizing the benefits of Blue Economy.



In brief

Tennis championship gets underway

KARACHI (APP): The 11th Dr Essa Lab National Seniors & Juniors Tennis Championships kicked off at Modern Club Tennis Courts. Faiz Ilyas earned two back to back 1st round wins in Under 16 & Under 14 Singles. Dhuraf Das of DA Central Club also registered 1st Round win in Under 16 Singles, according to a communiqué here on Sunday. Results Day 1: Juniors Under 18 Singles 1st Round Samer Zaman beat Taimoor Ansari Unde6 Singles 1st Round Dhuraf Das beat Abdul Nafay 6-1, 6-3 Ruhab Faisal beat Jagdesh 6-0, 6-0 Hazik Areejo beat Bilal Ikram 6-1, 6-3 Taimoor Ansari beat Nibras Malik 6-0, 6-0 Faiz Ilyas beat Laraib Shamsi 6-3, 6-0 Under 14 Singles 1st Round Sameer Kabir beat Azlan Khanzada 4-0, 4-2 Faiz Ilyas beat Zayd Zaman Laraib Shamsi beat Yahya Haleem 4-2, 4-0 Mikael Ali Baig beat Junaid meher 4-0, 4-0 Ismail Aftab beat Abdul Baseer 4-0, 4-0 Mens Singles 1st Round (local Event) Kashan Tariq beat M. Shahvaiz 6-0, 7-5 Salman Ahmed beat Mazhar hayat 6-4, 7-6 Mens Singles 2nd Round Bilal Soomro beat Amir Mumtaz 6-2, 6-1 Robin Das beat Abdullah Khan 6-2, 6-3 Muhammad Ali beat Danish 1-6, 6-2, 10-5 45 Plus Doubles 1st Round Javed iqbal + Muhammad Iltifat beat H a s e e b J a v a i d + A m m a d Danish 8-1 Razi Nawab + Muhammad Abdul Saeed beat Syed Qutub + Amir Mumtaz 8-4.

Naomi Osaka withdraws

MELBOURNE (AP): Two-time champion Naomi Osaka has confirmed she will not play at the Australian Open, adding her name to a growing list of notable withdrawals. Organizers confirmed in a tweet on Sunday that Japan's Osaka, the Open champion in 2019 and 2021, will not be playing in Melbourne. "Naomi Osaka has withdrawn from the Australian Open. We will miss her at #AO2023," the tweet said. The 25-year-old Osaka's ranking has slipped to 47 and she hasn't played since September after withdrawing during the second round in Tokyo. She won her first round match at that tournament when Australia's Daria Saville withdrew after one game with a knee injury. Osaka won only one completed match since May and was beaten in the first round of her three previous tournaments, including the US Open at which she also is a two-time champion. Last week she posted pictures on social media of a trip to Europe with her United States rapper boyfriend Cordae and had been considered unlikely to play in the first Grand Slam of the season. Ukraine's Dayana Yastremska has been promoted to the main draw in her place. Osaka took a mental health break after missing the 2021 French Open and later said she had been struggling with depression and anxiety for several years. Her absence from Melbourne adds to uncertainty over when or if she will resume her career. The Australian Open which starts on Jan. 16 already has lost several leading players including men's world No. 1 Carlos Alcaraz who pulled out Saturday with an ankle injury. Former finalist Simona Halep also is not playing this year and Venus Williams also has handed back a wildcard entry after suffering an injury while practicing in Auckland.

South Africa draw final Test as Australia win series

SYDNEY (Agencies): South Africa showed some fight on the final day to draw the third Test and deny Australia a series clean sweep.

The tourists were asked to follow-on after being bowled out for 255 in reply to Australia's 475-4 in Sydney.

But Sarel Erwee's gritty 42 not out from 125 balls helped South Africa to 106-2 in the rain-affected match.

Australia won the series 2-0 and a third win would have guaranteed their spot in the World Test Championship final at The Oval, in London, in June.

They top the table and now need just one draw from their four-Test series in India, which starts on 9 February, to qualify for the final. India are second in the table and also in a

strong position to reach the final.

South Africa went into the series against Australia with their own hopes of reaching the final but were thoroughly outplayed for much of the series.

They lost the first test inside two days in Brisbane and the second by an innings and 182 runs in Melbourne.

And Australia were again dominant in the third Test, with centuries from Usman Khawaja and Steve Smith setting up their 475-4 declared before 49 overs were lost across the opening two days.

South Africa started the final day 149-6 after the top order succumbed to the brilliance of Pat Cummins and Josh Hazlewood late on day four, the latter finishing with 4-48.

But a stand of 85 for the

eighth wicket between Keshav Maharaj and Simon Harmer, who made 53 and 47 respectively, rescued South Africa by taking valuable time out of the final day.

Their total of 255 was the biggest of the series, but they fell just short of the follow-on target.

Captain Dean Elgar opened the innings but was out shortly before tea for the fourth time in the series to Cummins, having scored 10 to end with an average of 9.33 from six innings.

However, Erwee battled alongside Heinrich Klaasen, who made 35 from 61 balls, while Temba Bavuma added an unbeaten 17 from 42 balls as Australia's bowlers struggled to break through on a slow pitch and South Africa recorded their first drawn Test in 47 matches.



SYDNEY: Pat Cummins and players celebrate with the trophy after day five of the Third Test match.

Trophy for Pakistan, New Zealand ODI series unveiled

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): The trophy for the One-Day International (ODI) series between Pakistan and New Zealand was Sunday unveiled at National Stadium, Karachi.

The captains of both the teams participated in the trophy unveiling ceremony.

It will be a three-day ODI series. The first match will be played on Monday, the second on Wednesday, and the third match will be played on Friday.

The matches are part of the ICC Cricket World Cup Super League.

After the unveiling of the trophy, Pakistan skipper Babar Azam addressed a press conference and said: "We will try to field a balanced team."

He pointed out that New Zealand was the best team. "It will be a good match," he added.

He also stated that it was the right of the players to get NOC to play in the foreign leagues.

To a question, he said: "Now, the ODI series is going to happen. Let's not talk about the Test matches please."

New Zealand captain Kane Williamson also addressed the press conference and said: "We will try to win the series. The world cup is just around the corner."

He added: "Every time, I score runs, I try that it is beneficial for the country."

He also said that Pakistan was a strong team, adding that they also had the advantage of home ground. "It is not easy to beat Pakistani team in Pakistan," he pointed out.

Squads

Pakistan: Babar Azam (captain), Shan Masood, Fakhar Zaman, Haris Rauf, Haris Sohail, Imam-ul-Haq, Kamran Ghulam, Mohammad Hasnain, Mohammad Nawaz, Mohammad Rizwan, Mohammad Wasim Jnr, Naseem Shah, Salman Ali Agha, Shahnawaz Dahani, Tayyab Tahir and Usama Mir.

New Zealand: Kane Williamson (captain), Tom Latham, Finn Allen, Michael Bracewell, Devon Conway, Lockie Ferguson, Daryl Mitchell, Henry Nicholls, Glenn Phillips, Mitchell Santner, Henry Shipley, Ish Sodhi, Tim Southee and Blair Tickner.

'Babar should have plenty of options for ODI WC 2023'

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): The chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Interim Selection Committee, Shahid Afridi, said on Saturday that skipper Babar Azam should have plenty of options ahead of the World Cup in India from October-November 2023.

Afridi shared his opinion on Pakistan's preparation for the 2023 ODI World Cup, while hosting dinner for the team at his house in Karachi.

"We have given new players a chance in the upcoming New Zealand series because we want to give Babar plenty of options to finalise the combination for the World Cup," said Afridi.

Meanwhile, pacer Naseem Shah said that Pakistan would play an adequate number of ODI matches in 2023 to prepare for the mega event.

The right-arm pacer said there is still some time left before the World Cup, and Pakistan has quite a few matches, which will help them prepare adequately.

The two-match Test series between Pakistan and New Zealand ended 0-0, depriving New Zealand of their first series win in Pakistan in 53 years.

Pakistan's last pair, Naseem Shah and Abrar Ahmed survived 21 balls in fading light Friday, while Sarfaraz Ahmed hit a fighting century to deprive New Zealand of a victory.

Regarding the Test series, Pakistani batter Aghan Salman said, "it was an exciting series, and as a cricketer, we enjoyed that a lot. I'm sure the fans enjoyed it a lot since New Zealand is one of the best teams in the world."

Shaheen Shah Afridi, who missed the series due to injury, was also happy to see the fightback staged by the Pakistan team. He said the Pakistan team staged a great comeback in the second Test. The entire team supports each other, said Shaheen.

Pakistan will now play three ODIs against New Zealand in Karachi. The matches will be played at National Bank Cricket Arena (NBCA) on January 9, 11, and 13.

Djokovic beats Korda to win Adelaide International

ADELAIDE (Agencies): Novak Djokovic saved a match point as he beat Sebastian Korda to win the Adelaide International and extend his winning run in Australia to 34 matches.

The Serb dropped his first set of the tournament but fought back to win 6-7 (8-10) 7-6 (7-3) 6-4.

The world number five has won 92 career ATP singles titles, level with Rafael Nadal. Only Jimmy Connors, Roger Federer and Ivan Lendl have won more.

"It's been an amazing week, for me to be here is a gift," said Djokovic. "The support that I've been getting in the past 10 days is something that I don't think I've experienced too many times in my life, so thank you so much to everyone for

coming out every single match."

The Adelaide International is Djokovic's first tournament in Australia since he was deported in 2022 because of his Covid-19 vaccine status, but his visa ban has now been overturned.

Djokovic will look to extend his record number of wins at the Australian Open which starts on 16 January. He is targeting his 10th title, which would also equal Nadal's men's record of 22 Grand Slam titles.

Aryna Sabalenka won her 11th career singles title, beating 18-year-old qualifier Linda Noskova 6-3 7-6 (6-4) in the women's final.

It was world number five Sabalenka's first win since May 2021, sealing

the victory without dropping a set throughout the tournament.

"I'm a different player right now," Sabalenka said after the match.

"Maybe a little bit smarter, a little bit calmer on court. Just a little bit of everything changed."

Elsewhere, world number seven Coca Gauff won the ASB Classic in Auckland, New Zealand.

Gauff, 18, beat Spanish qualifier Rebeka Masarova 6-1 6-1 and did not drop a set across five matches.

It was Gauff's first title since 2021 and her first on hard court since 2019.

"Honestly, a great week for me despite the rain," Gauff said. "I couldn't ask for a better start to my season - my first title on hard [courts] since I was 15."

Shoaib of PAF wins 9th DIG Amanullah Khan Memorial KP Open Tennis title

PESHAWAR (APP): International and Pakistan No. 3 tennis player Shoaib Khan of PAF clinched the trophy of the 9th DIG Amanullah Khan Memorial Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Open Tennis Championship by defeating another top ranking national player Barkatullah of Police in a thrilling final of the Men singles by 6-3, 3-6 and 6-2.

The thrill-packed final between top national ranking player of the Men singles was played between Shoaib Khan of Pakistan Air Force and Barkat Ullah of Pakistan Police here at Synthetic Courts of the Peshawar Sports Complex. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tennis Association Senior Vice President Professor Dr. Farhat Abbas along with others spectators witnessed the final. Chairman of KP Tennis Association and famous plastic surgeon Dr. Muhammad Tahir, Secretary Umar Ayaz

Khalil, Peshawar Press Club Secretary Irfan Musazai, Tennis Coaches Roman Gul, Shehryar Khan, Zakirullah, Nouman Khan, Shah Hussain, Janan Khan and Inam Gul were also present.

Players from all over the country participated in the Championship organized by KP Tennis Association. In the U18 final, Junior Davis Cupper and international tennis star Hamid Israr defeated Uzair Khan 6-1, 6-1, in the U-14 final, Shayan Afridi beat Muhammad Uzair 6-1, 6-2, in the U10 final, Shayan Afridi beat Abdullah Farman by 6-2 and 6-1 while in the doubles final, PAF's Shoaib Khan and Police's Barkatullah defeated international Junior Davis Cupper Saqib Umar and SNGPL's Hamid Israr by 6-4 and 6-2 to win the title.

Earlier, in the first semi-final match of Men's doubles, Barkatullah and

Shoaib defeated Nauman and Kamran 6-4, 6-2, while in the second semi-final, Saqib and Hamid defeated Yousaf and Asad 7-5 (6-6) and 6-4 in the final.

Known Cardiac Surgeon Prof. Dr. Farhat Abbas, who actually sponsored the Championship, said that the region of Peshawar was a stronghold of tennis players and different sports, efforts were being made to find this talent and bring it forward.

He said that camps and tournaments would be organized to provide opportunities for tennis players in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to advance and promote the sport further. He also directed the players to pay special attention to their performances. At the end, he along with Dr. Muhammad Tahir and Umar Ayaz Khalil gave away cash prizes and trophies to the winners and runners-up of various categories.

Pakistan's B.A Club to participate in Arias Futsal USA Cup scheduled from 20 Jan

PESHAWAR (APP): A strong Pakistan Futsal team is going to take part in the forthcoming International Arias Futsal Cup to be scheduled from January 20, 2023 at Inspire Courts, Gilbert Arizona United States of America, Secretary Pakistan Futsal Federation Dr. Malik Adnan said in a statement issued here on Sunday.

He said teams from around the world including the Pakistan are ready to participate in the prestigious Arias Futsal USA Cup. He also thanked the Futsal Federation of the United States for inviting the Pakistan team besides extending all support to the Pakistan Futsal Federation.

Malik Adnan said that it was good experience for the Pakistani players to get international exposure after playing in Turkey and recently held the World Cup in Paraguay. He said B.A Futsal Club is representing Pakistan in the International Arias Futsal USA Cup.

Adnan said that the same B.A Club was also Champion of SA Garden and that was why the SA Garden Lahore was sponsoring a 10 member's Pakistani

team with eight players and two officials. Besides getting international exposure, it will also help us in promoting Futsal in the country, he added. Malik Adnan said that soon after the Arias Futsal USA Cup, the team of United States would visit Pakistan for the three match Series and most probably one match each would be played in Lahore, Islamabad, Karachi and Peshawar.

He said talks have already been continued with the government of Punjab, Sindh for hosting the United States Futsal teams and arrangements in this connection have already been kicked off. "We are making all arrangements for the important 3-Matches Series of the United States team visiting Pakistan," Malik Adnan said.

He said a request to the Chief Minister KP Mahmood would also be made for holding and extending support to the two teams United States and Pakistan to have their match in Peshawar so that a message of peace could be also given to the rest of the world. He said soon Chief Minister KP Mahmood Khan would be con-

tacted for supporting the two teams during their match in Peshawar.

Malik Adnan also appreciated the President of Pakistan Futsal Federation Nasrullah Khan Kakar for supporting and holding National Junior and National Senior Futsal Championships in Sargodha, Quetta and Peshawar. He also appreciated Directorate General sports Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for hosting the last-year Women Futsal Championship in Peshawar wherein 13 teams of the leading departments and provincial associations participated. He said the Championship held in Quetta won by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which clearly indicated the talent that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa players have.

He also lauded the efforts of the Punjab Futsal Federation for holding the recently concluded 6th National Senior Futsal Championship in befitting manners. About the B.A Club, he said, the team have their regular practice, both in the morning and evening with a tough physical training so that it could be able to give good results in the Arias Futsal USA Cup.

NUML University upset Islamia College University in All Pakistan Inter-University Volleyball

PESHAWAR (APP): National University of Modern Languages, a Public University Islamabad handed a shocking defeat to Islamia College Peshawar in the opening match of the ongoing All Pakistan Inter-University Men Volleyball Championship being played at Indoor Hall of the University Campus on Sunday.

The final round of the All Pakistan Inter-University Volleyball Championship organized by the Directorate of Sports University of Peshawar is going on inside the campus with a large number of spectators there and enjoying the thrilling battle.

In the first match NUML recorded a shocking defeat against the Islamia College University Peshawar team in straight sets, the score was 25-20, 25-21 and 25-23. Only in the last and third set, Islamia College University players did some resistance, otherwise the NUML Islamabad team dominated the full session of the

match by not giving much room to their rival to strike back.

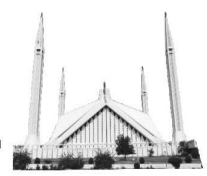
In the second match, Panch University of Rawalakot, Azad Kashmir defeated Minhas University Lahore by 25-12, 25-21 and 25-12 in another one-sided match. Punjab University defeated Karachi University by 25-16, 25-12 and 25-15. Karachi University players were unable to stop the onrushing offense of Punjab University players and beat them with one-sided affairs. Islamia University Bahawalpur recorded victory against University of Management and Technology Lahore in a thrilling five sets battle.

The match continued for two hours wherein both the players of Islamia University Bahawalpur and University of Management Technology Lahore exhibited some good display of attacking smashes and strong blocking at the net. The setters of each of the sides played a key role in defeating their respective rivals blocking at the net.

The score was 22-25, 21-25, 25-18, 25-17 and 15-14. In the final round of the All Pakistan Inter-University Volleyball Championship, a total of sixteen, one each team from all the 14 zones besides the winners and runners-up of the last year Championship.

In the other matches University of Sargodha defeated the University of Karachi by 3-0, the score was 25-22, 25-19 and 25-21, Islamia University Bahawalpur won against UMT Lahore by 22-25, 21-25, 25-18, 25-17 and 15-14. All Pakistan sixteen best university teams are participating in the final round of the Inter-University Volleyball Championship. The final will be played on January 10.

On this occasion, Director of Sports Peshawar University Bahr Karam was the special guest along with Dr. Noorzada, Deputy Director of Higher Education Arshad Hussain, Sajjad Ahmed, and other important personalities were present.



In brief

Two-day free medical camp

ISLAMABAD (APP): A two-day medical camp organized by Dr. Akbar Niazi Teaching Hospital (ANTH) concluded here Sunday after offering various medical facilities on hundred percent discount. Talking to APP, an official of ANTH Mudassar Farooq said that a number of citizens visited the medical camp at the Centaurus Mall and availed medical advice, nutrition advice, screening and fitness tests. He said that health awareness materials were also distributed amongst the public during the multi-speciality health camp. He said that medical specialists, nutritionists, pediatric surgeons, physiotherapists and dermatologists provided consultation to the clients. He said that complimentary diagnosis such as diabetes, bone strength, body mass index along with free medicines were provided. Mudassar Farooq said that aim of the camp was to provide quality healthcare for people who are unable to afford the quality healthcare facilities. "These camps reduce medical bills and make healthcare more affordable for everyone" he added. He highlighted that such medical camps can help raise awareness about health issues and help people to take necessary decisions about their health to stay fit.

Admin foils four bids

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Food Department Rawalpindi and district police while foiling four bids to smuggle wheat flour seized 2370 bags here on Sunday. According to a district administration spokesman, the authorities of the food department along with Potohar Division police conducted raids and rounded up four drivers namely Akramullah, Rehman, Mehmood and Sabir and recovered 2370 wheat flour bags. Superintendent of Police said, strict action in accordance with the law was being taken against wheat smugglers. The spokesman said, the Food Department Rawalpindi and district police on the directives of the authorities concerned were strictly monitoring all the exit points of Rawalpindi district to foil wheat and flour smuggling bids.

IRSA releases 24,400 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Sunday released 24,400 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 38,000 cusecs. According to the data released by Indus River System Authority (IRSA), water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1494.46 feet and was 96.46 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 16,300 cusecs while outflow as 5,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1119.55 feet, which was 69.55 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 6,300 cusecs and 4,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Gadda and Sukkur was recorded 11,100, 15,200, 4,600 and 5,800 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 8,700 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 6,700 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.



ISLAMABAD: Students during Riphah University 17th convocation at Convention Centre.

‘Efforts afoot for availability of authentic version of Quran with literal translation’

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Mufti Abdul Shakoor said that the Ministry was making all out efforts to ensure the availability of authentic version of the Holy Quran with its literal translation at every nook and cranny of the country.

In an exclusive talk with APP here Sunday, he said the following version of the Holy Quran with translation subsequently be published after seeking the seal of approval of provincial Quran Boards.

The minister said that the standard version of the Holy Quran published by the Matbooa Anjuman Himayat Islam and translated by Matbooa Elm Foundation had been notified at the federal capital level by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony and Ministry of Federal Education respectively.

He said that all the stake-

holders concerned were requested to get the above notified prescriptions and make arrangements for their availability at tehsil, district and province level.

He said that Quran Compulsory Education Act 2017 was passed by the Parliament and it ensured compulsory teaching of the Holy Quran to the Muslim students in all the federal capital and public sector educational institutions controlled by the federal government. On the recommendation of the Ittehad Tanzeemat Al-Madaris Pakistan (ITMP), the Ministry of Federal Education constituted a committee comprising representative from all sectors to reach a consensus on the translation of the Holy Quran with regard to its compulsory teaching in the schools, he added.

Mufti Shakoor said that after several meetings of the said committee, a unified translation of the Holy Quran was prepared and a

letter with the signatures of all the committee members was also published by the ILM Foundation.

Later, the Secretary of the aforesaid committee was asked to get a soft copy of the Holy Quran from the ILM Foundation and forward it to the provincial Awkaf Department to take approval from their respective Quran Boards, he maintained.

He said that Islamabad administration was requested to ensure the availability of standard version of the Holy Quran at the suitable places. He also expressed the hope that it would help remove the controversy of distorted translation of the Holy Quran which had caused fury amongst the Muslims across the country due to a particular segment of the society. It should be noted that this authentic copy of the text of the Holy Quran was completed in 2016 and its agreed Urdu translation was completed in 2020.

Reforms underway in Islamabad police to make it more professional

ISLAMABAD (APP): Showing firmness to their basic objective of maintaining law and order and ensuring peace in the city, personnel of Islamabad police successfully handled security affairs during the last seven months and ensured effective action against criminal elements. With the support of the incumbent government and the Ministry of Interior, the top brass of the force is working hard to upgrade Islamabad police on modern lines, sharpen agility through the provision of resources and boost the morale of its personnel through welfare steps.

During the last seven months, multiple steps have been taken to overcome several constraints and boost the morale of the force. All these steps have been aimed at creating a professional, service-oriented and accountable

force to prevent and detect crime as well as maintain public order.

Making reforms endure, or institutionalizing change, is a major challenge facing policing today but reforms in Islamabad police followed a pattern due to the guideline of the present government and the special interest of its chief Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan towards efficient policing.

The policemen in the Federal Capital have added a golden chapter in their history, written with blood of their martyrs. The courageous role played by the police in the Capital has won hearts of people as the brave custodians of law and order prevented many disasters by timely action against criminal elements as several police officials and Jawans of Islamabad police embraced martyrdom in line of duty. For the

compensation to the families of martyred personnel, police source said that an amount of Rs. 1,224 million was paid to the families of Shuhada and deceased employees. Similarly, Rs. 17.5 million was also distributed among families of Shuhada, deceased officials and other police personnel for welfare. The recruitment of next of kin of Shuhada has been completed and no case is pending with Islamabad police. Among other initiatives for the personnel of the force, the major steps to boost the morale include increase in salary of 9500 officers as well as in DA Allowance & Ration Allowance; 30 gallantry awards for ICP Police Officers from Constable to IGP; promotions of five SP temporary basis, 14 Inspectors, 28 Sub-Inspectors, 33 ASIs.

Large number of people visiting Lake View Park

ISLAMABAD (APP): A large number of people coming from different parts of the country were visiting Lake View Park here on Sunday to enjoy the winter season, the colors of various flowers, and other facilities available in the park.

Talking to APP, Waqar Ahmed, a resident of Karachi, said he along with his family is visiting Lake View Park and its beauty attracted them massively. "The park's cleanliness and location on the bank of Rawal Dam is a source of attraction and inspiration for visitors."

Sana Raoof, a student, said the cleanliness, security arrangement, and food installed were making our day so pleasant and full of excitement. She urged the tourists to come to visit the park to relish the weather rather than spend their time at home.

Despite the cold weather, she said, the people were feeling relieved and being entertained at such recreational spots.

Visits to the park exemplify the enthusi-

asm of women, children, young adults, and students from different universities. There is a dire need to further improve the cleanliness system at birds place in Lake View Park.

Security authorities deployed in the park said that six cameras were installed in the park for monitoring the movements of every visitor coming to the park, and two safe city cameras were also installed to ensure the security of the visitors.

There is one filtration plant installed in Lake View Park while many canteens including eateries were also providing services to the visitors, they said and added that the price list of these kiosks was checked by the Capital Development Authority (CDA) regularly so that no one is able to sell products at a higher cost.

The visitors asked the concerned authorities to take more measures to further improve the cleanliness system to enhance the beauty of the park to attract immense visitors.

ANF seizes over 86.3 kg drugs

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) Pakistan while conducting four counter-narcotics operations in different areas of the country seized 86.3 kg of drugs and arrested two drug smugglers, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Sunday.

He informed that ANF foiling a bid to smuggle drugs concealed in balloons recovered over 2.5 kg of Ice drug from a parcel being sent to Australia through a private courier company on Shahr-e-Faisal Karachi.

In another operation, ANF recovered 723 grams of Ice drug from another parcel booked for Australia at a private courier company in Islamabad.

In the third operation, ANF seized 390 grams of heroin from a parcel containing waist belts, intercepted at a private courier office in Dina.

The spokesman informed that ANF in an operation on G.T. Road near Muridke recovered 56.4 kg charras and 26.4 kg opium from secret cavities of a truck and arrested two smugglers residents of Khyber.

All cases have been registered at respective ANF Police Stations under CNS Act 1997 while further investigations are under process.

President directs SLICP to pay interest to an insurance policy holder

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr. Arif Alvi has directed the State Life Insurance Corporation of Pakistan (SLICP) to compensate an insurance policyholder by paying the interest due in accordance with the prevailing rate as it had delayed payment of the maturity claim to the complainant without giving any reason.

The president in his decision observed that the complainant had obtained the insurance policy from SLICP on 31.10.1990 for the sum assured of Rs 30,000 for a period of 20 years and that the date of maturity of the policy was 31.10.2020, however, SLICP made payment of the maturity claim to the complainant after a lapse of almost two years.

He said that SLICP failed to justify the belated payment to the complainant and admittedly, the premiums deposited by the complainant were kept by the insurance company and it had earned profits on it, President Secretariat Press

Wing said in a press release on Sunday.

The president held that by virtue of unexplained delayed payment to the complainant, SLICP was required to compensate the complainant by paying interest due in accordance with the prevailing rate.

As per details, Mukhtar Ahmad (the complainant) had purchased an insurance policy from SLICP and after its maturity on 31.10.2020, he had approached SLICP for the maturity claim but it was not paid.

Feeling aggrieved, he approached the Wafaqi Mohtasib, which close the case as the complainant was satisfied with the report of SLICP and wanted to withdraw his complaint.

Later, the complainant filed a representation with the president, which was accepted. Accepted the representation of the complainant, the president directed SLICP to submit its compliance report to the Wafaqi Mohtasib within 30 days.

917,285 children to receive anti-Polio drops

RAWALPINDI (APP): As

many as 917,285 children less than five years would be vaccinated against the crippling Polio virus during a week-long drive commencing from January 16 in all tehsils and union councils of the district.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of District Health Authority, Dr. Ansar Ishaq, told APP that 3,787 polio teams would go door-to-door while 243 Union council medical officers and 858 area incharges would also

participate in the drive.

In addition, "320 fix centres will be set up to administer drops".

Ansar added that anti-polio drops would also be administered at 182 transit points while teams would also be deputed at toll plazas so that no child could miss immunization.

To overcome Vitamin A deficiency in children, blue capsules would be given to children 6 to 11 months with a dose of 100,000 IU, while red pills with a high amount of 200,000 IU would be

given to children 12 to 59 months, he added.

The CEO said the objective of regularly conducting anti-polio campaigns was to keep children through protective drops and increase their immunity.

"The parents should cooperate with special teams so the set target can be achieved."

He urged the citizens, particularly the parents, to come forward and play their role in eliminating the crippling disease from society.

‘Paigham-e-Pakistan, a comprehensive doctrine to promote interfaith harmony’

ISLAMABAD (APP): Secretary Religious Affairs Dr Aftab Akbar Durrani said Paigham-e-Pakistan was a comprehensive doctrine that was signed by 7,000 Pakistani religious scholars along with Imam-e-Kaba and Multi-e-Azam of Turkiye, Egypt, and Indonesia.

In an exclusive talk with APP, he said the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony was proud of the preparation of Paigham-e-Pakistan and it would use all available resources for its promotion to yield positive results in the society. Aftab Durrani said the unified national narrative of

Paigham-e-Pakistan was becoming a great source of creating a peaceful coexistence, tolerant and moderate Islamic society. He said it rejected all forms of terrorism, bigotry, hatred and intolerance. "The elements who harm innocent people, women and children in the name of religion have nothing to do with humanity," he added. The Secretary said the state formed in the name of Islam was facing many internal and external challenges.

The religion of Islam and the Constitution guarantee the protection of life, property and honor of all minorities, he added.

Revamping state institutions for economic revival

ISLAMABAD (APP): Revamping state-owned organizations pays much in economic revival by earning more revenue especially when any nation faces recession amidst inflation, depreciating currency value and unmanageable trade deficit.

During recent years like other many institutions, Pakistan Railways also suffered a decline in revenue collection, provision of better facilities and putting the organization on modern lines. Therefore, the present government is putting in maximum efforts for curtailing losses of Pakistan railways through numerous measures and providing cheaper travelling facilities to the common man and a convenient transportation mode for industry and exporters.

Recovering from the slumber of the previous regime, the government has embarked on projects like the addition of new locomotives, restructuring and improving current rail infrastructure, increase in average train speed, improving on-time arrival performance, and provision of modern passenger services.

Due to its concerted efforts, the Railways has received the first batch

of 46 out of total 230 high-speed modern coaches from China with a speed capacity of 160 kilometers per hour instead of the present 120 kilometers per hour. After receiving these completely built units (CBUs) manufactured in China, Pakistan Railways will soon begin manufacturing remaining 184 coaches at its carriage factory in Islamabad with the assistance of Chinese engineers under the technology transfer agreement.

"The PML-N-led government in 2014 had launched Pakistan Railways Vision-2026 for building new locomotives, restructuring and improving current rail infrastructure. But, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf government put this initiative on back burner," an official in the Ministry of Railways told APP.

"Allocation of Rs 2300 million for this utility to repair 100 diesel-electric locomotives speaks volumes of the government's commitment for this utility," he said. "This decision will not only improve availability and reliability of running locomotives but also improve efficiency of Pakistan

railways." The official also mentioned to initiatives like upgrading infrastructure, retrieving railways land from encroachers, ensuring maximum punctuality and improving revenue collection. "Things are moving in right direction. Railways is doing its best within available resources and the day is not far off when department will once again become an earning hand." The government has signed another contract with a Chinese firm to manufacture 800 freight wagons and 20 brake wagons. After receiving 200 modern freight wagons from China, manufacturing of remaining 620 most modern wagons shall start at Mughalpur (Lahore) workshop and carriage factory in Risalpur.

"Economic rationale for rail communication enables transporting raw materials like metallic, mineral, grain, wood, chemicals and other products while moving millions of passengers from one destination to another," the official said. "Besides ferrying vehicles, agricultural and other important logistics, Railways also play pivotal role in transportation of defense equipment both during war and peacetime."

After the addition of heavyweight 4,000 horsepower locomotives to its fleet, the freight service of Pakistan Railways had considerably improved its revenue generation. Most of these digital locomotives are equipped with the latest fuel-efficient and environment-friendly technology having ability to haul up to 3,400 tonnes of load. "Pakistan Railways' freight/goods sector earnings have augmented only due to hard work and commitment of its team headed by Minister for Railways Khawaja Saad Rafique," the official said. "We are also planning to restore closed sections in Balochistan province to facilitate poor commuters."

The department has also planned rehabilitation of 33-kilometer track by sleeper renewal between Quetta-Bostan and Quetta-Chaman section as routes like Dera Allah Yar-Sibi-Quetta, Quetta-Chaman, Sibi-Khost, Spezend-Dalbandin-Taftan, Bostan-Zhob remained closed during last 15 years. Service improvement for passengers is another area under focus amidst perception that cleanliness sit-

uation at major stations like Lahore, Faisalabad, Karachi, Rawalpindi, Quetta, Peshawar, Khanawal, Sukkur, Sahiwal, Multan and Bahawalpur was not satisfactory, the official said. "We are going to expedite better service delivery in passenger trains and at railway stations by involving private sector especially cleanliness."

Pakistan Railways is also planning to upgrade five of its major railway stations (Karachi, Lahore, Faisalabad, Peshawar and Quetta) on modern lines making them business hub to facilitating passengers and earn more revenue.

The organization had previously outsourced commercial management of 14 trains to private parties under public-private partnership to provide better facilities to passengers and generate more revenue. To control the deficit, the department introduced "Raabta" - a platform to enhance customer facilitation via artificial intelligence. "Raabta" facilitates customers to plan trips by using different options. Single interface customers can check train statuses, choose and purchase seats, book hotels and order car rentals, meals, and refreshments," the official said.

He said around 60 million passengers travel by Pakistan Railways annually but 40 percent of its tickets were sold through an outdated system without any audit. "We are also upgrading this system to choke revenue leakage sources."

He informed that Pakistan Railways has also retrieved around 961 acres encroached worth Rs19,603 million from land grabbers during anti-encroachment operations across the country. "It includes 474-acre land in Punjab, 135 in KPK, 329 in Sindh and 23 acres in Balochistan." The department is also working on the replacement of old signal gear on the Lodhran-Multan-Khanawal-Shahdara Bagh mainline by spending Rs one billion besides diligently pursuing the Main Line-I project under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). For phase-wise up-gradation of track and enhancing trains speed from 120 to 160 per hour, the government has allocated Rs five billion in the 2022-23 annual budget.

Afghanistan is self-sufficient

KABUL (Agencies): Officials of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry said that currently, Afghanistan has reached self-sufficiency in the manufacturing of more than 50 types of products. Nooruddin Azizi, Acting Commerce and Industry Minister in a video message regarding the use of domestic products, says that Afghanistan has reached self-sufficiency in the production of more than 50 items including food, medicinal and industrial materials.

1,18000 tons transferred: ARA

KABUL (Agencies): The Afghan Railway Authority said that in the last week, 118,139 tons of transfers have been made through the Afghanistan Railway. According to the sources, 87,623 tons were transferred through the Haritaran railway line, 3,551 tons through Aqhina, and 26,965 tons through Torgandi, which is a total of 116,391 tons, including oil, non-oil, and other materials, have been imported into the country.

Asia is comparable to a living body composed of soil and water. The heart that beats inside the body is Afghanistan. The destruction of Afghanistan would be the destruction of Asia. And in its progress and prosperity lies the well-being of Asia. - Allama Iqbal

Increase in fuel, gas prices criticized

KABUL (TOLOnews): A number of Kabul residents on Sunday complained over the rise in fuel and had prices. They said that fuel prices have been controlled around the world, but they are still on the rise in Kabul. They called on the Islamic Emirate to make efforts to reduce the prices. "They should pay attention to the prices. The price of one liter petrol is 75 Afs," said Mohammad Saleem, a resident of Kabul. "Our people are so poor. Should they work all day long to feed their children or work for traders to afford fuel expenses because the income is not that much," said Zaki, a resident of Kabul. The Ministry of Industry and Commerce said th fuel and gas will be imported from Russia soon, which will help with reduction in the prices. A spokesman for the MoIC, Akhundzada Abdul Salam, said that 1 million tons of petrol, 1 million ton diesel and 500,000 tons of liquid gas will be imported from Russia based on the contract between Kabul and Moscow. "We have also noticed that the prices have increased but we are trying to reduce the prices. The imports of fuel and gas is

on the way. Some of it has already entered the Afghanistan's ports from Turkmenistan and Iran," he said. The Afghanistan Chamber of Industry and Mines (ACIM) called for investment in oil wells in Afghanistan. "We import 2.5 million tons to 3 million tons of fuel to the country. If the investment is taken place in oil wells, it can also meet the demands of the country and can improve the country's economy. This comes as the Islamic Emirate recently signed a contract for the Amu Darya oil project with a Chinese company, CPEIC.

Cessation of humanitarian aid is not true: DAB

KABUL (Agencies): Da Bank of Afghanistan has rejected the reports circulating in some media about the suspension of humanitarian aid and called those reports far from the truth. Da Afghanistan Bank in a statement, released Sunday, said: "Some media broadcasted a report on the suspension of humanitarian aid from international donors according to the spokesperson of Da Bank of Afghanistan, those reports are just rumors."

Da Bank of Afghanistan asked in its statement, that media officials pay attention to the principle of impartiality in writing and publishing news and not to cause deterioration of public minds. The bank clarified that any principled action that leads to the arrival of currency to the country and helps needy people of the society appreciates and will continue its efforts in strengthening the banking sector.

It is said, that since the beginning of the process of sending humanitarian aid from donor countries, 54 packages of humanitarian aid, which are worth nearly two billion US dollars have arrived in Afghanistan. The last 40 million dollar package of these donations arrived in Kabul on 14 Dec 2022.

MoD forces discovered arms depot

KABUL (Agencies): The country's Ministry of National Defense says that their forces discovered a weapons depot and ammunition in Kandahar province.

The troops of the 205th Army Corps of the Ministry of National Defense discovered a depot of various types of weapons in the area of Spin Boldak district of Kandahar province and confiscated its ammunition, said the Ministry in a statement. The discovered ammunition includes 1 Pika rifle, 2 Kalashnikov, 1 mine pal, 28 fire rocket shells, 1500 Pika rounds, 1200 Kalashnikov rounds, 2300 M16 rounds, and a large number of equipment and supplies, the Ministry's statement added.

I have no choice but to give an end to my life rather now than later," said an Afghan refugee. Similarly, Iran reports Afghan refugees in a regular manner. The Iranian border officials have been accused of committing physical harassment and torturing Afghan nationals on several occasions. Meanwhile, neighbor country, hosting millions of Afghan refugees over the past four decades has also taken serious initiative regarding undocumented Afghan migrants. They had put hundreds of Afghan women and children behind bars in prisons in the recent past, prompting widespread condemnations from politicians, refugee advocacy groups, and governments.

Khairkhah meets scholars of Islamic world in Kabul



KABUL (Agencies): The Acting Information and Culture Minister of Afghanistan, Mullah Khair Khah, met with scholars of Sudan, Egypt, Palestine and Libya. Minister Khairkhah said during a meeting with scholars that the Islamic Emirate not only asks for good advice and progress

for Afghanistan, but also for the entire Muslim Ummah and the world. "Our goal is to implement the Sharia, and we want to help our Muslim countrymen and citizens to have a good Islamic life," Khairkhah added. The leading scholars of the Islamic world, praised the 20-year jihad and strug-

gle of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, hailed the Afghans on this great victory, and attributed this victory to the whole Islamic world called it a victory. They said that they have traveled to describe the Islamic system in our countries in a better way under the influence of you. The delegation of the

leading scholars of the Islamic world praised the unity of the Muslims of the world, adding that they are ready to cooperate with Afghanistan in various scientific and cultural sectors. The leading delegation included scholars and elders from the countries of Sudan, Egypt, Palestine and Libya.

Turkey deports 68,000 illegal Afghan Migrants



ISTANBUL (Khaama Press): The General Directorate of Migration of Turkey has announced that it has deported some 68,290 Afghan nationals out of 124,441 illegal migrants during the past year.

According to the General Directorate of Migration of Turkey, some 68,290 Afghan citizens and migrants from other countries have been expelled during the past year. Turkey's migration department insists that it will deport more illegal migrants and asylum seekers in the current year, which includes 227 Afghan nationals.

Meanwhile, Khalil Ur Rahman Haqqani, Afghanistan's Acting Minister of Refugee and Repatriation

urged the host counties to stop the forceful deportation of Afghan migrants.

Following the return of the Taliban to power in August 2021, thousands of Afghans fled the country fearing physical harassment, persecution and killing at the hands of the Taliban to the neighboring countries. Most people took the rather risky and illegal pathways to enter countries including Iran and Turkey. After spending months of uncertainty they now face the fear of forceful deportation and imprisonment.

"Returning to Afghanistan is similar to suicide. I have suffered quite a lot to reach Turkey, and now they are forcefully deporting me to my coun-

try. I have no choice but to give an end to my life rather now than later," said an Afghan refugee.

Similarly, Iran reports Afghan refugees in a regular manner. The Iranian border officials have been accused of committing physical harassment and torturing Afghan nationals on several occasions. Meanwhile, neighbor country, hosting millions of Afghan refugees over the past four decades has also taken serious initiative regarding undocumented Afghan migrants. They had put hundreds of Afghan women and children behind bars in prisons in the recent past, prompting widespread condemnations from politicians, refugee advocacy groups, and governments.

Ban on girls' education is not permanent: Minister Nadeem

KABUL (Agencies): Acting Higher Education Minister, Sheikh Neda Mohammad Nadeem, met with Markus Potzel, UNAMA envoy for Afghanistan, and his accompanying delegation. The Ministry of Higher Education is committed to the rights of Afghans in the educational framework and is striving to work for the growth and advancement of the country with the protection of Islamic and national values, said Minister

Nadeem in a meeting. The enemies of the Islamic Emirate are criticizing the execution of Islamic affairs on the basis of higher education and the system as a whole and are using it as an argument to achieve their evil goals, he added. Minister Nadeem stressed that an independent Islamic system has come to Afghanistan through the sacrifices of Afghans and will not accept anyone's demands against Islamic

principles. Minister Nadeem assured UNAMA envoy for Afghanistan that the decision to halt women's education is not permanent, but has been delayed for a short period of time due to external aspects, and the Islamic Emirate is striving to find a solution to this matter in the light of Sharia. Potzel said that higher education has a direct impact on the economic situation of every country.

He swore to cooperate in the development of Afghanistan's higher education and shared his plan for female education with the Acting Minister of Higher Education. The Minister of Higher Education earlier had a meeting with a delegation of religious scholars from Egypt, Lebanon, Sudan, and Palestine and discussed in detail the education system of Afghanistan, among other topics.

Healthcare sector in Ghor province paralyzed: Sources

GHOR (Khaama Press): The health department in Ghor province has already been paralyzed due to a lack of female doctors and medicine, according to local sources. With the arrival of the snowfall, the roads connecting Ghor province to Kabul and Herat have been blocked. It also blocks the roads from Feruzkoh, the provincial city to the districts, followed by a shortage of doctors and healthcare personnel. Local residents warn that if the Ministry of Public Health continues ignoring the healthcare sector of the province, the patients will die due to a lack of access to medicine and doctors.

Obidullah, a resident of Tolak District, complains about the shortage of medicine and healthcare facilities at the district's clinic. He said to Hasht-e-Subbh that in previous years, patients used to get several medicines from the clinic, which has now been cut short. The lack of female doctors and genealogy specialists is another challenge for the local people in the isolated corners of Ghor province. According to sources, only two female



doctors serve at the provincial hospital of this province. Obstetric and gynecological patients do not get the proper treatment and face serious risks while giving birth. Following the ban on female employees working with national and international non-governmental organizations by the Afghan Taliban regime, a

considerable number of aid organizations have ceased their operations. These aid organizations which provide life-saving services to the people of Afghanistan during these difficult times emphasize the reversal of gender-based restrictions. They have also reiterated that the delivery of much-needed humanitarian aid and other support can be facilitated through female employees. The UN, EU, and other renowned humanitarian aid groups have warned of the consequences of the recent announcement by the Taliban administration if the humanitarian aid flows are interrupted in Afghanistan. The shortage of medicine and clinical specialist is already felt across the country, including the Ghor province.

KABUL (Pajhwok): Last week, the ban on girls' higher education and women employees of NGOs triggered widespread reactions, with the acting minister of interior saying work is underway on a reasonable and permanent solution. **Casualties:** Last week, at least 40 people were killed and 21 others wounded in different incidents across the country. Zabihullah Mujahid, spokesman for the Islamic Emirate, said 11 Daesh (Islamic State) members were killed and seven others wounded in raids on the group's hideouts in Kabul, Nangarhar and Nimroz provinces.

Al-Jazeera reported 14 people were killed and 18 more wounded as a result of a blast at the gate to the military airport in Kabul last week. Security forces rescued a businessman and killed four of his kidnappers in a Kabul raid, the Ministry of Interior said on Tuesday.

Based on reports, unidentified gunmen shot dead two people in Uzungram and Faryab. Three bodies were found in Ghazni, Bamiyan and Faryab. A woman was killed by an alleged robber in Faryab. Two young men were killed as a result of a clash among members of a family in Baghlan. One alleged rob-

ber was killed and another wounded in the same province. According to reports, one individual was killed and a second wounded in an unexploded shell blast in Kandahar. In Torkham, one person was killed and another wounded after a security officer opened fire at them. At least 29 people were killed and 14 wounded in different incidents of violence in the country the week before last week. **Restrictions on women, girls:** On Dec 24, the Ministry of Economy asked all national and international NGOs to send their female employees home until further orders. The ministry said it had received "serious complaints" that women working for NGOs were not observing proper Islamic dress code, a charge used by authorities to justify the ban on university education for females. UN Secretary-General's Deputy Special Representative for Afghanistan Markus Potzel said restrictions on Afghan women were harming millions in need. UNAMA tweeted that Potzel met Deputy Prime Minister for Administrative Affairs Abdul Salam Hanafi. "Banning Afghan women working for aid agencies and locking them out of schools and universities harms

millions in Afghanistan and is preventing critical help reaching Afghan men, women and children."

Potzel expressed concerns about the ban on Afghan women's education and other restrictions. But Interior Minister Sirajuddin Haqqani said they were working to find a logical and permanent solution to the girls' education issue. Haqqani met Potzel, UNAMA's political affairs chief Scott Smith and the delegation accompanying them at his office, the Ministry of Interior said in a statement.

It added Potzel thanked the leadership of the Interior Ministry for cooperation and praised the improvement in the security situation in the country. He shared his concerns about the imposition of restrictions on girls' education. Potzel also met former president Hamid Karzai and stressed the need for lifting restrictions on women workers and girls' education. The Afghan Women Leaders Forum urged the UNSC to send a delegation to Kabul to discuss women's work and girls' education. Last week, tribal elders in Khost, Faryab and Nimroz called upon the government to open all educational institutions for girls and give women the right to work for NGOs.

After the suspension of female NGO workers, UN Women said, 86 percent of activities of 151 organisations had either been stopped or curtailed. UNAMA said it had paid all its Afghan female employees their monthly salaries. The UK warned the Taliban decision would threaten the future of Afghanistan. IRC asked the UN to engage the Taliban administration in a practical and coordinated manner to ensure female aid workers can safely and effectively work in the country. Save the Children feared many minors would be forced to work in Afghanistan due to the Taliban-imposed restrictions. The UN also warned the Taliban ban would have a serious impact on humanitarian aid efforts in Afghanistan.

Women have been banned from working in None-Government Organisations due to insecure working environment and lack of government control on them, reasoned Zabihullah Mujahid, the IEA spokesperson. In an exclusive interview with the BBC, he said according to their assessment, the honour and dignity of women working for NGOs was not secure. Therefore, he argued, the 'Islamic Emirate had banned them from working.

Referring to the financial situation of some women who supported themselves and their families, he said: "This is a general decree for implementation based on Islamic Sharia and it is obvious some people will suffer. They should look for alternatives." He added: "For earning food, we should look for options described by the Shariah law. If someone says they will steal to earn livelihoods for their children, we cannot allow such things and this is un-Islamic." He said it was the government's responsibility to protect the honour of women and provide them better living conditions. Also, 18 different universities in Iran, the UK, the US, Qatar and elsewhere in the world announced hundreds of scholarships for Afghan girls.

Kabul's demand for UN seat: Deputy Prime Minister Abdul Kabir, in a conversation with Potzel, said the UN should hand over Afghanistan's seat to the caretaker government, saying all conditions for recognition had been met. Potzel said that UNAMA was a bridge between the Afghan government and the international community and was striving to remove the gap between. Interior Minister Sirajuddin Haqqani asked Ulema from Egypt,

Sudan and Palestine to convey the message of the people of Afghanistan to the world. **Haqqani to Prince Harry:** British Prince Harry acknowledged that he killed 25 Taliban fighters during his mission in Afghanistan in 2012-13. "My number is 25. It's not a number that fills me with satisfaction, but nor does it embarrass me," Harry wrote in his memoir Space. In another section, he described Taliban insurgents as "chess pieces" taken off the board, rather than people. Interior Minister Anas Haqqani tweeted: "Mr. Harry! The ones you killed were not chess pieces. They were humans. They had families waiting for their return. "Not many killers of Afghans have your decency to reveal their conscience and confess to their war crimes," Haqqani wrote, insisting: "Our innocent people were chess pieces to your soldiers, military and political leaders. Still, you were defeated in that game..." Bilal Karimi, the deputy spokesman for the government, said: "Harry's confession shows that such crimes are not limited to Harry, but every occupying country has a story of such crimes in our country."

At least 40 killed and 21 wounded last week in Afghanistan

‘Govt takes practical steps for protection of journalists rights’

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Sunday said that Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM's) government had taken practical steps for the protection of the rights of the journalist community. In her congratulatory message to the newly elected office bearers of Peshawar Press Club, she said that the incumbent government fully believed in freedom of expression.

The minister congratulated Arshad Aziz Malik on his election as President, Rizwan Sheikh as Vice President, Irfan Musazai as General

Secretary, Tayyab Usman as Joint Secretary, Imad Waheed as Finance Secretary and other members of the governing body on their success in the elections. The minister said that journalists of the press club had always promoted positive and responsible journalism in the country.

She expressed her hope that newly elected body of Peshawar Press Club would devote its skills and energy for the welfare of the Press Club and the journalist community. She expressed her best wishes for the newly elected office bearers of Peshawar Press Club.

Ukraine denies Moscow claim it killed 600 soldiers

KYIV (BBC): Ukraine has labelled a Russian claim that hundreds of Ukrainian soldiers were killed in an attack "propaganda".

Moscow claimed, without providing any evidence, that a "mass missile strike" in the eastern city of Kramatorsk had killed more than 600 Ukrainian forces. It said it was in retaliation for a Ukrainian attack on a Russian base that killed dozens of Russian soldiers on New Year's Day.

But the Ukrainian military says this is untrue.

"This is another piece of Russian propaganda," Serhiy Cherevaty, a spokesman for the Ukrainian army, told the BBC. Russia's defence ministry said it had killed more than 600 Ukrainian servicemen in a strike on

buildings temporarily housing Ukrainian forces. More than 1,300 Ukrainian troops were housed in two buildings, Moscow said.

It called the attacks a "retaliatory strike" to avenge the deaths of 89 Russian troops killed in Makiivka. Ukraine says as many as 400 people were killed or wounded at Makiivka, while numbers into the hundreds have been given by Russian nationalists on social media.

Moscow is yet to offer any proof of Russia's claim to have killed hundreds of Ukrainian soldiers.

On Saturday, journalists from the AFP news agency in Kramatorsk, which is located in the eastern region of Donetsk, heard at least four explo-

sions before midnight. There was further shelling in various parts of Ukraine overnight after the end of what Russian President Vladimir Putin said was a 36-hour ceasefire by Russian forces so Orthodox Christians could celebrate Christmas. Evidence suggests this so-called ceasefire was not adhered to by Moscow.

Ukrainian officials said at least one person was killed in the Kharkiv region in the north-east.

Explosions were also reported in the southern cities of Zaporizhzhia and Melitopol. Russia's defence ministry said that Ukraine had returned 50 captured Russian soldiers after negotiations. Kyiv confirmed that it had received the same amount of soldiers in return from Russia.

‘PTI looks forward to restore ties with establishment’

JEHLUM (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) senior leader Fawad Chaudhry said on Sunday his party was looking forward to restoring ties with the establishment.

The former federal minister was addressing the media in his hometown, where he voiced his opinions on different issues, including the matter of Punjab Chief Minister Chaudhry Parvez Elahi's vote of confidence. He made it clear to the PTI's dissident lawmakers, adding that the PTI will have no problem if the party's defectors form their own parties. Taking about the number games in the PA, Mr. Chaudhry claimed that the PTI's number games ahead of CM Elahi's vote of confidence were complete, adding that the party was eyeing January 11 to deal with the matter in the PA.

Schooling the coalition government, Mr. Chaudhry said the coalition government had no plan to deliver for the country, adding that the rulers were now eyeing to get financial aid from friendly countries like China and Saudi Arabia.

Underscoring the issue of inflation, Mr. Chaudhry said the ongoing week witnessed a back-breaking inflation of up to 31 percent, adding that there was also an expectation of the inflation getting increased by another three per cent. Complimenting his own party, Mr. Chaudhry claimed the country was not suffering from incitement because of the PTI's leadership, adding that there was a fear of incitement if the masses poured onto the streets without the leadership.

Imran delayed CPEC projects for four years, claims Kaira

LALAMUSA (NNI): PPP leader and Advisor to PM on Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Qamar Zaman Kaira has said that if PTI Chairman Imran Khan was not removed from power, he would have caused more damage to the country. The PPP leader alleged that Imran Khan delayed the CPEC projects for four years.

Kaira was addressing a launching ceremony of development projects in Lala Musa on Sunday.

Lashing out at former prime minister, he said that inflation was at its peak in his tenure. He said that Imran angered friendly countries and as soon as he got power, he vitiated ties with China.

The PPP leader rued that Imran regarded it as his success that a storm of indecency was unleashed on social media.

"Now Imran is attacking the Election Commission of Pakistan. He is talking against the state institutions. He has enraged Pakistan's friends and isolated the country in the comity of nations. He made Turkey, Malaysia, China and Europe angry," Kaira lamented. The PM advisor was of the view if the former premier stuck to power any longer, the country would have to endure more pain.



LAHORE: General Secretary of the Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam (F) Abdul Ghafoor Haideri calls on president of the Pakistan Muslim League (Q) Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain.

Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves will strengthen soon: Ishaq Dar reaffirms

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Finance Minister Ishaq Dar has reaffirmed that Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves will strengthen very soon saying that the country's reserves stood at a total of \$10 billion.

Recalling the economic feats achieved by the PML-N government from 2013 to 2018, Ishaq Dar said that they oversaw a period where the gross domestic product (GDP) of the country improved from \$244 billion to \$356 billion.

Ishaq Dar said, "Pakistan reserves stood at a total of \$10 billion — \$4 billion of the State Bank of Pakistan and \$6 billion of commercial banks. Pakistan is repaying its loans on time, and the foreign exchange reserves will soon boost."

The finance minister mentioned that a delegation of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) would soon visit the country and he would also meet the lender's officials at the Geneva moot.

The International Conference on Climate Resilient Pakistan will take place on January 9 in Switzerland's Geneva, where the coalition government aims to raise funds to recover from the deadly floods.

After concluding the visit to Geneva, Dar, without mentioning further, told the media outlet that he would visit the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on a three-day official visit.

"Funds from Saudi Arabia and other friendly countries will soon be

received," the finance minister said, who told journalists earlier this week that he expects inflows from China "in a few days".

IMF team may hold talks with Ishaq Dar in Geneva: A delegation of International Monetary Fund is expected to meet Finance Minister Ishaq Dar on the sidelines of International Geneva Conference going to be held tomorrow (Jan 9), the IMF spokesperson said on Sunday. In a statement, IMF representative in Islamabad Esther Pérez Ruiz said Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif held a constructive talk with the managing director of the Fund on Jan 6 regarding the Geneva Conference scheduled to be held on Jan 9. The representative said that the IMF MD expressed her sympathy to those directly affected by the floods and supported Pakistan's efforts to build a more resilient recovery.

She said that a delegation of the Fund is expected to meet Finance Minister Dar on the sidelines of Geneva Conference and they would discuss outstanding issues and are expected to find a way forward on the IMF loan programme.

Pakistan entered a \$6 billion IMF programme in 2019, which was increased to \$7bn last year. The programme's ninth review, which would release \$1.18bn, is currently pending. It had earlier been put off for two months due to government's unwillingness to accept certain conditions

placed before it by the Fund, and the disagreements have yet to be resolved. The IMF spokesperson's statement came two days after prime minister announced that a delegation of the Fund would visit Pakistan in next two to three days to complete the ninth review of the IMF \$7 billion loan programme for Pakistan.

On Friday, Managing Director International Monetary Fund Ms Kristalina Georgieva called Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif over telephone and reiterated her commitment to help Pakistan in the difficult period. She also expressed her deep sympathy and concern on the human and material losses due to recent floods.

The prime minister thanked the Managing Director for her concern on the fallout of the floods and extended an invitation to her to participate in the Climate Resilient Pakistan Conference at Geneva.

Kristalina Georgieva thanked the PM for the invitation to participate in the Climate Resilient Pakistan Conference at Geneva, saying she would be able to join the conference virtually as the IMF Board meetings had been prefixed for January 9 -10.

The prime minister assured the MD IMF that Pakistan was committed to successfully completing the ongoing IMF programme and thanked the Ms Kristalina Georgieva for her understanding and empathy of the challenges that Pakistan was facing.

Pakistan slams Israeli minister's visit to Al Aqsa Mosque compound

UNITED NATIONS (APP): Pakistan, speaking for the OIC group at the United Nations, has condemned the visit to the al-Aqsa Mosque compound by Israel's new far-right security minister, after a UN Security Council meeting at which the 15-member body's members called for preserving the historic status quo at Jerusalem's holy sites.

"We strongly demand that such acts have to be stopped and they have to be stopped, forthwith", Ambassador Aamir Khan, deputy permanent representative of Pakistan to the UN, told reporters at the UNSC stakeout alongside all ambassadors of Islamic countries.

The Pakistani envoy said that the group met prior to the Security Council meeting at the request of Palestine's Permanent Observer to the UN Ambassador Riaz Mansour, and strongly condemned Israel minister Itamar Ben-Gvir's action. "We have to deal with such situations with the strength and the force of international law," Ambassador Khan added.

At the Security Council meeting, Khaled Khiairi, U.N. assistant secretary-general for the Middle East, said, "As we have seen numerous times in the past, the situation at Jerusalem's holy sites is deeply fragile, and any incident or tension there can spill over and cause violence throughout the occupied Palestinian territory, in Israel and elsewhere in the region."

He urged the parties to refrain from escalating tensions and respect the status quo, which allows Jews and Christians to visit the site at specific times but only Muslims to worship there. The Council's emergency meeting was requested by Palestine and Jordan and supported by council members United Arab Emirates, China, France, and Malta.

Israel's new extremist government was sworn in on December 29, along with Benjamin Netanyahu, who returned as prime minister for an unprecedented sixth term. On Tuesday, the new national security minister, Itamar Ben-Gvir, accompanied by a heavy security detail, visited the compound that houses al-Aqsa Mosque. His visit marked the first time since 2017 that an Israeli minister had gone to Haram al-Sharif by and Temple. Ambassador Mansour, the Palestinian envoy, said Ben-Gvir's intentions were clear. "He is pursuing the same extremist agenda he has pursued all his life: ending the historic and legal status quo. That is his objective, regardless of the consequences," Mansour told the council.

Israel's U.N. envoy defended the national security minister's actions.

"Minister Ben-Gvir's recent visit to Temple Mount was not an incursion into al-Aqsa or any other fabrication that the Palestinians branded his visit as," Israeli Ambassador Gilad Erdan said. "Minister Ben-Gvir's visit was in line with the status quo, and whoever claims otherwise is only inflaming the situation. Jews are allowed to visit the Temple Mount."

"We expect the government of Israel to follow through on that commitment," U.S. Ambassador Robert Wood said at the council meeting.

Jordan's King Abdullah is the custodian of both Muslim and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem. His envoy at the UN said Ben-Gvir's unannounced presence was a status quo violation.

"This storming took place without the agreement of the Auqaf administration, which is the legal agency in charge of the Haram [al-Sharif]," Ambassador Mahmoud Hmoud said, adding that Israel also violated an international convention and two Security Council resolutions — one of which was adopted in 2000 in response to an incursion at the site by then-Israeli opposition leader Ariel Sharon. That incident led to Palestinian protests and riots that grew into the second intifada, which lasted more than four years and was deadly for Palestinians and Israelis.

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Biden heads to Mexican border in bid to show progress on immigration

WASHINGTON (Reuters): President Joe Biden is headed to the U.S.-Mexico border on Sunday for the first time since taking office nearly two years ago, tackling one of the most politically charged issues in the country as he prepares for a reelection bid.

Biden on Thursday announced fresh plans to block Cuban, Haitian and Nicaraguan migrants at the U.S.-Mexico border, expanding the nationalities of those who can be expelled back to Mexico, and his visit to El Paso, Texas, is not expected to yield any new policy breakthroughs. Instead, it is meant to demonstrate that Biden is taking the issue seriously, end nagging questions about when he plans to visit the border and shore up relations with Border Patrol, some of whose agents have bristled at the president's rollback of hardline enforcement policies. The longer-term goal of pushing Congress to pass laws to fix America's creaky immigration system is unlikely to succeed given Republicans' newly assumed control of the House of Representatives.

Right-wing lawmakers have repeatedly torpedoed U.S. immigration reform proposals over the past two decades. Biden sent Congress an immigration reform plan on his first day in office. It floundered due to opposition from congressional Republicans, who also blocked his request for \$3.5 billion to beef up border enforcement.

Republican lawmaker Jim Jordan told Fox News on Sunday that his party could help the Democrats - but only if Biden adopted the enforcement policies of former President Donald Trump. Those policies included separating children from their parents.

"They've allowed now a situation where frankly, we no longer have a border," Jordan said. Biden, joined by Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas, is expected to meet at the border with Congressional lawmakers, local officials and community leaders.

Mayorkas on Sunday said two of the key elements leading to increased numbers of migrants making their way to the United States - international crises and legislative stasis - were outside the pres-

ident's control. "We are dealing with a broken immigration system that Congress has failed to repair for decades," he told ABC News' "This Week" show.

The White House said Biden would assess border enforcement operations in El Paso, where the Democratic mayor declared a state of emergency last month, citing hundreds of migrants' sleeping on the streets in cold temperatures and thousands being apprehended every day.

U.S. border officials apprehended a record 2.2 million migrants at the border with Mexico in the 2022 fiscal year that ended in September, though that number includes individuals who tried to cross multiple times. Biden on Thursday did open legal, limited pathways into the country for Cubans, Nicaraguans and Haitians. While winning praise from some U.S. industry groups desperate to solve pressing labor shortages, Biden's moves have drawn criticism from human rights activists and some Democrats who say the new restrictions are a retreat from the president's 2020 campaign promise to restore historical rights to asylum-seekers.

Shortage of Staff: PIA submits report in SC

KARACHI (PPI): Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) has submitted a report containing the five-year financial plan to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court on Dec 17 rejected the plea of PIA seeking permission to recruit 200 employees, including 80 pilots. The apex court has asked PIA to submit a detailed report in this regard. The supreme court has put a ban on new recruitment in PIA since 2018.

PIA submitted the report through its counsel Salman Akram Raja in the apex court. The report, prepared on the International Air Transport Association (IATA)'s recommendations, revealed that PIA is facing an extreme shortage of professional and skilled employees in the areas of flight operations; services; information and technology; and finance.

"Total separation of employees in PIA since 2018 is 5,793 out of which 1,199 employees pertain to flight operations (pilots), flight services (cabin crew), finance, and IT department. No fresh hiring has been made whereas our immediate requirement is 250 employees for the year 2023," read the report. A three-judge bench of the SC, led by Justice Ijazul Ahsan, will take up the PIA plea next week seeking permission for the recruitment of 250 skillful workers.

The report revealed that as the SC restricted the national carrier from recruiting any manpower since 2018, the airline was unable to induct fresh

blood, resulting in an increase in the average age of its existing employees to 45.2 years.

This has created a deficiency of operational crew and new employees having the latest technological-cum-corporate knowledge with the contemporary skillset required to uplift the national flag carrier to an era of advancement and innovative strategic commercial operations," the report stated. It is also mentioned that the PIA had recently arranged code-sharing with Turkish Airlines. The report added that an increase in the frequency of flights would be a key requirement for running operations smoothly. "As an outcome of the code-share arrangement with Turkish Airlines, the PIA is projecting an annual revenue of Rs205 billion for the year 2023," it added.

"The fresh induction of manpower is critical for the achievement of the projected revenue. Moreover, IATA in its plan has also recommended to the PIA for enhancement of fleet and a corresponding increase in human resources based on competence," the report added. It is also stated that despite the lack of support from the government, the PIA had been able to add four A320 aircraft and one A320 Simulator to its fleet during the year 2022. "A total of 22 weekly flights to the UK and six weekly flights to the EU could not be added due to the EASA suspension; remote audit planned on March, 7 2023 subsequent to which operations to these destina-

tions are likely to resume depending on the outcome," it added.

The report forecast that domestic traffic would grow from 3.2 million passengers in 2022 to 4.6 million in 2026 (PIA market share = 54%).

International traffic would grow from 10.7 million passengers in 2022 to 19.1 million in 2026 (PIA market share = 27%) with major market expansion in Saudi Arabia, UAE, UK, Canada, US, Australia, Afghanistan, Central Asian states, Malaysia and Turkey, it estimated.

"Due to an increase in domestic and international passenger traffic, additional pilots and cabin crew will be required, to manage the increased flight operations," the report stated. On cockpit crew requirements, the report stated that 100 additional pilots and first officers were still less than the current requirement and the PIA was barely managing its flight operations whereby the duty limitation requirement waiver was requested from the regulator most of the time.

"This results in delays and flight schedule disturbance whereby commercial interest and company's brand is affected negatively," the report explained. "Moreover, four new aircraft have been added at the same time. The delta of variations of pilots vs aircraft have adversely affected the flight operations; therefore, statistically, due to unavailability and shortage of pilots, 29 flights have been cancelled in the month of December resulting in serious revenue and reputational loss," it added.