



Pakistan, Kazakhstan to improve trade, investment

President Dr Arif Alvi on Tuesday said boosting trade with Kazakhstan and other Central Asian Republics (CARs) through Karachi and Gwadar was an important element of Pakistan's 'Vision Central Asia' policy. (Report on Page 8)



COAS appointment made with Nawaz Sharif's consent: Ishaq Dar

Federal minister for finance Ishaq Dar on Tuesday said the process of appointment of the Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir went smooth and the PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif okayed the nomination of Gen Asim Munir by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. During an interview to a private news channel, he said government had plan B if president Dr Arif Alvi did not approve the summary.

Simultaneously published from Islamabad, Lahore and Multan

Groundbreaking

SUKKUR: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif unveils the plaque of groundbreaking of Sukkur-Hyderabad Motorway on Tuesday.

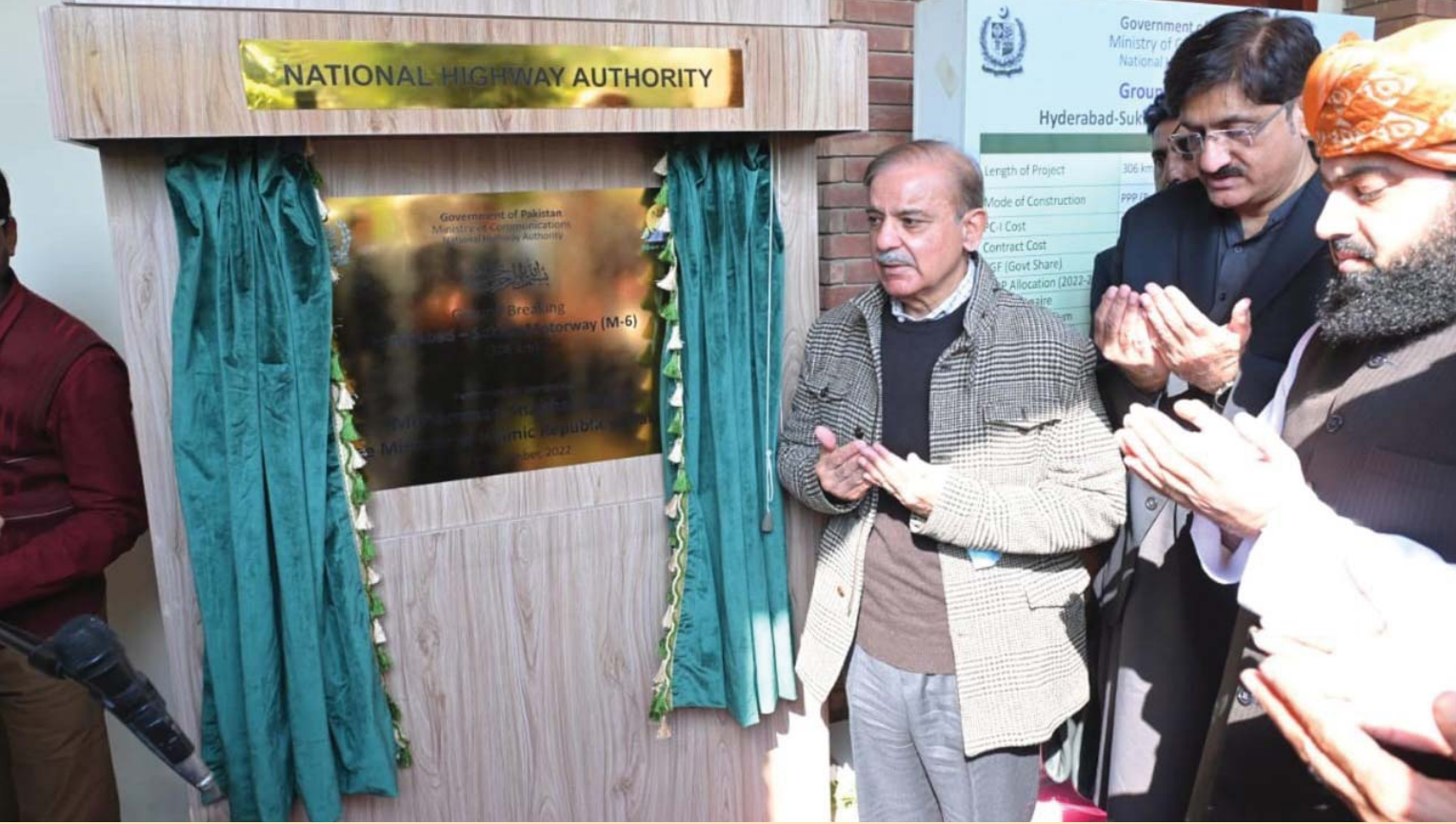


Photo: PID

President expresses full confidence in HIT capabilities to meet defence requirements



TAXILA: President Dr Arif Alvi on Tuesday expressed his full confidence in the capabilities of Heavy Industries Taxila (HIT) and appreciated the commitment to transform the organization into a modern defence production establishment and adequately meet the requirements of the armed forces and law enforcement agencies (LEAs) in line with international standards. During his visit, the president was briefed on HIT's technical capabilities, production activities, indigenization efforts, major research and development (R&D) projects and recently undertaken initiatives to improve the efficiency of HIT. President Secretariat Press Wing said in a press release. The president took keen interest in ongoing R&D projects including bulletproofing and IED protection of military vehicles and manufacturing of tank and artillery gun barrels and systems. He applauded HIT's efforts to attain self-reliance through indigenization and the acquisition of modern technologies for combat vehicles and systems. Earlier on arrival, Chairman HIT Lieutenant General Syed Aamer Raza received the president. APP

Mainstreaming disadvantaged areas through motorway network to ensure prosperity: PM

News Desk

SUKKUR/HYDERABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday said the development of road infrastructure connecting all provinces of the country, particularly the disadvantaged areas, was crucial for strengthening the national economy. The prime minister, who twice performed the foundation-laying of M-6 motorway - both in Sukkur and Hyderabad cities of Sindh province, said connecting the deprived areas including Balochistan and Sindh would pave the way for economic and social development besides creating new business opportunities. With its ends in Sukkur and Hyderabad, the 306-km-long M-6 will be completed with Rs 307 billion within 30 months as per international standards. The M-6 portion will complete the North-South Motorway Corridor, also known as the Karachi-Peshawar motorway, and will interconnect major cities of

the country. The prime minister in his address at the two events said it was a matter of satisfaction for the coalition government to restore construction work of the M-6 motorway that faced a prolonged delay due to the inefficiency of the previous government. He emphasized ensuring the quality and standard of the M-6 motorway no less than rest of the motorway network in the country. He directed the relevant authorities to complete the public-private project within the stipulated period of time. The prime minister encouraged Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal to promote further projects on public-private projects so as to achieve the goals of development and prosperity. He also called for improving road connectivity from Balochistan to the up country in order to connect the significant Gwadar port and mainstream the

province in the national economy. He announced the completion of the Sukkur Rohri bridge, which was earlier announced by former prime minister Nawaz Sharif and also directed improvement of Karachi-Hyderabad motorway to avoid traffic congestion and accidents. Also, he announced that federal government would contribute Rs one billion to Sindh's development fund to mitigate the sufferings of flood-affected people and urged the provincial government to allocate the same amount from their exchequer. He mentioned that federal and provincial governments, national and provincial disaster management authorities, and international aid agencies were collaborating in rehabilitation efforts. Chief Minister Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah regretted that the apathy of the previous government delayed the construction of M-6 for over three years and emphasized that 25,000 jobs related to the project needed to

be given to locals. He requested to allocated an amount for Sehwan Bypass in next budget. He drew the attention of the government towards the need for the dewatering of flood-hit areas and expressed confidence that the federal government would continue to extend assistance to Sindh in this regard. Federal Minister for Water Resources Syed Khurshid Shah said the M-6 motorway would prove as a milestone in strengthening the economy by promoting intra-country trade activities. Federal Minister for Communications Asad Mehmood said the construction of the Sukkur-Hyderabad Motorway (M-6) was a long-standing demand of the people of Sindh province, which has been fulfilled by the present coalition government. He expressed satisfaction that Shehbaz Sharif was fulfilling the vision of former prime minister Nawaz Sharif regarding establishing a large network of motor-

ways in the country as a step of development. Federal Minister for Information Technology Amin ul Haq said M-6 motorway would connect various cities of the country and would promote trade activities. Federal Secretary for Communications Capt (ret'd) Khurram Agha said the government would provide only Rs 9.5 billion and the construction would be carried out on a public-private basis. Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam leader Sindh chapter Rashid Mehmood Soomro said Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) would unitedly work towards carrying out projects of development across the country in the best public interest. Federal Minister for Planning and Development Dr Ahsan Iqbal, Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb, members of the provincial assembly, and officials of the Sindh government attended the two events.

PM, Gates agree to continue working together on shared objectives



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday reiterated that the government remained committed to ending all forms of polio in the country. The prime minister had a telephonic conversation with Co-Chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) Bill Gates and discussed the ongoing public health and social sector programmes supported by BMGF in Pakistan, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. While expressing concern over-reporting of new cases in 2022 after one year without any polio case, the prime minister noted that there had been a pause in polio cases since September 2022. In light of the recent flooding which had adversely affected the ongoing polio vaccination efforts due to large-scale displacements and destruction of healthcare infrastructure, the prime minister reaffirmed that the government was actively implementing the special emergency response plan and would continue to adapt and find ways to reach out to children in these challenging times.

Pakistan has 'irrefutable evidence' of India's involvement in Johar Town blast: Sanaullah

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Interior Rana Sanaullah on Tuesday said Pakistan had "irrefutable evidence" of the involvement of Indian agency RAW in the blast at Johar Town, Lahore last year. "India was not only behind the Johar Town blast, but also found involved in fanning terrorism in Pakistan," he said while addressing a news conference here along with Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) Additional Inspector General (IG) Punjab Imran Mehmud. "This is a matter of internal security and we are initiating the process to take it up at the international level. The

Secretary Foreign Affairs will highlight the issue at different world forums while Minister for Foreign Affairs Bilawal Bhutto Zardari will raise the matter of Indian involvement in terror financing and subversive activities in Pakistan at the United Nations," the minister added. Rana Sanaullah said Pakistanis had given innumerable sacrifices in wiping out terrorism from the country. "Pakistan has been facing terrorism for several decades, and Pakistanis including citizens, personnel of armed forces, police, Rangers and agencies, journalists, and politicians have either lost their lives in this war or became its victims."

'Dissolution of assemblies likely before Dec 20'

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) chief and former Prime Minister Imran Khan said on Tuesday announcement to dissolve the Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assemblies will be made before December 20. During the meeting with PTI's Mianwali, Sargodha and Sahiwal lawmakers at Zaman Park, the deposed premier, while highlighting the ruling Pakistan Democratic Movement' (PDM) "ineffective decisions" on the country's economy, said that party's politics is not against the country's interests, adding that the announcement regarding the provincial assemblies' dissolution will be made before December 20. "PML-Q is our key ally, and we are on the same page over dissolution decisions," he continued. Earlier, the PTI chief on Monday lambasted the current administration,



claiming that investors had lost faith in the government due to its policies. The former prime minister, while speaking to a gathering of his economic team, expressed apprehension that things would spiral out of control. He said he had sought the help of Hamid Azhar, Hamayun Akhtar, Omar Ayub and others to discuss the economic situation. He lamented that the media did not highlight the state of economy. "We are making all-out efforts to inform people about the economic

condition. We'll explain to people how the nation is struggling to deal with the current predicament and how we can overcome it. The current situation will have effects on key state institutions," added the former premier. Citing the Soviet Union's force, Imran said the Soviet Union's force was the most powerful army in the world. The former premier reiterated that the court must play a part if the nation is to avoid a quick decline. Highlighting the contributions made by his government, he said, "The wealthiest people in our time were farmers. Farmers experienced their first-ever record profits. During our time, industries were growing. The industry saw a 10.7% gain in large-scale manufacturing. Imran Khan said, "The country's dollar deficit was widening and that we had taken out loans to cover the installments payments".

FM desires enhanced Pak, Indonesia cooperation in diverse fields

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Tuesday stressed upon enhanced bilateral economic cooperation between Pakistan and Indonesia in diverse fields. During an interview with an Indonesian Tv channel, the foreign minister opined that there existed a large scope of cooperation between Pakistan and Indonesia. He said that they had signed an MoU for setting up a joint ministerial commission between the two countries, adding the economic and bilateral ties between the two countries had more potential which required to be unlocked. Bilawal said the first and the second largest Muslim countries working together on any issues had big scope. "I believe the sky is the limit and a lot can be changed," he said, adding that they were very keen to enhance the bilateral economic cooperation and people-to-people contacts between the two countries. FM desires enhanced Pak, Indonesia cooperation in diverse fields. The foreign minister observed that both the countries had already been cooperating at multilateral fora including OIC, ASEAN, UN, G77 and other global bodies. To a question, the foreign minister said that Pakistan had gained experience in combating terrorism and both the countries could learn from each other's experiences.

For economy boosting

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of the Mazhilis (Lower House) of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Mr Koshanov Yerlan Zhakanovich, along with his delegation, called on President Dr. Arif Alvi at Aiwan-e-Sadr on Tuesday.



Photo: Online

Pakistan, Kazakhstan to improve trade, investment: President Alvi

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Tuesday said boosting trade with Kazakhstan and other Central Asian Republics (CARs) through Karachi and Gwadar was an important element of Pakistan's 'Vision Central Asia' policy.

"There is a great potential for diversifying bilateral trade relations and entering into joint ventures in the fields of agriculture, IT, textile, energy, logistics, housing and construction", he said while talking to Chairman of the Mazhilis (Lower House) of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Koshanov Yerlan Zhakanovich who led a delegation, here at the Aiwan-e-Sadr.

President Alvi said Pakistan and Kazakhstan enjoy fraternal brotherly relations rooted in a common heritage and social, cultural and religious

values which need to be translated into meaningful business trade, investment and economic relations.

He mentioned that the Vision Central Asia policy focused on five elements including political and diplomatic, trade and investment, energy and connectivity, security and defence, and people-to-people contacts.

He said the existing level of trade of US\$219.12 million in 2021-22 needed to be substantially increased keeping in view the immense potential that existed between the two countries by building new and improving existing linkages through roads and railway networks, and through the sea.

The president expressed the hope that with the establishment of complete peace in Afghanistan, trade and invest-

ment between Kazakhstan and Pakistan would receive much-needed impetus and hoped that the current leadership in Afghanistan would succeed in establishing sustainable peace.

He hoped that Pakistan and Kazakhstan Inter-Governmental Joint Commission (IJC) on trade, economic, scientific, technological and cultural cooperation scheduled to be held in Islamabad on December 22-23, 2022 would take tangible decisions to further improve and cement the bilateral brotherly and fraternal relations.

President Alvi said the international community should take a strong exception to atrocities being perpetually committed by the Indian Security Forces against innocent Kashmiris who were demanding their legitimate right to self-deter-

mination as promised to them by various resolutions of UNSC on Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

"The international community should take notice of harassment, chastisement, and intimidation of minorities, especially Muslims, and desecration of their places of worship with total impunity", he added.

He emphasized that the world was in flux therefore, Pakistan and Kazakhstan should also try to forge close cooperation to deal with the emerging situations with dignity and respect and should continue to play their part in the resolution of regional and international issues.

Chairman of Mazhilis of Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan briefed the President on the aims and objectives

of the Kazakhstan Parliamentary delegation's visit to Pakistan and said that during the stay, the delegation would meet with the Chairman Senate, Speaker of the National Assembly and other parliamentarians to discuss ways and means to further improve linkages between the two parliaments and substantially increase people-to-people contacts.

He further said that the delegation would identify avenues and areas to further improve bilateral trade and investment relations, identify common ground to forge meaningful partnerships in cultural and tourism sectors, would explore the possibility of joint ventures in various sectors of mutual interest and discuss matters and issues related to bilateral, regional and international importance.

COAS appointment made with Nawaz Sharif's consent: Ishaq Dar

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal minister for finance Ishaq Dar on Tuesday said the process of appointment of the Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir went smooth and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supreme Nawaz Sharif okayed the nomination of Gen Asim Munir by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

During an interview to a private news channel, he said government had plan B if president Dr Arif Alvi did not approve the summary.

Talking about Nawaz's return to Pakistan, he said it was not possible to give an indication of his date of return adding the PML-N and its allies were desirous to see him back.

Commenting on general elections, he said general elections would be held in October 2023 adding the constitution needed to be amended to conduct elections in time.



Speaking about cheap petrol deal with Russia, he said the ban on buying cheap oil from Russia was revoked and the government would try its level best to buy oil at 30pc discount adding the price of petrol would not be increased.

He said the country needed \$16bn to put the economy back on track adding the government was meeting the conditions set by the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

He further said Saudi Arabia and China had assured financial support to Pakistan to help with economic challenges.

ADB approves \$100 mln to improve skills training in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a \$100 million loan to help improve technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in Punjab province in Pakistan and ensure skills training meets the demand for jobs in the country's priority economic sectors.

The Improving Workforce Readiness in Punjab Project will help enhance the quality and relevance of TVET to increase graduates' employability, upgrade workers' skills, ensure more equitable access to training for women and disadvantaged groups, and improve management and strategic planning in TVET institutions.

"Punjab makes up over half the national income and is expected to make a significant contribution to Pakistan's post-flood recovery," said ADB Director General for Central and West Asia Yevgeniy Zhukov.

They will provide programs with linkages to industry and deploy best practices. The project will include the development of skills train-

ing programs using technology in response to emerging trends in the fourth industrial revolution.

Given Pakistan's high vulnerability to climate change, disaster resilience will be incorporated into the design of TVET centers of excellence while training on how to prepare for and respond to disasters will be provided.

"Workers with improved skills in key areas such as construction and agriculture will be essential to implementing stronger safety standards, building back better, and helping the country prepare for future natural hazards," said ADB Director for Social Sectors Rie Hiraoka.

"ADB's program also seeks to support women and will prioritize disadvantaged groups to improve their chances of finding quality jobs and boosting their incomes.

"The project includes a \$2 million technical assistance grant from Japan Fund for the prosperous and resilient Asia and the Pacific, which will help to strengthen the TVET institutional framework and strategy in Punjab. APP

Cabinet gives go ahead to signing of Reko Diq final deal

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: The federal cabinet endorsed a decision of the Economic Coordination Committee taken on 11 December regarding Reko Diq project funding plan.

The meeting was apprised that for the settlement of the agreement of Reko Diq project, a legal opinion was solicited from the Supreme Court through filing of a presidential reference under Article 186 of the Constitution.

The Supreme Court on December 9 had given an opinion, observing that the reconstitution process of Reko Diq project was transparent and the agreements signed in this regard were legal under the relevant laws. Supreme Court's advice



was already sought over the Foreign Investment (Promotion and Protection) Bill, 2022 (Amendment Act) being under discussion in the parliament, it was added. The meeting accorded approval to the inking of final

agreements over the settlement of Reko Diq project upon the recommendation of Petroleum Division. In this regard, under Rules of Business 1973, the secretary/additional secretary petroleum division were given a nod to

sign the said deal on behalf of the government of Pakistan.

The cabinet approved the regulatory framework for the state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and its special purposes vehicles (SPVs), the government of Balochistan

SPVs and Reko Diq project company.

The meeting was apprised that with the consensus of allied parties, it was agreed that the legislation was related to the extent of Reko Diq project only.

To remove certain legal issues, a five-member cabinet committee comprising Minister for Finance Ishaq Dar, Minister for Trade Syed Naveed Qamar and Minister for Economic Division Sardar Ayaz Sadiq was formed.

The committee would hold discussions with the leaders of the allied parties and would remove their apprehensions by taking them on board. It was further agreed that in consultations with the relevant parties, the amendment would be made.

Indian troops launch CASO in Sopore

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: Indian troops launched a cordon and search operation (CASO) in Sopore town of Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK).

The Indian troops and paramilitary forces launched cordon and search operation after finding an improvised explosive device (IED) planted on the side of a road. The IED was later defused at Tulibal in the town.

The IED was detected by a road opening party of the Indian forces at Tulibal in Sopore in the morning, Indian police officials claimed.

NDMA Chair highlights data, actionable intelligence importance to alert masses before disaster

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Chairman National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), Lieutenant General Inam Haider Malik on Tuesday underscored the importance of data usage and actionable intelligence's availability to forewarn communities before a disaster strikes and expand the scope of national alerts to the target audience in affected zones.

The NDMA Chairman participated in thought-provoking panel discussions on climate change, humanitarian crises and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), during his visit to



Bangkok, held during Regional Humanitarian Partnership Week (RHPW) 2022, a news release here received said.

The discussions were divided into two sessions; the first session was collectively organized by the International Council of Voluntary Agen-

cies (ICVA), Asian Disaster Risk Reduction Network (ADRRN), Community World Service Asia (CWSA), and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA).

The Chairman NDMA apprised the house about the

devastating floods experienced by Pakistan this year and the resilience-driven national response. Further deliberated upon the need to upgrade the disaster management system and the requirement to invest efforts for national preparedness to deal with climate change.

He shed light on NDMA's vision to be a futuristic, technology-enabled entity and globally engaged organization committed to 'Climate Millennium Goals' and leading for 'Climate Reversal Initiatives'. All participants appreciated the vision and innovative recommendations of Chairman NDMA.

NA speaker condoles demise of Chaudhry Saeed

ISLAMABAD: National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervez Ashraf on Tuesday expressed his heartfelt sorrow and grief over the death of former Member National Assembly (MNA) Chaudhry Saeed.

In his condolence message to the family of Chaudhry Saeed, speaker said the sudden and most unfortunate passing away of Chaudhry Saeed has shocked him. "We pray for the salvation and eternal peace of the departed soul,"

He said that Chaudhry Saeed's political and social services would always be remembered. The void created by his death cannot be filled soon. The services rendered by the deceased to the people of his constituency would always be remembered.

Speaker Raja Pervez Ashraf prayed to Allah Almighty to elevate the ranks of the deceased and grant patience to the bereaved family to bear this irreparable loss.

CM Balochistan urges educationists to develop Education Dept

QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Abdul Quddus Bizenjo on Tuesday urged the educationists to develop the education sector through which the province could be put on the track of development.

In order to equip our children with knowledge and skills, revolutionary steps must first be taken in the field of education, he expressed these views in a statement issued here.

The Chief Minister directed that a think tank consisting of academicians and retired bureaucrats of the province should be formed saying that the goals of educational development



could not be achieved without bringing reforms and changes, we would take Balochistan forward only through the advancement of the education sector.

He said that a lot of time has already been wasted due to not taking the education sector seriously and we could not afford any more delay saying that

in order to equip our children with knowledge and skills, revolutionary steps must first be taken in the field of education

CM Bizenjo said that he would request the educationists, intellectuals and retired bureaucracy of the province to help and guide.

He said that the Secretary of the Secondary Education Department and the Secretary of the Higher Education Department would take all the stakeholders on board and carry forward the mission of educational development together with the educated section of society. APP

The Diabetes Centre (TDC) and Crescent Lions Club jointly conduct free medical camp

City Reporter

ISLAMABAD: The Diabetes Centre Islamabad in collaboration with Lions club held a free medical and screening camp in Ghauri Town Phase 3 here today in Islamabad. A large number of people of Ghauri town and areas adjacent to it participated and got themselves checked up by senior team of doctors. The purpose of this camp was to raise awareness level among general masses about ill effects of diabetes of human health.

Participants applauded TDC's efforts to spread awareness and educate general public about diabetes.

Ehsas Roshan Rayat Program



Mian Rashid Asghar

FAISALABAD: On the directions of the Punjab government, under the "Ehsas Roshan Rayat Program" Out of 5, each shop would be registered in four district of the division at union council level for providing flour, ghee/oil and pulses to eligible registered families under 40% subsidy.

In this regard, at the tehsil level, the steering committee consisting of Assistant Commissioner of concerned tehsil, Social Welfare officer, and representatives of Banks has been constituted which will deal with the issues of registration of shops on priority basis.

A high-level meeting was held under the chairmanship of the Divisional Commissioner Muhammad Shahid Niaz, in which the Deputy Commissioner Faisalabad Imran Hamid Sheikh, Assistant Commissioner General Samina Saif Niaz, the Deputy Director Social Welfare Amna Alam, Social Welfare Officer Muhammad Tayyab and representatives of Bank of Punjab and National Bank also participated.

During the meeting, the Deputy Director Social Welfare said that people having the income less than 35 thousand rupees can get registration by sending their National Identity Card number to "8171" who can buy flour, ghee/oil and pulses from the respective shops under 40% subsidy.

He said that, grocery vendors should be registered by scanning the QR code. The vendors who were already included in the program do not need to re-register. The Divisional Commissioner urged to use all means of awareness regarding the registration of deserving families under this program. It is a priority to ensure the provision of subsidy to the beneficiaries with ensuring tight transparency. He told the steering committee that the necessary arrangements should be taken for opening the bank accounts of grocery stores while all the necessary matters for registration of households should be completed immediately. During the meeting the Deputy Commissioners gave detailed about working of program.

Five day anti polio campaign peace fully ended

Adam Khan Wazir

WANA: According to details, the five-day anti-polio campaign in all tehsils of South Waziristan sub-division Wana ended peacefully.

According to the strict instructions of the DPO, strict security arrangements were made for the polio campaign. During the polio campaign, more than four hundred policemen and elite forces were deployed in different areas to protect the teams and maintain law and order.

All entrances and exits were blocked and snap checking continued. DPO South Waziristan commended all the officers and personnel for providing excellent security duty and said that undoubtedly Waziristan Police has proved in a very short time.

That it has emerged as an excellent force and is ready to face all kinds of situations. All the SHO's, DSPs and officers deserve the credit and I am proud of our force.

Waziristan Police will be upgraded from best to best soon and will be equipped with more advanced weapons.

Waziristan Police has not only fulfilled my expectations but is also being appreciated in public circles.

I am proud of my force for maintaining law and order day and night during polio

However, I am happy that I am commanding a force with such brave men and officers.



Rawalpindi: Group photo of Neel Ahmed, Nasir Ali Nasir, Imran Aami and other poets during Mushaira at Punjab Arts Council.

Performance on Christmas song

ISLAMABAD: Children are performing on Christmas song during Christmas celebration ceremony title "End of Year Partners Reception" at Sweden Ambassador residence in Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

Durrani slams KP CM over 'dual standards' for rights of KP

Bureau Report

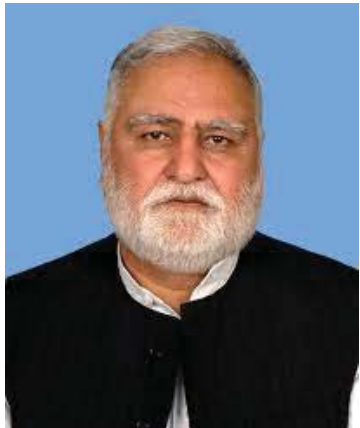
PESHAWAR: Leader of the Opposition in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Akram Khan Durrani on Tuesday criticized KP Chief Minister Mahmood Khan for his "dual standards over the rights of the province".

"On one side the CM is seeking support of opposition parties to stage a protest with them against the federation for rights of the province while on the other he is threatening to dissolve the assembly," he said while speaking on a point of order in the House.

Durrani said that the CM told a "lie" to the nation in his press conference at Islamabad, the other day, in which he claimed that the opposition was supporting his government for the protest, adding that despite being the leader of the opposition, KP CM never contacted him over the issue.

He said that it was beyond his understanding that the KP CM was threatening to dissolve the assembly this month while at the same time warning to stage a protest in Islamabad for the rights of the province.

Durrani questioned why the PTI government did not attach priority to gaining the rights of the KP province when it was in power in the federation



as well. He said the PTI failed to carry out even a single prominent development work in the province, adding during his tenure the province's debt decreased from 16 billion rupees to 8 billion rupees but today the loan volume has reached to Rs 791 billion.

It is pertinent to mention that Akram Khan Durrani had been the chief minister of KP from 2002 till 2007.

He also drew the attention of the house to the deteriorating law and order situation in the province.

Meanwhile, the minority member of PTI Wilson Wazir in his call attention

notice said that in the previous budget, Rs300 million was allocated under AIP program for the construction and repair of minority places of worship in the tribal districts while Rs 50 million rupees were allocated for provision of scholarships to minority children.

He deplored that unfortunately both the schemes could not get the approval of PDWP.

Advisor to Chief Minister on Minority Affairs Wazirzada replied that scholarships had been awarded to minority students of merged districts from the last three years, adding that vocation and skilled training is being imparted to 1800 youth at a cost of Rs 250 million.

He said the construction work has been completed on a Church in Bajaur while work is in progress on the construction of two churches in Landikotal Tehsil of district Khyber.

Meanwhile, Deputy Speaker Mahmood Jan expressed his displeasure over the absence of legislators in the house and remarked that some members come to the house only to make their "TikTok" video.

The house proceedings were adjourned after ANP lawmaker Khushdil Khan Advocate pointed out quorum. The proceedings would resume on Friday at 10am.

Women entrepreneurs advised to adopt digital marketing through E-exhibitions

Bureau Report

MULTAN: Multan Chamber of Commerce & Industry (MCCI) President Mian Rashid Iqbal advised women entrepreneurs on Tuesday to adopt digital marketing through E-exhibitions for their products as it was a dire need of the hour.

Chairing a meeting of the MCCI sub-committee on functions, fairs, and exhibitions, here, he stated that businessmen had to focus the digital marketing as their economic survival lies with it.

He informed that MCCI would upload women entrepreneurs' products at its website after making its E-catalogues, adding that they were in contact with Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP), Small and Medium Enterprise Development Authority (SMEDA) and Punjab Small Business Corporation for taking Multan pavillion in upcoming exhibitions under TDAP.

Habib Oil Mills & Shahid Afridi Foundation join hands to empower girls' education in Pakistan

KARACHI: Habib Oil Mills (HOM) have joined forces with Shahid Afridi Foundation (SAF) to empower girls' education in the country by establishing a school, Shahina Perveen Campus, in the under-resourced locality of Ibrahim Haidery in Karachi. While the true motif of the school is to encourage girls' education, about 25% boys from the district have also been enrolled in the school where they will be provided quality education.

A total of 22.5 million children are estimated to be out of school in Pakistan, the majority of whom are girls. A total of 32% girls and 21% boys are still not in schools and it gets worse for girls because only 13% make it to the ninth grade. Our youth

can only thrive in this constantly changing world if they have access to education. This initiative aims to bridge the gender gap in education and help the children build a better tomorrow for themselves.

Commenting on the partnership, Managing Director Habib Oil Mills, Mr. Moidul Hassan said, "Despite the country's increased demand for girls' education, girls still face barriers to education because of the gendered social norms and poverty. At HOM, we believe that women are economic contributors rather than economic dependents and to make them economically dependent, education is vital. The number of girls not in schools is alarming and we are



hoping to make a difference in collaboration with SAF."

Speaking at the occasion, Mr. Shahid Afridi, Chairman SAF stated, "Education shouldn't only focus on prominent academic disciplines of

Commerce, Science, and Arts but should also aim to foster critical thinking, life skills, value education, analytical skills, and decision-making skills in students. SAF Education is a community-based learning

program that promotes 'twenty-first-century skills,' like vocational skills, capacity development, and digital literacy. It benefits students through various academic and skills-based programs to cope with rapidly changing socio-economic scenarios. The partnership with H.O.M is a step further in uplifting the underserved community of 'Arkanabad' and creating new opportunities for them and their children. We will further expand this partnership to ensure Hope Not Out for all!"

The ceremony was attended by the board of directors of HOM and SAF along with dignitaries from the corporate, education and media spheres in Pakistan.

State-of-the-Art School Building Constructed by Kalash Group



Mian Rashid Asghar

FAISALABAD: The non-functional state-of-the-art school building constructed by the Kalash group at the cost of 25 million has been made functional and 216 students of the non-formal basic education center already established in chaks have been transferred to the new school.

The Divisional Commissioner, Muhammad Shahid Niaz and Deputy Commissioner Imran Hamid Sheikh along with Chairman Kalash Group Muhammad Shafiq and Director Farrukh Zaman shifted the students up to the middle level and the children of primary section from the old dilapidated building of the school to the new building through buses. They also sampled the plant in the school's green garden and formally inaugurated the school building, checked the educational facilities available in the classrooms and also distributed warm hoods to the children for winter.

Assistant Commissioner Sadar Muhammad Umar Maqbool, CEO Education Ifkhar Khan, In-charge District Emergency Operational

Center Muhammad Sadiq, District Officer Literacy Naveed ul Haque, Head Teacher Institution Madam Sidra, other officers of the District Education Authority, students and the parents of the children were also present. The Divisional Commissioner appreciated the revolutionary initiative of the Deputy Commissioner for utilizing the new building of the school and thanked the Kalash group for constructing a new building for the provision of education up to middle level for the girls of Chaks.

He said that this was a pleasure to see the boys and girls shifting to big schools today and the philanthropists of Faisalabad have always been in the forefront for the public service and welfare work. He praised the high quality classrooms and asked the teachers that they should continue training with quality education of female students wholeheartedly. He said that this school will also get high status soon. The Deputy Commissioner said that this is memorable day of his service that the new building is utilizing for education and this new school have 10 rooms.



Islamabad
15° - 23° Clear

SERVICES

Namaz Timings

Fajr5:34 am
Zohr12:02 pm
Asr3:22 pm
Maghrib5:00 pm
Isha6:29 pm

EMERGENCY

Rescue (Police) 15
Bomb Disposal 15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/
Islamabad1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance 1122 &
& Rescue Services 4451122
Motorway Police 9266044
Motorway Police 9270601-20

Women Police Stations

Islamabad 9222596
Rawalpindi 9270601-20

ENQUIRY

Edhi Ambulance115
PIA Flight Info 114
PIA Cargo 9280979
Railway Enquiry117
Railway Exchange9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi5555489
CAA 9281092

HOSPITALS

CMH561111
MH561116
MH561116
Cantt Hospital9270907-11
DHQ5556311-4
RGH9290301-7
Holy Family9290322-7
PIMS9261170-79
Polyclinic9218300-09
Shifa International4603666

DEPARTMENTS

CDA 9221334-43
CDA 9208301-04
Met Office 9250360-6
RDA 5555864
TMA 5770886
Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Old design large-size banknotes cannot be exchanged after Dec 31: SBP

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) on Tuesday informed the public that old design large size banknotes could not be exchanged after December 31, 2022.

According to press statement issued by SBP, the federal government vide Gazette Notification F.No.2(1)IF-III/2010 dated December 23, 2021, had extended the last date for exchange of old design large size banknotes of Rs 10, 50, 100 and 1000 by one year.

"The holders of these old design large banknotes have been given the last chance to exchange these old design large size banknotes from the field offices of the SBP Banking Services Corporation (BSC) by 31st December 2022," the statement added.

It is once again emphasized that this is the last and final deadline for exchange of such banknotes, upon expiry of which, these banknotes would no longer be exchangeable from the counters of the SBP BSC and thus will lose their value.

The general public is therefore, requested to avail this final opportunity and get their holdings of these banknotes exchanged from SBP BSC Field Offices by December 31, 2022 and protect the value of their savings in these banknotes, the statement added.

ICRC holds National Summit for the Empowerment of Women with Disabilities

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: To assess the current situation of women with disabilities in Pakistan and highlight the challenges and opportunities for their growth, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Pakistan and the National Forum of Women with Disabilities (NFWWD) organized the "National Summit for the Empowerment of Women with Disabilities" in Islamabad today.

In Pakistan, which is ranked 147 among 188 countries in the Gender Inequality Index, women with disabilities are a largely overlooked minority. The Summit brought together over 100 participants, including representatives from government authorities as well as humanitarian and development organizations to chart a way forward on a more disability inclusive environment in the country.

"A barrier-free environment is

central in assisting women with disabilities reach their full potential and achieve autonomy," said Abia Akram, CEO NFWWD. "This cannot be done without including the voice of these women in mainstream gender and disability decision-making processes."

"Immediate realization of efforts is needed for inclusion of girls and women with disabilities in all walks of life in Pakistan," said Mohammad Iqbal, the advisor on disability inclusion at the ICRC. "This includes their engagement through advocacy, sectoral capacity building programs, and creating a space for their meaningful collaboration with the government multi-lateral agencies."

Participants emphasized upon the needs for systematic efforts for the segregation of data to design inclusive policies and service delivery based on targeted individual and environ-

mental requirements. They also discussed prevalent challenges, shared best practices, and made recommendations for a way forward to enable full participation of women and girls with disabilities as well as ways to combat stigma and discrimination.

The discussions led to the creation of action plan for the promotion of capacity building, advocacy and partnerships to facilitate the inclusion of girls and women with disabilities and their representative organizations in decision making and policy formulation.

"It is important to understand the nuances of exclusion from the perspective of women and girls who are living with a physical disability in Pakistan. We're thankful to the ICRC for attempting to fill this gap through this dialogue," said Fouzia Luni, a participant in the event.

The ICRC's Disability Vision 2030 aims to design and deliver



inclusive, accessible, safe, dignified and people-centric initiatives including targeted physical rehabilitation services, ensure an enabling work environment for people with disabilities, and contribute

to a legal and policy environment that promotes their inclusion in humanitarian activities.

Since 1984, the ICRC's physical rehabilitation program in Pakistan has been working in part-

nership with authorities and local organizations to ensure that people with physical disabilities have access to quality and sustainable rehabilitation services along with their integration in society.

Tableau

MUZAFFRABAD: Students of Government Girls High School Nalochi wearing traditional dresses and presenting tableau during annual price distributing ceremony.



Photo: Online

Puppet Show Organized for Awareness of Children's Rights and Protection

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Under its Orphan Sponsor Program, The Secours Islamique France (SIF) organized a puppet show at the Pakistan National Council of Arts (PNCA) Islamabad for the recreation and awareness of the children on their rights and protection. These children are mostly from sponsored orphan families in Rawalpindi and Islamabad.

Secours Islamique France (SIF) is implementing an Orphan Sponsorship Program in Islamabad and Rawalpindi at the community level, target group of the program are vulnerable orphan families which are targeted for the provision of stipend to support the education of the orphan children in addition to awareness raising to the sponsored families regarding child rights



and protection. SIF is currently supporting 683 orphan children in Islamabad, Rawalpindi and Tharparkar. To enable vulnerable families to afford their children's education, SIF provides cash assistance every year. SIF also provides livelihood support to sponsored families through vocational training programs, apprenticeship, enterprise development assistance and livestock support.

Speaking at the occasion, Head of Mission SIF Pakistan Dr. Altaf Abro Said" Puppet show organized under the orphan sponsorship program (OSP) of SIF is not only entertain children, but also to relay messages highlighting the importance of education, especially for girls, skills development for youth and children's rights and protection in general."

Founded in 1991, SIF is

an international non-Governmental solidarity Organization acting in the fields of humanitarian and development sectors. Working in the field for over 30 years, SIF is now active in more than twenty countries, mainly in sectors including Water and Sanitation (WASH), Food Security & Livelihoods (FSL), Education, and Child Protection. SIF is present in Pakistan since 2010.

The program was attended by a large number of Children their guardians and extended families, SIF staff and volunteers. All the participants appreciated the program and efforts of SIF in arranging such a delightful and informative program. Participants stressed that in future such programs should also be organized on a regular basis for grooming the children and creating a healthy & vibrant society in Pakistan.

AIOU hosts 3rd meeting of HEDP



News Desk

ISLAMABAD: Third Vice Chancellors and Consortium meeting of Higher Education Development Project (HEDP) for identification and selection of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) held at Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) yesterday. The purpose of meeting was to ensure access to high quality education to students living in all especially remote disaster areas across the country. The meeting was presided over by the Executive Director, Higher Education Commission (HEC), Dr. Shaista Sohail. Project Coordinator of HEDP, Emeritus Prof. Dr. Mahmood Ul Hasan Butt and Vice Chancellor, AIOU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood hosted the consortium meeting. Vice chancellors and senior officials of 11 universities of Pakistan participated in this meeting physically and online. The representatives of the World Bank also participated in the meeting.

Dr. Shaista Sohail shed light on the problems in higher education in Pakistan. She said that during the covid-19, the need for online education arose and HEC gave instructions to universities to start online education. She said that the focus of HEDP is on all the major areas of higher education in Pakistan and HEC will provide full support for the identification and selection of open online courses on a large scale. Dr. Shaista Sohail thanked Allama Iqbal Open University for hosting the third session of Higher Education Development Project. VC, AIOU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood and Emeritus Prof. Dr. Mahmood ul Hasan Butt, briefed all about university's digitalization and online method of Education, CMS and LMS portals, recording studios and OB vans equipped with modern technology.

NSU and AIPS will jointly work on developing soft skills modules



News Desk

ISLAMABAD: The National Skills University Islamabad (NSU) is the most relevant institution to initiate soft skills training programs in collaboration with the American Institute of Pakistan (AIPS). This was jointly agreed upon by the visiting team members, including Professor Dr. Mike Hirsch, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences from the Houston-Tillotson University, Austin, Texas, and Mr. Nadeem Akbar, Director, AIPS stationed in Pakistan on their visit to the NSU.

Upon their arrival, Vice Chancellor's NSU welcomed honorable delegates, followed by a briefing about the university. Prof. Hirsch appreciated the "NSU Student Once NSU Student Forever" model.

National consultative workshop on elimination of child labour held

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: The food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) held a workshop in collaboration with the International Labour Organization (ILO) for the elimination of child labour as termed the present and future of the country.

A strong common collaboration among all the stakeholders is required to define and achieve the common goal of preventing child labour.

Thus concluded "National Consultative Workshop on Elimination of Child Labour in Agriculture/Cotton, Textile and Garment Value Chains in Pakistan" held here on Tuesday.

The workshop was held under the "CLEAR Cotton Project: Eliminating child labour and forced labour in the cotton, textile and garment value chains" (2018-2023). The project was mainly funded by the European Union. Pakistan is among the four countries including Burkina Faso, Mali, and Peru

where the CLEAR Cotton Project is being implemented. In Pakistan, the project is being co-implemented by FAO and ILO.

Speaking on the occasion, Khemphone Phaokhamkeo, ILO Country Director (Officer in Charge) in Pakistan said that fighting child labour is important for ILO and has been a priority since its establishment in 1919. Pakistan has also ratified 36 international conventions including the ones on the elimination of child and forced labour. As a member state of ILO, Pakistan should take steps to respect compliance of these conventions. The issue of child and forced labour in Pakistan requires our attention amongst other on three areas; Firstly, we need to ensure that all children have access to the quality education; not only up to the primary level but till the time they attain the legal age of being eligible to work. Secondly, a healthy, safe and protective work environment must be provided for the youth. Thirdly, poor

should be protected under social safety nets and social protection. All adults must be provided decent work so that they don't have to pull their children into work.

Florence Rolle, FAO representative in Pakistan while addressing the inaugural session said that; "Looking at the statistics of the out-of-school children and stunting rate in Pakistan, we realize that these are the key issues that we need to address. Nonetheless, the question is how? It is often said that children are the future. In my opinion, they are the present. We need to address the present so that they become the future of Pakistan. Almost 70 percent of the child labour in Pakistan is involved in agriculture, therefore, for FAO this is a major concern."

Azhar Iqbal Malik, Deputy Secretary Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis, and Human Resource Development and Syed Khalid Gardezi, Additional Secretary Ministry of National Food Security and Research, also represent-



ed the government and their respective ministries. They appreciated the project for being inclusive by involving all stakeholders to end the threat of child labour.

Dr. Ulrich Thiessen, First Secretary, EU Delegation, Pakistan while sharing

his thoughts said that child and forced labour fall under the eight ILO core conventions and Pakistan ratified the forced labour convention already since 1957 and child labour conventions in 2001 and 2006. These conventions are also part of the list of 27 international

conventions and agreements in the EU GSP+ regulations, which offers tariff and quota-free access of the Pakistani exports to the EU market constituting 66% of all exports from Pakistan to EU. Pakistan's compliance with these 27 international conventions and agreements is also being under EU funded project "International Labour and Environmental Standards Application in Pakistan's Small and Medium Enterprises" implemented also by ILO together with WWF since 2016. These actions fall under the EU delegation of Pakistan's priority areas 'Poverty reduction' and 'Green economic growth.'

Project partners and beneficiaries' representatives concerned government collaborators, donors and development partners, civil society organizations (CSOs) and other stakeholders relevant to agriculture/cotton, textile, and garment value chains participated in this workshop and presented their achievement as part of clear cotton project across Pakistan.

Group Chairman/Chief Editor: **Almas Ayoub Sabir**
 Vice Chairman: **Asim Nazir Ahmad**
 Managing Editor: **Naveed Ahmad Khan**
 Head Editorial Advisory Board: **Amjad Mehmood**
 Bureau Chief Karachi: **Saleem Zaman Khan.**
 (mszk786@gmail.com)
 Bureau Chief Lahore: **Syed Afraz Ali Nazish**
 (afrazalishah@gmail.com)
 Islamabad Office: Rose Plaza, I-8 Markaz.
 Karachi office: Flat No.C.3.A.One Comfort, Block No 11.
 Gulshan-e-Iqbal, Main Rashid Minhas Road.
 Lahore Office: 7-E,Samanberg, Johar Town.
 Email: **spokesmanislamabad@gmail.com**
 Whatsapp: **0346-5008408**

China and the GCC plan for a brighter future in the Gulf

Dr. Abdel Aziz

The GCC-China summit held in Riyadh last Friday was the first between China and the GCC as a bloc, establishing a multifaceted strategic partnership between them. In addition to a public statement summarizing their shared views on important regional and international issues, they adopted a five-year joint action plan to develop their partnership in 15 key areas, from comprehensive political and security dialogues to deeper economic partnership and greater cultural engagement.

When fully implemented, this strategic partnership has the potential to transform China's role in the region and enlarge its footprint in many new areas.

The Riyadh GCC-China Summit for Security and Cooperation, as it was officially called, did not sit well with Iran, which summoned the Chinese ambassador in Tehran to register its unhappiness with the joint statement issued at the conclusion of the summit. Tehran's foreign minister took to Twitter to bad-mouth the Chinese

over the statement. In an apparent attempt to smooth ruffled feathers, the ambassador promised that China's deputy prime minister would visit Iran in the near future.

Outside the issues with Iran, the GCC and China have long shared common positions on Palestine and Yemen, with China firmly supporting all UN resolutions on these two important issues, condemning for the first time the "terrorist attacks carried out by Houthi militias on civilian targets in Saudi Arabia, UAE, inside Yemen, in regional waterways, and against international navigation." While differences of opinion and nuance remain, as between many close partners, the summit reached consensus on most regional issues, including Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and Libya.

On Afghanistan, where both sides have staked important positions, they agreed on the need to safeguard the country's security and stability and called for greater efforts to deliver humanitarian assistance. They called on the Taliban to fulfill their repeated commitments to secure the basic rights, interests and freedoms of all Afghan people and establish an inclusive government. China and the GCC states are also concerned

about the use of Afghanistan's territory by terrorist groups and drug traffickers.

On Ukraine, they expressed support for "all international efforts toward de-escalation and the search for a political solution ... according to international law and the UN Charter," to save lives and safeguard regional and international security and stability.

On other aspects of the GCC-China partnership, President Xi Jinping outlined five main components of Beijing's GCC strategy.

First, China proposes a new, diversified energy equation. While China plans to continue importing oil and gas from the Gulf, it would like to take "full advantage" of the Shanghai exchange as a platform for oil and gas trade in the Chinese currency. China also seeks GCC cooperation in developing clean and renewable energies, including hydrogen. It proposed the establishment of a GCC-China forum for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and the training of 300 GCC nationals in this area.

Second, China wants to open new areas for investment and finance cooperation, for GCC investment firms to be more active in China's capital markets,

and for GCC and Chinese wealth funds to work together. It suggests utilizing the Cross-Border Interbank Payment System, known as CIPS, for yuan-based settlement to finance deals by bartering national currencies. A council for GCC-China joint investment and a forum for industrial and investment cooperation are proposed to manage these developments.

Third, China would like to enhance innovation and technical cooperation in important and pioneering areas, including the establishment of joint centers for large data and cloud computing, cooperation in 5G and 6G communication technologies and network building, digital trade, and meteorological technologies.

Fourth, China is calling for new breakthroughs in space cooperation. It calls for a greater partnership in space exploration infrastructure and satellite technologies. It has invited GCC astronauts to join their Chinese counterparts and work on joint space experiments, proposing a new GCC-China center for joint lunar and deep-space exploration.

Fifth, China seeks to create new momentum for cultural engagement. Building on previous agreements that put emphasis on teaching the Arabic and Chinese

languages in their respective regions, China announced that it has partnered with 300 GCC universities and schools, established 300 new smart classrooms to teach Chinese and offered 3,000 grants for GCC nationals to study Chinese in China. It also plans to host the GCC-China Forum for Language and Cultures and the GCC-China Library for cultural engagement in both Arabic and Chinese.

The Riyadh summit articulated a common vision for the GCC-China strategic partnership, but it should not be read as adversely affecting the GCC's relationships with regional allies, its close partnerships with the US and the UK or its budding strategic partnerships with the EU and others. In the search for regional and global security, stability and prosperity, the GCC states, individually and collectively, are enlisting all those relationships for that purpose. The partnership with China is an important building block in achieving that goal.

Dr. Abdel Aziz Aluwaishieg is the GCC assistant secretary-general for political affairs and negotiation, and a columnist for Arab News. The views expressed in this piece are personal and do not necessarily represent GCC views.

Christian community in AJK

Amidst an exceptionally conducive environment of traditional communal harmony and cohesion between the majority Muslims and the largest minority Christian community in AJK, Christmas celebrations formally commenced by the Christian community across the state to celebrate sacred festival of Christmas on 25th of December in various parts of AJK, wherever the Christians live.

Unveiling the ongoing programs to celebrate Christmas in AJK, where a large number of Christians were inhibiting in the adjoining town of Mangla, Head of Christian Welfare Trust and Women Wing AJK Younis Bhatti said that all preparations to celebrate Christmas have yet been given final touches.

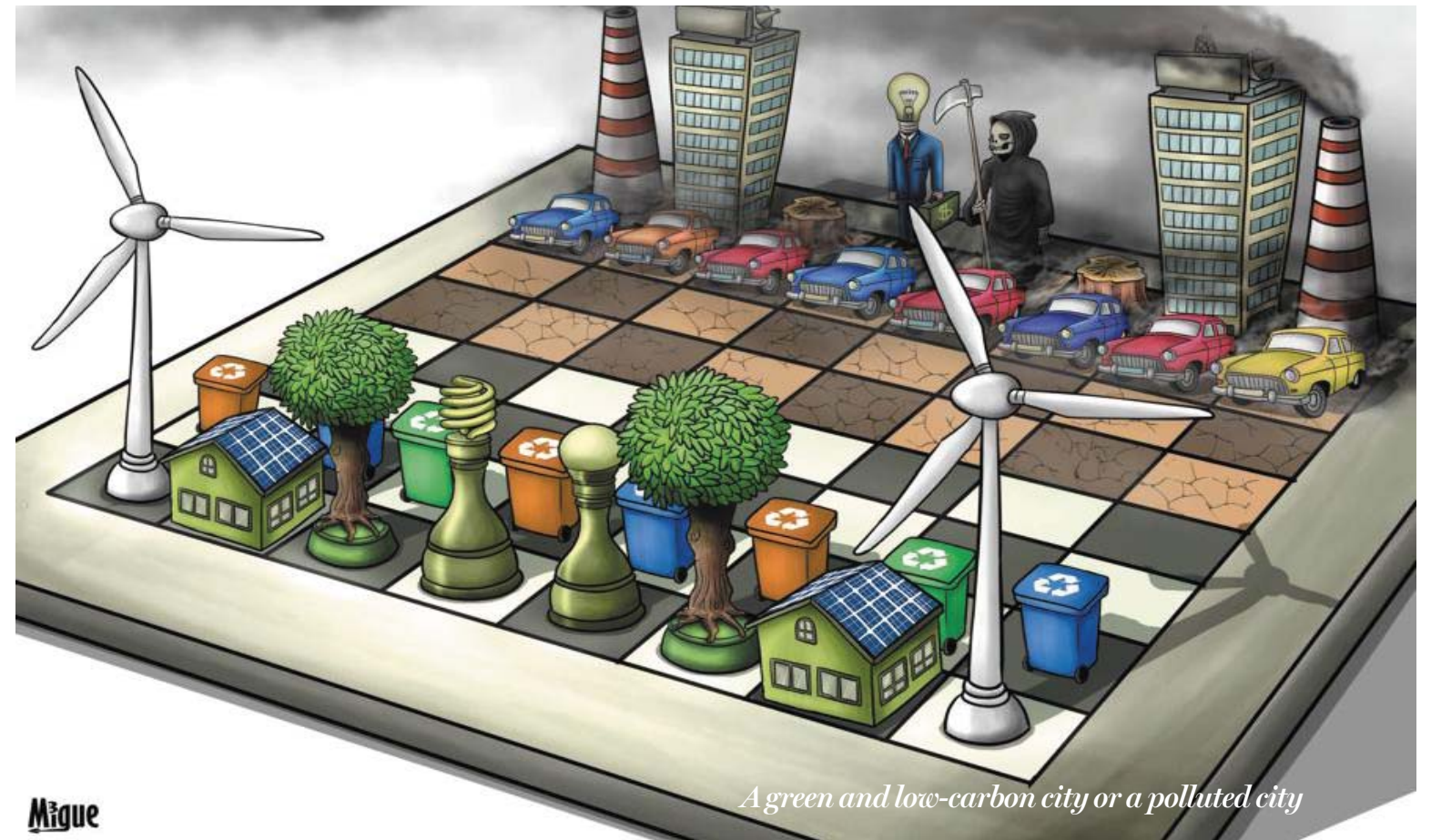
Bhatti said in a detailed interview to APP here on Tuesday that the religious festival will be celebrated by the Christian community with full traditional religious enthusiasm in AJK.

In Mirpur the advent of Christmas celebrations will be followed by a formal inaugural ceremony to be held at adjoining town of Mangla a day before Christmas. Community leader Reverend will formally inaugurate the ceremonies by cutting a cake and special prayer service. These ceremonies, he said would continue till December 25, the Christmas day.

Applauding the traditional communal harmony between majority Muslim and the minority Christian communities he pointed out that with the blessings of Allah (Almighty) there had never been any tension between the majority Muslims and the minority Christian community – since they pass their lives without intervening into each other affairs by fully respecting the religious and moral parameters of each other.

Bhatti said that the festivities of Christmas comprise special prayer services to be held at the local District Council Hall on December 25 besides at their major abode – Mangla with the renewal of the pledge to continue spreading the teachings of Jesus Christ (AS).

"The Christian community in the area will offer special prayers for the progress and prosperity of Pakistan", the Christian community leader said.



Mique

A green and low-carbon city or a polluted city

Democracy remains vulnerable despite a good year

Spokesman Research

Aristotle said there are three good forms of government – monarchy, aristocracy and constitutional democracy – in which the rulers act for the common benefit. And there are three bad forms of government where rulers act for themselves: tyranny, oligarchy and demagogy. The ancient Greek philosopher argued the latter are perversions of the former.

This is a useful framework for considering the health of government in the world today. Rich democracies face two main threats: an external one from autocracies, such as China; and an internal one from demagogues.

At the moment democracies look like they are winning the struggle. Both autocrats such as Chinese President Xi Jinping and demagogues such as former U.S. President Donald Trump have had a bad year. Only last week Peru's president was arrested after trying to dissolve parliament, and Germany foiled a coup plot.

This marks a sharp contrast to the mood earlier this year, when the Financial Times columnist Gideon Rachman published "The Age of the Strongman: How the Cult of the Leader Threatens Democracy Around the World".

That said, democrats should allow themselves no more than a wry smile. The world economy faces a tough decade. Meanwhile, climate change will unleash bigger waves of migration. The combination creates a perfect petri dish for nationalistic demagogues and autocrats to flourish.

Autocracy Isn't Working

At the end of 2021, things looked very different. China had bounced back from the Covid-19 pandemic faster than most countries, and its economy seemed

destined to rapidly overtake America's. The People's Republic looked on track to exert greater geopolitical leadership following U.S. President Joe Biden's chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan. Meanwhile, right-wing nationalist politicians in the West were praising Russian President Vladimir Putin for providing a model for the tough leadership they said their countries needed.

Russia remains a threat, particularly because of its nuclear weapons. And China is still a formidable challenge and a threat to Taiwan. But neither is any longer able to project a winning model to the rest of the world.

Demagogy Isn't Working Either

The world's most threatening demagogue, Trump, is engulfed in legal problems. The candidates he backed in recent U.S. midterm elections performed badly. He is not out of the picture and called for suspending constitutional rules earlier this month. But Trump's chances of making a comeback as U.S. president have diminished.

Meanwhile, the Brazilian electorate kicked out President Jair Bolsonaro in part because of his incompetent Covid-19 policies. Across the Atlantic, Boris Johnson, whose oratory helped convince the British to back a self-harming Brexit, resigned as prime minister. His successor, Liz Truss, lasted only six weeks after financial markets torpedoed her combination of populist tax cuts and spending increases.

Demagogues usually look more attractive in opposition, when they promise the world, than in power, when they often struggle to deliver. The UK's sober new prime minister, Rishi Sunak, is an antidote to demagogy. Meanwhile, Emmanuel Macron held off a challenge from the demagogue Marine Le Pen to win a second term as French president. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's 19-year grip

on power is shaky in next year's election because of the economic chaos he has inflicted on the country.

The election of Georgia Meloni as Italy's prime minister may seem an exception to this trend. But she isn't a rabble-rouser, at least on economic matters. The real Italian demagogues are her coalition partners, Matteo Salvini and Silvio Berlusconi, both of whom performed badly in the election.

The Meaning Crisis

Recession, debt and inflation in the years ahead will create problems for elected democratic governments, but also for serving autocrats and demagogues. People will be tempted to think that the grass is greener on the other side of the field.

That said, there is some evidence that electorates value competence rather than false promises when things get really tough. That's what modern Greeks ultimately chose in 2019, after years of both left-wing and right-wing demagogy during the country's financial crisis.

The bigger challenge for defenders of democracy may be that many people feel their lives have little meaning as traditional communities disintegrate, migrants arrive in their countries and technology destroys high-status jobs.

The strongmen have a ready answer to this identity crisis: so-called "traditional values", religion or nationalism, and often a combination of all these. Putin and Trump appeal to all of them. Meanwhile, Xi is ramping up nationalistic rhetoric. Slogans such as "Make America Great Again" and the Brexit rallying cry "Take Back Control" reach deep into people's emotions.

By contrast, liberal democracy is often rational and materialistic. While this caters to important human needs, it does little to ease people's identity crises. Until democrats provide some answer to this, they will be vulnerable to new waves of autocracy and demagogy.

King Dollar is not ready to abdicate

Reuters Breakingviews

Dollar bears have come out of hibernation. After gaining 16% in the first 10 months of the year, the dollar index, which measures the greenback against a basket of currencies, lost 5% in November, its worst monthly performance since September 2010. It has dropped another 1% since then, driven by a smaller-than-expected rise in consumer prices in November. That has prompted some fresh crowing about the peak for the U.S. currency, which has been powered by aggressive rate hikes, a resilient domestic economy and its status as the world's safe haven. By most measures, it shouldn't have staying power. But it will.

An 11-year upswing has made the bill featuring George Washington the world's most overvalued currency, according to research from Deutsche Bank. Looking at purchasing power parity, which estimates the optimal exchange rate by considering the cost of goods and services in each country, the dollar is nearly 35% more expensive than it should be. On fair value measures, which look at economic fundamentals such as the current account balance and unemployment, the greenback is around 20% above the "right" level.

The dollar faces more headwinds, too. The Federal Reserve is set to reduce the size of future interest rate hikes, which would allow other central banks to close the interest rate gap that has attracted investment into the United States. U.S. rates, which set the floor for both government and corporate bond yields, are between 3.75% and 4%, well above those of other major economies, such as the eurozone, where the deposit rate is 1.5%, or Japan, where rates are actually negative.

Plus, other risk factors that have sent investors fleeing to the dollar – the war in Ukraine, China's Covid-19 struggles and fear of a deep recession in the United States – are abating. Traders moved to place bets against the dollar for the first time in 16 months in November, according to U.S. Commodity Futures Trading Commission data.

Still, there's much more to keep the Almighty Dollar on top. Fed officials insist that rates will go higher. They want investors to focus on the trajectory, rather than pace, and are signaling that rates might peak above the 4.8% the market expects and stay there for most

of 2023. If the Fed sticks to its mantra of "higher for longer", central banks in Europe, the UK and China will find it hard to catch up, given the fragile state of their economies.

A recession in the euro zone, which looks likely, will increase pressure on the European Central Bank to go easy on rates to avoid an even deeper contraction. The Bank of England will need to combat the biggest drop in living standards on record as the energy crisis, fiscal austerity and lack of growth eat into British households' budgets.

What's more, China is only now emerging from an economic slowdown caused by a mishandled attempt to fight the pandemic. Its economy will grow by just 3.3% this year, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, a sharp deceleration from the 8.1% rise in 2021. Beijing's priority is to stimulate domestic consumption and infrastructure spending to avoid further social unrest. That will not be achieved by raising rates. The recent strength of the yuan, which on Dec. 5 hit the highest level against the dollar since mid-September, is already complicating the authorities' task by making China's exports more expensive. So relatively speaking, the U.S. economy still looks like a safe bet.

For the time being, investors keep putting money into U.S. assets, especially bonds, because other regions don't offer attractive returns. Net flows into fixed-income funds in the United States reached \$1.3 trillion over the past 12 months, according to Deutsche Bank analysts. And in the event of geopolitical and financial shocks, the greenback would continue to benefit from its role as the global reserve currency.

Big surprises – such as a further softening of U.S. inflation, which would cause a slowdown in rate increases, a mild European winter or a speedy reopening in China – could spark an anti-dollar movement. In the current political and economic climate, however, a currency regime change is not on the cards.

The dollar had its worst month in more than 12 years in November, as investors bet the Federal Reserve will slow the pace of its rate hikes.

The index which tracks the greenback against a basket of six major currencies dropped 5% in November, the biggest loss since September 2010.

The move came after softer-than-expected inflation data that fueled market hopes of a pause in the Fed's aggressive tightening campaign.

UN urges de-escalation of tensions following border clashes between Indian, Chinese troops

Spokesman Report

UNITED NATIONS: The United Nations Tuesday called for easing of tensions along the Sino-Indian disputed Himalayan border, after India claimed its troops clashed with Chinese troops last week.

"We call for de-escalation to ensure that the tensions along the border

in that area do not grow," the Secretary-General's Spokesman, Stephane Dujarric, said in response to a question at the regular noon briefing in New York.

According to the Indian army, the clash took in the Tawang sector of the disputed border last Friday, and a few soldiers on both sides suffered minor injuries.



Europe shifts focus to avoiding energy shortage next year

ISLAMABAD: The heads of the International Energy Agency and European Union's executive branch said Monday that the 27-nation bloc is expected to weather an energy crisis this winter but needs to speed renewables to the market and take other steps to avoid a potential shortage next year in natural gas needed for heating, electricity and factories.

Even after Russia cut most natural gas to Europe amid the war in Ukraine, EU countries largely were able to fill gas storage for the winter heating season by tapping new supplies, saving energy and benefiting from mild weather and low demand from China amid COVID-19 lockdowns.

But those reasons could evaporate next year, making it critical that the EU focus on ramping up energy efficiency efforts, easing the way for renewables and continuing to conserve energy, IEA Executive Director Fatih Birol said in a joint news conference with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen.

The heads of the International Energy Agency and European Union's executive branch said Monday that the 27-nation bloc is expected to weather an energy crisis this winter but needs to speed renewables to the market and take other steps to avoid a potential shortage next year in natural gas needed for heating, electricity and factories.

Even after Russia cut most natural gas to Europe amid the war in Ukraine,



EU countries largely were able to fill gas storage for the winter heating season by tapping new supplies, saving energy and benefiting from mild weather and low demand from China amid COVID-19 lockdowns.

But those reasons could evaporate next year, making it critical that the EU focus on ramping up energy efficiency efforts, easing the way for renewables and continuing to conserve energy, IEA Executive Director Fatih Birol said in a joint news conference with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen.

Plus, "nobody can guarantee that next year's temperature is as mild as this year," Birol said.

Though the EU has been able to "withstand the blackmail" from Russia and taken actions to lower prices and

do not cut off supply coming to the European markets."

Von der Leyen also called for an acceleration of renewables and increased investment in the energy transition from both the national and EU level. She said the commission will propose boosting the EU's framework for investing in clean technology.

"We have come quite a long way, but we know that we are not done with our work until families and businesses in the European Union have access to energy that is affordable, that is secure, and that is clean," she said.

While Europe has seen prices fall from summertime peaks and winter storage was filled far ahead of schedule, it's still in an energy crisis after the war in Ukraine led to a massive cutback in natural gas from Russia, where the EU had been receiving about 40% of its supply. Now, it's competing for more expensive LNG that comes by ship from places like the U.S. and Qatar.

"The issue is to find the right balance that we cut off the price spikes and manipulation and speculation," she said. "And on the other hand, that we do not cut off supply coming to the European markets."

Von der Leyen also called for an acceleration of renewables and increased investment in the energy transition from both the national and EU level. She said the commission will propose boosting the EU's framework for investing in clean technology.

"The issue is to find the right balance that we cut off the price spikes and manipulation and speculation," she said. "And on the other hand, that we

'Enough is enough' UK PM announces crackdown on illegal immigration

LONDON: Britain on Tuesday said it planned to bring in new legislation to prevent migrants who cross the English Channel from remaining in the country, as the government tries to control a surge in people arriving in small boats on its southern coast.



The number of people arriving in England across the Channel has more than doubled in the last two years, with government figures showing Albanians account for the highest number of people arriving by this route.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak announced a new five-point strategy for dealing with illegal immigration, including plans to fast-track the return of Albanian asylum seekers and double the number of asylum case workers handling claims.

"If you enter the UK illegally you should not be able to remain here," Sunak told parliament. "Instead, you will be detained and swiftly returned either to your home country or to a safe country where your asylum claim will be considered."

Migrants arriving on small boats has become a major political issue for the Conservative government, particularly in working-class areas in the north and central England, where migrants are blamed for making it harder to find work and stretching public services.

Sunak said in future migrants would be housed in disused holiday parks, former student accommodation and surplus military sites rather than hotels, and the government expected to clear the backlog of initial asylum decisions by the end of next year.

Britain's interior minister, Home Secretary Suella Braverman, recently called the wave of arrivals an "invasion" and described many of the migrants as "criminals", leading to an angry response from Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama.

Sunak said that over the coming months thousands of Albanians would be returned home.

A record 44,867 have so far crossed the Channel on small boats to enter Britain so far this year. ND

Could fusion energy help fight climate change?

WASHINGTON: U.S. scientists are set to announce a breakthrough on fusion energy on Tuesday, potentially a step toward one day harnessing the process that fires the sun to generate carbon-free electricity as the world struggles with climate change.

The U.S. Department of Energy said it will make the announcement at 10am Eastern Time (1500 GMT). Sources said the advance was carried out by scientists at the Lawrence Livermore National Lab in California, which focuses on national security and nuclear weapons.

Here are some of the main issues surrounding fusion energy:

What Is Fusion Energy?
Fusion occurs when two light atoms, such as hydrogen, heated to extreme temperatures of 100 million degrees Celsius (180 million Fahrenheit) fuse into one heavier atom, releasing large amounts of energy. It is different from fission, in which a reactor shoots a neutron into an atom of uranium, splitting into two smaller atoms.

What Did The Scientists Accomplish?
Using advanced technology, including one of the world's largest lasers, the scientists at Lawrence Livermore focused beams on hydrogen isotope target smaller than a pea, producing a fusion reaction that for an instant generated more power than it took to start.

Scientists outside the lab said that if the preliminary results are accurate, it represents progress on work that has been going on for decades, but that fusion is not yet anywhere near producing commercial-scale power.

Tony Roulstone, a nuclear energy expert at the University of Cambridge, said the experiment seems to be a success because energy output released by the reaction was more than the energy delivered to the target from the laser. But the experiment's energy output was only 0.5% of the vast amount of energy needed to fire the laser. "An engineering target for fusion would be to recover much of the energy used in the process and get an energy gain of double the energy that went into the lasers," Roulstone said.

Will Fusion Help Fight Climate Change?
Potentially. Besides vastly ramping up the energy from fusion reactions, scientists need to produce them multiple times per second on a constant basis.

Scaling that process up to a power plant and building plants big enough cover a significant chunk of the world's growing electricity demand would take momentous efforts requiring materials, land and clear regulations for industry. Politicians supporting the existing fuels and infrastructure may be resistant to rapid change.

As the quest for fusion energy develops over a decade or potentially much longer, countries should continue aggressive moves into wind and solar power, energy storage, including batteries, next generation fission power and other alternatives to reduce dependence on fossil fuels, scientists and environmentalists say.

A big advantage of fusion is it will most likely produce little radioactive waste compared to fission.

What Other Kinds Of Fusion Energy Are Being Developed?
Private companies have raised about \$5 billion from investors, from individuals to oil companies, and public funding, according to the Fusion Industry Association. Eight companies, including Focused Energy and First Light Fusion, aim to use lasers to initiate fusion reactions.

About 15 companies, including Commonwealth Fusion Systems and TAE Technologies, aim to use powerful magnets to confine fusion fuel in the form of plasma, a fourth state of matter that contains charged particles. About 10 companies are trying other methods, including a combination of magnets and lasers. Reuters

Return of seized antique coins to 4 countries

An Egyptian antiquity official hands over coins to a representative from Saudi Arabia in Cairo.



China urges citizens to leave Afghanistan after Kabul attack

ISLAMABAD: China on Tuesday advised its citizens in Afghanistan to leave the country "as soon as possible," following a coordinated attack by Islamic State militants the previous day on a Chinese-owned hotel in the heart of Kabul.

The Chinese advisory appeared to be a setback for Afghanistan's Taliban rulers who seek foreign investments in hopes of halting the downward spiral of the Afghan economy since their takeover of the country more than a year ago.

The militant Islamic State group — a key rival of the Taliban — claimed responsibility for the attack Monday afternoon on Kabul Longan Hotel, which left three assailants dead and at least two hotel guests injured as they tried to escape by jumping out of a window.

Plumes of smoke rose from the 10-story building in the central Shar-e Naw neighbor-

hood, according to images posted on social media as the attack unfolded. Residents reported explosions and gunfire.

Taliban forces rushed to the area and blocked all roads leading to the site. Khalid Zadran, the Taliban-appointed spokesman for the Kabul police chief, said the attack lasted several hours, followed by a clean-up operation.

On Tuesday, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin called the attack "egregious in nature" and said China was "deeply shocked."

Beijing demanded a "thorough investigation" and urged the Taliban government "to take resolute and strong measures to ensure the safety of Chinese citizens, institutions and projects in Afghanistan," Wang said.

The Chinese Embassy in Kabul sent its team to the site to help with the rescue, treatment and accommodations for

the victims of the attack, Wang added.

"In view of the current security situation in Afghanistan, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs once again advised Chinese citizens and institutions in Afghanistan to evacuate from Afghanistan as soon as possible," Wang said.

The Taliban swept across the country in August 2021, seizing power as U.S. and NATO forces were in the last weeks of their final withdrawal from Afghanistan after 20 years of war.

Since their takeover, the international community has balked at extending official recognition to the former insurgents who have broken promises of pursuing a more moderate path forward, including reopening schools to girls beyond the sixth grade and safeguarding minority rights.

The Taliban government has recently also made statements saying it intends to implement

Islamic law, or Sharia, as it did when the Taliban previously ruled Afghanistan in the late 1990s. In the past weeks, the Taliban have carried out executions and public floggings on several occasions of those convicted in Taliban courts of crimes such as murder and adultery.

China has economic and mining interests in the country though those familiar with past talks between the Taliban and Chinese officials say Beijing wants Taliban commitments to prevent China's Uyghur opponents from setting up operations in Afghanistan.

Chinese firms, with strong government backing, have tentatively sought to pursue opportunities in exploiting Afghanistan's vast, undeveloped resource deposits, especially the Mes Aynak mine that is believed to hold the world's largest copper deposit.

In October, Taliban-appointed



government spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid highlighted China as a key part of Afghanistan's economic development. China has also revealed its aspirations to play a leading role in Afghanistan following the withdrawal of U.S. forces — Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi at a regional conference recently called for the United States to unfreeze Afghan assets held abroad and end sanctions on the Taliban government.

There was no information on the identities of the injured Chinese guests at the Kabul hotel or what they were doing in Afghanistan.

The IS statement, carried by one of the militant Telegram channels used by the group, said two of its members targeted the hotel because it is frequented by diplomats and owned by "communist China."

It further claimed IS attackers detonated two bags with explo-

sives that were left in the hotel earlier, including one in the main hall, and set fire to a part of the hotel. The militant group offered no proof for its claims.

There were conflicting reports as to the casualty numbers. Taliban officials said three assailants were killed; the IS claim said only two of its members took part in the attack, identifying them by name and posting their photographs. According to Mujahid, the Taliban government spokesman, two foreign residents were injured when they jumped out of hotel windows.

However, the Emergency Hospital in Kabul said in a tweet Monday that it received 21 casualties, including the bodies of three people.

The IS regional affiliate — known as the Islamic State in Khorasan Province — has increased its attacks since the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021.AP

Bull & Bears
PSX 100-Share
Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index	
Current	Prev. Close
41,714.30	41,540.55
Day's High	Day's Low:
41,770.57	41,512.43
Index Value	Change
2,918,670,623	+173.75
Percentage	Time
+0.42%	13 Dec, 2022 5:00 pm
Europe: FTSE 100 Index	
Index Value	Change
7,492.48	+46.51
Percentage	Time
+0.63%	13 Dec, 3:59 pm GMT
USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average	
Index Value	Change
34,215.71	+210.67
Percentage	Time
+0.62%	13 Dec, 10:59 am GMT-5
Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average	
Index Value	Change
27,954.85	+112.52
Percentage	Time
+0.40%	13 Dec, 3:15 pm GMT+9

Open Market Forex Rates

Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	151.49	152.74
Bahrain Dinar	597.77	602.27
Canadian Dollar	164.62	165.97
China Yuan	32.22	32.47
Danish Krone	31.87	32.22
Euro	251.5	254
Hong Kong Dollar	28.91	29.26
Indian Rupee	2.72	2.8
Japanese Yen	2.02	2.07
Kuwaiti Dinar	731.56	736.56
Malaysian Ringgit	50.95	51.4
New Zealand \$	143.84	145.04
Norwegians Krone	22.43	22.73
Omani Riyal	583.84	588.34
Qatari Riyal	61.64	62.14
Saudi Riyal	63.6	64.2
Singapore Dollar	165.56	166.86
Swedish Korona	21.78	22.08
Swiss Franc	240.01	241.76
Thai Bhat	6.45	6.55
U.A.E Dirham	66	66.6
UK Pound Sterling	292.5	295
US Dollar	231.7	234

President FPCCI shows great concerns over unpredictable economic situation of country

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Irfan Iqbal Sheikh, President, Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry said that all the economic indicators have turned negative and the current unpredictable economic situation is creating great concerns in the business community. He said that he has never seen such an uncertain situation in his 45 years of his business life and stressed that the government should take business leaders on board to steer the economy out of troubles. He said that importers are paying US\$ 120 per container per day as demurrage charges due to LCs issue and stressed that SBP should address this issue on an urgent basis. He said this while addressing the business community during his visit to Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry.

Irfan Iqbal Sheikh said that Pakistan is doing exports with only 10-12 countries and it should tap new markets to increase exports. He said that Pakistan should focus on engineering products for exports as their share in the global market is 19% while the share of textile products is only 6%. He said that FPCCI will hold a conference on the charter of economy



and a conference on exports in January 2023 to develop proposals for improving the economy and exports. He stressed that the business community should develop strong unity to influence the government for making business friendly policies and assured that FPCCI would continue to play a role to resolve the issues of the business community and improve the economy.

Speaking at the occasion, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) said that

LCs of the business community are not opening due to which production activities are badly suffering and if this situation continues, many industries would face closure. He said that consignments of imports including soybean are stuck up at ports as banks are not retiring LCs due to which the poultry industry would face a crisis and stressed that FPCCI should take up this issue with the government for early solution. He said that the forex reserves have tumbled down to USD 6.7 billion, which is creating panic in the market. He said that

despite significant depreciation of the rupee, exports have shown a declining trend and the trade deficit is still high. He stressed that the government should bring down policy interest rate to single digit level to facilitate the growth of investment and businesses. He urged that the government should cooperate with the private sector in boosting exports to China, Africa, Central Asia and ASEAN countries to improve forex reserves.

Faad Waheed Senior Vice President, Engr. Azhar ul Islam Vice President ICCI, Khalid Iqbal Malik Group Leader ICCI, Aminullah Baig, Umar Masood ur Rehman and Qazi Akbar, Vice Presidents FPCCI, Mirza Abdul Rehman Chairman Coordination FPCCI, Muhammad Riaz Khattak Senior Vice President Pakistan Business Forum, Sajjad Anwar President Islamabad Chamber of Small Traders & Small Industries, Asad Mashadi former President Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Zafar Bakhtawari, Muhammad Ejaz Abbasi, Mian Shaukat Masud, Sheikh Abdul Razzak, Khalid Chaudhry and ICCI Executive members also spoke at the occasion and stressed that the government announced a clear strategy to revive the economy.

Defence Productions

TAXILA: President Dr. Arif Alvi inspecting various defence products manufactured at the Heavy industries Taxila (HIT), during his visit to HIT on Tuesday.



Photo: PID

SECP registers 7 new Private Funds in 2022

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has registered seven (7) new private funds under the Private Funds Regulations during the calendar year 2022.

Given that the Private Funds industry for past many years had only five funds, the registrations of two Venture Capital (VC) funds, four Private Equity and Venture Capital (PE&VC) funds and the country's first alternative fund is a significant development. Incentivized by the consistent reform measures, a sharp growth has been witnessed during the past three years in the number of PFMCs from four to ten, leading to an increase in the number of players in the SECP regulated PF industry.

The new funds, worth approximately Rs. 13.6 billion are expected to be launched within the financial year ending June 30, 2023. Following the launch of these funds, the cumulative asset size of PF sector is expected to increase to PKR25.8 billion, from PKR12.287 billion as on September 30, 2022, indicating a growth of 110 percent.

The SECP conducted a 'Diagnostic Review of Pakistan's Private Funds Industry' and recommended measures to revitalize the sector. The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) on the recommendation of SECP exempted the income of PE&VC funds from tax. In addition, the SBP has issued a clarification regarding its Prudential Regulations for Corporate/Commercial Banking for explicitly allowing banks to participate in PF units.

Anti-wheat smuggling activities by the food department on Attock-Rawalpindi

Qazi Shoaib Khan

ATTOCK: Following the directives of the Punjab Government, an active move has been launched by the District Food Department to monitor the complaints of wheat smuggling besides establishing more than 80 truckers points to supply flour to the masses on daily basis at their door steps in various markets and bazaars across the district.

This was said by the District Controller Rawalpindi Sufian Asif Awan during his news briefing on anti-wheat smuggling activities by the food department on Attock-Rawalpindi district border at Brahma-Bhattar toll plaza. Ruling out shortage of wheat flour or artificial paucity of the basic commodity in the district,

Mr Awan has said that with the recommendation of the concerned Assistant Commissioners of the relevant tehsils, flour is being supplied to as



many as 2200 shops on daily basis across the district. While replying another question, Mr Awan has said that the supply of wheat flour is being ensured to as many as 2200 shops on daily basis across the district Mr Awan has said that in line with directives of the district administration regarding strict monitoring of flour mills, the food department launched a crackdown against the flour mills for not providing a required quota.

"The food department will take action against hoarders and those involved in the cartelization of wheat causing a price hike as we have a surplus of agricultural commodities in the Rawalpindi division" He added. Responding to another question, Mr Awan has denied claims about flour shortage in the district and added that an ample quantity of flour was available at all sale points. Talking townsmen on this occasion, Peraviz Butt President central Karyana associa-

tion Rawalpindi district, rejected the paucity of flour for the common consumers in the district.

He said that association with other stakeholders including flourmills association and food department is supplying flour to 40 different bazaars on a daily basis. He said the trucks carried flour sent by flour mills and later old under the supervision of association and food department. He said that the flour millers are supplying flour bags at Rs 640 per bag to the shopkeepers and they sell it at a retail price of Rs 648. Meanwhile assistant commissioner Hassanabdal Arif Qureshi paid a surprise visit to the food check post at Jehri Kass on Hassanabdal-Hazra route in the early hours of Friday to monitor the working of the check post. On this occasion, he checked the attendance of the staff and movement of trucks especially entering from Punjab to Hazara division.

PTCL Group provides winter jackets

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: PTCL Group including Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited and Ufone 4G has donated 3000 warm jackets to help the flood affected communities of Balochistan for the on-going winter season.

The jackets were handed over to Balochistan Rural Support Program (BRSP) to distribute it amongst the flood affected families especially children, women and elderly to protect them from extreme cold in Orak, Panjipai & Kechi Baig, areas of Quetta, Ajram, Surkhab/Niganda & Tuba Kakari/Ibrahim Khan, areas of Pishin and Shina Khwara and Nasai areas of Killa Saifullah.

On the initiative, Group Director PR, CSR & Corporate Communiv-

ation, PTCL & Ufone, said, "PTCL Group is aware that the plight of flood affected people has been worsened by extreme winters and women, children and the elderly have been struggling to protect themselves from cold and winter ailments. These are extremely difficult times and the affected people need our assistance to get through the hardship. That is why, PTCL Group under its continued commitment to the relief and rehabilitation of the flood-hit communities, decided to extend a helping hand to ease their suffering. We are grateful to BRSP for helping us roll out the initiative under our Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) program."

On the initiative, Tahir Rasheed, CEO BRSP, said, "Majority of households uprooted by the devastating Monsoon floods of 2022 still await

complete rehabilitation and hence remain in dire need of humanitarian assistance to survive. Whilst the affected families have multiple challenges including food scarcity, clean drinking water, sanitation, shelter and access to health and educational facilities, the harsh winter aggravates the adversity multifold across cold climatic regions, including Balochistan. Warm clothing and beddings are two of the most needed commodities as extreme cold is setting in with winter diseases galore. We are glad that PTCL Group with its continued efforts and support has once again come forward to uplift the devastated communities."

PTCL Group was one of the first organizations to respond to Pakistan's flood appeal for relief and rehabilitation activities across the coun-



try. PTCL and Ufone 4G have so far provided food item, clean drinking water, medical support, and free calls to thousands of affected people across Punjab, KP, Sindh and Balochistan in a bid to extend a helping hand.

The company's CSR program has

been envisaged and designed to plug gaps in socio-economic inclusion of the underprivileged segments of society and has been undertaking initiatives to create shared value for various communities across the country.

Bankrupting a country to keep the elite happy is irrationality

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW) on Tuesday said it is irresponsible to bankrupt the country to keep the few thousand elites happy.

For decades, expenditure has been higher than income, while adequate taxes are not being collected, which creates gaps that are being filled by loans, it said.

Now it is getting difficult to get loans as the majority of countries consider lending to Pakistan a great risk, said Dr. Murtaza Mughal, President of PEW.

He said that no political government is sure of completing its term, therefore as soon as it gets power, instead of taking drastic measures for economic recovery, it starts pleasing financiers and voters.

Policies are changed to appease capitalists who donate heavily to political parties, SROs are released frequently, competition for investors is eliminated and packages are announced to increase their profits, he added.

Dr. Murtaza Mughal said that the promotion of the elite makes them richer but people are deprived of quality and cheap goods.

In addition, every new government announces unnecessary subsidies to please the voters, which burdens the exchequer and now the state of the economy has become so precarious that questions are being asked about its survival.

Decades of policies revolving around the elite have bled the country white and economic managers are running from pillar to post to avoid a default.

For the sake of its vote bank, the new government does not want to collect taxes from the businessmen, nor does it want to close the shops in the evening which can save billions of dollars.

At present, the rulers are not informing the people about the real state of the economy and assurances are being extended.

Tough decisions are not being taken out of fear of annoyance of voters. If tough decisions are taken, people will be angry, but if not, there will be a default, he warned.

Rizwan should be rested, Hafeez advises Babar to pick Sarfaraz for Karachi Test

By A Sports

KARACHI: Former Pakistan captain Mohammad Hafeez advised to give wicketkeeper batter Mohammad Rizwan 'a break' and include Sarfaraz Ahmed in the Playing XI for the upcoming Karachi Test.

Hafeez, in an interview with a local channel, commented on the debate of replacing Rizwan with Sarfaraz and threw his weight behind former Test captain Sarfaraz, emphasizing the fact that the former needs a break.

"Sarfaraz has been with the team for the last three years but only as a traveller and could not play a match and at several points, he can be given a chance to play," said Hafeez.

"And I still think that if the Pakistan Cricket Board's think tank and even Babar should think that if Rizwan could not deliver well in this format then he should give him the break and Sarfaraz



or even any other option they have, should be utilized in a best possible way," he added.

Notably, besides Hafeez, former Pakistan captain Shoaib Malik also advised including Sarfaraz and Shan Masood

in the upcoming Karachi Test; claiming Sarfaraz will bring much experience & Shan will help this team to have more stability.

"In my opinion, Pakistan should include Sarfaraz Ahmed & Shan Masood in playing 11. Sarfaraz will bring much experience & Shan will help this team to have more stability. I hope our team will perform well in Karachi insha'Allah," he tweeted.

Malik's suggestion for changes in the team came at a time when Pakistan faced two consecutive defeats and lost the home series 2-0 against England.

England sealed a dramatic win earlier today as they beat Pakistan by 26 runs in Multan Test on Day 4.

It is pertinent to mention that Sarfaraz was captain of the side when he played his last Test in January 2019 and has since been unable to find a spot in the Playing XI.

Pakistan v New Zealand series to commence on 26 December

Sports Reporter

LAHORE: Pakistan Cricket Board and New Zealand Cricket have mutually agreed to bring forward the tour of New Zealand men's side to Pakistan by a day.

The first Test of the two-match series will now commence on 26 December at the National Bank Cricket Arena in Karachi and the second will be played in Multan from 3 January.

The three ODIs will be played on 10, 12 and 14 January in Karachi.

Schedule of New Zealand's tour of Pakistan:

- First Test - 26-30 December at National Bank Cricket Arena Karachi

- Second Test - 3-7 January at Multan Cricket Stadium

- First ODI - 10 January at National Bank Cricket Arena Karachi

- Second ODI - 12 January at National Bank Cricket Arena Karachi

- Third ODI - 14 January at National Bank Cricket Arena Karachi

President of Punjab Cycling Association has returned from Kathmandu Tahir Amin Malik

Laahore: Pakistan completes its first MTB

Commissaire from UCI Mr. Adnan Ahsan Khan President of Punjab Cycling Association has returned from Kathmandu Nepal after completing UCI MTB commissaire course.

Khan was recommended by the Pakistan Cycling Federation for this competitive course and thus became the first Pakistani to achieve the said qualification. MtB has a huge scope in the cycling world while Pakistan is blessed with unlimited scenic trails for different classifications.

On this occasion, President PCF Syed Azhar Ali Shah said that Adnan Ahsan

Khan's expertise should be utilized to bring sports tourism to Pakistan, which will help the economy and cycling sports in the region.

General Secretary Pakistan Cycling Federation Moazzam Khan Klair congratulating Adnan Ahsan Khan, he said that after completing this course, there are commissaire of three levels of cycling, road, track and MTB in Pakistan, which is an important milestone in the history of Pakistan cycling and he has made all the cycling community proud after the completion of the above said course.

Morocco hungry for more, says coach Regragui

News Desk

AL KHOR: Morocco are not satisfied with a place in the semi-finals of the World Cup and are hungry for more coach Walid Regragui said ahead of their clash with world champions France on Wednesday.

"If we are happy just to reach semi-final and some see that as enough, I don't agree," Regragui told a press conference.

"If you get to the semi-finals and you are not hungry then there is a problem.

"The best team in the tournament, Brazil is already out. We are an ambitious team and we are hungry but I don't know if that will be enough," he added.

Morocco is the first African team to reach the last four but Regragui has his sights on making more history.

"We want Africa to be top of the world, but we will have to be strong to progress. We are not the favourites but we are confident—maybe that makes me mad, crazy?"



A bit of crazy can be good," he added.

"Everyone might think we are tired, they said that before the last games too, you can't be tired in a World Cup semi. Yes, we are still hungry," he added.

The Morocco coach was quick to offer a reminder that his team had upset Spain and Portugal in the knockout rounds to set up

their last four meeting with Didier Deschamps' side.

"We had perhaps the most difficult route to the semis. Every round people thought we would get knocked out but we are still here and we are going to fight to the end," he said.

Morocco have several injury concerns however including key central defender Romain Saiss but

Regragui said there was no decision yet on their fitness.

"We have a number of injuries but we have an excellent medical staff who are working hard and coming with good news every day," said Regragui.

"We will have to wait to last minute, we tend to do that, no one is out but no one is definitely in either," he said.

Spanish court acquits soccer star Neymar in fraud trial



News Desk

BARCELONA: A Spanish court has acquitted soccer star Neymar and his fellow defendants in a fraud and corruption trial related to the Brazilian's 2013 transfer from Santos to Barcelona.

The plaintiff, Brazilian company DIS, had accused Neymar, his father, and the former presidents of Santos and Barcelona of having intentionally hid the cost of his transfer to avoid paying DIS what it was due as the partial holder of his player rights.

However, the court said in a statement Tuesday that "it has not been proven that there was a false contract or that DIS was intended to be harmed."

The verdict is not a surprise following the decision by Spanish state prosecutors to drop all charges during the trial. That left only the lawyers of DIS to continue arguing their case.

DIS had initially sought a five-year prison sentence for the 30-year-old Neymar. But following the withdrawal of the state prosecutors, DIS' lawyers reduced their demands to two-and-a-half years of prison.

The legal victory for Neymar comes days after he and his Brazil team were eliminated from the World Cup by Croatia on penalties in the quarterfinals.

The other defendants declared innocent were Neymar's father, who goes by the same name, his mother, former Santos president Odilio Rodrigues and former Barcelona executives Sandro Rosell and Josep Bartomeu.

DIS, which owns a chain of supermarkets in Brazil, said it acquired rights in 2009 to receive 40% of a future Neymar transfer when it paid the player's family 5 million Brazilian reals (then \$2 million). DIS claimed it only received its due percentage from the 17 million euros that Barcelona and Santos initially announced as the transfer fee between the clubs, while the real cost was about 82 million euros.

Neymar joined Barcelona from Brazilian club Santos at the age of 21 amid massive fanfare, when he was already hailed as one of the world's top players. He helped the Spanish giant win a Champions League title and other trophies before he forced a move to current club Paris Saint-Germain in 2017.

Pakistan U19 captain Aroob Shah gets four-year scholarship



Ali Hassan

KARACHI: Captain of Pakistan U19 Women's Cricket Team Aroob Shah was rewarded with a fully-funded four-year scholarship from a private university here.

According to the details, the scholarship guarantees Aroob to receive four years of education from the university, free of cost. Notably, Aroob has represented Pakistan in five T20I and two ODIs and is poised to lead Pakistan in the inaugural U19 Women's World Cup, scheduled to take place from January 14 to 29, 2023 in South Africa.

Speaking on the occasion, Aroob thanked the chancellor and vice-chancellor of the private university and emphasized studying alongside her profession is her top priority.

"I am grateful to the Chancellor and Vice Chancellor of the [private University] for providing the fully funded scholarship," Aroob stated.

"Studying side by side and playing cricket is my top priority. The university itself will bear the expenditure of Rs one million on my education in four years," she concluded.



Hub/Baluchistan: Chief Guest Muhammad Ishaq Jamali Secretary Sports and Youth Affairs Government of Balochistan giving the winner trophy of first Sindh Balochistan T/20 Cricket Tournament to Dawood Sports Skipper Noor Wali, on this occasion Durra Baloch DG Sports Balochistan and Jameel Ahmed are also present.

Lionel Messi's World Cup taunt of Dutch player Wout Weghorst has delighted Argentina

News Desk

BUENOS AIRES: "What are you looking at, fool? Get lost!" Lionel Messi's World Cup taunt of Dutch player Wout Weghorst has delighted Argentina, where the phrase has made its way onto mugs, shirts and other products.

In a viral video online, soccer superstar Messi is shown being interviewed after Friday's stormy quarter-final clash with the Netherlands, when his eyes drift off camera.

He then launches his words in the direction of the Dutch substitute — whose two late goals pushed the two teams into penalties — while the reporter struggles to get his attention.

Argentina emerged victorious, but Messi fumed after the fractious match at the referee who gave Weghorst a free kick.

The sport's world governing body FIFA has opened disciplinary proceedings against both teams after a World Cup record of 18 yellow cards and multiple mass confrontations during the game.

But in Argentina, a saltier Lionel Messi has drawn comparisons with Diego Maradona, a troubled genius known for fiery moments both on and off the field.

Businesses wasted no time plastering the slogan on a variety of products, with mugs selling for 1,600 pesos (\$9), T-shirts for 2,900 pesos, and caps for 3,900 pesos.

"We made the T-shirts right away. The phrase went viral because in another stage, Messi had a calm, low profile. But people wanted him to have a bit of Diego (Maradona) spiciness," said clothing designer Tony Molfese, 31.

For many in Argentina, the language Messi used is far milder than what can be heard on the streets.

"I thought the phrase was great, so innocent and tender" compared to what you usually hear in Argentina's sporting world, said 67-year-old Graciela Squietino, who bought T-shirts for her three grandsons.

Stars are aligned for Messi to lift World Cup, says Ibrahimovic

News Desk

DUBAI: Zlatan Ibrahimovic believes the stars are aligned for Lionel Messi to finally capture that elusive World Cup trophy, the AC Milan forward told reporters in Dubai on Monday.

Contesting a record-equalling fifth World Cup, Messi will be looking to reach the second final of his career in the competition when Argentina take on Croatia in the last-four stage on Tuesday.

The 35-year-old Messi is very likely making his final World Cup appearance and with the likes of Brazil, Portugal, Germany and Spain all knocked out in Qatar, the Argentinians look primed to clinch football's most prestigious title for the first time since 1986.

Ibrahimovic, who continues to rehabilitate his knee while join-

ing his AC Milan team-mates for a winter training camp in Dubai, heaped praise on the other three semi-finalists in Doha but assured he only sees one team walking away with the trophy.

"I think it's already written who will win, and you know who I mean. I think Messi will lift the trophy, it's already written," said Ibrahimovic, who represented Sweden in two World Cups in 2002 and 2006.

Argentina and surprise semi-finalists Morocco will try to stop France and Croatia from setting up a rematch of the title decider from Russia 2018, with the Atlas Lions taking on the reigning champions on Wednesday.

Ibrahimovic described France and Croatia as "strong nations" but believes a Messi triumph is inevitable.

Asked about Morocco, who became the first ever African or Arab team to make the final four at a World Cup, Ibrahimovic said: "I don't think it's a surprise because I knew they were good before the World Cup. Then obviously in the World Cup everything can happen.

"That they reached the semi-final, maybe a little surprised, but remember it's a good team, a good nation. And these surprises I think the people like; they enjoy because they want these things to happen so they get some kind of extra adrenaline."

The Moroccans punched their ticket to a historic semi-final by stunning Spain and Portugal back-to-back.

Scenes of a tearful Cristiano Ronaldo making his way to the dressing room following Portu-

gal's elimination have been replayed on TV screens across the globe, marking a difficult ending to the 37-year-old's quest for World Cup glory.

Pressed to send a message to Ronaldo, Ibrahimovic said: "I think it's not important what I can say. I mean everybody wants to win the World Cup; not everybody gets to win the World Cup.

"Everybody is trying and if you don't win it obviously you'll get emotional, if you win it, you get also emotional in a different way."

Ibrahimovic added that the real story behind Ronaldo's unceremonious exit from Manchester United will never be revealed, making it tough for him to weigh in on the matter.

"His exiting United, I think when things happen, we will never know the true story. They



say what they want to say, he says what he needs to say to protect himself, then you have the coach that says these things to protect himself," said Ibrahimovic, who

spent two seasons at Manchester United from 2016 to 2018. "Then the club says things — not like me, I will tell you how it really happened. But we are all

different. Everybody is careful about their image.

"For me the perfect image is being yourself. The true story will not know my friend."