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President for enhanced trade with South Korea, Algeria

Cracks surface within PTI as Pervez Khattak openly criticizes PM Khan

Dawood Ahmed

ISLAMABAD: Cracks surfaced within the ruling Pakistan Tehrik e Insaf (PTI) as the Federal Defense Minister, Pervez Khattak openly criticized Prime Minister, Imran Khan on Thursday evening. Sources within the ruling party said Mr. Khattak asked the Premier, "You brought all non-elected people in the government". Khattak was referring to federal ministers Shaukat Tareen and Hammad Azhar. "We made you PM but there is no gas supply in Khyber Pukhtoonkhwa", Khattak told Imran Khan.

Differences within the ruling party surfaced during its parliamentary meeting. The Prime Minister reportedly left the party meeting after criticism by the Federal Defense Minister. "I will leave if you have no confidence in me", the Premier was quoted by TV channels.

"I have no industry and factory and I am not concerned about the seat", Mr. Khan told the meetinssssss. This was perhaps for the first time that cracks appeared within the ruling party.

Khattak remained Chief Minister of khyber Pukhtoonkhwa when Mian Nawaz Sharif was the Prime Minister.

YDA Balochistan resumes emergency services after talks with ministers

Health Desk

QUETTA: Young Doctors Association (YDA) Balochistan resumed emergency services after successful talks with provincial ministers. Senior provincial minister, Noor Muhammad Dummar, Muhammad Khan Lehri, Naseebullah Marri, and others held successful negotiations with YDA leaders in the civil hospital.

The ministers visited the doctors' protest camp after police arrested 20 doctors on Wednesday. At least 10 young doctors were also injured in a clash with police during the protest demonstration.

Dr. Hafeez Mandokhail, the Chairman of the YDA, and other protesting doctors participated in the negotiations. The provincial government released all arrested doctors and assured them that the demands of the YDA would be met.

The doctors had shut down all emergency services in civil hospitals, Children's Hospital Quetta, Bolan Medical Complex Hospital, and Fatima Jinnah Hospital after the police action.

ISLAMABAD: Balochistan National Party-Mengal (BNP-M) chairman Sardar Akhtar Mengal meet with Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) head Maulana Fazlur Rehman.

President for enhanced trade with South Korea, Algeria

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has emphasized the need for proactive measures to increase the quantum of trade with the Republic of Korea and Algeria.

The President talking to the Ambassador-designate of Pakistan to the Republic of Korea, Mr Nabeel Munir, who called on him, at Aiwan-e-Sadr in Islamabad, today, said Pakistan highly values its relationship with the Republic of Korea and wants to further enhance collaborations for promoting political, economic, people-to-people, and cultural relations.

He said that both countries had great scope for promoting religious tourism as Pakistan possessed a number of historic Buddhist religious sites and religious tourists from Korea needed to be encouraged to visit Pakistan.

The President highlighted that Pakistan was a key investment destination for foreign investors in view of its investor-friendly policies and improved business environment. He asked the Ambassador to urge Korean investors to invest in different sectors of the Pakistani economy, particularly in the Special Economic Zones and CPEC projects.

He appreciated the assistance and cooperation extended by the EXIM Bank of South Korea for initiating work on the construction and establishment of the Information Technology Park, at the cost of USD 88.80 million, in Islamabad.

He welcomed the recent launch of the Samsung Mobile Phones Manufacturing Unit in Pakistan, being established in Karachi. The President also underscored the need to encourage the exchanges of Parliamentary Friendship Groups of the two countries to further boost bilateral cooperation.

Later, the Ambassador-designate of Pakistan to Algeria, Dr Muhammad Tariq, also called on the President. INP

Pakistan committed to bring stability in Afghanistan: Fawad

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Chaudhry Fawad Hussain says Pakistan is committing to bringing stability in Afghanistan.

In a tweet on Thursday, he said Pakistan has worked a lot in this regard.

The Minister said the world is now getting closer to Pakistan's perspective.

He said Prime Minister Imran Khan visited the ISI Headquarters yesterday. He said the Army Chief, the DG ISI and their team briefed the Prime Minister in detail on the changing situation in Afghanistan.INP

Petrol price in Pakistan may reach Rs150 per lite from Jan 16

KARACHI: The price of petrol is expected to reach Rs150 per litre amid a hike in the rates of crude oil in the international market, media reports said.

The government is expected to move up the price of petroleum products by Rs6 per litre, media reports said, adding that the rate of petrol would rise by Rs5 per litre and diesel by Rs6 per litre.

The Ministry of Finance will take a final decision after consultations with Prime Minister Imran Khan. The new prices will be effective from January 16.

The federal government, on the eve of the New Year, had announced yet another hike in the prices of petroleum products.

The price of petrol and high-speed diesel (HSD) had been increased by Rs4 per litre for the first 15 days of January 2022. The price of kerosene had been increased by Rs3.95, and light diesel oil (LDO) by Rs4.15 per litre.INP

Fakhar Imam reaffirms to work with int'l community to address food security

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Syed Fakhar Imam has said that due to the excellent agricultural policies of the government, the production of wheat, rice, maize, sugarcane, potato, onion and groundnut has increased to a record level despite COVID pandemic.Virtually addressing the seventh D-8 Agricultural Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture and Food Security: Promoting Climate Smart Agriculture on Thursday, he reaffirmed that Pakistan is ready to work with international community to promote more ambitious collective actions to address the security of food in the world.He said this conference has provided.INP

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan during voting at National Assembly.

CM Bizenjo approves appointments on 804 vacancies in S&GAD

Staff Reporter :

QUETTA: Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Quddus Bizenjo has approved appointments on 804 vacancies in the Services and General Administration Department (S&GAD). "This was the long-standing demand of the educated youth of Balochistan", the Spokesman CM Secretariat said on Thursday evening.

CM has given the approval on a summary sent by the S&GAD. The present government has determined to provide jobs to the educated youth of Balochistan on merit, the Spokesman stated. No recruitment made in the S&GAD department since 2011.

Candidates had repeatedly applied on these posts.

The candidates had repeatedly applied in the department during the last decade. However, governments used to postpone the recruitment process. The CM has directed the department to make sure of immediate appointments.

CM Balochistan has also disposed of 596 files and summaries during the last two months. The files and summaries were pending during the former CM's era, the Spokesman noted. Mr. Bizenjo has already directed all concerned officials to make sure timely and fair solution of issues relating to the province.

Shafqat Mehmood tests covid-19 positive again

ISLAMABAD: Federal Education Minister Shafqat Mehmood has once again tested positive for novel coronavirus here on Thursday.

Taking to twitter, the minister said: "I have unfortunately tested positive for coronavirus. My symptoms are mild so far and I feel fine and hopefully with some rest will recover soon."

He also urged people to take all precautions specially wearing a mask at all times.

Shafqat Mehmood had earlier tested positive for COVID-19 in May 2021.INP

Covid positivity rate in big cities on upward curve

ISLAMABAD: The fifth wave of coronavirus cases led by Omicron strain pushed positivity rate in Karachi to 20.45 percent, sources at Ministry of National Health here said.

The ratio of positive cases in Lahore has reached to 10.70 percent, Islamabad 6.3 pct and Rawalpindi 7.35 pct, according to the ministry sources.

"No cases reported in Muzaffarabad, Diamer, Skardu and Jhelum, while 5.88 pct positive cases detected in Gilgit in 24 hours," sources said.

The ratio of positive cases in Quetta remained 2.66 pct, Peshawar 3.38 and Nowshera 1.5 percent, health ministry sources said.In seven districts of the country daily positivity rate of covid cases remained below one percent including Gujranwala, Multan, Swabi, Swat, Bannu, Mardan and Abbottabad.The fifth wave of the coronavirus seems to be on upward curve, as Pakistan recorded 3,019 fresh pandemic cases over the last 24 hours, marking it the highest in the past four months.

Five more patients succumbed to the viral disease in the past 24 hours increasing the death toll of the pandemic in country to 28,992.According to the latest figures shared by the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC), a total of 49,270 samples were tested during this period in country, out of which 3,019 turned out to be positive, showing a drastic surge in the national positivity rate to 6.12 per cent as compared to yesterday's 4.7%.The fifth wave of the coronavirus seems to be on upward curve, as Pakistan recorded 3,019 fresh pandemic cases over the last 24 hours, marking it the highest in the past four months.

Five more patients succumbed to the viral disease in the past 24 hours increasing the death toll of the pandemic in country to 28,992.INP

Pakistan rejects Indian Army Chief's baseless allegations

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Thursday categorically rejected the Indian Army Chief's fallacious comments made at a press conference, insinuating the presence of so-called "launch pads" and "training" camps across the Line of Control (LoC).

Foreign Office Spokesperson Asim Iftikhar Ahmad said in a statement issued in Islamabad said, "There is nothing new about the Indian General's unfounded allegations, as these are a part of the malicious anti-Pakistan propaganda being pedaled by the BJP-RSS combine at the helm in India."

He said, "The Indian government is driven by its belligerent and expansionist agenda embedded in the delusional notion of "Akhand Bharat", which poses a grave threat to regional peace."

The spokesperson said that the Indian Army Chief had made a desperate attempt at diverting global attention from India's state-terrorism and egregious human rights violations, which continue unabated in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK).

"Pakistan calls on India to forthwith halt its tyranny in the IIOJK, renounce its campaign of persecution of Kashmiris, and let them exercise their right to self-determination as promised to them under the relevant UN Security Council resolutions," the Spokesperson added.

He further said that Pakistan was committed to pursue meaningful dialogue with India for peaceful resolution of all outstanding disputes, including Jammu and Kashmir.

"The onus is, however, on India to create an enabling environment conducive for dialogue," he stressed.INP

Uproar in NA after 'mini-budget', SBP bill passed in hours-long session

The National Assembly on Thursday pass the controversial Finance (Supplementary) Bill, generally known as the "mini-budget", and the State Bank of Pakistan (Amendment) Bill 2021 during an hours-long session amid fierce objection from the opposition benches.

The finance bill and the SBP bill, both tabled on Dec 30, are necessary to ensure that Pakistan's sixth review of the $6 billion Extended Fund Facility gets cleared by the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) executive board.

The session, which began shortly after 4pm, resumed under the chairmanship of NA Speaker Asad Qaiser. Prime Minister Imran Khan, Planning and Development Minister Asad Umar and Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi were also in attendance.

PM Imran was welcomed by loud sloganeering from the opposition benches as treasury lawmakers thumped their desks to drown them out.

The government's amendments to the proposed bill were approved by the NA. In addition, amendments to the finance bill were also moved by MQM MNA Kishwar Zahra, to which the finance minister replied that most of the demands had been accommodated. In response, the MQM MNA thanked the premier and the foreign minister and withdrew the amendments.

The government introduced changes to Clause 3 of the bill, under which small shops will not be taxed on bread, chapattis, sheermal, naans, vermicelli, buns and rusk. Tier one retailers, restaurants, food chains and sweet shops will be taxed on the sale of these items.

A sales tax of 8.5 per cent will be imposed on 1,800 cc domestic and hybrid and domestic cars. A tax of 12.75pc will be imposed on 1,801 to 2,500 cc hybrid vehicles while imported electric vehicles will be taxed at 12.5pc.No general sales tax will be imposed on a 200g carton of milk, while a 17pc GST will be imposed on formula milk worth more than Rs500. Tax on imported vehicles was also increased under the changes, from five per cent to 12.5pc. The federal excise duty on all imported vehicles will remain the same.There will be a duty of 2.5pc on locally manufactured 1,300 cc vehicles, down from the 5pc proposed earlier. The duty on locally manufactured 1,300 to 2,000 cc cars was also reduced to 5pc from 10pc. A 10pc duty will be imposed on locally manufactured cars greater than 2,100 cc.The government's amendments to Clause 5 and Clause 6 were also approved during the session.

Opposition amendments rejected

Shortly after the session began, PPP's Shazia Marri moved a motion recommending that the finance bill be circulated for public opinion under Rule 124 of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the National Assembly so that it could be proven how "anti-people" it was.

However, the motion was opposed by Finance Minister Shaukat Tarin.

The opposition lawmakers also called for the House to debate the recommendations put forth by the Senate. PML-N's Ahsan Iqbal said that the recommendations put forth by the Senate regarding the mini-budget had not been discussed and called it an insult to the upper house of Parliament.

Voting also took place on several amendments moved by the opposition to the finance bill that were subsequently rejected through a voice vote.

The opposition demanded that a physical count be conducted for some of the amendments tabled by the opposition, including those by Mohsin Dawar and PML-N's Shahid Khaqan Abbasi.

QUETTA VOICE
Editor Asim Khan

Balochistan Education Sector Plan, Go beyond words

Much has been said about the Balochistan Education Sector Plan (BESP) 2020-25 on the official level and among the academia and international donor agencies. Undoubtedly, some officers of the education department and donor agencies deserve appreciation for preparing the Plan.

The estimated cost of the five years BESP is Rs. 72 billion as per the data shared with journalists during a function in this regard in Quetta the other day. Attractive banners, books, and brushers with the best paper quality were given to the participants of the function held at Quetta's luxury hotel. As usual, very few individuals bothered to read the information in bags given to them by organizers of the function.

The Secondary Education Department had prepared the BESP 2020-25 in collaboration with European Union, Global Partnership for Education (GPE), and UNICEF. Thanks to these organizations for extending support to the Balochistan government in improving the quality of education. Nevertheless, these international donor agencies should also go beyond words and ensure sustainable efforts to improve the state of education in Balochistan.

Most of the teachers, parents are unaware of BESP 2020-25

When educationists, academicians, bureaucrats, ministers, and representatives of donor agencies were addressing the BESP function, parents and teachers in remote remained unaware of the Plan. This daily asked some teachers and parents about the BESP 2020-25. They simply said, "What is this?".

Subsequently, the target group is unaware of the BESP 2020-25 and the multi-billion rupees spending on the Project. Most of the speakers spoke about the quality of education. In reality, speaking about the quality of education is like daydreaming in Balochistan, lagging behind other provinces of the country in terms of key social indicators.

Over 6,000 schools with one teacher in Balochistan

The education minister Naseebullah Marri lamented that 70,000 teachers and the quality still low. Palvasha Jalalzai, the education specialist of UNICEF put some critical questions about the one-teacher one-school, teachers training in Balochistan.

To be very precise, the government and donor agencies should come out of Quetta's only luxury hotel and mobile teachers, parents, political people, media, and religious scholars at the district level to improve the state of education in Balochistan.

New national security policy

Kamran Yousaf

Last week the federal cabinet approved, what the government claims, Pakistan's first-ever national security policy. The policy has yet to be made public but is believed to have covered all internal and external aspects. National Security Adviser Dr Moeed Yusuf is the man behind the new national security policy. He must have given a true assessment of the situation and suggested a way forward on the current precipice given the fact that before taking up the government job, Moeed used to say all the right things through his writing and opinions. In fact, his views were not different from those who are often branded as anti-state or traitors.

Pakistan is complex country with complex problems but at times complex problems have simple solutions. The authors of the new security policy must have burnt the proverbial midnight oil to come up with news suggestions and ideas given the multiple problems facing the country. The new policy may have been spread over hundreds of pages but if we are to pull the country out of the current quagmire perhaps a one-page document would do the job. The key issue we need to figure out first and foremost is whether Pakistan is a security state or welfare state. Certainly, the founders of Pakistan wanted to see it as a welfare state but because of our internal follies and external factors the country has for decades been seen as a security state.

In the new policy we must strive for getting rid of this tag. How that can be achieved? The state has to do course correction. Rule of law and adherence to the Constitution by all state institutions and its functionaries is a perquisite. Every individual, no matter how powerful, has to be answerable. No holy cows. Political stability is paramount for any sustained economic growth and reforms. No matter what type of a policy is drafted, nothing will change unless we stop manipulating election results and conspiring against elected governments. Use of religion for the purposes of advancing political goals is another disease that has wreaked havoc in our society. The policy of relying on non-state actors and religious groups to pursue strategic objectives has cost us dear. This fact has been admitted not only by our civilian leaders but also those in uniform.

In the new security policy there has been a greater emphasis on human security. The policy seeks transformation in Pakistan's role from being a geo-strategic to geo-economic hub. But for that, some key decisions have to be made. The crucial question of course is: can we do trade with India without resolving the longstanding dispute over Kashmir? For the last seven decades, Pakistan has consistently maintained that trade and commercial ties could only happen when the issue of Kashmir is settled. Governments in the past tried to bring a shift in that approach but were unsuccessful. Those who staunchly opposed trade ties with India believe that if Pakistan starts trading with India like any other country that would weaken Pakistan's stance on Kashmir. But the counter view is that increased trade and commercial ties may create inter-dependencies, perhaps leading to the resolution of disputes. Proponents of that approach cite the example of India-China rivalry. The two countries are engaged in territorial disputes over which there have been bloody exchanges at the border in the last couple of years, yet the bilateral trade figure between them is astonishing, having touched a record $114 billion this year. This burgeoning trade between the two Asian countries will prevent an all-out war since the stakes are too high.

Can Pakistan also think on these lines? Certainly, it is not going to be an easy proposition but that's what the new security policy must focus on — finding answers to difficult questions. Else, it will be an exercise in futility.

World's most polluted city

Kamal Siddiqi

Lahore has earned the distinction of being the world's most polluted city. According to air pollution data released by the US Air Quality Index, Lahore is on the top of the list. Delhi is the second most polluted city, Kyrgyzstan's Bishkek third, Dhaka fourth, and Karachi fifth.

Increasing urbanisation and industrialisation have played a part in the city's deteriorating air quality. This is having a serious impact on the health of Lahore residents with an outbreak of diseases such as asthma, eye, skin and lung infections, and respiratory tract allergies being witnessed. Prolonged or heavy exposure to hazardous air causes varied health complications, say doctors, including asthma, lung damage, bronchial infections, strokes, heart problems, and shortened life expectancy. The Global Alliance on Health and Pollution estimated in 2019 that 128,000 Pakistanis die annually due to air pollution-related illnesses. That number continues to rise.

But how serious is the government about tackling the problem? This year, the Lahore High Court expressed its concern over the rise in smog and directed the government to reconsider its decision of closing schools from Dec 20. The court observed that action would have to be taken immediately to control smog as the Provincial Disaster Management Authority had not taken concrete steps to tackle the issue. The authority's deputy director, however, took the plea before the court that barbeque shops are also causing an increase in the smog and asked the court to order early closure of these shops. However, this suggestion was not much appreciated by the court. So much for seriousness on part of the government.

We know that smog is nothing new in Lahore. Every winter the situation gets worse. The smog prevalent after sunset is usually deep and thick and exposure to it is like smoking 10 cigarettes at a time, experts say. Prolonged exposure to environmental pollution also results in a shortened life expectancy. These risks may be reduced by wearing masks, managing gaseous vehicular emissions, using eco-friendly products, and reusing and recycling. But that is something only the rich and privileged can afford.

The first question one should ask is: how bad is it? Experts say that the smog is caused as air pollution has been steadily growing in Lahore and many other cities in Punjab. Five cities in Punjab were listed among the 50 most polluted cities in the world in 2020. The current situation in Lahore is most alarming, with its fine particulate count repeatedly rising well above 40 times the WHO's air quality guideline values.Second question: what is the government doing about it? In 2019, Pakistan's climate change minister said the smog problem in Lahore was a conspiratorial attempt to spread misinformation. In a video posted on her Twitter account, Zartaj Gul Wazir called smog in Lahore 'fake news'. She said that data presented is not authentic and companies were spreading sensationalism. The minister also said these companies measure air quality when there are the most cars on the road and that they were doing so because they "want their equipment to be installed". She also said Lahore is not one of the most polluted cities in the world; New Delhi is. End of matter. Since then nothing has been done to tackle the problem.

Many in Pakistan blame stubble burning by Indian farmers as the main cause for Lahore's smog problem. Not surprisingly, the same is true of India where they blame Pakistani farmers. Changing wind patterns during the stubble-burning season mean wind directions keep fluctuating across the India-Pakistan border. So this is not the only cause. The reasons why air quality has been steadily declining in cities like Lahore are more than one. Vehicular emissions, industrial pollution, fossil fuel-fired power plants, the burning of waste materials, and coal being burned by thousands of brick kilns across the province are all to blame. Media reports that the lack of vehicular fitness and emissions testing, alongside use of poor-quality fuel, have compounded the city's air pollution problem.

This is a national problem and should be considered as an emergency. We have seen that the pollution continues to grow and is spreading to other parts of the country. Much of this has to do with lax environmental laws fueled by corruption. Enough is enough. Time to let professionals handle the situation. We can't keep on blaming India for everything.

Education: A Basic Human Right

Syed Abid Shah

The highlight of education is the basic human right of all people without any discrimination. According to the universal declaration of human rights, each state must ensure the entitle of education to each child of a country. Education is the fundamental right of each children and youth all over the globe and every state is bound to provide it. Now let's go to check out the right to education in Pakistan, either that state fulfils the basic human right or not, so in Pakistan when I searched about that right to education but unfortunately, we never found that much strictness which they take about education, either the government of Pakistan said that we bring a lot of variables into the field of education but still there is nothing on the ground to support their claims about education.

The government of Pakistan announced that they brought an equal syllabus all over the country but it's also a claim yet. It's one of the most problems which leads to the destruction of education in Pakistan there are several courses. The major challenges in the way of education due to which education is poor day by day in Pakistan. The first one, financial support the government of Pakistan is bound to issue 15 to 30 per cent in the annual budget for basic education, and also work on technical education because it is also a basic education due too which the government can produce technical people and youth in the state. Corruption is the key challenge for the government, how to stop corruption in that field because there is no merit system when they select the teachers and also the officer take the money of the schools instead to disbursed on the primary need. According to the UIS roundabout, there are 258 million children and youth who are out of schools all over the world at the end of 2018 data. The total includes 59 million children of primary school age, 62 million of lower secondary school age and 138 million of upper secondary age. According to UNHCR 155 countries legally guarantee 9 years or more of compulsory education Only 99 countries legally guarantee at least 12 years of free education 8.2% of primary-school-age children do not go to primary school Only six in ten young people will be finishing secondary school in 2030 The youth literacy rate (15-24) is 91.73%, meaning 102 million youth lack basic literacy skills. It is the responsibility of the government to keep an equal syllabus all over the state and ensure that there is no difference in courses among the provinces and federal education system. The state is responsible to look at privatization and its impact on education. States need to strike a balance between educational freedom and ensuring everyone receives a quality education. Primary education that is free, compulsory and universal Secondary education, including technical and vocational, that is generally available, accessible too all and progressively free. Higher education, accessible to all based on individual capacity and progressively free. Fundamental education for individuals who have not completed education. Professional training opportunities. Equal quality of education through minimum standards. Quality teaching and supplies for teachers. Adequate fellowship system and material condition for teaching staff.

Pakistan's stranglehold on artistic expression

Abbas Moosvi

Over the past several months, the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics has been conducting focus group discussions with stakeholders from across the artistic spectrum – including film, dance, music, comedy, literature and community centres – to ascertain the state of creative industries in the country. With each subsequent engagement, however, it has become increasingly apparent that the landscape is restrictive, unappreciative and, in some cases, outright dangerous. In the absence of joy and wonder, we forfeit the possibility of any meaningful prosperity.

Art has historically served crucial purposes, including as a tool to challenge the status quo and bring definition to societal norms and values by captivating audiences, allowing them to let loose and forget about their troubles for a while. This is even more important in a country like Pakistan where economic vulnerability and poor governance have stripped citizens of any sense of hope and stability.

Quality art is never a definitive answer, but rather a question mark, serving to provoke, resist and challenge. In Pakistan, this is made virtually impossible by the toxic culture of censorship that gives people the licence to harass, intimidate and silence those that undermine the status quo. This is especially pronounced when performing in a physical capacity. Performers have to make do with infrastructure not meant for their specific style of art, like in cafes, and perform to captive audiences.

This creates a general aura of hostility and dismissiveness, and artists must forego a significant chunk of their earnings to the venue – sometimes even having to pay a fee simply to access the space. Performing in open-air public zones is also not an option due to Pakistan's urban landscapes being fundamentally anti-citizen: with little to no walking spaces.

With a dearth of revenue streams, artists are compelled to collaborate with corporations and/or foreign donors which assist them in making ends meet, but invariably restrict their creative freedoms. Performers must toe the line, make themselves 'presentable' and promote products they would never use themselves. The ones that aren't able to make the 'cut' for these, frequently based on factors that have little to do with talent, are forced to work soul-sucking office jobs. New digital media channels have created alternative possibilities, although one's audiences must necessarily be in the hundreds of thousands for these avenues to be financially sustainable. Naturally this works against emerging artists. When it comes to organising shows and festivals, artists must navigate a complex and time consuming bureaucracy that presents them with a host of hurdles – whether through bribery, taxation, paperwork or security checks.

Shockingly, virtually all these 'requirements' are arbitrary, shifting and morphing at a pace that is difficult to keep up with. Most artists are thus advised to employ formal teams to deal with legal and logistical procedures – something that multiplies their expenses, making it difficult to compensate performers. Governance is also absent in the industry. There are no overarching authorities to facilitate artists and grant them resources, subsidise their activities, facilitate the acquisition of equipment, or simply bring them under one umbrella. The ones that do exist function as fraternities, choosing to collaborate with 'household names'. In other countries, governments fund artists for international festivals and conferences, contributing to the accumulation of soft power at a political level.

They grant them jobs in state institutions and plan events in remote areas in order to expand outreach and unite the nation under a shared love of transcendence. On an existential level, art triggers a sense of inquisitiveness in its beholders: expanding their imaginative capacities and inviting them to dream of a better world.

If societal flourishment is represented by a tree reaching the Heavens, art is the intricate system of roots underneath, symbolising the collective unconscious, extending to Hell. In Pakistan, artists are stopped in their tracks before they can even begin.

Drinking Water Pollution in Quetta

Dehana \Rabail Urooj

Everyone recognizes the importance of safe drinking water. Nonetheless, a variety of activities we do may contribute to water contamination in many ways. This article explains how to safeguard drinking water at home and in the community in a simple and economical manner. Water pollution is defined as the addition of any substance into the water that changes the physical or chemical properties in such a way that the water becomes unfit for drinking. Water plays a vital role in managing life and human health study has been showed that 80% of related disease in developing countries is due to scarcity of good quality water. Diseases due to drinking of contaminated water leads to the death of five million children yearly and make 1/6 of the world population ill. A study conducted on children of Quetta city aged 12-y ear from randomly selected areas showed that dental fluorosis has been found in 63% of which is a very high percentage. By applying an even sampling plan with the samples distribution taken from tube wells of different sites of Quetta city, where the drinking water quality is known to have been deteriorated. The study shows that the Concentration of fluoride varies from 0.32 ppm to 3.0

ppm (Hazara town to the western by-pass area of Quetta) as compared with World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines of drinking water for fluoride (i.e., 1.5 ppm). The high content of fluoride in groundwater of Quetta valley is due to metamorphic and igneous

rocks such as gneisses and granite; WHO has recommended 500 and 2000mgL-1 as the upper and lower permissible levels, respectively. The most inhabitants of the Quetta city utilize contaminated groundwater for drinking purpose. The increasing pH and TDS of the groundwater were due to the contribution of different salts of F-, Cl- , K+ , Na+ , and SO4 2- in Quetta. Hence it is concluded that rocks present in Quetta valley, are possibly the reason for the

increased concentration of fluoride in groundwater. Moreover, the groundwater may come from the strata of the same surroundings. Nevertheless, there has been no inclusive health survey conducted for dental fluorosis to address the problems in the past and there is a very minor difference in the concentration of fluoride that impacts a beneficial or hazardous effect on human health, therefore, there should be regular monitoring of drinking water scheme to maintain the

water quality. Modern water filter tanks should be being provided in Quetta to ensure a safe drinking water supply to the people. Non-toxic and biodegradable cleansers, as well as insecticides, are now widely available. Spending a little more money on certain items reduces water pollution automatically. Grease, fat, and used cooking oil should be thrown away or stored in a "fat jar" to be disposed of

with other solid waste. It's possible that your pipes may clog, causing sewage lines to choke and back up into yards and basements. Many examples of unlawful garbage dumping and other kinds of water contamination go unnoticed, and they are often not cleaned up. People who pour oil down storm drains, throw garbage bags into streams, and so on should be spurred. There will be charities working on watershed conservation, water pollution remediation, and

similar issues no matter where you reside in the nation. Find an active charity in your neighborhood and donate to it every year. With your help, we may be able to extend our anti-pollution efforts. Plastic shopping bags and plastic rings from six-packs of drinks pollute the nation's lakes and oceans to a great extent. In the water, plastic bottles may survive for decades. Instead, invest in

some reusable linen or plastic shopping bags. They may be bought for as little as $1 apiece, thus the cost is really low. Drinks should be stored in reusable, insulated containers, and filtered water should be made at home. Supporting water-related charity is vital since they can do tasks that are beyond the scope of the

typical household. Volunteer to help plant trees, clean up the local river, or collect leftover chemicals from local homeowners if you don't want to offer money or can't afford to. Some environmental organizations may hold collecting days for which volunteers are needed

Govt requests more time to file report in APS attack case

ISLAMABAD: The government on Thursday requested the Supreme Court to grant three more weeks to file a progress report in the Army Public School (APS) attack case.

The government through the attorney general of Pakistan (AGP) moved an application in the apex court demanding that three more weeks be granted to submit the report bearing Prime Minister Imran Khan's signature in pursuance of the top court's directives.

The application stated that a committee constituted by the prime minister has met with the bereaved families and is expected to meet them again soon to address their concerns, pleading with the top court to give more time for compliance of its order.

It is noteworthy that the SC had last month approved the government's plea seeking three weeks' time to submit the report.

Earlier, the SC ordered that a report with the prime minister's signature be submitted within four weeks. The court's deadline for submission of the report is Dec 10.

On Nov 10, the prime minister appeared before an apex court bench in a case related to the 2014 attack on Army Public School in Peshawar. "There is no sacred cow in the country and I believe in the supremacy of the law," Prime Minister Khan had said in court.

He assured the top court of taking action against all those responsible for the carnage.INP

ISLAMABAD: Advisor to the Prime Minister on Commerce & Investment, Abdul Razak Dawood in a meeting with Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan Mitsuhiro Wada.

Pakistan reports 3,019 COVID-19 cases, highest in four months

LAHORE: Pakistan has reported 5 deaths in the last 24 hours by novel coronavirus as the number of positive cases has surged to 1,312,267. The nationwide tally of fatalities has jumped to 28,992 on Thursday.

According to the latest figures by the National Command and Operation Center (NCOC) 3,019 persons tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 24 hours.

Punjab remains the worst-hit province in terms of deaths followed by Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Till now 13,084 individuals have lost their lives to the epidemic in Punjab, 7,691 in Sindh 5,948 in KP, 967 in Islamabad, 749 in Azad Kashmir, 367 in Balochistan, and 180 in GB.

Furthermore 491,743 coronavirus cases have been confirmed in Sindh, 449,843 in Punjab 181,906 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa 109,944 in Islamabad, 34,719 in Azad Kashmir 33,675 in Balochistan and 10,437 in Gilgit-Baltistan.

Pakistan has so far conducted 23,984,502 coronavirus tests and 49,270 in the last 24 hours. 1,260,045 patients have recovered in the country whereas 651 patients are in critical condition.

The COVID-19 positivity ratio was recorded at 6.12 percent.So far, 100,797,079 people have received their first dose of coronavirus vaccine including 386,788 in last 24 hours. 75,686,387 citizens have been fully vaccinated while 461,167 received their second dose in last 24 hours.The number of total administered doses has reached to 165,296,972 with 821,320 in the last 24 hours.Furthermore 491,743 coronavirus cases have been confirmed in Sindh, 449,843 in Punjab 181,906 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa 109,944 in Islamabad, 34,719 in Azad Kashmir 33,675 in Balochistan and 10,437 in Gilgit-Baltistan.

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Fog disrupts flight schedule in Lahore

LAHORE: Flight operations remained affected at Lahore's Allama Iqbal International Airport on Wednesday night owing to heavy fog as several domestic and international flights were delayed.

The delayed flights include Lahore-Jeddah flight PK-9759, Lahore-Muscat WY-342, Lahore-Karachi PK-305, Lahore-Karachi ER-525, Lahore-Karachi PK-307 and Lahore-Dubai PK-235 and Lahore-Quetta PK-323.

The PIA spokesperson said that the staff is taking care the passengers of the delayed flights.

The passengers will be adjusted to alternate flights. The airline asked the passengers to get information prior to their arrival at the airport from the landline number.

Earlier in December last year, the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (PCAA) had completed the calibration process of the secondary runway of Lahore's Allama Iqbal International Airport.

The PCAA experts had completed the calibration process of Lahore airport's secondary runway after flights had been facing issues in landing and taking off amid foggy conditions.

The PCAA officials had checked the instrument landing system (INS), radio navigation and then declared the secondary runway fit for the flights' transportation.

The Precision Approach Path Indicator (PAPI) and Doppler Very High-Frequency Omni-Directional Range DME System installed at the secondary runway had also been declared fit by the PCAA officials. INP

Pakistani students painting competition on CPEC and Pak-China Friendship held

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani Students painting competition themed CPEC and Pak-China Friendship was held here, Gwadar Pro reported on Friday.

CPEC in the eyes of the children is in bright colors, "their love for China and CPEC is unparalleled and we praise the young boys and girls who shared with us all their colorful dreams of people-to-people friendship with China," President of All Pakistan-China Friendship Association (APCFA), Muhammad Ikhlaque Usmani, said to Gwadar Pro after the awarding ceremony for Pakistani Students Painting Competition themed CPEC and Pakistan-China Friendship.

To celebrate 70 years of Pakistan-China Diplomatic Relations, the awarding ceremony initiated by the Chinese embassy in Pakistan and APCFA was held. All the panel reached consensus that the friendship between the two countries recognized by the young people is real and convincing.

Mubashar Tauqir Shah, Additional Secretary of Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, believed that CPEC is a manifestation of the trusted friendship of Pakistan and China and a vote of confidence for Pakistan.

"CPEC is a game-changer and we are already witnessing the socio-economic benefits it is achieving for Pakistan. This competition has played a very important role to rally Pakistani youth to share their visions of the exemplary nature of Sino-Pak relations and as well as to enhance socio-cultural understanding of the bonds of friendship," he said on the ceremony.

In her keynote speech, Pang Chunxue, Minister of Chinese Embassy in Pakistan congratulated the Pakistani youth on the vivid illustration of the friendship between Pakistan and China, and said that these colorful paintings are indeed a wonderful gift to the celebration of the 70 years of Sino-Pak diplomatic relations. More cultural exchange and cooperation will bring this friendship to new heights, she noted.

Farwa Zafar, General Secretary of APCFA, especially mentioned that it is important to promote collaboration for promoting youth exchanges and friendly bonds and to welcome Chinese students to Pakistan.

At the ceremony, the winning student representatives interpreted their paintings for the attendees. Students also discussed and exchanged ideas with each other.

In addition, Syed Kashif Qutub, MOC, Naghmana Hashmi, Former Ambassador of Pakistan to China, students and teachers from schools across Pakistan, friends from China and South Asian Friendship Associations, and the media also attended the ceremony.

APCFA organized this national painting competition in which despite school closures due to COVID-19, over 100 students from Gwadar to Peshawar took part.

A total of 20 prizes for two age groups, 9-15 years and 16-18 years were awarded to students as 1st, 2nd and 3rd prize winners, with four appreciations awards all students received certificates and winners received other prizes.

The report added, the SinoPak Friendship not only exists in economic and political fields, but also goes deep into the hearts of the youth of the two countries. INP

NSMC warns of likely severe earthquakes after Gwadar tremors

KARACHI: The National Seismic Monitoring Centre (NSMC) of the MET Office, has warned against likelihood of severe earthquake and tsunami in Makran subduction zone near Karachi coast.

It is to be mentioned here that a quake measuring 5.0 on the Richter scale jolted coastal areas of Balochistan on Tuesday night.The epicentre of the earthquake was 50km south of Gwadar at a depth of 25km in the Makran subduction zone, the NSMC said.

"After a long time an earthquake of this magnitude has been reported in the Makran subduction zone and was felt from Gwadar to Omara," an official said.

He said the tremors of this magnitude couldn't produce a tsunami, but urged for preparedness as the seismically active zone had the potential to generate a tsunami anytime.

The Makran subduction zone covered 600km area, starting from Iran up to Sonmiani, the meeting point of the Indian, Eurasian and Arabian tectonic plates.The department had also carried out drills in the coastal areas for preparedness and had installed sirens at different locations in case of an emergency, official said.

More than 4,000 people were killed along Pakistan's coast and neighbouring countries, Iran, India and Oman when a tsunami was produced in the Makran subduction zone in 1945.The Makran subduction zone covered 600km area, starting from Iran up to Sonmiani, the meeting point of the Indian, Eurasian and Arabian tectonic plates.

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Karachi confirms 11 more omicron cases

KARACHI: Karachi on Friday confirmed eleven more cases of the Omicron variant of the coronavirus.

Sources relayed that eleven members of a single family were found to be infected with the new strain.

The affected people, residents of the city's District East, include eight women and three men whose ages range from 26 to 77. The number of confirmed cases of the Omicron variant in the metropolis has risen to 44 with the addition of the new cases.

On Dec 28, the National Institute of Health (NIH) said so far 75 cases of the Omicron variant have been reported in Pakistan. 33 of the cases were reported in Karachi, 17 in Islamabad, and 13 in Lahore.

The NIH said that authorities are conducting contact tracing to prevent the further spread of omicron variant in the country.INP

QUETTA: Peoples selecting warm cloth from lunda bazaar in provincial city.

Pakistan must tap potential of soilless farming: Experts

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan must tap potential of soilless farming, says a report published by WealthPK on Thursday, quoting agriculture experts.

The report says, Pakistan is an agrarian country with land farming constituting a sizable chunk of its economy. Agriculture contributes at least 24% to the country's GDP, and is a handsome source of foreign exchange earnings. About 42.3% of the country's labour force is absorbed in this sector as farm workers.

Unfortunately, Pakistan's arable lands are quickly giving way to the increasing housing and industrialization, which may expose it to food insecurity in the coming years.

According to the Kisan Board of Pakistan, the situation is getting worse for the arable lands in Pakistan due to the mushrooming housing societies and industrial units.

For example, only in the Upper Punjab, 20% to 30% of fertile land has been consumed by the real estate sector and the newly developed industrial areas.

Comparatively, the situation is slightly better in the southern Punjab and northern Sindh districts which are currently producing more than 50% of the country's wheat, sugarcane and cotton.

Pakistan's agricultural land (% of land area) was reported 47.09% in 2018, according to the World Bank collection of development indicators, compiled from officially recognized sources.Growing urban areas are causing land scarcity in Pakistan, leaving the country having only 0.32 acres of arable land per capita, and it will decline more by 2025 if new land is not brought into production. The situation of cultivated, uncultivated and cultural wasteland can be described well by the following table issued by the Statistical Bureau of Pakistan:

According to the Economic Survey of Pakistan, Pakistan's total forex resources are about $17.1 billion, out of which the agriculture sector's share is $2067.3 million, which plays a vital role in the balance of payments.

During the fiscal year 2019-20, exports of fruits and vegetables witnessed a jump of 12.5% worth $730 million in foreign exchange.

To cover up the loss due to the commercial use of arable land, and to keep the benefit of foreign exchange earning, Pakistan is in dire need to make strict laws barring the sale of arable land besides switching towards the hydroponic or soilless systems to enhance trade level and food needs. Soilless cultivation systems [hydroponic, aquaponic or hydroponic] are the best alternative to agri farming, as they consume less sources and less space.

To promote soilless cultivation systems, a few institutions like the University of Agriculture Faisalabad (UAF) and the Institute of Hydroponic Research developed near Rawat.INP

PHC starts series of faith tourism in country

ISLAMABAD: Dr Ramesh Kumar Vankwani, Patron-in-chief of Pakistan and Member National Assembly, has announced to start religious tourism on the new year's eve.

Talking to media before departure to Wagah border for welcoming Indian delegate, he said that an international delegation, consisting of 200 Hindu pilgrims, is visiting Pakistan for 04 days, via Wagah border and Dubai, on the eve of Happy New year, from 1st to 4th January 2022. "This is actually in continuation of the previous historical visit, held in November 2021," he said, adding that "The primary purpose of Hindu pilgrims, led by Shriman Mahatma Param Nityanand, arriving here is to visit the Samadhi of Shri Param Hans Maharaj / Teri Temple."

"Every month one delegation from Pakistan will also depart India for visiting Dargah of Khwaja Nizam Uddin Aulia in Delhi and Dargah of Khawaja Ghareeb Nawaz in Ajmer Sharif whereas one international delegation will arrive here in Pakistan for visiting religiously significant sites of Hinduism, including the Samadhi of Shri Param Hans Maharaj / Teri Temple and Hinglaj Mata Temple Balochistan.INP

TIT-for-TAT: PPP plans sit-in outside Sindh governor house

KARACHI: In a tit-for-tat move, Sindh ruling Pakistan People's Party (PPP) has planned a sit-in outside Sindh Governor House to counter expected protest of the opposition parties outside CM House Sindh.

On Thursday it emerged that Sindh's major opposition groups and allies in the federal government, Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI), Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P), and Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA) had decided to stage a sit-in outside Chief Minister House against recently passed local bodies bill from the assembly.

In a counter-move, the PPP has devised a strategy for a sit-in outside the Sindh Governor House. The senior leadership of the PPP has vowed to protest if, opposition holds a sit-in outside the Sindh CM House.

The PTI, MQM-P, and GDA have completed their consultation over the move to oppose the recently passed bill and decided to stage a sit-in outside the CM House unless their demands are accepted.

The grand sit-in outside CM House is likely to be held on January 07 and the opposition parties will reach out to other political groups for their support in this regard. Representatives from traders, civil society and lawyers will also be invited to the sit-in.INP

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Ambassador-designate to Algeria, Dr. Muhammad Tariq, called on President Dr. Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

WB country director greets Ehsaas on digital survey completion

ISLAMABAD: The World Bank (WB) Country Director Najy Benhassine congratulated Ehsaas on the successful completion of South Asia's first digital National Socio Economic Registry (NSER) survey.

He was addressing the launching ceremony of the NSER survey chaired by Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Poverty Alleviation and Social Protection, Senator Dr Sania Nishtar.He congratulated the Government of Pakistan and Ehsaas on achieving this historical milestone. The World Bank feels proud to be the technical partner in this game changer survey, he added."This is not just Pakistan's but also South Asia's first digitally enabled socioeconomic census. It will be really transformative that the registry will now facilitate data sharing for social protection programs of federal government, provinces, government departments and development agencies," he maintained.

In her opening remarks, Dr Sania said, "Part of Ehsaas strategy, we have just concluded a new National Socioeconomic Registry of 34.41 million households. We did various validations of the data to precisely identify the real poor.

Tehsil level Ehsaas Registration Desks have also been opened all over the country to keep the national socio-economic registry dynamic, she said, adding, the registry will be regularly updated every four years.

She also congratulated the Ehsaas team on successful completion of survey. This is great achievement as despite COVID-19, this survey has been completed after a lag of ten years, she maintained.

Ehsaas has successfully accomplished a countrywide National Socioeconomic Registry Survey which includes households' information in terms of geographic data, demographics, socioeconomic status, education, health, disability, employment, energy consumption, assets, communications, agri-landholdings, WASH, livestock etcetera.

Ehsaas conducted a door-to-door computer aided survey all across the country to gather data about the socioeconomic status of households. With the conclusion, this will be the most reliable data set for the use of public sector institutions, think tanks and development agencies for designing social protection and poverty alleviation programmes.

Julien Harneis, Resident Coordinator UNRC, Secretary Ismat Tahira, and senior representatives of Government Departments, Asian Development Bank, development partners and media officials joined the event.INP

Nazim Jokhio murder case: suspects flee court after bail rejection

MALIR: Suspects in Nazim Jokhio murder case escaped from Malir court after their interim bails were rejected on Thursday.On January 8, the court had reserved its verdict in the light of the investigation report and had said it would announce its decision on January 13 (today).Suspects namely, Saleem Salar, Dodo Khan, Muhammad Soomar, Muhammad Ishaq and Muhammad Khan Jokhio fled Malir District court after their interim bails were turned down by the court.In a previous hearing, the court expressed annoyance over police investigator for failing to complete an investigation into the murder case.

The investigation officer (IO) of the case sought time to submit the final charge-sheet stating that he is yet to receive reports of a forensic analysis of digital video recorder (DVR) footage recovered from cameras at the MPA's farmhouse and a USB.

Murder victim Nazim Jokhio's body was recovered from the PPP lawmaker Jam Awais's farmhouse last month. His family alleged that Awais, Pakistan People Party (PPP) MNA Jam Abdul Karim, and their henchmen tortured him to death for filming and stopping their guests from hunting houbara bustards.Suspects namely, Saleem Salar, Dodo Khan, Muhammad Soomar, Muhammad Ishaq and Muhammad Khan Jokhio fled Malir District court after their interim bails were turned down by the court.In a previous hearing, the court expressed annoyance over police investigator for failing to complete an investigation into the murder case.

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Dedicated Web portal launched to monitor progress on CPEC projects

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Space & Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO), together with the Planning Ministry has developed a web portal and mobile application though which progress on various projects of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) can be monitored.

According to Gwadar Pro on Thursday, "SUPARCO has complemented this capability with an indigenously developed mobile application that a user from Planning Commission of Pakistan can install on his/her cell phone and monitor the progress on CPEC projects," an official statement stated.

Through the dedicated web portal from where users can easily browse, place orders and directly download satellite imagery right from their desktop.

It is state of the art portal with advanced imaging options for the professionals. In addition to CPEC projects, the dedicated portal can be used for monitoring of other projects as well.

The launching ceremony for Web Portal and Mobile App was held on Wednesday at Pakistan Planning and Management Institute Islamabad. Federal Minister Asad Umar, Chairman SUPARCO Major General Amer Nadeem, senior officers of Planning Ministry and stakeholders from public and private sectors attended the launching ceremony.

Asad Umar said that satellite system can be used to monitor the "quantitative and qualitative condition of projects and that how well it can be integrated with project management," adding that satellite technology improved communication and helped diagnose potential problems enabling timely decisions.

Chairman SUPARCO Maj Gen Amer Nadeem highlighted the significance of Pakistan Remote Sensing Satellite-1, saying that it has made the nation self-reliant in addressing a myriad of socio-economic development and monitoring challenges of the country.

Last month, Asad Umar had stated that weak Monitoring & Evaluation (P&E) system in Planning Commission always resulted in delay/inefficiency in PSD Projects implementation causing massive overrun, increase in cost, and wastage of taxpayer money as well.

The introduction of the dedicated web and mobile application will help the commission monitor and execute different projects on time.The launching ceremony for Web Portal and Mobile App was held on Wednesday at Pakistan Planning and Management Institute Islamabad. Federal Minister Asad Umar, Chairman SUPARCO Major General Amer Nadeem, senior officers of Planning Ministry and stakeholders from public and private sectors attended the launching ceremony.

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan chairs Parliamentary Party Meeting in Federal Capital.

Nanotechnology for high-yield agriculture promotes Pak-China cooperation

ISLAMABAD: Nanotechnology for high-yield agriculture will promote Pak-China cooperation, Gwadar Pro reported on Thursday.

Nanotechnology for high-efficacy agriculture promotes traditional agriculture on the road of high-quality connotative development.

According to the report, it can effectively promote farmers' increase in production and income and solve problems such as abandoned farmland and the adverse effects caused by excessive use of pesticides and fertilizers.

We tend to extend this achievement to our 'iron brother' Pakistan," Dr. Wu Zhiguo, Director of Nano Application Technology Research Office of Gansu Academy of Sciences highlighted on a video meeting with Prof Dr. Muhammad Yaseen From University of Faisalabad (UAF).

Ma. Yutian, Executive Director General of Gansu BRI Technology Transfer Center attended the meeting.

Dr. Wu further explained that at present, they have developed a series of nanoparticles, including iron, copper, silicon, zinc, and other series of high-quality nano-micro-fertilizer products.

The proprietary nanoparticles can increase production and efficiency, improve quality, resist pests and diseases and natural disasters, effectively reduce the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, and improve soil conditions.

In 2017, Prof. Yan Pengxun, Distinguished Researcher at Lanzhou Institute of Chemistry, Chinese Academy of Sciences, proposed to use high-quality elemental nano-powders for agriculture and nanotechnology high-yield agriculture.

In the past four years, sufficient trials, demonstrations and promotion of grain, fruits, vegetables, forage grass, and Chinese herbal medicine have been carried out in 23 provinces and municipalities in China. The total trial field has been accumulated more than 4,200 acres.

Prof. Dr. Muhammad Yaseen affirmed the results of Nanotechnology for High-yield Agriculture project and said that at present, 44% of the arable land in Pakistan is used to grow wheat, and the production of wheat is related to the food security of the whole country.

However, the yield of wheat per unit in Pakistan is lower than the world average, and agricultural scientists in Pakistan have been trying to introduce higher-yielding wheat varieties and new technologies.

"Faisalabad, Pakistan, a sister city of Gansu, welcomes the results of Nanotechnology for High-yield Agriculture project to be tested in Faisalabad and we are looking forward to its success and its expansion throughout Pakistan to increase food production," Prof. Dr. Yaseen stressed.

On the occasion, Mr. Ma Bin, Chairman of Pakistan Qijun international Trading Co., Ltd., underlined that over the years, under the guidance of the Belt and Road Initiative and China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), research and cooperation between China and Pakistan in agriculture have been continuously promoted.

The results of Nanotechnology for High-yield Agriculture project will not only benefit Pakistani farmers, but also open a new way for China's agricultural science and technology to reach the world.INP

Closure of schools: education ministers meeting postponed

ISLAMABAD: A meeting of the Inter-Provincial Education Ministers Conference (IPEMC) scheduled Thursday to decide whether or not close schools in view of rising cases of Covid-19 has been postponed.

The meeting that was to take place today at 11am was convened to decide the fate of schools in light of the fifth wave of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training confirmed the meeting has been posted until next week.

Earlier, a notification issued by the minister said the meeting would be held today (Thursday) with Federal Minister for Education Shafqat Mahmood in the chair. The meeting was to be attended by all provincial education ministers.

"The 34th meeting of the Provincial Education Minister's Conference (IPEMC) is scheduled to be held at 11 am on Thursday, chaired by Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training Shafqat Mehmood, to deliberate on a number of issues," read the notification.

The meeting was to review the prevalent COVID situation in the country with respect to educational institutes and discuss timely provision of quality textbooks in the academic year 2022 and interprovincial coordination regarding the timely provision of NOCs for textbook.INP

Challenge to LG law: SHC serves notice to Sindh govt

KARACHI: The Sindh High Court (SHC) on Thursday issued notice to the Sindh government on a Jamaat-e-Islami petition challenging the Sindh Local Government (Amendment) Act 2021.

The petition was moved by JI Karachi chief Hafiz Naeem ur Rehman.The high court (SHC) has ordered the People's Party led Sindh government to submit its reply in the next hearing of the case.The bench adjourned further hearing of the case for an indefinite period.The petitioner pleaded that the bill — which was passed on December 11, 2021 — was "illegal and in violation of Article 140A of the Constitution".Hafiz Naeem in the petition pleaded to the SHC to declare the new amendments in the bill as unconstitutional and void.It must be mentioned here that the Jamaat-e-Islami has been protesting against the local government bill for the last several days in front of the Sindh Assembly in Karachi.

The Sindh Assembly had passed the amendment bill for a new local government system with a majority amid the strong protest from the opposition.

The assembly also passed the bill for giving powers to the mayor to head Solid Waste Management Board. It is important to mention here that Sindh Governor Imran Ismail had rejected the local bodies bill after raising objections.It must be mentioned here that the Jamaat-e-Islami has been protesting against the local government bill for the last several days in front of the Sindh Assembly in Karachi.

The Sindh Assembly had passed the amendment bill for a new local government system with a majority amid the strong protest from the opposition.INP

Govt to form medical board to determine Nawaz's fitness to travel

ISLAMABAD: In a bid to bring the former prime minister, Nawaz Sharif, back from London where he had gone for his medical treatment, the government has decided to set up a Board to review eight medical reports submitted by him to the Lahore High Court (LHC) to prove his multiple illnesses, it was learnt on Thursday.

According to a copy of the letter written by Attorney General of Pakistan (AGP) Khalid Jawed Khan to the Punjab home secretary, the Board will also give its expert opinion not only on the authenticity of these reports but also different activities the three-time prime minister is carrying on in London despite claiming that he is sick.

The AGP says in the letter that he is writing in light of the decision taken at the federal cabinet's meeting held on January 11, 2022.

The letter reads that the two-member bench of the Lahore High Court (LHC) had on November 16, 2019 allowed Nawaz Sharif to proceed abroad, and that both Nawaz and his younger brother, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President Shehbaz Sharif had submitted an affidavit in the court, in which they assured the government that the former prime minister would return from London within four weeks.

The letter further reads that the medical reports submitted by Nawaz then showed that he was critically ill. "But on the contrary, once Nawaz reached the UK capital, he did not get himself admitted to a hospital even once, but continued his political activities there," the letter says and adds that this shows that he is fit to travel to Pakistan. "Apart from that, as per the statements of Shehbaz and immediate family members of the former prime minister, he is feeling better now. Therefore, a medical board be constituted which will give a final word on Nawaz's health," reads the letter.INP

Supplementary Finance Bill to be passed: Babar Awan

ISLAMABAD: Advisor on Parliamentary Affairs Dr Babar Awan on Saturday said that the Finance Supplementary Bill will be passed in the National Assembly.

Talking to the media along with Spokesperson for Finance Ministry Muzammil Aslam in Islamabad, he said the government will table 64-point agenda in the National Assembly regarding effective legislation.

The Advisor said the government will re-organize Municipal Corporation of Islamabad and 104 councils will be established in the federal capital.

He said Mayor of Islamabad will be elected directly while there will be six seats for professionals in the mayor's cabinet.

He said the entire world is appreciating the strategy adopted by Pakistan to deal with the global pandemic protecting the economy and human lives.

Talking about announcement of long march by the opposition, he said the government will complete its constitutional tenure and next general elections will be held through Electronic Voting Machines.

In his remarks the Spokesperson of Finance Ministry said the government is going to introduce several reforms in the budget through Finance Supplementary Bill.

He said steps have been taken to enhance tax net and stop tax evasion. He said tax collection target during this fiscal year is 6100 billion rupees.INP

ISLAMABAD: Managing Director PARCO Shahid Mahmood Khan called on Deputy Speaker National Assembly Qasim Suri.

Shahrukh Jatoi hospital stay: Inquiry reveals 21 inmates enjoyed freedom

KARACHI: Convict Shahrukh Jatoi who was sentenced to death in the 2012 Shahzeb murder case made headlines lately when it was revealed that he had been staying at a hospital instead of prison.

He was shifted back to the Karachi central prison from the private hospital where he had been staying for the past eight months. Swinging into action, the provincial authorities ordered an inquiry into his illegal stay at the hospital.

Sources today informed that the prison department has forwarded an inquiry report on the matter to the higher authorities.

The sources privy to the content of the report revealed that a total of 21 prisoners, including eight convicts and 13 under-trial prisoners, had been enjoying freedom for a long time on the pretext of medical grounds.

After hospital admission, they had been staying at their homes most of the time and would visit hospitals at certain times, the sources said, adding the details of their lavish lifestyle were kept under wraps.

"The IG prison, the home department and the jail superintendent were aware of the matter," the sources disclosed, adding the prison staff and inmates accompanying them would get hefty amounts to facilitate them.

The prisoners allowed to stay at hospitals would also drive around the city, the sources said.INP

LHC dismisses Shehbaz's plea against FIA inquiry in money laundering case

LAHORE: Lahore High Court (LHC) on Thursday dismissed Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President and Opposition Leader in National Assembly (NA) Shehbaz Sharif's petition challenging the inquiry of Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) in money laundering case.

During the hearing, the PML-N leader's counsel said that the inquiry of FIA is based on dishonesty. We fully cooperated with the team in the investigation. The authorities have failed to unearth any benami bank account of Shehbaz Sharif, he added.

Subsequently, the court dismissed the plea after PML-N lawyer withdrew it to refile.Earlier, FIA had submitted details of 45 bank accounts of Shehbaz Sharif, his sons Hamza and Salman Shahbaz in money laundering case. The concerned officials told that the accused may be sentenced to seven years in jail with fine and seizure of properties.FIA had also submitted a challan against Shehbaz Sharif and Hamza Shahbaz and declared them as prime accused.On November 11, 2020, Mian Shehbaz Sharif and his son Hamza Shehbaz Sharif were indicted in money laundering reference by accountability court.All the accused in the case pleaded not guilty. Shehbaz Sharif, while rejecting allegations of the anti-graft watchdog, said that he was being politically victimized.INP

Those responsible for Murree tragedy deserve to be hanged: IHC

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice Islamabad High Court (IHC) Athar Minallah has observed that those responsible for the Murree tragedy deserve to be hanged, adding that there was no need for inquiry in the case.

A petition seeking action into the Murree tragedy was heard by Chief Justice of Islamabad High Court Athar Minallah.

Ramad Abbasi, a resident of Murree, appeared in the court along with his lawyer during the hearing of his petition. The lawyer requested the court to take action against those responsible for the Murree tragedy for their criminal negligence.The lawyer said that the family of the deceased ASI Naveed had informed the higher authorities about the situation, but the prime minister, interior minister and the police did not take any action despite receiving the information.

The lawyer further said why more than 100,000 tourists were allowed to come to Murree? The failure of all senior officials to take action on the incident shows their criminal negligence.

The court then summoned Deputy Attorney General Tayyab Shah to the rostrum. The CJ asked the deputy attorney general what is meant by disaster management.

After being summoned by the IHC bench, the NDMA officials appeared in the court. The Chief Justice summoned them to the rostrum and rebuked them over their failure in protecting the precious lives of the tourists.

The court expressed outrage over the negligence of NDMA officials and questioned them as to who was responsible for the 22 deaths in the tragedy?.INP

Pakistani national hockey team to participate in Asian Games in China

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani national hockey team will participate in Asian Games in China from September 10 to 25, Gwadar Pro reported on Thursday quoting Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF).

PHF unveiled the schedule of the national sports calendar for the year 2022. The national hockey team is scheduled to participate in six international events in the PHF sports calendar.

The 2022 Asian Games are due to take place in Hangzhou in China. Hangzhou will be the third Chinese city to host the event, after Beijing in 1990 and Guangzhou in 2010.

The programme will be made up of 46 sports, among which 33 were featured at the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo, six were from Paris 2024, two were put forward by the Local Organizing Committee, and a sport was from each of Asia's five regions.

At the 2018 Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) General Assembly in Jakarta, officials had claimed the 2022 Asian Games will be the start of a new chapter for Hangzhou.

According to the PHF schedule, the Pakistani national hockey team will participate in the Asia Cup in May, a five-a-side hockey tournament in Switzerland in June, Commonwealth Games in Birmingham from July 28 to August 8, Asian Games in China from September 10 to 25, and a six-nation hockey tournament in Spain from December 8 to 22.

Training workshops, umpiring clinics, and courses are also scheduled in the sports activity calendar by PHF to enhance the capacity of umpires, coaches, and technical officers.INP

Dense fog disrupts air, road traffic in parts of Punjab

LAHORE: Dense fog in different cities of Punjab including Lahore on Thursday badly disrupted routine life, road and air traffic.

The flight operation at the Allama Iqbal International Airport Lahore was disrupted as the visibility dropped below 50 metres and several incoming or outgoing flights were either delayed or cancelled.

The thick fog has badly affected the flow of road traffic in several cities of Punjab.

According to a Motorway spokesman, the Motorway Section from Faizpur Lahore to Samundri (M3), Motorway Section from Mahmood Booti to Sambrial (M11), Motorway Section from Thokar Niaz Baig to Kot Momin (M2) have been closed at several places for all kind of traffic as visibility was very poor.

The Motorway spokesman also informed that Motorway Section from Abdul Hakim Toll Plaza to Faisalabad Toll Plaza (M4) has been closed for heavy transport vehicles (HTVs).INP

ISLAMABAD: PML-N member Shaista Pervaiz Malik sign after took oath as Member of the National Assembly. She contested the election on the seat vacated by her husband Pervaiz Malik after his demise.

ITP focusing on road discipline to control over speeding, mishaps: SSP

ISLAMABAD: SSP (Traffic) Rai Mazhar Iqbal has said that the Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) was focusing on road discipline to control over speeding practices and mishaps.

He was speaking at the concluding ceremony of the two-day road safety workshop organized by Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) at Competition Commission, Ministry of Finance to acquaint the staff with traffic laws.

During the workshop, the ITP Education Team delivered lecture on Road Safety Tips. Director General Admin and Finance from Ministry of Finance Shehzad Hussain, Director HR Maria Usman, Deputy Director HR Zareen Rashid were also present on the occasion. SSP (Traffic) Rai Mazhar Iqbal said the aim of holding such programs was to acquaint the people with traffic laws while inculcating better traffic sense among them. He that ITP was doing its utmost effort to maintain traffic discipline in the city while conducting inspection through radars, to control overspeeding practices.

In this regard, ITP has arranged several workshops and programs in various educational and government institutions and would continue to deliver lectures there in future as well, he maintained. This exercise would prove helpful in providing disciplined traffic system to the masses, he added.

DG Shehzad Hussain stated that ITP has improved the image of policing and ensured community policing through public co-operation and eliminated VIP culture. At the end, SSP (Traffic) distributed certificates among 50 participants of the workshop.INP