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December in History

December 24, 1952:

UN Security Council adopts the Anglo-American Resolution on Kashmir urging immediate demilitarization talks between India, Pakistan.

December 31, 1952:

Pakistan National Scouts instituted.

December 22, 1957:

Malik Feroz Khan Noon is sworn in as seventh Prime Minister of Pakistan.

December 7, 1970:

First General elections held. Awami League and Pakistan People Party emerge as leading parties in East and West Pakistan.

December 19, 1970:

Pakistan wins gold medal in Asian Games hockey, beating India 1-0.

December 20, 1971:

General Yahya Khan hands over power to Z. A. Bhutto, who takes over as President and Chief Martial Law Administrator.

December 30, 1973:

Z. A. Bhutto lays foundation stone of Pakistan Steel Mills.

December 27, 1975:

1976 is declared Quaid's Century year.

December 31, 1985:

Martial Law is lifted, amended 1973 Constitution revived.

December 2, 1988:

Benazir Bhutto is sworn in as first woman Prime Minister of Pakistan.

December 12, 1990:

Pakistan becomes 37th country to send expedition to Antarctica.

December 4, 1994:

Pakistan regains World Hockey Championship title after 12 years, beating Holland 4-3.

Pakistan's standing in the global rankings

Overview

Pakistan observed a slight improvement in the overall international rankings in 2021 covering socio-economic and political outcomes of the country. Several elements complemented the prospects including successful democratic transition, efficient counter-terrorism measures leading to enhanced peace and security, and foreign direct investment inflows under CPEC, among others. Albeit, decoupling economic growth from human development suggests that the country needs to enhance its scores in health, education and standard of living by ensuring political will, equitable financing and efficient governance to ensure parallel growth for marginalized segments as well. Civil and political liberties must grow hand in hand to ensure a conducive environment for democratic dialogue and accountability which ultimately supports its nation building process.

DEMOCRACY INDEX

Pakistan was placed at the 104th spot among 167 states on the global Democracy Index 2021, compiled by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU).

Index from 0 (authoritarian regime) to 10 (full democracy)

Compiled based on indicators covering: Electoral process and pluralism, Civil liberties, Functioning of government, Political participation, and Political culture.

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX

Pakistan ranked 161 out of 192 countries in the Human Development Index scoring 2022 0.562 out of 1.000 in 2018 compared to 0.560 out of 1.000 in 2017.

Index from 0 (low development) to 1 (very high development)

Compiled based on indicators covering: life expectancy, education, and per capita income

PRESS FREEDOM INDEX

Pakistan's press freedom rank dropped to 145 out of 180 countries in the Press Freedom Index, An annual ranking of countries published by Reporters Without Borders (RWB), an international non-governmental organization dedicated to safeguard the right to freedom of information.

Compiled based on indicators covering: pluralism, media independence, environment and self-censorship, legislative framework, transparency, and infrastructure.

TERRORISM INDEX

Terrorism Index in Pakistan decreased to 7.83 in 2021 from 7.92 in 2020.

Index from 0 (lowest impact) to 10 (highest impact)

Compiled based on indicators covering : Total number of terrorist incidents in a given year, total number of fatalities caused by terrorism in a given year, total number of injuries caused by terrorism in a given year and the approximate level of total property damage from terrorist incidents in a given year.

ECONOMIC FREEDOM INDEX

In 2021, index of economic freedom for Pakistan was 51.7 score.

Though Pakistan index of economic freedom fluctuated substantially in recent years, it tended to decrease through 2002 - 2021 period ending at 51.7 score in 2021.

Compiled based on indicators covering: Market openness, Regulatory efficiency, Government size and the rule of law.

Positive Post is a strategic effort to project achievement and contributions of Pakistan. While showcasing Greenwich University's cultural diplomacy initiatives, it also encapsulates a compilation of different developments complementing Pakistan's socio-cultural, economic and Political outcomes.

Officials agree on talks with Kabul over border issues

With the efforts of a 16-member jirga that visited Kandahar to meet the Taliban officials amid tense situation at Chaman border, a flag meeting held between Pakistan and Afghan authorities at Friendship Gate on Tuesday agreed to resolve all border issues through talks.

At the flag meeting, which was postponed earlier on Saturday reportedly due to grouping among the Afghan officials on use of authority and taking decisions, it was also decided that civil and military officials of both sides would visit the other country for negotiations on all issues in future.

Both sides agreed that fighting was not a solution to any problem and negotiation was the right way to resolve all issues between the neighbouring countries. The meeting was held in a very cordial atmosphere as two sides discussed the border issues in detail and appreciated the role of religious and tribal elders in breaking the deadlock through their efforts and suggested that their role should be continued in future for increasing trust and con-



fidence between Pakistan and Afghanistan," official sources told Dawn.

"It was decided the civil and military officials concerned would hold negotiations by visiting both countries in future and will remain in contact," a senior official present at the meeting disclosed.

The Pakistani civil and military officials also put traditional turbans on the heads of Afghan officials.

While the situation has been tense at Chaman border since the mid of November when a Pakistani soldier

was martyred by firing from across the border, Afghan border forces' shelling on officials as well as on civilian settlements in recent weeks aggravated it.

In an ice-breaking visit to Afghanistan after the postponement of Saturday flag meeting, a delegation comprising leading religious scholars and tribal elders from Chaman held talks with senior Afghan Taliban leaders and officials in Spin Boldak and Kandahar and took up the issue of shelling by Afghan forces on the civilian settlement that claimed at least nine lives and left 45 others

injured.

At those meetings, the Pakistani delegates and Afghan officials agreed to facilitate the conduct of flag meeting before the jirga returned to Chaman and briefed the civil and military authorities about their decisions, sources said.

Subsequently, the flag meeting was held at Friendship Gate on Tuesday afternoon. Civil and military officials, including deputy commissioner Chaman, tribal and religious leaders, while from the other side, senior border security and deputy commissioner of Spin Boldak attended the meeting.

The Afghan officials expressed their grief and sorrow over the human loss during the recent shelling from the Afghan forces and fateha was offered for the departed souls of the Pakistani civilians who lost their lives. "We have a lot of respect for the sacrifices rendered by the people of Pakistan for Afghanistan and we cannot forget these sacrifices forever," they said.

Courtesy: Dawn

PM chairs huddle to devise ways to satisfy IMF

In a bid to end the economic uncertainty stemming from the delay in the 9th review of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chaired a huddle of his economic team to take stock of the economic situation and devise ways to ward off the risk of default and keep the Fund happy.

The meeting was convened at a time when the current and former finance ministers of the coalition government were busy giving contradictory statements on default risks faced by the country amid a delay in the talks with the IMF.

In a high-level meeting at the Prime Minister's House, the economic team briefed Mr Sharif on the current status of the economy, whispers of default risk, and prior conditions for the next review. The premier said the government would continue its programme with the



Fund at all costs. Similarly, the premier stressed the need for structural and policy reforms in order to reduce fiscal and current account deficits.

Shehbaz calls for structural, policy reforms to reduce current account, fiscal deficits

In the meeting, the premier directed that facilities should be provided to the exporters, including necessary facilities at ports, identi-

fication of new markets, and assistance in the import of raw materials and machinery. Mr Sharif said at present, Pakistan's IT exports stood at \$2 billion and added that these could be increased to \$5 billion through the provision of facilities to entrepreneurs in the field.

The minister of energy was directed that the reforms in the energy sector should be implemented with full attention and diligence. Reducing circular debt is a top priority

along with increasing power generation, the premier stressed. The prime minister directed that a campaign should also be started to improve general attitudes towards energy saving, as Pakistan relied on imported fuel to produce power.

According to the statement issued after the meeting, in 2018, Pakistan owed Rs25 trillion in loans. However, in March 2022, the total loans taken by the country were recorded at Rs44.5 trillion, it said, blaming the previous government for ruining the economy.

Finance Minister Ishaq Dar, Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal, the governor of the State Bank of Pakistan, and other top officials of the finance, economic affairs, and planning ministries attended the meeting. Presidents of Habib Bank Limited and the Al-Falah Bank also attended the briefing.

Courtesy: Dawn

Abrar's 'lucky seven' on a magical debut

AFTER Pakistani bowlers received a 500-run thrashing from English batsmen on the first day of the opening Test in Rawalpindi, the home side's coach Saqlain Mushtaq was asked to explain his choice to debut leg-spinner Zahid Mahmood over his spin mate, Abrar Ahmed.

"Justice", according to Saqlain, was the reason why Abrar couldn't make the cut. For the Pakistan coach, Zahid had spent more time with the Pakistan Test squad ahead of the three-match series and hence deserved a debut ahead of his teammate from Sindh.

It was baffling how Saqlain once a world-class spinner himself seemed to ignore Abrar's show of form in the recently concluded Quaid-i-Azam Trophy, Pakistan's premier first-class competition.

The 24-year-old Abrar had earned his place on the Pakistan roster after bamboozling batters across the country to bag a mind-blowing 43 wickets in just seven outings in the Quaid Trophy, striking at an average of less than 22.

Justice, though, was perhaps truly served when Zahid was plundered by the England batters for 235 runs in the first innings of the Rawalpindi Test. Karma intervened swiftly, however, when Abrar who was finally and rightfully awarded a

Test cap ahead of the second game in Multan to take seven wickets on his debut.

But this was no ordinary seven-scalp haul; the bespectacled "mystery" spinner broke through the England line-up after opening his Test career with a googly that castled opener Zak Crawley's off-stump in picture-perfect style.

By lunch, Abrar had already recorded his maiden five-wicket haul, becoming the 13th Pakistani bowler to do so on debut.

While England's relentlessly (read carelessly) attacking style of play may have gifted Abrar an extra wicket or two, there was no denying that he was causing serious problems for the visitors.

England opener Ben Duckett whose habitual reverse-sweeping eventually allowed Abrar to trap him leg-before claimed his teammates did not find anything "mysterious" about the Karachi-born spinner and that they had no problems reading him.

But the look on skipper Ben Stokes' face, when Abrar bowled him through the gate, told another story.

Abrar's delivery to the talismanic left-hander left him jaw-dropped as



Stokes took a moment on the crease to make sense of how the ball spun after pitching around leg-stump to go on and hit off.

Similarly, Stokes' predecessor Joe Root, one of the world's best batters, found himself stranded on his back-foot as another Abrar googly struck his pads plumb.

England will take the same, flamboyant approach when they come back to bat in the second innings, Duckett said in his post-match comments, something that just might work in Abrar's favour. If it does, and say, Abrar goes on to record 10 wickets in a match, it won't be something he has not dreamed of since his early days as a teenage cricketer.

At 15, Abrar demanded his friends to call him "superstar" after he took five wickets with his beguiling spin in a club match. A product of the famed Rashid Latif Cricket Academy in Karachi, Abrar has always had a knack of making high claims, but he

has managed to manifest his dreams. The spinner, like many of his type, was touted as a white ball-only sensation, but he promised his mates in the Sindh team that he would prove himself to be equally capable with the red cherry, a promise he fulfilled in this year's Quaid Trophy.

This thirst for wickets, the immense urge to knock out the opponent, makes Abrar all the more special. The type of special that Pakistan need, to stand with their chins up against England's "Bazball" philosophy, which looks to burden the opponent through constantly attacking cricket.

Abrar is of the type that does justice to Pakistan's reputation of producing something better than normal.

Nicknamed "Harry Potter" by his friends because he wears glasses and has a wizard's way with the ball, Abrar may well go far as a player for team Pakistan.

Courtesy: Dawn

Punjab gets four day work week

The Punjab government told the Lahore High Court that all public and private schools in the provincial capital will remain closed on every Friday and Saturday, in addition to the weekly holiday on Sunday, until further orders due to the worsening smog situation.

A provincial law officer also presented a notification issued by the school education secretary to this effect before Justice Shahid Karim, who had asked the government to notify the closure of schools in Lahore for at least three days a week.

The law officer also presented another notification by the Punjab Provincial Disaster Management

Authority (PDMA) regarding the closure of all private offices in Lahore for two days in a week Friday and Saturday till Jan 15, 2023. However, the staff may work from home.

Justice Karim directed the government to implement the notifications forthwith.

Lahore Deputy Commissioner (DC) Muhammad Ali and other officials of the government also appeared before the court.

The judge directed the DC to hold discussions with the traders to ensure closure of markets by 10pm daily and a complete shutdown on Sundays. The judge further directed



the DC to devise a policy in consultation with the PDMA for monitoring of smoke-emitting industries through drone cameras to ensure a clean environment in the city.

An official of the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) submitted new rules, as previously directed by the court, to make the existing punishments for violation of the

laws and policies stricter. The factories/industries, as per the new rules, could be demolished for committing violations after the warnings.

The judge adjourned the hearing to the next week and sought compliance reports from the authorities concerned.

Courtesy: Dawn

\$900m okayed for Chilean firm to exit Reko Diq

After the Supreme Court endorsed a settlement deal worth over \$6.5 billion last week, the government on Sunday approved a payment of more than \$900 million to the Chilean firm Antofagasta over six years to exit the Reko Diq project.

The committee also green-lighted about \$1.91bn shareholder financing by state-owned enterprises (SOEs) to take the gold and copper mining project forward.

The decisions were taken at a special meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the cabinet presided over by Finance Minister Ishaq Dar through video link from Lahore to meet deadlines for an out-of-court settlement with the Tethyan Copper Company to avoid a looming \$10bn international arbitration award. The 'definitive agreements' are ready to be signed by Dec 15 under the settlement deal.

Under the agreement, the government and its entities the OGDCL, Pakistan Petroleum Limited and Govt Holdings Pvt Limited (GHPL) have already deposited \$900m in an escrow account for payment along with interest in six years to Antofagasta Minerals of Chile to exit the project.

ECC takes decision to avoid looming \$10bn arbitration award

These entities are also required to arrange about \$4.3bn equivalent funds as an equity investment in the restructured project, now named Barrick Reko Diq Holdings Limited (BRDHL), to be operated by Canada's Barrick Gold Corporation mining company.

"The ECC considered and approved two important agenda items related to the Reko Diq project, thus paving the way for early start of the Reko Diq Project," an announcement said after the meeting, adding that it



allowed the concerned divisions of the government and the SOEs to act in such a manner to ensure that the deposited amount along with interest deposited by the SOEs in the escrow account to form part of the consideration for share purchase of the Reko Diq Mining Company Limited.

Informed sources said the finance ministry told the ECC that as per 'definitive agreements' ready to be signed by Dec 15 under the settlement deal, the share of special purpose vehicle (SPV) of state-owned enterprises, namely Pakistan Minerals Ltd (SOE SPV) and the government of Balochistan (GoB SPV) towards the funding obligation in the restructured project is \$1.194bn and \$717m million, respectively, out of the \$4.297bn to be adjusted for inflation.

This funding is required over six years, beginning with about \$11m this year and gradually going up to \$730m in the 2026-27 fiscal year.

In the case of project financing of up to 50pc, the above equity contribution could come down to \$597m for SOEs SPV and \$359m



for the provincial one, whose financing arrangement is also the responsibility of the federal government.

The ECC thus authorised the finance ministry to initiate the process of issuing a guarantee from a mutually agreed financial institution or multilateral development lender for raising debt financing.

The Petroleum Division also submitted a summary for approval of accrued interest on the amount held in an escrow account (\$900m) in connection with the Reko Diq project dispute settlement.

It told the Economic Coordination Committee that the federal and Balochistan governments had entered into an out-of-court dispute settlement with the Tethyan Copper Company Pvt Limited a consortium of Barrick Gold and Antofagasta over their longstanding dispute over the Reko Diq copper and gold mining project in the Chagai district.

As per settlement terms, the federal government has to clear

liabilities to Antofagasta.

In light of the terms of the agreed settlement, the ECC allowed the finance division to direct the GHPL (for its own as well as the Balochistan government's share), OGDCL and PPL to deposit the aggregate amount of interest to the sum of \$22.72m in the escrow account from March 31 to December 15 this year.

The ECC further allowed the finance division to arrange the interest payable for the Balochistan government's share amounting to \$8.52m from the loan of Rs65bn already raised from the National Bank of Pakistan by the GHPL with the Pakistan government's guarantee.

Under the restructured project, the Reko Diq project would now be led by Barrick Gold Corporation with 50pc shareholding along with operatorship.

Of the remaining 50pc shareholding, Balochistan will hold a 25pc stake, including a 10pc direct free share and 15pc through Balochistan Mineral Resources Limited, to be paid by the federal government along with capital and operational expenses.

The rest of the 25pc shareholding would be held with equal participation by the OGDCL, PPL and GHPL.

The Supreme Court consented to a presidential reference on the subject and cleared for implementation the fresh Reko Diq settlement deal signed by the government of Pakistan with international mining firms to avoid arbitration penalties.

Pakistan had already been given an adverse arbitral award by the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes and was anticipating a similar award from the International Chamber of Commerce.

Courtesy: Dawn

Hina urges world to hold India accountable

Pakistan on Wednesday called upon the international community and the United Nations to hold India accountable for perpetrating terrorism in the country with undeniable and indisputable evidence available.

Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Hina Rabbani Khar at a press briefing on the dossier regarding India's involvement in terrorism in Pakistan said repeated terror incidents reflected India's persistent hostility and the use of terrorist proxies against the country.

Ms Khar was referring to evidence of India's involvement in the Johar Town blast in Lahore last year, that killed three people and injured 24 others.

Ms Khar said no other country had used terrorism better than India that played the victim card despite being the biggest perpetrator of terrorism.

Pakistan had submitted the Lahore blast-specific dossier with the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and would soon be sharing it with Secretary General Antonio Guterres, she said, adding that it was a clear evidence of India's

planned and perpetrated attack against civilians.

She said Pakistan condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and regretted that the masterminds remained at large. Ms Khar said India fit the definition of a rogue state, adding that the country had blocked the listing of four individuals at the UNSC. She said may it be the Samjhota train incident or blatant support to militants in Balochistan, India's objective was to undermine the peace and security of Pakistan.

She said that 211 members of law-enforcement agencies suffered the RAW-sponsored attacks including the attack on Chinese nationals, at PC Hotel Gwadar, and Frontier Corps camp in Punjgur.

Ms Khar pointed out that India had blatantly violated human rights laws in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) and continued to follow the rogue policies.

She stressed that India had mastered the art of using international organisations for its political gains. In reply to a question if she was denied meeting by a certain minister during her recent visit to



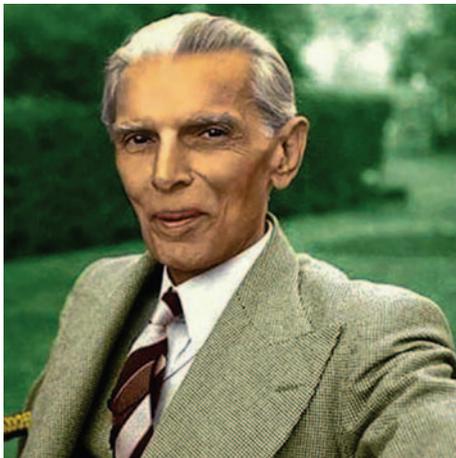
Afghanistan, she dismissed such reports, saying that no such meeting was asked to be held from the Pakistan side.

"I was very well received in Kabul and in the meetings, and we exactly achieved what we wanted to achieve," she said.

Ms Khar said that she believed in useful diplomacy without theatrics where the focus was to protect the interests of Pakistan instead of mere countering the social media disinformation campaign.

When asked if the Foreign Office had continued policies of the previous government, she said that good steps were being pursued acknowledging that some good work was done on Islamophobia.

Courtesy: Dawn



The 146th birth anniversary of the father of the nation, Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, will be observed on Sunday (today) with renewed pledge to uphold his guiding principles of unity, faith and discipline.

The day will dawn with special prayers for security, progress and prosperity of the country. The national flag will be hoisted on major government buildings throughout the country. Special events will be arranged to promote the ideals and views of the founder of Pakistan, particularly with regard to rule of law, supremacy of the Constitution, and upholding of democracy.

Public and private departments across the country will hold a variety of events, including seminars, conferences, competitions and discussion programmes, to highlight the messages and vision of the Quaid.

Messages shedding light on various aspects of the

Quaid's birth anniversary being observed

Quaid's struggle for the achievement of a separate homeland for the Muslims of the subcontinent were issued by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and other leaders.

Prime Minister Sharif called on the nation to take guidance from the Quaid's life and follow his principles to ensure the progress and prosperity of Pakistan.

The struggle of Quaid-i-Azam was against the idea of a majority usurping the rights of minorities on the basis of numerical superiority, the premier said, adding that he had strived for the restoration of a unique way of life of Muslims and for their separate social, economic, political and cultural identity in the comity of nations.

PM Shehbaz pointed out that because of the rising religious animosity and the thinking of extremist Hindutva, India as a state had failed to protect rights of the minorities. This situation has proved right the Quaid's arguments for the two-nation theory, he stressed.

The PM said that Pakistan was going through a difficult phase at present and the need to follow the Quaid's principles had become more necessary to follow than ever. The best way to pay tribute to him was to make Pakistan an Islamic welfare state.

"We have to put an end to internal chaos and work tirelessly for the advancement of Pakistan," he said.

Former president and PPP leader Asif Ali Zardari

on the occasion said Peoples Party was steadfast on its resolve to make Pakistan a democratic and welfare state.

He said the founder of Pakistan was a true democrat and an enlightened leader who advocated for human and religious freedom.

Mr Zardari said PPP would continue to defend freedom of expression and political and religious liberty in the country founded by the Quaid-i-Azam.

He said the 1973 Constitution given by Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was a guarantee of stability.

Paying tribute to the Quaid, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Mahmood Khan said his dedication and unflinching resolve for the cause of freedom would always be remembered.

"We could lead country on the way of progress and prosperity by following the golden principles of the father of nation," he said.

Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Abdul Qudoos Bizenjo said the nation should pledge to play its role for the stability of the country and the promotion of national unity by putting aside political and group differences.

In his message, he said the country was facing challenges, and maintaining unity in "our ranks and upholding the golden principles of the father of the nation is the need of the hour".

Courtesy: Dawn

Messi magic sets his date with destiny

LIONEL Messi twisted and turned to leave Croatian defender Josko Gvardiol chasing his shadows and when Julian Alvarez turned in his low cross from the byline, the 35 year old opened his arms in accepting the adulation of the Argentina supporters gathered behind that goal at the Lusail Stadium.

Argentina had a three-goal lead with 20 minutes to go. They were heading to the final for Messi's date with destiny; the deliverance of the title he and his nation have craved for so long here in Qatar.

Eight years on from their disappointment in the World Cup final against Germany in Brazil, there is a feeling that now is the time for their talisman to script the perfect ending. When the full time whistle blew on Argentina's 3-0 win, Messi stood on the centre circle before his team-mates gathered around him. When he smiled for the world, perhaps the departed Diego Maradona, the man who led Argentina to their last title in 1986, smiled from the skies. On the touchline, Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni had tears in his eyes.

France or Morocco await in five days time at this very same venue



after Argentina's most convincing win so far at the tournament which also saw them gain a measure of revenge for their loss to the Croats by the same score in the group stage four years ago in Russia.

Once Messi and Argentina turned it on, there was no way back for Croatia. Perhaps they will rue the moment of madness from Dominik Livakovic that gave Argentina a penalty, coolly dispatched by Messi, and a foothold in this game after the half hour mark. It meant there was going to be no fairytale ending for a legend of their own; Luka Modric, their 37-year-old midfield warrior who was substituted with 10 minutes to go.

Even an hour before kickoff, Lusail

felt like a cauldron burning in anticipation of what was to come. Another show of fireworks announced the commencement of the last-four stage but it was a cagey start; both teams looking to stay calculated, cohesive. There was no room on offer. Croatia had the possession; loads of it. But then, Livakovic Croatia's hero in their penalty shootout wins over Japan and Brazil on their way to the semi-final erred with a cynical block on Alvarez who had been sent through by Enzo Fernandez.

On the opposite end, Argentina goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez couldn't even bear to look. He knelt on one leg, facing a sea of Argentina supporters, who had been in full voice well before the start. But when Messi's penalty hit

the roof of the net, those fans let out a roar of release. It was loud, it was deafening.

The goal, the lead, gave Argentina the impetus they needed; patience paying off, the final in sight. Croatia showed grit and resilience in coming back against both Japan and Brazil to force extra time. But this wasn't their day and five minutes later, they were 2-0 down.

Alvarez received the ball in his own half from Fernandez and ran; the 22 year old dribbled into the box through the centre before getting lucky with two ricochets, first off Josip Juranovic and then off Borna Sosa before slotting the ball past Livakovic. It was all in one motion; perhaps not as iconic a goal as the one scored by Maradona against England in 1986 but just as important.

The game was now Argentina's to lose. Argentina had let a two goal lead slip in their quarter final against the Netherlands before prevailing in a penalty shootout here at Lusail. This time, they showed they had learnt their lesson; tightening the noose around Croatia and before Messi showed his class all over again to finish the game as a contest.

Courtesy: Dawn

Gen Munir warns Delhi against any 'misadventure'

In his first visit to Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) after assuming command, Chief of Army Staff Gen Syed Asim Munir warned India against any misadventure, saying that such a move would be met with "the full might of our armed forces".

According to an Inter-Services Public Relations statement, the army chief made the remarks during a visit to frontline troops in Rakhchikri Sector, along the Line of Control (LoC) in AJK.

The COAS said, "We have noticed highly irresponsible statements from Indian leadership on Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir recently.

"Let me make it categorically clear, [that] Pakistan's armed forces are ever ready, not only to defend every inch

of our motherland, but to take the fight back to the enemy, if ever, war is imposed on us," he emphasised.

"Any misconception resulting into a misadventure will always be met with full might of our armed forces backed by a resilient nation," he said. The army chief further said, "Indian state will never be able to achieve her nefarious designs", adding the world must ensure justice and deliver what is promised to the Kashmiri people as per UN resolutions.

General Munir's remarks followed statements from India's Lieutenant General Upendra Dwivedi and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh.

In October, Singh said he hoped to have GB as part of India to complete the mission the Modi government began by annexing Indian-held

Kashmir in August 2019.

Last week, Dwivedi the general officer commanding-in-chief of the Indian army's northern command commented on Singh's statement by underscoring that a resolution on the matter already existed in the Indian parliament.

"As far as the Indian Army is concerned, it will carry out any order given by the government of India. We are always ready for it," a Hindustan Times report had quoted him as saying.

The Foreign Office had already rejected Singh's statement about GB as ridiculous and said it represented India's expansionist mindset while the ISPR had denounced Dwivedi's statement as an "apt manifestation" of the Indian army's "delusional mindset".



Earlier, on arrival, Lt Gen Shahid Imtiaz, Corps Commander Rawalpindi, received the COAS.

Gen Munir was briefed on the latest situation along the LoC and operational preparedness of the formation.

He interacted with officers and soldiers, appreciated their high morale, professional competence and combat readiness while performing their duties in challenging conditions, ISPR said.

Courtesy: Dawn

Rs1bn 'New Year gift' for govt employees unveiled

The government has finalised a "special dispensation package" for its civilian employees in grades 1 to 16, who have been protesting for an increase in salaries, citing inflation and alleged discrimination.

The package, involving an additional annual impact of around Rs1 billion and finalised by the finance ministry after negotiations with the All-Government Employees Grand Alliance (AGEGA), has been submitted to the prime minister for approval before a formal notification.

The package, which is on the pattern of a similar dispensation given to employees of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government, will come into force on January 1.

To be announced as a "New Year gift" to the non-gazetted employees, the package will not apply to employees paid out of the defence budget and will cost just Rs500 million during the remaining fiscal year, which ends in June.

These employees, through their numerous unions and representative bodies, have been agitating for improvement in the service structure of their cadres along with financial amelioration.

Most demands presented by these employees and organisations were based on seeking parity with the benefits that have been granted in the provincial governments.

The main demands included the upgradation for the post of the lower division clerk (LDC) from basic pay scale (BPS) 9 to 11 and the upper division clerk (UDC) from BPS 11 to 14, besides grant of higher pay scale along the lines of those authorised by the KP government, i.e. two high pay scales to employees in BPS-1 to 5 and one



high pay scale to those in BPS-6 to 15. During the four-year PTI government that ended in April, an agreement was concluded between the AGEGA and the ministers for defence, interior and parliamentary affairs that included the upgradation of posts on the pattern of the KP government.

All demands decided under that agreement were met except those related to upgradation, giving cause to continuous unrest and agitation among the employees.

The finance ministry and the establishment division, the government's human resource arm, re-engaged the protesting representatives of the employees' alliance and reached a mutually acceptable ground on the analogy of the KP government.

Under the finalised package, the employees in BPS 1 to 5 will be granted two higher pay scales as a one-time dispensation if they have yet to avail timescale promotion (TSP) under the 2022 policy.

However, those in the same grade who have availed the promotion will be granted one higher pay scale as a one-time dispensation.

In BPS 6 to 15, employees who have not availed TSP 2022 will be granted the next higher pay scale

as a one-time dispensation, whereas those who have availed the benefit will only be granted one additional increment of their current pay scale.

However, the substantive pay scales of all the above categories will remain unchanged. Also, employees in BPS 16 will be granted one additional increment as a one-time dispensation.

Moreover, the post of LDC will be upgraded from BPS 9 to BPS 11 and that of UDC from BPS 11 to 13, along with incumbents. The recruitment rules will be amended by the establishment division accordingly as per the upgradation policy.

However, these special dispensations will only apply to those civil servants of the federal government who are in BPS 1 to 16 (excluding employees paid out of defence estimates) and are in receipt of disparity reduction allowances.

Besides, one chance of granting a higher timescale, admissible under TSP 2022, will be considered lapsed for employees who avail of the benefit under this dispensation. This special dispensation will not involve any upgradation of the posts except the posts of UDC and LDC and no premature increment will be admissible on grant of the higher pay scale under this dispensation.

The beneficiary of the grant of a higher pay scale under this dispensation shall continue to draw allowances, perks, privileges, etc., sanctioned for the substantive pay scale of the beneficiary.

The substantive pay scale is one that a civil servant regularly acquires through initial appointment or by means of promotion or appointment by transfer.

Courtesy: Dawn

Defence ministry seeks more funds to fight inflation

Days after the change of command in the armed forces, the Ministry of Defence has sought additional funds from the federal budget to cope with the impact of rising fuel cost and overall inflation.

The demand was put forth by Defence Secretary retired Lt Gen Hamood-uz-Zaman Khan during a meeting with Finance Minister Ishaq Dar.

"Defence and economic issues together with security-related budgetary matters were discussed during the meeting," said a statement issued by the Ministry of Finance.

The development comes only a month after the Economic Coordination Committee of the cabinet approved a Rs31 billion supplementary grant for the defence ministry, on October 28.

Informed sources said the defence team told the finance minister that it had already been following strict austerity measures but inflation, particularly

POL expenses, was putting an additional pressure, thus causing a financial shortfall. According to them, there was little room within the allocated funds to meet the additional financing requirements.

The statement quoted Mr Dar as highlighting the economic outlook and fiscal position of the country and various measures taken by the government to stabilise the economy. He said the results of these measures would soon be reflected in the strengthened fiscal position and enhanced economic activities.

Prime Minister's Special Assistants on Finance and Revenue Tariq Bajwa and Tariq Mehmood Pasha, special secretary finance and senior officers from the finance and defence divisions attended the meeting.

The government is currently facing almost Rs1 trillion slippages on fiscal account, chiefly because of increase in interest payments amid devaluation and higher interest rates, besides flood-related ex-



penditures. The finance ministry is already struggling to convince the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to complete the 9th review of its \$7bn ongoing programme.

The Fund wants more taxes and tight expenditure controls to ensure tax-to-GDP ratios committed under the programme structure before it clears disbursement of \$1.18bn tranche that was due early last month.

The government has decided to slash down the country's development budget by more than half to Rs350bn from the budget allocation of about Rs800bn for the current fiscal year.

Courtesy: Dawn

Argentina, Messi taste glory at long last

As his Argentina teammates rushed towards the corner to celebrate with goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez, Lionel Messi strode to the side of the pitch and raised his arms. Relief at last, the World Cup glory at last.

Argentina had been pushed all the way by France and Kylian Mbappe in a compelling climax to the World Cup in Qatar, but they had emerged winners for the first time since 1986.

The 4-2 penalty shootout win after a 3-3 draw had seen Messi equal Diego Maradona in his last World Cup appearance. What a way it was to sign off and a glimpse of how much this meant to Messi came when he received the Golden Ball trophy for the best player of the tournament.

As he went to pose for photographers, he kissed the World Cup trophy on the way. He could do this now. He'd earned the right to do that. He would, a few moments later, lift it high into the night sky as his teammates jumped around him.

Mbappe single-handedly brought France back into game with a hat-trick

With the final locked 2-2 at the end of normal time, Messi had given Argentina the lead in the 108th when he arrived in the box at the right time to turn in the rebound after French goalkeeper Hugo Lloris saved a shot from Lautaro Martinez.

But Mbappe, who had turned the game on its head in normal time, got a penalty after his shot struck Gonzalo Montiel on the arm. He brought France level again in the 118th, only for goalkeeper Martinez to emerge as the penalty shootout hero, making a save off Kingsley Coman while the impressive



Aurelien Tchouameni blazed wide for France.

It was hard on France after the defending champions had rallied from 2-0 down in the last 10 minutes of normal time. Mbappe's goal to level matters was sublime. He headed a pass from Adrien Rabiot from the right to Marcus Thuram in the middle and once he received the ball from his teammate, he met it with a sensational right-footed volley that brushed the hands of Martinez on its way in. Just a minute or so earlier, Mbappe had breathed hope into France. He set free Randal Kolo Muani and the substitute's pace was too much for Nicolas Otamendi, who ended up fouling him inside the box. Mbappe's penalty was superb, going underneath Martinez who'd guessed the right way.

Argentina on top

France had looked dead and buried before that. Messi and his teammates had pummeled them into submission; pinning them down with their

relentless pressing from the start.

Messi it was who'd given Argentina the lead at the Lusail Stadium, which had been preparing for his farewell party. Angel Di Maria had been tripped in the box by Ousmane Dembele in the 21st minute and Messi did the rest, planting a perfect penalty as Hugo Lloris dived the wrong way.

Euphoria and delirium overtook the Argentina fans, who had gathered in large numbers here, hoping to witness Messi ending their long wait for the World Cup title. And Argentina seemed to have one hand on the World Cup trophy when they were 2-0 up in the 36th.

Messi had eagerly looked at it when the teams lined up for the national anthems, A French attack had broken down and Messi received a hit ball close to the centre circle. With one touch of his out foot, Messi found Julian Alvarez who just helped it on to Alexis MacAllister. MacAl-

lister ran into the box and a gleeful Di Maria, arriving on the other side, finished off the move to spark more Argentina celebrations.

French coach Didier Deschamps had seen enough and with Argentina dominant, he felt the need to change. Mbappe had been ineffective against Morocco in the semi-final until he was moved to the centre. Deschamps did the same here, replacing Olivier Giroud and Dembele with Thuram and Kolo Muani.

But it was the substitutions he made in the 70th minute Kingsley Coman for an ineffective Antoine Griezmann and midfielder Eduardo Camavinga for left-back Theo Hernandez that changed the complexion of the game. Ultimately, though, it only served to make this an enthralling final. They couldn't join Italy of 1938 or Brazil of 1962 in defending the World Cup.

The long night was Argentina's.

Courtesy: Dawn

Patron:
Ms. Seema Mughal
Vice Chancellor
Editor:
Dr. Sabir Ahmed
Assistant Professor
Graphics & Layout:
Shazia Anwar

Greenwichians interested
in contributions!
Shoot an email to the editor,
including your name,
roll number and your work at
drsabir@greenwich.edu.pk

Greenwich  *University*

Greenwich University, DK-10, 38th Street, Darakshan, Phase VI,
Defence Housing Authority, Karachi-75500, Pakistan
UAN: (021)111-202-303; Tel: (021) 35840397-98; Fax: (021)35851910
Email: gu@greenwich.edu.pk ; URL: www.greenwich.edu.pk