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President, Election Commission agree on holding general polls on Feb 8

ECP suggests three dates to President regarding 2024 general elections

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi and the Election Commission of Pakistan on Thursday reached a consensus for holding the general elections in the country on February 8, 2024.

The agreement on the election date was reached in a meeting between President Alvi and Chief Election Commissioner of Pakistan Sikandar Sultan Raja, who called on the president along with the Attorney General for Pakistan Mansoor Usman Awan and four ECP members.

"On today's order of the Supreme Court of Pakistan, the Chief Election Commissioner of Pakistan, Sikandar Sultan Raja, along with the Attorney General

for Pakistan, Mansoor Usman Awan, and four members of the Election Commission of Pakistan, came to meet President Dr Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, to discuss the date for holding the forthcoming General Elections in the country," a President House statement said.

In the meeting, President Alvi heard about the progress the Election Commission had made in delimitation and elections.

"After a detailed discussion, the meeting unanimously agreed to hold General Elections in the country on 8th February 2024," the statement added.

Meanwhile The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Thursday

suggested 'three dates' to President Dr Arif Alvi for 2024 general elections.

According to details, a delegation led by the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) called on President Dr Arif Alvi at President House and the meeting continued for an hour.

The commission suggested to President three dates including January 28, January 4 and February 11 for general elections in the country.

It emerged that the commission would present the details of the important meeting to the top court tomorrow.

The date prescribed by President Alvi would also be presented before the top court.



ISLAMABAD: President, Dr. Arif Alvi exchanging views with Sikandar Sultan Raja, Chief Election Commissioner of Pakistan along with the Mansoor Usman Awan, Attorney General for Pakistan and four members of the Election Commissioner of Pakistan during meeting held at Aiwan-e-Sadr in Islamabad.

CM says strategies being devised to overcome street crime, dacoit culture

KARACHI (APP): Caretaker Sindh Chief Minister Justice (R) Maqbool Baqar Thursday said that the government was putting all its efforts into overcoming the menace of street crime in Karachi and the dacoits in the Riverine area. "A foolproof strategy is being devised and I am sure that the innovative and trusted mechanism will succeed in the culmination of dacoit culture from the remaining parts of the province," he concluded.

This he said while addressing the participants of the National Defence University 25th Security Workshop led by NDU head Major General Raza Azaid.

The participants include current and former members of provincial as-

semblies, senators, senior civil and military officers, academicians, as well as representatives of civil society.

Provincial caretaker ministers, Chief Secretary Dr Fakhre Alam, IG Police Rifat Mukhtar and provincial secretaries attended the program. The CM said that the purpose of such trips, was to acquaint participants with the realities of the area they were visiting, exchange ideas with respect to security challenges and build synergistic alliances that allow us to find solutions to shared problems.

"We are a country of over 200 million people, and by 2025 we will have 100 million people in the middle class, thus, making Pakistan's middle class the 10th largest in

the world," he said and added that one of the major challenges for any government was to create opportunities and to particularly provide our youth with avenues for fulfillment and self-actualization. Justice Baqar said that keeping in view the nexus between security and development, the federal and the Sindh governments were utilising significant resources towards improving access to education and healthcare, improving connectivity and ensuring the provision of basic amenities particularly for the inhabitants of cosmopolitan cities like Karachi in order to cater for the long-awaited demand/need of the particular and working women, especially with respect to public transport.

PM directs Information Ministry to resolve issue of advertisement dues

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Thursday assured the Pakistan Broadcasters Association (PBA) of payment of advertisement dues and directed the Information Ministry to resolve the issue as soon as possible.

He was talking to a PBA delegation, which called on him. During the meeting, matters relating to the media, especially electronic media, came under discussion.

The delegation informed the prime minister about the issue of outstanding dues on account of government advertisements.

Highlighting the importance of the media, the prime minister said that being the fourth pillar of

state, the media was of utmost importance for the development of society, and the mental and intellectual training of people.

He said the protection of advertisement dues and the rights of the media representatives was also responsibility of the state.

PM Kakar said that through effective and coordinated communication between the government and the media, the public could stay informed about government policies and initiatives.

He said the media played a key role in good governance and accountability of government performance. He expressed the hope that the media would continue to play its role in the stability of democracy through impartial reporting.



KARACHI: Sindh Governor Kamran Khan Tessori addressing to members of National Security Workshop at governor house.

Caretaker Federal Minister for Finance held meeting with IMF review Mission

ISLAMABAD (Online): Caretaker Federal Minister for Finance, Revenue & Economic Affairs Dr. Shamshad Akhtar held a meeting with IMF review Mission led by IMF Chief Mr. Nathan Porter at Finance Division, today.

The meeting was attended by IMF resident representative Ms. Esther Perez Ruiz, Governor SBP Mr. Jamil Ahmed, Chairman FBR, Chairman SECP, Secretary Finance, members of IMF delegation, and senior officers from Finance Division.

The caretaker Minister for Finance, Revenue, & Economic Affairs Dr. Shamshad Akhtar welcomed the delegation and shared progress on the Standby Arrangement (SBA). The Minister briefed the Mission on fiscal measures being taken by the Government to improve the economic situation. The meeting also included

discussions on comprehensive reforms and measures undertaken by FBR and the Government's strategies to address the circular debt issue.

Mr. Nathan Porter, IMF Mission Chief, appreciated the Government's commitment to meeting the 1st Quarter targets, and commended the Government's efforts and measures taken in some critical areas. He further underscored the importance of continuation of these efforts for staying on track for economic stability of the country.

The Minister Dr. Shamshad Akhtar expressed her appreciation for the continued support and assistance of the IMF. She reaffirmed the Government's commitment to working closely with the IMF to ensure successful completion of the SBA and achieve the economic objectives.



KARACHI: Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) Chief, Maulana Fazal-ur-Rehman along with others leaders joints hand with each other to express solidarity on stage during the Al-Aqsa Palestine Conference against Israeli cruel and inhuman acts and express unity with the innocent people of Palestine, held at Shahrah-e-Quaideen road in Karachi.

All 25 towns of Karachi should be on same page to work for the city: Mayor

KARACHI (APP): Karachi Mayor Barrister Murtaza Wahab has said that development work is going on in all the seven districts of Karachi and all the 25 towns of Karachi should be on the same page and work for the city.

Wahab made the remarks while addressing the foundation stone laying ceremony for the construction of the Paver Block Road in Sachal Goth on Thursday. "Every member of the PPP has promised that we will fulfill the promises made to the people," he said. Wahab said that the residents of Sachal Goth will benefit from the construction of one and a half kilometer two-way road in the town at a cost of 300 million rupees.

"We are also solving the problem of drainage in the area, which is fulfilling another promise of ours," he said. Deputy Mayor Karachi Salman Abdullah Murad and other leaders were also with Wahab on this occasion. In a separate statement, Wahab said that today he was standing in Safoora Town where the residents of Sachal Goth were facing the problem of drainage system and damaged road.

"Today we have laid the foundation stone for the construction of the road and will complete the road including correcting sewage system very soon, which will provide a lot of convenience to the people and solve their long-standing problem," he said.



ISLAMABAD: A delegation of the Pakistan Broadcasters' Association called on caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.

PPP chief felicitates newly elected PBA office bearers

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari Thursday extended congratulations to all newly elected office-bearers of the Pakistan Broadcasters Association (PBA) on their success.

He felicitated the newly elected PBA President Shakeel Masood, General Secretary Mian Amir Mehmood, Senior Vice Chairman Mir Ibrahim Rehman, Vice Chairman Ahmed

Zuberi, Joint Secretary Athar Qazi and Finance Secretary Ghulam Nabi Morai and expressed best wishes, said a press release issued here.

"I hope the newly elected office-bearers of PBA will play their full role in promoting freedom of expression and freedom of press in the country," he said, adding that PPP would stand by the side of PBA, as always, for the progress of the media sector and solutions to the problems faced by it.



ISLAMABAD: Head of Mission of Afghanistan Sardar Ahmad Shekib called on Caretaker Federal Minister for Interior Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti.

More than 165,000 Afghans leave Pakistan in a month: officials

TORKHAM (INP): More than 165,000 undocumented Afghans have fled Pakistan since Islamabad issued an ultimatum to 1.7 million people a month ago to leave or face deportation, officials said Thursday.

Just over 129,000 have fled from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, the provincial home department said, while a total of 38,100 have crossed through Chaman in Balochistan, border officials informed.

The majority rushed to the border in the past several days as the November 1 deadline approached and police began to open up dozens of holding centres to detain arrested Afghans.

Officials at the country's busiest border point at Torkham in

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province worked into the early hours of Thursday morning to clear a queue of 28,000 people that stretched for seven kilometres.

"Illegal Afghans arrived at Torkham in heavy numbers because of the deadline... People can still return voluntarily but today only 1,000 are present at the border," Abdul Nasir Khan, deputy commissioner of the border district said.

Pakistan's Interior Minister Sarfraz Bugti last Thursday said that the expulsion plan for illegal foreign immigrants has been finalized.

Holding centres have been set up in all provinces to keep illegal foreign nationals.

PM Kakar to attend ECO summit in Uzbekistan: FO

ISLAMABAD (INP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar will pay an official visit to Tashkent, Uzbekistan to attend in the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) summit, the FO spokesperson confirmed on Thursday.

During the summit, the prime minister will reaffirm Pakistan's commitment to ECO vision 2025 and promotion of cooperation in the areas of trade, transport, connectivity, energy, tourism and economic growth and productivity, Foreign Office Spokesperson Muntaz Zahra Baloch said in her weekly news briefing in Islamabad.

On the occasion, the prime minister will present Pakistan's vision for the future work of the organization and promotion of regional connectivity and mutual prosperity. Premier Kakar will also engage in bilateral discussions with the leadership of Uzbekistan and other participating leaders. Regarding repatriation plan of the illegal foreigners, the foreign office spokesperson said this applies to all foreigners residing illegally in Pakistan irrespective of their nationality and country of origin.

Pak-Qatar Navies bilateral exercise MUHARIB-AL-BAHR concludes

KARACHI (INP): The 6th edition of bilateral exercise MUHARIB-AL-BAHR between Pakistan Navy Special Service Group (SSG(N)) and Qatari Naval Special Forces (QNSF) was conducted at Karachi. The exercise was conducted annually alternatively at Pakistan and Qatar.

The two weeks long exercise comprised of various operations such as Frogman Ops, coordinated Maritime Interdiction Operations, Ship Visit-Board-Search & Seizure (SVBSS) Procedures, Sniper Weapon Firing, Day & Night Counter Terrorism Training, Close Quarter Combat (CQC) at Ship in a Box Mockup and Fast Rope Insertion Extraction Techniques (FRIETS).

The exercise was aimed at strengthening military relationship and improving coordination and interoperability between Pakistan Navy Special Service Group (SSG(N)) and Qatari Naval Special Forces (QNSF).



KARACHI: Pakistan Navy Special Service Group and Qatari Naval Special Forces demonstrating Counter Piracy Operation during Joint Naval Exercise MUHARIB-AL-BAHR VI, held in Karachi.

Govt playing key role to promote country's soft image effectively: Jamal

ISLAMABAD (INP): Minister for National Heritage & Culture Jamal Shah Thursday said that the interim government was playing a key role in promoting the country's soft image effectively at the international level and connecting people of various countries with their rich cultures.

"Pakistani nation is hospitable and has cultural values which we need to highlight the correct image of the country at national and international levels", Jamal Shah said while talking to a private news chan-

nel. Pakistan has a rich and diverse cultural heritage which can be promoted to attract maximum tourists, he said, adding that there is a dire need for complete mapping and categorization of cultural sites including those of religious to ensure their preservation.

The Federal government is ready to extend all possible support for the provinces on this matter, he added. He further explained that our regional languages, literature, culture and art defined the identity of a nation and the government.

Crackdown to be launched against fake CNICs holders: Sarfraz Bugti

ISLAMABAD (INP): Caretaker Interior Sarfraz Ahmad Bugti has said that the government would launch a crackdown against the holders of fake Computerized National Identity Cards (CNICs).

Interacting with a private television channel on Thursday, he said the law enforcement agencies were taking action against non-registered and illegal foreigners living in Pakistan since long.

Sarfraz Bugti further stated that we will welcome foreigners in Pakistan with valid documents.

Pakistan's total liquid foreign reserves reach at \$ 12.57 bln

KARACHI (APP): The total liquid foreign reserves of Pakistan stood at US\$ 12,576.6 million while the central bank held the reserves of \$ 7,507.8 million.

The State Bank of Pakistan, in a statement issued here on Thursday, informed that SBP's reserves increased by US\$ 14 million to US\$ 7,507.8 million during the week ended on October 27, 2023.

Meanwhile, net foreign reserves held by commercial banks stood at \$ 5,068.8 million, it added.

Total liquid foreign reserves held by the country, in the previous week ending on October 20, 2023, were US\$ 12,655.6 million.

Daily Voice of Masses Independent

No respite

Today, Nov 2, is observed worldwide as the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists. It is a day when attention turns to the extreme pressures and injustices journalists face in the line of duty. The context in which it will be observed this year in Pakistan is quite grim.

On the eve of the occasion, Absar Alam, former chief of the country's electronic media regulator, made a damning statement before the Supreme Court alleging that a senior ISI officer, as well as his subordinates, attempted to control and coerce the media through Pemra during Mr Alam's tenure. The tactics employed included reducing the visibility of TV channels that refused to toe the state's line and seeking penalties against TV commentators who were critical of the state. There are many in the industry who will attest to the fact that the climate of repression that prevailed during retired Lt-Gen Faiz Hameed's time at ISI's helm was one of the worst experienced by Pakistani media. The former spy chief gained notoriety for pressuring Pakistani media in ways never seen or heard before, including with direct threats. His methods were unusually brutish. At one point, he vowed to 'destroy' this publication and made good on that threat by blocking Dawn's circulation and advertisements.

Access to Dawn's sister television channel, DawnNews, was repeatedly disrupted in connivance with cable operators across the country. Other news outlets, such as Geo News, faced persecution in very similar ways.

The financial consequences for ordinary journalists working in these organisations were immense and painful to bear. Unfortunately, Gen Hameed's tactics seem to have found enduring favour under the present regime as well. All of the Pakistani media's challenges can obviously not be attributed to one individual or institution. The government's lack of commitment to journalists' protection deserves equal blame. Though Pakistan became the first country to enact laws for the protection of journalists under the PTI, the Freedom Network noted this week that it has failed to mitigate the prevalence of crimes against journalists despite doing so. Eleven journalists have been slain since the law was passed, while journalists continue to face kidnapping, physical assault and harassment through legal cases. The data available shows that no place in the country is safe for journalists anymore — not even the federal capital. Everywhere, journalists are being targeted for their work with impunity. No murder or disappearance seems to be adequately investigated, and the perpetrators are, therefore, never brought to book. This culture of impunity is what allows the cycle of violence to repeat itself. It is unlikely to stop till the federal and provincial governments provide more means and resources to the various bodies set up to look after journalists' rights and protect them from violence. They must act now.

Reforming at gunpoint



Khurram Husain

This could be a case study in how not to do things. Common sense tells us that when problems are left to fester for long, they can grow in scale and complexity. Having postponed inevitable adjustments for long periods of time, a moment arrives when the necessary adjustment has to be undertaken in panic, in a short period of time, without the luxury of staggering out its impact, or embedding it within a larger package of reform measures.

This is exactly what has happened with the recent gas price hikes. It is hard to tell whether the hikes applied so far are enough to arrest the growth of the circular debt in the gas sector.

My hunch is no, it is not, and more hikes may need to be applied in the future. But even without that, what has happened in the gas sector is almost a case study in how not to do things.

It has been known since at least the early 1990s that Pakistan's domestic gas supplies would peak somewhere close to the year 2010. By the early 2000s, these were no longer projections, but empirical facts that were coming into view, about the moment when domestic gas supplies would enter their period of decline. That is why the Musharraf regime mobilised to commence LNG imports, arranging a full package involving a long-term contract and a regasification terminal.

We all know what happened with that: the court assumed corruption was involved, halted the deal, and Pakistan had to

wait another decade before another LNG import deal could be signed and activated. The second one was also made the subject of frivolous corruption allegations, but thankfully (for the country) those allegations did not halt LNG imports.

From when they started, in 2015, imports of LNG have grown nearly tenfold, and at the present rates of growth, imported LNG will soon surpass domestic gas in the system. And with this growth comes pricing pressure.

Pakistan's gas reserves went into decline around 2010. The crippling shortages in the years leading up to the commencement of LNG imports are remembered by all those who lived through them. From that point onwards, it was known and clear to all that gas pricing would have to change in Pakistan. For decades, we had been lying to ourselves with our gas pricing.

By pricing it at nearly throwaway values, we had been telling ourselves that gas is abundant and cheap, whereas in reality it was scarce and precious. Having squandered this vital resource, we have been faced with the unpleasant prospect of repricing gas for well over a decade now. But that wasn't done.

There was more than a decade in which to make crucial decisions about natural gas. These included pricing, and in addition, allocations. Who will get how much gas at what price? There were at least five major stakeholders in this decision: fertiliser, power generation, textiles, vehicular CNG and domestic consumers. There was a decade and a half in which to get a new pricing regime in place, and allow that pricing regime to reallocate gas among the various stakeholders.

None of that was done. What happened,

instead, was that fresh supplies via imported LNG were arranged and the vehicular CNG stakeholders were thrown overboard, mainly because they lacked the organised clout that the other industry stakeholders had. For a while, this worked. Then in 2022 the PTI government undertook crucial pricing reform, bringing in what was called the Weighted Average Cost of Gas (WACOG).

The past two years have seen relentless price shocks administered to the economy. There was the withdrawal of the fuel subsidies, the power tariff hikes, the devaluations, the interest rate hikes, and now the gas price increases. It is not yet clear whether these shocks have now ended or more are yet to come.

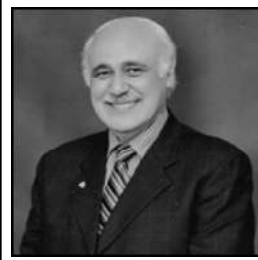
What is clear, however, is that running an economy in constant crisis and firefighting mode means the reform agenda becomes subsumed under the required adjustments.

What ought to have been a reform moment, a time to take stock and devise a package of policies to steer the economy towards a more sustainable direction, has become little more than a moment to swallow one bitter pill after another in an effort to get prices right after a decade of avoiding crucial decisions.

Reforms are not firefighting measures. These relentless price shocks are not setting the economy on the right path. All they are doing is stabilising the ship, and hopefully those running the show can see how difficult that task is. The real reforms come later.

But for that moment to arrive, the country cannot be under an interim government. -- Courtesy Dawn

'Death's dominion'



F.S. Aijazuddin

Anyone hoping to understand Pakistan's politics needs to believe implicitly in miracles. He must admit that resurrections can occur and could happen again, and that a sea of adversity was parted once and would divide itself again. The return of Mian Nawaz Sharif to Paki-tan on Oct 21 is nothing short of miraculo-us. Every legal obstruction is being removed from his path, hinting at neo-divine intervention.

To his PML-N followers, Nawaz Sharif is akin to a modern Moses promising to lead them into a Promised Land, with his brother Aaron by his side. A Jewish rabbi identified the differences between the two brothers as: "Aaron comforted the people. He spoke soothingly. He was the calm in the wake of the storm. Moses, by contrast, was the thunder within it."

Those with a penchant for parallels will notice how neatly these cloaks fit the brothers — Nawaz, a man with a mission, if only to clear his name; Shabbaz the ambitious surrogate, the conciliator prepared to make peace even with a pharaoh.

Both will need to navigate a course carefully through the foreseeable turmoil leading up to the next elections and, more critically, the predictable mayhem that will follow the declaration of results, whenever.

Before previous elections, the PML-N team studied Theodore White's analysis of the US presidential elections: The Making of the Presi-

dent 1960 (1961), and its sequels on the 1964, 1968 and 1972 jousts. From them, the PML-N culled a strategy of focusing on marginal constituencies. Safe seats were already in the bag. It was the undecided who needed PML-N's help to make up their minds for them.

Today, one is not aware of a similar tactical plan developed by any of the political parties. They are relying on the broad blunderbuss approach to the more specific precision of the rifle.

The elections of December 1970 have been touted as the high-water-mark of 'free and fair' polls. After its waters had subsided, though, the resultant bedlam led to vivisection of a single Pakistan and the emergence of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Mujibur Rahman as elected supremos in its residual West and East.

At the time, a victorious Indra Gandhi resisted the temptation to absorb East Paki-tan into a larger Akhand Bharat. She had enough Muslims within India to contend with.

Fifty years later, the Indians and Bang-la-deshis have collaborated again, this time on a newly released film Mujib: The Making of a Nation, an Indian-Bangladeshi co-production directed by Shyam Benegal. It has been sponsored by Mujib's daughter, the current PM Sheikh Hasina.

Like Gurinder Chadha's eminently watchable Viceroy's House (2017) — a cinema-drama recounting the events of 1947 — Benegal's biopic is unlikely to be shown in Pakistan. Neither Bangladesh, nor Pakistan, nor India have fully excoriated the demons in their common past.

The crowd that greeted Mujibur Rahman when he stood with Bhutto in Shalimar Gardens, Lahore, during the Islamic Sum-mit of 1974,

is in its dotage. It can hardly remember Bhutto, leave alone Mujib.

In 1995, a post-apartheid South Africa taught the world the cathartic benefit of forgiveness. Its Truth and Reconciliation Com-mission enabled black, white and coloured South Africans "to come to terms with their past on a morally accepted basis".

In 1945-46, the vengeful Allies gave the world the Nuremberg trials. Their purpose went beyond conviction of Nazi-tainted defendants. It was "to offer a history lesson to the defeated Germans, and delegitimise the traditional German elite".

As no war is one-sided, "the judges were aw---are that both the Allies and the Axis had pl--anned or com--m--itted acts of ag--gression". They wrote "the verdict careful--ly to avoid discrediting either the Allied governments or the tribunal". The verdict declared the plotting and waging of an aggressive war "the supreme in--ternational crime" because it contained "wi--thin itself the accumulated evil of the whole".

Will Israel, after it has obliterated the last particle of Palestine, submit itself to international accountability? Unlike the Jews who survived World War II to savour the cold revenge of the Nuremberg trials, the Palestinians have only the ghosts of their dead to draw upon to indict Israel.

Poets like Dylan Thomas sing what victims can only stutter: "Though they be mad and dead as nails, / Heads of the characters hammer through daisies, / Break in the sun till the sun breaks down, / And death shall have no dominion." Death continues to exercise dominion — now over Palestine, where harvests are drip-fed with the blood of Abraham. -- Courtesy Dawn

Commerce News

Brunei Darussalam can take benefit from Pakistan's investor-friendly policies: Sanjrani

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman of the Senate, Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani, said on Thursday that Pakistan's investor-friendly policies make it an attractive prospect for potential investments from Brunei Darussalam in various sectors such as energy, agriculture, and education.

The chairman expressed these views during a meeting with the High Commissioner of Brunei Darussalam who

paid a courtesy call to the Chairman of the Senate, as stated in a news release.

During the meeting, both sides called for further strengthening existing relations, particularly in the areas of trade, business, investment, and the economic sector.

Sadiq Sanjrani, congratulated High Commissioner PG Kamal Bashah PG Ahmed on his appointment and extended his heartfelt best wishes for his role in strengthening

ties between the two countries.

The meeting was marked by a strong sense of optimism and hope for an enhancement in diplomatic ties between Pakistan and Brunei Darussalam.

Sanjrani, expressed his confidence that this appointment would contribute to the strengthening of relations between the two nations.

During the comprehensive discussion,

the two sides delved into the prevailing regional situation and addressed issues of mutual interest.

Pakistan and Brunei Darussalam's strong bilateral relations, deeply rooted in shared religious values and cooperation, were also highlighted.

Both dignitaries emphasized the need to further bolster these relations, particularly in areas of trade, business, investment, and the economic sector.



ISLAMABAD: Dr. Tauqeer Hussain Shah, the Executive Director (designate) World Bank called on the Minister for Finance, Revenue and Economic Affairs, Dr. Shamshad Akhtar at the Ministry of Finance to bid fare-well upon the end of his assignment in the country.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate, Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani exchanging views with Group of AJK Businessmen from UK led by Raja Naveed Akhtar Goga and Chairman District Council Mirpur during meeting held at Parliament House in Islamabad.

Mobilink Bank witnesses a 38% growth in lending to MSMEs

ISLAMABAD: Mobilink Bank exhibited significant growth in the first three quarters of 2023, as evidenced by the Q3 financial statements. This milestone highlights the Bank's dedication to supporting Micro, Small, and Medium-Sized Enterprises (MSMEs), supported by substantial deposit growth and improvements on multiple indicators. Mobilink Bank's Q3 2023 growth trajectory exemplifies its commitment to embracing a holistic approach that goes beyond profitability, focusing on providing innovative, value-driven solutions tailored to foster

economic well-being and prosperity for all while addressing the evolving needs of its borrowers.

Mobilink Bank is part of the VEON group, a global digital operator that provides converged connectivity and online services across seven countries.

As part of its digital operator strategy, VEON is transforming people's lives by creating opportunities for increased digital inclusion and by driving economic growth across countries that are home to more than 8% of the world's population.

Mobilink Bank's total revenue surged by 64% in Q3 2023,

demonstrating its strong customer attraction and retention capabilities. During this period, the Bank's Profit Before Tax (PBT) experienced a growth of 299% compared to 2022, solidifying its standing as a leading digital microfinance institution.

The Bank's deposits experienced a 16% increase from FY 2022, reaching PKR 75 billion. The core banking deposits grew by 12% compared to the previous year, reaching PKR 23 billion, while JazzCash segment deposits powered by Mobilink bank increased by 19%, reaching PKR 52 billion in Q3 2023.

10 million employed in cottage industry need to be protected: Irfan

Independent Report KARACHI: Mr. Irfan Iqbal Sheikh, President FPCCI, has emphasized that the government policies should protect, emancipate and enable cottage industry in Pakistan as it employs 10



million people in the country — bridging a massive employment gap left out by other sectors and industries.

It is pertinent to note that FPCCI's Standing Committee on Cottage Industry organized a high-profile meeting on the burning issues of cottage industry, which was well-attended and well-represented from across Sindh province.

Mr. Irfan Iqbal Sheikh explained that, as matter of fact, there are

many developed and quickly developing economies in the world who built their socio-economic transformation; import substitution capacities and GDP per Capita growth on the basis of a



large number of diverse cottage industries. China, India, Bangladesh and Brazil are some of the glaring examples of the power of the cottage industry, he added.

Mr. Irfan Iqbal Sheikh informed that the World Bank research shows that MSMEs generate 50 percent of all employment in the world; and, they are involved in 90 percent of all economic activities — one way or the other.

Dr. Umar urges Saudia to facilitate Pakistani IT companies in travel, visas

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for IT and Telecommunication Dr. Umar on Thursday urged the Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to Pakistan Nawaf bin Said Al-Malki to facilitate Pakistani IT professionals and business persons in travel and issuing of visas.

The minister expressed these views during a meeting with the ambassador who called on him. Matters of mutual interest and related to IT and Telecommunication

were also discussed, said a news release.

The two sides agreed to enhance cooperation in the IT and telecom sectors between the two countries.

Dr. Umar Saif said that the Government of Pakistan wanted to boost relations with Saudi Arabia in the IT and telecom sectors.

Saudi Arabia is a very attractive market for Pakistani IT companies, he added.

He said as Pakistani IT companies scale up their presence and businesses in

Saudi Arabia, it's important to facilitate their travel and issuance of visas.

The minister said that there was great potential for IT and Telecom professionals in Pakistan and the environment for investment in the country was conducive, urging the Saudi tech companies to invest in Pakistan.

Saudi Ambassador Nawaf bin Said Al-Malki said that Saudi Arabia will fully cooperate with Pakistan in the IT sector and Telecom.

UAF to launch wheat campaign from Nov 7

FAISALABAD (APP): University of Agriculture Faisalabad (UAF) in collaboration with Punjab Agriculture (Extension) Department will launch eight-day wheat campaign from November 07 to November 14, 2023.

UAF Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Iqbal Ahmad Khan while chairing deans committee said that more than 330,000 UAF students would visit farmers' fields in six divisions of the Punjab as the drive would be started to disseminate experts' recommendations to increase per acre productivity.

WAPDA signs Rs705m agreement for consultancy services of Naulong Dam

ISLAMABAD (INP): Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) on Thursday signed an agreement valuing Rs. 705 million for consultancy services of Naulong Dam project with a joint venture comprised of two firms — Dolsar of Turkey and Mott MacDonald of Pakistan. The agreement was signed by General Manager (Projects) South Muhammad Masood Ahmed Soomro and International Projects Coordinator of Dolsar Cem

Aker on behalf of WAPDA and the joint venture respectively. The consultancy contract relates to review and update the detailed design, prepare procurement documents, and update the safeguard documents of the project, said a statement issued. As per the contract, these tasks will be completed in 28 months. The Asian Development Bank was providing financial assistance for consultancy services of Naulong Dam Project.

Naqvi imposes ban on cleaning of schools by students across Punjab

Independent Report
LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi conducted a comprehensive inspection at the Government Junior Model High School Model Town. The conditions observed were deeply concerning; several classrooms lacked furniture, forcing students to study on the bare floor. The washrooms were unclean and devoid of water, and the electric water coolers were malfunctioning. Broken furniture, damaged whiteboards, dilapidated doors and windows without glass and grilles

further contributed to the dismal state of the classrooms. Similarly, there was only one sweeper available for a student population of 750. In addition to these issues, sports activities were suspended, classrooms exhibited peeling paint and cobwebs, lighting was inadequate, and some fans were inoperable. Both the computer and science labs were found to be non-functional and in poor condition, respectively. The CM went to every classroom, engaging with the students to understand their concerns.

The students voiced grievances about the absence of clean drinking water, insufficient water in washrooms, broken furniture, and damaged whiteboards. They also highlighted issues such as dim lighting, non-functional fans, the absence of sports activities, and the necessity to purchase textbooks from the market. The chief minister also interacted with nursery class children, expressing his commitment to providing them with essential educational facilities and instructing for their prompt provision.

The CM expressed dissatisfaction upon witnessing the deplorable conditions and summoned Education Minister Mansoor Qadir, secretary schools, secretary C&W and the CEO district education authority to the school to rectify these issues. Acknowledging the gravity of the situation, CM Naqvi took stringent action and prohibited students from undertaking the responsibility of cleaning schools across Punjab, directing the secretary school education department to issue a notification for strict compliance today.



LAHORE: Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman in a group photo with participants of 7th International Health Professions Education Conference at University of Lahore.



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Haji Ghulam Ali inaugurates main campus site of the University of Technology adjacent to motorway near Rashkai Interchange in Nowshera.

Governor lays foundation stone of APS Martyrs University of Technology

PESHAWAR (APP): Addressing the ceremony, the governor said that he was pleased to inaugurate the varsity that would prove to be milestone in educating youth in new emerging fields of technologies. He said that location of university in proximity to Rashakai Industrial Zone would provide students ample chances to experience working of various types of technologies practically. Ghulam Ali also directed to complete the project at the earliest and said that the design should be modern.

First phase of Raiwind Tablighi Ijtema begins

LAHORE (APP): The first phase of the annual congregation, 'Raiwind Tablighi Ijtema' started on Thursday, amid tight security arrangements. The Ijtema 2023 will continue from Nov 2 to November 5. According to Ijtema administration, districts and areas participating in the first phase are Kark, Bannu, Lucky Marwat, Dir, Bajaur, Timargarah, Chitral, Rawalpindi, Jhelum, Attock, Tala Gang, Chakwal, Sargodha, Khushab, Bhakkar, Mianwali, all districts of Kashmir and all districts of Sindh province, except for Karachi.

World cannot remain indifferent to the plight of Palestinians: Governor

Independent Report
LAHORE: Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman said that all human beings are connected to one another. The world can not remain indifferent to the plight of Palestinians. The way innocent men, women and innocent children are being martyred in Gaza by bombing of refugee camps, hospitals, and civilian population is not only sad but shameful. The international community should play a role in stopping the oppression of innocent Palestinians. He expressed these views while speaking as a special guest at the Health Professionals Education Conference at University of Lahore today. In the conference, the Caretaker provincial Health Minister, Prof. Dr. Javed Akram and vice chancellors of medical universities and foreign delegates were present.

PUC appeals to observe 'Children's Martyrs Day of Palestine' nationwide

LAHORE (APP): The Pakistan Ulema Council (PUC) on Thursday appealed for the observance of 'Children's Martyrs Day of Palestine' throughout the country on Friday, underscoring the importance of addressing the Palestinian issue through the establishment of a free and independent state. Addressing a press conference at Jamia Manzoor-ul-Islamia, PUC Chairman Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi, clarified to the United Nations that the issue of

Palestine would not be resolved through ceasefire and aid but rather through the establishment of a self-determined Palestinian state. He said in a notable meeting with the Palestinian ambassador, Chief of Army Staff, General Syed Asim Munir affirmed Pakistan's commitment to stand shoulder to shoulder with the Palestinian people, emphasizing that the government, armed forces, and the general populace of Pakistan were resolute in their support for the Palestinian people.

He commended the Saudi government's initiative to establish official funds for aiding the Palestinian population, reflecting the strong stance of Saudi Arabia in supporting their Palestinian brethren. He urged Pakistan to follow suit and establish special funds at the government level to assist the Palestinian people. Ashrafi who is also the Special Representative to the Prime Minister on Religious Harmony and Pakistani Diaspora in the Middle East and Islamic Countries.

Smog may cause throat, lungs, respiratory system complications: Minister

Independent Report
LAHORE: Caretaker Punjab Minister for Primary and Secondary Healthcare Dr. Jamal Nasir has warned that smog can lead to diseases of throat, lungs, and respiratory system, and urged the public to take preventive measures. He advised citizens to wear masks to protect themselves from smog and also recommended frequent hand, face, and eye washing to mitigate its harmful effects. In case of a scratchy throat, he suggested gargling with lukewarm water. The Punjab government has taken action to combat smog by making it mandatory to spray water near construction sites and development projects. Furthermore, farmers have been encouraged to refrain from burning crop residues and dispose of them in an environmentally friendly manner.

Brother in law shoots Basharat Dogar

BUREWALA (APP): Well-known political and social personality Basharat Ali Dogar was allegedly shot dead by his brother-in-law over financial matters in the limits of Sheikh Fazal police station on Thursday. Police sources said that the accused managed to escape from the scene after shooting his brother in law. According to the details, Sardar Basharat Ali Dogar, a well-known political and social figure resident of Chak no 104/E-B was present at his house.

KP Minister pledges financial support to Mental and General Hospital

MANSEHRA (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Transport, Communications, and Construction, Ahmad Jan Khan Thursday has pledged to contribute 50,000 rupees from his monthly salary to the Mental and General Hospital in Daddar, Mansehra. This financial support is aimed at enhancing the hospital's services and

providing better healthcare to the public. The minister expressed these views during his visit to the Mental and General Hospital in Mansehra, where he inaugurated several essential facilities. These facilities included a solar system, a labor room, a dental clinic, and a new X-ray machine, all funded by the hospital management committee.

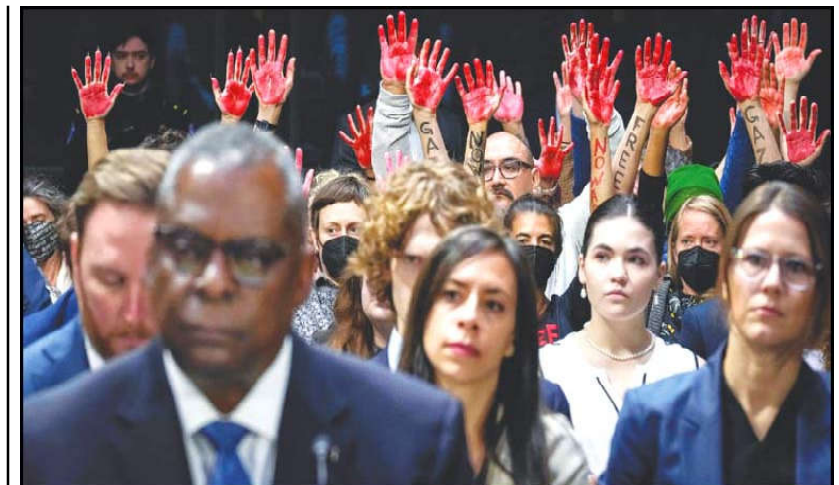
International News

Red hands raised in Congress as US seeks more funds for wars

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: As US secretaries of state and defence began to brief the Senate Appropriations Committee on Tuesday on the Biden administration's request for more money to fund the wars in Israel and Ukraine, a line of anti-war protesters got up and raised red-stained hands in the air. They shouted: "Ceasefire Now, Protect the Children of Gaza and Stop Funding Genocide" before they were removed from the room. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin testified to the Senate Appropriations Committee

on the Biden administration's request for an additional \$106 billion, which includes \$14.3 billion for Israel, \$9 billion for humanitarian relief—including for Israel and Gaza. A press release sent to various media outlets said the protesters were from an organisation called CODEPINK. The organisation said multiple members, including 29-year US Army veteran and former diplomat Col. Ann Wright and peace activist David Barrows, were arrested for their actions. CODEPINK said the red-painted hands of the silent audience members were meant to symbolise blood.

The protesters also said they attended the hearing to denounce the Biden administration's support for "genocide" against Palestinians in Gaza. Secretary Blinken did not respond to the protesters, but when he was asked later about the possibility of a ceasefire, he said that would only help Hamas regroup. A pause, however, for humanitarian reasons can be considered, he added. Also on Tuesday, a prominent Jewish intellectual and New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman wrote in his column, "Israel, it's time to consider a ceasefire".



WASHINGTON: US Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin testifies as protesters calling for a ceasefire in Gaza raise their hands, painted in red, during a Senate Appropriations Committee hearing with Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Austin.

Saudi Arabia tells US it still wants 'normalisation' with Israel, but links talks to 'ceasefire'

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: Saudi Arabia has reassured the Biden administration that it's still interested in pursuing a potential agreement to normalise relations with Israel after the crisis in Gaza ends, the White House said. The visiting Saudi Defence Minister Khalid bin Salman met White House National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan on Monday and their talks focused on the crisis in Gaza as sides affirmed the urgent need to increase humanitarian assistance to the Palestinians, the White House said. "Without getting into specifics — we came away from those discussions confident that we have a path to get back towards

normalisation and that there is an interest on the Saudi side to pursue that," US National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby told reporters in Washington on Tuesday evening. The Saudi defence minister, however, said in a tweet that he stressed for Mr Sullivan the need for an immediate 'ceasefire' in Gaza, protection of civilians, allowing humanitarian aid and resuming the peace process. Mr Kirby acknowledged that the Gaza situation makes it harder to discuss long-term peace plans but said "we are still committed to it, and it is clear to us that the Saudis are still committed to it." The White House said that the Saudis also

"emphasised the importance of working towards a sustainable peace between Israelis and Palestinians, building on the work that was already underway between Saudi Arabia and the United States over recent months." The recent talks between the United States and Saudi Arabia have revolved around the ongoing crisis and the pursuit of potential normalisation of relations between Saudi Arabia and Israel. The later part of the talks is based on the 2020 Abraham Accords, which marked a historic diplomatic breakthrough, normalising relations between Israel and several Arab nations, including the UAE, Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco.

Iran, Turkiye call for 'regional conference' to avert spread of unrest

Monitoring Desk
ANKARA: Turkiye and Iran on Wednesday called for a regional conference aimed at averting the spread of unrest into the Middle East. Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan met counterpart Hossein Amir-Abdollahian a day after Iran's top diplomat met Hamas leaders in Qatar. Fidan said Turkiye was pushing for an immediate ceasefire because "it is not difficult to predict that this spiral of violence will grow" without a permanent solution to the Israel-Palestine issue. "We do not want the human tragedy in Gaza to turn into a war that affects

the region's countries," Fidan said. The Iranian foreign minister "shared with us that there are strong indications that other armed elements in the region may intervene in the conflict if conditions do not change", Fidan said. "A ceasefire and peace have become more essential," Amir-Abdollahian said a peace conference involving "Muslim and Arab" countries should be held "as soon as possible". Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei urged Muslim countries to halt trade with Israel, including oil exports, in response to its bombardment of Gaza.



A man reacts as Palestinians search for casualties a day after Israeli strikes on houses in Jabalia refugee camp in the northern Gaza Strip.

Sheikh Mohamed orders treatment of 1,000 Palestinian children at UAE hospitals

Monitoring Desk
DUBAI: The United Arab Emirates said on Thursday it planned to treat 1,000 Palestinian children from Gaza, without saying how they would leave the Israeli-besieged enclave for the Gulf state. Israel has tightened its blockade and bombed Gaza for nearly four weeks in retaliation for the Oct 7 attack by Hamas that Israeli authorities say killed 1,400. The Gaza health ministry says 8,796 Palestinian, including 3,648 children, have been killed in Israeli strikes since Oct 7.

Gaza's border with Egypt — the only exit point apart from the closed border crossings with Israel — has largely been shut since Oct 7, although several hundred foreign nationals and a small number of injured Palestinians, to be treated in Egyptian hospitals, have crossed into Egypt since Wednesday. Qatar brokered that deal to allow some people to leave Gaza, and a diplomatic source has said some 7,500 foreign passport holders would leave Gaza over the course of about two weeks.

Bolivia cuts ties with Israel over Gaza crisis

Monitoring Desk
LA PAZ: Bolivia said on Tuesday it was severing diplomatic ties with Israel over its "disproportionate" attacks in Gaza, as two other Latin American countries recalled their ambassadors over the mounting humanitarian crisis. Bolivia "has decided to cut diplomatic relations with the State of Israel, in repudiation and condemnation of the aggressive and disproportionate Israeli military offensive being carried out in the Gaza Strip," deputy foreign minister Freddy

Mamani told a press conference. Minister of the Presidency Maria Nela Prada also announced the country was sending humanitarian aid to Gaza. "We demand an end to the attacks" in the Gaza Strip "which have so far caused thousands of civilian deaths and the forced displacement of Palestinians," she said at the same press conference. The government of leftist Luis Arce is the first in Latin America to cut ties with Israel since October 7.

Putin signs bill revoking Russia's ratification of a global nuclear test ban treaty

Monitoring Desk
MOSCOW: President Vladimir Putin on Thursday signed a bill revoking Russia's ratification of a global nuclear test ban, a move that Moscow said was needed to establish parity with the United States. Putin has said that rescinding the ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, also known as the CTBT, would "mirror" the stand taken by the U.S., which has signed but not ratified the nuclear test ban.

Over 400 evacuated to Egypt from Gaza

Monitoring Desk
ISMAILIA: Seventy-six wounded Palestinians and 335 foreigners entered Egypt from the Gaza Strip on Wednesday in first such crossing since the Oct 7 Hamas raid that triggered an ongoing episode of hostilities by Israeli forces in the besieged enclave. A day after an Israeli air strike killed about 50 people and wounded 150

others in Jabalia, another blast shook Gaza's largest refugee camp on Wednesday. Ambulances transported the 76 wounded Palestinians into Egypt and six buses took 335 foreign passport holders who were stuck in Gaza since Israel placed a "total siege" on the Palestinian territory after Hamas's raid early last month, an Egyptian official at the Rafah crossing said.

United States troubled by imminent attack on North Darfur

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: The United States is troubled by reports of an imminent attack on El Fasher, North Darfur, and is calling on the warring parties in Sudan to immediately cease further attacks, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Thursday. "The United States calls on the warring parties to immediately cease further attacks.



Brazil's president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva looks on during a press conference at the Planalto Palace in Brasilia, Brazil.



ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi addressing the 26th Convocation ceremony of the COMSATS University.

President advises youth to play productive role in exponential growth of country

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Thursday called upon the youth and fresh graduates who were about to enter their professional lives, to play their productive role in the country's exponential growth.

He said the country at this stage, badly needed the exponential growth rather than linear growth as it was already far behind the region in many sectors including education.

Addressing the 26th Convocation ceremony of the COMSATS University here, the president believed that if the students in their professional lives, ensure justice in the society, contribute productively in the country's development, and learn to share their resources with the poor, the country would see new heights of prosperity and development.

Today, he said Artificial Intelligence or Computer Science was the second leg of every profession. "The world is running very fast so we must have to run with same pace as the world do." Otherwise,

he said the country would lag further behind the region and the world.

The president said the world was growing exponentially, however Pakistan's growth pace was relatively slower in the region.

He said 9% of total intermediate students manage to get admissions in the higher education while in the region, the ratio was over 25%.

The universities should increase enrollments of the students to achieve exponential growth in the country, he added.

He maintained lack of timely decision was one of the major reason behind slow growth. We lacked vision for example, he said, adding we could not foresee the electricity requirement before time and when the time came, we took emergency decision to install power plants that cost much higher.

The said the neighboring country India announced the data policy in 2012 while Pakistan announced it after a decade in 2022 and that too due to

his personal efforts.

During the ceremony, the president gave away medals to the top position holders and conferred degrees to the successful students in various departments of the university.

President Alvi said the Holy Prophet Muhammad (SA) always taught for seeking knowledge, good training and love for mankind.

Congratulating the successful candidates on getting degrees, he said they had now become elites of the country as around 28 million or 40% children were still out of schools in the country.

He said some 55000 school buildings were required to accommodate all the out of school children in the country which was extremely difficult. Therefore, he said some out of the box solutions were required on emergency basis as these uneducated children at later stage would become a huge burden on the country's economy which would not be able to contribute anything productive for the country.

UN Security Council must act, fulfill its responsibility of upholding peace in Gaza: FO

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan on Thursday stated that UN Security Council must act and fulfill its responsibility of upholding peace in Gaza.

Expressing concerns over the dire situation in Gaza, the Foreign Office (FO) spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch has stated that UN Security Council must act and fulfill its responsibility of upholding peace. She said the world body must call for lifting the siege, protecting civilians and facilitating humanitarian corridors for provision of uninterrupted essential supplies to the beleaguered people of Gaza.

"World body must call for lifting the siege, protecting civilians and facilitating humanitarian corridors for provision of uninterrupted essential supplies to the beleaguered people of Gaza," she reiterated.

Responding a question, he stated that Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar will embark on an official visit to Tashkent, Uzbekistan to participate in the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) Summit commencing on Wednesday next.

At her weekly news briefing, Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz

Zahra Baloch said the Prime Minister, at the summit, will reaffirm Pakistan's commitment to ECO vision 2025 and promotion of cooperation in the areas of trade, transport, connectivity, energy, tourism and economic growth and productivity.

The Prime Minister will present Pakistan's vision for the future work of the organization and promotion of regional connectivity and mutual prosperity.

The Prime Minister will also engage in bilateral discussions with the leadership of Uzbekistan and other participating leaders.

Sanjrani chairs meeting to assess progress, development of IPC

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chairman Senate and Founding President of the International Parliamentarians Congress (IPC), Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani on Thursday presided over a meeting at the Parliament House to assess the progress and developments of IPC.

Thorough and detailed deliberations took place during the meeting, attended by IPC and Senate officials. These deliberations culminated in a decision to proceed with the election of the President of IPC. The official election schedule was set to be announced in December 2023.

The meeting was attended by Secretary Senate, Mohammad Qasim Samad Khan; Secretary General IPC, Sitara Ayaz; Executive

Director PIPS, Muhammad Anwar and Director General Coordination Senate, Mir Shae Mazar Baloch.

This decision to elect a new President marks a significant step forward in IPC's journey to further enhance its role in the global parliamentary community. The upcoming election will ensure the continued dedication and leadership of IPC in facilitating international parliamentary cooperation and diplomacy.

Chairman Senate and Founding President of IPC, Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani, expressed his commitment to the organization's mission and values, emphasizing the importance of transparency, accountability, and inclusivity in the upcoming election process.

PEC presides meeting to review LG by-polls preparations

KARACHI (APP): Provincial Election Commissioner Sindh Ejaz Anwar Chauhan held a meeting at the office of Deputy Commissioner Karachi South on Thursday to review arrangements and preparations for local body by-elections scheduled on November 5.

The meeting was attended by DC South Capt @ Altaf Hussain Sario, Assistant Commissioners,

Police Officials and other relevant participants.

Chauhan directed the officials to ensure the implementation of the security plan, installation of CCTV cameras at sensitive polling stations, and a transportation plan for the deployment of officials during the election.

He also discussed other important agendas related to the by-elections.



KARACHI: Leaders and members of Jamat-e-Islami (JI Women Wing) are holding protest demonstration against Israeli cruel and inhumane acts and express unity with the innocent people of Palestine, held at Nazimabad Five Star roundabout in Karachi.

SHC dismisses plea against Murtaza Wahab's UC election

KARACHI (INP): The Sindh High Court on Thursday heard a petition seeking restraining order against Mayor Murtaza Wahab's contesting elections from various UCs.

The high court directed the petitioner to take the matter to the election tribunal.

Acting Chief Justice Aqeel Abbasi also directed that the tribunal must look

into the objections and decide the matter urgently. "Election is a key issue. These cases should be heard on daily basis," Justice Abbasi observed.

"The matters with regard to the legal flaw, should be heard on priority," court observed. "Unfortunately, election cases used to be heard for years until the time comes for next election," Justice Abbasi said.

PSQCA launches crackdown against substandard manufacturing

KARACHI (APP): Pakistan Standard Quality Control Authority has launched a crackdown against substandard manufacturing and seized the items on the spot.

According to a statement issued here on Thursday, action has been taken on the directives of Director General PSQCA and raids were conducted at Chase Plus, Continental Bakers Gulistan-e-Johar, Home Plus Super Store and Big Buy Store Gulshan Iqbal.

Inspectors of the Pakistan Standard Quality Control Authority collected 17 samples of food and non-food mandatory products of different brands and found most products illegal and non-licensing.

PSQCA teams also seized substandard food and non-food items as per the Authority's Act VI 1996 and notices were issued to the manufacturers for compliance.



KARACHI: Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM-P) Deputy Convener, Anis Ahmad Kaimkhanji along with members of the MQM-P Coordinating Committee Burns Road Town and others visiting to reviewing arrangements for the public communication campaign meeting coming ahead, at Burns Road Town in Karachi.



ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervez Ashraf in a meeting with Mayor of the London Borough of Hounslow Councillor Afzal Kiyani.

Pakistani Diaspora's role in progress of country, an irrefutable reality: Raja

ISLAMABAD (APP): Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervez Ashraf on Thursday said that Pakistani Diaspora around the world had always played pivotal and substantiated role for progress and development of country.

He expressed these views during meeting with the delegation of Pakistani Diaspora under leadership of Mayor of the London Borough of Hounslow Councillor Afzal Kiyani, said a press release issued here.

He also said that ensuring participation of Pakistani Diaspora in development and progress of country had been principle stance of Pakistan People's

Party (PPP). "The proactive role played by Pakistani Diaspora in Pakistani development and progress of the country is an undeniable reality," he added.

While underscoring the significance of highlighting positive image of Pakistan across the world, he said, "Pakistani Diaspora must be committed to ensure highlighting positive image of country."

The speaker also emphasized the need to encourage and enhance the positive and proactive role of Pakistani Diaspora for their inclusion in progress of every socioeconomic segment of country.

US holds key importance being Pakistan's largest trade partner: Dar

ISLAMABAD (INP): Leader of the House in Senate, Mohammad Ishaq Dar was called on by US Ambassador Donald Blome at the Parliament House on Thursday.

Various issues of bilateral interest including the ways and means for further strengthening the enduring relationship between Pakistan and the United States came under discussion during the meeting.

Speaking on the occasion, Senator Ishaq Dar said that the US being Pakistan's largest trade partner holds

key importance and stressed for continued collaboration and cooperation to further enhance the trade and economic ties between the two countries.

The discussions delved into a comprehensive analysis of the ongoing Afghan refugees issue, acknowledging Pakistan's relentless efforts to promote the regional peace.

The Ambassador lauded Pakistani leadership's commitment and contributions in fostering peace and stability in the region.



KARACHI: Police officers detain immigrants, who fail to provide legal documents, during a search operation against illegal immigrants at a neighborhood of Karachi.

Rangers organizes free medical camps in Lyari, Mehmoodabad

KARACHI (APP): Pakistan Rangers Sindh organized free medical camps in Kalakot, Lyari and Chanesar Goth, Mehmoodabad areas of the city.

Free medical facilities were provided to the deserving people of the areas in the camp, said a news release on Thursday.

In the free medical camp, over 5470 patients including women, children

and the elderly were examined by medical specialists, skin specialists, ENT specialists, eye specialists, child specialists, gynecologists, cardiologists, general physicians, gastrologist and Rangers doctors. The patients were also provided free of charge medicines.

Free of charge lab tests including ECG, diabetes, ultrasound, CBC and others were also conducted in the camps.

IHC issues notices to all relevant parties in cipher case

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Thursday issued notices to all relevant parties in the cipher case regarding the intra-court appeal of PTI chairman against his jail trial.

Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb and Justice Saman Rifat Imtiaz heard the intra-court appeal.

At the outset of the hearing, the Additional Attorney General asserted that the judge of the Official Secrets Act court had been appointed following approval by the Federal Cabinet on a summary from the Law Ministry.

DC pays surprise visit to HM Khoja school

HYDERABAD (APP): Deputy Commissioner Zahid Hussain Rind in a surprise visit of HM Khoja DC High School Nawabshah, checked the attendance of teachers and students and asked some questions from students from their syllabus.

Instructing the school headmaster, DC said that all possible steps be adopted to further raise the standard of education while the attendance of teachers and students must be ensured.

DC also advised for improvement in sanitation and cleanliness of the school. He said that students shall be given opportunities in extracurricular activities side by side with curricular activities and prove their capabilities.

Three robbers injured, held after encounter

KARACHI (INP): Three robbers were injured and held with weapons after police encounter in the metropolis on Thursday.

According to details, three robbers present in Steel Town police station jurisdiction for robbery were engaged by police.

The robbers started firing at police and attempted to free from the scene. In retaliatory firing of police, the robbers were injured and held with arms. The detained injured robbers who were considered to be symbol of fear for citizens were shifted to hospital.

Police recovers stolen car, handed over to owner

HYDERABAD (APP): Hyderabad police recovered a stolen car and handed it over to the owner. According to the police spokesperson, a resident of Latifabad Unit Number 5, Nadeem Javed, filed a complaint at the B Section police station few days before, regarding the theft of his car Toyota Corolla with the registration number AUG-789.

Following the complaint, B Section police initiated a search for the stolen vehicle and during Thursday's patrolling, the police found the mentioned car in an abandoned condition.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate, Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani presiding over a meeting regarding review of the Constitution of International Parliamentarians Congress (IPC) held at Parliament House in Islamabad.

Court summons Asif Zardari in Park Lane case

ISLAMABAD (INP): An accountability court (AC) in Islamabad on Thursday summoned former president Asif Ali Zardari and 18 other suspects in Park Lane reference on December 20, 2023.

AC judge Muhammad Bashir heard the case. Speaking on the occasion, counsel for the defendant Arshad Tabrez said that when the agreement had been signed, Zardari was not Park Lane's director.

The judge said right now he would issue notices. "You are asked to give arguments on the next hearing," he said while addressing Tabrez.

Negative impacts of climate change can be lessened via joint efforts: Solangi

ISLAMABAD (INP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Murtaza Solangi has said that negative impacts of the climatic changes can be minimized through collective efforts.

While addressing the "Pre COP28: Paris to Dubai" seminar in Islamabad on Thursday, he said that the future of the coming generations must be secured.

International community needs to come forward for playing role in the countries adversely affected by

climate change, he urged.

Murtaza Solangi said that the planet faced the dangers of climate change and the government, or any department alone could not solve this problem.

"We need a strategic vision to tackle the challenge of climate change," Murtaza Solangi maintained.

The whole society has to realize about climate change issue, Murtaza Solangi said adding: "We are facing many social problems to deal with climate change."

Bachat bazaars banned in Karachi

KARACHI (INP): The district East administration on Thursday banned all bachat bazaars in Karachi district from immediate effect.

The deputy commissioner Karachi West Zone has suspended NOCs for all bachat bazaars across the district. All organisers can get fresh NOCs from the district administration after completing the verification process.

It is pertinent to mention here that the weekly bachat bazaars in Karachi have become a means of providing relief to the people from inflation. In the bachat bazaars, stalls selling used items, shoes, clothes, blankets, utensils, food items, vegetables and fruits are helping the public to cope with inflation.

About 150 bachat bazaars are being set up in Karachi under the NOC of Bureau of Supply and Prices whereas the number of bachat bazaars with the permission of Deputy Commissioners and regional savings bazaars without NOC is around 100.

Dry weather to prevail in Sindh

KARACHI (APP): Pakistan Meteorological Department, Thursday, forecast mainly dry weather in most districts of Sindh province during next 24 hours.

According to the Met Office, the weather remained dry in the province during the previous 24 hours while the lowest temperature was recorded in Mithi where the mercury dipped to 18 degrees Celsius mark.

The minimum temperature in Moen Jo Daro was recorded 19 degrees centigrade, Nawabshah and Sukkur 21 centigrade, Dadu 22 centigrade and minimum temperature in Karachi, Hyderabad and Thatta was recorded 23 centigrade each.

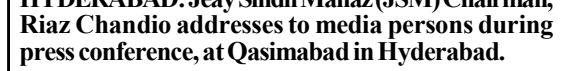
Commissioner Larkana visits Pilot Higher Secondary School Larkana

LARKANA (APP): Commissioner Larkana Abdul Waheed Sheikh visited Government Pilot Higher Secondary School Larkana on Thursday.

He inspected the book fair organized in the school, where different types of books were displayed including religious, science, historical, literary, information technology, general knowledge and other subjects.

The commissioner took keen interest and said that these kinds of fairs should be held so that students and other people can benefit from it.

Sheikh said that this is a healthy motivation for providing books of different subjects to the students on concession rate in this fair, which will help the students for their studies.



HYDERABAD: Jay Sindh Mahaz (JSM) Chairman, Riaz Chandio addresses to media persons during press conference, at Qasimabad in Hyderabad.

Int'l moot to explore new avenues of Robotic Surgery in city

KARACHI (APP): Pakistan Society of Robotic Surgeons and SIUT (Sindh Institute of Urology and Transplantation) are jointly organizing a seminar on Saturday to explore new avenues for achieving more success in the world of robotic surgery.

The seminar also intends to apprise the medical profession abreast with the latest cutting-edge technology and extend its benefit to those who need it, said a statement on Thursday.

The moot is expecting the attendance of some eminent robotic surgeons from many parts of the world including UK, Australia, India, and the host country. Robotic surgery is the latest technology that has

ushered in the world of surgical sciences with rapid popularity due to several advantages it holds in its fold.

Keyhole incisions, minimal blood loss, shorter stay in hospital are few salient which have greatly contributed in the popularity of new surgery. Apart from the developed world robotic technology has gained momentum in many developing countries. SIUT which offers free treatment to its patients has maintained that investment in technology has been made keeping in view of its own economics. Initial investment in robotic surgical technology will go a long way in achieving more milestones by adoption of technology in other multiple disciplines.