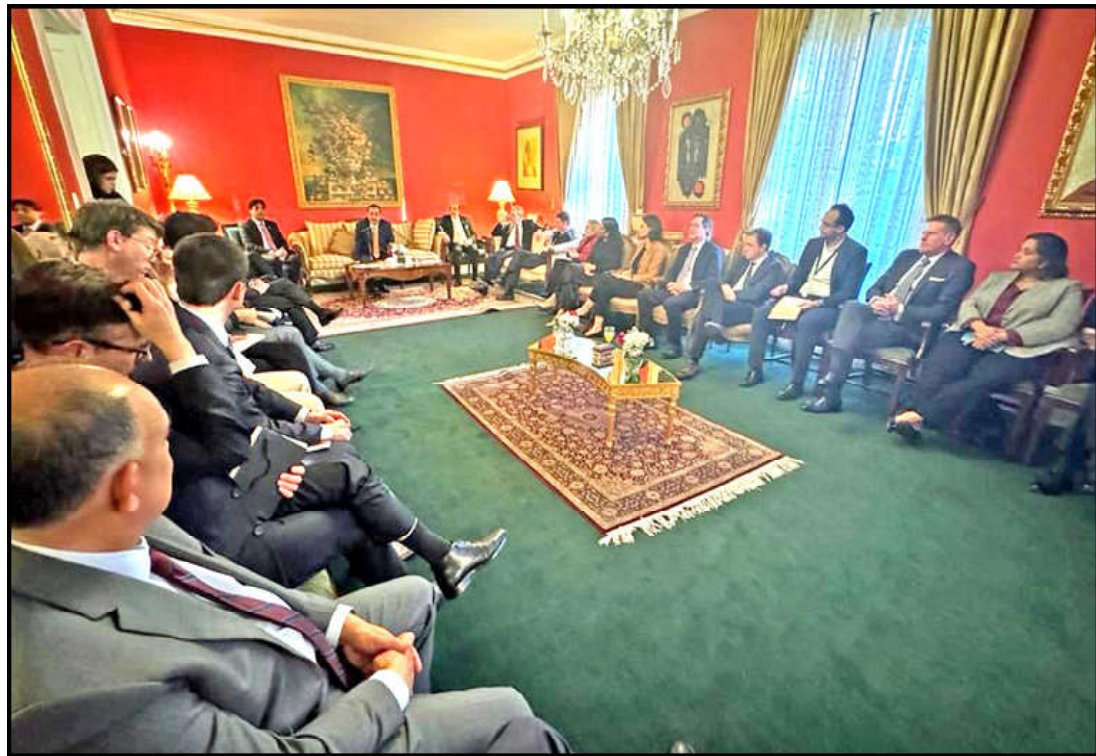


Independent

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WASHINGTON DC: COAS General Syed Asim Munir, engaged in a candid discourse with members of prominent US think tanks and media, at Washington DC.

Meeting with US think tanks Pakistan wishes to develop as hub of connectivity: COAS

Says country has made unparalleled contributions, sacrifices in fight against terrorism; Stresses Kashmir settlement as per UNSC resolutions, Kashmiris' aspirations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General Syed Asim Munir, said Pakistan was a country of consequence both from a geopolitical and geoeconomic perspective and wished to develop itself as a hub of connectivity and a gateway to Central Asia and beyond. The Army Chief further said, "The country, however, eschews bloc politics and believes in maintaining balanced relationships with all friendly countries."

think tanks and media, according to an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release issued here. The COAS, during the interaction, put across Pakistan's perspective on regional security, transnational terrorism, and the importance of maintaining strategic stability in South Asia. General Asim Munir highlighted that Pakistan desired to broaden bilateral engagement with the U.S. through a long-term multi-domain partnership. He highlighted, "His interactions during the visit to the U.S. with political and military leadership

have been very positive, and he looks forward to further strengthening the relationship." The COAS also highlighted, "Pakistan stood as a bulwark against transnational terrorism for decades, ensuring regional stability and global peace and security." "It has made unparalleled contributions and sacrifices in its enduring fight against terrorism and will continue to fight till the logical end, in line with the aspirations of people in Pakistan," General Syed Asim Munir said. The COAS also stressed the need for resolute of the Kashmir issue

as per the aspirations of the people of Kashmir and the UNSC Resolutions. He said, "Kashmir is an internationally accepted dispute, and no unilateral action can alter the nature of this dispute against the wishes of millions of people in the area." COAS also emphatically highlighted the immediate need for ending the sufferings in Ghaza, the provision of humanitarian assistance, and the implementation of two state solutions for enduring peace in the region. Earlier on arrival, COAS was received by the Ambassador of Pakistan to the US.

Join national mainstream BNA Commander Sarfaraz Bangulzai alongwith 70 companions surrender



QUETTA (APP): In a major development towards restoration of peace in Balochistan, Commander of Baloch Nationalist Army (BNA) Sarfaraz Bangulzai, alias Murid Baloch, along with his 70 companions on Wednesday surrendered to the State and joined the national mainstream. They made the announcement during a press conference here at the Sikandar Jamali Auditorium, Civil Secretariat. Caretaker Provincial Minister for Home and Tribal Affairs Captain @ Zubair Ahmed Jamali, and Caretaker Provincial Information Minister Jan Achakzai were also present on the occasion.

"We have decided to leave the path of violence and join the national mainstream to play a constructive role in the development of the province and the country," Bangulzai said. "I was working in the Food Department in Balochistan, had a house and a car, and was living a comfortable life, but derailed by anti-peace elements in 2009," he added. Bangulzai admitted that he had committed heinous crimes "in the name of nationalism". However, he realized that the so-called insurgent leaders were anti-peace and enemies of the country as they themselves were enjoying luxurious lives abroad.

Alvi, Raisi for coordinated efforts by Islamic states for an end to Gaza massacre



ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi and President Ebrahim Raisi of Iran on Wednesday had a telephonic conversation wherein they underscored the need for coordinated efforts by the Islamic countries to bring an end to the ongoing massacre and crimes against humanity in Gaza. He regretted that despite the deaths of over 19,000 Palestinians, including women and children, the United Nations Security Council had failed to impose a ceasefire and bring an end to the unspeakable Israeli atrocities. President Alvi reiterated that a just solution to the Palestinian question based on an independent and contiguous Palestinian State with Al-Quds-Al-Sharif as capital was critical for lasting peace in the Middle East. The president reaffirmed Pakistan's support to all diplomatic initiatives to the end, and appreciated Iran's concerns and initiatives about the ongoing situation. He also appreciated the Iranian leadership for its principled stance on the Jammu and Kashmir dispute, and its support for the Palestinian cause.

During the conversation that lasted almost 45 minutes, President Alvi voiced deep concern over the dire situation in occupied Palestine, including Gaza as a result of ongoing Israeli aggression and occupation. The prime minister, in an interactive session with the students of Ghulam Ishaq Khan Institute of Engineering, Science and Technology, exemplified



SWABI: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar inaugurates new building of Girls Hostel at Ghulam Ishaq Khan Institute of Engineering Sciences and Technology.

PM calls brain drain as part of talent hunt, foresees strength for Pakistan

SWABI (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq on Wednesday, calling the brain drain, a part of talent hunt, said those leaving Pakistan for better opportunities would eventually become a strength for the country, which ought to be encouraged. The prime minister, in an interactive session with the students of Ghulam Ishaq Khan Institute of Engineering, Science and Technology, exemplified

the Indian nationals who had left their country and returned as an asset to contribute to their country. Responding to a question about the measures taken by the government to stop the brain drain, he said those leaving the country were not going to vanish, rather they would seize better economic opportunities and skills, which should be encouraged. He said after improving their skills and qualifications, they would become a valuable asset and product as the world was in search of talent. "I consider their journey a part of the talent hunt," he added. He said there was no evidence of any dramatic surge in brain drain in the prevailing circumstances rather it was a continuous process of skilled, semi-skilled, and non-skilled people moving abroad for better economic opportunities.

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QUETTA: Caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki presiding over 8th meeting of B-TEVTA Board

CM forms special committee for making B-TEVTA functional

Mir Ali Mardan Domki emphasizes on need to encourage technical and vocational training institutions and produce skilled human resource by making them functional

QUETTA: The caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki has constituted a special committee for making the Balochistan Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority (B-TEVTA) fully functional. He has directed to the concerned high ups to take emergent measures for operationalization of the B-TEVTA. In this regard, the special committee should ensure implementation on the initiatives after proposing it. The caretaker Chief Minister was presiding

over the 8th meeting of the board of B-TEVTA here on Wednesday. Those who were present in the meeting were included the caretaker Provincial Minister for Finance and Revenue, Amjad Rasheed, caretaker Minister for Education, Dr. Qadir Bakhsh Baloch, Additional Chief Secretary Planning and Development, Abdul Saboor Khan Kakar besides other concerned high ups. Addressing the meeting, Chief Minister said that special attention is being given on technical and vocational training all over the world instead of traditional education in the present modern era.

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Nawaz, Bilawal obtain nomination papers

Nawaz received nomination papers from NA-15 Mansehra, Bilawal from NA-194 Larkana. MANSEHRA (INP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Quaid Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif including 14 other candidates Wednesday obtained nomination papers for NA-15 Mansehra to contest the upcoming general elections scheduled for Feb 8, 2024. According to details, in the lead-up to the General Elections, the electoral landscape in Mansehra has gained momentum as 15 candidates, including former prime minister Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, have successfully obtained their nomination papers in the NA-15 constituency. The formal procedure

for acquiring nomination papers was currently underway in the Mansehra district for participation in the upcoming elections. In the NA-14 constituency of Mansehra, 20 candidates, notably former federal minister Sardar Muhammad Yousaf from PML-N and provincial leaders such as Shujaat Saleem Khan from PPP, have secured their nomination papers. Meanwhile Bilawal Bhutto Zardari received nomination papers nomination papers for NA-194 Larkana. According to sources, Bilawal Bhutto's political Secretary Jameel Soomro has received nomination papers in his place.

Govt all set to drop another electric bombshell

ISLAMABAD (Online): Preparations have been made to drop another electricity bombshell on people. Electricity tariff is likely to increase by RS 4.66 per unit. Central Power Purchasing Agency has submitted the application to NEPRA. According to NEPRA, this increase has been sought in November Fuel price adjustment. Application will be heard on December 27 in NEPRA. In case of approval from NEPRA, an additional burden of RS 40 billion will be put on consumers.

SC seeks exemplified stance in lifetime disqualification issue of lawmakers

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Supreme Court (SC) through an advertisement on Wednesday has sought the candidates' stance in issue of lifetime disqualification of lawmakers. The apex court ad was aimed to resolve the discrepancy between the judicial decision on lifetime disqualification under Article 62 (1) (f) and the amendments made to the Elections Act, 2017. The candidates willing to contest general elections in the matter of lifetime disqualification have been invited for inputs through advertisement released in the different newspapers. "Interested candidates can submit detailed written replies to SC if they want," the ad read.

Murtaza Solangi says CPEC transformed Pakistan's socio-economic landscape

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Wednesday said the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), formally launched in 2013, had substantially transformed the socio-economic scenario of Pakistan by addressing the dire energy crisis and crumbling infrastructure. "The CPEC has infused hope, trust and confidence in Pakistani people", Solangi said while delivering a keynote address at the 8th China-Pakistan Economic Corridor Media Forum. Prior to the CPEC, Pakistan had been facing daunting challenges in 2013, that included 10-hour blackouts, a 2500 MW electricity deficit, and a \$250 billion economic loss, he said, and added later the CPEC projects had profound positive effects on the lives of local people with provision employment opportunities.



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To put agriculture & livestock sectors on modern lines Governor calls for support, guidance of banking sector

QUETTA: The Governor Balochistan, Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar has stressed that there is a dire need of guidance and support of the banking sector for providing soft term loans to the farmers and put the agriculture and livestock sectors on modern lines. The Governor was speaking to a delegation who called on him under leadership of Chief Manager State Bank Quetta, Sarfraz Ahmed Nadeem here on Wednesday. Speaking to the delegation, Governor said that Pakistan is basically an agricultural country and major part of our population is still associated with the agricultural sector.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Secretary for Interior Aftab Durrani in a meeting with the Saudi Ambassador Nawaf bin Saeed Ahmad Al-Malki.

World Bank approves loan of 350 million dollars for Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (Online): World Bank has approved a loan of 350 million dollars for Pakistan. A loan of 350 million dollars has been approved by the World Bank under the Rise to Program. The World Bank says that Pakistan will have to implement the policy of reforms for stability in the economy, implementation of financial management is necessary for stable growth. The money provided by the World Bank will be used for institutional reforms besides achieving sustainable growth and targets.



QUETTA: A delegation led by Chief Manager State Bank Quetta, Sarfraz Ahmed Nadeem meeting with Governor Balochistan Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar

PTI founder to contest elections from three constituencies: Gohar

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's founder will contest election from three constituencies, PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali and Barrister Ali Zafar announced in a news conference. PTI founder will contest elections from the National Assembly constituencies of Mianwali, Lahore and Islamabad, party chairman Gohar Ali Khan said. Barrister Ali Zafar said that the PTI wants general election on February 08, at any cost. "Restraining from submitting nomination papers is against the spirit of democratic process," he said. "We won't boycott the election, the opponents will try to create the situation," Barrister Gohar said. He said, he will contest the election from Buner. "The election commission should ensure that the PTI gets its rights as a political party," Gohar Khan said. They are nervous to the extent that denying election field to the party candidates, PTI chairman said. "We don't want to exacerbate the situation, opponents will try to worsen it," he said.

Daily Voice of Masses Independent

A hurdle crossed

One by one, largely due to the intervention of the higher judiciary, the major obstacles standing in the way of the Feb 8 elections are being removed. Last Friday, in a dramatic evening sitting, the Supreme Court suspended a Lahore High Court order that had effectively put the brakes on the election process after the ECP stopped training polling staff to comply with the LHC decision.

On Monday, the apex court set aside a Balochistan High Court order and observed that objections to delimitations cannot be entertained after the election schedule has been announced. Echoing what many Pakistanis desire, acting chief justice Sardar Tariq Masood observed: "Let the polls take place."

While gerrymandering is a genuine concern, the fear of unfairly drawn-up constituencies cannot be misused to indefinitely delay the poll process. As Justice Mansoor Ali Shah noted during Monday's hearing, "We have to draw a line and set a limit in this regard."

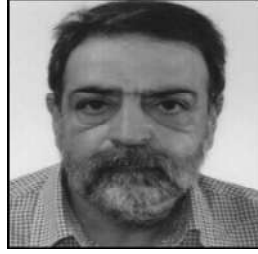
With the SC's second reassurance within a week that elections would not be delayed, and the process of filing of nomination papers beginning today, the nation should in earnest start preparing for the polls. However, though the threat of delayed polls has been shot down by the apex court, there still remains the question of fairness.

For the democratic process to be credible, all parties must be given an open field to campaign. This includes the PTI, which has been facing hurdles in its operations since the May 9 episode. Many PTI leaders remain behind bars, with some not formally charged. Those not formally charged or convicted must be freed and allowed to contest the polls.

Political parties also need to switch to top gear, and inform the people of their programmes to address Pakistan's myriad problems. Some signs of the coming elections had already been visible, such as the wheeling and dealing associated with constituency politics, as well as the migration of 'electables' towards parties believed to have the blessings of the powers that be.

But with the exception of the PPP, whose top leadership has been on the campaign trail for a while, most other mainstream parties have displayed lacklustre poll fever. This should now change.

The country is confronted with numerous crises, with political polarisation, disillusionment with the system, economic stagnation and resurgent terrorism topping the list. It is the job of political parties to convince the electorate that the democratic process has within it the answers to these problems. Parties need to start unveiling manifestos and explain their policy positions. Older and more traditional voters can be approached through rallies and corner meetings, while the younger generation needs to be engaged through social media. Only a free and transparent election can dispel hopelessness, and bring about a new democratic dawn.



Mahir Ali

It took 28 years of UN-sponsored climate conferences for one of them to even acknowledge the primary source of the planet's woes. That was enough for the circus that concluded in Dubai a week ago to be hailed as a landmark.

It has been patently obvious for decades that fossil fuels are the chief culprits in global warming. Reports prepared for some of the biggest offenders pointed this out as far back as the 1950s. They were covered up, obviously. And varieties of greenwashing have been the norm since the world woke up to the challenge 30 years later.

Much attention has been focused lately on the Swiss cheese of loopholes that accompany the bland wish to 'transition away' from coal, oil and gas as the sources of most of the globe's energy. This kind of wishful thinking might have meant something if the turning point had been recognised three decades ago, and efforts launched to curb greenhouse gas emissions.

Meaningful investments in solar and wind energy, if launched as recently as the 1980s-90s, could have made a huge difference to Earth's fate. It was not to be. The COPs since then have been reluctant to spell out the source of the world's woes, partly courtesy of the Saudi injunction that any initiative required consensus.

COP28 was deemed a step forward in calling out fossil fuels, but precious little was specified in terms of transcending them as the primary source of energy. The requisite sound

Weasel words

and fury were absent from the 'UAE consensus', which effectively signifies nothing. The worst polluters can step up their activities without violating the meaningless Dubai injunction.

That was apparently the intention. The choice of the Emirati petrostate as the next conference host at the conclusion of COP27 in Egypt occasioned plenty of dark humour even before the UAE picked Sultan al-Jaber, the head of the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company as its president. The UAE hired leading PR agencies to transform the narrative. It was only partially successful, particularly once it was alleged that al-Jaber was keen on using COP28 as a platform for negotiating lucrative oil deals. And that he doubted the science behind decreasing fossil fuels as the chief hurdle to achieving net zero emissions. He pushed back against those media reports, acknowledging that the phase-out of fossil fuels was essential to cooling the Earth. But after the conference concluded, he returned to his job at the helm of the oil company, which reportedly intends to fire up its production levels in the years to come.

Another petrostate will host the next COP, and doubts about whether these conferences serve any useful purpose have steadily been mounting. More than 2,400 fossil fuel lobbyists were accredited to the farce in Dubai, an exponentially higher figure than their numbers in Glasgow and Sharm el-Sheikh. The numbers in Baku may be even higher. They needn't worry too much, though — the biggest polluters will make sure that next to nothing is agreed that just might salvage the planet. And even if by some miracle a consensus were to be achieved on phasing out fossil fuels, it would mean very little without an enforcement mechanism —

which doesn't exist. Sure, Saudi output, for instance, would be set back if all other nations stopped buying its oil. But, seriously, what are the chances?

After all, as George Monbiot points out, "more carbon dioxide from fossil fuels has been released worldwide" since 1992, when climate negotiations began, than in all of human history. He compares the oil and gas lobbyists' presence in Dubai to "allowing weapons manufacturers to dominate a peace conference". Mind you, one hardly hears of a peace conference these days, whereas they were ubiquitous between the end of World War II and the 1980s.

They didn't achieve much, but nor have the climate conferences. Arguably, even the two exceptions of some consequence, Kyoto and Paris, have simply been ignored by those who didn't particularly care for their injunctions. There is absolutely no reason to expect that the UN climate conference process will ever yield anything resembling a practical road map for edging away from the impending apocalypse.

We live in a capitalist world where profits will always matter far more than common sense, even if they pave the path to the end of the world — which appears to be precisely what is in store. What will today's politicians and economists say to future generations? Sorry that in the hottest year on record we parted in Dubai, and did almost nothing to shift our planet's orbit away from the path to Armageddon?

Part of the reason why the UN climate conferences are such a cruel farce is that they raise hopes that are then brutally dashed — shortly afterwards, if not there and then. That climate is unlikely to change. — Courtesy Dawn

South Asia's smog



Jamil Ahmad

Air pollution is a major environmental threat of our time, affecting our well-being and posing health hazards to the most vulnerable members of our communities. South Asia, home to a quarter of the global population, has the worst urban air pollution in the world. Most South Asians live in areas where air pollution levels significantly exceed the WHO guidelines, exposing people to unhealthy air year-round and shortening life expectancy.

At the start of winter, air pollution increases to extremely dangerous levels. The toxic mix of smoke and dust is trapped by cold and heavy air, converting it into thick layers of smog over long periods of dry weather. In addition to health hazards, reduced visibility endangers lives on roads and motorways. Only occasional spells of rain provide temporary relief from the smog, even as highly dangerous levels of pollution remain in the air.

The air quality in Pakistan, Bangladesh, India and Nepal is counted as the worst. Lahore, Peshawar, Gujranwala, New Delhi, and Kolkata rank among the world's most polluted urban centres.

A recent news report labelled South Asia as the 'epicentre' of air pollution. This year, the situation is alarming. The impact of living under such hazardous conditions is particularly calamitous for children, the elderly and those with respiratory and cardiac health conditions.

In Pakistan, due to air pollution, life expectancy has been reduced by four

years compared to the global average reduction of 2.3 years. In the worst-affected urban areas, such as Peshawar and Lahore, residents are expected to lose as many as five years of their lives as a result of unhealthy air.

The drivers of air pollution are well known, as are the solutions to control it. Toxic emissions from industry, transport, waste burning and seasonal crop residue burning are major sources of air pollution in Pakistan.

In some parts of Pakistan, health advisories have been issued and educational institutes and offices closed for short periods, with the expectation that less human activity would reduce the smog and protect the vulnerable. This is no lasting solution.

A ban on crop residue burning will also not be effective until farmers are provided with an alternative system to clean their land of crop residue in an environmentally friendly way. Meanwhile, court cases against polluters often fall by the wayside, either due to the inability of prosecuting agencies to produce timely evidence, or law enforcement agencies' lack of capacity.

Land use management regulations are another area warranting immediate attention. Pakistan's urbanisation rate is the highest in the region. Half of the country's population will be living in cities by 2025. In the process, unsustainable and often unregulated urban sprawl is taking place, mostly at the expense of green cover, depriving the cities of natural air filters.

This exacerbates air pollution significantly. Conversion of agricultural land or forested areas into housing schemes must be regulated to ensure the provision of sufficient green spaces around cities. This is also important to safeguard natural habitats for wildlife and biodiversity, and thus essential for a balanced ecosystem.

The United Nations Environment Programme has identified implementation and policy gaps and compiled actions that governments can take to address air pollution. The costs of inaction are high. The burden of disease and economic costs keep rising. Urgent and bold measures are needed to tackle the problem on a permanent basis.

Strengthening the implementation arm of law enforcement agencies will enable the courts to penalise polluters. Other steps to help reduce pollution include expanding the network of electric transport and restricting vehicular movement in urban centres by levying a congestion toll on smoke-emitting transport. Introducing pedestrian zones is useful to protect citizens from air and noise pollution.

Temporary closure of traffic in recent roadworks in Peshawar cantonment provided a pleasant peek into how pedestrians could enjoy smoke-free air in an otherwise polluted and noisy part of the city. The provision of pedestrian zones should be a compulsory requirement of urban designing and restructuring. Through a cross-sectoral approach, Pakistan's National Clean Air Policy should be implemented in synergy with climate change policies through a bottom-up approach.

Engaging communities and local bodies will be helpful to monitor air quality in a systemic manner and propel swift and sustained action at ground level through stringent regulatory frameworks. Citizens all over are increasingly raising concerns about the impact of air pollution on their lives. Their calls for clean air must be heard and answered. — Courtesy Dawn

Commerce News

Commerce Minister to increase country's exports to China upto \$25 billion

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Commerce and Industries, Dr. Ejaz Gohar on Wednesday unveiled his vision to increase Pakistan's exports to China up to US \$25 billion to engage in trade between the two neighbours.

The newly appointed Economic Counsellor of China to Pakistan, Mr. Yang Guangyuan paid a courtesy call to the Commerce and Industries Minister Dr. Gohar Ejaz, said a press release issued here.

The meeting followed two successful visits to China by Dr. Ejaz which

are a part of the intensified interaction between the two countries in the field of trade.

Mr. Guangyuan extended warm congratulations to Dr. Ejaz for his successful visit to China, emphasizing the positive initiatives taken to foster economic cooperation between the two nations.

Minister Ejaz conveyed the warmth and hospitality extended by the Chinese officials during his visit to China.

Dr. Ejaz highlighted that the primary purpose of his recent visit to China was to witness first-hand

the remarkable progress China has achieved on the one hand and to seek new market segments for Pakistani exports on the other hand.

He unveiled an ambitious 5-year vision to boost trade between Pakistan and China, setting a target of \$25 billion for Pakistan's exports.

Mr. Guangyuan welcomed the Minister's sentiments for increasing bilateral trade and economic cooperation and expressed China's commitment to stand with Pakistan, emphasizing the deep-rooted friendship between the two countries

China boasts over 3.28 mln 5G base stations

ISLAMABAD (APP): China has constantly advanced the construction of its 5G network with the number of 5G base stations in the country exceeding 3.28 million by the end of November, according to official data released Wednesday.

The volume accounted for 28.5 percent of the country's total mobile base stations, the China's Ministry of Industry and Information Technology said.

In the meantime, more mobile phone users in China have embraced 5G services, Ecns reported.

As of the end of November, the number of mobile phone users of the country's three telecom giants—China Telecom, China Mobile, and China Unicom—had reached about 1.73 billion, the data shows.

Among them, 771 million were 5G mobile phone users, a net increase of 210.4 million from the end of last year, accounting for 44.7 percent of total mobile phone users.



ISLAMABAD: PIDE Vice-Chancellor Dr Nadeem ul Haque giving his remarks on the eve of launching of its latest research report titled "The State of Commerce in Pakistan—International and Domestic," highlighting challenges and opportunities.

PIDE report highlights challenges, opportunities in commerce sector

Independent Report
ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) here on Wednesday launched its latest research report titled "The State of Commerce in Pakistan—International and Domestic," highlighting challenges and opportunities shaping the landscape of the country's commerce sector.

"As a premier institution dedicated to fostering economic development, PIDE's report serves as an invaluable source of

information and statistics on the state of commerce in Pakistan," a news release said. In his opening remarks, PIDE Vice-Chancellor Dr Nadeem ul Haque said his institution had compiled the report for the Ministry of Commerce and Industries so that it could explore all facets of internal and external trade in Pakistan.

"The primary objective is to gain a profound understanding of markets, growth and international and domestic trade."

He emphasized that despite the vibrant sector,

it faced challenges stemming from the various governments' indifference, regulatory problems, and various other problems.

The PIDE VC highlighted the growth potential of several entities within sectors such as construction, retail, chain stores, food, franchises, and transport. Dr Haque said PIDE's research showed that the government's footprint on the economy was at over 70 percent of the economy, with its involvement in trade and markets, stifling market development and growth.

Speakers for removing bottleneck to harness hydropower, RE potential in country

ISLAMABAD (APP): Speakers for removing bottleneck to harness hydropower, RE potential in country Speakers at 3rd International Hydropower Conference while terming the hydropower and renewable energy (RE) crucial for sustainable future of the country on Wednesday stressed the need to remove bottleneck in harnessing the hydropower and RE potential for provision of affordable electricity to the people and industry.

The third International Hydropower conference themed

"Hydropower: A Renewable Energy Source for a Sustainable Future" was organized by the Energy Update in collaboration with Private Power Infrastructure Board (PPIB) and International Hydropower Association (IHA).

They were of the view that RE and Hydropower were the future of the country but there was a dire need for consistency of government policies to exploit these areas for the benefit of the people.

Speaking on the occasion, Caretaker

Minister for Power Muhammad Ali lauded the Energy Update for organizing the conference and said that it would help us to improve the policy framework in the energy sector.

He said enhancing RE and hydropower share in energy mix was the government top priority as it was the only way to reduce the power tariff besides provision of affordable energy to the people. Currently, the share of hydel and RE in total energy mix stood at 31 per cent adding that the government has embarked

Sohrab stresses strengthening of collaboration with ILO for Pak Workforce Dev.

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development, Jawad Sohrab Malik, held a significant meeting with Director-General of the International Labour Organization (ILO), Gilbert Houngbo on the sidelines of the Global Labour Market Conference (GLMC) in Riyadh on Wednesday.

According to the news release here received, the discussions centered around aligning Pakistan's workforce development strategies with ILO's global standards and initiatives.

The meeting was a significant step towards fostering international collaboration to enhance the skills and employability of the Pakistani

workforce in line with the ILO's best practices. Both parties acknowledged the importance of aligning national policies with global standards to ensure the welfare and prosperity of the workforce.

Director-General of ILO, Gilbert Houngbo implored the global community to support and create employment opportunities for Pakistani youth. Recognizing the demographic dividend that Pakistan possesses, he emphasized the need for concerted efforts to harness the potential of the youth population and provide them with quality employment prospects.

SAPM, Jawad Sohrab reaffirmed that the Government of Pakistan is committed to working closely with the International Labour Organization.



KARACHI: Women with children purchase shoes at a roadside stall ahead of Christmas.



LAHORE: Secretary Transport Punjab Ahmed Javed Qazi drives Electric Rickshaw before launching E-Rickshaws.

PML-N to address economic issues: Nasir

ISLAMABAD (Online): PML-N leader Nasir Butt said that his party has experienced persons to manage the economy and if voted to power, PML-N has plans to address the key economic issues of the country.

He said that the PML-N government had achieved many economic milestones for Pakistan during its previous tenures. If voted to power, it would again bring Pakistan out of economic trouble and provide relief to the common man, he added.

He said this while talking to Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President of Islamabad Chamber of

Commerce and Industry during his visit to ICCI.

Nasir Butt said that the business community is the backbone of the economy and PML-N would finalize economic policies by taking them on board to achieve win-win outcomes.

He said that Pakistan has great potential to emerge as a strong economy and it only needs visionary leadership and good governments to achieve this goal.

He said that PML-N's leadership has the ability and experience to resolve issues and deliver up to the expectations of the people.

Govt trying its best to improve Children's Hospital: Minister

Independent Report
LAHORE: Caretaker Punjab Health Minister Prof Dr. Javed Akram has said that the government is trying its best to improve Children's Hospital Lahore.

He was chairing the 9th syndicate meeting of the University of Child Health Sciences (UCHS) here on Wednesday. He said that basic steps are being taken to make the UCHS a paperless university.

Earlier the minister approved all the minutes of the 8th Syndicate meeting. Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Masood Sadiq also presented a report on the implementation of the

decisions of the 7th Syndicate meeting. During the Syndicate meeting, 100 per cent implementation on the Lahore High Court's orders about quality and performance SOPs was emphasized.

It was decided to approve the statutes of the UCHS and send them to the chancellor for final approval through the department. All the decisions of the finance and planning committee of the 8th syndicate meeting were approved.

During the meeting, the ongoing progress on the complex under construction of the UCHS was also reviewed in detail.



GILGIT: Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Haji Gulbar Khan being briefed by Minister Social Welfare Dilshad Bano and Secretary Social Welfare, Fida Hussain about the department at CM Secretariat.

Minister inaugurates newly constructed 'Business Centre'

Independent Report
PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister for Industries, Commerce, Technical Education and Merged Districts Affairs, Dr. Aamer Abdullah inaugurated the newly constructed Business Centre at Small Industries Estate here on Wednesday. The construction of the centre has cost about Rs.45 million. The commercial operation of the facility could earn millions of rupees for the Small Industries Development Board (SIDB) every month.

The newly constructed Business Centre at Kohat Road, Small

Industrial Estate is comprised of display halls and showrooms for the exhibition of the products manufactured by the manufacturers of the estate. Besides, the Managing Director (MD) SIDB, Ghazanfar Ali, Deputy Managing Directors Sahibzada Zulfiqar and Noman Fayyaz and other officers, officials and employees were also present on the occasion.

Speaking on the occasion, the caretaker minister termed the project as of high importance and directed amendments to the business model of the board for its financial stability.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwar ul Haq Kakar in a group photo with senior member doctors of the Association of Physicians of Pakistani Descent of North America (APPNA) at the 46th Winter Khyber Medical College Convention organized in collaboration with APPNA on 20 Dec 2023.

Naqvi orders land allocation for smart police stations

Independent Report
LAHORE: Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi has issued directives for the allocation of land dedicated to Smart Police Stations.

During a specially convened meeting presided over by Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi here on Wednesday, it was disclosed that the construction of 40 smart police stations is slated to be completed within the stipulated time frame. The initial phase will witness the establishment of 23

smart police stations in Lahore, while an additional 17 will be strategically located in other districts.

Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi, in setting a stringent deadline for the Smart Police Station project, emphasized the phased conversion of conventional police stations into smart ones throughout the province. The meeting scrutinized the construction, repair, and rehabilitation initiatives encompassing a total of 737 police stations. A comprehensive

review of the progress on the Smart Police Station project and an evaluation of the facilities integrated into these stations took place during the briefing.

Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi directed the expeditious allocation of land to every landless police station across the province, stressing the swift completion of the land transfer process.

The meeting also addressed the project involving the construction of 313 houses for police officers and employees.

In attendance were Inspector General Police, Senior Member Board of Revenue, Additional IG, Secretary Home, Secretary Communication and Works, CCPO, CTO, SSP Admin, and other key police officials. Meanwhile, Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi chaired a special meeting to assess progress on proposed enhancements for Data Darbar Hospital. During the meeting, deliberations took place regarding the proposition to establish.

Two drugs convicts sentenced to different terms

ATTOCK (Online): Two drugs peddlers were sentenced to different terms by two different courts in Attock on Wednesday. In the first case, a special court for the Control of Narcotic Substances (CNS) in Attock sentenced a convict identified as Najeeb Ullah—a native of Waziristan to 9 years' imprisonment besides imposing fine over him for smuggling two kilogram of hashish from KP to Punjab.

Ban on airing Imran speeches: LHC seeks affidavit from chairman PEMRA

LAHORE (Online): Lahore High Court (LHC) has sought affidavit from chairman PEMRA to the effect that he has not imposed restriction on TV channels from airing former chairman PTI statements and interview. The court remarked chairman PEMRA should file this reply too that who has imposed ban. The petitions filed against ban on airing the speeches of former chairman PTI Imran Khan by T V channels despite court's orders

came up for hearing before single bench of LHC led by Justice Shams Mehmood Mirza Wednesday.

Lawyer Ahmed Pansota appeared in the court on behalf of former chairman PTI. The court sought affidavit from chairman PEMRA. The court remarked chairman PEMRA should file affidavit that he had not imposed ban on airing statements and interviews of former chairman PTI by TV channels.

LHC seeks report on cases against Omar

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Wednesday sought a report from Punjab police and other departments on a petition filed by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Secretary General Omar Ayub Khan seeking details of cases registered against him. The single bench comprising Justice Ali Baqar Najafi heard the petition filed by the PTI secretary general for provision of details of cases. The petitioner's counsel argued before the court that his client wanted to participate in upcoming general elections.

All parties have expressed confidence in ECP: PML-N

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Deputy Secretary General Attaullah Tarar has said all political parties have expressed confidence in the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), as there is no doubt about its credibility and transparency.

Talking to the media, along with PML-N leader Malik Ahmad Khan at Model Town on Wednesday, he said some elements had pointed fingers at the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and the ECP just for nothing, adding that free and fair elections

should be conducted in the country on the given time and his party wanted to take forward the matter smoothly toward the elections. Attaullah Tarar said the individual imprisoned in Adiala Jail is enjoying every facility and comfort in the jail, adding that walk, exercise and all recreational activities are going on in Adiala Jail. He said that everyone gets Toshakhana gifts, but no one had sold out those gifts in the black market to gain 'black profit'.

He said that those gifts were the pride of the country and not meant for sale or gaining profit.



KARACHI: Members of Christian Community are performing tableau on stage during celebration ceremony in connection of Christmas Day Celebrations coming ahead, at St. Anthony's Church in Karachi.

Environmental shifts Seminar to tackle health challenges in KP held

PESHAWAR (APP): Addressing the growing impact of climate change on public health, Evidence for Health in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa organized a comprehensive one-day seminar for health managers here on Wednesday.

This event brought together key stakeholders, including Director General of Health Services, Dr. Shaukat Ali, and Director of Public Health, Dr. Arshad Roghani, along with participation from district health offices and regulatory bodies across the province.

Dr. Shaukat Ali underscored the

vulnerability of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to climatic variations, emphasizing the adverse effects on public health. The seminar shed light on the surge in influenza-like diseases, waterborne infections, and pneumonia, all attributed to the changing climate.

Dr. Shaukat Ali commended the successful control of dengue this year, highlighting Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as the pioneer in developing a robust health security action plan, marking a significant stride toward building a climate-resilient healthcare system.

International News

Putin claims Russia's military has the momentum in Ukraine and is poised to meet Moscow's goals

Monitoring Desk
MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin declared Tuesday that his country's military has seized the initiative in Ukraine after repelling a monthslong counteroffensive and is well positioned to achieve Moscow's goals. Putin spoke at a meeting with top military brass a day after he presented documents to Russia's Central Election Commission to seek reelection in the March presidential vote that he's all but certain to win.

"Our troops are holding the initiative," the Russian leader said. "We are effectively doing what we think is needed, doing what we want. Where our commanders consider it neces-

sary to stick to active defenses they are doing so, and we are improving our positions where it's needed."

The Russian leader praised Russia's troops for beating back Ukrainian attacks during the counteroffensive that started in June. "The enemy has suffered heavy casualties and to a large extent wasted its reserves while trying to show at least some results of its so-called counteroffensive to its masters," Putin said, adding that "the myth about invulnerability of Western weapons also has collapsed."

"All attempts by the West to deliver us a military defeat, a strategic defeat, were shattered by the courage and fortitude of our soldiers, the growing might

of our armed forces and the potential of our military industries," Putin said.

During the counteroffensive that began in early June, Ukrainian forces have failed to make any significant gains as they faced multicheloned Russian defensive lines, including sprawling minefields. Speaking at the same meeting, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said that the Russian minefields spread for 7,000 kilometers (more than 4,300 miles).

Shoigu said that 650,000 Russian soldiers have received combat experience in Ukraine, turning the Russian army into "the best prepared and capable army in the world, armed with advanced weapons that have been tested in combat."



Rescuers work amid the rubble at Shiyuan village following the earthquake in Jishishan county, Gansu province, China.

France's Macron faces cracks in his government over migration law

Monitoring Desk
PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron faced cracks within his ruling alliance on Wednesday after parliament passed a toughened immigration bill, leaving him needing to find ways to appease left-leaning members.

The bill, a compromise between the centrist president's party and the conservative opposition, illustrates a rightward shift in politics in much of Europe as governments try to curb the rise of the far-right

by being tougher on immigration.

It also showed the difficulties for Macron of governing without a parliamentary majority, which he lost in the June 2022 election after winning a second presidential mandate. Health Minister Aurelien Rousseau told Le Monde daily he would resign in protest against the new law. "It's not possible for me to defend this text," Le Monde quoted Rousseau, a former communist, as saying.

EU agrees new rules on hosting migrants, seeks to cut numbers

Monitoring Desk
BRUSSELS: The European Union reached agreement early on Wednesday on new rules designed to share out the cost and work of hosting migrants more evenly and to limit the numbers of people coming in.

Representatives of the European Parliament and of EU governments reached an accord after all-night talks on EU laws collectively called the New Pact on Migration and Asylum that should take effect next year.

The laws cover screening irregular migrants when they arrive in the European Union, procedures for handling asylum applications, rules on determining which EU country is responsible for handling applications and ways to handle crises. Migrant arrivals in the European Union are way down from the 2015 peak of more than 1 million, but have steadily crept up from a 2020 low to 255,000 in the year to November.



U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin speaks with service members stationed at Al Udeid Air Base, Doha, Qatar.

West accuses Iran of illegally testing missiles, transferring drones to Russia, enriching uranium

Monitoring Desk
UNITED NATIONS: The Western powers in the 2015 nuclear agreement with Iran accused Tehran Monday of developing and testing ballistic missiles, transferring hundreds of drones to Russia, and enriching uranium to an unprecedented 60% level for a country without a nuclear weapons program — all in violation of a U.N. resolution endorsing the deal.

Iran and its ally, Russia, dismissed the charges by Britain, France and Germany, strongly supported by the United States, which pulled out of the agreement

known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action in 2018.

The six-party agreement was aimed at ensuring that Iran could not develop atomic weapons. Under the accord, Tehran agreed to limit enrichment of uranium to levels necessary for the peaceful use of nuclear power in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions.

The sharp exchanges came at the Security Council's semi-annual meeting on the implementation of its resolution endorsing the 2015 nuclear deal.

India's Modi willing to 'look into' US assassination plot claim

Monitoring Desk
NEW DELHI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said he will investigate any evidence provided regarding an alleged plot to kill a Sikh separatist in the United States, the Financial Times reported on Wednesday.

The US Justice Department last month charged an Indian citizen with plotting to assassinate a Sikh separatist leader on US soil, alleging an Indian government official was also involved in the planning. "If someone gives us any information, we would definitely look into it," Modi said in his first comments on the issue. "If a citizen of ours has done anything good or bad, we are ready to look into it. Our commitment is to the rule of law," he added. India's foreign ministry had earlier said it set up a "high-level" inquiry committee "to look into all the relevant aspects of the matter."

US may yet back 'mild ceasefire' for Gaza

Monitoring Desk
UNITED NATIONS: The eme-rgency UN Security Council meeting on the Gaza situation was adjourned on Tuesday, with discussions entering into informal consultations as hopes rise of a slight flexibility in Washington's otherwise staunch support for Israel. The council's meeting, which started on Monday for a vote on a UN resolution calling for a sustainable cessation of hostilities in Gaza, was postponed due to US concerns over the draft's phrasing.

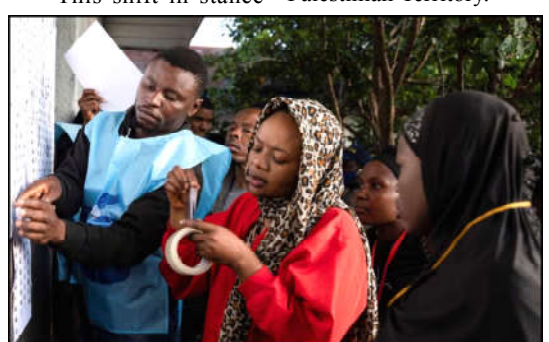
While the US administration was still hesitant to endorse a "cessation of hostilities," it has shown openness to a milder "suspension of hostilities."

This shift in stance

reflects deepening divisions within the US government, with growing discontent, particularly from the global South. In a departure from its previous stance, the White House's willingness to consider alternative wording suggests frustration with Israel's approach.

Despite diplomatic efforts, Israel's approach has faced criticism, and pressure has been mounting on the US following a UN General Assembly vote on December 12, where 153 countries called for an urgent cessation of hostilities.

UAE Ambassador Mohamed Issa Abushahab underscored the urgency of the situation, declaring 2023 as the deadliest year in the history of Occupied Palestinian Territory.



Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) agent displays the list of voters at the Mavuno polling centre on the day of the presidential election in Goma, North Kivu province of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Philippines rebukes China over South China Sea claims

Monitoring Desk
MANILA: The Philippine defense minister rebuked China on Wednesday for accusing his country of provoking tension and stirring trouble in the South China Sea, saying only Beijing believed what it was saying.

"Truth and in fact, no country in the world, none, supports unequivocally their claim to the whole of South China Sea," Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro said as both nations have exchanged accusations over recent collisions in the waterway. China claims almost the

entire South China Sea, a conduit for more than \$3 trillion of commercial shipping annually, including parts claimed by the Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei.

The Permanent Court of Arbitration in 2016 said China's claims had no legal basis, a ruling the United States supports but Beijing rejects. There was no immediate comment from the Chinese Embassy in Manila. More than a week ago, Manila and Beijing traded accusations over a collision of their vessels in the South China Sea.

Jordan's King Abdullah-II confers Order of Star of Jordan upon CJCS

RAWALPINDI (APP): Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCS), General Sahir Shamsah Mirza, who is on an official visit to Jordan, called on King Abdullah II, Ibn Al Hussain.

Jordanian King Abdullah Ibn Al Hussain conferred the medal 'Order of the Star of Jordan' on CJCS General Sahir Shamsah Mirza in recognition of his meritorious services.

During the meeting, both dignitaries discussed various areas of interest,

JUI, MQM-P demand extension in deadline for nomination papers filing

ISLAMABAD (INP): Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam (JUI) on Wednesday has demanded the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to amend the election schedule, requesting an extension to the deadline for receiving nomination papers. Senator Kamran Murtaza, a JUI representative, wrote a letter to Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja, expressing concerns about the limited time allotted for submitting nomination papers. The current schedule allows only three days for this crucial step.

Murtaza argued that political parties need more time to distribute tickets to candidates at both the na-

including bilateral politico-diplomatic and military cooperation and the prevailing regional security situation, according to an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release issued here Wednesday.

The CJCS also held separate meetings with Major General Yousef Ahmed Al-Hnaity, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Jordanian Armed Forces (JAF) and Brigadier General Muhammad Hyasat, Commander of the Royal Jordan Air Force.



JORDAN: Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee General Sahir Shamsah Mirza called by King of Jordan King Abdullah II Ibn Al Hussain at Jordan.

IT ministry develops mobile app to digitize Hajj operation

ISLAMABAD (APP): Hajj operations for pilgrims have been digitalized as Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunications has developed a mobile app in record time to facilitate Hajj Pilgrims.

Caretaker Minister for IT Dr Umar Saif and Caretaker Minister for Religious Affairs Aneeq Ahmed jointly launched the application developed by the National Information Technology Board (NITB) on Wednesday, said a statement issued here.

Chief Executive Officer NITB Babar Majeed Bhatti briefed the participants about the application in the welcome address.

Speaking on the occa-

sion, the Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunications Dr. Umar Saif said that the process of digitalization has been accelerated in the country under the directions of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC). The launch of Hajj application was a milestone in this connection, he said.

Highlighting the key features of the application Dr. Umar Saif said that the Application will enable pilgrims to register using the OTP received via SMS. Users will be provided with a unique ID, that is their CNIC and application number, he said.

He said pilgrims can view and update their per-

sonal information, including contact details and identification information. The application will enable pilgrims to view their Hajj application status i.e (submitted, successful, unsuccessful, refunded) real time updates, he said.

He said the application will provide information that is collected from application form i.e personal information, group information, Mehram information, helper information, additional facilities, Hajj dues, nominee information, and applicant's bank account details. Dr. Umar Saif further said that Pilgrims can access information about their Hajj group, including group members' details.

Illegal structures demolished in Quetta

QUETTA: Illegal structures in different parts of the provincial capital were demolished on Wednesday by the staff of Quetta Metropolitan Corporation in a drive launched against encroachments.

Following the directions of Abdul Jabbar Baloch, Administrator, Quetta Metropolitan Corporation, staff of QMC launched anti encroachment drive under the supervision of Ali Raza Durrani, Incharge, Anti. Encroachments in different areas of Quetta.

During the drive, several illegal structures were demolished in different areas of Quetta, including Liaquat Bazar, Mecongy Road, Usman Road, Abdul Sattar Road and Archer Road.

Performance of DHOs & MSs of hospitals to be strictly monitored: Secretary

QUETTA: The Secretary Health Department, Abdullah Khan has stated that the performance of District Health Officers of all districts and Medical Superintendents of the public sector hospitals would be strictly monitored all over the province.

The Secretary Health also vowed to make the primary healthcare structure more organised and effective and there would be no compromise in this regard.

He was presiding over the zoom meeting of divisional directors, DHOs and Medical Superintendents here on Wednesday.

Also present in the meeting were Special Secretary Health, Muejibur Rehman Qambrani, Director General Health Services, Dr Farooq Hoth,

Additional Secretary Health, Arif Khan, Additional Secretary Health, Hameed Zehri, Section Officer, Tahoor Khan, Director Safe Blood Transfusion, Professor Dr Hanif Mengal, Director Emergency and Monitoring Dr Fahim Khan, Additional Director MSD Dr Shoaib Akram and other concerned high ups.

Speaking on the occasion, Secretary Health said that majority of the people depend on the government hospitals for treatment in the rural areas. He asserted that no excuse would be tolerated in provision of the medical treatment and medicines in the hospitals.

The Secretary said that improvement is being brought in availability of the medicines and other healthcare facilities.



FAISALABAD: Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami, Siraj ul Haq is addressing the Tahya Palestine Convention at Al-Fateh Sports Complex.

ADOWA demands posting of officers of attachment deptt. against key positions

QUETTA: Federation of the Attached Departments Officers Welfare Association, has demanded of the authorities to post officers of attached departments against the key positions of line departments instead of posting of BCS and BSS officers.

It was stated by Abdullah Khan Durrani, President, Federation of the Attached Departments Officers Welfare Association in a statement issued here on Wednesday.

Balochistan Civil Services (BCS) and Balochistan Secretariat Services (BSS) officers were being promoted against the

posts of attached departments, said he, adding that posting of BCS and BSS cadre officers were not acceptable to Federation of the Attached Departments Officers Welfare Association.

He said that a delegation of the Federation of the Attached Departments Officers Welfare Association would call on Chief Secretary Balochistan for redressing the grievances of field officers, adding that if demands of Federation of the Attached Departments Officers Welfare Association were not addressed, protest movement would be started besides adopting legal option.



QUETTA: Former Caretaker Provincial Minister Agha Umar Bangulzai meeting with Caretaker Home Minister Captain (ret'd) Muhammad Zubair Jamali.

Hashmi underscores media's role in highlighting successes of China-Pakistan ties

BEIJING (APP): Pakistan Ambassador to China, Khalil Hashmi on Wednesday underscored that media collaboration has a vital role in highlighting successes and solidify the mutual trust which is the bedrock of China-Pakistan relationship.

He made these remarks while speaking via online at the 8th CPEC Media Forum "Next Decade of CPEC: Opportunities and Learning from Past Decade" held in Islamabad to celebrate the completion of the first decade of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

Ambassador Hashmi highlighted that the 2nd phase of CPEC is poised to focus on the socio-economic development of our peoples. The key CPEC projects promise to improve the lives and livelihood opportunities, including for those in the remote areas. He said enhancing bilateral industrial cooperation between Pakistan and

China remains pivotal. In the next phase of CPEC, both sides would endeavour to accelerate implementation of 2022 Framework Agreement on industrial cooperation to develop industrial parks and special economic zones in Pakistan. Ambassador Hashmi said with CPEC's increased focus on green projects, such as hydro power generation and solar parks, we are determined to achieve the target of 60 percent renewables in our national energy mix by the year 2030.

He noted that CPEC symbolizes the combined efforts of two countries to bring their economic and trade ties at par with their robust political partnership.

He underlined that the seamless connectivity between Xinjiang and Gilgit Baltistan is key to facilitate trade, promote people to people exchanges and solidify geopolitical ties between our two countries.

Customs foils major bid of smuggling of foreign currency & gold

QUETTA: The Pakistan Customs foiled major bid of smuggling of foreign currency and gold from alleged smugglers at Pak-Afghan border on Wednesday.

According to the spokesman of Customs, the Customs carried out operation against the smugglers in collaboration with the Frontier Corps (FC) at the Pak-Afghan border.

During the seizure, a total of 826 grams of gold and around 200,000 foreign currency (Saudi Riyal) were recovered from five alleged smugglers.

The smugglers were arrested and further legal action has been started against them.

According to the Customs spokesman, the worth of smuggled currency and gold is over Rs. 3 crore.

SFA technical team visits BFA labs

QUETTA: A technical team from the Sindh Food Authority (SFA), led by Director Technical Dr. Ahmed Ali Shaikh and Technical Advisor Dr. Seema Ashraf, recently visited the newly established laboratories of the Balochistan Food Authority (BFA). This visit took place at the invitation of the BFA and under the direction of DG SFA Agha Fakhar Hussain.

The primary objective of the visit was to provide guidance, assistance, and testing facilities to the BFA laboratories. The SFA team aimed to enhance the capabilities of the BFA in chemical analysis and microbial analysis.

During the visit, the SFA technical team offered consultations and guidance to the staff of the microbiology lab at BFA. They provided valuable insights on the analysis of loose or unpacked oil/ghee samples, harmonizing the procedure,

and implementing uniform strategic Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) followed by the Sindh Food Authority.

Furthermore, the SFA technical team extended their consultation and support to the BFA in chemical analysis. They provided expertise in food grade and non-food grade color analysis, powdered and infant formula milk analysis, as well as bakery and confectionery item analysis.

This collaborative effort between the SFA and BFA aims to strengthen the food safety infrastructure in Balochistan and ensure that the highest standards are maintained in the production and distribution of food products.

By sharing knowledge, expertise, and resources, both authorities are working towards the common goal of safeguarding public health and promoting consumer confidence in the food industry.



QUETTA: Commissioner Quetta Division Hamza Shafqaat presiding over meeting of local bus owners and rickshaw union.

PM announces upgradation of KMC, AMC to medical universities

PESHAWAR (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister, Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar here on Wednesday announced upgradation of Khyber Medical College (KMC) Peshawar and Ayub Medical College (AMC), Abbottabad as public sector medical universities.

The prime minister made the important announcement while addressing the 46th annual meeting of Association of Physicians of Pakistan Descent of North America (APPNA) organized by the alumni of Khyber Medical College Peshawar at Governor House. On the request of members of APPNA and its President Dr Arshad Rehman, Prime Minister Kakar said that practical work on upgradation of KMC and AMC as public sector medical universities should be initiated within 35 hours by the respective authorities. Commending APPNA's rich services for ailing humanity and continued long connection with people of their home country, the prime minister di-

rected the Governor and Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to give practical shape to upgradation of KMC and AMC to a full fledged medical universities keeping in view of people and APPNA demands.

While lauding services of students of both these medical colleges in healthcare services in the country as well as abroad, the prime minister said that Pakistani doctors serving in United States and other foreign countries were like an ambassador of Pakistan and their medical and surgical services besides philanthropy contribution during earthquake, floods and other natural calamities in Pakistan was highly praised worthy.

Prime Minister Kakar said that he was very pleased that Pakistani doctors, settled in America have established strong roots and bonds with their countrymen and helped Pakistan in every difficult situation.

He said that Pakistani doctors have proved their

abilities and professionalism all over the world including USA and played a role of a bridge between Pakistani communities and American citizens while dedication towards duties and treating patients with friendly attitude and warmth was their hallmark.

"Pakistani doctors are the best in the world and graduates of KMC doctors were known internationally for their hard work, professionalism and devotion in healthcare services," he said.

On the request of APPNA President, the prime minister announced to recommend name of Dr Umar Taimur Atique, for Nishan-e-Imtiaz, the first non-American President of the College of Physician of America for his great services for Pakistan. Dr Umar Atique was the graduate of KMC Peshawar. The prime minister recalled his memories of spending time with friends at CEENA Hall hostel of KMC at Peshawar, saying that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's unique culture.



Judicial Assistants of the Supreme Court of Pakistan in a group photo with Mr. Justice Athar Minallah at the Federal Judicial Academy Islamabad.

19th convocation of BUITEMS due to be held today

QUETTA: The 19th annual convocation of Balochistan University of Information Technology, Engineering and Management Sciences (BUITEMS) is scheduled to be held today (Thursday) here in its Takatu campus.

According to the programme, the Governor Balochistan, Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar would be the chief guest at the convocation.

He would award degrees to the graduates and postgraduate students of the university.

351 more power connections disconnected; 64 tempered meters removed

QUETTA: In all 351 more electricity connections of the defaulters of utility bills and arrears were disconnected and 64 tempered and shunt meters were removed during last 24 hours in all operation circles of Quetta Electricity Supply Company (QESCO). According to the spokesman of QESCO, the drive against defaulters and power pilferers is continued all over the province. The QESCO has managed to collect over Rs. 320 million on account of the detection and fine from the power pilferers in the province.

Former chairman DRAP arrested in corruption fake degree case

ISLAMABAD (Online): Former chairman Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) Sheikh Akhtar has been arrested by FIA in fake degree and corruption case. FIA has arrested Sheikh Akhtar former chairman DRAP following the cancellation of this bail. Judge Shahrukh Arjmand of FIA Court central has cancelled the bail before arrest. According to FIA, former chairman DRAP Sheikh Akhtar was facing Rs 2.5 billion corruption charges.

Submission of nomination papers for 2024 elections kicks off

ISLAMABAD (INP): Submission of nomination papers for participation in general elections kicked off on Wednesday.

According to schedule issued by Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), the desiring candidates could get and submit the nomination papers till 4:30 pm December 22.

On December 23, preliminary list of the candidates will be released while scrutiny of nomination papers will be held from 24th to 30th December.

As per the schedule, electoral symbols will be allotted to the candidates on January 13 and polling for the general elections will be held on February 8.

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) Tuesday issued guidelines for candidates to submit nomination papers.

The ECP said that nomination papers can be

submitted from December 20 to 22.

The fee for obtaining the nomination papers is fixed at Rs. 100.

A candidate can submit a maximum of five nomination papers with different endorses.

The fee for the candidate of the National Assembly seat is Rs30,000 (non-refundable) while the fee for the candidate of the Provincial Assembly seat is Rs20,000 (non-refundable).

The candidate shall attach the income tax return documents of the last three years with the nomination papers.

The basic qualification for the candidate is to be a citizen of Pakistan and not less than 25 years of age.

As per ECP, contestants for National Assembly seats must be voters of any place in Pakistan.



KARACHI: Caretaker Health Minister Balochistan Dr. Amir Muhammad Khan Jozgazi talking with Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori.

DC Ziarat chairs meeting to improve health facilities for patients

ZIARAT (APP)-Deputy Commissioner (DC) Ziarat Hamad-ur Rehman on Wednesday chaired a meeting of District Health Committee meeting to improve quality of health facilities for patients of the area.

District Health Officer (DHOs) Dr. Badar Nadeem Ansari, DSMP PHI Faridullah Panizai, MS Dr. Irfanuddin participated in the meeting.

In the meeting, important decisions were taken regarding the appointment

of Dr. Paramedical staff on duty and the provision of facilities in hospitals.

Addressing the meeting, Deputy Commissioner Ziarat Hamad-ur Rahman said that Doctors are the messiah of the nation, they should treat the people better and fulfill their duties honestly.

He said that strict action would be taken against those absentee doctors and paramedical staff in order to improve functional of hospitals in the area.

Pakistan, Brunei hold inaugural round of bilateral consultation

ISLAMABAD (APP): The inaugural round of Pakistan-Brunei Bilateral Consultation and Cooperation (BCC) was held virtually on Wednesday wherein the two sides engaged in extensive discussion on bilateral relations, regional developments and multilateral issues of mutual inter-

est. The inaugural round was co-chaired by Foreign Secretary of Pakistan, Ambassador Muhammad Syrus Sajjad Qazi and Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Brunei, Pengiran Norhashimah Binti Pg Mohd Hassan, a Foreign Office press release said.