

Independent

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KARACHI: President Dr. Arif Alvi offering Fateha at the Mausoleum of Quaid-i-Azam.

President visits Quaid's mausoleum

KARACHI (APP): President Dr. Arif Alvi on Monday visited the mausoleum of Quaid-e-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah and paid rich tributes to the Father of the Nation on his 147th birthday. Sindh Governor Mohammed Kamran Khan Tessori, Caretaker Chief Minister Justice (Retd) Maqbool Baqar and his cabinet members were also present on the occasion.

The president along with the governor and chief minister laid a wreath on the Quaid's grave and offered Fateha. He also prayed for the development and prosperity of the country.

Interfaith harmony need of hour Nation to stand resolute & strong against enemies creating fissures: COAS

Says Pakistan's enemies hell-bent on creating fissures using religious, ethnic and political vulnerabilities; Army Chief Acknowledges contributions made by Christian community.

RAWALPINDI (APP): Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir on Monday said that the nation would have to stand resolute and strong against the country's enemies who were creating fissures using religious, ethnic and political vulnerabilities.

"Enemies of Pakistan are hell-bent towards creating fissures using religious, ethnic and political vulnerabilities. We have to stand together and united to rise as a resolute and strong nation," the Army Chief said while speaking here at the Christ Church, where he joined the Christian community in Christmas celebrations.

The congregation welcomed the COAS and

thanked him for sharing the festivity. The Army Chief wished Merry Christmas to the entire Christian community in Pakistan.

Gen Asim Munir expressed reverence for the religious community and stressed upon the need for promoting greater interfaith harmony in the society in order to follow the true vision of Quaid-e-Azam of a united and progressive Pakistan.

He said, "Islam teaches us the lesson of peace, friendship and encourages interfaith harmony which is the need of the hour."

The COAS stressed upon the importance of having correct perspective, truth and knowledge-based opinions about national issues rather than following

rhetoric and propaganda, to address complex challenges and issues.

The Army Chief, paying glowing tribute to Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah's great vision and leadership on his 147th birthday, quoted his historical remarks made in his speech on August 11, 1947 while addressing the Constituent Assembly: "You are free. You are free to go to your temples. You are free to go to your mosques or to any other places of worship in this State of Pakistan."

At the end, the COAS befittingly acknowledged the contributions and sacrifices made by the entire Christian community of Pakistan in all the fields and domains.

Flag hoisting ceremony at Quaid Residency Ziarat: Interim Govt endeavouring to provide relief to masses by putting Balochistan on path of peace & progress: CM

Mir Ali Mardan Domki pays homage to Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah for visionary leadership, untiring struggle to get separate state for Muslims of sub-continent

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QUETTA: The caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki has stated that the interim government is endeavouring to provide relief to the masses by putting the province on path of peace and development. The Chief Minister said that the numerous minerals as well as the unique Gwadar deep seaport, Saindak and Reko Dik projects are located in Balochistan.

The work is being done on priority basis on the China-Pak Economic Cor-

ridor as well as the development projects including those of dams and roads.

These and similar other views were expressed by the caretaker Chief Minister while addressing the ceremony organised to mark the birth anniversary of Quaid-e-Azam, Muhammad Ali Jinnah at the Quaid residency Ziarat on Monday. He Chief Minister said that we had been able to get an independent Muslim state on August 14, 1947 just because of the visionary leadership, untiring efforts and continuous struggle of the Quaid. The flag hoisting ceremony was

attended by the caretaker provincial ministers, high ranking civil and military officers, tribal elders and students of different educational institutions.

He said that we got the country after great sacrifices and in this, the great services of the Quaid have been written with the golden words, he maintained.

He said that it is utmost endeavour of the provincial government to provide relief to the masses by putting the province on path of peace and development with support of the Pak army and security institutions.



ZIARAT: Caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki addressing a ceremony held in connection with Quaid Day at Ziarat Residency

Bilawal vows to abolish 17 federal ministries if PPP voted into power

PPP chief says Rs1,500 billion subsidy given to the "elites" in various sectors including energy, fertiliser

NAWABSHAH (INP): Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari on Monday vowed to abolish 17 federal ministries if his party elected into power following general elections to save taxpayers' "Rs300 billion".

Addressing a public gathering in Nawabshah, Bilawal said the 17 federal

would end the subsidy for elites to provide funds to labourers and farmers through cards, he said.

The 18th Constitutional Amendment was passed on April 8, 2010. It devolved multiple federal ministries and powers to provinces. It divested the president of all his executive authority and made him a ceremonial head of the



NAWABSHAH: Chairman Pakistan People's Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari inspecting different arts and science projects prepared by students of Bakhtawar Cadet College

ministries should have been devolved to provinces after the 18th Constitutional Amendment, Geo News reported.

The PPP chief said Rs300 billion was spent on the ministries and an Rs1,500 billion subsidy was given by the government to the "elites" in various sectors including energy, fertiliser and others. Bilawal said his party

Calling the youth the future of the country, the PPP chief said old politicians are a thing of the past.

Bilawal said the country's issues could be resolved by burying the politics of "hatred and division". He highlighted that the country is facing enormous challenges related to the economy and climate change.

Election 2024: ECP receives over 28,000 nomination papers from candidates

7,713 and 18,546 people submit papers for NA and provincial seats

ISLAMABAD (INP): With the deadline for the submission of nomination papers expiring on Sunday, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has received a total of 28,626 nomination papers from prospective candidates across the country aiming to contest upcoming polls slated for February 8, 2024.

As per the ECP's data seen by Geo News, 7,242 men along with 471 women have filed nomination papers for national assembly seats (general), whereas for provincial assemblies, the number stands at 17,744 and 802, respectively.

The ECP is currently scrutinising the nomination papers filed by the candidates with the stage set to culminate on December 30 (Saturday).

Meanwhile, appeals against the acceptance or rejection of nomination papers can be submitted by January 3, and decisions on these appeals will be made by January 10. The top electoral body will issue the list of candidates on January 11, with candidates having the option to withdraw until January 12 i.e., before the ECP allots electoral symbol on January 13.

Nation celebrates Quaid's birth anniversary with zeal

ISLAMABAD (INP): The nation celebrated the 147th birth anniversary of Father of the Nation Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah with zeal and fervor. The day dawned with gun salutes at the federal and provincial capitals. Special programs have been arranged by various social, political, governmental and non-governmental organizations and forums to celebrate the birth day of the founder of Pakistan.

The participants of events will pay rich tribute to founder of Pakistan for his tireless efforts and visionary leadership. These observances of Quaid's birthday are being widely covered by Radio Pakistan

and PTV focusing on his legacy. In Karachi, the day dawned with a 21 gun salute to the father of the nation while fateha khwani and Quran Khwani was held at the Mazar for Quaid and other leaders of Pakistan Movement.

Change of guard ceremony was held at the Mazar-e-Quaid during which a smartly turned out contingent of the Pakistan Military Academy (PMA) Kakul assumed the ceremonial guard duty. Commandant PMA Major General Itikhar Hassan Choudhry inspected the guard of honour, laid a floral wreath at the Mazar and offered Fateha. He also recorded his impressions in the visitors' book.

Government releases all Baloch protestors

ISLAMABAD (APP): The government has released all the remaining 290 Baloch protestors, in light of the deliberations of the committee formed by Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar. The decision to release the arrested protestors was taken in view of the directions of the honorable court, an Interior Ministry spokesperson said in a statement on Monday. He said that peaceful protest was the right of every citizen, but no one was allowed to take the law into their hands. The security of the Capital's Red Zone, where constitutional institutions and the Diplomatic Enclave were located, would be ensured at all costs, the spokesperson added.

Bolan Mail restored from Quetta to Karachi after one year & four months

QUETTA: The operation of Bolan Mail was restored between Quetta and Karachi on Monday. The inauguration of restoration of the Bolan Mail was held at the Quetta Railway Station.

The Divisional Superintendent of Railways Quetta, Yousaf Leghari formally inaugurated the Bolan Mail.



The high ups of Pakistan Railways were also present on the occasion. Needless to mention here that the Bolan Mail has been restored after one year and four months. The operation of Bolan Mail was suspended on August 20 last year due to the devastating floods in the province. Speaking to the media persons on the occasion, the DS Railways said that the Bolan Mail has been restored after one year and four months. He announced that by the grace of Allah Almighty, the Nawab Akbar Bugti Express would also be restored within couple of months. He said that the fate of economy class in Bolan Mail has been fixed as Rs. 2200 per passenger, which is normal.

President approves removal of Ahad Cheema

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr. Arif Alvi approved the removal of Ahad Khan Cheema from his post of Advisor to Prime Minister for Establishment.

On the instruction of the Election Commission of Pakistan, the caretaker prime minister sent the summary to the President for the removal of Ahad Cheema from his post.

The President approved the removal of Ahad Cheema on the advice of the prime minister under Article 48 of the constitution.

PPP to form next govt, says Zardari

NAWAB SHAH (INP): Former president and Pakistan Peoples Party candidate for NA-207 Asif Ali Zardari urged PTI members to work hard, highlighting that success requires effort.

Speaking at the office of Returning Officer after filing his nomination papers in Nawab Shah, Zardari expressed confidence in the Peoples Party's future.

He said that PPP would form the next government after winning the Feb 8 polls.

Solangi stresses on democratic means, adherence to rule of law to tackle issues

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Information & Broadcasting Murtaza Solangi Monday stressed on addressing the challenges being faced by the country through democratic means, negotiations, and adherence to the rule of law, as extra-constitutional measures could only lead to destruction.

Speaking at a speech competition organized by the Directorate of Electronic Media and Production (DEMP) among the students of model schools

and colleges affiliated with the Federal Directorate of Education (FDE) to pay tribute to Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah on his birth anniversary, he underscored that the pivotal solution to the country's urgent challenges laid in upholding democratic traditions. "Respecting the Constitution is crucial as progress rests in following the law. Deviating from this may lead to chaos and a breach of constitutional principles," the minister said.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Murtaza Solangi addressing event "Speech Competition on Quaid Day" organized by DEMP at Information Service Academy.

Scrutiny of nomination papers of 2,669 candidates starts in Balochistan

QUETTA: The process of scrutiny of nomination papers of the candidates filed their candidature for the national and provincial assemblies started in the province as elsewhere in the country on Monday.

According to the sources of Provincial Election Commissioner (PEC) office, in all 2,669 candidates have filed the nomination papers for the general and reserved seats of the national and provincial assemblies from Balochistan.

Altogether 631 candidates have appeared to file the nomination papers for 16 seats of the National Assembly. In all 19 female candidates are also those filed papers for general seats of the national assembly. Similarly, 1788 candi-

dates filed nomination papers for the provincial assembly seats. They are included 45 females who submitted their papers for the general seats in the provincial assembly.

For 4 seats reserved for the women in National Assembly, a total of 60 candidates filed their nomination papers in the province.

At least 123 candidates have filed papers for 11 seats of the women in Balochistan Assembly.

While 67 candidates have filed papers for three seats reserved for minorities in the Balochistan assembly. They are included 57 male and 10 female candidates. The Provincial Election Commissioner Ejaz Anwar Chohan told the scrutiny of notification papers of the candidates would remain continued till December 30, 2023.

Daily Voice of Masses
Independent

Gaza bloodbath

While other news, both domestic and foreign, compete for people's attention, we should not forget that one of the most brutal massacres of the modern age, perpetrated by one of the world's most powerful military machines, continues in the Gaza Strip against a starved and terrorised civilian population. Since Oct 7, Israel has been doing in Gaza what it has always been doing to the Palestinian people since the Nakba, but in more concentrated fashion. The torture, murder, humiliation and pillage the Arabs of Palestine have faced since 1948 — and even before, since the Zionist encroachment of Arab land began in the early 20th century — can be seen in condensed form in what the Israeli state has unleashed over the past 80 days or so in the forsaken Strip. Gaza has become an emblem for the hypocrisy of the 'international community', and the complete lack of empathy many of the self-professed global champions of human rights are capable of. They play politics to protect Israel at all costs as Palestinian children cry out in unbearable pain.

Some of this hypocrisy was on display at the UN Security Council, when the world body passed a resolution on Friday that called for the delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza, yet remained silent on stopping state-sponsored Israeli violence. As many global bodies observed, the resolution is meaningless: aid will be of little use as Tel Aviv continues to bomb Gaza. This pointless resolution is the result of much hard work by the US, which did all it could to prevent calls for a meaningful ceasefire, and abstained at the time of voting. True to form, Israel dismissed even this watered-down text, reflecting what it really thinks of world opinion. Meanwhile, famine-like conditions loom in Gaza, with the UN's World Food Programme saying the Strip faces "catastrophic conditions" as its people confront starvation. This is another war crime to be added to the many Israel has already committed against the Palestinians.

Unfortunately, those who are trying to tell Gaza's story continue to be exterminated; the Committee to Protect Journalists recently said 68 journalists and media workers have been killed since hostilities began. The vast majority of fatalities (61) are Palestinian. Moreover, Tel Aviv has told foreign wire services that it could not guarantee the safety of their journalists in Gaza. The message is clear: whoever dares to report on the misery in Gaza could themselves become a target of Israeli bombs. Yet even the death of 20,000 Palestinians — most of them women and children — has been unable to shake the world's conscience. The bravery and steadfastness of the Palestinian people can only be commended, while their killers and tormentors have shown they are capable of truly bestial violence.

Two trajectories



Luay Shabaneh

Last summer, I had the privilege of joining a Canadian delegation on a field mission to monitor a UNFPA-Canada-supported initiative — the Sehat Mand Khaandaan (SMK) programme — focused on promoting 'healthy families'. Our journey led us to the heart of Memon Gi Wasi village in Matiari district, Sindh, where we were welcomed to an "adolescent and youth-friendly space". A few dozen young people and some delegation members sat on the sand under an old wooden roof, where we were briefed by the youth about their hopes and challenges and how their engagement with SMK activities had improved their lives. I eagerly absorbed the valuable insights of young women who had managed to discover hope amidst adversity and daunting circumstances. They were brilliantly drawing roadmaps and shaping their dreams, while benefiting from their participation in youth activities and methods they employed to help their communities.

The presentations by these amazing young females reminded me of the UNFPA model for the trajectory of the 10-year-old girl introduced in 2014. The model assumes two trajectories for the girl; the first is what I called at the time 'shining', and the alternative is 'down-nosing'. The shining trajectory starts by keeping the girl at school, protecting her from child marriage, in fact, delaying her marriage until she completes her education and is equipped with skills and

confidence, provided a decent job opportunity and empowered to enjoy her rights. This leads to better health for the girl, a smaller family, lifelong education, and economic independence. Ultimately, she will be better equipped to make decisions about her own reproductive health and raise healthy, happy children, making her a woman leader in her family, community, and larger society, one who is fit to participate in politics and contribute to her nation's prosperity.

On the flip side, the downward trajectory starts with a 10-year-old girl discontinuing her education, leading to early or child marriage, early pregnancy, a growing number of children, health challenges, lack of skills, difficulty in securing stable employment, limited access to education, and heightened vulnerability to gender-based violence (GBV). The accelerators to lift the girl from the down-nosing to shining trajectory were identified by strengthened systems (education, sexual and reproductive health, GBV prevention and response), programmes (population and youth policies, capacity building for quality service provision, laws and policies upholding SRH rights, criminalising violence against women and ending discrimination), and individual capabilities (lifelong education, enabling work environment, knowledge, skills, opportunities and income-generating activities). Go-vernment spending on a 10-year-old on the down-nosing trajectory is far higher than the cost of investing in her education, skills, and opportunities in the shining trajectory.

Although investing in women is a human right, governments, too, can gain multiple benefits from such investment. Cultural barriers and discriminatory social norms are often guarded by community gatekeepers, including women who enable the reinforcement of discriminatory value systems and myths within the household and family structure. Women with a high level of human capital are the natural agents of change in social norms that prevent socioeconomic progress.

Research shows that people live in cycles, and socioeconomic and demographic cycles are interlinked with strong association. Poor families are trapped because they have a bigger family size, a higher dependency on breadwinners, are uneducated and unhealthy, and have fewer chances of getting high-income jobs because of their economic burden. Breaking out of this vicious cycle and transitioning to a more prosperous path requires a change in family demographics, and this usually requires investments in women's human capital and opportunities.

Discussions at a recent population conference highlighted the experience of Bangladesh, Iran, Indonesia, Tunisia, and Turkey, which showed that investing in women's human capital, skills, rights, and opportunities comprise a multiplying factor in calibrating population with resources. Pakistan lags behind countries such as Bangladesh and Malaysia, which have achieved remarkable progress in recent years in terms of economic growth and empowering women and integrating them as productive members of society. For example, the female labour force participation rate in Pakistan is 24 per cent compared with 43pc in Bangladesh and 55pc in Malaysia. Pakistan has no choice but to allocate substantial funds and design long-term programmes to invest in women and girls to shift the nation's trajectory from 'down-nosing' to the 'shining' approach.

- Courtesy Dawn

Bits of hope



Huma Yusuf

The focus on Pakistan's upcoming elections is of an existential nature: will they take place? Will the PTI endure in any form? Can Pakistani democracy survive such blatant orchestration? The answer to the last question is: it has to. And so we must seek for shreds of hope.

Our country's democratic system is arguably facing its darkest spell yet, which may seem a dramatic assessment as the hurly burly of elections kicks off. But this is against the backdrop of a censored media, enforced disappearances, suppression of minority rights, a compromised judicial system, including a push for civilian trials in military courts, and threats to the Constitution, particularly targeting the 18th Amendment. In this context, a sham election seems the least of one's problems.

The election itself, beyond the obvious puppet mastery, has more fundamental flaws, key among them the persistence of disenfranchisement. As Sarwar Bari wrote last month, up to 15 million voters across 102 (out of 134 districts) are missing from the electoral rolls.

This disenfranchisement is prevalent in Balochistan, where one-third of eligible voters in 31 districts have been excluded, but also in more developed parts of the country.

The missing voters include both men and women, with poverty likely a major reason for non-registration. The Ahmadi community is also systemically denied suffrage due to require-

ments to flag voters' religious identities.

So where are those shreds of hope? The assumption is that sham elections erode a public's engagement with the democratic process. But ours is a nation accustomed to democratic perversions, and it has not yet lost the appetite for democracy (think of elections in 1988, 2008, and to some extent 2013). In dark political times, should we entertain the idea that the electoral charade itself has merit?

If nothing else, the February elections will keep the electoral machine moving. More than 128.5m voters are registered — no small feat. The election gender gap persists, with women accounting for only 46.13 per cent of registered voters. But enfranchisement is improving: the gender gap for the first time in a decade is less than 10m, and marginalised communities continue to seek representation (consider the candidacies of Nayab Ali and Sobia Khan who are championing transgender rights).

The tenuous link between polls and service delivery also endures.

The powers that be acknowledge the need to mobilise 'electables' who draw votes in exchange for patronage (a road, a tube well) for their district. At a brighter moment in Pakistan's democratic trajectory, this trend must be entrenched with better local government structures to improve accountability. There's also something to be said for instilling the electoral habit.

Anyone who has cast a vote recalls the thrill of it — the joy of collective participation, the fleeting euphoria of empowerment, the pride of sporting an ink-stained thumb. Voting is addictive, and one hopes that the more than 59m voters under the age of 35 will leave the polls in February with a craving for more democracy.

Pakistanis will head to the polls in a big year for elections — 76 countries, including eight of the 10 most populous, will hold elections in 2024. But democracy lovers are not celebrating. Many important elections (Pakistan, Russia, Bangladesh, Mexico) will not be free or fair, and other critical ones (the US, India, Indonesia) will be deeply flawed. Quality of polling, not quantity, is the purist's call.

However, even in the global context, there is some cause for optimism. Elections that are neither free nor fair are explicitly so. The widespread acknowledgement that some elections are democratic façades erodes trust in current political stakeholders, but should not in the long run irreparably damage democratic systems. Failures in representation, service delivery and policymaking will be blamed on the real power brokers and their complicit proxies, but not on the system itself. If the arc of the moral universe bends toward less nostalgia for autocrats, martial law and hybrid regimes, that is no bad thing. Another interesting trend is the re-engagement of voters in developed democracies with the power of their vote. One example of this is pro-Palestine US voters who will struggle to vote for Joe Biden given his support for Israel. The notion of voting for Biden to keep Trump out no longer seems compelling enough. Such thinking in the short term may lead to more instability and worse political outcomes, but in the longer run would invigorate issue- and values-based politics and reinstate the integrity of the vote, strengthening democracy overall. So darkness will persist, but democracy will prevail. Any other conclusion would be too bleak as we enter an annus electorum. — Courtesy Dawn

Commerce News

Pak-China building materials collaboration opportunities flourish in Linqu, Shandong

BEIJING (APP): The Linqu Building Materials Special Session, as part of the 2023 Weifang International Procurement Festival, was held in Linqu, Shandong, which provided a platform for international representatives to connect. Tahir Zaman Muhammad, the CEO of Eagle Star Supply Chain and a prominent Pakistani business representative, received significant attention during his participation in the event. "I am honored to have been invited to participate in this prestigious event. The organization of procurement festivals within industrial clusters

provides an excellent opportunity for me to connect with outstanding and reliable suppliers," said Tahir. He also highlighted the increasing interest and potential for collaboration between the building materials industries of China and Pakistan, China Economic Net (CEN) reported. Linqu City is renowned for its abundant resource base, advanced manufacturing capabilities, and comprehensive supply chain. Its products, including ceramics, glass, cement, and steel, enjoy high demand both domestically and internationally.

"This event has given me valuable insights into the significant influence of Linqu and has introduced me to several high-quality building material enterprises," expressed Tahir, impressed by the thriving building materials industry in Linqu. Pakistan is currently witnessing a growing demand for building materials due to rapid urbanization and infrastructure development initiatives.

The country's expertise in areas such as marble, granite, and textiles presents promising opportunities for collaboration with Linqu's building materials sector.



ISLAMABAD: A man is buying flower pot from vendor at nursery along the Park road in Federal Capital.

RCCI celebrates Quaid's 147th birth Anniversary

RAWALPINDI (APP): A cake-cutting ceremony in connection with the 147th birth anniversary of Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah was held at Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) here on Monday. Speaking on the occasion, RCCI President and Chairman RWMC, Saqib Rafiq said that the objective of inheriting a prosperous Pakistan to the next generation can only be possible by complying with Quaid's motto of Unity, Faith and Discipline. Saqib

Rafiq emphasized the business community, youth and members of the RCCI to adopt Quaid's attributes of honesty, hard work, perseverance and dedication. "We have to work together and give a better and prosperous Pakistan for future generations". Group leader Sohail Altaf said that with the difficulties that Pakistan is facing today, it is the responsibility of every individual to become sincere to his country and devote his services to the building of the country.

PRGMEA, Customs hold interactive session to facilitate garment exporters

LAHORE (INP): The Pakistan Readymade Garments Manufacturers & Exporters (PRGMEA) held an interactive session on Monday in collaboration with the Model Customs Collectorate to facilitate the exporters to enhance value-added textile exports, contributing in the economic uplift of the country.

Participated by a number of PRGMEA members, during the interactive session Customs Collector Ms. Azmat Tahira along with her team including Ms. Farah Farooq, Deputy Collector Customs Ms. Syeda Sidra, ADC Additional Deputy Collector Customs, briefed the exporters about various issues including Rebate Calculations, Pending DTRE Cases, Bonded Warehouse Soft Clearance, Vender Registration for EFS, HS Code Approval, Maintenance of Customs Record in Duplicate both in manual and electronic and Access of different Analysis Certificate etc.



PESHAWAR: A delegation of Islamic Development Bank is meeting with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Integration of Districts, Industry and Crafts and Technical Education Dr. Aamir Abdullah, headed by regional operation team leader Kanamak Infrastructure Osama Trigoi.

FBR issues stern warning to non-filers

ISLAMABAD (INP): In a bold move, the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has issued a warning to non-filers, signaling severe consequences such as bank account suspensions and travel bans for those who fail to comply with income tax return regulations.

Chief of Broadening the Tax Base (BTB) Muhammad Asif stressed the urgency for non-filers to register with the nearest tax office to avoid penalties, fines, utility disconnection, and the extreme measures of bank account suspensions and restricted travel.

FBR Chief

Broadening the Tax Base revealed that a national drive has been launched to broaden the tax base, targeting all eligible individuals and those with taxable income.

A document from the FBR official highlighted Pakistan's narrow tax base, with only around 5.2 million people registered in the tax system in 2022 out of a population of 240 million.

The country faces challenges of widespread tax evasion, a low tax-to-GDP ratio, and a shortage of tax revenues for critical public services and socioeconomic development.

Thanks to Punjab CM, LDA City affectees to get possession of plots

LAHORE (INP): In another historic decision, Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Monday announced plan to give possession of plots to the affectees of LDA City, who were awaiting this decision from the last nine years.

Sources in Punjab government said that handing over of plots possession to the LDA City affectees will start from December 31 in Block C. Commissioner Lahore Muhammad Ali Randhawa presented the LDA City plan to the Punjab CM.

Possession of 19

plots of 2 kanals and 309 plots of one kanal, 664 plots of 10 marlas and 561 plots of 5 marlas will be given to affectees in C Block of said housing scheme.

Overall, Punjab CM will provide relief to the affectees of LDA City by giving possession of a total of 1553 plots.

Mohsin Naqvi has also barred the collection of additional development charges. He also announced that passion charges will be nominal and will be collected according to nominal DC rate.

SAPM says: Pakistan participating in Int'l Human Resource & Labour Expo in Riyadh

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) for Human Resource Development and Overseas Pakistanis Jawad Sohrah Malik on Monday said that for the first time Pakistan was participating in the International Human Resource & Labour Expo in Riyadh, Kingdom of

Saudi Arabia. The SAPM, in a post on the social media platform 'X', said that the main purpose of attending the expo was to highlight "our talented workforce to the global stage, and generate extensive job opportunities for Pakistanis worldwide". To generate extensive

job opportunities for Pakistanis worldwide, he added. He said it was crucial to grasp international market needs & tailor "our skills to meet them". He urged the overseas Pakistanis to join the Pakistan delegation at the @Rals2030 Expo in Riyadh, which would continue till December 27.

Secretary Industries Punjab visits RDA to inspect under construction BFC

RAWALPINDI (APP): Secretary Industries, Commerce, Investment and Skills Development Department, Punjab Ehsan Bhatta along with Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Liaquat Ali Chatta here on Friday visited R a w a l p i n d i Development Authority (RDA) to inspect the under-construction Business Facilitation Center (BFC).

The Secretary on the occasion said that the purpose of establishing the BFC is to provide maximum facilities to the industrialists, investors and entrepreneurs for obtaining No Objection Certificate (NOC).

Demand for 'cakes' goes up as Christian community celebrates Christmas with zeal

ISLAMABAD (APP): As the Christian community across Pakistan was celebrating their grand festival of Christmas on Sunday, the bakeries have designed and displayed a variety of 'cakes' decorated with images of Santa Clause, a Christmas tree, and other related themes to attract buyers with high demand. A huge crowd was witnessed at the sweet shops and bakeries to place orders for the customized cakes and sweets, according to a report aired by a private news channel.

"This Christmas season, people are mostly placing huge orders to send gifts as well to celebrate the occasion with zeal and enthusiasm," said a citizen.

Various cakes, cupcakes, and other delights decorated with Santa, a Christmas tree, and other Christmas themes are the favourite choice of the people, especially children and we have displayed special designs which are highly appreciated by customers, said a famous bakery. A buyer commented there was no Christmas without cakes and sweets. "For me, Christmas celebrations are synonymous with cakes and sweets."

"I am not only booking cakes for my family but also my friends and relatives, as this is our tradition to gift cakes and sweets while visiting each other on Christmas."

‘Minorities must be treated with kindness’, CM Punjab

Independent Report
LAHORE: Caretaker Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi said on Monday that minorities must be treated with kindness as per the teachings of our beloved Holy Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him).

He said this while addressing a prayer ceremony held at Cathedral Church here.

CM extended Christmas greeting to christian community.

Mohsin Naqvi said that Churches and houses damaged in Jaranwala incident had been repaired, while houses which had been burnt were provided financial assistance.

He further said that ‘after Jaranwala incident, ‘Meesaq’ centres have been established in all the districts for the protection of the rights of the minorities and the

promotion of inter-faith harmony”.

CM said that today biggest ‘Mesaq Centre’ will be inaugurated in Lahore.

For the first time Punjab Cabinet meeting was held in Jaranwala Church to express solidarity with christian community, he said and added that doors of Mosques were opened for Christians after Jaranwala incident.

Mohsin Naqvi said that Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah also emphasized on protecting rights of minorities.

He said that services of christian community in the field of education could not be denied.

CM said, “Sacred heart, Convent and other educational institutions of christian community are source of pride for all of us.” He said, “Muslims

deeply respect Hazrat Isa (AS) as one of the great messengers of Allah Almighty”.

It is pertinent to mention here that Archbishop of Lahore Sebastian Francis Shaw welcomed the CM at the Church and presented flowers to him. Christmas cake was also cut on the occasion.

Meanwhile the Punjab government on Monday celebrated the birth anniversary of Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah in an unprecedented manner at Chief Minister’s office. According to a handout issued here, Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi and members of the cabinet participated in a cake-cutting ceremony, extending heartfelt wishes to the nation on the revered occasion of the Father of the Nation’s birth anniversary.



LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi cutting the cake on the occasion of Christmas Day at St. Anthony’s Church, in the City.

Quaid-e-Azam changed map of sub-continent through democratic struggle: Governor

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor, Haji Ghulam Ali here Monday said that the founder of Pakistan, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah had changed the map of the sub-continent and made the creation of Pakistan possible for Muslims through a democratic struggle.

In a message on the 147th birthday anniversary of the legendary leader, Ghulam Ali said that the ideology of Pakistan for Quaid-e-Azam was not acquiring merely a piece of land but the creation of a separate and sovereign

state where they can live a free and dignified life.

Paying rich tributes to the great Quaid, the Governor vowed to make every sacrifice for Pakistan. “Pakistan is our pride and identity and every citizen has to play a constructive role for its prosperity and progress by strictly adhering to faith, unity and discipline principle of the charismatic leader.”

He called for results-oriented efforts for national cohesiveness and unity to make Pakistan more stronger and prosperous.

Fire break out due to gas leakage in Rawalpindi

RAWALPINDI (APP): A fire broke out due to a gas pipeline leakage in Dhamyal, Rawalpindi, on Monday. According to spokesperson Rescue 1122, six emergency vehicles, including three fire tenders, and more than a dozen personnel participated in the operation. Fortunately, there were no reported casualties, but a house was badly damaged due to the fire. Soon after the incident, Commissioner Rawalpindi Liaquat Ali Chatta, Regional Police Officer (RPO) Rawalpindi Syed Khurram Ali.

37 robbers killed during 58 police encounters in Vehari district

BUREWALA (APP): As many as 58 police encounters were taken place in which 37 robbers killed in Vehari district during last 10 months. 41 dacoits were injured while two policemen were also injured in these encounters. According to the spokesperson of Vehari district police, the criminals, proclaimed offenders and robbers left the area due to police raids under the supervision of DPO Vehari Isa Khan.

Commissioner shares Christ joy in colourful event

RAWALPINDI (APP): In a heartwarming Christmas gathering, Commissioner Rawalpindi Liaquat Ali Chatta highlighted the universal message of love for humanity preached by all religions, emphasizing the value of unity and respect for diverse beliefs.

Speaking as the chief guest, Commissioner Chatta said that minorities are fully

protected and enjoying equal rights.

He assured the Christian community of foolproof security measures, emphasizing that the security of Pakistan is intertwined with the collective attitude towards other religions and minorities. He called upon everyone to actively contribute to making the country a haven of peace and security.

CM KP extends warm wishes to nation on Quaid’s Day

PESHAWAR (APP): Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Justice @ Syed Arshad Hussain Shah, in commemoration of the birth anniversary of the founding father, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, extended warm wishes to the nation on this significant day and urged the nation to renew its commitment to making Pakistan an Islamic welfare state.

Chief Minister Syed Arshad Hussain Shah delivered a heartfelt message, addressing the entire nation. Chief Minister Arshad Hussain Shah acknowledged the relentless efforts and visionary leadership of Quaid-e-Azam in establishing a separate state.

He emphasized the

enduring commitment and unwavering struggle that paved the way for the creation of the blessed country of Pakistan. Reflecting on the principled and scholarly leadership of Quaid-e-Azam, the Chief Minister highlighted that the nation, under his visionary guidance, emerged as the manifestation of Allah’s gift. In the context of current crises, the Chief Minister stressed the need for the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to adhere to the principles of faith, unity, and discipline laid out by the founding fathers. CM Arshad Hussain urged everyone to efforts and visionary leadership of Quaid-e-Azam in steering the country away from prevailing crises and towards the path of progress.



PESHAWAR: Chief Traffic Police Officer Dr. Zahid Ullah distributing helmets, mugs and history books of Quaid-e-Azam to a motorcyclist on the occasion of Quaid-e-Azam day at Khyber Road.

Kashmiris remember Quaid e Azam on his 147th birth anniversary

MIRPUR (AJK) (APP): People across Azad Jammu Kashmir celebrated Quaid-e-Azam day marking the state-wide celebrations of 147th birth anniversary of the founder of Pakistan, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah on Monday with great enthusiasm and devotion coupled with the renewal of the pledge to continue the individual and collective role for making Pakistan progressive and prosperous in letter and spirit as envisioned by

father of the nation. It was gazetted holiday across AJK on this occasion. The day dawned with special prayers in the mosques throughout AJK for the integrity, solidarity, progress and prosperity of Pakistan and for the early success of the Kashmir freedom movement. Special ceremonies to celebrate the birthday of Quaid-e-Azam were hosted in all ten districts, as well as the subordinate tehsil headquarters of Azad Jammu Kashmir including the state metropolis.



FAISALABAD: Visitor keenly viewing the displayed portrait during an exhibition in connection with Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah’s 147th birthday at Nurat Fateh Ali Khan Auditorium of Arts Council.

135 male, 7 female for NA, 470 male, 22 female submitted papers for PK seats in Peshawar

PESHAWAR (APP): As many as 135 male and seven female candidates have submitted their nomination papers for five National Assembly seats while 470 male and 22 female have submitted their nomination papers for 13 provincial assembly seats in Peshawar for General Elections 2024.

According to a notification issued here on

Sunday by the provincial election commission, said that 33 males have submitted nomination papers for NA-28 Peshawar-I, 21 males have submitted nomination papers for NA-29 Peshawar-II, 25 males and two females have submitted nomination papers for NA-30 Peshawar-III, 28 males and two females have submitted nomination papers for NA-31 Peshawar.

CM KP greets newly office bearers of Tank Press Club

PESHAWAR (APP): Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Justice Retired Arshad Hussain Shah on Monday felicitated the newly elected office bearers of Tank Press Club.

He extended congratulations to President Rafiq Ahmed Kundi, General Secretary Sheikh Rehmatullah along with entire cabinet, on their successful election.

In his official statement, Chief Minister Arshad Hussain Shah expressed hope that the newly elected cabinet would utilize their leadership and professional skills for the prosperity and advancement of the journalistic community in the area.

He emphasized their responsibility in fostering a positive journalistic environment and promoting excellence in the field of journalism.

International News

Russian has the upper hand in arms race with the West, says Russian minister

Monitoring Desk
MOSCOW: Russia has the upper hand in weapons production over the West and intends to keep the rate of growth high, a top Russian minister said on Monday after both the West and Russia ramped up arms production for the Ukraine war.

Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, triggering the biggest conflict in Europe since World War Two and the deepest confrontation between Russia and the West since the depths of the Cold War. Ukraine and its West-

ern backers ramped up arms production in an attempt to defeat Russian forces on the battlefields of Ukraine. Russia also hiked production but says the West is to blame for the war which Moscow dates to 2014. “I don’t want to boast, but I can say that we began to gain and picked up the pace of production earlier than Western countries,” Denis Manturov, the deputy prime minister who oversees arms production, told the RIA news agency.

“Another question is how long this race will last,” Manturov said, add-

ing that a 2025-2034 armament plan was due to be approved next year.

President Vladimir Putin and his defence minister, Sergei Shoigu, have said that production of artillery, drones, tanks and armoured vehicles is soaring.

Some former leaders of the West have spoken about a new Cold War between Russia and China on one side and the United States and its allies on the other, though Russia’s \$2 trillion economy would find it hard to counter the entire might of the West alone for long.



Supporters of the opposition ‘Serbia Against Violence’ (SPN) protest in front of the city hall, after the SPN alleged major election law violations in the Belgrade city and parliament races, in Belgrade, Serbia.

Swedish court ruling against ex-official ‘unjust’: Iran

Monitoring Desk
DUBAI: Iran said on Monday it would continue efforts to gain the release of a former Iranian official sentenced in Sweden to life in prison for his part in a mass execution of political prisoners in Iran.

“This unjust and outrageous ruling does not end Iran’s diplomatic efforts to repatriate and free this Iranian citizen and we will use all legal and available means,” Foreign Ministry spokesperson Nasser Kanaani said, without specifying.

Last Tuesday, a

Swedish appeals court upheld the guilty verdict and life sentence for murder and serious crimes against international law for the former official Hamid Noury.

“We seriously object to the verdict and to what has taken place during this citizen’s long period of detention... and his basic rights have not been respected in Sweden’s prisons,” Kanaani told a weekly news conference. “We hope Sweden will take serious actions to compensate for its errors.”

Drone attack damages ship off India’s coast

Monitoring Desk
DUBAI: A drone strike damaged a merchant ship off the coast of India on Saturday, but caused no casualties, two maritime agencies said, with one reporting the vessel was linked to Israel. The attack caused a fire on board, according to the British military’s United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations, or UKMTO. Ambrey, a maritime security firm, said the “Liberia-flagged tanker... was Israel-affiliated” and had been on its way from Saudi Arabia to India. Both agencies said the attack occurred 200 nautical miles southwest of Veraval, India.

Large parts of Australia endure heatwave

Monitoring Desk
SYDNEY: Large parts of Australia on Sunday sweated through heatwave conditions as authorities warned of a high bushfire risk in many parts of the country’s vast Western Australia state. The nation’s weather forecaster on Sunday issued heatwave alerts for the western state, the neighbouring Northern Territory and the eastern Queensland state.



OCCUPIED WEST BANK: Members of the Palestinian youth scouting movement hold banners calling for an end to the conflict in the Gaza Strip during a procession to welcome the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem.

France completes military withdrawal from Niger, leaving a gap in the terror fight in the Sahel

Monitoring Desk
ABUJA: France on Friday completed the withdrawal of its troops after they were asked to leave Niger by the country’s new junta, ending years of on-the-ground military support and raising concerns from analysts about a gap in the fight against jihadi violence across the Sahel region of Africa.

The last French military aircraft and troops departed Niger by the Dec. 22 deadline set by the junta which severed ties with Paris after the coup in July, the French Army General Staff told The

Associated Press by email. France already announced this week that it would close its diplomatic mission in Niger for “an indefinite period.”

However, the country would continue to be involved in the Sahel — the vast expanse south of the Sahara Desert which has been a hot spot for violent extremism — although differently. President Emmanuel Macron said Thursday during a visit to a base in Jordan.

“I decided on some important reconfigurations,” Macron said.

Afghan schoolgirls are finishing sixth grade in tears. Under Taliban rule, their education is over

Monitoring Desk
KABUL: Bahara Rustam, 13, took her last class at Bibi Razia School in Kabul on Dec. 11 knowing it was the end of her education. Under Taliban rule, she is unlikely to step foot in a classroom again. In September 2021, a month after U.S. and NATO troops withdrew from Afghanistan following two decades of war, the Taliban announced that girls were barred from studying beyond sixth grade. They extended this education ban to universi-

ties in December 2022. The Taliban have defied global condemnation and warnings that the restrictions will make it almost impossible for them to gain recognition as the country’s legitimate rulers.

Last week, U.N. special envoy Roza Otunbayeva expressed concern that a generation of Afghan girls is falling behind with each day that passes. Last week, an official in the Education Ministry said Afghan girls of all ages are allowed to study in religious schools.

Eight police injured, 38 detained in Serb opposition protest over election

Monitoring Desk
BELGRADE: Eight policemen were injured and 38 people detained during and after an opposition protest over election results, Serbia’s police said on Monday.

Thousands gathered in the centre of Belgrade on Sunday to demand the annulment of parliamentary and local elections a week ago that international observers said were unfair.

The protesters broke windows and glass at the main entrance of the town hall, before police used pepper spray to disperse them around 10 p.m. (2100 GMT).

American military ‘tracks’ Santa Claus for 68th year

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: The joint US-Canadian military monitoring agency has continued its decades-long tradition of tracking Santa’s whereabouts, helping children around the globe find out when his reindeer-powered, present-filled sleigh is coming to town. A 3-D, interactive website at www.noradsanta.org showed Santa and his reindeer on their imagined worldwide delivery route.

Staff deaths in Gaza reach unprecedented levels, says UN chief

Monitoring Desk
UNITED NATIONS: In a startling disclosure, UN Secretary-General António Guterres said on Sunday that 136 UN personnel had lost their lives in Gaza over the past 75 days, marking an unprecedented tragedy in UN history.

Mr Guterres expressed deep concern over the appalling human suffering, physical destruction in Gaza, and urged Israel not to continue its ‘collective punishment’ against the Palestinian people.

The secretary-general paid tribute to the UN staff, most of whom were forced from their homes, and thousands of aid workers risking their lives to support civilians in Gaza. He emphasized the international community’s responsibility to leverage its influence to prevent further escalation and end the crisis, urging Israel to avoid “collective punishment.”

“The international community has a responsibility to use all its influence to prevent further escalation and end this crisis,” Mr. Guterres insisted.



Pope Francis celebrates Christmas Eve mass in St. Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican.

Thousands join migrant caravan in Mexico ahead of Secretary of State Blinken’s visit to the capital

Monitoring Desk
TAPACHULA: A sprawling caravan of migrants from Central America, Venezuela, Cuba and other countries trekked through Mexico on Sunday, heading toward the U.S. border. The procession came just days before Secretary of State Antony Blinken arrives in Mexico City to hammer out new agreements to control the surge of migrants seeking entry into the United States.

The caravan, estimated at around 6,000 people, many of them families with young children, is the largest in more than a year, a clear indication that joint efforts by the Biden administration and President Andrés Manuel López Obrador’s government to deter migration are falling short.

The Christmas Eve caravan departed from the city of Tapachula, near the country’s southern border with Guatemala. Security forces looked on in what appeared to be a repeat of past tactics when authorities waited for the marchers to tire out and then offered them a form of temporary legal status that is used by many to continue their journey northward. “We’ve been waiting here for three or four months without an answer,” said Cristian Rivera, traveling alone, having left his wife and child in his native Honduras. “Hopefully with this march there will be a change and we can get the permission we need to head north.”

President urges children to achieve high academic goals, adopt Quaid's principles

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Monday urged children to contribute to the country by achieving high standards in education and adopting the Quaid-e-Azam's principles of unity, faith, and discipline.

In an event titled "Quaid and Children", the president said adhering to the golden values of the founder of Pakistan would make the country prosper in the comity of nations.

The colourful ceremony held here at the Presidency to celebrate the birth anniversary of the Quaid-e-Azam was attended by First Lady Samina Alvi, ministers, parliamentarians, and a large number of school children including the differently-

abled ones.

President Alvi recalled that during the Pakistan Movement, children were also among the population who loved their Quaid and steadfastly stood with him in his struggle for a separate homeland. He read out a few passionate letters written by children to the Quaid-e-Azam where they penned their support to him besides sending him the money collected after savings. The president said Quaid-e-Azam was a strong believer in mainstreaming women and other marginalized segments of society to ensure economic prosperity.

He emphasized providing equal opportunities to women and differently-abled people in the fields

of education and employment. He said the Quaid-e-Azam created this country with utmost dedication and commitment and stressed that it was the responsibility of every citizen to play a part in its development.

President Alvi mentioned that the people in Kashmir were suffering at the hands of Indian occupation forces while the religious minorities faced continued persecution.

"The current situation in India reinforces the significance of the Two-Nation theory that necessitated the creation of a separate homeland for the Muslims of the Indian sub-continent," he said.

He said Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah was a great leader

whose struggle led to bringing a change in the world. "This homeland was created after the sacrifices of thousands of people and it needs to be strengthened with hard work and commitment," he said.

President Alvi and Samina Alvi cut the cake to celebrate the birthday of the Quaid-e-Azam among children. The children clad in traditional dresses danced to the tunes of folk songs depicting the rich culture of the four provinces and Kashmir. A group of differently-abled children including the visually-impaired presented a tableau on the song 'Dil Dil Pakistan', which was highly appreciated by the audience that waved national flags during the performance.



ZIARAT: Caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki, provincial ministers and high officials photographed with children after a ceremony at Ziarat Residency in connection with Quaid Day.



KARACHI: Special Representative to the Caretaker Prime Minister on Religious Harmony & Islamic Countries and Chairman of Pakistan Ulama Council Hafiz Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi talking to media persons at Holy Trinity Cathedral Church.

Muslims, minorities united for country's development: Ashrafi

KARACHI (APP): Special Representative to the Caretaker Prime Minister on Religious Harmony & Islamic Countries Hafiz Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi on Monday said that Ulama and minorities, including the Christian community, were united for the peace and development of the country.

Ashrafi, who is also Chairman of the Pakistan Ulama Council, said the PUC and churches had always stood firm for peace in the country.

He stated this during his visit to Holy Trinity Cathedral to celebrate Christmas with the Christian community. Ashrafi, felicitating the Christian community on the auspicious occasion, said that the Ulama believed in having respect for all religions. The minorities including Christians, Sikhs and Hindus were free to go to their worship places in the country and their protection was the State's responsibility,

he added.

Ashrafi said that the Chief of Army Staff Syed Asim Munir also visited a Church today to join the Christian community in Christmas celebrations.

Referring to the Palestine situation, he said that the Christians opened doors of their Churches for the Muslims when the latter were attacked.

He said that the Christians were also being targeted in Palestine along with the Muslims. "We want peace and do not want war," he added.

Recalling the incident of Jaranwala, he said that no one had the right to destabilize peace in the country. "Islam does not allow anyone to force for marriage as well as does not allow any act with force."

Ashrafi said that due to the efforts of the caretaker prime minister and the COAS, activities had been restored in the Pakistan Stock Exchange and reduced Hajj expenses by Rs 0.1 million.

PM condoles demise of Nisar Qadri

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Monday expressed grief and sorrow at the demise of prominent actor Nisar Qadri.

In a message of condolence, he prayed for the elevation of the departed soul in the ranks of Jannah. He sympathized with the bereaved family of the deceased artist.

He said Nisar Qadri was among the experienced artists of Pakistan Television.

The services of Nisar Qadri for Pakistan Television, film, radio and theatre would always be remembered, he added.

4 killed, several injured in road accident

ISLAMABAD (INP): At least four persons were killed while another five got injured in a collision between a car and a motorcycle on Islamabad Expressway near Dhokh Kala Khan in the wee hours of Monday.

According to rescue sources, an over speeding car collided with a motorcycle, resultantly, four people were killed on the spot, a private news channel reported.

Police teams reached the spot and started an investigation after cordoning off the area, adding, the injured and bodies were shifted to hospital. Rescue teams also reached the accident site and launched a rescue operation.

Earthquake of magnitude 4.4 jolts Mingora, surroundings

SWAT (INP): A low intensity earthquake jolted Mingora and its surrounding areas on Monday but causality or damage was reported.

According to National Seismic Monitoring Centre (NSMC), tremours measuring 4.4 on Richter scale were felt in Mingora and its adjoining areas.

ANP's candidate Niaz Wali dies of cardiac arrest

PESHAWAR (INP): Awami National Party (ANP) candidate for provincial assembly, Niaz Wali passed away of cardiac arrest on Monday.

Niaz Wali had submitted nomination papers from constituency PK-70 of Tehsil Bara for general elections to be scheduled on February 08, 2024. The ANP candidate suffered heart attack which proved fatal.

Aneeq says: Provision of best Hajj facilities to pilgrims' govt's top priority

ISLAMABAD (INP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed Monday said that provision of best Hajj facilities to Pakistani pilgrims is top priority of the government for which the government was taking all possible steps.

Interacting with a private TV channel here, he said that in its Hajj Policy 2024, the federal government has significantly reduced the Hajj expenses as compared to previous year.

Ameeq Ahmed said that the Hajj 2024 was set to embrace digitalization, providing pilgrims with a mobile application which will function without Internet connectivity. This innovative app will offer various features, including a complaint lodging option to the pilgrims this year, he added.

The government had also introduced a historic 20 to 21-day short Hajj package and was striving to make the religious obligation financially affordable to the entire nation, he said.

He said quality accommodation and meals, with improved transportation facilities would be provided to make the Hajj a more comfortable and convenient experience for the pilgrims.

Change of Guards ceremony held at mausoleum of Quaid-e-Azam

KARACHI (INP): Change of guards' ceremony held at the mausoleum of the Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah on his 147th birth anniversary on Monday. An elegant change of guards' ceremony held at the Quaid's mausoleum in Karachi today to pay tribute to the Father of the Nation.

A smartly turned-out contingent of the Pakistan Military Academy Kakul assumed the ceremonial guards' duty. Commandant PMA Major General Iftekhar Hassan Chaudhry was the chief guest in the change of guards' ceremony at Mazar-e-Quaid.

Commandant PMA laid floral wreath at the Mazar-e-Quaid and paid respects. The nation is celebrating Quaid's birth anniversary today across the country with enthusiasm and national spirit.



GADANI: Additional Chief Secretary Home Zahid Saleem listening problems of prisoners during his visit to Gadani jail.

ECP introduces online facility center to check nomination papers process

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Election Commission has introduced an online facility center to streamline the process of checking nomination papers for the upcoming general elections.

The spokesperson of the Election Commission on Monday revealed that the online facility center, located in the Election Commission Secretariat, is operational 24 hours a day, supported by NADRA, NAB, FIA, FBR, and the State Bank. Information is promptly relayed to the relevant institutions for necessary actions.

The Election Commission spokesperson added that directives have been issued to the Secretary of Power Division and Secretary of Petroleum Division to obtain lists of candidates from the returning officers. Similarly, the Secretary of National Telecommunication and Secretary of Housing have been instructed to collect candidate lists from returning officers. Chief Secretaries of the four provinces and the Chairman of CDA have also received orders to procure candidate lists from Returning Officers.

Furthermore, the Election Commission spokesperson emphasized that defaulting candidates should approach the Returning Officer for document verification between December 25 and December 30, following the release of the candidate list. All federal and provincial government institutions are urged to communicate directly with the immediate returning officers.



QUETTA: Security officials stand high alert to avoid untoward incident during on the occasion of Christmas Day celebration, outside Sacred Heart Church in Quetta.

Solangi for implementation of Quaid-e-Azam's principles to make Pakistan prosperous

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Monday called for the implementation of the principles of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah to make Pakistan a developed and prosperous nation.

In his message on the birth anniversary of the Father of the Nation Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, he said today the entire nation paid homage to "Mohsin-e-Pakistan" Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

Quaid-e-Azam tirelessly fought for the freedom of the Muslims of the subcontinent and the establishment of a separate independent state, Murtaza Solangi said.

He said the Quaid-e-Azam made it possible to create a state in the form of Pakistan where all citizens have equal opportunities to live and develop without any discrimination of colour, caste, religion, language.

The Quaid-e-Azam made the dream of Pakistan a reality due to his skills, determination and exceptional character. Murtaza Solangi remarked.

"To overcome the challenges, we have to adopt the golden principles of unity, faith and discipline," Murtaza Solangi added.

"Today we reiterate our resolve to make Pakistan a greater and stronger country," Murtaza Solangi said.

PAF pays tribute to Quaid-e-Azam through video

ISLAMABAD (INP): A short video was released by Directorate of General Public Relations, Pakistan Air Force (PAF) to pay tribute to the Founder of Pakistan, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, on his birth anniversary.

The PAF video stated that Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah offered the oppressed Muslims of the Subcontinent a ray of hope and united them as one nation to achieve a separate and independent homeland for them.

According to news released by PAF in this connection, "It is because of the Quaid's tireless efforts that we are breathing in a free state today."

George says: Christmas bring people closer for ending their differences

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Human Rights, Khalil George here on Monday said that all minorities including the Christian community enjoyed complete religious freedom in Pakistan.

In his message on Christmas Day, the minister said that Christmas bring people closer and the best way to celebrate it was to include the poor, orphans and needy in our happiness and share joys besides ending differences.

"We all are Pakistani and united for the progress and prosperity of our country," he said while addressing the cake-cutting ceremony of Christmas during a function held here at a hotel. He said that all Prophets had come to this world for guidance of humanity, and delivered the universal message of peace.

Nusrat Sehar Abbasi quits politics

KARACHI (INP): Three times MPA from Sindh on women seat during three consecutive general elections, Nusrat Sehar Abbasi quits politics.

According to details, from 2002 to 2018, Nusrat Sehar Abbasi contested elections on PML-F ticket and elected member Sindh Assembly on special seat.

She remained top among the women participating in the Sindh Assembly's proceedings.

As an opposition member, Nusrat Sehar raised the public issues, corruption, fake appointments and problems faced by women.

She quit the politics and has shifted to Canada.



QUETTA: Christians community attend Christmas prayer ceremony at Bethel Memorial Methodist Church.

Shehbaz Sharif urges nation to follow teachings of Quaid

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz President Shehbaz Sharif on Monday urged the nation to follow the guiding principles of the father of the nation to ensure progress and prosperity in the country.

In his message issued here on 147th birth anniversary of Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, he said that separate homeland for the Muslims of sub-continent was created to ensure economic independence, besides providing education, health and social justice to all its citizens.

He said, "the best way to pay tribute to Quaid-e-Azam is to make Pakistan an Islamic welfare state."

Shehbaz Sharif said that Quaid-i-Azam struggled for free and independent country till his last breath.

He said, "Vision behind creation of Pakistan has to be followed in letter and spirit to achieve real objective of making Pakistan."

It was very essential to overcome economic instability, poverty, division and ignorance to protect country's freedom, he added.



QUETTA: Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) District Chief, Maulana Abdul Rehman Rafiq addresses during Majlis-e-Amla meeting held in Quetta.

Sheikh to reach out to public against PDM

RAWALPINDI (INP): Former interior minister and chief of Awami Muslim League Sheikh Rashid Ahmed has said that he will go to the public against the former ruling alliance, the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM).

He was talking to media on Monday after his nomination papers were accepted after scrutiny.

He said that his and Raashid Shafiq's papers have been approved in National Assembly constituency NA-56.

Rashid said that 44 people have submitted nomination papers against him. "I have seen six or seven contestants, but never seen 44. By the grace of Allah, I will win constituency 56 and 57 as well," he added.

He said all the contestants in this election are respectable to him.

The senior politician said that he has been a minister 17 times and no corruption charge has ever been levelled against him.

Rashid announced that he would campaign for one month and hold his last rally on February 6. He would launch his election campaign on January 1 with pen and inkpot as his election symbol, the ex-minister continued.

He based his election drive on three points - Nullah Lai, a mother-child hospital and a college at Dhok Dalal.

"I have already built 60 educational institutions."

The former interior minister said that he eliminated land grabbing mafia. "I am not a commodity that can be sold. I belong to a respectable family. I am not a traitor. I will work for the development of Rawalpindi."