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PM Kakar dispels doubts about election on Feb 8

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar Thursday said there should be no doubt about polls on February 8 as the election process had started with the candidates filing their nomination papers and the political parties busy in building narratives to attract voters.

In an interview with a private television channel, he said it was a constitutional requirement to hold elections which would be held on February 8 after which a new elected government would be formed.

To a question, he said the government would provide security to political leaders, including the three time prime minister Nawaz Sharif, Maulana Fazlur Rehman, Maryam Nawaz, Imran Khan, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and others.

Prominent political leaders could be targeted and the government would be blamed for any lapse in their security, he continued.

"It is the responsibility of the government to provide security to political leaders and voters of Pakistan."

He said the caretaker government would fulfill its responsibility during the holding of elections.

It would be illegal to stop the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) from taking part in the elections, he said and

clarified there was no policy to stop the PTI from organizing public meetings.

On the election day, the candidates of PTI would be in the field and the voters would be voting for them, he commented.

He said those who were involved in the incidents of May 9 were facing the law of the land. He was of the view that those involved in the May 9 incidents should not be public office-holders.

He said the Election Commission should look into complaints made by political parties about maladministration.

To a question, he said overall political circumstances triggered the actions against the PTI and lessons were learnt by the State.

He said, "It is not our job to tell overseas Pakistanis which political party they should support." However, the people should vote for a party which had an agenda for the economic revival of Pakistan, he opined. "I will vote for a party which has an agenda to revive the economy," he asserted.

The prime minister said there was a wave of terrorism in the country and there were forces which wanted to cause disruption in Pakistan and the government would make all efforts to protect the lives of people.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar in a group photo with the President, Directing Staff of National Defence University and graduating Civil Service officers of National Security Course-2024.



ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi chairing a meeting on health related issues and role of Mosques, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

SC approves bail pleas of PTI founder, Qureshi in Cipher case

ISLAMABAD (Online): Supreme Court (SC) has approved bail plea of founder PTI and Shah Mehmood Qureshi against surety bonds of Rs 10 lac each in cipher case.

Justice Athar Minallah has remarked offence has not been proved against founder PTI and he is innocent.

Acting Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Sardar Tariq Masood remarked Shah Mehmood was wise person. He saved himself and asked founder PTI to read cipher.

A 3-member bench of SC presided over by Acting CJP Sardar Tariq Masood took up the bail pleas for hearing Friday.

Counsel for PTI founder said trial court has recorded statements of 12 witnesses in haste.

The acting CJP remarked speedy trial is right of every accused. Why do you want that trial is not completed speedily.

Justice Athar Minallah remarked foreign ministry informs government about cipher so that help could be sought in foreign policy. Objective of official secret act is only this the sensitive information could not go out to any one.

Counsel Suleman Safdar said we have to see this sensitive information has been shared or otherwise. Justice Athar Minallah

remarked the original cipher is in ministry of foreign affairs. If it has gone out then it is offence of ministry of foreign affairs. Suleman Safdar said former Prime Minister (PM) had said in a public meeting that the letter held by him is evidence of conspiracy. It has not been said anywhere in the public meeting that what is in cipher and it has come from where.

Justice Athar Minallah while raising questions on cipher case remarked how the investigator came to know meeting was held in Banigala. Did the investigation officer investigate the matter of disappearance of Azam Khan.

Mosques can play role in preventing diseases: President

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Friday said that the mosques and pulpits could play an important role in preventing diseases.

Chairing a meeting regarding the importance of the mosques in creating awareness about health issues, the president said that during the corona virus, the religious scholars and Imams (prayer leaders) played an important role in preventing spread of the virus.

The meeting was attended by Caretaker Federal Health Minister Dr Nadeem Jan, Caretaker Federal Minister for Religious Affairs Aneeq Ahmed, provincial representatives

and senior officials.

President Alvi pointed out that the community participation could also reduce the burden of disease on the health system.

It was agreed in the meeting that a policy draft on the role of mosques towards public health would be prepared in two weeks.

The health minister appreciated the president and the first lady for playing a role in creating awareness about certain diseases.

The provincial representatives informed the meeting about the measures taken for the health of the people in their respective provinces.

Full confidence in EC, elections will be held on time: Solangi

ISLAMABAD (Online): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information Murtaza Solangi has said that general elections will be held as per schedule. We have full confidence on Election Commission (EC). I cannot comment on internal matters of political parties.

PEMRA act provides job protection to journalists.

While talking to media, Caretaker Federal Minister for Information Murtaza Solangi said that legal steps will be taken to protect the employment of journalists.

The demands of protestors from Baluchistan are long standing. Women and children have been released. Most of the men have also been released. Committee is doing its work. Governor of Baluchistan also joined the

committee.

Caretaker Federal Minister for Information has further said that today there is also meeting of this committee with Prime Minister. Security is being provided to women and children who have come from Balochistan.

APP adds: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi said on Friday the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) extended the date for submission of nomination papers by two days on the demand of various political parties. Talking to the "Dawn News", he said the ECP had not made any changes in the date of elections, which would be held on February 8, 2024.

PTI loses electoral symbol 'bat' as ECP voids intra-party polls

Barrister Gohar announces to knock at court's doors against ECP decision to take away 'bat' electoral symbol

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Friday declared the intra-party elections conducted by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) null and void, withdrawing the party's electoral symbol - bat.

The electoral watchdog ruled that the party did not hold the elections in line with its constitution, the Election Act, 2017, and the Election Rules, 2017, and was thus ineligible to obtain the election symbol of 'bat'.

A five-member bench, led by Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja, gave the decision on the petitions challenging PTI's intra-party elections.

Other members of the bench included ECP members Nisar Ahmed Durrani,

Shah Muhammad Jatoi, Babar Hassan Bharwana and Justice @ Ikrumullah Khan.

The reserved verdict was announced a day after the Peshawar High Court directed the ECP to decide the petitions filed against PTI's intra-party elections in accordance with the law.

In its decision, the ECP observed that "the PTI did not comply with the Commission's directions rendered therein order dated 23rd November, 2023 and failed to hold intra-party election in accordance with PTI prevailing Constitution, 2019 and Election Act, 2017, and Election Rules, 2017.

Therefore the certificate dated 4th December, 2023 and Form-65 filed by the alleged Chairman, is hereby regretted and rejected accordingly. The provisions of Section 215 of the Election Act, 2017 are hereby invoked and PTI is hereby declared ineligible to obtain the Election Symbol, for which they have applied for."

It may be noted that the ECP rendered the intra-party polls as invalidated hence, Barrister Gohar Ali Khan, who became the party's chairman, would no longer be the party's top leader.

The development came shortly after the PTI held discussions with ECP authorities, prompted by the Supreme Court's directive for the ECP to allow PTI's reservations regarding lack of a level-playing field. As per the PTI, the ECP assured its delegates that it would redress their grievances.



ISLAMABAD: Governor Balochistan Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar meeting with members of the committee formed led by the caretaker Federal Minister Fawad Hasan Fawad regarding the Baloch Yakjithi March

JUL-F chief submits nomination paper for NA-265 Pishin

QUETTA (APP): Nomination Papers of Maulana Fazl-ur-Rehman, Chief of the Jameet Ulema-e-Islam (JUL-F) were submitted on Friday for NA-265 Pishin for the upcoming general elections.

Provincial Ameer JUL-F Maulana Abdul Wasey, on behalf of the JUL-F central Ameer, submitted the nomination papers at Pishin district of Balochistan.

Senator Kamran Murtaza, Asghar Tarin were prominent among other leadership of the party who accompanied the JUL-F provincial Ameer.

Mushaal says: Global peace can be achieved by uniting people across all faiths

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Assistant to Prime Minister for Human Rights and Women Empowerment, Mushaal Hussein Mullick, has emphasized that true global peace can be achieved through the unity of people from diverse faiths.

Speaking at a Christmas cake-cutting ceremony arranged by the Nazriya Pakistan Council, she underscored the importance of fostering harmony and understanding among individuals of different religious backgrounds.

Sabien Hussein Mullick (Focal Person to SAPM), Mian Javed (Chairman Nazriya Pakistan Council), Manzoor Maseh (Executive Member Nazriya Pakistan Council), Faisal Zahid Malik, Salahuddin (Former High Commissioner of Pakistan to United Kingdom), Ms. Nargis and Mr. Khalid Suleri were among the attendees.

Mushaal highlighted the universal values of love, sacrifice and peace embedded in every religion. She said that during her meeting with Vatican pope she had emphasized fostering Multi-Faith Harmony as a key driver for enduring global peace. Mushaal asserted that the resolution of global conflicts, including those in Kashmir and Palestine, lies in the propagation of the messages of love, peace, and harmony embedded in all religions. She stressed the need to stand in solidarity with people who were oppressed. Mushaal underscored the unanimous condemnation from all segments of Pakistani society regarding the Jaranwala incident. She commended the measures taken by the Government in response to the situation. She also praised the peace rallies organized by civil society, noting the substantial participation of ordinary citizens in these gatherings. Mushaal voiced deep concern over the persecution of minorities in India carried out on daily basis. She attributed it to the influence of Hindutva-inspired policies within the Indian government.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs, Murtaza Solangi addresses the graduation ceremony of 38th MCMC Domain Specific Training and 40th Specialized Training Program at Information Service Academy Auditorium.

8th CPEC Media Forum calls for objective narrative of CPEC amid fruitful outcomes

BEIJING (APP): The 8th China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) Media Forum was held in Beijing, Islamabad and Gwadar, both online and offline.

The Forum saw the unfolding of several key events, including the CPEC Golden Anchor Awarding Ceremony, the launch of the CPEC Media Forum Balochistan Initiative, and the Perceptions on CPEC in Pakistan research paper, and the unveiling of its Joint Statement.

The Forum commenced with Cui Jun, President of China Economic Net, reading out a congratulatory letter from Sun Weidong, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of China.

The letter stated, "Under the strategic guidance of the leaders of the two countries and the care and support of people from all sectors, China-Pakistan relations have grown in depth in recent years and

bilateral cooperation in various fields has yielded fruitful results.

To further strengthen friendship and collaboration, it added, media professionals of both countries were expected to undertake significant responsibilities and tasks.

The positive role of CPEC in Pakistan was echoed by Murtaza Solangi, Caretaker Federal Minister for Information & Broadcasting, who stated that the economic corridor "has transformed Pakistan's socioeconomic landscape, addressing a dire energy crisis and crumbling infrastructure, has generated 236,000 jobs since 2013, and is set to create 1.2 million direct jobs, contributing to local workforce development and reducing regional disparities."

In response to the use of selective facts, emotions, and sometimes misleading stories by the Western me-

dia against CPEC, Solangi urged the media personnel of both countries to engage in the objective reporting of CPEC and disseminate accurate and unbiased narratives responsibly. Zheng Qingdong, President and Editor-in-Chief of Economic Daily, highlighted the constructive role of Chinese and Pakistani media in creating an enabling public atmosphere for CPEC.

He suggested that both sides should jointly navigate through challenges for more development opportunities, enhance exchanges for people-to-people bonds and connectivity, and conduct impartial, evidence-based news reporting. Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed, Chairman of the Senate's Defence Committee and Pakistan-China Institute, noted that CPEC, featuring openness, inclusivity, and connectivity, had advanced notably and "the best of CPEC is yet to come".

5 laborers killed, one injured in firing on under construction police station

PESHAWAR (APP): At least five laborers were killed and one sustained injuries in an armed attack on an under-construction police station in Wanna, district of South Waziristan, confirmed Farmanullah, District Police Officer (DPO).

The DPO told media that the attack was carried out late Thursday night resulting in the tragic loss of

five lives, with one worker sustaining injuries.

The bodies and the injured were shifted to district hospital Wana he said adding that further details would be shared after the investigation.

The victims, hailing from Punjab, were identified as Mohammad Uzair, Baqar Ali, Shehbaz Ahmed, and Shehzad Ahmed.



ISLAMABAD: Youngsters from Balochistan Province are shouting slogans during protest in the favor of their demands outside National Press Club in Federal Capital.

Daily Voice of Masses Independent

Flies on the wall

For the past few years, dubiously recorded private conversations of public figures have been released to the media, or uploaded on social media, in an effort to sully reputations. Victims of this detestable practice have included people from the sporting world, judges and politicians including prime ministers, and even their relatives. The million-rupee question is: who is responsible?

The Islamabad High Court attempted to answer this query while hearing petitions related to illegal wiretapping. During Wednesday's hearing of former first lady Bushra Bibi's case, the attorney general told the court that the ISI, FIA and IB are "not allowed to record any conversations", adding that if any government agency was involved in this practice, "it is doing so illegally".

Further, the IHC was reportedly told that the ISI cannot trace the source of the audio leaks. Other intelligence agencies like the IB and FIA, too, have previously denied knowledge of the source of similar leaks. So if the nation's top agencies cannot trace the culprits, then who can?

It is common practice the world over for intelligence agencies to monitor suspected hostile actors and foreign agents who intend to harm the country. To do so is no doubt necessary — while following SOPs to avoid violating the rights of innocent people. But to extend these powers to secretly record personal conversations of public figures and private citizens cannot be justified.

What national security objectives are served by illegally recording personal calls or messages, and then releasing these, initiating a frenzy in the media and cyberspace? In fact, the policy of electronic eavesdropping by powerful quarters is a continuation of the practice of maintaining 'files' on public figures, and releasing these as and when 'required'.

As for those reacting gleefully to their opponents' dirty laundry being aired publicly through such means, they should remember that the same weapon can be deployed against them at some point. Both Imran Khan and Shehbaz Sharif can testify to this, as the conversations of both gentlemen were leaked from the time they were in the Prime Minister's Office.

The IHC has said it could appoint local and foreign experts in case the state failed to provide information about the leaks. The solution could lie in appointing an empowered commission to investigate the source of the leaks.

Forensic experts, as well as those familiar with the technology in question, can be brought on board to trace the culprits, and help end this vile practice. Illegally recording and releasing personal conversations has no place in a democratic polity, and is more suited to police states. If the state does not want to be seen as complicit in these shady activities, it must endeavour to unveil the source of the leaks.



Jan-e-Alam Khaki

Literally, 'healing wounds' is a laudable act, no matter in which context it is exercised. It means a lot metaphorically in the social context, where individuals or communities deeply 'hurt' each other because of one excuse or another. Probably, mental or psychological wounds cause greater pain than physical ones, and may sustain far longer than physical wounds.

Words, as the famous saying goes, hurt deeper than the strike of a sword. I call hurtful words 'weapons of mass destruction' when used in a communal context, while on the other hand, beautiful and inspiring words give fresh life to individuals and communities. Due to anger (regarded as fire) erupting for any reason, people get upset and cause harm — physical or otherwise — to those who inflict it. Once this happens, someone, or some people, need to resort to 'therapeutic' treatment to heal and defuse the toxic situation between individuals or in communities.

The healing of wounds through building bridges among communities — whether faith-based or tribal-based — is one of the prime tasks of civil society and society in general. Meetings between leaders or general community members is a dire need to bridge gaps in relations and remove misunderstandings. That ours is a divided society is to state the obvious; what we can do to heal old wounds or recent injuries is not that obvious.

In this context, let me mention a case study in which a certain faith leader attempted to build bridges

Healing wounds

and heal the hurt mentioned here. A prominent religious scholar, a committed educator and innovative thinker visited the scenic but communally tense Gilgit-Baltistan in the backdrop of the recent tension caused by a religiously sensitive issue. The issue was thankfully defused by efforts of the government and saner members of society. Meeting communities to do what we are talking about here — 'the healing of wounds' — following the lowering of tensions was a dire need to strengthen peace. This, to me, was an unusual act of generosity in the true spirit of Islam which advises: "The Believers are but a single Brotherhood: So make peace and reconciliation between your two (contending) brothers..." (49:10).

The leader in question made a point of meeting all major communities and their representatives, ulema and dignitaries. From whatever I could gather from the speeches he made to the select gatherings he held (now on YouTube) with different communities, I summarise a few key points from his talks.

First, meeting these communities as an outreach step to foster brotherly feelings and remove misunderstandings was itself a great 'healing' step. He listened to them first before he spoke to them — indeed, an important step to better understand and heal. This generous gesture must have given a feeling of healing.

The second point was that he emphasised on the commonalities of faith, while at the same time accepting differences of interpretations, right from the early history of Islam. Differences should not lead to confrontations, he emphasised. Communal interpretations need to be restricted for internal consumption, while consensus should be developed regarding the major pillars of Islam on which there is overall agreement — and these examples are plentiful, he pointed out.

The third point worth highlighting from his speech was discouraging those who create discord by arousing the emotions of the members of other communities, and particularly those whose business it is to provoke the masses through emotional and polemical speeches. He argued not to leave the space vacant for them to exploit and encourage discord.

He suggested that the elders in communities, like in the family, should ensure that such elements are discouraged and not given centre stage to cause trouble. Even if a person tends to create mischief, the other community members should not support them and take sides with the wrong person. The Quranic guidance (5:2), which says, "Help ye one another in righteousness and piety, but help ye not one another in sin and rancour" provides guidance regarding what we need to do.

A commentator made a succinct remark about the talks referred to above and observed, "Each word is a golden word; my request is for visiting each district of Pakistan taking this message." Scholars and leaders of this stature, with this kind of highly articulated view in a modern idiom rooted in essential Islamic teachings, are in short supply today.

Mawlana Jalaluddin Rumi rightly says, "Tu barai wasl kardan aamadi; ne barai fasal kardan aamadi" meaning, "O humans, you have been asked to unite, not divide." We need more such inspiring leaders with the capacity to heal wounds through their efforts and inspiring talks. — Courtesy Dawn

Baloch question



Aasim Sajjad Akhtar

There is no single issue that clarifies one's political position in Pakistan than the Baloch question. This was made brutally clear this past Wednesday night when a caravan of peaceful, unarmed protesters who had made their way to Islamabad from Turbat were violently refused entry into the federal capital.

In the preceding few weeks, the Baloch long march had literally made waves, mobilising thousands of Baloch women, men and children, along with progressive political workers, ethnic-nationalists hailing from other communities, as well as ordinary people.

Led by young women, the caravan snaked through Balochistan and then the Seraiki, Pakhtun and Punjabi heartlands. It was the most meaningful expression of democratic aspirations and what a voluntary federation could look like in recent times. And then they reached the outskirts of Islamabad.

The demands of the marchers are simple enough, but it is precisely their simplicity that is unpalatable to those who rule us: to bring an end to the dastardly practice of enforced disappearances, as well as 'encounter killings', which is what triggered the initial protest in Turbat and accountability for those who are known to be complicit in all such practices. Simple demands, with earth-shattering implications.

Why is it that raising such demands is so taboo? And why is it especially taboo for Baloch youth to state what pretty much ev-

eryone in Pakistan already knows: that there are some functionaries of the state who do what they want and cannot be held to account.

It is telling that while the long march was making its way through the country, mainstream parties were busy wooing Balochistan's proverbial electables. Sarfraz Bugti, the caretaker interior minister who resigned as soon as the Election Commission confirmed the Feb 8 poll date, was in particular demand. He eventually joined the PPP.

The caretaker prime minister also hails from Balochistan. In the aftermath of the violent crackdown on the long marchers, it was reported that he took urgent notice. As did the Islamabad High Court after a petition was filed on behalf of the hundreds who were detained. Which begs the question: why is it that the Baloch are repeatedly brutalised and nominal remedial action taken only after more salt is rubbed in their already gaping wounds?

Zubeida Mustafa wrote last week on these pages about the systemic and systematic oppression that steadily increased disaffection amongst the Bengalis and led to the eventual creation of Bangladesh.

One presumably writes such words in the hope that the lessons of history are learned, but the Baloch question makes clear not only that nothing has been learned but that the state is even more militarised now.

Indeed, the scenes on the outskirts of Islamabad this past week make it more difficult to convince the sceptics that a democratic federation in which ethnic nations like the Baloch enjoy genuine citizenship is still a possibility. To be sure, there is no other way to describe the attitudes and actions of those who rule us as old-fashioned colonial statecraft.

The marchers asked

to be let into the federal capital and be allowed to say their piece. Their language was not incendiary — it was, in fact, a plea to be heard. They certainly did not come with the loftiest of expectations, given the historical track record.

This is precisely why the young women and mothers who came on foot to what is supposed to be the symbol of the federation, simply asking to be allowed to make their way to a peaceful protest camp, should not have been baton-charged, hosed with water cannons and bundled into police vans.

Mainstream Pak-is-tan has been exposed to some of these tactics in recent months, especially those who continue to pledge their allegiance to the jailed former prime minister. Many of those who have now experienced the big stick ask rhetorically how and why they are being treated so brutally.

The truth is that they are only now being subjected to the treatment that many Baloch and those who have stood in solidarity with them suffered for a long time. To recognise this is to truly open up the possibility of a deeper democratic struggle in which the most oppressed is given centrality.

Indeed, the solidarities that were expressed along the route of the long march should not be forgotten in the clamour of what happened when it actually entered Islamabad.

The establishment will not be held to account by bourgeois politicians who want to cosy up to it. The only hope is for all progressives — and the ordinary people who came out onto the streets to make clear their abhorrence for disappearances and 'encounter' killings — to recognise that that can maybe, just maybe, still lead to a just and democratic future. — Courtesy Dawn

Commerce News

Good to use natural elements to support agricultural activities

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Dr Kausar Abdullah Malik has said using natural elements for supporting agricultural activities is most desirable approach.

He said this while addressing the 5th PlantwisePlus National Forum meeting at a local hotel on Friday.

He said, "Climate change and realisation to move away from fossil fuel technology are highly important."

He said anything related to bio was extremely important whether it was biocontrol, biopesticide, biofertilizer,

biostimulant, etc.

He said that climate change was impacting agriculture in a number of ways, often exacerbating existing challenges to crop production. Smallholder farmers in developing countries were the most vulnerable and disproportionately affected because they lack the capacity to cope with uncertainties created by a rapidly changing world, he added.

He said smallholders needed to adapt to farming practices to climate hazards to maintain the quality and quantity of crops, or in some cases diversify into new forms of farming and livelihoods. He

said that it was very important to look at soil health to obtain desired results.

Dr Kausar said, "We are consuming most important resources of gas and energy in developing fertilizers." Fertilizers were important but the way they were being used was illogical, he added. The minister said that import and export depend on sanitary and phytosanitary measures as it was extremely important. He suggested the Centre for Agriculture and Bioscience International (CABI) to impart training to all our potential exporters and importers as they were not aware of SPS.



PESHAWAR: Chairperson, Intellectual Property of Pakistan (IPO-Pakistan), Ambassador Farukh Amil addressing an awareness session on Intellectual Property Rights.

IPO Pak emphasis need for creating awareness on Intellectual Property Rights

PESHAWAR (INP): Ambassador Farukh Amil, Chair-Intellectual Property Organization of Pakistan (IPO-Pakistan) here on Friday said Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) were very important for the promotion of genuine trade and underscored the need for the creation of awareness among manufacturers, people and industrialists on its registration, protection and enforcement for genuine business development.

He expressed these views during an awareness session on "Protection and enforcement of IPRs: Business development

opportunities for industrialists" jointly organized by (IPO-Pakistan) and the Industrialists Association Peshawar (IAP) here.

Speaking as chief guest, Farukh Amil said that the workshop aimed to raise awareness among people, manufacturers and industrialists in Peshawar about IPRs related services including trademarks, copyrights and patent designs that were protected by his organization and ensure their effective enforcement by law enforcement agencies to avoid counterfeiting and piracy of their products.

Gold rates up by Rs.1,800

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold decreased by Rs 1,800 and was sold at Rs 219,800 on Friday against its sale at Rs 218,000 on the last trading day. The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs 1543 to Rs 188,443 from Rs 186,900 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold went down to Rs 172,740 from Rs 171,325, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported. The price of per tola and ten gram silver witnessed no change and was sold at Rs.2,650 and Rs.2,271.94 respectively.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Shipping activity reported at the Port where five ships namely, Seaspang Ganges, SpilKartini, Nord Vanquish, Kamome Victoria and Sheng Ping Hai carrying Container, Edible oil, Gasoline and Coal, berthed at Container Terminal, Liquid Terminal, Oil Terminal and Bulk Terminal respectively on 21st December. Meanwhile three more ships, Sheng De Hai, Estia and Silver Eleaener also arrived at outer-anchorage of the Port Qasim during last 24 hours.



LAHORE: Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Kausar Abdullah Malik addresses at CABI 5th Plant Wise Plus National Forum Lahore.

Senate body discusses financial challenges faced by PSM

Independent Report

ISLAMABAD: The Senate Standing Committee on Industry and Production Friday discussed multiple options to address the financial challenges of Pakistan Steel Mill. The meeting, chaired by Senator Khalida Ateeb, was held at the Parliament House to deliberate on critical issues concerning the industrial sector of the country.

During the meeting, the committee received a

comprehensive update on the progress regarding the previous recommendations concerning Pakistan Steel Mill, National Fertilizer Corporation, and Pakistan Industrial Technical Assistance Center.

The Chief Financial Officer of Pakistan Steel Mill highlighted a 25% increase in the temporary relief allowance for employees, effective since September 2023, initially emphasizing its one-year duration.

Of profound concern for the committee was the alarming surge in theft incidents within Pakistan Steel Mill, resulting in substantial financial losses.

Officials revealed that since 2021, thefts have escalated, causing a loss of approximately 18 million rupees, with recoveries amounting to 4.9 million rupees. The theft of machinery and assets has significantly impacted the operations and stability of Pakistan Steel Mill.

Speakers discuss future opportunities in building IT talent ecosystem

ISLAMABAD (APP): Speakers at an event hosted by the University of Bahrain on the sidelines of the Huawei ICT Competition 2023-2024 regional final awards ceremony in Manama, delved into discussions about future opportunities in building the IT talent ecosystem and the significance of public-private partnerships in nurturing innovations.

They called upon supplementing university curricula with practical skills and training, fostering socio-economic growth in

the region. The University of Bahrain is a partner for the Huawei ICT (Information Communications Technology) Competition 2023-2024 regional final and hosted the official closing and awards ceremonies for the programme this year.

The forum panel discussion featured Dr Jassim Haji, President of the International Group of Artificial Intelligence; Dr Hessa Jassim Al-Junaid, Dean of the College of Information Technology, University of Bahrain; Dr

Zong announces special offer on Christmas

ISLAMABAD (APP): Zong 4G Pakistan's leading telecom operator announced a special data roaming bundle for the United Kingdom to ensure seamless and uninterrupted connectivity at affordable rates this Christmas.

As an organization that believes in inclusivity, this bundle has been tailored-made for those celebrating the festivities of the occasion said a news release.

This customized bundle is designed to ensure that you get access to the best data roaming services at affordable prices.

Pakistan's textile exports reach \$6.88bn in 5 months

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan exported textile products worth \$6,883.615 million during the initial five months of the current financial year (2023-24), the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported.

The exports of the product however witnessed a decline of 6.50 percent during July-November (2023-24) when compared to the exports of \$7,361,914 million during July-November (2022-23).

The textile commodities that witnessed positive growth in trade included raw cotton, the exports of

which grew by 253.10 percent, from \$11.253 million last year to \$39.733 million this year.

Likewise, the exports of cotton yarn increased by 50.30 percent, from \$328.197 million last year to \$493.277 million this year, cotton carded or combed by 22.86 percent, from \$0.477 million to \$0.586 million and towels by 0.74 percent, from \$409.510 million to \$412.544 million. The textile commodities that witnessed negative growth include cotton cloth, the exports of which declined by 13.35 percent, from \$903.685 million to \$783.087 million, yarn other than cotton yarn by 11.47 percent.



Two new Carrefour supermarkets open their doors in DHA Lahore, graced by the presence of Umer Lodhi, the Country Manager of Carrefour Pakistan, who joyfully cut the ribbon at the inauguration ceremony.

Weekly inflation falls by 0.51%

ISLAMABAD (APP): The weekly inflation, measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), witnessed a decrease of 0.51 percent for the combined consumption groups during the week ended on December 21, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday.

The SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 310.00 points as compared to 311.58 points during the past week, according to the PBS data.

As compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under

review witnessed an increase of 42.60 percent. The weekly SPI with the base year 2015-16=100 covers 17 urban centers and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups.

The SPI for the lowest consumption group up to Rs 17,732, decreased by 0.39 percent and went down to 304.83 points from last week's 306.02 points. The SPI for consumption groups from Rs 17,732-22,888, Rs 22,889-29,517; Rs 29,518-44,175 and above Rs 44,175 it decreased by 0.40 percent, 0.39 percent, 0.44 and 0.59 percent respectively.

IPMG meeting urges Fortifying gender data collection to promote gender equality

LAHORE (APP): The participants in the Inter-Provincial Ministerial Group (IPMG) discussed the use of data more effectively in efforts to promote gender equality in Pakistan. The two-day 21st IPMG meeting, held under the auspices of the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) and with support from UN Women and the United States, concluded here on Friday during which speakers shared vision of a more inclusive society, where every woman can thrive and contribute to the nation's progress. The IPMG was established in 2009 to enhance coordination on gender equality and women's empowerment in Pakistan. Nilofar Bakhtiar, chairperson NCSW, said: "This assembly serves as a crucial platform, fostering collaboration and initiating positive change on the path to gender equality and empowerment of women in Pakistan. Together, let's unite to construct a society where every woman's voice echoes, and her rights and contributions are valued."



LAHORE: Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman in a group photo with during function organized in connection with the Quaid Day at the Governor House.

Christian community playing key role in Pak development, prosperity: Mushaal

RAWALPINDI (APP): Archbishop Rawalpindi-Islamabad Dr Joseph Arshad in connection with Christmas celebrations, Mushaal Hussain Mullick, congratulating the Christian community on Christmas, has said that the Christian community was playing a key role in the development and prosperity of the country. She said that the Christian community members were performing significant services while all the minorities including the Christian community had equal rights in Pakistan. Addressing a ceremony organized by

Shoab Sadal, Member of the peace committee, Babu Sajid Amin Khokhar, Frayad Francis, Napoleon Gomez, Sanobar Gill, ambassadors of various countries, Hindu, Sikh and Christian leaders, Ulema Izhar Bukhari, Hafiz Iqbal Rizvi and Pir Azmatullah, and administrative officers attended the ceremony. Archbishop Dr Joseph Arshad, in his remarks, said, "Christmas gives us the message of peace and brotherhood, and the Christian community will continue to strive for the development and prosperity of the beloved country like before." He urged the Christian community to remember their needy and deserving brothers in the festivities of Christmas and share them in their joy. He congratulated the Christian community on Christmas, which, he said, was a message of peace, reconciliation and love. The community would continue its efforts for the promotion of love and affection. On this occasion, special guest Mushaal Mullick lit the candle of peace along with Dr Joseph Arshad and other distinguished guests. A Christmas cake was also cut later.

KARACHI: PPP Senator Saleem Mandiwala talking to media persons after submission of nomination paper for NA 241 General Elections 2024 at Assistant Commissioner office.

Firdous says: Every political step of IPP will lead to the country's construction, development

SIALKOT (APP): Central Information Secretary Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP) and former Federal Minister Dr. Firdous Ashiq Awan has said that every political step of Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP) will lead to the country's construction and development and to divert the resources of a strong and powerful Pakistan towards the development and prosperity of the people of NA-70, there must be sincere and honest leadership from the constituency. In a statement issued here to the media on Friday,

RPO orders foolproof security on Christmas

FAISALABAD (APP): Regional Police Officer (RPO) Dr. Muhammad Abid Khan has issued instructions for ensuring foolproof security arrangements on Christmas. He directed the capital police officer (CPO) Faisalabad, district police officers (DPOs) of three districts including Jhang, Toba Tek Singh and Chinot to make foolproof security arrangements in churches, Christian settlements, special markets and celebration points on Christmas.

KP Cabinet reiterated commitments to provide level playing field in Election

PESHAWAR (APP): The Caretaker Provincial Cabinet of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Friday reiterated its commitment to provide a level playing field to all political parties and has asked them to follow the Standing Operating Procedures (SOPs) during their election campaigns. Besides the directives of the Election Commissions, these SOPs include holding large political gatherings in designated areas notified by the provincial government during daylight to ensure efficient security and safety of the participants. The cabinet met under the Chairmanship of the Caretaker cabinet, Chief Minister Justice (Retd) Arshan Hussain Shah finalized preparations for the upcoming general elections in light of the directives of the Election Commission reiterating that every effort will be made to ensure free and fair elections in the province. The Chief Minister said that all resources have

CM orders 24/7 CT-Scan, MRI reports facility

Independent Report LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi has directed the health secretary that all hospitals must adhere to a 24/7 facility for providing CT scans and MRI reports to patients. He made a surprise visit to Children's Hospital on Friday where parents raised concerns regarding delayed issuance of CT scans and MRI reports. The CM was informed that CT scans and MRI reports were issued three days after the tests. The CM warned that hospitals found to be causing delay in delivering CT scans and MRI reports would face administrative action. During his visit, the CM inspected various wards, interacted with parents of children and inspected the medical facilities. The CM also inspected up-gradation work, engaged with the labourers and assessed progress.



MULTAN: Senior Vice Chairman PPP, Syed Yousaf Raza Gillani submitting his nomination papers with his supporters at the Commissioner's office.

Kristin Hawkins sees women become agents of change through sports

LAHORE (APP): US Consul General in Lahore Kristin Hawkins has said women become a source of positive change in societies through the life transforming skills and confidence gained from sports. Speaking at a four-day US funded sports workshop for women at University of Education (UoE) Township here on Friday, she said sports contribute to character-building and help women become positive agents of change and reminded the workshop participants of their unique role as educators, coaches, and mentors in helping young women develop their leadership skills. With the sole purpose of empowering young women, the workshop was conducted by coaches, trainers, and educators from Baylor University and University of North Carolina, Wilmington, in partnership with the UoE, Township. Female sports educators, trainers, and coaches from 10 schools and four universities across Punjab attended the workshop. "Not everyone, who participates in sports, will go on to play professionally, but the confidence, teamwork, and skills that we learn from sports can help us become a force for positive change, no matter what we do in life," Hawkins said.

International News

More than 20 countries now part of US-led Red Sea coalition, Pentagon says

Monitoring Desk WASHINGTON: A total of more than 20 countries have agreed to participate in the new US-led coalition safeguarding commercial traffic in the Red Sea from attacks by Yemen's Houthi movement as more nations join the effort, the Pentagon said on Thursday. Still, the new Pentagon total would suggest that at least eight of the countries who have signed up have also declined to be publicly named, in a sign of political sensitivities of the operation as regional tensions soar over the Israel-Hamas war. "We've had over 20 nations now sign on to participate," Major General Patrick Ryder said, noting declarations by Greece and Australia. "We'll allow other countries, defer to them to talk about their participation." The United States launched Operation Prosperity Guardian two days ago, saying more than a dozen countries had agreed to participate in an effort that will involve joint patrols in Red Sea waters near Yemen. Each country will contribute what they can, Ryder said, dubbing it a "coalition of the willing." "In some cases that will include vessels. In other cases, it could include staff or other types of support," he told a news briefing. The crisis in the Red Sea has grown out of the war between Israel and Gaza's ruling Palestinian Islamist group Hamas. The war began on Oct. 7 when Hamas fighters stormed across the Gaza border into southern Israel, where Israeli authorities say the militants killed about 1,200 mostly civilian Israelis and foreigners. Israel's retaliatory bombardment and invasion of Gaza, which Israeli officials state is aimed at wiping out Hamas, has killed nearly 20,000 Palestinians, according to health officials in the densely populated, coastal enclave.



Lai Ching-te, Taiwan's vice president and the ruling Democratic Progressive Party's (DPP) presidential candidate gestures during an election campaign event in Kaohsiung, Taiwan.

No functional hospitals left in northern Gaza: WHO

Monitoring Desk GENEVA: There are no longer any functional hospitals in the north of the Gaza Strip, the World Health Organisation (WHO) said Thursday, describing "unbearable" scenes of largely abandoned patients begging for food and water. The UN health agency said it had led missions to two badly damaged hospitals, Al Shifa and Al Ahli, in the north of the Palestinian territory on Wednesday. "Our staff are running out of words to describe the beyond catastrophic situation facing remaining patients and health workers," said Richard Peeper-korn, the WHO representative for the occupied Palestinian territory. His comment came amid increasingly frantic diplomatic efforts to secure a pause in the war that Hamas says has already claimed 20,000 lives in Gaza, 70 per cent of them women and children.

Diplomatic ties with US could break down over asset seizures

Monitoring Desk MOSCOW: Russia may cut diplomatic ties with the United States if Washington confiscates Russian assets frozen over the Ukrainian war, the Interfax news agency quoted Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov as saying on Friday. The United States "must not act under an illusion... that Russia is clinging with both hands to diplomatic relations with that country," Ryabkov said. Russia has described relations with the United States as "below zero" because of U.S. military and financial aid for Ukraine in the war now approaching the end of its second year. Ryabkov said Russia, which sent forces into Ukraine in February 2022 in what it called a "special military operation", would not be the one to initiate a break in diplomatic ties, but such a rupture could be prompted by a variety of factors.



Czech Interior Minister Vit Rakusan and Police Chief Martin Vondrasek give a press conference in the Ministry of the Interior in Prague, Czech Republic.

Czech police seek motive in Prague mass shooting that killed 15

Monitoring Desk PRAGUE: Czech authorities sought a motive on Friday in a student's gun attack that killed 15 people at a Prague university, where tearful mourners have left a sea of candles to grieve for the victims. The gunfire on Thursday at the Charles University's Faculty of Arts sparked frantic scenes of students running from the attack that was the Czech Republic's worst shooting in decades. A makeshift memorial of hundreds of candles flickered outside the university on Friday as police pursued the investigation at the campus in Prague's historic centre. The gunman, a 24-year-old student, killed himself after the attack, shooting dead 15 people and wounding 25 others. "We know all 14 dead and their identity. It's 15 victims of the mad gunman and the gunman himself," Interior Minister Vit Rakusan told public broadcaster Czech TV, revising down a previous total of 14 victims. He added that three of the wounded were foreigners.

North Korea's Kim warns of 'nuclear attack' if 'provoked'

Monitoring Desk SEOUL: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un warned Pyongyang will not hesitate to launch a nuclear attack if "provoked with nukes", state media said on Thursday, while Seoul and its allies called for "dialogue without preconditions". Kim's warning follows a meeting between South Korea and the United States last week in Washington, where they discussed nuclear deterrence in the event of conflict with the North. The meeting's agenda included "nuclear and strategic planning", and the allies reiterated that any nuclear attack by Pyongyang on the United States or South Korea would result in the end of the North Korean regime. But Kim told his military's missile bureau "not to hesitate (launching) even a nuclear attack when the enemy provokes it with nukes," Pyongyang's official Korean Central News Agency said. Washington, Seoul and Tokyo released a statement shortly afterwards, urging the nuclear-armed country to "stop conducting further provocations and accept our call for engaging in substantive dialogue without preconditions".



Jordanian cameraman Samer Abu Daqqa during a demonstration in front of the broadcaster's office in Amman, Jordan.

US, China top military officials speak for first time in over a year

Monitoring Desk WASHINGTON: The top U.S. military officer held a virtual meeting with his Chinese counterpart on Thursday, the Pentagon said, in the first such conversation in over a year amid hopes by U.S. officials that it could lead to a broader restoration of ties between the two militaries. The video teleconference followed an agreement between U.S. President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping last month to resume military-to-military ties severed by Beijing after then-House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi vis-ited self-ruled Taiwan in August 2022. U.S. Air Force General Charles Q. Brown, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and General Liu Zhenglun of China's People's Liberation Army touched on "a number of global and regional security issues," Brown's office said. Liu is the chief of the Joint Staff Department of the Central Military Commission (CMC), the military body responsible for China's combat operations and planning. Pentagon officials say communication between the two militaries is crucial to preventing a miscalculation from spiraling into conflict.

Japan prepares for missile shipments after easing arms export restrictions

Monitoring Desk TOKYO: Japan said on Friday it would prepare to ship Patriot air defence missiles to the United States after revising its arms export guidelines earlier that day, in the pacifist nation's first major overhaul of such export curbs in nine years. The announcement comes as Japan, which had long adopted a stance of not allowing exports of deadly weapons, seeks to boost its defence industry amid an increasingly tense security environment in the Indo-Pacific. "This holds significant meaning in terms of further strengthening the Japan-U.S. alliance. It will contribute not only to Japan's security but also the peace and stability of the wider Indo-Pacific region," Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi said following the announcement. Although Japan's new export controls still prevent it from shipping weapons to countries that are at war, it may indirectly benefit Ukraine in its war with Russia as it gives the United States extra capacity.

Turkiye detains 304 over Islamic State ties

Monitoring Desk ANKARA: Turkish authorities have detained 304 people suspected of having ties to the militant group Islamic State in operations across 32 provinces, Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya said on Friday. The majority of the suspects were detained in Turkey's three biggest cities of Ankara, Istanbul and Izmir, Yerlikaya said on social messaging platform X. He said the operation, "Operation Heroes-34",

Speakers hail Pakistan's achievements at COP28

Demand futuristic approach to meet pledges

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Speakers at a post-COP28 roundtable dialogue on Friday hailed the progress made by the country at the international climate moot and demanded the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination along with other stakeholders to work out a futuristic approach to meet global pledges.

The Centre for Strategic Perspectives (CSP) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI), in collaboration with Civil Society Coalition for Climate Change (CSCCC), organized a roundtable discussion on "COP 28: An Analytical View."

The keynote speaker at the event was Secretary, Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Asif Hyder

Shah. Other panelists at the event included: Executive Director, CSCCC, Aisha Khan; Director, Governance & Policy WWF, Pakistan, Dr. Imran Saqib Khalid; Head, of Resilient Development Program, SDPI, Dr. Shafiqat Munir; Professor, QAU, Dr. Ilhan Niaz; World Bank, Ahsan Tehsin; Climate & Energy Attache at Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, Nadeem Ahmad and Fatima Jinnah University, Rawalpindi, Fiza.

In his keynote address, Secretary, Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Asif Shah underscored the substantial progress achieved during COP28, culminating in a host of positive outcomes and increased transparency in climate finance. Notably, Pakistan secured a position on

the board of the Loss and Damage Fund, demonstrating its commitment to addressing the impacts of climate change. Additionally, Pakistan's representation on the Santiago Network for Loss and Damage (SNLD) further solidifies its global engagement.

Concluding his address, Shah acknowledged the competitive landscape for accessing the Green Climate Fund, highlighting the imperative for Pakistan to enhance its capacity to secure international funding.

Dr. Neelum Nigar, Director of CSP, highlighted the significance of key decisions made during COP28. She underscored the necessity for a comprehensive analysis of the outcomes and their impact on stakeholders, providing valuable insights for policymakers.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Malaysia to Pakistan Azhar Malan posing for a group photo graph along with others during cooking event at F-9 Park to mark the Asean BBQ Day, in Federal Capital.

ECP awareness drive likely to double women, youth turnout in upcoming polls: Zafar Iqbal

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Secretary Election Commission of Pakistan Zafar Iqbal on Friday said that the Election Commission of Pakistan continued a media awareness drive among people with the overarching goal of motivating women and youth actively involved in the electoral process where youngsters of the country likely to double its voter turnout in upcoming elections.

Talking to PTV news channel he ensured that ECP will provide a level playing field for all political parties and advocate the active involvement of

young women to ensure inclusive in the electoral process.

He said that elections will be conducted with strict implementation of gender equality and all political parties also strive hard through their election campaigns to increase youth voter turnout.

He also mentioned that the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has issued a comprehensive code of conduct for the upcoming general elections scheduled on February 8.

Additional Director General Election Commission of Pakistan Syed

Nadeem Haider said that any violation of the code will be treated seriously, and allegations made by one candidate against another will require confirmation from both sides before prosecution can commence.

To ensure the smooth functioning of the election process, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has complete powers to conduct general elections in a fair and freestyle while all the institutions, including military, judiciary and provincial governments are fully cooperating with us.



ISLAMABAD: Secretary Ministry of Information, Broadcasting Shahera Shahid addresses the graduation ceremony of 38th MCMC Domain Specific Training and 40th Specialized Training Program at Information Service Academy Auditorium.

Ministry renovates 2,377 houses, flats in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Works Department (PWD), Ministry of Housing and Works has upgraded and renovated as many as 2,385 houses and flats in various sectors of Islamabad during the last five and half years.

"The PWD has carried out EM works of as many as 1,365 flats and houses while around 1,012 civil work is executed of different categories, an official in the ministry told APP.

The official said the ministry has owned as many as 5,253 houses and flats of categories-I to categories-V located in various sectors in the federal capital. He said the Capital Development Authority (CDA) was responsible for the maintenance and renovation of Pak Secretariat, Islamabad, therefore, no fund has been spent on ministry's renovation.

The official said the

PWD has started sending notices to the allottees of government accommodation in Sector 1-9/4 about payment of electric meter bills for water motors installed at residential blocks.

He said the Finance Division had allocated funds for payment of utilities in the relevant heads of accounts of the users while utility bills of the residential accommodation including hostels, rest houses and judicial residences should be paid by the users.

To a question, he said the Ministry of Housing and Works has allocated an amount of Rs 5.80 million in the current financial year 2023-2024 for electricity bills of Qasr-e-Naz Lodge, South Zone Karachi due to financial constraints. "Out of the total Rs 5.80 million, only an amount of Rs 0.87 million have been released at the rate of 15 percent in this regard so far," he added.

PMDC clarifies news on FIA investigation

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PMDC) has taken notice of the news appearing in the media, creating confusion amongst the public regarding FIA's investigation into the council affairs.

According to a PMDC spokesperson, the FIA has started an investigation into corruption charges against some of the officials of the PMDC.

He said that the Director General FIA has ordered the inquiry on the complaint of the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination.

He said that an inquiry has been started to investigate the alleged extortion of over 60 million rupees by some PMDC officers against outstanding payment of arrears of a federal allowance to the council employees, alleged irregularities in recognition of some medical and dental colleges and alleged illegal registration of some unrecognized qualifications, etc.

PMDC successfully conducts NRE exams

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PMDC) has successfully conducted the National Registration Examination (NRE) step 2.

According to spokesperson PMDC, more than 50% of candidates passed the examination as 367 candidates appeared for the test.

These candidates were given the best possible facilities so that they were able to take the exam in a good environment, he added.

The exam was conducted by the National University of Medical Sci-

ences, as per the schedule announced by the council.

The exam was held at Combined Military Hospital (CMH) on the 10th of December 2023.

The whole purpose of the NRE was to test the competency, knowledge, and skills of a graduate to ensure they are a 'safe doctor' as they would be granted a license to treat patients independently.

The NRE skills and clinical exam represent the basic skills that are mandatory for patient handling and management in the absence of which patients would be at severe risk.



ISLAMABAD: Director General (FDE) Tanveer Ahmad and Principal Prof. Fouzia Sheikh giving away 1st prize award to the winner of Quaid Day Declaration Contest organized by Federal Directorate of Education at Model College for Girls F-7/2.

PTA cautions public about deceptive links

Urges vigilance & use of official platforms for services

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) has cautioned the public against phishing, and fraudulent links circulating on Whatsapp, social media, and through text messages, falsely claiming to be associated with PTA's Device Identification Registration & Blocking System (DIRBS). The message making the rounds purports to be an official communication, stating that the user's SIM is found to be involved in "suspicious activities" and that the user should check the number of SIMs at the given link. Alternatively, another message warned that the user's phone registration will be suspended unless they visit the provided link, according to a news release.

These deceptive tactics are designed to trick individuals into clicking on malicious

links, compromising their personal information. The public has been urged to refrain from clicking on links from unknown numbers/senders and report such phone numbers/links for blocking through PTA's complaint management system (toll-free number: 0800-55055, web link: <https://complaint.pta.gov.pk/RegisterComplaint.aspx> and PTA CMS mobile app).

To check the status of their device, users should only visit <https://dirbs.pta.gov.pk>, SMS IMEIs to 8484 from their device, or through the official Device Verification App, available on both Google Play Store and Apple App Store.

PTA has urged the public to stay vigilant and prioritize the use of its official platforms/shortcodes to protect their personal information.

FM saddened over life loss in tragic Prague University shooting

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Foreign Minister Jilani on Friday expressed his condolence over the loss of life in a tragic shooting that took place at Charles University of Prague on Thursday.

As per media reports, a student opened fire in a Charles University of Prague, killing at least 14 people and injuring more than 20.

Expressing heartfelt condolence to the families of the victims, the foreign minister also prayed for the recovery of all the injured.

IHC reserves verdict on PAC's powers

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Friday reserved its verdict in cases pertaining to the powers of Public Accounts Committee to summon NAB officials in the Tayyaba Gul harassment case.

Chief Justice Aamer Farooq reserved the verdict after hearing arguments from the two sides.

During the course of proceedings, Additional Attorney General Munawar Dogal said that the committee had the authority to summon the officials as per the rules.

The chief justice inquired as to why Tayyaba Gul had approached the PAC instead of the Federal Investigation Authority (FIA) or anti-corruption department.

2-day Regional Heads conference ends at AIOU

ISLAMABAD (APP): Vice Chancellor of AIOU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood on Friday urged the Regional Heads of Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) should create a "Reference Document Chart" in order to increase enrollment, strengthen student support system, improve examinations system and overall development of the university.

Addressing the closing session of a two-day Regional Heads Conference, he emphasized the need for transparency in all matters, including exams, and requested a report on the regional heads' success in meeting admission targets.

VC AIOU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood, said that any kind of irregularities or corruption would not be tolerated.

ASEAN committee gathers Islamabad-based diplomats at family BBQ get-together

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Committee in Islamabad (ACI) organized an event themed 'Family Barbeque, Year-end get-together' on Friday.

Speaking on the occasion, Malaysian High Commissioner in Pakistan Mohammad Azhar Mazlan in his capacity as the Chair of ACI said the aim of the event was to bring together the diplomats and families of Islamabad-based ASEAN embassies to provide them with an opportunity to touch base with one another in an informal setting. He expressed the confidence that such a gathering would bring about a sense of togetherness and belonging among the ASEAN community in Pakistan.

Christmas and a happy and prosperous new year 2024 to all present.

During the event, the guests enjoyed a number of cuisines, specially prepared by each ASEAN embassies, savoring the unique spices, techniques, and cultural influences of the Southeast Asian region. The cuisines included Satay with peanut sauce, Padthai, Nasi Goreng, Bakso and Sagudana, among others.

The ASEAN diplomats and families exchanged warm greetings and cultural insights, while celebrating the diversity of ASEAN tradition in Pakistan, showcasing the rich tapestry of the region.

The event was not merely a social gathering but a celebration of the shared values and aspirations that unite the diverse nations of Southeast Asia.

It served as a testament to the enduring friendship and solidarity among the ASEAN nations and their commitment to fostering a prosperous and harmonious future together with the host nation, Pakistan.

Considering the presence of more than 200 guests including the local officials and media personnel, High Commissioner Azhar expressed his happiness and hoped the event would be an annual feature.

He conveyed his well wishes to those celebrating



ISLAMABAD: Former president Azad Kashmir Sardar Muhammad Yaqoob in a meeting with President Azad Jammu Kashmir Barrister Sultan Mahmood Chaudhary.

Embracing Quaid's vision crucial for a strong Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): As the nation would observe the 147th birth anniversary of Pakistan's founder Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, on December 25, echoes of his visionary ideals resonate. The call to uphold his principles of democracy, equality, and unity remains pertinent.

Embracing his vision promises a path towards a genuine and democratic Pakistan, steering the nation through contemporary challenges with unwavering commitment.

The journey towards Pakistan's independence was nothing short of a revolution, marked by the Muslims' unwavering determination to carve out their sovereign state amidst a complex political landscape.

This pursuit was

championed by none other than Muhammad Ali Jinnah, whose visionary outlook laid the foundation for an independent Pakistan.

Despite facing numerous challenges, Pakistan emerged as a distinct nation-state, guided by Quaid's principles. However, the nation's journey post-independence has been fraught with challenges that continue to shape its course.

The inception of Pakistan was the culmination of decades of struggle. The Lahore Resolution of March 1940, which advocated for a separate homeland based on the Two-Nation Theory, marked a turning point. Jinnah's vision echoed the ideas of Allama Iqbal, emphasizing a separate state for Muslims to safeguard their identity and ideals.



ISLAMABAD: Leader of Pakistan People's Party Syed Fash-ul-Hassan Shah Bukhari arriving for the submission of his nomination papers to contest for the upcoming general elections at DC Office in Federal Capital.

PNCA in collaboration with Saira Peter arranged special Christmas celebrations

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) in collaboration with Saira Peter arranged special Christmas celebrations here at PNCA Auditorium on Friday titled "Bethlehem's Christmas".

Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture Jamal Shah was the chief guest on the occasion, with Adviser and Culture Expert Muhammad Kashif Irshad and Director General PNCA Muhammad Ayub Jamali also in attendance and Zafar Francis moderated the overall programme.

The event began with a video message by a Palestinian pastor explaining how Palestinian churches are not celebrating Christmas this year due to the horrific bloodshed and tragedy of the Palestinian genocide through a potent combination of songs, carols and images which could not be ignored.

Peter performed songs themed around Palestine's suffering children, calling for interfaith harmony and an end to violence. The programme also featured video messages of peace from around the world.

In his remarks, Federal Minister Jamal Shah highly praised Saira Peter for collaborating with PNCA to mark Christmas in a befitting manner. He said that the role of the Christian community is of key importance in the prosperity of the country.

The Federal Minister commended Saira Peter's demonstration that music is much more than entertainment, remarking on the power of the Arts to communicate society's issues. He cited her moving depiction of the Palestinian genocide through a potent combination of songs, carols and images which could not be ignored.



ISLAMABAD: Leader of Pakistan Muslim League (N) Anjum Aqel Khan arriving for the submission of his nomination papers to contest for the upcoming general elections at DC Office in Federal Capital.

EPA launches crackdown against illegal units in H-13 burning plastic waste

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA) has launched a stringent crackdown against the illegal units, established without formal approval of the authorities concerned in sector H-13 of the federal capital, burning plastic waste that was causing dark smoke and risk of smog.

Director General Pak-EPA, Farzana Altaf Shah told APP via telephonic conversation that there were videos that went viral of H-13 Naserabad area where people had illegally rented and established mega units burning scrap material particularly plastics for recycling purposes that were creating dark smoke screens into the atmosphere that were highly injurious to health and environment.

The Islamabad Capital Territory Administration (ICT Admin) on the

request of EPA had imposed section 144 in the capital to ban all sorts of burning of waste, stubble and any other material to curb smog risk, she added.

The EPA DG added that the Minister and Secretary of the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination took serious notice of the matter. However, the EPA team, along with the ICT Admin and the area magistrate raided the illegal units burning plastic waste and trash.

"As many as four individuals were arrested and five units were sealed in the area for burning plastic waste illegally. People are illegally setting up mega units in the sector, where burning of scrap material is being carried out in large cauldrons to melt plastic items for making pet products of household use," she said.



ISLAMABAD: Senator Irfan-Ul-Haque Siddiqui, Chairman Senate Standing Committee On Federal Education & Professional Training presiding over a meeting of the committee at Parliament House.



Message

Mr. Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani
Chairman Senate



The Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI) have consistently championed the economic growth and advancement of our beloved nation through its determination and hard work. Its commitment to nurturing businesses, promoting commerce, and upholding the highest standards of industry excellence is unparalleled. The year 2022 stands as a testament to the resilience and prowess of our business community. Through challenges and changing landscapes, our industrious professionals have not only adapted but thrived, marking significant milestones in the socio-economic development of Pakistan. Their efforts are not just of national significance,

but have resounded in international markets, making us all immensely proud. It is with great respect and admiration that we acknowledge the high achievers of this year. The FPCCI Achievement Awards are not mere accolades but a recognition of the remarkable journeys, relentless determination, and innovative ventures that have set these individuals and organisations apart. Earning this prestigious award underscores their exemplary contributions and places them among the elite in both Pakistan and abroad. Such recognitions are pivotal. They not only celebrate success but also motivate the broader business community to aspire, innovate, and contribute more profoundly to the socio-economic fabric of Pakistan. It is through these accomplishments and the continuous encouragement from platforms like FPCCI that we pave the way for a more prosperous and progressive future for our nation. May the laurels of today inspire many more success stories tomorrow, and may the FPCCI continue its commendable work in spearheading Pakistan's economic journey.

Dr. Umar Saif
Federal Minister for IT & Telecom, Science & Technology



I am delighted that the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry is organizing its 11th Achievement Awards ceremony this year in recognition of the services of talented people and reputed organizations and, as usual, is bringing out an informative Achievement Award Souvenir on the occasion.

I am very happy to note that the aims of this award is to give recognition to individuals and organizations whose achievement has contributed significantly in the growth and development of Pakistan. The Awards promote healthy competition among people and encourage them to strive harder to push the boundaries of excellence. The Award recipient would have demonstrated past accomplishments and forward thinking to advance the notions of sustainability in every possible way.

We all know that Pakistan has unique location and talented people, but the platforms to recognize the services of these people are very few. At this time, the organizing of achievement award is really praiseworthy. Such important Award ceremonies play a major role in motivating the corporate sector of any country to reach out to new heights of excellence. In an increasingly interconnected and interdependent world, Apex trade bodies play a vital role in both national and international affairs and make significant contributions that benefit society at large, from spurring economic growth to promoting good governance.

On this joyous occasion, allow me to congratulate FPCCI on its devotion and sincere efforts to promote talent of the country. I also felicitate all Award Winners on their performance and hope that the business community will continue its efforts for the progress and prosperity of Pakistan. I hope that the award winner will not only maintain the record of their best performance but also become role models for other people to compete for this coveted accomplishment.

Mr. Irfan Iqbal Sheikh
President FPCCI



The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry being the apex representative body of the business community of Pakistan taking pride of initiative to acknowledge the outstanding performances of business entities and individuals in their respective fields through Achievement Awards.

After successful organization of the previous events, FPCCI is holding the 11th Edition of "Achievement Awards", as a flagship event which is regularly organized to honor the achievements of enterprises in their respective fields, acclaiming as symbol of prestige and recognition at national and international level. The FPCCI Achievement Awards helps Award Winners, in the elevation of

their profile and reputation among all circles.

The performances of award winners and their achievements despite the challenges faced by the business community in Pakistan are highly commendable. This speaks of their dedication, devotion and commitment to their business interests and valuable contribution towards Pakistan's economy.

I thank my team, Convener and Members of the Awards Committee, the Senior Vice President, Vice Presidents, Coordinators, the Secretary General of FPCCI and his team for their dedication and hard work put in organizing this event. I am confident the Achievement Award will motivate and encourage others to put in more efforts into their respective areas of interest and come out with outstanding achievements which will not only reward them but will also serve trade and economic interests of the Pakistan. I congratulate all the Award Winners and wish them a continued success in their endeavors, with laurels.

Justice (ret'd) Maqbool Baqar
Caretaker Chief Minister Sindh



The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI) is organizing the 11th FPCCI Achievement Awards to recognize the outstanding performance of individuals and firms for enhancing the insignia of Pakistan. As we know that, in knowledge drive global culture and human development, progressive nations atheistically search for new ideas, people, talents creative plans innovative methods to renovate the old and obsolete systems and infrastructure with new passion and ambitions for a better future. In the era of globalization and economic integration the issues of socio-economic development is one of the category of FPCCI's achievements awards.

Despite all challenges like infrastructure, lack of knowledge creating activities and educational and health backwardness, our people are still competitive in marketing their talent in

Mr. Ahmed Irfan Aslam
Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental coordination



I am pleased to know that following its past tradition, the FPCCI is organizing the 11th FPCCI Achievement Awards to confer awards to the leading entrepreneurs of Pakistan in recognition of their exceptional performance this year.

The organization of Achievement Awards is a commendable step because they recognize the achievements of exporters and service sector who dare to venture in new areas and succeed. By learning from the example of successful achievers, new entrepreneurs will also encourage to take bold initiatives and win a seal of approval from the apex body. On this occasion, I would also like to appreciate the contribution of the private entrepreneurs for promoting the image of the country through quality products.

Mr. Rizwan Ahmed Bhatti
CEO, Pakistan Industrial Development Corporation



I am glad to know that the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) is organizing its 11th Achievement Awards in order to honor the business houses who have made an outstanding contribution towards Pakistan's business performance.

Pakistan's strategic location offers our manufacturers a great opportunity to serve the markets in the region, provided they have exportable surplus of manufactures. We should, therefore, adopt innovative methods and the public private partnership model for

reaching international markets and I commend them on this achievement. On this occasion, I also applaud the role of FPCCI in promoting technology, export, economic growth, and prosperity and assisting traders and industrialist in addressing the new challenges being faced in the sphere of international market.

I believe that this event will play a role to boost the confidence of people in marketing their activities. Every successful nation always wants the quick convergence of the country, which is possible only in that condition when countries adopt export led growth and investment-led growth policies for competitiveness, diversification and value addition. I am confident that this event will open up a new vista of fresh opportunities and truly help in promoting true image of Pakistan, which need bareness at significant level.

I congratulate to all valiant winners for their dedicated efforts which are highly admirable and it is my conviction that our people will perform better in future too to accelerate the progress of Pakistan's economy which is the need of the time. I congratulate all the awardees, and convey my best wishes to the organizers for the success of the ceremony.

Haji Ghulam Ali
Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa



It is heartening to know that the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) is organizing the 11th FPCCI Achievement Awards, to strengthen the confidence of Pakistani individuals and organizations who performed exceptionally in their respective fields and sectors.

I am pleased to learn that FPCCI's Achievement Award has generated fair competition amongst individuals and organizations and boosts their dynamism, which will lead Pakistan to the road of self-reliance. Economic development, open trade and social emancipation always take place in those countries where creativity, freedom of thoughts and actions are

welcomed and due recognition is given to the individuals who participate actively in attaining the objectives.

The industrial sector plays vital role in the economy by creating jobs, providing goods services, and stimulating economic growth. It is also an important source of tax revenue for governments. Indeed the individuals and organizations of industrial sector not only collaborate with governments to gain access to resources and develop new products but also enable government to invest in infrastructure and other important projects. Congratulate all award winners for their dedicated efforts. It is my firm belief that our individuals and organizations will perform even better future to accelerate the pace of Pakistan's economy.

I would like to convey my best wishes to the President of FPCCI, Mr. Irfan Iqbal Sheikh and his entire team for organizing the Award successfully with this hope that FPCCI will continue its efforts by way of providing marketing opportunities to individuals and organizations both at home and abroad.

Mr. Aneeq Ahmed
Minister for Religious Affairs & Interfaith Harmony



I am glad to learn that the Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI) is organizing the 11th FPCCI Achievement Awards to pay tribute to the proficient and bright people and organization who have performed well in the field of trade, industry, economic, science, academia, research and development, commercial and socio-economic development. The institution of Achievement Awards is one of the praiseworthy contributions of FPCCI towards the promotion of merit and expertise and serves to provide recognition to the unflinching members and organization of the Pakistani Community.

In this era of competition, there is a dire need that we recognize the motivate the services of individuals and organization whose are performing well in their area

of interest to boost the economy by devising strategies that gives us an edge over our competitors. These bright people are not only work in Pakistan also work in other nations to the prosperity and development of the nation.

I anticipate that the FPCCI's Awards will generate new fair competition amongst organization and individual and boost their dynamism, which will lead Pakistan to the road of self-reliance. I hope that the Achievement Awards will further encourage the country's people to perform outstanding to improve the status of country in industries, commercial and socio-economic activities and to enhance the progress of Pakistan in national and international market.

I extend my warm felicitations to the president FPCCI and his team for organizing such a prestigious event and also on bringing out an impressive souvenir on this occasion. I also extend my felicitations to the FPCCI Achievement Awards Winners on their excellent performance and hope that they will continue their efforts for the prosperity of our country.

Mr. Muhammad Alamgir Chaudhry
CEO, National Productivity Organization



It gives me immense pleasure to know that FPCCI is organizing the 11th FPCCI Achievement Awards in the honor of the leading entrepreneurs of Pakistan whose performance is outstanding in bringing the much-needed foreign exchange to build the reserve of the country.

Through hard work and dedication these individuals have built efficient & commercial organizations that contribute to the economic growth and development of the communities in which they serve. The instituting of FPCCI Achievement Awards is a great initiative of FPCCI to further motivate the star performers under the prevailing conditions when global economy is slow down and affecting our economic progress.

Pakistan economy, particularly industry, agricul-

ture and services are increasingly exposed to serious challenges of competitiveness. In order to improve the competitiveness, there is immediate need to work on relevant indicators as with current performance, Pakistan cannot ideally compete and fetch a good share in the international market. Competitiveness is key for Pakistan's Industry. In today era, it is impossible to compete in global market without being productive and efficient. I hope that the export awards would serve to encourage a healthy competition in all sectors of economy improving productivity, harnessing new markets and meeting the international challenges.

I congratulate FPCCI on its devotion and sincere efforts to promote entrepreneurship in the country. I also extend my heartfelt felicitations to all Awards Winners on their outstanding performance and contribution in economic development of country. Their achievements and contributions to our business landscape have indeed set a high bar for the entrepreneurs of tomorrow.

Syed Mehdi Shah
Governor Gilgit-Baltistan



I am pleased to know that the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) is organizing a prestigious event of the 11th FPCCI Achievement Awards, to leading individuals and organizations in lieu of their outstanding performance. These awards have great significance in the present competitiveness environment and they provide an opportunity to the individuals and organization to identify challenges, analyze emerging trends and devise new strategies for recognizing the talent of the country.

The FPCC Achievement Awards encourage those who have done well during the previous year, and also act as a catalyst in generating fresh efforts to meet upcoming challenges to improve the image of country. I hope that the FPCCI Achievement Awards will recognize the individuals and organizations that have contributed extraordinary in the fields of trade, industry, social sector, science, research and others and reveal the highest values of their profession.

I believe that FPCCI Achievement Awards will motivate the individuals and organizations to vigorously play their crucial role in the growth and economic development of the country. I extend my warm felicitations to Irfan Iqbal Sheikh President of FPCCI, and his entire team on organizing this splendid Award ceremony in Pakistan. I also wish all award winners to continue good fortune and success for the future.

I am quite optimistic that FPCCI will continue to support commendable activities of recognizing and admiring high achievers, which surely motivates and encourages individuals and organizations to further explore creativity and skills that propel them to achieve even higher goals.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and appreciate the efforts of FPCCI, its President Mr. Irfan Iqbal Sheikh, Office Bearers and the Executive Committee Members, for holding this extraordinary event. Your support allows the winners to gain the recognition they deserve.

I congratulate all the award winners on their achievements and wish them continued success in future. It is a pleasure to be in the company of so many high-achieving organisations and individuals.

Dr. Saifuddin Junejo
Chairman Export Processing Zones Authority (EPZA)



to boost exports and facilitate Foreign Direct Investment (FDIs) in its established Zones in the country, hence achieved export growth in the FY 2019-20 US\$ 638.022 million, FY 2020-21 US\$ 974.600 million and FY 2021-22 US\$ 934.997 through manufacturing Sector. EPZA is trying its best to enhance its share in the national exports. EPZA efforts have resulted in the cumulative exports of US\$ 11,875.00 million till the end of FY 2022-23.

There is a dire need to pursue an integrated approach wherein public and private sector work as partners to facilitate and promote an innovative and modern culture for promoting exports. FPCCI being an apex body of trade and industry is undoubtedly playing a crucial role in promoting trade and industry in Pakistan. The Achievement Awards are one of the major activities which encourage the business community and the exporters of Pakistan who are working tirelessly to promote Pakistani products in the International market and earn precious foreign exchange for the country.

Last but not least, I congratulate all the award winners for their commendable performance and wish them success in future.

