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ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi, First Lady Begum Samina Arif Alvi and federal ministers cutting cake to celebrate the 147th birth anniversary of Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

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.

He 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.



RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir addressing a Christmas ceremony at Christ Church

ECP Orders: Islamabad IG, deputy commissioner removed



ISLAMABAD (INP): In line with the directions of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), the Establishment Division Monday removed Islamabad Inspector General of Police (IGP) Dr Akbar Nisar Khan and Deputy Commissioner Irfan Nawaz Memon from their posts with immediate effect.

It is pertinent to mention here that then-DIG

(grade-20) Nasir was appointed as the top cop in the federal capital in May 2022, by the former Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM)-led coalition government.

In October, the ECP had asked the interior ministry to transfer the officers after different political parties filed complaints against them fearing they may influence the outcome

of the upcoming elections. In November, the interior ministry asked the Establishment Division to transfer the Islamabad IG and the deputy commissioner without further delay in light of the directives issued by the ECP. However, the division turned a deaf ear towards the directives. Last week, the ECP summoned the Establishment Division secretary, seeking an explanation for not removing the officers. The ECP directed the secretary to appear before it on December 26. In a bid to avoid any departmental action or punishment, the authorities removed the officers from their posts just a day before the Establishment Division secretary was to appear before the electoral watchdog.

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 popu-

lation 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 the 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.

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 Ifikhar 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.

He said that a special assistance center was set up by the Islamabad Police, which could be contacted at telephone numbers 0519001534 and 03459600622 or email assistance.ictp@gmail.com.



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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

Solangi asserted that the country could overcome its prevailing challenges by wholeheartedly embracing the principles advocated by Muhammad Ali Jinnah.



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

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.

Aneeq Ahmed said that the Hajj 2024 was set to embrace digitalization, providing pilgrims with a mo-

bile 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.

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

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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.

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.



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 downward 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). Government spending on a 10-year-old on the downward 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 commu-

nity 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 a franchise 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 democ-

cracy.

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 facades 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 implicit 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.

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 Sohrab 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". 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."



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 Muhammad 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.

'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 Chhatta, Regional Police Officer (RPO) Rawalpindi Syed Khurram Ali.

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 play their role 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 Nusrat 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 Rehmatalah 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.

Commissioner shares Christ joy in colourful event

RAWALPINDI (APP): In a heartwarming Christmas gathering, Commissioner Rawalpindi Liaquat Ali Chhatta 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 Chhatta 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.

37 robbers killed during 58 police encounters in Vehari district

BUREWALA (APP): As many as 58 police encounters were took 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.

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 Western 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, adding 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 announced 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. 11 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 universities 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."

ECP receives over 28,000 nomination papers from candidates for general elections

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.

As per the data shared by the ECP, a total of 459 and 1,365 nomination papers have been received by the elec-

toral body for the reserved seats for national and provincial legislatures, respectively.

Meanwhile, on the reserved seats for non-Muslims, 361 men and 32 women have submitted their nomination papers for provincial assemblies. For national assembly seats, the number stands at 140 and 10, respectively.

A total of 7,713 people have submitted their nomination papers for national assembly seats (general), with the number standing at 18,546 for provincial assemblies (general).

Here's a brief province-wise breakdown of the nomination papers filed across the country.

Islamabad

The federal capital saw a total of 208 people submitting their nomination papers for the national assembly (general), whereas 150 nomination papers were filed on the reserved seats for non-Muslims.

Punjab

The province saw a total of 13,823 nomination papers being filed with 3,871 and 9,029 nomination papers being filed for national and provincial assembly seats (general), respectively. A total of 796 and 127 people filed their nomination papers for the reserved seats for women and non-Muslims, respectively.



ISLAMABAD: Activists of Jammu Kashmir Pir Panjal Freedom Movement holds banner and shouting slogans during protest outside National Press Club against the Indian Forces un humane behavior with Kashmir's and the murdered of Kashmir's Youngsters at Poonch district of the IIOK.

Christmas celebrations in Pakistan, Joyful festivities across the nation

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Christian community in Pakistan on Monday embraced the spirit of Christmas with traditional zeal and enthusiasm, mirroring global celebrations from official gatherings to cake-cutting ceremonies and illuminated houses, the festive fervour was evident as the community delved into the heartwarming activities to mark this joyous occasion.

Various ministries and departments in Pakistan held special cake-cutting ceremonies on the working day preceding Christmas, extending happiness to Christian staff members and recognizing their valuable contributions.

To mark the Christmas celebrations the Associated Press of Pakistan in Islamabad, led by Managing Director Muhammad Asim Khichi, held a notable cake-cutting ceremony to honour Christian employees and commend their role in the country's progress.

Churches across the nation hosted special services where prayers resounded for the peace, progress, and prosperity of

Pakistan, as well as the safety of humanity from natural disasters and diseases. These gatherings were a testament to the significance of faith during the festive season.

Key elements of the Christmas festivities included decorating Christmas trees, the arrival of Santa Claus, church prayers, carol singing, and the exchange of gifts. The Christmas tree, adorned with various ornaments and topped with an angel or star, symbolized the joyous spirit of the season.

The National Institute of Folk and Traditional Heritage (Lok Virsa) collaborated with UP Church and Saint Thomas Church Islamabad for special programs at the Pakistan National Heritage Museum.

These included a cake-cutting ceremony, congregation, Christmas tree erection, artisans' exhibition, and joyful activities like the distribution of sweets by Santa Claus, along with Christmas and folk songs and dances. The Executive Director Lok Virsa Uzair Khan felicitated the Chris-

tian community at their special occasion. In a display of solidarity, Islamabad Traffic Police organized a Christmas ceremony, distributing gifts among employees. Allama Iqbal Open University (AIU) arranged a magnificent event presided over by Vice-Chancellor Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood, showcasing support for the university's Christian employees.

With a commitment to safety, Islamabad Police deployed over 1500 policemen around churches and public places, ensuring comprehensive security arrangements for Christmas. The tight security included special checks outside churches, guaranteeing a peaceful celebration for all.

Notable in the capital were the vibrant Christmas displays in shopping malls, offices, and hotels, enticing visitors, especially children. Christian communities added to the festive atmosphere by organizing bazaars with a variety of Christmas-related items. In areas where a significant Christian population resides, such as Katchi Abadis.

Jamal Shah pays tribute to Quaid-e-Azam, calls for unity, progress

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a heartfelt tribute, Caretaker Minister for Culture and National Heritage, Syed Jamal Shah, on Monday commemorated the birth anniversary of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

Acknowledging Jinnah's unwavering determination, Jamal Shah emphasized how the founder's visionary leadership transformed the dream of a separate homeland for Muslims into a tangible reality.

Jamal Shah urged the nation to unite on this significant day, echoing the spirit that fueled the independence movement for the creation of Pakistan. Regardless of differences in caste, creed, or faith, he called for collective efforts towards a common goal.

Expressing his hopes for the nation's future, Jamal Shah prayed for strength and unity. He envisioned a Pakistan that lives up to the ideals set by Quaid-e-Azam, aspiring to

become the strongest nation on earth.

Highlighting the caretaker government's commitment under the leadership of Prime Minister Anwar Ul Haq Kakar, Jamal Shah shared their dedication to building a society free of corruption. Emphasizing a system that uplifts the poor and underprivileged, he underlined the alignment of these efforts with the founder's vision for Pakistan.

In a broader message of inclusivity, Jamal Shah extended warm greetings to the Christian community in Pakistan on the joyous occasion of Christmas. This gesture underscored the minister's commitment to fostering harmony and celebrating the diversity within the nation. This tribute not only commemorates the visionary leader Quaid-e-Azam but also calls for collective action and unity to fulfill the aspirations of a stronger, more prosperous Pakistan.

HEC Chairman pays tribute to Quaid-e-Azam, emphasize youth to follow his vision

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Higher Education Commission (HEC) Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed Monday paid eulogizing tributes to the Father of the Nation, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, emphasized upon the youth to adopt Quaid's attributes of honesty, hard work, perseverance and dedication.

Talking to PTV news channel, the Chairman said that the young population should follow the footsteps of Jinnah and would have to show dedication to develop Pakistan on the pattern as envisioned by its founder Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah as it is need of hour.

Calling upon the

youth to contribute towards the development of the country, he said today, every person, every institution, and every organization has to move forward with the pledge that whatever I do should be for a developed Pakistan.

He said that youngsters are very important elements of the societies, adding, youth should work hard for their character building.

"We as a nation need to understand the importance of independence in its true spirit", he added.

He said there was a dire need to keep high the message and thoughts of the great Muslim philosopher in practical life.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Murtaza Solangi visiting the photo exhibition during the speech competition on Quaid Day organized by DEMP at Information Service Academy.

Nilofer to stress on women empowerment in Christmas Community

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairperson of National Commission for the Status of Women (NCSW) Nilofer Bakhtiar extended her heartfelt greeting to the Christian community on the occasion of Christmas that minorities in Pakistan enjoy all political, economic, and social rights guaranteed by the Constitution of Pakistan.

In her Wishing message on Twitter, She added that everyone a joyous and Merry Christmas May the spirit of unity and peace prevail. "Let's celebrate diversity and empower the women in our minority to contribute to the tapestry of our shared future," She added.

11 outlaws arrested; drugs and weapons recovered

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Police apprehended 11 outlaws from different areas of the city during the last 24 hours and recovered drugs and weapons from their possession, a public relations officer said.

He said that, following the special directions of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad Capital Police has intensified crackdown against the criminal elements in order to eliminate the crime from the city.

Following these directions, the Tarnol police team arrested three accused namely Noman, Nisar Khan and Naeem Ullah and recovered two pistols and 1230 gram heroin from their possession. The Sabzi Mandi police team arrested an accused namely Hassan and recovered 1133 gram hashish from his possession. Likewise, the Noon police team arrested an accused namely Muhammad Aryan and recovered one 30 bore pistol from his possession, while the police team also arrested an accused namely Muhammad Ali.

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 Ulema and minorities, including the Christian community, were united for the peace and development of the country.

Ashrafi, who is also Chairman of the Pakistan Ulema 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

Ulema 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.

CPO distribute gifts among Christian employees in connection with Christmas

ISLAMABAD: Following the special directions of the Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad Capital Police

present. On this occasion, the CPO security division said that we are proud of our Christian employees who are serving in various wings of the force. They said that



arranged ceremonies in connection with Christmas and distributed gifts among the Christian employees, a public relations officer said.

He said that, an event was organized at Security Division Islamabad which was attended by Capital Police Officer security division as chief guest while SSP security division, Christian employees, and other senior police officers and officials of Islamabad Capital Police were also

minorities enjoy equal rights in the country and are contributing significantly to its development. He further said that the Christmas event gives a lesson in brotherhood and humanity, and all of us should work together to promote inter-faith harmony.

He also expressed good wishes for them, distributed gifts among them and announced holidays for Christian employees in Capital Police.



ISLAMABAD: Christian community members cutting cake on Christmas day at Fatima Church.

Social media users celebrates 147th birth anniversary of 'Jinnah'

ISLAMABAD (APP): On the 147th birth anniversary of the Father of the Nation, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the Pakistani nation shared Quaid's inspiring quotes and photos from his speeches on Monday to express their respect and love for Jinnah, who fought selflessly for the Muslims of undivided India and laid the foundations of a new country, Pakistan.

"Social media users, while paying rich tributes, had posted messages on various platforms commemorating his sacrifices and struggles in achieving a

separate homeland for the Muslim population," said a report aired by the PTV news channel.

Social media is the best opportunity for students because it provides a good platform for learning and knowing about the historical struggle of the founder of the nation, said a teacher.

Pakistanis, including various politicians and celebrities, also posted heartfelt messages for Mohammad Ali Jinnah on Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp groups, and Instagram posts, said a citizen.

Thanks indeed, Sir, for

your diligent efforts in making a beautiful and independent homeland for us, said a Facebook user while sharing the post. On his anniversary, we remember the founding father of Pakistan, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, with respect and gratitude, according to another post on Twitter. "There is no power on Earth that can undo Pakistan," said a politician while sharing his views on Twitter. Let's pay real tribute to Quaid-e-Azam by making Pakistan as per his dream and vision, said an Instagram post shared by a celebrity.



ISLAMABAD: Children enjoying on the Jumping jack in a local Park during the celebrations of Christmas at Katchi Abadi area in Federal Capital.

Authorities crack down on begging in twin cities, 67 accused face legal action

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a bid to curb the rising trend of professional begging in Rawalpindi and Islamabad, authorities have implemented robust measures resulting in legal actions against 67 beggars and throughout December 2023, about 42 cases were registered, signalling a determined effort to address the issue.

This move aimed not only to decrease the prevalence of begging but also to encourage alternative means of earning a livelihood. The Islamabad Deputy Commissioner's office revealed that after a thorough investigation process, legal proceedings were initiated against 67 individuals involved in professional begging. These cases, now in the hands of the competent jurisdiction, mark a significant step in tackling the persistent issue, an

official in the Ministry of Interior told APP.

The measures taken have led to a noticeable decline in begging activities across the twin cities. Officials express optimism that these actions will redirect beggars towards more sustainable sources of income, emphasizing the importance of hard work and labor.

He further said that efforts to address inflation and poverty are also underway, with the government working tirelessly to provide equal employment opportunities for all segments of society. The goal is to create an environment where citizens can earn a living through legitimate means, reducing dependency on begging as a source of income.

Notable areas identified for professional begging include Saddar, Committee,

Special Traffic education, enforcement campaign in full swing

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Police took prompt action against underage motorcyclists and drivers and imposed fines on them under the campaign of Special Traffic education and enforcement. Following the directions of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan and CPO Safe City/Traffic, the Islamabad Capital Police launched a special traffic education and enforcement campaign in order to solve the traffic related problems faced by the citizens on roads, a police public relations officer said.

He said that, campaign is underway against

underage bikers, those involved in rash driving and violating traffic rules. Under the supervision of chief traffic officer Islamabad, zonal DSP's are ensuring strict action against those violating traffic rules. In this regard, Islamabad capital police already formed special squads to set up special roadblocks in major highways and squares of Islamabad in order to take strict legal action against underage drivers and other traffic rules violators. Pamphlets and leaflets are being distributed to create awareness among citizens. While various teams of the education wing are spreading awareness about road safety rules among the road users.

Gas pipeline explosion in Rawalpindi, no casualties reported

ISLAMABAD (APP): A house collapsed after an alleged gas pipeline explosion which was reported in Dhamaial a village of Rawalpindi district of Punjab on early Monday morning. According to details, rescue sources said the explosion occurred early this morning and soon after the explosion, three firefighter tenders and six emergency vehicles reached the site immediately. Private news channels reported. No casualties were reported so far in the incident, they said. The police also called the Bomb Disposal Squad (BDS) to investigate the nature of the blast.



ISLAMABAD: Musician Raees Khan performing on stage during ceremony to mark the birth anniversary of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah at Pakistan National Council of Arts in Federal Capital.