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Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar talking to the resident Ambassadors of Muslim countries from the Middle East and North African (MENA) region over lunch in Islamabad.

Caretaker PM urges Muslim Ummah to get united to overcome challenges

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Wednesday underscored the significance attached by Pakistan to fraternal ties with the Muslim world, particularly with the countries of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. He said the ties were anchored in mutual trust, common understanding and close cooperation on bilateral as well as regional matters of common interest. The prime minister met the resident ambassadors of Muslim countries from the MENA re-

gion over lunch earlier in the day. The meeting was attended by the ambassadors of Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Syria, United Arab Emirates and Yemen. The caretaker foreign minister, secretary to the PM and foreign secretary were also present, the PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. The caretaker prime minister shared Pakistan's perspective on a number of issues, particularly the deteriorating human rights and humanitarian situation in

the occupied Palestinian territories. Other challenges confronting the Muslim world such as Islamophobia were also discussed. Prime Minister Kakar emphasized the need for the Muslim Ummah to continue to work closely and collectively, especially through the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to deal with the complex issues. He also praised the ambassadors for their efforts to forge stronger ties between Islamabad and their respective capitals.

Qureshi rearrested, shifted to unknown destination

RAWALPINDI (Online): Punjab police have taken PTI vice chairman Shah Mehmood Qureshi into its custody and shifted him to some unknown destination soon after his release. Shah Mehmood Qureshi was released in cipher case following the acceptance of his bail plea by the Supreme Court (SC). However he was taken into custody by Rawalpindi police soon after he came out of jail and was shifted to some unknown destination in armored vehicle. Shah Mehmood Qureshi while standing on armored vehicle said in his address on the occasion "I was released by Supreme Court (SC). Arresting me again is injustice. I am being punished for serving the nation."

PPP Chairman outlines election agenda Democratically took revenge by expelling PTI's Imran: Bilawal

Benazir Bhutto's 16th death anniversary observed in Garhi Khuda Bux Bhutto

GARHI KHUDA BAKHSH (INP): Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari revealed a comprehensive 10-point charter outlining the party's vision and commitment to addressing the nation's challenges ahead of the general elections. Bilawal Bhutto said that the resolution to the country's issues lies in the manifesto of the people. He was addressing a large gathering held in connection with the death anniversary of his mother former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto in Garhi Khuda Bakhsh.

A core focus of the PPP's agenda is the commitment to doubling the salaries of government employees within a five-year timeframe. Bilawal emphasized the party's dedication to implementing top-notch education projects and alleviating the burden of inflation by providing free electricity to the underprivileged, with a

specific commitment of 300 units. In a strategic move towards sustainable energy, the PPP leader unveiled plans to establish green energy parks in every district, ensuring affordable electricity for all. Bilawal expressed the party's stance that institutions like WAPDA and K-Electric are unnecessary, proposing a paradigm shift towards a more efficient healthcare system through public-private partnerships.

CPEC helps further strengthen Pak-China relations: President

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Wednesday said the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) had helped further expand and strengthen the bilateral relations. He expressed these views while talking to Pakistan's Ambassador to China, Khalil-ur-Rahman Hashmi who called on him at Aiwan-e-Sadr. The president said under CPEC, a network of roads, had been laid across the country whereas infrastructure projects of strategic importance were also included in the mega project. Terming China as Pakistan's brotherly country and a permanent strategic partner, he said the bi-

lateral ties between Pakistan and China were of special importance. "China is the largest trading partner of Pakistan and was an important source of Foreign Direct Investment in the country, President Alvi remarked. Further, he pointed out that the cultural and educational exchanges were important for the strong friendship of the two countries. Congratulating the recently appointed ambassador to China, he hoped that the strategic partnership with China would further strengthen in future. The president directed the ambassador to further deepen the trade, economic and cultural relations with China.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate, Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani calls on President Dr Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Pakistan-bound ship from Saudi Arabia attacked in Red Sea

RED SEA (INP): Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi militia claimed responsibility for a missile attack on Tuesday on a Pakistan-bound container ship in the Red Sea and for an attempt to attack Israel with drones. MSC Mediterranean Shipping said there were no injuries to its crew from the attack on its ship, the United VIII, en route from King Abdullah Port, Saudi Arabia to Karachi. It said the ship had informed a nearby coalition naval warship that it had been under attack and had taken evasive manoeuvres. Israel said separately that its aircraft had intercepted a hostile aerial target in the Red Sea area.

Research, pursuit of knowledge, key to overcome Pakistan's current challenges: Solangi

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Wednesday said that research and pursuit of knowledge were imperative to overcome multiple challenges, currently faced by the country. Delivering the speech at Fourth Convocation of Information Technology University, he said nations did face challenges and Pakistan, with the grace of Allah Almighty, would also overcome multiple challenges being faced now. The minister said that a country could develop only through the acquisition of

knowledge and education. Stressing the role of students in overcoming these challenges, he said it was necessary to end negative propaganda. The motto of almost all the religions, was that humans should become good persons, Murtaza Solangi said adding that education promoted humanity and friendly attitude in the society. He said Pakistan was facing diverse, unprecedented and extraordinary challenges including economic crisis, intolerant and violent behaviour. He said every day, impacts of climate emergency were being witnessed by everyone in the country.



LARKANA: Chairman PPP Bilawal Bhutto Zardari addressing a public gathering on the occasion of 16th death anniversary of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto at Garhi Khuda Bakhsh.

IHC tells police to not treat Baloch protesters as 'enemies'

Orders police to present 34 arrested protesters in identification parade, submit report on female protesters' arrest

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) asked the federal capital's police on Wednesday to not treat the Baloch protesters as "enemies". Justice Miangul Hasan Aurangzeb's remarks came as he heard a petition filed last week challenging the protesters' arrests and denying them the right to protest in Islamabad. The hearing was attended by the senior superintendent of police (SSP) operations, the advocate general (AG) Islamabad and the lawyer representing the organisers of the protest, the Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC). Expressing his indignation, Justice Aurangzeb asked the SSP operations

whether the order to treat the protesters "harshly" was given by him. "You make some people sit in your lap while you treat others like this", the judge remarked as he referred to the mass arrests the protesters were subjected to on reaching Islamabad on foot from Kech, in Balochistan. "They have come [here]. Let them sit". During the hearing, the petitioner's counsel stated that 34 Baloch protesters were still in custody who were still to be presented in an identification parade. He added that an individual named Zaheer, named in the first information report (FIR) registered at the Kohsar police station, is missing. At this, the SSP informed that Zaheer was in jail and could not be released due to non-payment of bail money.

EC issues SOPs regarding accreditation cards for media men

ISLAMABAD (Online): Election Commission (EC) has issued SOPs in connection with accreditation cards for local observers and media. According to SOPs all media representatives can submit application for obtaining accreditation cards. The representatives of local NGOs and civil society can also apply for accreditation card. EC will provide maximum facility for observing and coverage of electoral process. EC has issued letter to all returning officers.

Pak successfully conducts flight test of FATAH-II missile

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan on Wednesday conducted the successful flight test of Fatah-II, equipped with the most modern avionics, sophisticated navigation system and unique flight trajectory. The weapon system is capable of engaging targets with high precision up to a range of 400 kilometres, an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release said. The flight test was witnessed by senior officers from tri-services and dedicated scientists and engineers.



RAWALPINDI: View of conducted successful flight test of Fatah-II, equipped with state of the art avionics, sophisticated navigation system and unique flight trajectory.

Dr. Umar Saif says Protection of Pakistan's cyberspace under PECA act very important

By M.Ilyas ISLAMABAD - Caretaker Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Dr. Umar Saif has said that the protection of Pakistan's cyberspace under the PECA Act is very important. Cybercrime, online buying and selling, cyberbullying, protection of online data, other services of our citizens, identification of threats and effective action against criminals is our core responsibility. He said this in his address as chief guest at the prize distribution ceremony of Digital Pakistan Cybersecurity Hackathon 2023 in Islamabad on Wednesday. The event was organized by the National Technology Fund (Ignite), an organization of the Ministry of IT Telecom. Dr. Umar Saif further said that there was no specific organization to act against cybercrime, so a cybercrime wing was created in FIA to look after these issues, now we have established a separate agency called the National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency equipped with all the required equipment and skills. Gradually, the authority to act against cybercrime is being transferred from FIA Cybercrime wing to this particular organization. Which will be able to take effective action against cybercrime. With which Pakistan's cyberspace, data of public and private institutions, business transactions, and online activities of citizens can be secured effectively.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for IT & Telecommunication, Dr. Umar Saif addressing Awards Ceremony of Digital Pakistan Cybersecurity Hackathon-2023.

Nawaz return rejuvenated PML-N, says Shehbaz

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President Shehbaz Sharif has said that Pakistan was making progress during the party Quaid Nawaz Sharif's previous tenure as the prime minister, and the journey will start again with his victory in the upcoming general election. Addressing the 17th party parliamentary board meeting at Model Town on Wednesday, he said that PML-N Quaid Nawaz

Sharif's return to the country on Oct 21 rejuvenated the party, and he would be elected as the prime minister of Pakistan for fourth time through the efforts being made by his supporters. The former premier said that the long march, staged by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf founding chairman in 2014 was the darkest chapter in Pakistan's history, saying the stunt was orchestrated only to sabotage the planned visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Will file application with ECP against Qureshi's re-arrest: Barrister Gohar

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chairman Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Barrister Gohar has said that the party will move an application to Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) for re-arresting Shah Mehmood Qureshi. In a statement on Wednesday, he said that the issue of arrest of Shah Mehmood has been brought in notice of ECP and the party would also file application with election body regarding harassing of its candidates of general election. Barrister Gohar said that we would also consult the court against re-arrest of party leader. He said that over 50 incidents of snatching nomination papers from PTI candidates were reported. The PTI chairman said that if free and transparent elections were not held, it would adversely affect the democracy and country. He further stated that the PTI founder has directed to contest the general elections.

Disqualification of PTI founder SC rejects plea for immediate hearing of appeal plea seeking abolition

ISLAMABAD (Online): Supreme Court (SC) has rejected the plea for conducting immediate hearing of appeal in connection with abolition of disqualification of PTI founder Imran Khan. The court has made this decision being the bench incomplete. The court has remarked no bench less than 3 members can hear this appeal plea. May be some larger bench is constituted in this case. In level playing field case and suspension of decision of PTI Toshakhana case in SC, Justice Athar Minallah remarked there are very serious allegations in your petition. Latif Khosa counsel for Imran Khan said had the case been registered in time then there would not have been so much emergency today. Tosha Khana decision

suspension case and level playing field case came up for hearing before SC Wednesday. A two members bench of SC presided over by acting Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Sardar Tariq Masood heard the case. The lawyers of PTI appeared in the court. Counsel Latif Khosa said two petitions have been filed in SC. Request has been made for suspension of decision against PTI founder. Contempt of court petition has been filed in the matter of level playing field. The Acting CJP Sardar Tariq Masood remarked we obtain the information from the office about both the petitions. Counsel Latif Khosa said file was snatched from my staff in SC compound. They were threatened.

Daily Voice of Masses
Independent

Inclusive politics

It is encouraging to see that in the upcoming elections, the number of women candidates filing nomination papers has surpassed the figures of 2018 and 2013. While this is a positive indicator of the evolving role of women in politics, the fact that they constitute only 11pc of the total candidates underscores a persistent gender disparity in political representation. This year, 3,139 women candidates have stepped forward, a significant rise from the 1,687 in 2018 and 1,171 in 2013. Such an increase should be celebrated, yet when viewed in the context of over 28,000 candidates overall — in itself a record — the figure is starkly disproportionate.

This discrepancy highlights a missed opportunity by political parties to promote a more balanced representation. The expectation was for parties to this time around actively encourage and support a greater number of women candidates, yet this has not materialised to a satisfactory degree. The situation within the PML-N offers a microcosm of the broader issue. The discord among women candidates in the party, who feel sidelined in favour of a select few — primarily from influential backgrounds — raises questions about the criteria for selecting candidates for reserved seats. This practice not only discourages dedicated party workers but also undermines the essence of reserved seats, which should ideally serve as a platform for diverse and representative female participation. So, what could have been done differently? First and foremost, political parties need to establish and adhere to transparent and equitable criteria for selecting candidates, especially for reserved seats.

This process should prioritise merit and dedication to public service over familial or socioeconomic connections. Additionally, there should be a concerted effort to scout and mentor potential women leaders from various walks of life, ensuring more inclusive and representative choices. Moreover, political parties and the ECP must work together to remove barriers that deter women from political participation. This includes addressing societal prejudices, ensuring the safety of women candidates, and providing the necessary resources and training to potential women politicians. The current state of women's participation in national politics underscores the need for urgent action. Political parties, civil society, and government institutions must shoulder the responsibility to foster an environment where women's political engagement transcends tokenism and becomes a cornerstone of our democratic fabric. This is not just about meeting quotas or surpassing previous statistics; it is about fundamentally redefining the political landscape to be truly inclusive, equitable, and representative of diverse voices. The journey towards this goal is arduous but essential for the health and maturity of our democracy. It is time to embrace a vision where women's voices are not just heard but are instrumental in steering the course of our nation's destiny.



Furqan Hyder Shaikh

Prosperity, development, and sustainability in Sindh are linked to the number of people casting their vote — hopefully for someone who has a vision, a plan, and an executable strategy to deal with problems. Socioeconomic challenges, unfortunately, dominate the landscape, with poor education and health systems, water and food scarcity, and a dearth of livelihood opportunities.

This begs the question: is it our vote winners who lack the skills and abilities needed to serve the people, or is it the voters who fail to comprehend the qualities a poll candidate must possess in order to ensure effective governance once elected? The value of a vote is neither taught well, nor comprehended clearly. With general elections scheduled for February, votes are needed to transform Sindh into a well-managed province by a qualified political leadership.

Of course, it is the number of votes that decides who wins and who loses. But what criteria should be employed to assess the likely performance of a candidate in Sindh, the kind of leadership qualities he or she possesses, and what constituency issues matter most to him or her?

Undoubtedly, even a single vote has the potential to make a difference. For example, John F. Kennedy won the American presidential election of 1960 by the very narrow margin of less than two-tenths of a percentage point. Democracy works only if people

A single vote

come out to show their concern by casting their vote. Sindh is a poverty-stricken province hit by myriad problems including the impact of climate change. If one were to think of a 'voting policy' for Sindh, what criteria should the electorate keep in mind?

In fact, there are several elements informing well-thought-out voting choices. For instance, one could ask what sort of a plan the candidate has to address Sindh's water woes. What does the candidate, if elected to power, intend to do about economic empowerment in the coastal belt, as well as sea intrusion in the Badin, Sujawal and Thatta districts? Does the candidate have a strategy to put an end to the barbarous practice of abducting girls? Does the candidate have a viable proposal for a state-of-the-art education system in his or her constituency? If elected, would the candidate be willing to take responsibility for a woman dying due to the unavailability of medical facilities in a rural setting? How will the candidate protect the rights of the minorities in his or her constituency? Such questions need to be reflected on by voters and be posed by them to the campaigning candidates. If today's voters want themselves and their generations to live a healthy life and have all the advantages of a modern education system, prosperity, and development, they need to think now. Only performance will count.

The general aim of elections is to bring to power a government which can make policies that benefit the people at large. But the picture of previous elections shows that before and during elections, some voters are influenced or made to cast their vote for a particular candidate. Sometimes, the carrot of Rs5,000 against

each vote is dangled before them. If vote-seekers can 'organise' themselves to 'induce' voters to cast their ballot in their favour, why can't voters similarly prepare themselves to vote in the best, ie, those who would actually make a difference?

For prosperity in Sindh, voters from Karachi to Kashmore, Hyderabad, Sukkur, Badin, and Tharparkar have to think of a 'voting policy', keeping in mind the challenges their respective constituencies face. For this, the role of social activists in urban and rural settings is pivotal. They must educate people about the importance of the single vote, and convince them that their vote should not be cast just to perpetuate a 'legacy'; it must be cast for a prosperous future. The electorate should understand that their vote should go towards the fulfilment of their rights

and the future of their offspring. The right decision today will positively impact the future.

Unfortunately, so far the votes of Sindh's unaware masses have only enriched the vote winners who are past masters at playing with the rights of the destitute and illiterate.

At the end of the day, it is only voters who can change Sindh's destiny. NGOs, civil society, school teachers, influencers in rural Sindh, and activists with deep knowledge of the importance of elections should act to create awareness, particularly in the province's rural areas, so that voters have an understanding of what they should be looking for in those who want to represent them. They must be made aware that elections ultimately aim to seek good governance — from the village unit to the provincial level. — Courtesy Dawn

Obliterating Gaza



Mahir Ali

It took several days of diplomatic negotiations for the Security Council to come up with a sufficiently bland Gaza resolution that the US would not feel obliged to veto. Even after it had been diluted to a meaningless plea for unspecified measures that "create the conditions for a sustainable cessation of hostilities" — which Israel would interpret as a green light to persist with its genocidal military campaign — the wretched Biden administration could only bring itself to abstain.

The resolution also called on all parties to "facilitate and enable the immediate, safe and unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance at scale" to the Palestinians in Gaza — almost 90pc of whom have been displaced, pushed into ever-diminishing "safe zones" that are often promptly targeted by the Israel Defence Forces (IDF).

Even if by some miracle the Security Council had managed to clearly demand a ceasefire, Israel would have ignored it, as it has routinely done since 1948, without facing consequences. The protection of its American godfather is paramount. Western media outlets have lately been promoting the impression that the US is striving to persuade Israel to reduce the intensity of its onslaught.

That's the equivalent of requesting a serial killer to be less indiscriminate, while supplying him with weapons to accomplish his aims. Had the US seriously wished to halt the slaughter in which entire branches of Palestinian

family trees are being hacked off, it could have done so by cutting off the military, diplomatic and financial supply chains crucial to sustaining Israel's capacity for monstrousness. But don't hold your breath.

After all, it took decades, plus the relentless efforts of activists, for the US to recognise the horrors of South African apartheid (propped up with surreptitious Israeli back-k-ing) and endorse sanctions against Pretoria. Going further back, the Nazi regime enjoyed the sympathy of key components of Western elites, from the British royal family to American captains of industry.

Long before that, the US King-Crane commission was dispatched to the Levant in 1919 to solicit popular opinion about the region's future following World War I. It found vast support for a united Syria encompassing latter-day Lebanon and Palestine. Facts on the ground shifted the erudite commissioners' views from backing the Zionist project endorsed by the Balfour Declaration to pointing out that it would entail "a practically complete dispossession of the present-day inhabitants of Palestine" and "the gravest trespass upon the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine".

It presciently reminded the then US president, Woodrow Wilson, that "if the American government decided to support the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine, they are committing the American people to the use of force in that area, since only by force can a Jewish state in Palestine be established or maintained". By then, the US Congress had effectively endorsed the Balfour Declaration, and the State Department decided that publishing the report "would not be compatible with the public interest".

It had little effect when eventually published by Editor & Publisher magazine in 1922, and continued to be disregarded when US backing for Israel went into high gear following the 1967 "pre-emptive" Israeli assault against its neighbours. A Palestine Liberation Organisation pamphlet noted that the population density "jumped in a few weeks from 208 to more than 6,000 persons per square kilometre".

Gaza's population has more than quadrupled since then, and the conditions have deteriorated. The IDF has lately been renewing the status of long-standing refugees — often from territories adjacent to the Gaza Strip, the areas violated by Hamas and its associates on Oct 7 — by casting them into the wilderness. The atrocities committed in the kibbutzim cannot be denied, while acknowledging that some of the deaths and damage can be attributed to the manner in which the IDF response unfolded.

The precise details may never emerge, but the century-long context of repression and dispossession in occupied Palestinian territories cannot be ignored in contemplating today's dire realities as the seeds of hatred are sowed anew.

Benjamin Netanyahu's response to the UN resolution was to visit his troops in Gaza on Christmas Day and declare that his war would be intensified, even as Bethlehem marked the occasion with a rubble-strewn Nativity scene. Reading about a Children's Happiness Centre levelled by the IDF in its scorched earth campaign alongside hospitals, homes and schools, I was reminded of Northern Irish freedom fighter Bobby Sands' prison diary entry shortly before he succumbed to the privations of a hunger strike: "Our revenge will be the laughter of our children." — Courtesy Dawn

Commerce News

Pak first foray into global jobs market with record agreements for manpower export

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan, through its Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development (OP&HRD), participated for the first time in the International Human Resources & Labour Services Expo in Riyadh from December 24 to 27. The agreements would open doors for Pakistani workforce in various sectors such as construction, hospitality, information technology, services industry and various other fields globally, the press release said. The Overseas Employment Corporation (OEC), which is part of

orchestrated Pakistan's participation in the expo and also inaugurated Pakistan's Pavilion there. Over a dozen agreements with Saudi and international companies were executed during the Expo to boost employment opportunities abroad for the Pakistani workforce.

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Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Overseas Pakistanis, Muhammad Jawad Sohrab Malik inaugurated Pakistan pavilion at Human Resource and Labour Services Expo 2023 in Riyadh, KSA.

Commerce minister to address status of SEZs in Karachi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Industries and Production Secretary Federal Minister for Commerce and Industries, Dr. Gohar Ejaz here on Wednesday chaired high-level meeting to address the status of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in Karachi for creating investment friendly environment the country and to assess the current status of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in Karachi.

The meeting was attended by key officials including Sauleh Ahmed Farooqui, Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Rashid Langrial, Secretary of the Ministry of

Industries and Production and Sohail Rajput, Secretary Board of Investment.

The meeting focused on the operational status of the Port Qasim SEZ, which is now ready for prospective investors. The Port Qasim SEZ boasts comprehensive utility services, creating an ideal environment for businesses to thrive. During the discussions, the minister highlighted the importance of diversification and growth, specifically addressing the establishment of a SEZ dedicated to the Information Technology (IT) sector. The IT SEZ is

poised to play a crucial role in fostering innovation and technological advancement in Pakistan.

A key agenda item centered on initiatives to enhance the skill set of the labor force in Pakistan. The Ministry of Commerce, in collaboration with other relevant authorities, plans to implement programs to improve the overall skill level of the workforce, with a particular emphasis on IT skills.

This strategic approach aligns with the goal of boosting IT exports and positioning Pakistan as a competitive player in the global IT industry.

Ministry announces BoP improvement of \$5.6b

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federal Ministry of Commerce on Wednesday announced remarkable trade Performance and Year-on-Year Balance of Payments (BoP) Improvement worth \$5.6 billion as a significant achievement in Pakistan's trade sector. Caretaker Minister of Commerce Dr. Gohar Ejaz said that the positive trade figures and upward trend showcased Pakistan's resilience, said a press release issued here.

The minister said, "We will continue to work towards enabling our exporters and to find new destinations for exports." According to the Ministry, for a Year-on-Year Increase in exports in the first 20 days of December 2023, Pakistan experienced an outstanding year-on-year increase in exports, amounting to \$479

million, reflecting an impressive growth rate of 33.1 percent. On Year-on-Year decrease in Imports, conversely, imports during the same period saw a substantial decrease of \$405 million, marking a 12.8 percent reduction. This positive trend contributed to an \$884 million improvement in the balance of trade for December 2023. According to the data, from July 1st, 2023, to December 20th, 2023, Pakistan's exports soared to \$14 billion, showcasing a remarkable year-on-year increase of \$709 million, translating to a substantial 5.3 percent improvement. Import figures during the same period (1 July 2023 to 20 December 2023) dropped to \$24.3 billion from \$29.2 billion in FY-2022, reflecting a notable year-on-year decrease of \$4.9 billion.



ISLAMABAD: A vendor is selling seasonal fruit Oranges at Khana Bridge to earn daily wages for the livelihood of his family.



SIALKOT: Senior Trainer National institute of Management, Masood Ahmed addressing to the delegation at SCCL.

Cotton Yields drop in Pakistan due to adverse weather

KARACHI (INP): Ehsanul Haq, Chairman of the Cotton Genet's Forum, painted a concerning picture of the country's cotton harvest, predicting a significant decline due to adverse weather and pest problems. Despite a similar trend internationally, this dip casts a shadow on hopes for price hikes.

"Pakistan initially aimed for a robust 1 crore 28 lakh bales of cotton in 2023-24," Haq stated. "However, harsh weather conditions and a severe whitefly infestation have forced us to scale back that

target to 1 crore 11 lakh 50 thousand bales. Even that seems optimistic, with current estimates hovering around 85 lakh bales, particularly in Punjab's cotton belts."

This sharp downward trajectory, exceeding even the adjusted target highlights the crippling impact of environmental factors on Pakistan's cotton production.

The news comes amidst reports of similar struggles for major cotton-producing nations worldwide, suggesting a broader crisis for the industry.

Rupee gains 18 paise against Dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani Rupee on Wednesday witnessed the 11th consecutive recovery session as it gained 18 paise against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs282.19 against the previous day's closing of Rs282.37.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market stood at Rs284.5 respectively. The price of the Euro increased by 33 paise to close at Rs311.60 against the last day's closing of Rs311.27, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese Yen came down by 01 paise and closed at Rs1.97; whereas a decrease of 78 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs359.26 compared to the last closing of Rs358.48.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal decreased by 04 and 03 paise to close at Rs76.84 and Rs75.24 respectively.

Economic outlook stays optimistic despite challenges: Report

ISLAMABAD (APP): Despite significant challenges, the overall economic outlook remained optimistic, marked by receding inflationary pressures, positive prospects in agriculture, signs of potential recovery in the industrial sector, imports, and a favorable external environment.

According to Monthly Economic Update and Outlook for December issued by the ministry of finance, the optimistic economic outlook is also evident by the 2.13 percent growth achieved in the first quarter

of FY2024, largely contributed by agriculture and industry.

Further, the report says, the twin deficit is on a downward trajectory signifying better economic management to reduce the macroeconomic imbalances.

"This lays the foundation for progressing towards higher and sustainable economic growth. It is therefore expected that this positive momentum will further strengthen in the upcoming months," the report adds.

Meanwhile, the report says for the Rabi season 2023-24, wheat

crop has been cultivated on an estimated area of 8.733 million hectares against the target of 8.998 million hectares to achieve the production target of 32.3 million tonnes.

Punjab has surpassed its sowing target (6.475 million hectares) by 2 percent to 6.592 million hectares, while in other provinces it is in progress.

The Large Scale Manufacturing (LSM) declined by 0.4 percent during Jul-Oct FY 2024 against the contraction of 1.7 percent same period last year. In October 2023, LSM decreased by 4.1 percent on Year on Year

(YoY) basis against -1.4 percent in the same month last year.

While on a monthly basis, it is declined by 2.0 percent in October against the decrease of 3.2 percent in September. During Jul-Oct FY2024, 12 out of 22 sectors witnessed positive growth. These includes, food, beverages, coke & petroleum products, wearing apparel, leather, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, non-metallic mineral products, rubber products, fabricated metals, machinery and equipment, and others (Football).

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation recorded at 29.2 percent on a YoY basis in November 2023 as compared to 23.8 percent in November 2022. During Jul-Nov FY 2024, CPI stood at 28.6 percent against 25.1 percent in the same period last year. On basis, it increased to 2.7 percent in November 2023 compared to an increase of 1.0 percent in the previous month. The Sensitive Price Index (SPI) for the week ended on December 21, 2023, recorded a decline of 0.51 percent as compared to previous week. Prices of 9 items declined, 24 items remained stable and 18 items increased.

Naqvi visits Ganga Ram Hospital, expresses dismay

Independent Report
LAHORE: Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi made a surprise visit to Ganga Ram Hospital on Wednesday where he found cleanliness arrangements inadequate. There were piles of filth and dirt in the washrooms. Patients and their attendants complained about being charged for surgeries in the hospital. A female patient also complained about having to procure medicines from outside. Expressing his strong dismay, CM Naqvi issued a final warning to the MS [medical superintendent], stating that hospital affairs should be rectified without further delay.

He said, "I am giving you a final warning. I will visit again soon. If the situation does not improve, you will be held responsible." He ordered an inquiry into an incident of charging money for surgery by the Chief Minister's Inspection Team and directed the CMIT to immediately reach the hospital to probe the matter and submit the inquiry report to him by evening. He ordered to refund the money and told the MS, "If even a single round of the hospital had been conducted by you, the cleanliness situation would not have been like this. I don't want to see any dirt on my next visit."

He also inspected the upgradation work and ordered to complete the project within the timeframe, emphasising that there would be no tolerance for delay in the upgradation work. Meanwhile, the caretaker Punjab government has successfully revitalised another stalled welfare project, completing the construction of 245 houses under the low-cost housing scheme in Raiwind. These affordable homes are slated to be handed over to deserving government employees on January 15, following special directives of Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi.



LAHORE: Caretaker Federal Minister for information Murtaza Solangi meeting with Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi. Provincial Minister for information Amir Meer is also present.

CM encourages students to harness their energies positively

ABBOTTABAD (APP): Chief Minister KPK Justice @ Syed Arshad Hussain Shah Wednesday distributed laptops to students at Hazara University Manshera under the Prime Minister Laptop Scheme. The Chief Minister also inaugurated the Khyber Medical University Abbottabad Campus and new building of Ayub College of Dentistry in Abbottabad. Additionally, he unveiled the Online

Complaint Management and Patient Facilitation Center, along with the Cornea Transplant Service at Ayub Teaching Hospital (ATH) Abbottabad. During his address at the event, Chief Minister Arshad Hussain Shah expressed his concern and underscored that Ayub Teaching Hospital is the largest teaching hospital. He assured that all issues at the hospital would be addressed on a priority basis through preferential foundations.

Emphasizing the urgency of a meeting among relevant departments to tackle the hospital's challenges, the Chief Minister outlined the need for swift action. Clarifying the provincial cabinet's stance in response to the caretaker Prime Minister's announcement, Justice Arshad Hussain Shah said that we have granted approval to Ayub Medical College and Khyber Medical College for university status.



GARHI KHUDABUX: A large number of supporters and activists of Peoples Party (PPP) are gathered to mark 16th death anniversary of PPP Chairperson Benazir Bhutto held at Bhutto Mausoleum in Garhi Khuda Bux.

PoG decides to provide electric bikes to students at low rates

LAHORE (Online): Punjab government has decided to provide electric bikes to students at subsidized rates to contain environmental pollution.

The care taker transport minister of Punjab Ibrahim Hassan Murad said in an interview Punjab is facing big problem of fog.

LHC grants protective bail to Cheema

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Wednesday granted protective bail to former Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Mussarat Jamshed Cheema for five days in cases related to May-9 violence.

Justice Shehram Sarwar Chaudhry heard the petition, filed by Mussarat Cheema. Her counsel argued before the court that his client wanted to join the investigation of cases besides attending the scrutiny process of her nomination papers for general elections.

Chief Secretary advocates collaborative approach for GLOF-II Success

GILGIT (APP): The Provincial Project Steering Committee (PPSC) meeting of GLOF-II Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) was convened on Wednesday. It was chaired by the Chief Secretary GB Abrar Ahmed Mirza and was attended by the Additional Chief Secretary (Dev) Capt. (Retd) Mushtaq Ahmed, Secretary Finance Aziz Ahmed Jamali, Secretary Home Capt. (Retd) Syed Ali Asghar, Secretary Forest Zafar Waqar Taj, Secretary Agriculture Tariq Hussain, Secretary Water Management and Irrigation Riaz Ahmed, Director General GBDMA Safdar Khan, Deputy Chief Planning and Development

Department Ali Jabbar, and representatives from various implementing partner organizations. During the meeting, UNDP Provincial Coordinator Mr Abdul Basit provided a comprehensive overview of the progress achieved by the GLOF-II project in the year 2023 and presented the proposed work plan, detailing activities and costs earmarked for the year 2024. The forum engaged in a thorough deliberation on the achievements thus far and discussed future strategies. Chief Secretary GB, Abrar Ahmed Mirza, commended the GLOF-II project for effectively addressing climate change issues.

Three included woman killed in separate incidents

SWABI (APP): Three persons including a woman were killed in separate incidents that occurred in two different areas of the district, police said on Thursday. According to police, two persons were killed and another injured when a tri-wheeler, motorcycle, and tractor collided with each other in the Jagat area of the district. The killed were identified as Attaullah and Shahab. In another incident that occurred in Chota Lahor armed person broke into the house of Muhammad Sher and started firing. The wife of Muhammad Sher sustained injuries and later succumbed in the hospital.

Minister inaugurates e-Stamping in KP

Independent Report
PESHAWAR: In a significant move towards combating the issuance of fake stamp papers in the province, KP Caretaker Minister for Revenue, Finance, and Excise Taxation, Ahmed Rasool Bangash, announced the initiation of an e-Stamping system. This initiative aims to curb the prevalence of counterfeit stamp papers and facilitate the seamless accumulation of revenues through the Bank of Khyber into the provincial account. The e-Stamping system is a crucial step towards promoting good governance in the province, as it was undertaken as part of an agency agreement signed between the Bank of Khyber and the State Bank

of Pakistan. The launching ceremony witnessed the presence of key officials, including Secretary Finance Aamer Sultana, Director Revenue, Director Finance State Bank of Pakistan Qadir Bakhsh, and Group Head Conventional Banking Sher Muhammad, along with other relevant authorities from the Bank of Khyber. Minister Finance Ahmed Rasool Bangash, in his address during the e-Stamping launch, emphasized that the primary objective behind this initiative is to provide instant access to genuine stamp papers without any hassle and to deter fraudulent activities.



KARACHI: Passengers are suffering at Railway Station due to the delay of the trains because of fog in the different areas of the Country.

Skill-Based Education imperative for societal development: Khokhar

MULTAN (APP): Secretary of School Education South Punjab, Dr. Obaidullah Khokhar stressed the pivotal role of skill-based education in transforming the region's youth into catalysts for societal improvement. Addressing participants at the National Conference on Life Skills-Based Education Roadmap and Advocacy Strategy for Out-of-School Children, held at the Pakistan Institute of Education Dr. Khokhar outlined the vision of instilling crucial life skills

in students through training programs. Under the Life Skills-Based Education Program, students in government schools across South Punjab will receive training to become invaluable contributors to society, he remarked. The conference brought together education secretaries from the country's four provinces, Gilgit-Baltistan, South Punjab, and national and international experts, with the support of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

700 kg substandard chips, over 100 kg rotten edible items discarded

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Food Safety and Halal Food Authority on Wednesday recovered and discarded 700 kg substandard chips and over 100 kg rotten food items in Peshawar and Nowshera. The Food Authority while taking notice of public complaints received in an online public hearing conducted operations in Peshawar and Nowshera, said the spokesperson of Food Authority. A team of the

authority conducted raiders on Chips factories located on Charsadda Road here and found use of non-food grade colour and in the preparation of chips. The team confiscated and discarded more than 700 kg of substandard chips. Similarly, during operations in different markets of Tehsil Pabbi, district Nowshera the teams inspected pop and chips wholesalers, chicken and kebab shops, and chips and spices factories.

International News

Russia unhappy with Japan over providing Patriot air defence systems to Ukraine

Monitoring Desk
MOSCOW: A move by Japan to provide Patriot air defence systems to Ukraine will have "grave consequences" for Russia-Japan ties, Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said on Wednesday. Relations between Moscow and Tokyo, already difficult, have deteriorated sharply since Russia sent tens of thousands of troops into Ukraine in Feb. 2022. Japan has joined its Western allies in imposing sweeping economic sanctions on Russia. Last week, Japan said

it would prepare to ship Patriot air defence missiles to the United States after revising its arms export guidelines, in Tokyo's first major overhaul of such export curbs in nine years. 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 to provide military aid to Kyiv. "The Japanese side loses control over the weapons with which Washington can now do whatever it

wants," Zakharova told a weekly briefing. "It cannot be ruled out that under an already tested scheme Patriot missiles will end up in Ukraine." Such a scenario would be "interpreted as unambiguously hostile actions against Russia and will lead to grave consequences for Japan in the context of bilateral relations", she said. Earlier this month, Japan and South Korea both scrambled jets to monitor joint flights by Chinese and Russian bombers and fighters near their territories.



Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov shakes hands with India's Foreign Minister Subrahmanya Jaishankar during a joint press conference following their talks in Moscow, Russia.

Russia, India closer to joint military equipment production: Russian FM

Monitoring Desk
MOSCOW: Russia and India have made tangible progress in talks on plans to jointly produce military equipment, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Wednesday, after talks with his Indian counterpart Subrahmanya Jaishankar in Moscow. Speaking at a news conference, Lavrov said such cooperation was of a strategic nature and was in both countries' interests and would help ensure security on the Eurasian continent. He said Moscow respected India's desire to diversify its military hardware suppliers and was ready too to support New Delhi's desire to manufacture things needed by India in India. Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said Russian President Vladimir Putin would meet Jaishankar later on Wednesday. Jaishankar said he expected Putin and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to meet next year. Jaishankar said he and Lavrov had discussed the conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza, as well as bilateral trade and investment. India has become one of Russia's core economic partners since the West in 2022 imposed sweeping sanctions on Moscow over the war in Ukraine.

India has become one of Russia's core economic partners since the West in 2022 imposed sweeping sanctions on Moscow over the war in Ukraine.



South Korean soldiers take part in an anti-terror drill against North Korea's possible provocations, amid mounting tensions on the Korean peninsula, in Seoul, South Korea.

Self-driving cars could be on UK roads by 2026 -minister

Monitoring Desk
LONDON: Self-driving cars could be on some British roads by 2026, the country's transport minister Mark Harper said on Wednesday. Cars with full self-driving technology are not currently permitted on Britain's roads but the government's Automated Vehicles (AV) legislation is going through parliament, meaning that a legal framework for them should be in place by the end of 2024, said Harper. "Probably by as early as 2026 people will start seeing some elements of these cars that have full self-driving capabilities being rolled out," Harper told BBC Radio. "It'll be gradual...so there'll be companies rolling it out to be used in certain places." Critics of the technology, which has been trialled in the United States, say that the vehicles can cause crashes, and in California, regulators ordered General Motors' driverless car unit Cruise to remove its vehicles from state roads after an accident in October.

Iraq slams US after deadly strikes on pro-Iran forces

Monitoring Desk
BAGHDAD: US air strikes targeting pro-Iranian forces in Iraq claimed at least one life and drew an angry response from Baghdad on Tuesday amid high regional tensions over the Israeli aggression against Gaza. Iraq condemned as "a clear hostile act" the overnight US strikes, saying they had killed one member of the security forces and wounded 18 other people, including civilians. Washington has repeatedly targeted sites used by Iran and pro-Tehran forces in Iraq and Syria in

response to more than 100 attacks on American and allied forces since Oct 7. Yet another rocket barrage was fired later on Tuesday morning at US and allied forces in Syria, at an American patrol base in Al-Shaddadi, but without causing casualties or damage, said a US military official. Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin earlier announced the overnight strikes, saying that "US military forces conducted necessary and proportionate strikes on three facilities used by Kataeb Hezbollah and affiliated groups in Iraq".

Palestinians work to identify 80 dead handed over from Israel

Monitoring Desk
GAZA: Israel has handed over the bodies of 80 Palestinians killed in the conflict in Gaza, the Palestinian Ministry of Health said on Wednesday after they were buried and the authorities recorded details to help with later identification. Gaza authorities were trying to figure out when and where the men were killed and who they were. Israeli officials did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The health ministry said the bodies were handed over by Israel through the Kerem Shalom border crossing. According to the Islamic Waqf, or religious affairs ministry, the bodies had been collected from the northern part of the Gaza.



Police officers examine a scene where South Korean actor Lee Sun-kyun was found dead at a park in Seoul, South Korea.

US delegation heads to Mexico as nations see migrant numbers jump

Monitoring Desk
TAPACHULA: Secretary of State Antony Blinken heads Wednesday to Mexico in hopes of showing headway in tackling surging migration, which has climbed to the top of political headaches for President Joe Biden as he enters an election year. The unusual Christmas week trip by the top US diplomat was abruptly scheduled as the rival Republican Party presses Biden for a migration crackdown in return for agreeing in Congress to one of his key priorities - support for Ukraine. Around 10,000

people have been seeking to enter without authorization each day on the southern US border, nearly double the number before the pandemic, with a new caravan of hundreds if not thousands of people leaving by foot from southern Mexico on Sunday. US border authorities have been so overwhelmed that they have suspended several legal crossings to focus on processing migrants. Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador discussed migration in a telephone call Thursday with Biden.

Iranian Guards vow revenge against Israel over general's killing

Monitoring Desk
TEHRAN: Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) warned Israel on Wednesday that it or its allied groups would take "direct" action to avenge the killing of senior commander Razi Mousavi. The general was killed on Monday in an Israeli missile strike near the Syrian capital, according to state media, at a time of heightened regional tensions around the Israel-Hamas fighting raging in Gaza. The Israeli army, which

has launched hundreds of strikes on Iran-linked targets in war-torn Syria in recent years, said only that it does not comment on foreign media reports. The body of Mousavi, a commander in the Guards' foreign operations arm the Quds Force, was taken to Iraq for funeral rites in holy sites a day ahead of his burial in Iran planned for Thursday. IRGC spokesman Ramezan Sharif warned that "our response to Mousavi's assassination will be a combination of direct action.

Revamped Wafaqi Mohtasib website breaks language barrier for easy complaint resolution

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a significant stride towards accessibility, Wafaqi Mohtasib, Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi on Wednesday unveiled the revamped version of the official website, now boasting essential features in Urdu by removing the language barrier for easy complaint resolution to facilitate the masses.

This move aims to simplify the process for the general public to lodge complaints online, eliminating the need to physically visit offices.

Addressing a ceremony celebrating the website's launch, Qureshi emphasized the pivotal role the website plays in providing basic information and facilitating complaint redressal.

The ceremony, attended by senior officers and online participants from regional offices, highlighted the collaboration with the National Information Technology Board (NITB) in developing the enhanced platform.

Utilizing cutting-edge technology, the website has been transformed into a more efficient and user-friendly interface. The in-

corporation of Urdu content addresses the challenges faced by users who struggled with the English version. Qureshi stressed that this inclusion would boost awareness among the masses about the institution's services.



The revamped website now features all essential content, including complaint redressal mechanisms, practices, procedures, and special initiatives, in Urdu language. Information related to the Grievance Commissioner for Overseas Pakistanis and the Grievance Commissioner for Children, operating under the Wafaqi Mohtasib Office, has also been made accessible in Urdu. Qureshi underlined that this initiative primarily aims to bridge the information gap for users in remote areas who face difficulties visiting offices. He expressed confidence that the

website's launch would empower all segments of society to seek grievance redressal virtually, bringing essential services to their doorstep.

In a groundbreaking move towards inclusivity, Wafaqi Mohtasib, Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi, has introduced a revamped version of the official website, now equipped with essential features in Urdu. This strategic enhancement aims to streamline the complaint resolution process for the general public, offering a convenient online alternative to physical office visits.

Speaking at the launch ceremony, Qureshi highlighted the website's crucial role in providing information and facilitating complaint redressal. The event, attended by senior officers and online participants from regional offices, acknowledged the collaboration with the National Information Technology Board (NITB) in crafting the upgraded platform.

Harnessing state-of-the-art technology, the website has undergone a transformation for greater efficiency and user-friendliness.



ISLAMABAD: Dr. Bu Abdullah, Chairman Bu Abdullah Investment Group UAE meeting Dr. Gohar Ejaz, Federal Minister of Commerce and Industries to discuss opportunities for investment in Pakistan at the Commerce Ministry.

Politicians pay floral tributes to Benazir Bhutto on her martyrdom anniversary

ISLAMABAD (APP): Leader of political parties on Wednesday paid floral tributes to Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Shaheed on her 16th death anniversary and remembered her political struggle and sacrifice for strengthening of democracy in the country which would always be remembered in the political annals of history. On the eve of the martyrdom anniversary of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto, Akhunzada Chhattan, while talking to PTV news channel, presented salute to her unyielding resilience and unwavering vision for the nation's development.

He said that Benazir

Bhutto always advocated the politics of principles and had firm belief that a true democracy was the ultimate solution to Pakistan's problems instead of sowing seeds of hatred among masses.

MQM leader Sajjid Ahmad added that the services of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto for the cause of democracy in the country would always be remembered. Bhutto family rendered a great deal of sacrifices for the democracy in the country and BB shaheed was a brave and intelligent leader, he added.

Pakistan Muslim league-N leader Shaista

Pervaiz Malik said that the martyrdom of Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto was a huge loss for Pakistan, adding, there are many ways to admire her lifetime services but to me, her services for democracy trump them all.

Sharmila Farooqi PPP leader also paid a glowing tribute and acknowledged the sacrifices made by Benazir Bhutto that her relentless efforts for the protection of the rights of downtrodden sections of society which will always be remembered.

"We will not let Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto's great sacrifice go in vain," she added.

NHA launches strict action against overloading of loader vehicles

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Highway Authority (NHA) has issued a detailed advisory warning the truck drivers and loaders to avoid overloading their vehicles as it had initiated strict action against the vehicles violating the restrictions and burdening the national thoroughfares leading to accidents and damage to important connectivity infrastructure.

The Authority with the cooperation of the National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP) has initiated a stringent nationwide drive against overloaded vehicles that were jeopardizing public life, property and infrastructure.

The minimum weight allowed for a two-axle Bedford truck or vehicle

was 17.5 tonnes, 27.5 and 29.5 tonnes for a three-axle vehicle, 39.5 tonnes and 41.5 tonnes for a four-axle vehicle, 48.5 tonnes and 49.5 tonnes of vehicles for a five-axle vehicle, 51.5 tonnes for a five-axle vehicle, 58.5 and 61.5 tonnes for eight axle vehicle.

The overloading of vehicles was leading to risk to life, tyre burst, damage to roads, excessive fuel usage, early damaging of tyres, heavy fines, axle breakage, expenditure of road repairs and wastage of time.

The NHA advised the masses to comply with the laws and abide by the restrictions whereas in case of violation, excessive items would be offloaded from the vehicles being charged with violation.

CDA to Auction More Plots in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Capital Development Authority (CDA) has decided to conduct an auction of plots in January 2024, alleviating the budgetary constraints faced by civic body. According to the CDA official, the plot auction is set to take place from the 10th to the 12th of January at the F9 Park in Gandhara Hall. Plots located on Blue Area, Centers, and Park Road will be included in the auction. The auction list includes petrol pumps, Class Three shopping centres, agro farms, and apartment plots, along with fruit and vegetable shops, IT centres, and hostel plots. A substantial 10 percent discount will be applicable for complete payments made within one month of bid acceptance.



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Ambassador to China, Mr. Khalil-ur-Rahman Hashmi called on President Dr Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Dr. Nadeem Jan says Pakistan to play leading part to strengthen 'health emergency systems' of poor countries

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Health, Dr Nadeem Jan Wednesday on 'International Day of Epidemic Preparedness' stressed the importance of collaborative efforts and said that Pakistan would play its leading part in strengthening health emergency systems of poor countries through hosting its first global health security Summit.

Talking to a Private news channel, the minister for health said that the 'Global Health Security Summit' will be held on January 10 and 11 in the federal capital of Pakistan, adding, that Pakistan will finalize its strategic road map to effectively tackle health

emergencies and epidemics in the country.

Holding the summit will be proof that Pakistan will play a key role in the health sector and protect people from global epidemics, he mentioned.

The minister highlighted that ongoing efforts will improve the availability of medicines, resources, infrastructure and increase production. Replying to a query, he said that Pakistan stands ready to contribute to all such endeavors and initiatives at relevant UN and WHO platforms.

In this regard, "We need to develop countries that should be prioritized in terms of equitable distribution of vaccines and

medicines and building their fiscal space to combat the pandemics," he added.

He said that soon Pakistan will also establish a 'global pandemic financial facilities forum' which would provide equal opportunities and distribute equal resources to low-income countries for handling epidemics.

He assured that this international summit will give a positive image of Pakistan globally, adding, that the importance of collaborative efforts in addressing health challenges, improving health systems' performance, and fostering cooperation to mitigate climate change impacts on health globally is a need of hour.

Modi regime misleading world about situation in IIOJK: APHC

ISLAMABAD (APP): The All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) has said that the RSS-backed Narendra Modi-led Indian government is misleading the world by falsely propagating that peace is returning to occupied Jammu and Kashmir after its unilateral and illegal actions of 5 August 2019.

According to Kashmir Media Service, the APHC spokesman in a statement issued in Srinagar said the Modi regime has intensified its efforts to brutalize the Kashmiris and colonize Kashmir since its 5 August move, which further ag-

gravated the already volatile situation in the territory.

However, he said, the Indian militaristic approach cannot suppress the Kashmiris' passion for freedom.

The APHC spokesman paying tribute to the Kashmiri martyrs including the recent victims of custodial killing in Poonch said that their sacrifices would never be allowed to go in vain.

He also prayed for the speedy recovery of all those injured due to the torture by Indian troops in custody in Poonch.

Dengue cases exceed 15,060 during year

ISLAMABAD (APP): The number of dengue cases has surpassed 15,060 at Punjab in the current year with four new cases reported during the last 24 hours in the provincial capital.

Secretary Punjab Health Department, Ali Jan Khan told a private news channel that Rawalpindi has so far reported 2,654 dengue cases in the current year. As many as 16 patients of dengue fever were currently admitted to hospitals of the province, he added.

Dengue virus is a mosquito-borne viral disease that has rapidly spread in recent years around the world.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for IT and Telecommunication Dr Umar Saif posing for a group photo graph after ceremony "Digital Pakistan Cybersecurity Hackathon 2023" at local hall in Federal Capital.

EC moved for recovery of Faraz Chaudhry brother of Fawad Chaudhry

ISLAMABAD (Online): The petition has been filed with Election Commission (EC) for recovery of Faraz Chaudhry brother of Fawad Chaudhry.

The petition has been filed by Beena Faraz wife of Faraz Chaudhry.

The petitioner has said in the petition that Faraz Chaudhry went to returning office to file nomination papers of his brother Fawad Chaudhry. He was harassed and threatened on the way to office. He was stopped from filing nomination papers of Fawad Chaudhry.

It was further said in

26 absconders involved in heinous crime held

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Police have arrested 26 absconders and proclaimed offenders involved in heinous crime during the last 48 hours, a public relations officer said. He said that, following the special directions of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, special tasks were assigned to all senior police officials to ensure the arrest of proclaimed offenders and absconders involved in heinous crimes. During the crackdown, the Islamabad Capital Police teams have arrested 48 absconders.

Independent Report

Following these directions, the Karachi Company police team used technical and human resources and succeeded in apprehending two wanted members of a notorious bike lifter gang involved in numerous bike theft activities and recovered seven stolen motorbikes from his 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 had categorically started a crackdown against criminal elements in order to save the precious lives and

Madad Ali Sindhi says: Iqbal's poetry, philosophy & thought were universal

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training, Madad Ali Sindhi on Wednesday said that Iqbal's poetry, philosophy and thought were, undoubtedly, universal and his message was for the people of the whole world.

Iqbal's message is as fresh as ever and we still need it today, the minister said while addressing the opening session of a two-day international conference on "Iqbal's Thought in the Perspective of 21st Century and Two Great Poets of Islam: Iqbal and Akif" at Allama Iqbal Open University (AIU). The conference was organized by the Department of Iqbal Studies AIU in collaboration with Yunus Emre Institute.

Madad Ali Sindhi mentioned that Iqbal's thought provided a solution to the problems of today and served as a guiding light for all human beings. Iqbal's political philosophy is a source of strength for democracy in Pakistan, he said.

He expressed his delight over the presence of eminent intellectuals and Iqbal enthusiasts from all over Pakistan, Egypt, Iran, and Turkey at the conference.

The federal minister congratulated Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood, Vice Chancellor AIU and his entire team for organizing this international conference on Iqbal.

Vice Chancellor AIU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood mentioned that the University was one of the few universities which had established a Department of Iqbal Studies to promote Iqbal's thoughts and poetry. He stated that through this department, we aimed to convey the message of Allama Iqbal to the youth. Dr. Nasir emphasized the need to elaborate and explain Iqbal's thoughts to train the new generation.

Turkish Ambassador Mehmet Pacici and Dr. Halil Tokar commented that Iqbal's poetry had profoundly impacted the Turkish nation. In Turkey, there have been many translations of Iqbal's poetry and research work on Iqbal is being conducted in Turkish universities, he said and added, however, in Pakistan, Muhammad Akif is not recognized, and in collaboration with AIU, the Yunus Emre Institute will promote the poetry and thoughts of the Turkish poet Muhammad Akif in Pakistan.



ISLAMABAD: Ms. Haya Fatima Sehgal, author of the book "Resilient Pakistan" called on Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.

Garbage burning becomes nuisance for Capital's residents causing diseases

ISLAMABAD (APP): The residents of the federal capital are perturbed over increasing garbage burning as the air pollution was exacerbating in the metropolis causing respiratory diseases and other health complications.

The Islamabad Capital Territory Administration has imposed Section 144 on open waste burning in the federal capital on the request of the Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA) to control the spiking risk of smog due to deteriorating air quality.

The air quality as per the EPA report was unhealthy due to increased ratio of particulate matter of 2.5 microns (PM2.5) was beyond the permissible limits of the national environmental quality standards (NEQS).

Suleiman Agha, a resident of Sector G-7/1 told APP that during the evening hours, the ambiance of the city got murky after

small heaps of garbage being set ablaze could be seen around the public parks and street junctions.

He added that most of the time either people or the sanitary staff put the garbage and dried leaves on fire for heating purposes or otherwise for getting rid of the waste.

He said this practice is extremely dangerous for the masses residing near to such locations especially children, elderly including heart patients and others.

Agha demanded the authorities concerned to launch a massive awareness campaign and action against the perpetrators.

Farha Rabbani, a resident of H-13 complained about the illegal plastic manufacturing units that were burning plastic items for recycling that were emitting dark smoke and causing severe problem for the masses as breathing issue and respiratory ailments were common in the locality.



ISLAMABAD: Traffic wardens giving challan to motorcyclists due to violation of traffic rules at Islamabad Zoo road in the Federal Capital.

Wanted members of bike lifter gang arrested; seven stolen motorbikes recovered

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Police Karachi company police team have arrested two wanted members of a notorious bike lifter gang involved in numerous bike theft activities and recovered seven stolen motorbikes from his 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 had categorically started a crackdown against criminal elements in order to save the precious lives and

property of citizens.

Following these directions, the Karachi Company police team used technical and human resources and succeeded in apprehending two wanted members of a notorious bike lifter gang involved in numerous bike lifting activities in various areas of Karachi Company police station.

The accused were identified as Hamad Wali and Saleem Khan. Police team also recovered seven stolen motorbikes from their possession. Cases have already been registered against the nabbed accused and further investigation is underway.



ISLAMABAD: Students and Faculty Members of the International Islamic University, Islamabad visiting Senate Museum at Parliament House.

General elections 2024: Khar family once again comes face to face in political arena

By Rana Shahid Mahmood

KOTADDU: The nomination papers of former Governor Punjab, Malik Ghulam Mustafa Khar, former Foreign Minister, Hina Rabbani Khar and former MNA Malik Raza Rabbani Khar have been approved from NA-180 constituency of Kot Addu.

Speaking on the scenario, Hina Rabbani Khar said that she respects Malik Ghulam Mustafa and our other elders, however, they lost the election three times and as such they should sit at home now. According to

Hina Khar, it is not enough for them to contest elections. My brother Raza Rabbani is also a candidate from the National Assembly Constituency 180. Our father, the late Malik Ghulam Rabbani Khar, was a poor man and his mission was to serve the people and reduce their miseries. Ms Khar maintained. She also said that this is the real politics when she became the foreign minister. She has been engaged in public service round the clock.

This training was given by her father late Malik Ghulam Rabbani Khar and

the public service was the focus of our politics.

Hina Khar said that Malik Ghulam Mustafa Khar is his uncle, he is our elder, it does not matter to us if he contests the election. In the last election, he had fielded his cousin to contest the election against her, but he could only get 15000 votes. She said that I want to say this to my uncle that you are our elders, but you are doing politics according to the theory of late Rabbani Khar. Politics is the name of worship and service to the people, she added.