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Quetta

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Govt taking multiple initiatives to streamline governance structure of Balochistan: PM

Govt determined to conduct free, fair polls: Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar

QUETTA (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Tuesday said that the government had taken multiple initiatives to bring about reforms in bureaucracy in order to improve overall governance structure of Balochistan province.

Addressing a press conference, he said the province had some chronic and complex issues which ought to be resolved by deputing a blend of upright and hard-working bureaucrats from civil service as well as from the provincial structure.

"Our issues are linked with the bad governance,

that had been badly affecting the performance of the province for the last few decades," he said. On the request of the Balochistan government, he deputed a competent bureaucrat Shakeel Qadir Khan along with a team, to ensure meritocracy and to streamline the overall structure of bureaucracy.

He said he specifically instructed the team to fully support the Chief Minister and the provincial government in this regard.

PM Kakar said there was an axis of some corrupt bureaucrats and other stakeholders who had

crumpled the whole province, thus adversely affecting the national economy.

He hoped that the incoming elected government would also remain vigilant in this regard and would continue the process of reforms in future.

To a question regarding reservations of the nationalist parties to hold free and fair elections in the province, the prime minister said it was just a routine matter as these parties had something to say to their voters.

Reiterating the government's resolve to hold free and fair elections across the country, he said

the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) would perform its duty to conduct the elections in an appropriate way.

"It is our task that we run the day-to-day affairs of the government, implement the state affairs, and then conduct the election," he said.

Responding to a question about the projects under China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the prime minister said the

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QUETTA: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar presiding over a meeting regarding law & order and development projects in the province. Caretaker Provincial Chief Minister Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki, Caretaker Federal and Provincial Ministers are also present



Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Asim Munir meeting with Gen Michael Erik Kurilla, the Commander of the US Central Command (CENTCOM).

COAS, US Centcom discuss joint training, enhance cooperation avenues

RAWALPINDI (APP): Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General Syed Asim Munir called on Commander United States Central Command (US CENTCOM), General Michael Erik Kurilla during his visit to the Headquarters Central Command at Tampa Bay, Florida.

According to the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release on Tuesday, during the meet-

ing, matters of shared interests, particularly cooperation in regional security matters came under discussion.

Both the sides discussed avenues of joint training and reiterated the need for enhancing training interactions between CENTCOM and the Pakistan Army. The COAS also visited the CENTCOM Joint Operations Center during the visit.

Process of training of ROs and DROs completes: Election Rules and Act to be implemented in true letter and spirit, maintains PEC

QUETTA: The Provincial Election Commissioner, Balochistan, Ejaz Anwar Chohan has categorically stated that the Election related rules and Act would be imple-



mented in true letter and spirit, and there would be no thing against the law. He pledged that all political parties would be provided level playing field and treated equally ensuring free, fair and transparent elections in the province.

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Lawyers' community demands resignation of CEC Sultan

PBC raises concerns about fairness, transparency of upcoming elections

ISLAMABAD (Online): Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA), the highest organization of the lawyers' community, has expressed concerns over the elections under the supervision of the Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja and demanded his resignation.

In the statement issued by SCBA, it has been said that in the current situation, the CEC should go home because transparent elections are not possible under his supervision.

Many questions are being raised on the transparency of the elections under the supervision of the current CEC, statement

Statement further said

that even before this, valuable resources and the country were lost by conducting elections without clearing doubts.

INP adds: The Pakistan Bar Council (PBC) has expressed reservations about the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) and the current Chief Election Commissioner (CEC), Sikandar Sultan Raja. In a statement, the PBC raised concerns about the fairness and transparency of the upcoming general elections, citing an imbalance in the distribution of seats, doubts about the integrity of the electoral process, and a lack of equal opportunities for all political parties.

Domki meets Kakar, discusses matters about Balochistan

QUETTA: The caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki had meeting with the caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar here on Tuesday.

During the course of meeting, different matters about Balochistan were discussed.

US supports free, fair elections in Pakistan: State Department

WASHINGTON (INP): The United States (US) reiterated its stance for free and fair elections in Pakistan.

US will continue to support free and fair elections in Pakistan, said US State Department spokesman, Matthew Miller said in a weekly press briefing.

"That is the – and engage with Pakistan on a bilateral basis to discuss our support for free and fair elections," Mathew Miller said and reiterated that the US does not take sides while speaking about Pakistan's politics and they would engage with elected representatives. "As I've said before, we don't take a position as it comes to – when it comes to political parties in Pakistan, and we will engage with the leaders that the Pakistani people select," Miller said.

ECP orders removal of Ahad Cheema from the post

ISLAMABAD (Online): Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has ordered the immediate removal of Ahad Cheema from the post.

According to the announcement issued by the ECP, Ahad Cheema can influence the elections, he has been instructed to immediately separate the post of advisor. In this regard, the Secretary Cabinet Division was ordered to remove Ahad Cheema.

It may be recalled that in the petition filed last week by Advocate Syed Azizuddin Kakakhil, it was requested to remove caretaker Prime Minister Anwarul Haq Kakar and some other members of his cabinet including Ahad Cheema, Fawad Hasan Fawad and Syed Tauqeer Hussain.

PM directs to accelerate rehabilitation of flood affected families in Balochistan

Anwaarul Haq Kakar directs to resolve issues of water supply in Balochistan at the earliest besides forming special patrolling force for prevention of illegal fishing in at coasts of all

Independent Report

QUETTA: The caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar has issued standing directives to the concerned authorities for expediting process of rehabilitation of the flood affected families and their houses in Balochistan.

He also directed to resolve the issues of water supply in the province at the earliest.

In this regard, he directed to the provincial ad-

ministration to ensure water supply in all areas of the province.

These directives were issued by the caretaker Prime Minister while presiding over a review meeting on the administrative matters and development here on Tuesday.

The Prime Minister was briefed about different initiatives taken during the period of incumbent caretaker government in the province.

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ISLAMABAD: Senior Member Federal Public Service Commission, Mr. Akbar Hussain Durrani presenting Annual Report-2022 of FPSC to President Dr Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

PTV Bolan fulfills Hazara community's demand with Hazargi broadcast: Solangi

QUETTA (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs

Murtaza Solangi said on Tuesday that long standing demand of Hazara community had been fulfilled by start of Hazargi language programmes at Pakistan Television Bolan from today.

Delivering his speech at the opening ceremony of "Hazargi language" programme on PTV Bolan,

he said the PTV Bolan was already broadcasting programs in Balochi, Pashto and Brahvi languages.

PTV Bolan broadcasts were available on cable and satellite, Murtaza Solangi said adding it could also be accessed through terrestrial antennas that would help people in remote areas too.

"We are grateful to Prime Minister Anwarul Haq Kakar for encouraging us to take this initiative," Murtaza Solangi remarked.

ECP to start receiving nomination papers for 2024 Elections today

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) will begin receiving nomination papers from prospective National and Provincial Assembly candidates on Wednesday, (December 20), as the country gears up for a crucial general election on February 8, 2024.

Detailing the oath-taking

ing process, an ECP official explained that provincial election commissioners would administer the oath to District Returning Officers (DROs), who, in turn, would administer the oath to each Returning Officers (ROs) and Assistant Returning Officers (AROs) within their respective districts.



QUETTA: Governor Balochistan Malik Abdul Wali Kakar, Principal Asif Jan, Dr. Waheed Yousaf, Madam Yasmeen Joseph and others cutting cake during anniversary of Saint Mar's School

No delay will be accepted in election: Supreme Court

Suspends BHC verdict regarding constituencies; Delimitation cases be heard after elections

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Supreme Court (SC) on Tuesday suspended another decision of Balochistan High Court (BHC) pertaining to the delimitations and said all appeals, would be taken up again after the general elections.

The court reiterated that it wouldn't spare any hindrance with regard to general polls in the country. There was no chance to delay the electoral process, it added.

A three-member bench of the top court, headed by Acting Chief Justice Sardar Tariq Masood and comprising Justice Mansoor

Ali Shah and Justice Athar Minallah, heard the various appeals against the delimitations in Balochistan.

Secretary ECP Umar Hameed appeared before the court.

During the course of proceedings, the court said that the decision wouldn't affect the cases of all petitioners. It said that the court couldn't accept any delay in the conduct of the general elections.

Justice Sardar Tariq Masood remarked that there was a bit of stability in the country after the announcement of election date. Whether the petitioners didn't want stability, he

asked, adding that announcement of election schedule was not an ordinary issue.

Justice Athar Minallah remarked that it was not the duty of high court to see the maps, rather it was the job of ECP. He said that it could derail the process of polls if the court allowed the changes in the delimitations at this stage. There was no chance of delay in elections, he added.

Justice Mansoor Ali Shah said that the court wouldn't intervene if there were no elections ahead. The court was protecting the right of petitioners, he said.

GoB decides to establish Skills Development Fund

QUETTA (APP): Balochistan Caretaker Chief Minister Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki on Tuesday said the provincial government has decided to establish "Balochistan Skills Development Fund" under the supervision of Planning and Development Department to provide technical education and training to the youth of the province.

He expressed his views while addressing the inauguration ceremony of the Prime Minister's Youth Skills Development Program here.

The chief minister said that the existing infrastructure of the Labor and Manpower department would be utilized where the youth will be trained in artificial

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QUETTA: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar launches the Electronic Public Procurement System of Balochistan.

Properly educated people can transform society: PM

QUETTA (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Tuesday pointed out the seriousness of out-of-school children issue which warranted collective efforts for its redressal as properly educated people could transform a human society.

He said in the future, no society would be able to exist without education and knowledge, and stressed that students should have realization for the changes

shaping the human societies.

During an interaction with the students of different universities of the Balochistan province, PM Kakar said that the out-of-school children issue was a social issue which had two aspects and according to his view, they required to ponder as to what steps should be taken to make the education accessible to such

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Imran Khan teaches nation rudeness, misbehavior, hooliganism, lying

LAHORE (Online): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PMLN) leader Nawaz Shareef has said that it was not India or America that damaged the country but we ourselves.

Judges themselves garlanded those who broke the constitution: Nawaz Shareef

Imran Khan taught the nation the culture of misbehavior, misbehavior,

hooliganism, slander, and lies. Addressing the meeting of the Parliamentary Board of the PML-N, he said that those who never tired of saying that change will come, we will create a new Pakistan. The green passport will be honored and then everyone saw that it was all a false dream and allured.

He said that their leader

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President for promoting virtual education in varsities

ISLAMABAD (INP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Tuesday stressed that every university should start virtual education to promote higher and skilled based education across the country.

Addressing the 13th convocation of Virtual University, the president said that keeping in mind the evolving technology trends, the Higher Education Commission (HEC) had also prepared a policy that was still waiting for final approval, under which all universities would be allowed to impart 30% virtual education to its students.

Dr Arif Alvi said the international educational institutions were rapidly shifting from traditional Brick and Mortar University system to the virtual education system.

In the United States, he said more than 50% of the courses in every university were now virtual and they were also improving quality.

The president said he had always been the proponent of online education and had been stressing that the online education should be promoted to disseminate knowledge in remote areas of the country.

He said the reason behind less development in most of the Muslim countries was that there was still resistance in adopting the new technology.

"The change will be possible only after ensuring timely adoption of the evolving technology," he remarked.

Giving the regional statistics, the president said in Pakistan after only 10% students managed to enroll in higher degrees, while in India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, the ratio was at least 25%.

He regretted that around 28 million children were out of school in Pakistan. However in the regional countries, there was almost 100% enrollment in primary classes.

President Alvi maintained that the reason behind low literacy rate in Pakistan was the lack of leadership and lack of preparedness. Further, he said role of every citizen was also important in this regard.

He said when he became the president, total annual enrollment in the virtual university was 28,000 which had increased to 55,000 this year which was quite encouraging. He pointed out that the university was running totally on its own resources and it was not seeking any financial support from the government.

The president advised the children to adopt good ethics and morality, and always advocate for love and peace in the society.

"We should always take care of the poor, down trodden and the persons with disabilities," he added.

Congratulating the degree awarding students, the president said the market needed the two-year associate degree as it takes less time to be able to start professional and technical work.



QUETTA: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar launches the Prime Minister's Youth Skill Development Program.



LAHORE: PML (N) Quaid Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and President Shabbaz Sharif presiding over a meeting of Parliamentary Board

Imran challenges cipher case proceedings in IHC

ISLAMABAD (INP): Former Prime Minister Imran Khan has filed a petition in the Islamabad High Court challenging the entire proceedings of the cipher case, including the indictment against him. He argues that the proceedings conducted thus far are illegal and null and void, and seeks his discharge from the case.

Khan's petition specifically targets the proceedings held since November 23rd, 2023, which he claims violate legal requirements and principles of justice. He further contends that the trial court's rejection of his plea on December 12th was erroneous.

One of the key points raised in the petition is the interpretation of the word "complaint" in Section 13(2)(3) of the Official Secrets Act.

Election Rules and Act to be...

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The PEC was speaking to the media persons on occasion of the training of District Returning Officers (DROs) here at a local hotel on Tuesday.

Also present on the occasion were Commissioner Quetta, Muhammad Hamza Shafiqat and Election Commissioner's senior officials. The PEC said that the training of DROs and ROs has been completed in the province.

He said that it is mandate of the ECP to ensure free, fair and transparent elections in the province and it is responsibility of

the DROs to implement the mandate of ECP on ground. Mr. Ejaz Chohan said that strict directives have been issued to the DROs to perform honestly and as per rules while performing duties of elections in their respective districts.

He said that is demand of all political parties to conduct free and fair elections in the province.

Referring the election process, the PEC said that the process of issuance of nomination papers is due to start from December 20 (today), and would remain continued with submission of the papers till December 22, 2023.

GoB decides to establish...

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intelligence, hoteling, tourism, health care, nursing, fashion designing, film making in order to produce quality technical human resource.

He said that the objective of the program is to provide skills in various fields of technology to the youth of Balochistan to secure employment opportunities worldwide upon completion of their training.

Domki said that the purpose of providing the training program was to equip them with much-needed valuable skills that will enable them to contribute to the economic development of the province and send remittances to family.

He said that on the direction of Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar, the youth of Balochistan are being provided with skill training in various fields so that they can support their families and work abroad.

Caretaker chief minister said that more than 60 percent of the total population of the country consists of youth which are a

valuable asset of any country and society. There was a need to guide the youth in a better direction and provide opportunities to utilize their abilities.

He said that with the support of the federal government, the National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVITC) is taking efforts to provide technical training to the youth of Balochistan in various fields.

The chief minister said that an effective strategy has been formulated at provincial level for the promotion of technical training and adequate funds have been allocated for BTEVTA.

He said that the government was also working to strengthen the technical and vocational education system in the province to fulfil the current day's requirements. China has shown interest in providing a grant of 60 million dollars for Balochistan to strengthen the basic structure of technical centres, he said, adding that fifty percent of this total grant should be allocated for youth skills de-

velopment.

He said that the government has also focusing on establishing centers to impart Korean, German, Chinese, Japanese and other languages to the youth of Balochistan so that our youth can get employment opportunities in respective countries.

These programs to be introduced in Balochistan will help in imparting technical education to the youth as well as guiding them towards economic self-reliance, he added.

Domki said that in order to provide employment to the youth, it is necessary to provide them with modern technical education and training along with traditional education.

He said the Balochistan government has decided to initiate international standards education programs, naming Middle Teach, Metric Teach, and Inter Teach to equip the youth with modern skills.

He said the federal government will continue its cooperation for the construction and development of Balochistan.



QUETTA: Inspector General of Police Balochistan Abdul Khaliq Sheikh cutting Christmas cake at Central Police Office

Ashrafi calls for int'l tribunal to probe Israel's war crimes

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister's Special Representative for Religious Harmony & Islamic Countries Hafiz Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi on Tuesday called for the establishment of an international tribunal to probe Israel's war crimes.

The United Nations should take immediate steps in that regard as it was the unanimous demand of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to hold Israel accountable for the war crimes it was committing in Palestine, he said while addressing a conference on the current situation in Palestine and Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir.

Ashrafi, who is also Pakistan Ulema Council's Chairman, said the people all over the world irrespective of their religious backgrounds were condemning Israeli brutalities on Palestinians.

Both Muslims and non-Muslims stood united in opposition to the Zionist regime which was perpetrating genocide in Palestine, he added. It was the humanity not the religion of a specific religion facing oppression, Ashrafi said.

He said Israel was an

occupier, oppressor, and aggressor, and Pakistan would support a solution of the conflict as per the aspirations of the Palestinian people.

Ashrafi lauded Chief of Army Staff General Asim Munir for effectively highlighting the issues of Kashmir and Palestine during his recent visit to the United States.

The PUC chairman denounced the recent terrorist incidents that led to the martyrdom of soldiers. The foreigners residing in Pakistan should follow the laws of the land and refrain from creating unrest, he added.

While announcing the conference's declaration, Ashrafi stated that the PUC endorsed the Supreme Court's decision on military courts.

Earlier, PUC leader Maulana Zulfikar, in his address, emphasized on the resolution of Palestine and Kashmir issues.

He highlighted the significant casualties and displacement in Palestine, urging international organizations to take notice.

PUC Islamabad President Maulana Abu Bakar Sabri also spoke. Prominent religious scholars and others attended the conference.

Pakistan announces 17-man squad for New Zealand T20I series

Sports Desk

LAHORE: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Tuesday announced a 17-man squad for the upcoming T20I series against New Zealand, which will take place in January.

In a press release, the PCB said that pace ace Shaheen Shah Afridi would lead the Pakistan squad for the first time.

It said that the series marked the start of Pakistan's preparations for the ICC T20 World Cup 2024, which is scheduled to take place in June 2024.

The PCB said right-arm pacer Mohammad Abbas Afridi, wicketkeeper-batter Haseebullah and leg-spinner Usama Mir had earned their maiden call-up to the T20I team following "commendable" runs during the domestic season.

"Sahibzada Farhan, who made his T20I debut for Pakistan in 2018, has also returned to the squad after he impressed with the bat in the National T20 Cup 2023-24," it said.

The PCB said that uncapped Abrar Ahmed and Azam Khan, who last featured for Pakistan against Afghanistan in March 2023, had also been named in the squad.

Meanwhile, Pakistan opted for six pace bowling

options by including Aamir Jamal, Zaman Khan, Haris Rauf, Mohammad Wasim Jnr, Abbas Afridi and Shaheen.

It said that Naseem Shah, Ihsanullah and Shadab Khan would not be part of the squad due to injuries.

"Shan Masood, Mohammad Harris and Faheem Ashraf, who were part of Pakistan's squad during the last bilateral series, miss out on the tour," the PCB added.

The cricket board said that Pakistan's T20I tour of New Zealand would comprise five matches, to be played from January 12 to January 21. It further said that Pakistan would be touring New Zealand immediately after wrapping up the Test tour of Australia.

The press release quoted PCB Chief Selector Wahab Riaz as saying that it was imperative to nurture young talent as they had to represent Pakistan going forward.



QUETTA: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar distributes cheques among the high achievers of NUST hailing from Balochistan.

UNGA unanimously adopts Pak-sponsored resolution fostering interreligious dialogue

UNITED NATIONS (INP): The UN General Assembly Monday unanimously passed a resolution, sponsored by Pakistan and the Philippines that underscored the need for promoting interreligious and intercultural dialogue to advance a culture of peace and non-violence in the world. Co-sponsored by over 40 states, the resolution called on States to promote inclusion and unity to combat racism, xenophobia, hate speech, violence and discrimination. Diplomats at the UN noted that the text was adopted without a vote, and pointed out that it came amid an alarming rise in religious intolerance and racism, particularly the upsurge of Islamophobia across the globe.

PM directs to accelerate...

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The PM was also briefed about the water resources, construction of houses, minerals, communication, law and justice, fisheries and different other sectors.

In addition to this, he was also informed about the progress made on upgrading the mining sector.

Addressing the meeting, the Premier said that the future of people of Balochistan is linked with the local and international investment in the mining and minerals sector.

He on the occasion directed to improve the communication and transportation system besides establishing system of safety certificates launch in the country.

Imran Khan teaches nation...

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led the nation to misbehavior, misbehavior, misbehavior, hooliganism, bullying, lies, rigging. He did all this in the name of change and it was named Madina State. They did not fear Allah, what they were doing and what they were talking about, they kept shouting slogans in Madinah Sharif and Kaaba Sharif, this new Pakistan, new culture.

The former prime minister said that during my time there was no room for the dollar to survive, the dollar remained at the same price for four years, the credit goes to Ishaq Dar sitting here, he called the IMF Good bye. If it continued to develop, it would become one of the most developed countries in the world.

In the 2013 election, Shabbaz Sharif told me that you should say that we will end load shedding in six months, but I said that I will say what is the truth, so I said that I will end load shedding during his government. Then we have seen that we have eliminated load shedding in the coun-

He stressed that an effective database system should be formulated for issuance and verification of the licenses of vehicles.

Moreover, the Prime Minister directed to form a special patrolling force for prevention of the illegal fishing in the country's coast.

An effective patrolling force comprising local people should be constituted for stopping movement of the illegal trawlers.

The caretaker Chief Minister, Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki, caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Murtaza Solangi, federal Minister for Education, Madad Ali Sindhi, members of the caretaker cabinet besides other high ups of the federal and provincial governments.

by the end of 2016.

Nawaz Sharif said that the economic reforms order and policies that we made after coming to power for the first time had far-reaching results, then everyone saw the construction of motorways in the country. If that continued, today we would have definitely become the Asian Tiger, but after what was done again and again, the countries that were behind us in development have gone ahead today.

Condition of Pakistan today is not anyone else's fault, he continued that it was not done by India or America against us, it is our own fault, it is xed on our own feet, whenever the constitution is broken here, the judges step forward. They made to wear flower necklaces on those who broke the constitution and also gave them legal protection that you have free permission to do whatever you want with the constitution for three years, but the elected prime minister is kicked out for not taking salary from his son.



LAHORE: Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari addressing lawyers at Lahore High Court Bar Association

Properly educated people....

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He stressed upon utilization of existing infrastructure and enhancement of teachers' capacity building, besides increasing the outreach of education.

The prime minister suggested that about 10 million Pakistani diaspora, living in different parts of the globe, could play their part in overcoming the out-of-school children issue. If they gave commitment to educate at least five children with their minimum donation, that amount could prove huge for catering to the needs of the uneducated children.

With such initiative, the other countries and stakeholders would look towards the move as positive and would be supplementing in those efforts, he opined.

The caretaker prime minister, to another query, replied that career counseling should be introduced at universities, keeping in view the contemporary needs of the local industry and particularly in the region, and cited the massive construction work being undertaken in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia which required skilled manpower.

He also expressed the hope that the upcoming government would focus and improve the skill development capacity of the people by taking different steps.

The caretaker prime minister, referring to the trade and economic potential of the region, said trillions of dollars trade was

expected in the region. For example, the member states of Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) had the population of about 500 million, which meant about half of the quarter of world's population resided there which gave it a central position in the world.

To a question, he opined that political stability would be achieved after the upcoming parliament completed their respective stints. The democratic system would settle down and amplify the economic strength in future, he said, adding the functional democracy was linked with the economic strength.

He also underscored the significance of the efficient system for collecting and spending taxes.

The prime minister expressed the optimism that he was very much hopeful that different challenges faced by the country would be addressed in a gradual and rational manner, and the students would be the main ingredients in the achievement of those goals.

Prime Minister Kakar encouraged the students of the province, saying that they possessed huge potential and could compete and excel when compared with other developed areas of the country and even with the best educational institutions of the world.

He stressed that they should evaluate their efforts as to what they had contributed towards the betterment of the society.

Responding to a question, he said in the Constitution of Pakistan, no person or group could set up any militia and on the basis of religion, sectarian or linguistic base could spread violence in the society.

He said the Constitution had given the liberty of carrying out political activities in a peaceful manner and there was no restriction on any citizen to participate in the political activities.

He said the banned terrorists outfits like Tehreek Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) were masquerading and carrying out their violent activities.

Media had the freedom of expression but within parameters of laws because everything was regulated by rules and limitations, he said, adding that the government worked under a settled system and regretted that often that aspect was projected in a negative manner.

The caretaker prime minister reiterated that the government would not surrender before the narratives of terrorists and violent groups.

He further expressed the hope that soon a transformation in the Balochistan province would be made and through the involvement of youth who had been utilizing social media tools. They would lead the society as lead models, he said and urged the students to take on different challenges as a mission.

Mushaal lauds COAS for raising Kashmir issue dispute in US

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Human Rights and Women Empowerment Mushaal Hussein Mullick on Tuesday highly praised the successful visit of Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir to the United States during which he raised the longstanding Kashmir issue in a befitting manner.

Mushaal, in a statement, said that the COAS unequivocally conveyed to United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres that peace in South Asia would remain elusive until the resolution of Kashmir dispute in accordance with the UN Security Council resolutions and the aspirations of Kashmiri people, giving a fresh impetus to the Kashmir freedom movement and a testament that Pakistan stood firmly with the Kashmiri brothers and sisters in the struggle for right to self-determination.

The SAPM lauded the COAS for strongly taking

up the unilateral, unconstitutional and illegal actions of the Narendra Modi-led Indian government to change the special status of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) at the highest level.

She said that the Indian government had crossed all limits of barbarism and terrorism to silence the dissenting voices within and outside of the country. All the minority communities in India were being subjected to brutal state terrorism and coercive actions, which was evident from its global terrorist networks targeting people in Pakistan, Canada and even in the US, she added.

The SAPM urged the UN bodies and the world powers to pay attention to the report of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) that had exposed the dirty and brutal face of India.

The USCIRF, she said, rightly demanded to the Biden administration to designate India as a "country

of particular concern" under the US Religious Freedom Act, for targeting religious minorities overseas. Mushaal said the report revealed that recent efforts by the Indian government to silence activists, journalists, and lawyers abroad posed a serious threat to religious freedom.

She called upon the international community to shun the double-standards, and take punitive and decisive actions against the rogue Indian state to avert the possible human catastrophe, as it was fast spreading tentacles of its terrorist networks across the globe and became a threat to the world peace.

Mushaal made it clear that neither India nor Israel could defuse and suppress the ongoing freedom struggle of Kashmiris and Palestinians through their genocidal actions and use of ruthless power, as both the states had been exercising all options of state terrorism during the last seven decades.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture Jamal Shah along with Caretaker Federal Minister for Religious Affairs & Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed cutting ribbon to inaugurate two-week long "Teaching of Calligraphy to Madrassa Students as a creative segment of Curriculum" at PNCA.

Over 128.5m voters to decide fate of 175 political parties; ROs issue public notice inviting applications

ISLAMABAD (APP): Over 128.5 million registered voters in Pakistan would decide the fate of 175 political and religious parties in the 2024 general election.

Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP's) data has revealed that total registered voters in Pakistan are 128,585,760 including 69,263,704 male and 59,322,056 female, who would decide the fate of about 175 political and religious parties on February 8, 2024.

On Tuesday, the Returning Officers (ROs) issued public notice for filing of nomination papers for the national and provincial assemblies seats, paving the way for smooth conduct of general election.

Chief Secretary Khyber Pathunkhwa, Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry while addressing district returning officers here said that today was a very important day in the country's election history after the ROs had issued public notice, inviting candidates to file nomination papers for the national and provincial assemblies seats.

He assured the Deputy Returning Officers (DROs) all-out support in conduct of free, fair and transparent elections in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and

said that conducting the general election was a national obligation and together we would be able to hold free, fair and transparent elections in the country.

Urging people and government departments to unite for election, he directed the relevant authorities to ensure accessibility of persons with disability voters to the polling stations so that they could easily exercise their right of vote on February 08, 2024.

According to ECP's election schedule for 2024 general election, nomination papers could be filed with respective returning officers by the candidates on December 20-22, 2023 while names of all nominated candidates would be published on December 23.

Similarly, December 24-30 has been fixed as the last date for filing of appeals against decisions of the Returning Officers regarding rejection/acceptance of nomination papers while the last date for deciding appeals by the Appellate Tribunal was January 03, 2024.

The last date for deciding appeals against decisions of the Returning Officers regarding acceptance or rejection of appeals by the appellate tribunal is

January 10, 2024 while a revised list of candidates would be published on January 11.

The publication of the revised list of candidates has been fixed as January 12 while election symbols to candidates would be allotted on 13th January and polling would be held on February 08, 2024.

This election program would also apply to the seats reserved for women and non-Muslims in the National Assembly and provincial assemblies of Punjab, Sindh, KP and Balochistan provinces. The last date of filing of a separate priority list for seats reserved for women and non-Muslims before the Returning Officer is December 22, 2023.

Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has issued guidelines for candidates filing nomination papers for seats of national and provincial assemblies. Fee of obtaining one nomination paper's form is fixed as Rs10, and one candidate can submit a maximum five nomination papers with different proposers/seconders.

The fee for submission of a nomination paper for a national assembly seat is Rs 30,000 and Rs 20,000 for a provincial assembly seat that was non-refundable.

Dr Nadeem for adoption of new emerging technologies

ISLAMABAD (APP): Health. Caretaker Federal Minister for Health Dr Nadeem Jan on Tuesday said that the timely adoption of new emerging technologies was important for the health sector.

He said this during a meeting with Federal Minister for Information Technology Dr. Umar Saif. Both discussed the ongoing reforms in the health sector. They also discussed the promotion and cooperation of IT in the health sector.

Dr. Nadeem Jan said that the ministry was working on the reforms agenda in the health sector and added that the government laid the foundation of digitalization in the Ministry of

Health. The minister said that the registration and licensing system of Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) has also been digitized.

The pharmacies of government hospitals are being computerized, he added.

Dr. Nadeem said that data was also being computerized in primary health centers.

Dr. Nadeem said that the digitization of the Ministry of Health will continue under the reform agenda.

He said that innovation in the health sector is the need of the hour and IT has an important role to play.



ISLAMABAD: Leader of the opposition in the Senate, Dr. Shahzad Waseem recording his condolence on the demise of Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in the visitor's book at Embassy of Kuwait.

Rizwana torture case: Civil judge Asim's wife Soumia Asim appears in court

ISLAMABAD (Online): District and Sessions Courts Islamabad heard the case of violence on young maid Rizwana.

Arguments were summoned on January 13 by the prosecution for not submitting the forensic report of the CCTV footage.

On the occasion of the hearing of the Rizwana torture case, the accused Soumia Asim, the wife of Civil Judge Asim Hafeez, appeared before the court. The case was heard by Judicial Magistrate Omar Shabbir.

Accused Soumia Asim's lawyer Qazi

Glulam Dastgir Advocate also appeared in the court.

The forensic report of the CCTV footage could not be submitted to the court on the occasion of the hearing. Arguments were summoned on January 13 by the prosecution on the CCTV application.

On the previous hearing, two applications were filed in the court on behalf of the accused Soumya Asim. Arguments on the request to provide CDR will also be held at the next hearing.

Court adjourned the hearing of the case till January 13.

Imran and Fawad have not been indicted in ECP contempt case

ISLAMABAD (Online): Imran Khan and Fawad Chaudhry have not been indicted in Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) contempt case.

According to the details, ECP member Nisar Durrani heard the contempt Election Commission case.

Election Commission members Shah Mehmood Jatoti, Babar Hussain Bharwana and Justice retired Ikrumullah were also present in the court.

Fawad Chaudhry in his statement said that we

were not provided with copies related to the case and neither were our documents allowed inside. Without the documents, I cannot tell what the charges are against me.

Founding Chairman PTI and Shah Mehmood Qureshi could not be indicted. Election Commission contempt hearing was adjourned till December 27. Meanwhile, a 4-member bench of Election Commission headed by Member Election Commission Nisar Durrani reached Adiala Jail to hear the case.



ISLAMABAD: A woman nominee for the National Assembly Seat of Minorities is taking nomination paper from the counter of the Election Commission of Pakistan, in Federal Capital.

Traffic police issue 854,135 fine tickets during 2023

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Police (Traffic Division) issued violation tickets to 854,135 individuals on traffic laws violations in the year 2023, with fines of more than Rs. 370 million.

During the enforcement of traffic laws, 16,769 vehicles and 37,225 motorcycles were impounded at various police stations, while 1,587 public service vehicle drivers had their licenses suspended. Additionally, legal actions were taken against 1,084 underage drivers.

In 2023, the issuance of 45,846 driving licenses, the renewal of 67,031 licenses, and the issuance of 90,352 learner permits were carried out. Moreover, efforts were made to ensure smooth traffic flow during

road and infrastructure repairs. To safeguard the lives and property of the citizens and maintain discipline on the roads, special emphasis was placed on controlling traffic in the federal capital through effective and unbiased enforcement. The Chief Traffic Officer of Islamabad, Muhammad Sarfraz Virk said that it our top priority to provide convenient transport facilities to citizens and take measures to prevent accidents.

According to the performance report of Islamabad Capital Police (Traffic Division) for the year 2023, a total of 854,135 individuals were issued violation tickets amounting to Rs. 370,447,800 for traffic law violations.



ISLAMABAD: Special Representative to the Prime Minister for Religious Harmony & Islamic Countries and Chairman Pakistan Ulama Council Hafiz Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi will address at the conference regarding current situation in Pakistan, Palestine and Indian Illegally Occupied Kashmir.

Kashmiris urged to resist India's Hindutva driven policies in IIOJK

ISLAMABAD (APP): Posters have appeared in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), which rejected India's Hindutva-driven policies in the territory.

According to Kashmir Media Service, through the posters displayed by different Hurriyat organizations in several parts of the territory, the international community has been asked to take practical steps for the resolution of the Kashmir dispute in accordance with relevant resolutions of the United Nations Security Council.

January 05, 1949 UN resolution embodies the principle of the right to self-determination for the Kashmiris, some posters read stressing that Kashmiris right to plebiscite has even been accepted by Indian first Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. "India is subjecting the IIOJK

people to collective punishment for demanding the same UN-mandated plebiscite," the posters lamented.

New Delhi is using nefarious tactics to suppress Kashmiris' genuine demand for the right to self-determination, posters read. "Kashmiri people have never accepted Indian illegal occupation as Kashmir have never been part of India as Jammu and Kashmir is not an India's internal matter; instead it is an international dispute on the United Nations agenda," many posters with the message were seen in streets of Srinagar. The posters criticized India for completely disregarding the Kashmiris' right to decide their future as per UN resolutions. Indian Supreme Court influenced by RSS-BJP's Hindutva ideology bypassed all the principles of law and justice and announced the verdict on Article 370 status.

Ministry says: Nearly 60,000 apply for Govt Hajj Scheme

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony has received a total of 59,328 Hajj applications under the government scheme.

According to the ministry sources, the deadline for submitting applications for the Government Hajj Scheme has already been extended to December 22.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs extended an invitation for Hajj 2024 applications under the government's scheme starting from November 27, with the deadline earlier set on December 12.

Under the government's scheme, the quota for Pakistanis participating in the annual Islamic pilgrimage next year is 89,605, with an anticipated cost of Rs1,075,000 [\$3,769] per person.

Paracha resigns as MD of PBM to participate in elections

ISLAMABAD (APP): Aamir Fida Paracha has stepped down as the Managing Director of Pakistan Baitul-Mal, to contest the elections as a candidate from Rawalpindi following Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's directive.

He expressed gratitude to Asif Ali Zardari and Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari for placing their trust in him. The PPP, committed to public service, has diligently served the people without discrimination.

Speaking at the farewell function, he expressed profound satisfaction from serving the public both spiritually and emotionally during his term as MD of PBM. He extended his gratitude to all directors and employees who participated in the farewell event to bid him farewell.

LNG reference case adjourns till February 13

ISLAMABAD (Online): Judge Muhammad Bashir heard the LNG reference against former Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi in the accountability court of Islamabad.

Shahid Khaqan Abbasi lawyer appeared before the court and requested to adjourn the hearing until the verdict of the intra-court appeal in the Supreme Court.

There are a total of 15 accused in the LNG reference, including former Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi.



ISLAMABAD: Empowering Women through Digital Inclusion: NCSW, PTA and GSMA establishes the 'Action Coalition' by signing a Letter of Intent.

Directs timely completion PMIC team inspects under construction model prison of Islamabad

ISLAMABAD (APP): A team of the Prime Minister's Inspection Commission on Tuesday inspected the under-construction Model Prison of Islamabad and directed the authorities concerned to ensure timely completion of the project.

The visit took place after PMIC Chairman Brigadier (Retd) Muzaffar Ali Ranjha, took cognizance of the concerns of the prime minister over the unwarranted delays in the completion of PSDP projects, said a press release.

The PMIC had shown dissatisfaction over the implementation status and also the latest progress on the decisions made in the meeting held on October 10, 2023.

The PMIC chairman assigned the task to the inspection team headed by PMIC Member Engineer

Aamir Hassan for vigorously persuading the project and its completion at the earliest.

The inspection team comprising Engr. Aamir Hassan, Member and Muhammad Saleh Narejo, Director, PMIC visited the Model Prison project at sector H-16, Islamabad and inspected the ongoing construction work of the project.

The officers of Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Pak PWD, National Highway Authority, Capital Development Authority and other stakeholders of the project were present during the inspection.

The team observed the progress made by the contractors and Pak PWD in light of directions given in the meeting held on October 10.



Engr. Aamir Hassan, Member, PMIC (Retired Federal Secretary) is chairing the meeting at NHA Headquarter on PSDP project titled "Construction of Model Prison at H-16, Islamabad" on 19-12-2023 and getting briefing from the officers of Ministry of Interior, Ministry of PD&SI, NHA and Pak PWD.



ISLAMABAD: A person is capturing the enlightening digits of 2024 as with all its shining and blooming the 2023 is about to leave, and people are ready to welcome the new year in Federal Capital.

Islamabad police arrest 3,484 accused during last month

Independent Report ISLAMABAD: Islamabad police arrested 3,484 accused during the last month for their alleged involvement in crime cases and recovered weapons, narcotics and other looted items worth Rs. 164.4 million from their possession.

According to a police spokesperson, Islamabad Police demonstrated their commitment to public safety by arresting 3,484 individuals in the past month. The arrests encompass a range of offenses, including cases related to weapons, narcotics, property crimes, burglaries and auto theft.

The law enforcement agency's efforts led to the recovery of stolen property worth a staggering Rs. 164.4 million, revealing the extent of criminal involvement in various illegal activities.

Among the apprehended individuals are hardened criminals engaged in

dacoity, armed robbery, stabbing incidents, theft, and the theft of cars and motorcycles. Islamabad Police, in November alone, successfully seized 45 cars and 82 motorcycles, dismantling criminal operations and enhancing public safety.

The crackdown extended to dismantling criminal gangs, as 114 individuals from 45 such groups were brought to justice during the same period.

Notably, November also saw Islamabad Police making significant strides in curbing drug-related offenses. A total of 232 drug dealers were apprehended, resulting in the confiscation of 60 kilograms of hashish, 77 kilograms of heroin, 1,460 grams of ice, and 1,054 bottles of alcohol.

Addressing the issue of illegal weapons, 160 individuals were arrested for possession illegal weapons, leading to the recovery of 12 Kalashnikovs and guns.

Wednesday December 20, 2023

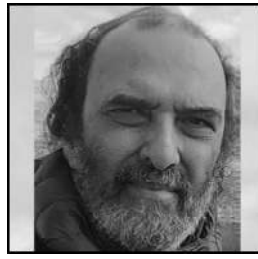
Balanced ballots

The latest voter data by the ECP is a harbinger of progress. The electoral gender gap in Pakistan has notably shrunk to below 10m. With the overall voter count soaring beyond 128m, women now represent 46.13pc of the electorate. This shift, while heartening, underscores an ongoing challenge: the need for sustained efforts to further reduce this gap and enhance women's participation in our democratic processes.

The reduced gender gap, albeit significant, is unevenly distributed across the provinces. Punjab, with a disparity of over 5m, leads in gender disparity among voters, followed by Sindh, KP, and Balochistan. While Punjab boasts districts with more than 48pc female voters, areas like South Waziristan (Lower) in KP report considerably low female voter percentages, as little as 34.54pc.

This contrast not only reflects the varied sociopolitical landscapes of these provinces but also signals where targeted interventions are most needed. The responsibility to further narrow this gap rests significantly on the shoulders of political parties. Their role extends beyond mere competition in elections; they are, in essence, the stewards of our democracy and must lead the charge in initiatives aimed at encouraging and facilitating women's voting. This duty encompasses a range of actions, from awareness campaigns to the implementation of measures such as ensuring the availability of safe and accessible polling stations, and addressing the sociocultural barriers that impede women's political participation. In addition, the role of communities in shaping attitudes towards women's voting rights cannot be overstated. Comprehensive efforts to educate and engage communities, especially in regions marked by pronounced gender disparities, are of utmost importance. This engagement needs to transcend tokenistic approaches and strive to genuinely empower women, dismantling the entrenched patriarchal norms that restrict their political agency. Reflecting on the history of past elections, the gender gap has been a persistent issue, reaching its peak at 13.17m in 2016.

The current reduction is a clear indication of the concerted efforts by various stakeholders, including the ECP. However, the objective extends beyond merely decreasing numbers; it aims for the achievement of gender parity in voter participation. As we approach future elections, the narrowing of this gap marks an important milestone, signalling progress yet reminding us that there is a considerable journey ahead. It is crucial to recognise that the true strength of a democracy is reflected in the inclusivity of its processes. Political parties, civic groups, and communities must persist in their collaborative work to ensure that every citizen's voice, regardless of gender, is heard and valued at the ballot box. This journey towards an inclusive, equitable democracy demands unwavering commitment and concerted action from all sectors of society. Let this be the legacy we aspire to create and solidify for future generations.

**Jawed Naqvi**

The Indian supreme court's judgement last week effectively endorsed Prime Minister Modi's dismemberment of Kashmir in 2019 and his dismantling of its special status guaranteed by the constitution. The verdict was a setback to the idea of India as envisaged by its founding fathers.

It has brought censure from nuclear weapons states in India's neighbourhood who have claims on the territory, in one case on the basis of UN Security Council support for a peaceful resolution of the Kashmir dispute.

Moreover, its reasoning has shocked and surprised the country's best legal minds, including at least two former senior judges of the apex court. The effect of the verdict for native Kashmiris is being

Don't disturb the class, please

seen as disastrous, but the Kashmiri people and Kashmiri leaders have stochastically resolved to persist for as long as it takes to put democracy back on the rails and to restore the special status on the statutes, peacefully.

The verdict reminded my brother of Jimmy Falls, the laidback Anglo-Indian teacher at Lucknow's La Martiniere College. There was trouble in the back benches when a boy made an untenable proposition to his neighbour who complained to Falls. The petitioner was in for a surprise. "Don't disturb the class, young man. Give your friend what he wants," the gobsmacked complainant was advised conclusively.

Falls was perhaps following the doctrine of necessity, favouring an unequal compromise as the best hope to avoid making things worse in the belief that the crisis would blow over with a bit of give and take. But there was no give; only take.

The justices of the supreme court pored over the case for four years before concluding that they could not dispute the Indian president's reasoning about

the special circumstances of Jammu and Kashmir that effectively allowed the government to erase the constitutional clause, which legal experts see as the basis of the erstwhile princely state's ties with India.

Mr Modi routinely accuses Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister, of letting Pakistan walk away with a large part of the state, and at the same time claiming the rest of it with the support of UNSC resolutions.

Historically opposed to Article 370, which tied the state to India with the promise of special rights, Mr Modi's Hindu nationalist supporters insist that, had Nehru's home minister and alleged rival Vallabhbhai Patel had his way, Jammu and Kashmir would be an uncontested part of India. Renowned scholars — public intellectual Prof Ram Puniyani, advocate for secular democracy, among them — have illustrated with verifiable references how wrong Hindutva groups were about Patel, particularly on Kashmir.

"The attempt to show that Nehru and Patel had differing opinions on Kashmir is a figment of imagina-

tion which abuses the facts of the history to its extreme," Prof Puniyani wrote in *The Wire* in response to Home Minister Amit Shah's berating of Nehru in justifying the destruction of Article 370 four years ago. Pakistan, of course, doesn't even accept the instrument of accession, which India flaunts as the basis of Maharaja Hari Singh's imprimatur to go with Delhi.

It was Nehru and Sheikh Abdullah, Kashmir's towering leader, who got Kashmir to accede to India, archival evidence says. Maharaja Hari Singh had refused to merge with India and was supported in this decision by Praja Parishad. Sardar Patel, who was doing the integration of the princely states, had enough on his plate.

Puniyani cites Rajmohan Gandhi's book, *Patel a Life*, as showing what Patel had in mind about Kashmir was to strike a bargain, to have Hyderabad for India and to let Pakistan have Kashmir. To this end Rajmohan Gandhi cites a speech Patel delivered at the Bahauddin College in Junagadh following the latter's merger with

India. In it, he said: "We would agree to Kashmir if they agreed to Hyderabad."

Hari Singh, according to Puniyani, was all for independent Kashmir and was opposed to merger with India. Patel was already pleased with Hyderabad's merger. "It was Sheikh Abdullah, who chose to come on the side of India. Here again his consideration was not religion but secularism and socialism. He was keen for land reforms which he saw as impossibility in Pakistan, with predominant leadership with feudal mindset."

About Amit Shah's criticism of Nehru for supporting a ceasefire, Puniyani quotes from official correspondence. Patel expressed on June 4, 1948, in a letter to Gopalswamy Ayyangar, that the "military position is not too good, and I am afraid that our military resources are strained to the utmost".

On the logic and reasoning of the verdict, too, questions have been raised. Justices Madan Lokur and Rohinton Nariman, former judges of the supreme court known for their tempered and reasoned analysis of judicial issues, thought it

was a wrong call for the court to back the dismantling of Article 370.

Moreover, the decision now poses a threat to all states in India, which could be similarly dismantled by presidential decree. Of course, presidential decrees essentially reflect the central government's mind. The Kashmir verdict triggered unhappy responses from neighbours. Pakistan's caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar said the verdict upholding the abrogation of Article 370 was "politically motivated". Undoing the situation was China's expectation too, while the verdict would not impact the Chinese position on Ladakh. Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning, asked to comment on the Indian judgement, said: "China has never recognised the so-called Union Territory of Ladakh set up unilaterally and illegally by India."

India's domestic judicial verdict does not change the fact that the western section of the China-India border has always belonged to China." Mr Falls could be more attentive to the backbenchers to run the class better. -- Courtesy Dawn

No money and not smart**Mosharraf Zaidi**

The rapid changes taking place around the world are not superficial. These are changes that are altering how the world works. We heard the 'we need to get our house in order' often in Islamabad. What this actually means to generals, judges, politicians, bureaucrats and other rent-seeking capitalists of Pakistan is less clear.

Pakistani intelligence, including the media and vast swathes of academia are just as bad — maybe worse. Our job is to map icebergs in advance to the mothership risking crashing into them. Instead, we blurt out cacophonous warnings long after impact. Perhaps an ecosystem broken at the top cannot escape fragility down below?

In the World Bank's International Debt Report 2023 are the clearest signs

yet of the profound challenge low- and middle-income countries now face as a result of sustained high interest rates since 2021.

The total stock of external debt held by low- and middle-income countries in 2010 was \$4.3 trillion. In 2022 this amount had essentially doubled to \$8.9 trillion. The overall trend gives the impression of a ceaseless fiscal bonanza in which low- and middle-income country elites can continue to borrow money from abroad because that's how everyone is living.

Yet, a closer look at what has happened after the Covid-19 pandemic illustrates the obvious and urgent challenge for countries like this (Pakistan may be a poster child for this kind of country). In 2022, the net flows of both private non-guaranteed bond issuances and public (or publicly guaranteed) bond issuances were negative. This means more bonds were paid back than were disbursed. If you are a country that got used to issuing bonds as a means of meeting your spending habits, you should be deeply worried about the immediate future. But if you take a good look at how Pakistan has sought to

manage the fallout of record high interest rates around the world, there seems to be no worry about the future at all.

"And they tell you that you're lucky, but you're so confused! Cause you don't feel pretty, you just feel used! And all the young things line up to take your place! Another name goes up in lights! You wonder if you'll make it out alive!" [Taylor Swift, 2012]

Over the last three years, when low- and middle-income countries took on debt from private creditors (like the issuance of bonds or borrowing from commercial banks), the average interest rate on the borrowing was under 5.0 per cent — and hovering around 4.0 per cent in 2022. During this time (just to set some context), the average interest rate on which India borrowed from private creditors (bonds or commercial bank borrowing), was about 3.0 per cent in 2020, 2.0 per cent in 2021 and back to 3.0 per cent in 2022. The rates that Pakistan agreed to borrow money at during the same period? It borrowed money at around 3.0 per cent in 2020, around 4.5 per cent in 2021 and at a whopping 7-8

per cent or more in 2022.

Many in Pakistan insist that these kinds of numbers are alarmist and would immediately point out that private sources of credit only make up a fifth of all Pakistani public and publicly guaranteed external debt. Sure. Let's then look at official creditors (including both bilateral and multilateral lenders).

Average interest rates for low- and middle-income countries borrowing from official sources in 2022 were about 6.0 per cent and the average maturity period on these new loans was a smidge above 20 years. India enjoyed longer maturity periods of about 25 years and lower interest rates, at about 4.0 per cent. Pakistan negotiated loans from official sources that had shorter maturities, at about 15 years and much higher interest rates, at about 8.0 per cent.

What this tells us should not be news for anyone with a pulse in Pakistan. The country's management of its external debt has produced the surreal, sustained, repeat nightmare of the economy hanging at the edge of default for the last two years. The problem isn't linear, and it isn't short term. Pakistan is committed to a

range of very large expenses outside of its debt obligations in the near and short term — and during this exact same time, Pakistan has signed itself up to short-term loans with high interest payments.

Financially, fiscally, and economically, this is like choosing to put oneself in between a rock and a hard place. But just how blindly is the country committing itself to being stuck here for an indeterminate period? For this we need an accounting of the kinds of very large expenses outside of its debt obligations in the near and short term that Pakistan's elites have committed it to.

"We were good, we were gold! Kinda dream that can't be sold! We were right 'til we weren't! Built a home and watched it burn!" [Miles Cyrus, 2023]

These are important commitments and when examined in isolation, they are probably less ambitious than they should be. The only problem is that to achieve these commitments, Pakistan would need to spend billions of dollars each year on infrastructure, on climate adaptation of the existing core structures of economic activity and con-

currently on resilience. A lot of those billions would be required in cold hard US dollar-denominated cash — because so much of the technology for climate transition will need to be imported. Clearly, very little of the climate agenda Pakistan has set for itself is achievable.

Since the world has changed and is changing so rapidly, what Pakistan's genius elites don't realize is that the climate frontier is going to become an instrument of punishment not just from nature, but from the high emissions, high carbon economies upon whom the Pakistani elite depend on for capital, for sustenance, and worst of all, for ideas about freedom, national autonomy and economic growth. Already, the European Union has instituted the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) as a toll that will be charged on goods that are exported to the EU. At first, these kinds of mechanisms will only affect individual exporters, but soon the cumulative effect of such offsets will shake economies. Those that adapt and adopt will thrive. Those that keep trying to survive, may. But only barely. -- Courtesy TheNews

Issues with BRT**Dr Noman Ahmed**

While meeting an Asian Development Bank delegation earlier this month, Sindh's caretaker chief minister said that 180 solar-powered buses will be introduced to support the operations of the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system in Karachi. These imported buses are meant to provide urban commuters with a cleaner, more efficient public transport option.

However, questions arise: can these expensive buses operate as efficiently as promised, given the run-down state of our roads? Not too long ago, the government launched electric buses on three routes, most of which were out of service in less than a year. Issues of charging facilities and other operational difficulties were cited as the main reason.

In fact, one can question the financial model of the entire BRT system. Currently, the Green Line is operational. It was developed by the federal government-owned Sindh Infrastructure Development Company. Will this service continue when it has been unable to generate revenue amounting to even a fraction of the sum spent on its operations? The under-construction Red Line is a \$503 million undertaking. Life in many neighbourhoods has been adversely impacted by the slow pace of construction. Besides, work on the Yellow Line, running from Korangi to Numaiish, will soon start. The loan from the World Bank for this is \$382m.

Do we need the BRT

system? Five arguments justify a negative answer.

One, the proposed BRT's cost and management needs serious review. According to a document prepared by the relevant authorities, the total cost of the Karachi Circular Railways and seven BRT corridors is Rs520.6 billion. An investment plan has also been prepared to justify the un-der-taking based on the possible enterprises evolving from the BRT. However, the performance of local and provincial bodies is at a record low, and the level of professional handling and follow-up needed for a project of such magnitude is difficult to expect from them. The BRT may also cause enormous physical displacement. Be-sides, capable traffic management would be necessary during its construction.

Two, the BRT will cater to only nine per cent of total passenger trips, if all seven lines become operational. Such trips are currently over 30m per day. As Karachi's population grows, the trips will expand proportionally. The net benefit to the commuter population would be minuscule.

Three, the BRT's development and operations won't reduce the existing congestion on the streets. The corridors are being built on the major arteries of the city. In many cases, exclusive right of way for BRT buses shall reduce available road space for other modes of transport. This will be a challenge for motorcycles, cars, delivery vans, water tankers, oil tankers and other vehicles, besides adding to air pollution.

Four, ordinary folk consider owning a motorcycle or a car a social attainment. Thus it is very unlikely that people will stop using cars or motorcycles once the BRT becomes functional. In North Nazimabad and adjoining locations along the Green Line, no visible

reduction in motorcycles or cars has been noticed. Perhaps the absence of feeder services and long and inconvenient walks will leave people with little choice but to continue to use private vehicles. Many people have outdoor employment, including delivery services where possessing a vehicle is necessary. Thus the BRT offers little solace to them.

Lastly, there is little interconnectivity between the existing paratransit and the BRT system. While those managing the BRT claim that this will be ensured, there have been no indications of this so far.

One must also study other examples. For instance, the Lahore BRT runs on a huge subsidy with a limited passenger trip load. The Peshawar BRT was hit by allegations of malpractice and corruption. Several investigations were carried out by various agencies to ascertain the charges of cost overruns and operational inefficiencies. Across the border, the Delhi BRT was dismantled by the state government due to rising congestion and its own relative ineffectiveness.

From a macroeconomic perspective, the government can focus on road development and maintenance, while bus operations are left to local bus operators without any subsidy.

The people of Karachi need short-, long- and medium-term solutions to their commuting woes. The immediate increase in buses and mini buses, and removal of encroachments from roads for the smooth flow of traffic should be undertaken as a low-cost, short-term action. The revival of ordinary Karachi buses on designated routes and alignment of larger rickshaw routes to connect the modes of mass transit with neighbourhoods may be undertaken in the medium term, while the planning and development of grade-separated BRT mass transit should be started as a long-term option. -- Courtesy Dawn

Ambitious outcome**Aisha Khan**

The recently concluded Conference of Parties, COP28, held in Dubai delivered a package of agreements setting out the pathway for global climate action in the years to come. The outcome of the Global Stock-Take (GST) under the UAE COP presidency, was historic in many ways. It called for action to transition away from fossil fuels for the first time, made headway in the operationalisation and initial capitalisation of the Loss and Damage Fund and saw record breaking (\$85 billion) pledges in climate action.

The narratives emerging at COP28 reflect a climate regime struggling to come to terms with the need for urgency in climate action and maturing to move to an era of 'implementation'. However, despite consensus and incremental gains, COPs remind us that negotiations are part of a broader agenda and not an endgame, with some wins, some disappointments and a few loopholes carried forward to the next meeting. The ultimate arbiter of COP's significance will be the delivery of emissions cut, adaptation action, and finance through the Dubai-Baku-Belem roadmap.

The GST has set the stage for accelerating action between now and 2025 when parties are expected to submit their next Nationally Determined Contributions. This will make finance the central focus of COP29, highlighting need for mobilising and aligning financial flows with Article 2.1c of the Paris Agreement

and finding a way to incorporate Means of Implementation in the finance package to address debt burdens and forward thinking in strengthening resilience.

The seriousness of the GST decision can be seen in its call for a follow-up, including a two-year dialogue on implementing its outcomes to start at COP29 and a "Roadmap to Mission 1.5" to enhance global cooperation under the guidance of the presidencies of COP28, COP29 and COP30. Notwithstanding the lack of detail on transitioning away from fossil fuels in energy systems, the use of 'just', 'orderly' and 'equitable' in the text language raises hope of significant emissions reductions in this decade and the beginning of the end of the fossil fuel-dominated era.

COP28 also saw many new announcements and pledges, ranging considerably in their significance and credibility. The UAE-led Finance Framework, along with record-breaking pledges to the Green Climate Fund and new finance for loss and damage of around \$655.9 million can be interpreted as a shift in politics of financing.

The UAE announced a package of finances as a contribution to delivering on the framework with a \$30bn investment fund for clean transition, \$4.5bn for energy transition investment in Africa, and a new announcement plan to re-channel \$200m equivalent in special drawing rights to the IMF Resilience and Sustainability Trust Fund. The gap between adaptation finance pledges and the need for implementing adaptation plans signal a need for heightened political attention. Significantly, COP president Sultan Al Jaber called on the need to inject more capital into multilateral development banks to support mobilising and distributing finance for transition. Other highlights of

COP28 include pathways for alignment on climate, food and nature goals ahead of Brazil's COP30 and a High Ambition Coalition to serve as the centre of gravity for pushing outcomes on fossil fuels, adaptation and finance. The US-China Sunnylands statement ensured a basis of support for the final package, but without a major shift in their pre-COP positions.

The fiercely contested negotiations went into overtime to reach consensus but successful shuttle diplomacy in the last 48 hours played a role in gaveling the agreement.

For Pakistan, it's important to translate GST into NST (National Stock-Take) and convene a multidisciplinary discussion on the impact of global climate agreements on the country and the region. An analytical review to assess the impact will help in setting the course for coping strategies, inclusive of economy-wide impacts and options, for increasing resilience streams to meet mitigation commitments and adaptation needs.

The climate change ministry-led delegation at COP28 marked a new start by taking a 'whole of society' approach, working closely with all relevant stakeholders to foster collective ownership in framing Pakistan's stance. The 29 events hosted at the Pakistan Pavilion included high-level segments with diverse themes that provided opportunity for expanding outreach and showcasing the impact of climate calamities, as well as networking opportunities for deepening engagement and forging new partnerships.

The next steps include balancing national gaps with international obligations and moving towards a point of convergence, where complementarities create an enabling environment for long-term investments. -- Courtesy Dawn

KP cabinet authorizes depts to transfer buildings for launching skill development classes

PESHAWAR (APP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Cabinet on Tuesday authorized different provincial departments to transfer their buildings in spare time for launching classes of skill development among the youth under the Khushala Pakhtunkhwa Program.

These departments include Elementary and Secondary Education, Technical Education, Industries and Labor, Health, and other line departments.

The special meeting of the provincial cabinet was held under the chairmanship of Caretaker Chief Minister Justice (Rtd.) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah was also attended by provincial ministers, Chief Secretary,

and administrative secretaries.

It was revealed at the meeting that recently South Korea had demanded over one hundred thousand skilled workers in response to which Pakistan could only provide 16000 skilled workers from all over the country because the country had no skilled labor force to be employed in the outside world. It was also learned that more than 500 thousand youth from all over the province will be imparted different trainings in information technology, computer, paramedics, nursing, trade etc. so that they could earn livelihood for their families both inside and outside the country.

Addressing the meeting the Chief Minister said though the prime duty

of the caretaker government was to facilitate fair and impartial elections but in view of the increasing unemployment and poverty in the province, the youth cannot be left to desperation to become nurseries for the terrorists. He said that the government cannot wait and has to contribute to the welfare of the people at large. "All Mighty Allah might have provided us an opportunity to serve the people this way at this point of time therefore we must come forward to play our role" he said. The Chief Minister had already formed a task force comprising different ministers, secretaries and heads of different organizations which is meeting daily to make the said program a success.



PESHAWAR: Group photo after meeting with the Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali, a delegation of elected local government representatives from the merged North Waziristan district at the Governor's House.

DCs asked to ensure best arrangements for elections

LAHORE (APP): Chief Secretary Punjab Zahid Akhtar Zaman has directed all the deputy commissioners to ensure the best arrangements for conducting free, fair and transparent elections.

He issued this directive while presiding over a meeting of all deputy commissioners at the Civil Secretariat here on Tuesday. The secretary home, special secretary local government, all deputy commissioners and officers concerned attended the meeting. The Chief Secretary said that the deputy commissioners as DROs must fulfill their constitutional and national

responsibility in a good manner. He said that according to the guidelines of the Election Commission, all arrangements should be completed on time and a comprehensive plan should be prepared for polling stations, staff deployment, transport and security. He also issued instructions regarding the launch of an anti-encroachment operation across the province. He said that indiscriminate action should be taken against encroachments in districts. He said that "Ab Gaon Chamkein Ge" program is the foundation of a new governance model.

LHC stops FIA from any disciplinary action against Khadija Shah

LAHORE (Online): Lahore High Court (LHC) ordered to stop any disciplinary action against Khadija Shah.

Justice Ali Baqir Najafi heard Khadija Shah's plea against money laundering inquiry in FIA. The court stopped taking any disciplinary action against Khadija Shah.

Lawyer Samir Khosa had taken a stand in the court that FIA had not received any complaint in this regard. This is not an FIR, it is an inquiry. This

is a sue motto enquiry, any inquiry is based on any information, there are 5 things in this inquiry that are out of the routine, no one has come forward to complain.

Khadija Shah got bail in 4 cases, then was arrested in MPO, then taken to Quetta, lawyer said.

Lawyer requested in plea for temporarily stay this inquiry. Further Khadija Shah Counsel said parties should be prevented from re-detaining Khadija Shah.

No vehicle to be allowed on road without NOC from VICS: Commissioner

RAWALPINDI (APP): Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Liaqat Ali Chatta on Tuesday said that no vehicle would be allowed on road without a NOC of engine checking from Vehicle Inspection and Certification System (VICS) Punjab.

He said this while visiting various areas of the city to review the arrangements made for controlling smog.

Liaqat said that the provision of a hygienic environment to the

residents was the responsibility of the district government and no negligence would be tolerated in this regard.

He said that Rawalpindi Waste Management Company (RWMC) had launched a campaign against smog by washing Murree Road late night. The Commissioner said that all city roads would be washed and cleaned to remove the dust as blowing of dirt was the major cause of smog formation.

Governor takes oath to Justice Aqeel Abbasi as CJ SHC

KARACHI (APP): An oath-taking ceremony of the Chief Justice (CJ) of the Sindh High Court (SHC) was held in the Sindh High Court here on Tuesday.

The Sindh Governor Mohammed Kamran Khan Tessori administered the oath to Justice Aqeel Ahmad Abbasi as the Chief Justice of the Sindh High Court.

The ceremony was attended by lawyers, government officials, city dignitaries and media representatives.

PDWP Punjab approves two uplift schemes

LAHORE (APP): Provincial Development Working Party (PDWP) of Punjab Tuesday approved two developmental schemes of the local government sector with an estimated cost of Rs 3436.04 million.

The schemes were approved in 35th PDWP meeting of current financial year 2023-24 chaired by Planning and development Board Chairman Ifkhar Ali Sahoo. Secretary P&D Board Muzaffar Khan Sial was also present. The approved schemes include the improvement of Sewerage System and Construction of Waste Water Treatment Plant (WWTP) Kamalia City at the cost of Rs 1483.630 million; comprehensive Sewerage System in Okara City (PCP) at cost of Rs 1952.41 million.

Desilting of canals started in Bahawalpur

BAHAWALPUR (APP): On the instructions of the Chief Minister of Punjab Mohsin Naqvi, the desilting campaign of canals is being initiated throughout the province.

The Departments of Irrigation, Agriculture, and Mines will jointly take part in the desilting campaign. The concerned officers will monitor all the matters in the field. In this regard, more than 193 miles-long canals of the Bahawalpur zone.



LAHORE: Punjab Governor Muhammad Baligh-ur-Rehman and Caretaker Provincial Health Minister Dr. Javed Akram in a group photo with participants on the eve of inauguration of Society of Gynecology Oncology Pakistan.

CM Naqvi sets deadline for protected u-turns in Lahore

Independent Report
LAHORE: Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Tuesday chaired a meeting focusing on addressing traffic issues in Lahore.

The meeting approved the establishment of protected U-turns at the six busiest intersections of the city to streamline traffic flow. The CM set a deadline of January 19 for the implementation of the U-turns at Qadir Topash Chowk, Gujumat Chowk, Nishtar Chowk, Khokhar Chowk, and Joray Pull Chowk.

Additionally, approval was granted to relocate Babusabu Toll Plaza, and various proposals were examined

to alleviate congestion at the Thokar Niaz Baig entrance on Multan Road. A consensus was reached to direct heavy traffic onto the M2 Motorway. The CM emphasized the need for sustainable measures to ensure smooth traffic flow on Multan Road.

The meeting was also attended by Inspector General of Police, Additional IG, Secretary Communication and Works, Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, CCO, CTO, and relevant officials.

Meanwhile, Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi chaired a meeting in which an important decision was made to export high-protein fodder from Punjab

to Kuwait.

The meeting approved measures to enhance the cultivation of high-protein "alfalfa" fodder for livestock development, emphasizing the scientific drying and preservation of this nutrient-rich feed. Plans to provide seeds to farmers for cultivating "alfalfa" fodder and exploring various proposals for breed insinuation to boost dairy development were also discussed.

The CM directed the full functionality of the Food Research Center in Sargodha to augment the production of high-protein fodder, aiming to capitalize on the potential for increased beef and mutton exports.



HYDERABAD: Caretaker Home Minister Sindh Brigadier (Rtd) Haris Nawaz visit staff Training Academy at Central Prison Hyderabad.

PPP always believes in power of public mandate: Kundi

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Central Information Secretary Faisal Karim Kundi on Tuesday said his party would opt to play the opposition's role during the next tenure rather than becoming 'Laadla' (favorite) or 'Selected' as it always believed in the power of public mandate.

Addressing a press conference here at Kundi Model Farm, the PPP Information Secretary said the country had faced a 'Laadla' in the recent past and borne its losses.

He said the PPP has a clear stance that the general elections must be held in time in a free, fair and transparent manner.

The different political parties, who have fear of defeat, expressed their wish to delay the elections

by showing their lame excuses like bad weather conditions and demanding appointments of ROs and DROs from the judiciary, he mentioned.

Replying to a question regarding PPP candidates, Kundi said the party was in the process of finalizing its candidates. The complete panel of candidates from constituencies of Dera Ismail Khan would be announced on Thursday, he mentioned.

He said the PPP would contest upcoming general elections under its manifesto of 'Roti-Kapra aur Makaan' and it would accept the public mandate.

Kundi also paid tribute to the security forces that were rendering sacrifices to establish peace in the country. He said the PPP.



LAHORE: Regional Commander of Anti Narcotics Punjab Brigadier Sikandar Hayat Chaudhry talking to media persons at Drug Advisory Office in provincial Capital.

National electoral process commences across Hazara Division

ABBOTTABAD (APP): In a significant development on Tuesday, the electoral process has commenced in Hazara Division, encompassing the entire nation, as confirmed by the Election Commission.

The initiation involves the commencement of filing nomination papers, marking the initial step in the electoral journey.

The Election Commission has officially launched the nomination paper filing process for the upcoming general elections.

Public notices have been prominently displayed in all Returning Officer (RO) offices nationwide, providing crucial information for

prospective candidates.

Nomination papers are currently being submitted for both national and provincial assemblies throughout the country, a process inclusive of candidates competing for reserved seats allocated for women and minorities.

Aspiring candidates can get nomination papers from the respective RO and District Election Commission offices. The Election Commission emphasizes that the necessary fees must be paid for obtaining nomination papers, and the completed documents are required to be submitted to the relevant RO offices within the period of December 20 to 25.

Political entities are mandated to furnish

Steps being taken for development, progress of tribal areas: Governor

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali has said that steps had been taken to usher tribal areas into new phase of progress and to address deprivations of tribal people.

He was talking to a thirty five member delegation of Mohmand tribal district led by Malik Shehryar Khan here Tuesday. Speaking on the occasion, the Governor said that provincial and federal governments have taken steps for the development and progress of merged tribal districts.

He highlighted the sacrifices of tribal people for the peace of the country and strengthening its sovereignty. He also urged the youngsters to counter narrative of elements that are targeting state institutions and added that it was the prime responsibility of each and every citizen to join hands for protection of the

motherland.

The delegation informed the Governor about their problems relating to transport, health, education and other basic amenities. The Governor listened to their problems and assured cooperation to resolve them and stressed the use of modern technology to tap potential of tribal area.

A delegation of local government representatives of North Waziristan also called on the Governor and discussed their problems with him. The Governor also assured them cooperation to convey their concerns to relevant authorities.

He also met with a delegation of Artists Action Foundation that included Tariq Jamal, Shazman Haleem, Waisal Khial and others. The Governor also met with a delegation of Sindh and discussed with them matters of mutual importance.



KARACHI: Governor Sindh Kamran Tessori taking oath from newly appointed Chief Justice of Sindh High Court Justice Aqeel Abbasi, in Provincial Capital.

If we can't discuss list with Imran, where is level playing field: Shoaib Shaheen

RAWALPINDI (Online): Former Prime Minister Imran Khan's lawyer Shoaib Shaheen has raised the question that if we can't even discuss a list with Imran Khan, how did this level playing field happen?

PTI's lawyer Shoaib Shaheen while talking to the media outside Adiala Jail said that the petition against the jail trial order in the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) contempt case is pending. A jail trial was ordered without any rule of law. This is an open trial case, only the venue has changed.

He said that transparency requires the presence of media. Media,

public, relatives, lawyers should be present for open trial and indictment. We were not allowed to enter with complete files. For half an hour our files were checked and we stood waiting.

He said that ECP should ensure that if we cannot discuss the list with the former chairman, then where is the level playing field? The bat symbol has been withheld till date, all the other parties have received their electoral symbol.

He said that it is the responsibility of ECP to prevent pre-poll rigging. We can't even hold a worker convention. It is the responsibility of ECP.



LAHORE: Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi presides over the meeting regarding Protected U-Turns Project for smooth flow of Traffic.

PHC hears PTI's petitions on electoral symbol

PESHAWAR (Online): Peshawar High Court (PHC) has stopped the Election Commission of Pakistan from taking action against PTI till December 21.

In the PHC, a hearing was held on PTI's petitions against the Election Commission's notices on the issue of intra-party elections and electoral symbols.

Justice Attique Shah and Justice Sahibzada Asadullah heard the petition. During the hearing, the Election Commission representative said that we will submit the answer today.

Former PTI MPA joins PPP

MULTAN (APP): Former member provincial assembly (MPA) and right hand man of Vice Chairman Pakistan Tehreek e Insaaf (PTI), Shah Mahmood Hussain Qureshi, Wasif Raan here on Tuesday announced to part ways with PTI and join Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP).

He made this announcement in the presence of former Prime Minister, Senator Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani and other PPP leaders at Qadirpur Raan. Later while talking to reporters, Gilani welcomed Wasif Raan in PPP claiming that his party.

110 students get laptops under PM scheme

MULTAN (APP): As many as 110 students of Emerson University (EMU) received under the Prime Minister Laptop Scheme here Tuesday.

During a ceremony held in this regard, a total of 220 laptops were disbursed under the scheme and Punjab Governor Baligh Ur Rehman had distributed 100 laptops among the varsity students last month.

Addressing the ceremony, Vice Chancellor EUM Dr. Muhammad Ramzan

highlighted the significance of the laptops in enabling students to earn a "Halal livelihood" through freelancing and online programmes, empowering them to contribute to their families. He advised the students to adapt to emerging trends and prepare for future opportunities.

Guest of honour, Secretary Agriculture South Punjab, Saqib Ali Ateel congratulated the students, emphasizing that their hard work would instill ambition and determination to overcome life's challenges.

300 laptops distributed among SMIU's students

KARACHI (APP): The Sindh HEC Chairman Dr Tariq Rafi, Vice Chancellor of Sindh Madressatul Islam University Dr Mujeeb Sahrai and Regional Director of federal HEC Javed Ali Memon distributed 300 laptops among the students of different departments of Sindh Madressatul Islam University under the Prime Minister Youth Program Laptop Scheme on Tuesday at a ceremony, which was held at the SMIU's auditorium.

Addressing the ceremony Dr. Tariq Rafi appreciated the federal HEC for giving laptops to the talented and deserving students of the country, which may be supportive of their academic progress. He said we are living in a digitalized world, where our students, faculty and researchers must be connected with the world through gadgets because we can't live in isolation. He said unlike our generation's past today's world is connected to figure tips, hence students must benefit from modern gadgets, that would be beneficial for their academic growth.



KARACHI: Members of Christen Community holds rally from Trinity Church to Press Club, during the celebrations of the Christmas.

Pakistan exports first shipment of dried Chillies to China: Minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister of Commerce and Industries Dr Gohar Ejaz, on Tuesday, announced a significant breakthrough in Pakistan's agricultural exports to China with the inaugural shipment of dried chillies.

This momentous achievement, made possible through the outstanding efforts of Litong Food Co. Ltd., marks the beginning of a new era in the trade relationship between Pakistan and China, said a

press release issued here. The minister extended best wishes to Litong Food Co. Ltd. for their extraordinary feat and expressed sincere appreciation for the unwavering support of the Chinese government in creating a substantial market for Pakistani goods within China.

"I am delighted to announce that the first-ever consignment of dried chillies is on its way to China. This achievement not only showcases the

capabilities of our exporters but also highlights the potential for further collaboration between Pakistani and Chinese businesses," the minister stated.

He emphasised that the exports of Pakistan's products to China have the potential to exceed \$20 billion in the coming years.

However, achieving this ambitious goal requires concerted efforts from Pakistani agricultural exporters.

Dr. Gohar Ejaz

encouraged the exporters to uphold high-quality standards, increase productivity, and implement effective marketing strategies to meet the expectations of the Chinese market.

Acknowledging the crucial role of the Chinese companies in the process, the minister expressed optimism about the prospects of collaboration. "If our companies can meet the standards set by the Chinese authorities, our exports can soar.



QUETTA: A delegation of the Zamindar Action Committee of Balochistan call on caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.



ISLAMABAD: Dr. Maen Khreasat, Ambassador of Jordan to Pakistan called on the Caretaker Federal Minister for Privatisation, Fawad Hassan Fawad.

PCJCCI suggests export of Pak honey

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan China Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCJCCI) President Moazzam Ghurki said on Tuesday that certified Pakistani honey could triple its value, enhancing its export to other countries.

Sharing his views in a think-tank session held here at PCJCCI Secretariat, he added, "Our honey is sold for merely USD 20 or USD 25 per kilogram but the price can rise to USD 100 per kilogram when it is packaged at other countries. The situation could improve if we establish labs and certification systems and implement management and supervision policies."

Ghurki called for upgrading Pakistani honey industry, asserting that Pakistani honey is cheaper and tastes better than New Zealand's honey, but the latter's certification has been recognized by four international companies. "If we work to establish an internationally recognized modern laboratory, our honey will be among the

best. Another way to upgrade Pakistan's honey industry is to establish large-scale honey processing plants." Although the Pakistani has a large honey market with many varieties, the honey production still follows the most traditional method. China has already adopted advanced filtration technology and packaging, so Pakistan can seek help from them, he added. PCJCCI Senior Vice President Fang Yulong said that China's honey-producing companies are willing to provide honey production and processing technology to Pakistan. The honey processing technology is said to feature the honey raw material processing, including honey filtration, sterilization, and temperature control. He further said that the honey collected by bees is full in the hive but it is high in moisture. "So we remove the moisture by a honey dryer, in which the honey is put on the upper chamber and the empty container on the lower chamber."



ISLAMABAD: Workers busy in cleaning peanuts at Khana Pull.

Google to pay \$700 mln to US consumers, states in Play store settlement

Monitoring Desk
LONDON: Alphabet's (GOOGL.O) Google has agreed to pay \$700 million and to allow for greater competition in its Play app store, according to the terms of an antitrust settlement with U.S. states and consumers disclosed on Monday in a San Francisco federal court.

Google will pay \$630 million into a settlement fund for consumers and \$70 million into a fund that will be used by states, according to the settlement, which still requires a judge's final approval.

The settlement said eligible consumers will receive at least \$2 and may get additional payments based on their spending on Google Play between Aug. 16, 2016 and Sept. 30, 2023. All 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, joined the settlement.

Google was accused of overcharging consumers through unlawful restrictions on the distribution of apps on Android devices and unnecessary fees for in-app transactions. It did not admit wrongdoing.

Lead plaintiff Utah and other states announced the settlement in September, but the terms were kept confidential ahead of Google's related trial with "Fortnite" maker Epic Games. A California federal jury last week agreed with Epic that parts of Google's app business were anticompetitive.

Wilson White, Google vice president for government affairs and public policy, in a statement said the settlement "builds on Android's choice and flexibility, maintains strong security protections, and retains Google's ability to compete with other (operating system) makers.

PSX stayed bearish, loses 2,371 more points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bearish trend on Tuesday, losing 2,371.64 more points, a negative change of 3.64 percent, closing at 62,833.03 points against 65,204.68 points the previous trading day.

A total of 1,513,931,019 shares valuing Rs.29,099 billion were traded during the day as compared to 1,890,424,261 shares valuing Rs.24.595 billion the last day.

Some 386 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 31 of them recorded gains and 351 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 4 remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were K-Electric Ltd with 341,067,706 shares at Rs.5.30 per share, WorldCall Telecom with 176,027,711 shares at Rs.1.70 per share and Nergycico PK with 131,716,935 shares at Rs.5.01 per share.

Rafhan Maize witnessed a maximum increase of Rs.150.00 per share price, closing at Rs.9,900.00, whereas the runner-up was Pakistan Services Limited with a Rs.44.63 rise in its per share price to Rs.1,126.63.

Unilever Pakistan Foods witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs.725.00 per share closing at Rs21,550.00, followed by Nestle Pakistan Limited with Rs.400.00 decline to close at Rs.8,100.00.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Six ships namely, MSC Pamela, Maersk Brooklyn, Northern Javelin, Sakizaya Star, Al-Bida and Indigo Cefiro carrying Container, Canola Seed, LNG and Coal, berthed at Container Terminal, Grain Terminal, Elengy Terminal and Bulk Terminal respectively on Monday. Meanwhile two more ships, Limra and Ejan also arrived at outer anchorage of the Port Qasim during last 24 hours to unload Petroleum Products respectively. A total of nine ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them a containership 'MSC Pamela' left the port on today morning and another containerships 'Maersk Brooklyn' is expected to sail on today afternoon. Cargo volume of 135,884 tonnes, comprising 86,936 tonnes imports cargo and 48,948 tonnes export cargo carried in 2,843 Containers (1,033 TEUs Imports.

Welfare of farmers in top priorities of State: Caretaker PM directs to ensure power supply to Agri tube wells in Balochistan

Independent Report
QUETTA: The caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar has firmly stated that the welfare of farmers is included in priorities of the state as such the steps are being taken for the purpose.

The Prime Minister directed the Chief Secretary to ensure power supply to the agricultural tube wells in the province.

The caretaker Prime Minister was speaking to the delegation of Balochistan Zamindar Action Committee who called on him here at the Chief Minister secretariat on Tuesday.

The members of

delegation apprised the Prime Minister about the issues of agriculture sector in Balochistan. They particularly informed the issues of power load shedding in the province.

The caretaker Prime Minister directed to provincial administration to provide electricity and resolve the issues of irrigation and other ones being faced by the growers.

Also present in the meeting were the caretaker Chief Minister Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki, caretaker federal ministers, Chief Secretary Balochistan, Shakeel Qadir Khan besides other concerned high ups.

Pakistan's current account deficit enters into surplus after 6 six months

ISLAMABAD (Online): Pakistan's current account deficit entered into surplus for the first time in six months.

The current account deficit narrowed to 64% in the first five months of the current financial year.

In November, the first month after four months, when the current account surplus raised to \$9 million, exports rose by 12 percent.

As a result of tight

monetary and fiscal policy and stringent administrative measures taken by the government, the current account balance has declined substantially in the first 5 months of FY2024. As a result of the correct policies, the current account deficit has reduced to \$1.16 billion in July-November of fiscal year 2024, which was \$3.3 billion during the same period last fiscal year.



PESHAWAR: Laborer is busy in filling cotton in a pillow for selling purposes in the Gabgari area.

US, China, UK remain top destinations for Pakistani exports during July-Nov

ISLAMABAD (APP): The United States (US) remained the top export destination of Pakistani products during the first five months of the current financial year 2023-24, followed by China and the United Kingdom (UK).

Total exports to the US during July-November 2023 were recorded at US \$229.6424 million against the exports of US \$ 2606.612 million during July-November 2022, showing a decline of 11.90 percent, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

This was followed by China, wherein Pakistan exported goods worth US \$1223.532 million against the exports of US \$877.444 million last year, showing an increase of 39.44 percent. UK was the third top export destination, where Pakistan exported products worth US \$862.397 million during the months under review against the exports of US \$874.066 million, SBP data revealed. Among other

countries, Pakistani exports to UAE stood at US \$817.993 million against US \$614.902 million last year, showing an increase of 33.02 percent while the exports to Germany were recorded at US \$612.276 million against US \$746.055 million last year, data said.

During July-November, the exports to Holland were recorded at \$559.819 million against \$630.973 million whereas the exports to Italy stood at \$501.985 million against \$491.734 million.

Pakistan's exports to Spain were recorded at \$638.783 million against the exports of US \$569.936 million while the exports to Afghanistan were recorded at \$232.697 million against \$213.282 million last year.

The exports to Bangladesh stood at US \$248.457 million against US \$364.930 million. Similarly, the exports to France during the months under review were recorded at US \$207.024 million.

AJK PM directs for focusing on reducing disparity between filers and non-filers

MIRPUR (AJK) (APP): Azad Jammu and Kashmir Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwar ul Haq has directed the State Inland Revenue Department to pool in all its efforts to achieve the tax collection targets besides reducing the disparity between filers and non-filers.

Chairing a high level meeting of the AJK Inland Revenue Department here Tuesday, he said that the government would provide the required resources to the department but negligence in duties won't be tolerated under any

circumstances. The meeting discussed in detail the taxation related matters, setting up taxation targets and implementing fiscal policies to widen the tax base in the region.

The Commissioner of Inland Revenue (North), on the occasion, briefed the prime minister, in detail of the tax collection targets in Muzaffarabad, Neelum and Jhelum Valley and the problems faced by the department.

The prime minister further directed the IRD officials to collect the data

of all the private hospitals, hotels, tourism resorts, business centers, shops, local industries, marquees and private schools and furnish the report to the PM office within next couple of weeks.

The meeting was attended among others by senior Minister Colonel Retired Waqar Ahmed Noor, Communications Minister Azhar Sadiq, Health Minister Anwar Abdali, Special Secretary Masood-ur-Rahman and officers of the Inland Revenue Department.

Gold rates up by Rs 400

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold increased by Rs 400 and was sold at Rs 217,600 on Tuesday against its sale at Rs 217,200 on the last trading day. The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs 343 to Rs 186,557 from Rs 186,214 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold went up to Rs 171,011 from Rs 170,696, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola and 10 gram silver remained stagnant at Rs 2,670 and 2,289.09 respectively.



RIYADH: SAPM Jawad Sohrab Malik meets with Greek Labour Minister at Global Labour Market Conference.

FGEHA all set to initiate new residential projects

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federal Government Employees Housing Authority (FGEHA) is all set to initiate new residential projects in eight major cities of the country to provide housing to government employees and the general public.

"The authority has already received several applications from land owners, companies and firms interested in the mega projects," sources in the FGEHA told APP.

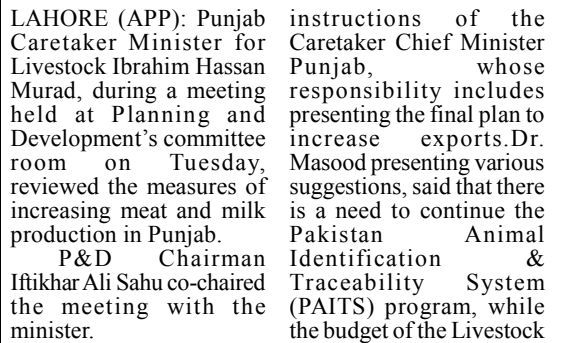
They said the applications were invited from land owners, developers, firms and eligible individuals for the supply of land for housing schemes (plots, houses and apartments) projects in major cities of the country.

The procedure for applications and selection was being followed as per Joint Venture Regulations 2020, they added.

They said the authority was planning to launch new residential projects in eight major cities of the country, including the twin cities Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Other cities are Lahore, Peshawar, Quetta, Multan, Faisalabad and Karachi.

"The new housing projects will be started for federal government employees and the general public on the basis of a joint venture," they added.

To a question, they said that the FGEHA would complete the development work of Green Enclave-II residential project of the government employees by 2025.



ISLAMABAD: A vendor displayed antique copper pots and decorating items in his wholesale handicraft shop at Sector F-6 in Federal Capital.

Minister for increasing milk, meat production

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Livestock Secretary Dr. Masood Anwar gave a detailed briefing and said that a special committee has been formed on the

instructions of the Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab, whose responsibility includes presenting the final plan to increase exports. Dr. Masood presenting various suggestions, said that there is a need to continue the Pakistan Animal Identification & Traceability System (PAITS) program, while the budget of the Livestock department needs to be increased to achieve the target, but more budget is required for medicines and de-worming.



Senator Saleem Mandiwalla, Chairman Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Revenue presiding over a meeting of the committee at Parliament House Islamabad.

At least 126 dead in northwest China earthquake

Monitoring Desk
GANSU: Rescuers in remote villages of northwest China dug through the rubble of collapsed homes on Tuesday after the country's deadliest earthquake in years killed at least 126 people and injured hundreds more.

State media said the shallow tremor just before midnight had caused the deaths of at least 113 and injured more than 530 in impoverished Gansu province, as of Tuesday afternoon.

A further 13 died, 182 were injured and 20 were missing in Haidong in neighbouring Qinghai province, state broadcaster CCTV reported.

The quake damaged more than 155,000 buildings, according to CCTV, and sent residents running into the freezing streets for safety.

At a village near the epicentre, AFP reporters saw huge cracks running through the exterior and interior walls of a brick home, and the roof of a building that had caved in completely. "I am 70 and I have never experienced such a powerful quake in my life," resident Ma Wenchang told AFP. "I can't live (in this house) anymore because it's too dangerous. My relatives have been relocated somewhere else." At another location, the top of a mosque had collapsed askew, and another building was reduced to mere rubble.

The roads were full of emergency and military vehicles, and the AFP team saw trucks covered in red banners reading "earthquake relief supplies".

The quake was China's deadliest since 2014, when more than 600 people died in southwestern Yunnan province. China's western hinterland carries the scars of frequent seismic activity, and a huge quake in Sichuan province in 2008 left more than 87,000 people dead or missing, including 5,335 schoolchildren.

The US Geological Survey said on Monday night's magnitude-5.9 quake struck at a shallow depth at 11:59 pm local time (1559 GMT) with an epicentre around 100 kilometres (60 miles) from Gansu's provincial capital, Lanzhou.

China's state news agency Xinhua reported the magnitude as 6.2 and said the shaking was felt as far away as the major city of Xi'an, about 570 kilometres away.

Dozens of smaller aftershocks followed, and officials warned that tremors with a magnitude of more than 5.0 were possible in the next few days.

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Residents keep warm around fires after an earthquake in Jishishan County, in northwest China's Gansu province.

Volcano erupts in southwestern Iceland, spewing magma in spectacular show of Earth's power

Monitoring Desk
GRINDAVIK: A volcano has erupted in southwestern Iceland, sending a flash of light into the evening sky and spewing semi-molten rock into the air in a spectacular show of Earth's power in the land known for fire and ice.

The eruption Monday night appears to have occurred about 4 kilometres (2.4 miles) from the town of Grindavik, the Icelandic Meteorological Office said. The town near Iceland's main airport was evacuated in November after strong seismic activity damaged homes and raised fears of an imminent eruption.

Iceland, which sits above a volcanic hotspot in the North Atlantic, averages an eruption every four to five years. The most disruptive in recent times was the 2010 eruption of the Eyjafjallajökull volcano, which spewed huge clouds of ash into the atmosphere and led to widespread airspace closures over Europe.

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Yemen rebels 'will not stop' Red Sea attacks: Huthi official

Monitoring Desk
SANAA: Yemen's Iran-backed Huthi rebels said Tuesday they would not halt attacks on Red Sea shipping despite the announcement by the United States of a new maritime protection force.

"Even if America succeeds in mobilising the entire world, our military operations will not stop... no matter the sacrifices it costs us," senior Huthi official Mohammed al-Bukhaiti said on X, formerly Twitter. Bukhaiti said the rebels would only halt their attacks if Israel's "crimes in

Gaza stop and food, medicines and fuel are allowed to reach its besieged population". He spoke after Pentagon chief Lloyd Austin announced a 10-nation coalition on Monday to quell Huthi missile and drone attacks on shipping passing through the Red Sea, with Britain, France and Italy among countries joining the "multinational security initiative".

Austin said the force would operate "with the goal of ensuring freedom of navigation for all countries and bolstering regional security and prosperity."

Ukraine's frontline judges deliver justice under fire

Monitoring Desk
UKRAINE: Olha Konoplenko's eastern Ukrainian city is occupied by Russian forces, but that hasn't stopped her from trying to uphold the law remotely as a judge.

Residents who fled Bakhmut, captured last May after months of fierce fighting, still rely on her and other exiled colleagues for key rulings.

"There's no city, but there are still its people,"

said Konoplenko, whose Artemivsk City District court now operates in a town farther from the front line of Russia's war in Ukraine.

She requested its exact location not be disclosed for security reasons.

Working in the war-torn east, parts of which have been occupied by Russian proxy forces since 2014, was never easy for local judges.



Members of Andhra Pradesh State Disaster Response Force (APSDRF) cut the branches of a fallen tree after Cyclone Michaung made landfall, in Nellore district, in the southern state of Andhra Pradesh, India.



Palestinians gather at the site of an Israeli strike on a house, amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas, in Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip.

Putin says Russia is ready to talk on Ukraine

Monitoring Desk
MOSCOW: President Vladimir Putin said on Tuesday that Russia would be prepared to talk to Ukraine, the United States and Europe about the future of Ukraine if they wanted to, but that Moscow would defend its national interests.

Putin, who sent troops into Ukraine in 2022, has repeatedly said he would be prepared to talk about peace, though Western officials say he is waiting for the U.S. presidential election in November before making a genuine effort.

"In Ukraine, those who are aggressive towards Russia, and in Europe and in the United States - do they want to negotiate? Let them. But we will do it based on our national interests," Putin told a meeting of the defence leadership in Moscow. "We will not give up what is ours." Russia controls about 17.5% of the territory that was internationally recognised as part of Ukraine as the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991. Russia annexed Crimea in 2014, and last year said the four additional regions of Ukraine that its troops partially control are part of Russia.

Taiwan reports another suspected Chinese weather balloon crossing Taiwan Strait

Monitoring Desk
TAIPEI: A suspected Chinese weather balloon flew across the sensitive Taiwan Strait on Monday but stayed well north of Taiwan, the island's defence ministry said on Tuesday, the third time this month Taipei has reported them nearby.

The potential for China to use balloons for spying became a global issue in February when the United States shot down what it said was a Chinese surveillance balloon. China said the balloon was a civilian craft that accidentally

drifted astray.

Taiwan is on high alert for Chinese activities, both military and political, ahead of Jan. 13 presidential and parliamentary elections. Taipei has warned of Beijing's efforts to interfere in the ballot to get voters to pick candidates China may prefer. Taiwan's defence ministry said the single balloon was detected at 9:09 a.m. (0109GMT) after crossing the strait's median line 67 nautical miles (124 km) northwest of the northern Taiwanese port city of Keelung.



French Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin and members of the French government attend the questions to the government session at the National Assembly ahead of a vote by members of parliament on immigration bill in Paris, France.

Indian opposition MPs suspended for demanding security breach statement

Monitoring Desk
NEW DELHI: When Bertolt Brecht wrote his acid account of the subversion of democracies by autocratic regimes, he would have hardly had the Indian parliament in mind.

In a move that would make the legendary German playwright's spirit squirm, the two houses of India's parliament on Monday saw the suspension of a total of 78 opposition MPs taking the toll of suspended MPs from December 15 to 92.

While 33 MPs were suspended in the Lok Sabha, 45 were suspended in the Rajya Sabha. On December 14, a total of 14 MPs (13 in Lok Sabha and one in Rajya Sabha) were suspended.

The suspensions come as both houses of parliament saw repeated adjournments amid calls from opposition MPs for a statement from Union home minister Amit Shah on the security breach in parliament on December 13.

Hundreds stranded as parts of India's Tamil Nadu flooded after heavy rain

Monitoring Desk
CHENNAI: Heavy rain has paralysed several parts of India's southern state of Tamil Nadu, inundating roads, affecting train services, and leaving authorities scrambling to rescue those stranded.

The deluge occurred while the state was still recovering from the damage caused by Cyclone Michaung, which lashed the coast this month, killing at least 13 people.

Tamil Nadu received almost 50 mm of rainfall between Sunday and Monday, compared with the 2.5 mm that would be normal at this time of year, the weather department said, and more rainfall is predicted on Tuesday.

Local media reported at least five people died in the flooding and accidents related to the rain, which primarily affected the districts of Tuticorin, Tirunelveli, Tenkasi and Kanyakumari. Entire neighbourhoods remained submerged on Tuesday, with houses appearing like lonely islands surrounded by murky, brown water, according to footage from Indian news agency ANI, in which Reuters has a minority stake. Teams were using inflatable rafts to rescue people from houses and temples, and to distribute food packets to those they were unable to move to safety.

UN agencies voice anger at attacks on Gaza hospitals

Monitoring Desk
GENEVA: UN officials voiced anger and disbelief on Tuesday about the situation in Gaza hospitals, where injured people do not have basic supplies and children recovering from amputations are being killed in the ongoing conflict.

"I'm furious that children who are recovering from amputations in hospitals are then killed in those hospitals," said James Elder, spokesperson for the UN children's agency.

Cyberattack hits Iran's petrol stations

Monitoring Desk
DUBAI: Iran's Oil Minister Javad Owji on Monday confirmed that ongoing nationwide disruption to petrol stations was caused by a cyberattack.

A hacking group that Iran accuses of having links to Israel claimed it carried out the attack that disrupted services at petrol stations across the country on Monday, Iranian state TV and Israeli local media reported.

Owji had earlier told Iranian state TV that services had been disrupted at about 70 per cent of Iran's petrol stations.

Erdogan says signals from US, Canada may help Turkey move on Sweden NATO bid

Monitoring Desk
ANKARA: Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan was quoted on Tuesday as saying that positive developments on the US sale of F-16 fighter jets to Ankara, and on Canada's arms embargo, would help Turkey's parliament move toward ratifying Sweden's NATO membership bid.

After long-time non-alignment, Sweden and Finland asked to join NATO last year after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. But NATO member Turkey raised objections over what it said was the two countries' protection of groups that Ankara deems terrorists.

Turkey endorsed

Finland's membership bid in April but, along with Hungary, it has kept Sweden waiting.

"Positive developments we expect both on (procuring US) F-16s and Canada's promises (on lifting its arms embargo) would help our parliament to have a positive approach to Sweden... All of them are linked," Erdogan told reporters on a flight returning from Hungary, according to a text shared by his office.

Turkey asked in October 2021 to buy 40 Lockheed Martin Corp (LMTN) F-16 fighters and 79 modernisation kits for its existing warplanes.

US, UAE work toward middle ground at UNSC

Monitoring Desk
UNITED NATIONS: The United States and the United Arab Emirates engaged in last-minute consultations on Monday as the UN Security Council prepared to vote on a new resolution urging an "urgent and sustainable cessation of hostilities" in Gaza.

The UAE resolution responds to escalating tensions in the region and growing impatience among key allies, notably the US, with Israel's military actions.

The resolution calls for an immediate and sustainable cessation of hostilities to allow safe and unhindered humanitarian access in Gaza and supports a two-stage solution. But it does not explicitly condemn Hamas, prompting objections from Israel and the US.

The move follows the recent US rejection of a Security Council resolution proposing a "humanitarian ceasefire" in the battered Palestinian territory. The rejection raised questions about the international community's stance on the conflict.

While the General Assembly, with 193 members, overwhelmingly supported a ceasefire, the Security Council has faced challenges in passing resolutions related to Gaza. Out of six proposed resolutions during the ongoing conflict, only one has been adopted, calling for "humanitarian pauses." America's key Western allies, such as France, the UK, and Germany, have joined global calls for a ceasefire.

Bangladesh train blaze kills four as opposition calls strike

Monitoring Desk
DHAKA: Protesters in Bangladesh set a train ablaze on Tuesday, killing four people, among them a mother and child, amid a nationwide strike called by the opposition to press its demand for the government to resign ahead of next month's general elections.

It was the latest strife sparked by anti-government protests in which dozens of buses and vehicles have been set on fire, with at least six people killed since Oct.

28, when an opposition rally turned violent.

"Strike supporters set fire to three compartments of an express train," said fire service official Shahjahan Shikder. "Four bodies have been retrieved from a compartment."

It was not immediately clear how many were aboard the train, headed for the capital of Dhaka from the northern district of Netrokona, when passengers saw the flames a short distance from its destination, police said.

Tokyo prosecutors search offices of key ruling party factions

Monitoring Desk
TOKYO: Tokyo prosecutors on Tuesday searched the offices of two powerful political factions within the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), public broadcaster NHK reported, in connection with the biggest fundraising scandal to engulf the party in decades.

Prosecutors suspect the Abe faction of failing to report as much as 500 million yen (\$3.5 million) in funds over five years, while the smaller Nikai faction was believed not to have

reported 100 million yen, NHK said. The Tokyo prosecutors' office declined to confirm the reports when contacted by Reuters.

The scandal has eroded public support for the LDP and Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's government, forcing him to replace key cabinet ministers last week as he tried to limit the fallout. Polls conducted over the weekend by the Asahi, Yomiuri and Nikkei newspapers put the embattled premier's support ratings around 20%.

Red Sea attacks force rerouting of vessels, disrupting supply chains

Monitoring Desk
DUBAI: Mounting attacks by the Iran-aligned Yemeni Houthi militant group on ships in the Red Sea are disrupting maritime trade as leading global freight firms reroute around the Cape of Good Hope to avoid the Suez canal.

The group said it launched a drone attack on a cargo vessel in the area on Monday, the latest in a series of missile and drone strikes on shipping which it says are a response to Israel's assault on the Gaza Strip.

Several major freight companies—including MSC—have begun to sail around Africa, adding costs and delays which are expected to be compounded over the coming weeks, according to industry analysts. About 15% of world shipping traffic transits via the Suez Canal, the shortest shipping route between Europe and Asia.

Combined, the companies that have diverted vessels "control around

half of the global container shipping market," ABN Amro analyst Albert Jan Swart told Reuters. "Avoiding the Red Sea will lead to higher cost due to longer travel time," Swart said.

Oil major BP (BPL) also temporarily paused all transits through the Red Sea, a sign the crisis - which has mostly affected goods freight until now - might broaden to include energy shipments. Crude oil prices rose on those concerns on Monday. The Houthi attacks were also forcing companies to rethink their connections with Israel, with Taiwan's Evergreen Marine (2603.TW) saying on Monday it had decided to temporarily stop accepting Israeli cargo.

"For the safety of ships and crew, Evergreen Line has decided to temporarily stop accepting Israeli cargo with immediate effect, and has instructed its container ships to suspend navigation through the Red Sea until further notice," it said in a statement.

President urges enhanced ties with Egypt, Oman, Bosnia, Sri Lanka, Cyprus

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Tuesday underscored the need for increasing cooperation with Egypt, Oman, Bosnia, Sri Lanka and Cyprus in the fields of trade, economy, and culture as their envoys-designate presented diplomatic credentials to him. The president expressed these views while talking to the envoys of the Arab Republic of Egypt, Sultanate of Oman, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Republic of Cyprus and the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.

The envoys presented their diplomatic credentials to the president and separately called on him, at the Aiwan-e-Sadr, a President House press release said. Welcoming Egyptian

Ambassador Dr Ihab Mohamed Abdelhamid Hassan, the president highlighted the importance Pakistan attached to its bilateral relations with Egypt, reflected by shared bonds of common faith, cultural affinities and values between the people of the two brotherly countries.

He emphasized the need for increasing the trade, economic and cultural cooperation between the two countries.

The president expressed Pakistan's deep concern over the killing of innocent people and the tremendous damage done to the public property in Gaza by the Israeli security forces. The Egyptian ambassador said that his country was supporting the hu-

manitarian aid to Gaza. Talking to Ambassador of Oman Fahad Sulaiman Khalaf al Kharusi, President Alvi said that Pakistan and Oman enjoyed excellent relations in various fields.

He informed the ambassador that Pakistan offered investment-friendly environment to the foreign investors and had constituted, in that regard, Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) that provided one window operation for investment in IT, cooperate farming, minerals and energy sectors.

The president also highlighted the atrocities being committed by India in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IIOJ&K).



The Ambassadors-Designate of the Arab Republic of Egypt, Sultanate of Oman, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Republic of Cyprus and the High Commissioner-Designate of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka presenting their credentials to President Dr. Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, Islamabad.

PM stresses effective training strategy to produce skilled human resource

QUETTA (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Tuesday termed skilled human resource the most important asset for a nation said effective training strategy was crucial to meet the needs of the contemporary world.

Addressing here at the launch of PM's Youth Skill Development Programme, he said in the era of technology and artificial-intelligence, there was a need to equip the youth with necessary up-to-date knowledge. PM Kakar said imparting skills to one person did not restrict to him but the families associated with him and also the coming generations benefit from it. He said the country was in dire need of such initiatives of social development which resulted in the overall uplift of the people.

Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Ali Mardan Domki said the provincial government was committed to providing every possible opportunity to the people of Balochistan. He said the provincial government had decided to set up the Balochistan Skilled Development Fund under the supervision of the Planning and Development Department. He said the government of China showed interest to provide a \$60 million grant for the development of Balochistan, of which the provincial government had the intention to use fifty percent on skilled development of youth. Federal Minister for Education Madad Ali Sindhi said imparting skills to youth was the main ingredient of empowering them by helping them qualify for employment.



QUETTA: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar inaugurates the broadcast Hazargi language programmes on PTV Bolan.

Caretaker CM terms historic initiative: Longstanding demand of Hazara community met with launch of transmission in Hazargi on PTV

Independent Report QUETTA: The caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki has expressed pleasure over the launch of transmission in Hazargi language from Pakistan Television Quetta center and said that the longstanding demand of Hazara community has been met with the historic initiative.

In a statement issued here on Tuesday, the Chief Minister said that the start of transmission in the Hazargi language on PTV

Quetta center, longstanding demand of Hazara community has been met. Mr. Domki said that PTV filled numerous colours in the lives of Pakistanis after it was established in 1960s, which is still imprinted in their minds and hearts.

The caretaker Chief Minister said that the news section of the state-run TV has been criticized because of the mouthpiece of the governments, but still there's no two opinions that it had been the only

authentic source of news for several decades.

Even today, the private media refers the state-run TV acknowledging it the authentic source of news, which shows its credibility, Mr. Domki maintained.

The Chief Minister expressed the hope that PTV would also maintain its uniqueness in telecasting the healthy programmes and providing the authentic news maintaining the lead in the present competitive era.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Religious Affairs & Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed talking to media along with Caretaker Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture Jamal Shah to inaugurate two-week long "Teaching of Calligraphy to Madrasah Students as a creative segment of Curriculum" at PNCA.

Religious minister highlights urgency of interfaith understanding

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed on Tuesday emphasized the need for understanding among different religious beliefs, asserting that the current global scenario doesn't represent a clash of civilizations but a confrontation with ignorance.

Talking to French Ambassador Nicolas Gale, the minister strongly condemns targeting of civilians, including children, in hospitals, refugee camps and schools in Palestine. These uncivilized acts require immediate global attention and intervention.

Expressing vehement disapproval, he highlighted the unprecedented and appalling targeting of innocent civilians, including children,

in hospitals, refugee camps, schools, and places of worship. Such acts, deemed utterly uncivilized, demand swift global attention and intervention.

During the discussions, a mutual consensus emerged on the imperative of providing respect, trust, and equitable facilities to minority populations worldwide.

Ambassador Nicolas Gale stressed the pivotal role of education in fostering tolerance and love among the younger generation, transcending religious differences.

Moreover, he commended the government's scholarly circles' support for minorities post the tragic events of Jordanwala, acknowledging the clear stance against indifference to such acts.



QUETTA: A protest rally of Pashtoonkwa Milli Awami Party led by Dr. Hamid Achakzai, Abdul Rahim Ziaratwal & others passing through Manan chowk.

PML-N to emerge as largest party in general election: Sheikh Jafar

QUETTA (APP): Former president of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Balochistan Sheikh Jafar Khan Mandukhel on Tuesday said that PML-N would emerge as the largest party in the general elections and the next government in Balochistan could be of PML-N.

He expressed these views while addressing on the occasion of former MNA Sardar Israr Tareen joining to Pakistan Muslim League-N.

He said that the PML-N had become stronger in Balochistan with the joining of tribal elders of Harnai

in the Party. On this occasion, Sardar Israr Tareen said that many tribes of Harnai were in contact with us to join PML-N, saying that he would struggle to further strengthen the Party in Harnai.

The expectations from the Balochistan Awami Party have not been fulfilled, he said.

Former provincial minister Muhammad Dummar, while addressing on the occasion, said that Sardar Israr Tareen Harnai was related to a famous and well-known tribe.

Pakistan's cultural diversity a source of its strength as federation: PM

QUETTA (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Tuesday said Pakistan as a federation derived its strength from diversity of its cultures, traditions and languages with every ethnicity having a unique binding factor.

"Pakistan is not about monotony or uniculturalism, but a blend of cultural identities that strongly hold and integrate each other," he said at the launch of a Pakistan Television's programming in Hazargi language.

PM Kakar said like other provinces, Balochistan was a rich kladioscope of ethnicities and tribes with their cultures and values imbibed with Baloch values.

He lauded the Hazara community of Balochistan,

terming their contribution as significant for the development of Quetta and the province.

He mentioned the prominent figures of the Hazara community including former Governor of Balochistan General (ret) Muhammad Musa, Sardar Sadaat and Brigadier Khadim Hussain who earned respect due to their integrity.

He paid tribute to the Hazara community who demonstrated resilience while braving the challenge of terrorism, which hit all segments of the country.

He expressed the resolve that with unity, the nation could defeat the elements that created divide and differences among communities.

PM Kakar vowed to

make Balochistan and Pakistan a hub of peace, saying that peace prospers arts.

The prime minister felicitated the Hazaras on the launch of PTV's programming in their regional language and termed it as a tribute to all the martyrs of Hazara community who sacrificed their lives for the homeland.

He expressed confidence that the talented community would use the platform to highlight their beautiful culture as an important feather to the country's diversity.

PM Kakar said PTV was a historic asset that glued the nation through its outstanding programmes and vowed the government's continued assistance for the uplift of the organization.

Repatriation of illegal Afghans continues: over 438,000 return home

ISLAMABAD (INP): The process of repatriation for irregular Afghans residing in Pakistan is ongoing, with another 1,586 individuals returning to their home country on December 18th. This brings the total number of repatriated Afghans to over 438,000 since the initiative began.

The breakdown of those who returned on December 18th highlights the family nature of the movement, with 365 men, 298 women, and 923 children crossing the border. This trend reflects broader concerns about irregular migration's impact on vulnerable populations, particularly women and children.

It's important to note that even before the official repatriation process commenced, many irregular Afghans were already choosing to return home due to fears of potential arrest. This indicates a complex interplay of factors influencing migration patterns, including economic hardship, security concerns, and family reunification desires.

While the repatriation exercise is ongoing across Pakistan, Karachi stands out as a city with a historically large irregular population.

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QUETTA: Sui Southern Gas Company (SSGC) General Manager, Muhammad Anwar Baloch addresses during public awareness campaign for winter season.

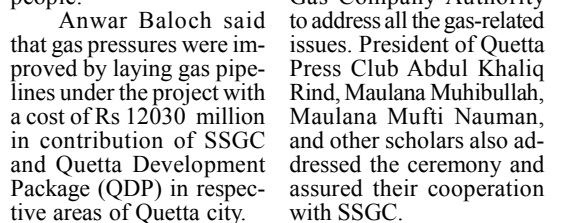
Gas leakage accidents to control by following winter safety measures: Anwar

QUETTA (APP): Acting General Manager (AGM) Sui Southern Gas Company (SSGC) Balochistan Anwar Baloch on Tuesday said that gas leakage accidents could be controlled only by adopting all safety measures during the winter season in respective areas of Balochistan.

He said that 8-inch gas pipelines were also being laid down on both sides of Sariab road which would be completed by the end of December or mid of January. He said that the citizens should take precautionary measures in the use of gas heaters in winter to avoid any accidents. BUJ's President Irfan Saeed said in his address that it was the responsibility of the Gas Company Authority to address all the gas-related issues. President of Quetta Press Club Abdul Khaliq Rind, Maulana Muhibullah, Maulana Mufti Nauman, and other scholars also addressed the ceremony and assured their cooperation with SSGC.

After laying the pipeline in Sabzal Road, Nawan Killi, Spiny Road and adjoining areas, the gas pressure has been recovered, he said. He said that measures were being taken to solve gas-related issues on a priority basis to facilitate the people of Balochistan.

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QUETTA: Muslim League (PML-N) Provincial President, Sheikh Jafar Khan Mandukhel addresses to media persons during press conference held at Quetta press club.



QUETTA (APP): Levies Force arrested an alleged robber and recovered a stolen bike from his possession in Kalat Town on Tuesday.

PHC stops EC from initiating any proceeding against PTI

PESHAWAR (Online): Peshawar High Court (PHC) has restrained election commission from initiating proceedings against PTI till December 21.

PTI petitions filed against election commission notices on the matters of election symbols and PTI intra party election came up for hearing before PHC Tuesday.

Justice Attique Shah and Justice Sahibzada Asadullah heard the petitions.

During the hearing of the case, election commission representative said we will file reply.

Upon it, the court directed EC not to initiate any proceedings against PTI till December 21.

The hearing of the case was adjourned till December 21.

ECP announces guidelines for intending election candidates

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Tuesday announced its guidelines to the candidates intending to submit nominations for the national and provincial assemblies' seats. According to the election schedule nomination papers can be filed from Dec 20-22.

The nomination papers can be filed from 8:30 in the morning till 4:30 in the afternoon. "The nomination fees for the National Assembly candidates and provincial assemblies' candidates have been Rs 30,000 and 20,000 respectively," ECP said. The candidate can pay the fees in cash or deposit it in a branch of a bank.

"A candidate will submit his/her income tax returns of three years, annexed with nomination papers," the guidelines read. "The copies of full passport of the candidate would also require to be annexed with nomination papers". "The age of a candidate on last date of submitting the nomination papers must not be less than 25 years," ECP said. "A candidate of the National Assembly seat must be a voter of any place within Pakistan".

Robber held with stolen bike in Kalat

QUETTA (APP): Levies Force arrested an alleged robber and recovered a stolen bike from his possession in Kalat Town on Tuesday.

According to a Levies Force source, a man informed the patrolling Levies Force that a robber snatched his bike from him and fled away.

The Levies Force chased and apprehended him along with a stolen motorbike at the police area.

The arrested robber was handed to police for further investigation.



QUETTA: Members of Balochistan Union of Journalists (BUJ) are holding protest demonstration against killing of Senior Journalist Jan Muhammad Mahar and demanding to arrest his murderers, at Quetta press club.

DC for safety arrangements in view of possible heavy rains, snowfall

PISHIN (APP): Deputy Commissioner (DC) Pishin Captain @ Juma Dad Khan Mandukhel on Tuesday chaired a meeting regarding preparations and safety arrangements of the departments concerned in view of the possible heavy rains and snowfall in winter.

The meeting was attended by Assistant Commissioners of all Tehsils and officers of other relevant departments including Irrigation Department, PDMA, Education, Health, C&W and Municipal Corpora-

tion. In the meeting, the Deputy Commissioner discussed cooperation and maintenance of storm drains under the comprehensive strategy between the concerned departments.

Directing the improvement and cleaning of the sewage system, he said that action should be taken against the encroachments on all storm drains before the rains and snowfalls saying that in this regard, the concerned departments should ensure immediate implementation.

Water accounting, resources assessment standards stressed to address water challenges

QUETTA (APP): Pakistan is grappling with critical water challenges that could have severe consequences for its economy and society. The urgency of the situation to this effect was recognized at a consultative workshop on water accounting and water resources assessment standards, organized by the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) Pakistan, with funding from UKaid here Tuesday to support the implementation of National Water Policy.

Following a federal-level water accounting workshop held in March this year, a series of pro-

vincial-level workshops are now being held to better assess the status of water accounting mechanisms within each province and to enhance the capacity of provincial departments in this regard. Dr. Mohsin Hafeez, Director, Water, Food and Ecosystems, IWMI through virtual interaction provided an insightful overview of the WRAP programme and its component one which focused on the climate resilient solutions for improving water governance (CRS-IWaG).

He said, "Let's pave the way for a sustainable future, identifying hotspots and solutions for better water management in

Balochistan, by unveiling a game-changing water accounting framework to track water sources, consumption, and availability". He offered stakeholders to visit Okara district where most of the climate resilient solutions are being implemented that could be up-scaled to other districts of Pakistan.

Prof. Dr. Khalid Hafeez, Vice Chancellor Balochistan University of Information Technology, Engineering and Management Sciences (BUITEMS) who was the chief guest on this occasion, said that Balochistan was impacted due to acute water shortages and climate change.