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Anti-Pakistan rumour mill in full gear on social media

COAS vows to eliminate mafias with support of nation

Social media is being used to create an environment of chaos, despair, and panic; Fake news being used to portray state in decline; Says provinces major beneficiary of Green Initiative, farmers & agri research to also benefit

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir has said that social media is rife with fabricated claims against the state of Pakistan as he came down hard on anti-national elements.

"Social media is being used to create an environment of chaos, despair, and panic. Through fake news, an impression is being created that the state is losing its [writ], the army chief said in an address to the National Farmers Convention in Islamabad on Friday.

In his address to the farmers, the army chief further said that "rumours" and "negative impressions" were being spread about Pakistan.

"But you should know that only two states were established on the bases of the Kalima: the state of Madina and Pakistan," COAS Munir said,

emphasising divine backing to the country.

APP adds: Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir on Friday said that a major part of the income of Green Pakistan Initiative would go to the provinces, while the rest would be kept for farmers and agricultural research.

The role of the Pakistan Army in it was only to serve the people and farmers, he said while addressing the National Farmers' Convention, according to official sources.

The Army Chief said that agriculture and cattle rearing was the occupation of almost every Prophet, for it involved discipline, suffering, growth, and patience, resulting in immense rewards.

"Rumours and negative things are being said about Pakistan, but you should know that two states were

established in the name of Kalma, State of Tayyaba and State of Pakistan, this is not a coincidence," the COAS said.

Pakistan, he said, was rich in resources. "It has glaciers, rivers, mountains, and fertile land from which the world's best rice, fruits like mandarin orange and mango, granite, gold and copper are produced."

In the sixties, the COAS said, Pakistan was the fastest growing country in Asia, "but we forgot the three golden principles of Quaid-i-Azam - faith, unity, discipline, due to which it suffered degradation." The Army Chief added that the aim of the Green Pakistan Initiative was to work on agriculture first on a priority basis. Agriculture malls would be organized in all districts where all kinds of agricultural facilities would be available to the farmers, the COAS said.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar and Chief of the Army Staff, Syed Asim Munir participating in the National Farmer's Convention

Does caretaker govt wants to derail election: IHC

ISLAMABAD (Online): Islamabad High Court (IHC) has allowed meeting between PTI founder and PTI chairman under the supervision of Superintendent Adiala Jail. Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb has remarked horrendous system is running under caretaker government. According permission for consultation in connection with general election is basic right.

He further remarked does the care government want to derail the election.

He gave these remarks while hearing the petition filed by chairman PTI and other lawyers in connection with permission for meeting and consultation with PTI founder Friday.

It has been requested in the petition that permission be given to chairman PTI Gauhar Khan to make consultation with PTI founder.

The court ordered that meeting between chairman

PTI and founder PTI be arranged under supervision of superintendent Adiala jail.

The court remarked permission for consultation in connection with the general election is basic right. The caretaker government should be impartial in the election. Opposing consultation between PTI chairman and PTI founder by the care taker government raises question on its neutrality.

Additional Attorney General (AAG) and Superintendent Adiala jail appeared in the court. Counsel Shoaib Shaheen took the plea in the court consultation is needed for distribution of 700 tickets of PTI. The court expressed annoyance over opposing the maintainability of the petition by AAG remarking was the additional note issued by Supreme Court not enough for you. Do you want to get write a note by me too against you after SC.

FO spox confirms India's request to extradite Hafiz Saeed

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan has received a request from the Indian authorities, seeking extradition of Lashkar-e-Taiba founder Hafiz Saeed, the Foreign Office spokesperson said Friday.

Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch stated this in response to media queries regarding India's request to extradite Hafiz Saeed.

The spokesperson said the request had been made by India in a so-called money laundering case.

"It is pertinent to note that no bilateral extradition treaty exists between Pakistan and India," she added.

Nomination papers of Murad rejected

PESHAWAR (APP): The nomination papers of former communication minister and PTI leader, Murad Saeed for constituency NA-4 Swat have been rejected by the Returning Officer on Friday.

Local leader of PTI, Suhail Sultan Advocate while confirming the rejection of Murad Saeed's nomination papers, said the reason behind the denial of the nomination paper would soon be made public.

Murad Saeed was earlier elected as MNA from the same constituency in 2018 and later performed as federal minister for communication.

IHC allows PTI leaders to hold election meetings with Imran in jail

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Friday granted PTI leaders and lawyers permission to visit ex-premier Imran Khan who is incarcerated at Adiala Jail and hold election meetings in the run-up to the February 8 polls.

The order was passed by Justice Miangul Hasan Aurangzeb on a petition filed by Imran seeking permission to hold meetings with party members Asad Qaiser, Junaid Akbar Khan, senators Aurangzeb Khan and Dost Mohammad Khan, and Ishtiaq Meherban, among others, to strategise ahead of the elections.

Banks to remain open on Saturday, Sunday for tax collection

KARACHI (APP): The State Bank of Pakistan on Friday directed all banks to keep their branches open on Saturday and Sunday for collection of taxes, duties and other government receipts. "The branches of all banks that are open on Saturday shall observe extended working hours till 5:00 p.m. Saturday, December 30, 2023 and till 8:00 p.m. on Sunday, December 31, 2023 for collection of taxes through alternate delivery channels and over-the-counter facilities," an SBP press release said.

The central bank also advised NIFT to arrange special clearings at 3:00 p.m. on Saturday and at 5:00 p.m. on Sunday to ensure same day clearing and settlement of payment instruments.

PM Kakar says Agriculture holds immense importance for socio-economic dev. at grassroots level

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Friday said that agriculture held immense importance for socio-economic development of the country at the grassroots level.

The prime minister, addressing the National Farmers' Convention as the chief guest, appreciated the collaborative work of ministries and departments for achieving various milestones under the umbrella of Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) and stressed the need to expedite various initiatives, according to a press release issued by the PM Office's Media Wing.

Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir was the Guest of Honour on the occasion.

The event was attended by federal ministers, agricultural experts and senior government officials.

The COAS, in his address, emphasised that the

farmers were the backbone of the country's agriculture sector.

"It's your untiring hard work, toil and determination that plays a pivotal role in ensuring food security for millions of Pakistanis. You make us and the entire nation proud," he added.

He said that the climate change and water scarcity were realities that challenged Pakistan's food security and necessitated use of technology and close government-public collaboration as being done under SIFC.

"Pakistan is endowed with immense potential and abundant resources. Together, we will navigate through these challenging times, by the grace of Allah, and attain our goals across every sector, InshaAllah," he added.

The COAS said that the dividends of all initiatives by SIFC would help Pakistan come out of the economic crisis.



KARACHI: Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed Ashraf giving away efficiency shield to the winning unit of Pakistan Navy for best performance during Fleet Efficiency Competition Parade 2023 held at Pakistan Navy Dockyard

Pakistan Navy conducts fleet annual efficiency competition parade

KARACHI (APP): Pakistan Navy Fleet Annual Efficiency Competition Parade was held here at Pakistan Navy Dockyard upon the culmination of the operational year.

Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf graced the occasion as Chief Guest that marked the culmination of a rewarding and eventful operational year for Pakistan Navy ships, submarines and aircrafts, a Pakistan Navy news release said.

Upon arrival at the venue, the chief guest was received by Commander Pakistan Fleet Vice Admiral Muhammad Faisal Abbasi and a smartly turned-out contingent presented the Guard of Honour.

The Chief of the Naval Staff expressed complete satisfaction and confidence over the operational preparedness of the Pakistan Navy Fleet. He acknowledged and praised the dedication and professionalism of officers and men in successfully achieving operational objectives and milestones for the year 2023.

The Admiral commended PN Fleet's efforts and contributions towards maritime security. The chief guest also mentioned the modernization plan of the Pakistan Navy wherein various platforms are being inducted in the Fleet. He underscored that induction of these platforms will immensely contribute towards capability enhancement of the Fleet.



LARKANA: Chairman PPP Bilawal Bhutto Zardari showering flowers at the grave of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto at Garhi Khuda Bakhsh.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Minister for IT and Telecommunications Dr Umar Saif is being briefed by Chairman PTA Major General (Retd) Hafeez-ur-Rehman on the affairs of the department at PTA headquarters.

Dr. Umar Saif says Scope of national roaming facility to be extended to National Highways, Motorways

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication, Dr Umar Saif, said on Friday that the national roaming facility's scope would be extended to motorways and national highways to facilitate travellers.

During his visit to the headquarters of the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA), Dr. Umar Saif said, "The government is taking all possible steps to promote the telecom sector in the country."

Chairman PTA, Major General Hafeezur Rehman, Member Compi-

ance & Enforcement PTA, Dr. Khawar Siddique Khokhar, and senior officers of MoIT&T and PTA were present on the occasion.

Senior officers briefed the minister about the functions of PTA, regulatory initiatives, and the overall performance of the telecom sector.

The minister was informed that the PTA has consistently facilitated the thriving telecom industry in Pakistan, providing state-of-the-art telecom, broadband, and ICT services. The challenges faced by the sector and the regulator's ongoing efforts to address them were also discussed.

Faizabad Dharna case: Faiz Hameed summoned by commission to record his statement

ISLAMABAD (Online): Former DG ISI Gen (Retd) Faiz Hameed has been summoned by commission to record his statement in Faizabad Dharna case.

According to sources Faiz Hameed has been summoned by the commission in TLP Faizabad Dharna case for the second time.

The call up notice was sent to former DG ISI through ministry of defence.

According to sources he will record his state-

ment in Faizabad Dharna case.

Being former government officer Faiz Hameed will assist the commission in Faizabad dharna case and collection of evidences regarding reasons.

Faiz Hameed was summoned in second week of December too. He could not appear before commission as the first notice was not timely received.

Commission is likely to finalize its report in the second week of January.

Four killed in road accident near Khuzdar

KHUZDAR (APP): At least four people were killed in a road accident that occurred near Karkh area of Khuzdar district of Baluchistan province, Rescue and TV Channel reported on Friday.

According to details, two rashly driven vehicles collided with each other near Karkh area, resulted in killing of four persons on the spot. Police and Rescue team rushed to the site, and shifted the bodies to a nearby hospital.

Police are investigating the matter.

According to details, Rescue sources said that two overspeeding vehicles collided, as a result, four people lost their lives on the spot, private news channels reported.

The bodies and injured were shifted to the hospital.

Senate session adjourned due to lack of quorum

ISLAMABAD (Online): The Senate briefly met at the Parliament House in Islamabad Friday with President Officer Rubina Khalid in the chair.

At the outset, lack of quorum was pointed out upon which the chair adjourned the House to meet again on Monday at 2:30 p.m.

Shehbaz conveys Nawaz Sharif's 'important' message to MQM-P

KARACHI (INP): In a much-anticipated meeting, the president of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Shehbaz Sharif, conveyed the 'important' message of Nawaz Sharif to the Muttahida Quami Movement Pakistan (MQM-P) leadership in Karachi on Friday.

According to the details, the PML-N president, Shehbaz Sharif, along with other party leaders reached the Markaz of MQM-P in Bahadurabad, Karachi.

The MQM-P leadership including Khalid

Maqbool, Farooq Sattar, Mustafa Kamal, Aminul Haque, and others welcomed the PML-N leaders in Karachi.

The meeting was attended by prominent leaders of both political parties including Mustafa Kamal, Dr. Farooq Sattar, Aminul Haque, Nasreen Jilil, Javed Hanif, Anees Qaim Khan, and other provincial committee members.

Sources claimed that the former PM will also hold a separate meeting with the Convener, Deputy Convener, and Senior Deputy Convener later



KARACHI: Former Prime Minister and Muslim League (PML-N) President, Shehbaz Sharif along with Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, Convener Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM-P) talking to media persons at MQM-P Bahadurabad Head Office

Inter-Ministerial Committee meeting reviews AJK-based mega development projects

MIRPUR (AJK): (APP): A meeting of the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Friday discussed issues related to the AJK-based mega projects Neelum Jhelum Hydropower Agreement, Mangala Dam Up-Raising project, Production Cost of Electricity, Reconstruction of Rathoa Hariyam Bridge and other matters were discussed thereabout.

The meeting, held in the federal metropolis, was jointly chaired by Prime Minister Azad Jammu Kashmir Chaudhry Anwar ul Haq and Federal Defense Minister Gen. (ret) Anwar Haider Ali,

was attended, among others, by senior minister Col. (Retd) Waqar Ahmad Noor, minister for Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Mian Abdul Waheed, Finance Minister Abdul Majid Khan. The meeting participants expressed their resolve to solve all the issues amicably. The committee headed by Federal caretaker Defense Minister General (ret) Anwar Haider Ali, decided to form working groups on all the issues, which would submit the report to the central committee after completing the recommendations as per ToR.



RAWALPINDI: Inter Ministerial Committee on AJ&K being chaired by Minister for Defence, Lt. Gen (Retd) Anwar Ali Hyder co-chaired by Prime Minister Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), Chaudhary Anwar-ul-Haq held at Ministry of Defence in Rawalpindi.

Daily Voice of Masses
Independent

Wasted harvests

That an agricultural country is facing food shortages sounds almost like an oxymoron. But Pakistan is a country where truth is stranger than fiction. In our truth, the world's eighth largest producer of agricultural output is failing to achieve food security. On Wednesday, medical experts came together to attend the 26th Annual Sustainable Development Conference organized by the SDPI, and suggested that a change in dietary preferences and reduction in food waste can help the country reduce its ever-evolving problems of food insecurity and malnutrition. On the 2023 Global Hunger Index, Pakistan ranks 102 out of 125 countries and has a level of hunger that is 'serious'. And it is rather alarming that the country has done nothing to improve its situation. While it is true that Pakistan is a poor country that relies mostly on food imports to meet the basic needs and that after the 2022 floods the country faced multifaceted challenges including the loss of crop and the financial inability to have a smooth flow of imports, policymakers show a complete lack of will when it comes to doing something on our own to meet the targets of food security. Pakistan needs external financing to rebuild the areas destroyed by the floods, but nothing in the world encourages the country to sacrifice its green, fertile lands for housing schemes, allowing power-hungry capitalists to increase their assets. Cutting down mango orchards to develop posh housing societies, for example, is clearly in the hands of the Pakistan government, and policymakers here willingly approve such plans, with complete disregard to the ecological impacts such projects may have. It is extremely shocking that a year after the floods, a 50 per cent increase in the child undernutrition rate has been reported, which means that around 44 per cent of children under five are now stunted. Post the floods, unbridled inflation snatched away the little purchasing power that most people had. Not only did price hikes affect the poor, but the well-off also started feeling the pinch of inflation and ultimately watered down their donation activities, hitting the poor and the working class hard.

Elections and elitism

By Hussain H Zaidi

As the nation gears up for national elections, the question that dominates media and political discourse is: which party will carry the day? Will it be the current favourites – the PML-N? Or will the PTI, which is currently under a cloud, have the last laugh? Or will master politician Asif Zardari pull a rabbit out of the hat? While this question is important, particularly for the political parties, their supporters, movers and shakers (both actual and self-styled) and bookmakers, it boils down to answering which among the elite will rule 240 million plus people. A more fundamental question for the people at large is whether the forthcoming elections usher in an improved lot for them. The fact that the country has remained in the grip of hyperinflation over the past two years, which has put both low- and middle-income households in a spot, will make the state of the economy a major contributor to the electoral outcome. That said, the economic question is much wider – the price spiral being only part of it – and pertains to moving towards a more egalitarian, or let's dispense with euphemism, a less elitist society. As a rule, the leading political parties in Pakistan have their heads in the cloud when facing the problem of egalitarianism or elitism. Yes, in manifestos and speeches, they do virulently attack elitism. Yet, while in the saddle, they do little to attenuate it, as their economic policies aim at making the affluent better off through tax relief and subsidies. Since democracy is a people-centred political system, one would expect that in a democracy elitism would be conspicuous by its absence. However, in both theory and practice, democracy and elitism are not mutually exclusive. The elite theory popularized by Italian social scientists Pareto and Mosca argues that all societies, regardless of the form of government, are governed by one or more political elites. Pakistan has often been

described as an elitist state. The essential narrative is that the national economy was captured by a small elite, which both manipulated the market and controlled the state. The result was a vicious combination of inefficient resource allocation (market failure) and inequitable income distribution (government failure). The elite has been so powerful that a change in government, or even a transition from despotism to democracy and vice versa, failed to hold it in check. Instead, successive governments strengthened, as well as in return benefited, from elite capture. Their policies on the one hand promoted cronyism and rent seeking and on the other neglected social sector and human resource development so that the elite's preeminent position remained unchallenged. The already scarce resources were allocated primarily to grand infrastructure-related projects in the name of development. Such projects served as a source of rent for the businesses and commissions and kickbacks for the people in power. The PTI has been a strong exponent of this narrative. However, during its four years in power, its support for the elite wasn't any less. The bottles might have changed but the wine was the same. Even if successive governments didn't by design promote elitism, it can't be denied that for one reason or another, social welfare has taken a backseat in public policies. Besides, welfare policies have had a very narrow focus – viz income transfer to the people at the bottom of the economic heap. A case in point is the Benazir Income Support Programme. While cash transfers may help the recipients survive another day, they are an extremely weak instrument for promoting public welfare or even poverty alleviation. The ultimate test of a poverty alleviation programme is that the number of its beneficiaries shrinks over the years and the programme eventually phases out. Cash transfers serve elitism in that they perpetuate the culture of

dependence on the elite, as the recipients by and large have neither the incentive nor the opportunity to become socially useful economic agents. Though in normal circumstances cash transfers make little economic sense, these are an important means of garnering political support and winning elections. Human resource development (HRD) is an important means of increasing public welfare in the long run. This is especially true of a labour-abundant country like Pakistan, which will always find it tough to realize its growth potential without adequate HRD. However, HRD has remained a neglected area in Pakistan. Not surprisingly, Pakistan is presently ranked 161 among 191 nations on the UNDP's Human Development Index (HDI), which comprises three broad indicators: life expectancy at birth, expected and mean years of schooling, and per capita national income. The country is placed under the 'Low Human Development' category, the lowest category. Although between 1990 and 2021, Pakistan's HDI value has gone up from 0.400 to 0.544, it is still well behind the average score for the world (0.732), developing countries (0.685) and South Asia (0.632). The HDI doesn't directly take into account income distribution. However, countries' HDI performance is adjusted for inequality in income distribution and other relevant indicators. Pakistan's current inequality-adjusted HDI value is 0.380 compared with the world average of 0.590, developing countries' average of 0.538, and the South Asian average of 0.476. Pakistan's coefficient of human inequality is 29.2 compared with the world average of 19.4, developing countries' average of 21.4, and South Asian nations' average of 24.3. The coefficient is measured on a scale of 0-100. Zero means perfect equality, while 100 means perfect inequality. - Courtesy The News

Why the silence?

By Zubeida Mustafa

Recently, at a history conference on academic freedom held at SZABIST, a session was devoted to analysing the culture of silence that has come to prevail in our academia. It was attributed to the penchant of the powers that be to clamp down on the free expression of opinion by scholars who want to expose the unpleasant truths of our history. If they choose to defy censorship guidelines, the consequences can be dire for them. It was also pointed out correctly by a speaker that traditionally our society silences children; they are discouraged from asking questions and are not permitted to speak up before their elders. Another panellist blamed the teachers for failing to create interest in the students in what was being taught in the classroom. As a result, the students had no desire to acquire knowledge. Unfortunately, no one spoke of the self-imposed culture of silence created by the government's language policy in the education system. There is overemphasis on the use of the English language, despite the teachers' lack of proficiency in it. The government's decision to make English compulsory for all schoolchildren and also allow its use as the medium of instruction in private schools has created a dichotomy. Worse is the recent — not publicly announced — move of the Sindh government to introduce English as the medium of instruction in all public-sector schools in Karachi's District South. These unwise policies are destroying education in Pakistan while creating fissures in our already class-ridden soci-

ety. Inequality and injustice are on the rise driven by a fractured education system. All this is shaping social attitudes. English is 'good'. Urdu (or any local language) is 'bad'. Those who study in 'English-medium schools' are good and get jobs. Those who go to a school that does not claim to use English as the medium of instruction are scum of the earth, worthy of marginalisation. Is it then surprising that all are now chasing English for their survival and, paradoxically, self-destruction? How does this phenomenon create a culture of silence? It robs the youth of their confidence. I experienced this a fortnight ago when invited by the Urban Resource Centre to distribute certificates to some students who had completed the 18th Community Architect Training Course. This is a valuable service the URC renders to communities by training young men and women to map their dwellings and improve ventilation and sanitation, while arranging their visits to various localities where they meet the denizens of the real Pakistan. Nearly 292 people have been trained so far. I was asked to give a lecture on double standards in education. Instead, I decided to have a discourse based on the participants' own school experiences. Each of them gave an identical account of their school education. They had all studied in a school that claimed to be 'English medium'. The teachers spoke in Urdu but the students had to read, write and learn from textbooks that were in English. After they had introduced themselves they fell silent. They appeared smart but no one questioned this hybrid

style of pedagogy that is accepted by all concerned with education in Pakistan. This bizarre pedagogy produces tragic results. The children do not learn English. Neither do they learn the subjects they are taught in it. Yet it is foolishly believed that a dual purpose is served. This absurd pedagogy, a post-colonial product, has five results. 1) It does not teach a student how to express his own thoughts in any language. 2) The child resorts to rote learning. 3) The concept is not clearly understood by the child. 4) In the process, the children forget their own language and 5) they are dumbed. When they see children from elite schools speaking "fur fur in English" (the dream of a child from Lyari in Karachi, herself struggling with the language), they internalise the loss of self-esteem they suffer. A few days later, I telephoned a number of these certificate holders to ask them why they didn't speak up when I had wanted them to. It was then — after they had listened to my talk — that they became vocal. One said that the silence I witnessed was a normal pattern at such events. Another said that once she had an argument with someone on the language issue and had been humiliated by the speaker (not at the URC). As a result, she chooses silence. The culture of silence is so deeply ingrained in children that even in the comfort zone of the URC, where there are no language restrictions, students fail to shed the inhibitions they imbibed in early childhood. It actually affects their psyche. Their sense of dignity is violated and they develop an inferiority complex. Should good education be doing that?—Courtesy Dawn

Commerce News

SBP emphasizes on role of fiscal policy, effective administration for price, financial stability

Independent Report
KARACHI: The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), on Friday, emphasized the role of fiscal policy and effective administration for price and financial stability, particularly rationalization of government spending, increasing revenue collection, strengthening food and energy supply chains, and enhancing productivity. The central bank, in its Governor's Annual

Report (GAR) for the fiscal year 2022-23 issued here, also vowed to continue taking decisions to prevent high inflation from becoming entrenched and keep inflation expectations anchored to achieve the medium-term target of 5-7% by the end of FY25, with FY24 inflation moderating to 20-22 per cent on account of the impact of contractionary monetary policy, improvements in

domestic supplies, softer non-energy global commodity prices, and the high base effect. However, the Report added that "this outlook hinges on the absence of adverse shocks stemming from geopolitical tensions and unforeseen climate events, and unfavourable movements in global commodity prices." The GAR 2022-23 is published Under Section 39 (1) of the State Bank of

Pakistan Act, 1956 which requires the governor to submit to the Parliament an annual report regarding the Bank's objectives, the conduct of monetary policy, the state of the economy and the financial system. The GAR stated that fiscal year 2023 was extraordinarily challenging, with a host of external and domestic shocks, amplified by lingering structural weaknesses.



KARACHI: Deputy Governor SBP calls on Caretaker Federal Minister for Commerce and Industries & Production Dr. Gohar Ejaz at Governor House.

Weekly inflation up by 0.37 percent

ISLAMABAD (APP): The weekly inflation, measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), witnessed an increase of 0.37 percent for the combined consumption groups during the week ended on December 28, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday.

The SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 311.14 points as compared to 310.00 points during the past week, according to the PBS data.

As compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 43.25 percent.

The weekly SPI with the base year 2015-16=100 covers 17 urban centers and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups.

The SPI for the lowest consumption group up to Rs 17,732, increased by 0.40 percent and went up to 306.04 points from last week's 304.83 points.

The SPI for consumption groups from Rs 17,732-22,888, Rs 22,889-29,517, Rs 29,518-44,175 and above Rs 44,175 it increased by 0.41 percent, 0.38 percent, 0.39 and 0.35 percent respectively.

During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 15 (29.41 percent) items increased, 09 (17.65 percent) items decreased and 27 (52.94 percent) items remained stable.

The items, which recorded a decrease in their average prices on a week-on-week (WoW) included potatoes (8.66 percent), tomatoes (1.01 percent), vegetable ghee 2.5 kg (0.61 percent), cooking oil 5 liter (0.44 percent), eggs (0.40 percent), mustard oil (0.24 percent), gurr (0.19 percent) and garlic (0.15 percent).



LAHORE: Activists of Rickshaw Union holds protest in the favor of their demands outside press club in Provincial Capital.

WAPDA generates 34 bln units hydel electricity in 2023

ISLAMABAD (APP): The outgoing year 2023 has been a satisfying year for hydropower and water sectors in Pakistan as WAPDA generated about 34 billion units of low-cost, clean and green hydel electricity, which is 2.2 billion units more than that of the last year. The country witnessed increased generation of hydel electricity, while under-construction WAPDA projects in water and hydropower sectors also achieved major milestones in 2023, according to a press release on Friday. This increased hydel generation helped national exchequer save about Rs. 106 billion, if same quantum of electricity was to be generated through expensive, imported fossil fuels. Most importantly, WAPDA hydel electricity costs only Rs. 3.51 per unit; and it constitutes about 30% of the total electricity provided to the National Grid. WAPDA owns and operates 22 hydel

power stations including Neelum Jhelum with cumulative generation capacity of 9459 Megawatt (MW). According to the generation details of 2023, Tarbela generated 12.9 billion units, Tarbela 4th Extension 4.4 billion units, Ghazi Barotha 6.8 billion units, Mangla 4.7 billion units, Neelum Jhelum 1 billion units, Warsak 0.8 billion units, Chashma 0.9 billion units, and rest of WAPDA hydel power stations cumulatively generated 2.5 billion units. Year 2023 also augured well for under-construction WAPDA projects. Despite the cosmic crunch, construction work on eight WAPDA projects continued unabated. WAPDA achieved the landmark of river diversion at Dasu Hydropower Project in February 2023, while diverted River Indus at Diamer-Basha Dam through test-run. WAPDA is likely to achieve the milestone of river.

Senate body on petroleum discusses suspension of gas supply of Sindh industrial sector

Independent Report
ISLAMABAD: The Senate Standing Committee on Petroleum, chaired by Senator Mohammad Abdul Qadir, on Friday discussed the issue regarding the suspension of gas supply of Sindh industrial sector, resulting in a substantial 28% production loss. Officials from the Ministry for Energy (Petroleum Division) while briefing the committee said that each year the country was witnessing a depletion of more than 10% of gas reserves at various gas fields, with a simultaneous increase in its demand. This year, Sui Southern Gas Limited (SSGL) was grappling with a reduction of approximately 90 MMCFD compared to the previous year. Secretary of the Ministry for Energy (Petroleum Division), Mohsin Agha, highlighted the sustained decline over the past 8 to 10 years, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive plan to scrutinize the policymaking. The committee members conducted an in-depth analysis of supply statistics and gas depletion over the years, urging Ministry for Energy officers

(Petroleum Division) to address discrepancies for conclusive results. Furthermore, ministry officials provided insights into LPG rates, clarifying that OGRA (Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority) determines prices for producers, the margin of Marketing Companies (MCs), and consumers. Pricing is based on various parameters, including the monthly determination of the producers' price per metric ton according to the Saudi Aramco Contract Price (40% Propane; 60% Butane). The distribution margin is fixed at Rs. 35,000 per metric ton, equivalent to Rs. 413 per cylinder. Additionally, a petroleum levy on indigenous production stands at Rs. 4,669 per metric ton, translating to Rs. 55 per cylinder. The officers explained that GST, previously at 17% and now increased to 18% since February 2023, applies to these parameters. They clarified that the compilation of these figures makes up the consumer price. The Secretary of the Ministry for Energy (Petroleum Division) added that active exploration of

indigenous sources is underway, addressing infrastructure constraints in efforts to stabilize gas prices. Chairman of OGRA, Masroor Khan, provided the committee members with insights into the reasons behind the increase in oil and gas prices. Senator Saadia Abbasi highlighted that the rise in cylinder prices is attributed to taxes imposed on people. Similarly, Committee Chairman Mohammad Abdul Qadir suggested that officers explore and utilize gas transportation via seaports and large ships to mitigate price increases, ultimately benefiting the larger population struggling with rising costs. The Chairman of OGRA mentioned that their FBR mechanism already operates at the sea border. However, operating on large ships is currently not feasible, and efforts are underway to determine how to increase LPG operations at Karachi ports. Chairman Mohammad Abdul Qadir recommended that officers from the Ministry of Energy (Petroleum Division) reach out to international companies and encourage them to invest.

CM expresses dissatisfaction at poor condition in Jallo Park, Botanical Garden

Independent Report
LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi undertook comprehensive visits to three hospitals, as many park, and the CTD headquarters.

In his visit to Jallo Park and Botanical Garden Jallo, Mohsin Naqvi expressed dissatisfaction at broken roads and poor conditions in Jallo Park, demanding a plan for its upgrade. He directed the immediate transfer of park management from the Forest Department to the PHA, emphasizing the need for improvements.

Expressing keen interest in the welfare of children, he inquired about the treatment facilities provided in the Children's Hospital emergency and

directed immediate enhancements, including fixing new tiles on the main corridor floor. He sought new counters' designs from IDAP within 24 hours adding that new tiles and counters fixing should be completed within ten days. Furthermore, he inspected ongoing construction at the Punjab Institute of Cardiology, issuing directives to expedite the laying of biogas pipes underground within 24 hours. He also emphasized the need for optimal arrangements in the waiting area for attendants and ordered the relocation of the generator to a suitable place.

Turning his attention to the General Hospital, CM reviewed the

upgradation work on all four floors of the Emergency Block. He emphasized the importance of safe and standard wiring for biogas and AC pipes, as well as infection-free operation theatres. Noting some sluggishness in construction activities, he ordered to accelerate the pace of work.

CM Naqvi's visit to Shalimar Garden involved a detailed review of its overall condition. Riding a rickshaw, he affirmed his commitment to restoring the garden to its original historical state. The CM ordered the removal of illegal constructions around the garden, tasking the deputy commissioner Lahore with the responsibility.



LAHORE: Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi holding hand of child in a pleasant mood after reviewing upgradation project during his visit to Children Hospital.

Minister says: Education networking system to be improved in merged tribal area

Independent Report
PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister for Newly Merged Districts Affairs, Industries, Commerce and Technical Education, Dr. Aamer Abdullah has said that private education system and the government educational institutions would be improved to impart quality education to the tribal youth in the merged areas.

He said this while holding a meeting with the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the network of private educational institutions "Dar Arqam Schools System Pakistan" and Chairman of Al-Ghazali Education Foundation, Waqas Jafari who called on him at his office in the Civil Secretariat here Friday.

The meeting discussed in detail ways and means for the improvement of the education systems in the merged tribal areas. The

caretaker minister along with the delegation discussed various proposals regarding the improvement of the education system in the province, especially in the merged districts. Provincial President of Al-Khidmat Foundation Pakistan Khalid Waqas Chamkani was also present.

The minister and the head of private educational institutions deliberated on the possibilities of expanding the network of the above-mentioned schools in the merged districts and also discussed the matters of public private partnership proposal for some government educational institutions in the same districts. In the meeting, the minister said that the provincial government was considering several useful proposals to maintain the high quality of 10 governor model schools, established in the merged districts and to run them in a better manner.

DIG Sukkur vows to improve traffic situation

SUKKUR (APP): Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Police, Sukkur, Abdul Hameed Khoso on Friday issued instructions to immediately improve upon the traffic situation in the district on an emergency basis following

days of traffic congestion which has created severe issues for commuters. In this connection, the DIG has asked the SSP Sukkur to submit a detailed report on the reasons and solutions for improving the flow of traffic on the main roads of the town,

and those routes which are frequently used by commuters.

He also instructed the traffic police Incharge on turns and all other roads of the city's congested traffic zones to improve the flow of traffic.

Minister inaugurates vehicle inspection and licensing App

LAHORE (APP): Provincial Minister for Transport Ibrahim Hassan Murad on Friday inaugurated the Vehicle Inspection and Licensing App in a ceremony held here at the Punjab Transport Company's office. The ceremony was attended by Secretary Transport Ahmad Javed Qazi, CEO Punjab Transport Company Faiq Ahmed, enforcement inspectors and officers from the transport department. Ibrahim Murad congratulated the IT and the transport department teams, expressing optimism that the app would lead to a 90% reduction in axle-load traffic violations. The minister highlighted the

department's goal to eliminate paper-based challans, stating that with the efficient team, the journey towards e-challans had begun. The Vehicle Inspection and Licensing App aims to curb fake and bogus challans complaints, marking a significant step towards digital transformation. The minister emphasized real-time information retrieval had become possible, heralding a new era in transportation. Secretary Transport Ahmad Javed Qazi said that the app would also facilitate savings in challans printing and enhance transparency in the inspection process.

KP decides to open bank accounts for prisoners

PESHAWAR (APP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) government has made the decision to open bank accounts for prisoners across the province.

According to official sources on Friday, the recently released Welfare Fund Rules 2023 by the KP home ministry stated that prisoners will now have their own personal bank accounts to support their families.

Negotiations are currently in progress with the Bank of Khyber (BoK) for the establishment of these accounts, as mentioned in the official statement. The government outlined a distribution plan where 10% of the prisoners' income will go to the government, 30% to the prisoners themselves, and 60% to the Welfare Fund. Additionally, prisoners will be permitted to engage in various activities.



GARHI KHUDBUX: Peoples Party (PPP) Leader, Aseefa Bhutto Zardari is laying floral wreaths and offers Fateha for the peace of departed soul of the PPP Founder, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and Benazir Bhutto, at Bhutto Mausoleums in Garhi Khuda Bux.

Sec Health describes year accomplishments of Health Dept

PESHAWAR (APP): Health Secretary Mehmood Aslam Wazir on Friday in his annual performance message said the Health Department has achieved many accomplishments in the year 2023. He said that this year, the department has effectively contained the dengue cases to 747 without any fatalities.

He said by activating seven closed hospitals, medical services are now provided on a double shift basis, both in the morning and evening, compared to the previous practice of offering services only during daytime hours.

Speaking about the impediments related to fake, unregistered, and spurious drugs, Health Secretary Mahmood Aslam Wazir revealed the establishment of the province's first mobile drug lab in Pakistan.

Jameel elected as the new Chairman KDA

ABBOTTABAD (APP): The Kaghan Development Authority (KDA) marked a significant milestone as the newly constituted board on Friday convened its inaugural meeting at the Commissioner's Office in Abbottabad and elected its new chairman.

In the online session members of the board including Lieutenant General @ Ayaz Saleem Rana, Masroor Ahmed, Arif Islam Khan, Senior Bureaucrat Jameel Ahmed, Commissioner Hazara Division Syed Zahir-ul-Islam, Director General Shabir Khan, and Raqeeb Khan were present. Senior retired Bureaucrat Jameel Ahmed was unanimously elected as the new Chairman of the KDA during the proceedings. Shabir Khan, Director General KDA welcomed the newly appointed members, expressing confidence in Chairman Jameel Ahmed and assured cooperation.



TANDO ADAM: Grooms and brides during a mass marriage ceremony held in a local garden, organized by the Odera Lal Welfare Association. A total of 250 couples participated, including 125 Muslims and 125 Non-Muslims.

International News

Russia launches massive missile attack on Ukraine, 12 dead

Monitoring Desk
RUSSIA: Russia on Friday unleashed one of its biggest missile attacks on Ukraine of the war so far, killing 12 civilians, wounding dozens more and hitting residential buildings in Kyiv, the south and west of the country, officials said.

Ten people in Kyiv were trapped under rubble at a warehouse damaged by falling debris, the city's military administration said. A maternity ward was damaged in the city of Dnipro, but no casualties were reported, the governor said.

"Today, millions of Ukrainians awoke to the loud sound of explosions. I wish those sounds of explosions in Ukraine could be heard all around the world," Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said, calling for Kyiv's allies to step up their support.

The vast end-of-year aerial assault comes as uncertainty is swirling over the scale and staying power of future Western military and financial support for Kyiv nearly two years into the war with Russia.

"Russia attacked with everything it has in its arsenal... Approximately 110 missiles were fired, most of which were shot down," President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on Telegram messenger.

Air Force Commander Mykola Oleshchuk suggested the strike was Russia's largest aerial barrage since the February 2022 invasion, describing it on Telegram messenger as "the most massive attack from the air".

Army chief General Valeriy Zaluzhnyi said the attack targeted critical infrastructure and industrial and military facilities. There was no immediate comment from Russia.

The energy ministry reported power outages in the regions of southern Odesa, northeastern Kharkiv, central Dnipropetrovsk and central Kyiv.

Ukraine has been warning for weeks that Russia could be stockpiling missiles to launch a major air attack on the energy system. Last year millions of people were plunged into darkness when Russian strikes pounded the power grid.

Five people were killed in the central region of Dnipropetrovsk where missiles hit a shopping centre, a privately-held home and a six-storey residential building.

One person was confirmed dead at a warehouse in Kyiv, Mayor Vitali Klitschko said, revising down an earlier toll of two. Residential buildings and an uninhabited building were also hit, a senior military official said.



Rescuers work at the site where a residential building was damaged during a Russian missile and drone strike, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, in Odesa, Ukraine



RAFAH: An injured Palestinian man comforts a relative outside the Kuwait hospital, in the southern Gaza Strip, following an Israeli army strike that left at least 20 dead and 55 wounded

Maine elections official disqualifies Trump from presidential primary ballot

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: Maine disqualified Donald Trump from the state ballot in next year's U.S. presidential primary election, becoming the second state to bar the former president for his role in the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol.

Maine Secretary of State Shenna Bellows, a Democrat, concluded that Trump, the front-runner for the Republican presidential nomination, incited an insurrection when he spread false claims about voter fraud in the 2020 election and then urged his supporters to march on the Capitol to stop lawmakers from certifying the vote.

"The U.S. Constitution does not tolerate an assault on the foundations of our government," Bellows wrote in a 34-page ruling.

The decision can be appealed to a state Superior Court, and Bellows suspended her ruling until the court rules on the matter.

Trump's campaign said it would quickly file an objection to the "atrocious" decision.

Lawyers for Trump

have disputed that he engaged in insurrection and argued that his remarks to supporters on the day of the 2021 riot were protected by his right to free speech.

The decision came after a group of former Maine lawmakers said that Trump should be disqualified based on a provision of the U.S. Constitution that bars people from holding office if they engaged in "insurrection or rebellion" after previously swearing an oath to the United States.

The former lawmakers—Kimberly Rosen, Thomas Saviello and Ethan Strimling—said in a statement that Bellows "stood on the side of democracy and our constitution in her decision to bar former President Donald Trump from Maine's ballot."

Rosen and Saviello are both former Republican state senators. Strimling is a former Democratic state senator.

The ruling applies only to Maine's March primary election, but it could affect Trump's status for the November general election.

North Korea's new reactor at nuclear site likely to be operational next summer

Monitoring Desk
SEOUL: A light-water reactor at North Korea's main nuclear complex will likely be formally operational by next summer, South Korea's defense minister said, amid suspicions that the North may use it as a new source of fissile materials for nuclear weapons.

Concerns about North Korea's nuclear program deepened recently as the UN atomic agency and foreign experts said they've detected signs indicating that North Korea had begun operating its light-water reactor at the Yongbyon nuclear complex.

IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi said last week that his agency had observed increased levels of activity at and near the reactor and since mid-October, a strong water outflow from its cooling system. He said the reactor is "a cause for concern" because it can produce plutonium — one of the two key ingredients used to manufacture nuclear weapons, along with highly enriched uranium.

The South Korean Defense Ministry said Friday

that Defense Minister Shin Wonsik told local reporters a day before that his country had also spotted similar cooling system-related activities associated with the reactor last summer.

Shin said the reactor appears to be in the stage of a trial operation and that it's expected to be officially operational around next summer.

North Korea has long produced weapons-grade plutonium from its widely known 5-megawatt reactor at Yongbyon. The light-water reactor would be an additional source of bomb fuels, and observers say its bigger capacity could allow it to produce more plutonium. Yongbyon has a uranium enrichment facility as well.

There are questions about the reactor's reported operation, as light-water reactors are best-suited for electricity generation. Shin noted there has been no country that has used light-water reactors to produce weapons-grade plutonium. However, many observers say North Korea could adapt one at Yongbyon to

produce weapons-grade plutonium.

"(North Korea's) commissioning of a new light water nuclear power plant raises serious concerns, including safety," the US Mission to the UN in Vienna said Saturday in a message posted on X, formerly known as Twitter. "(North Korea's) unlawful nuclear & ballistic missile programs continue to pose a grave threat to international peace & security."

Grossi also noted the North's operation of the light-water reactor violates UN Security Council resolutions.

The IAEA and foreign governments rely on satellite imagery and other methods to monitor activities at Yongbyon and other suspected nuclear facilities in North Korea. The North kicked out IAEA inspectors from the country in 2009.

Outside estimates on the size of North Korea's nuclear arsenal vary, ranging from 20-60 to more than 100. Experts say North Korea can add six to 18 bombs each year.



ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Human Rights & Women Empowerment Ms. Mushaal Hussein Mullick addressing International Kashmir Conference on "The Role of Women Youth & Diaspora on Kashmir" at Kashmir House.

Social media PTA, HEC agree to raise awareness for preventing blasphemous activity

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) and the Higher Education Commission (HEC) have agreed to coordinate their efforts for raising awareness among masses to prevent blasphemous activities on internet and social media.

During a meeting, Chairman PTA Major General (Retd) Hafeez ur Rehman and Chairman HEC Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed also concurred on disseminating the message among administration, faculty, and students of all universities.

The aim is to encourage them to play an effective role in the noble cause of eradicating this menace from society.

According to a press release, both sides expressed strong enthusiasm for deep collaboration and maximising outcome through joint academic ventures. Major General (Retd) Hafeez ur Rehman highly appreciated the initiative of HEC and said that PTA is fully committed to address the challenges related to responsible use of cyberspace.

In this regard, PTA has held consultative meetings with esteemed religious

scholars of the country and is engaged with multiple international organizations like UNICEF, TikTok and Telenor Pakistan for the purpose.

The collaboration between HEC and PTA will pave the way to reduce circulation of unlawful content, activities over the internet and engaging youngsters in utilizing cyberspace for productive online activities.

Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed appreciated the multiple steps taken by the PTA especially promoting safe, responsible and productive use of the internet.

Indian troops continue CASOs in Rajouri, Poonch districts

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indian troops continued their violent cordon and search operations (CASOs) in different districts of Jammu region in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

According to Kashmir Media Service, the cordon and search operations, led by Indian army and Central Reserve Police Force,

continued on the ninth consecutive day, today, in Poonch and Rajouri districts.

Indian troops barge into the houses and terrorize the inmates in Surankote and Thanamundi areas of the districts. The cordon and search operations were also going on in different areas of Samba and Kishtwar districts.

Rights activist Imaan Mazari ties the knot

ISLAMABAD (INP): Human rights activist and legal wizard Imaan Zainab Mazari has tied the knot in an intimate ceremony with lawyer Abdul Hadi.

Imaan Mazari shared the news of her marriage with Abdul Hadi in a post on X (formerly Twitter).

Her husband also took to X and announced the wedding in the same breath.



ISLAMABAD: Former Senator Lt General (R) Abdul Qayyum addressing during "International Kashmir Conference" at Kashmir House in Federal Capital.

Zong 4G and HANDS initiate collaborative effort to make Digital education accessible for youth

ISLAMABAD (APP): Zong 4G Pakistan's Leading Telecommunication Company has partnered with the Health and Nutrition Development Society (HANDS) to set up a revolutionary Digital Lab at the FAS School in Noor Muhammad Goth near Karachi.

As a part of Zong 4G's Sustainability Program, this partnership aims to provide students in marginalized areas with top-notch technological systems to empower their digital skills and provide access to the digital world said a news release.

The school presently serves 120 students and is consistently broadening its

scope to guarantee the provision of high-quality education for more students.

HANDS is a non-profit organization working effortlessly to improve healthcare and education systems, alleviate poverty, and build infrastructure in Pakistan.

Both Zong 4G and HANDS are motivated to bridge the digital gap in Pakistan by providing students with unrestricted digital access to foster knowledge imperatives and help them excel in the digital world.

The school previously faced challenges in delivering digital access to children but is now optimistic regarding the positive impact

of the newly established digital lab in facilitating a more seamless and enjoyable educational experience for students.

In reference to the recent collaboration, the official spokesperson for Zong 4G articulated, "Zong 4G views the support and development of educational institutions in Pakistan as a primary commitment.

Aligned with our Sustainability Program, the initiative is designed to advance societal well-being in the country.

Through this partnership with HANDS, we aim to enhance digital education, making the digital realm more accessible for students."

Pakistan missed 2023 global deadline to regulate Trans-fats across all foods

ISLAMABAD (APP): As 2023 comes to a close, it is apparent that Pakistan has missed the World Health Organization's (WHO) 2023 deadline to eliminate industrially-produced Trans Fats (iTFA) from all food sources.

Despite efforts by the Nutrition Wing of the Ministry of National Health Services Regulations and Coordination earlier this year to regulate iTFAs in specific food sources such as banaspati ghee, bakery wares, and bakery shortenings with the help of Pakistan Standards and Quality Control Authority (PSQCA), public health experts stress that this progress, while a positive step forward, remains insufficient.

"Many commonly consumed sources of trans fats such as packed snacks, dairy products,

street foods, and several types of ultra-processed foods remain outside the realm of iTFA standards," stated Munawar Hussain, Country Coordinator Pakistan at the Global Health Advocacy Incubator (GHA) as part of a press statement issued by the TRANSFORM Pakistan Campaign. "It is imperative that Pakistan does not allow the matter of regulating iTFAs to linger any further, and all efforts should be made to ensure that trans-fats across all dietary sources are regulated in accordance with WHO guidelines at earliest."

Dr. Khawaja Masuood Ahmed, National Coordinator Nutrition and NFA at the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations, and Coordination (MoNHSR&C) commented on ongoing efforts, stating, "The Ministry of Health is closely collaborating with civil society organizations, and providing technical support to the PSQCA to regulate Trans-fats to 2% in all food sources and safeguard the health of the Pakistani nation. We are committed to adopt the best practice policy to cover all foods under iTFA limits as per WHO Standards, through a single regulation if required."

Earlier this year, Pakistan Youth Change Advocates (PYCA), with support from GHAI and the Ministry, collaborated with civil society actors such as the Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives (CPDI) and Heartfile to launch the TRANSFORM Pakistan campaign. Afshar Iqbal, Director of Media and Communications at PYCA, highlighted their efforts, stating, "Through the TRANSFORM Pakistan Campaign, we aim not only to raise mass awareness about the ill effects of iTFAs in our dietary sources but also to work with all relevant stakeholders to expedite the regulation of trans-fats across all food items in Pakistan. We are grateful to our national and international partners, collaborators, and the Ministry of Health for their support in advancing this critical cause."

Mukhtar Ahmed, Executive Director of CPDI, shed light on the civil society's role in regulating iTFAs, saying, "Civil society is in close communication with the Ministry of Health, PSQCA, and provincial food regulatory bodies."

IHC says Islamabad DC does not have authority to issue 3MPO

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Islamabad High Court has said that the deputy commissioner of the federal capital does not have the authority to issue 3MPO.

IHC Justice Babar Sattar Friday announced a reserved decision on the petitions filed by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leaders Shehryar Afridi and Shandana Gulzar challenging their arrests under 3MPO.

The court allowed the pleas of Afridi and Shandana Gulzar against the MPO order and declared the Act PO 18, 1980 of the 3MPO illegal.

While announcing the reserved verdict, Justice Babar Sattar said that

Islamabad Deputy Commissioner does not have the authority to issue 3MPO. The power of 3MPO should be vested only in the Federal Cabinet.

Later, talking to the media outside the Islamabad High Court, PTI lawyer Babar Awan said that the IHC had said that action should be taken against those who made arrests under 3MPO.

He said that the powers given to the Deputy Commissioner and the Commissioner under the martial law order are wrong. The court has declared the 3MPO order invalid. Only the Federal Cabinet can pass orders within Islamabad, Awan added.



ISLAMABAD: Member Provincial Assembly and Chairman GB Reforms Committee Amjad Hussain Adv calls on to CM GB Haji Gul Bar Khan at his Office.

NHMP urged commuters to adopt cautions, dense fog causes major highways closures

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a stark manifestation of winter's grip, dense fog has shrouded key roadways, prompting authorities to enforce closures from Sher Shah to Shamkot, Abdul Hakeem to Pindi Bhattiyan, and several other significant stretches.

As of 28th December, the veil of mist extends its reach, significantly impacting visibility and necessitating strategic road closures.

Motorists across the affected regions are facing substantial disruptions as fog-induced closures grip the road network.

The primary affected areas span from Sher Shah (KM 00) to Shamkot (KM 54), Abdul Hakeem (KM 89) to Pindi Bhattiyan (KM 290), and Thokar Niaz Baig (KM 00) to Kotmomin (KM 162). These closures, attributed to the persistent fog, are a precautionary measure to ensure the safety of commuters.

Notably, the

Islamabad main toll plaza has become a focal point for closures, impacting both north and southbound lanes. From Kot Momin (KM 163) to Lillah (KM 214), a critical section is closed for heavy-duty vehicles (HTVs), intensifying the challenges faced by freight transport.

The situation is exacerbated along the stretch from Faizpur (KM 1147) to Rajana Interchange (KM 965), where both north and southbound lanes are closed. A noteworthy development is the diversion of northbound traffic from Rajhana (KM 965), redirecting vehicles to alternative routes.

Meanwhile, visibility concerns persist along various segments, with fog reducing sight range significantly. From Kassoal Bridge (KM 1045) to Musafir Khana (KM 817), drivers are contending with visibility as low as 50-100 meters. The same goes for the stretch from Kharian

Cantt (KM 1410) to Chak Akka (KM 1446), where visibility drops to 50-60 meters.

In a particularly challenging scenario, the stretch from Jinnah Terminal Beat-12 (KM 1245) to Sanpal Chowk Beat-16 (KM 1045) witnesses extreme conditions, with visibility fluctuating between 20-100 meters. Similarly, the route from PS Kamoke (KM 1305) to Kala Shah Kahu (KM 1276) reports visibility as low as 10-50 meters, emphasizing the need for utmost caution.

As commuters navigate these weather-induced challenges, authorities advise strict adherence to closure guidelines, urging individuals to prioritize safety over expediency. It remained critical for travellers to stay updated on real-time road conditions and exercise patience in the face of these unforeseen challenges posed by nature's wintry grip on the region's transportation arteries.

14 outlaws including 7 professional beggars held; drugs & weapons recovered

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Police apprehended 14 outlaws including seven professional baggers from different areas of the city during the last 24 hours and recovered drugs and weapons from their possession, a public relations officer said.

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

Following these directions, the Golra police team arrested an accused namely Tanveer Abbas and recovered 15 liters of alcohol from his possession.

The Sangjani police team arrested two accused namely Muhammad Faizan and Umair Shoukat involved in illegally refilling gas cylinders.

Similarly, the Khanna police team arrested two accused namely Muhammad Aqib and Noman Ilyas and recovered 410 gram heroin and one 30 bore pistol from their possession.

The Humak police arrested an accused namely Muhammad Sarwar and recovered 519 gram heroin from his possession. The Bhara Kahu police team arrested an accused namely Muhammad Hassan and recovered 510 gram hashish from his possession. Cases have been registered against the nabbed accused and further investigation is underway.

DC Muzaffargarh takes notice of complaint of sugarcane farmers

KOT ADDU: DC Deputy Commissioner Muzaffargarh Mian Usman Ali took notice of complaints of sugarcane farmers and advocate Rana Amjad Ali Amjad, Provincial Kot Coordinator of All Pakistan Kisan Ittehad against AC ordered to take action.

In the immediate implementation of which AC raided the Tandlianwala Sugar Mills, the mills CPRs and records of payment to brokers instead of farmers were seized. D C ordered payment to all farmers by January 4.

Acting on this, the records of the mills. It should be noted that Provincial Coordinator of All Pakistan Kisan Ittehad, complained that Tandlianwala Sugar Mills Muzaffargarh Chief

Accountant Chaudhry Mohammad Younis and GM Cane Naeem Ahmed sugarcane growers and farmers instead of their specific brokers immediately, but the orders are being rejected by the district administration.

So, taking notice of the complaints of sugarcane farmers, Deputy Commissioner Muzaffargarh Mian Usman Ali ordered Assistant Commissioner Muzaffargarh Nasir Shahzad Dogar to take action against the mills management and directed that under the Cane Act payment to all farmers is guaranteed by January 4. To be made All Pakistan Kisan Ittehad has welcomed the initiatives of Deputy Commissioner Muzaffargarh Mian Usman Ali and Assistant Commissioner Muzaffargarh Nasir Shahzad Dogar.

HEC extends deadline for registration till Jan 03

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Higher Education Commission (HEC), has extended the deadline, till January 03, 2024, for registration in the Centralised Test being held for Computer Science and IT graduates—leading to apprenticeship in top IT companies of Pakistan. The test date shall however remain intact i.e. January 07, 2024, said a press release on Friday.

The students enrolled in the 7th semester of Computer Science/IT related disciplines offered in recognised public and private sector universities and affiliated / constituent colleges are encouraged to register through Virtual University (VU) link <https://www.vu.edu.pk/GraduateTest/>.

The decision to extend the registration deadline was made in a virtual meeting of Vice Chancellors/Rectors and Heads of Departments of Computer Science/IT of all public and private sector HEIs in order to ensure that maximum number of eligible students



ISLAMABAD: A view of dry leaves at the roadside greenbelt in Federal Capital.

UNWTO recognizes Pakistan as top tourist destination in 2023

ISLAMABAD (APP): The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has acknowledged Pakistan's outstanding performance in tourism, marking a remarkable 92% recovery to pre-pandemic levels in 2023.

The country experienced a 115% surge in foreign tourist arrivals compared to the previous year, signaling a robust comeback post-Covid-19, said a press release.

Attributing this success to concerted efforts in tourism promotion, Managing Director-PTDC Aftab Rana said that the Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) last year actively engaged in six major global events such as World Travel Mart London, ITB Berlin, New York Travel and Adventure Show, Arabian Travel Mart Dubai, Seoul Travel Mart Korea and Travel Mart in Vietnam, fostering essential B2B connections with foreign tour

operators.

A strategic online outreach, along with launching of the "Salam Pakistan" tourism brand in August 2023, contributed significantly to attracting a diverse range of visitors from across the globe.

He highlighted the collaborative efforts of PTDC, provincial tourist departments and private sector operators, emphasizing the role of global events in expanding international partnerships.

Minister of State on Tourism, Wasi Shah, extended congratulations to the team of PTDC and industry partners, expressing optimism for a stronger performance in 2024 despite existing challenges.

With the recovery reaching 115% and projections of international receipts reaching USD 1.3 billion by year-end, Pakistan stands as a beacon in tourism resurgence, showcasing its potential on the global stage.



A Group of Students and Faculty Members of Air University, Islamabad Visiting Senate Museum At Parliament House, Islamabad