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Peace in South Asia will remain 'elusive' until resolution of Kashmir dispute: COAS

Army chief condemns Indian efforts "to change the status of Jammu and Kashmir" in violation of UNSC resolutions; Stresses 'two-state solution' as key to ending Gaza crisis; UNSG acknowledges COAS' concerns over plight of Gaza's people

NEW YORK (Online): Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir has said peace in South Asia will remain elusive until a peaceful solution to the longstanding Kashmir dispute is found in accordance with the UNSC resolutions and the aspirations of Kashmiri people.

He made the remarks during a meeting with UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres in New York.

The Army Chief condemned unilateral and illegal Indian efforts to change the status of Jammu and Kashmir saying these are in violation of UN Security Council Resolutions.

General Asim Munir reiterated Pakistan's stance on the Palestine issue and urged the Secretary General to mobilize the international community for immediate cessation of hostilities in Gaza to prevent the unfolding human tragedy.

He highlighted that enduring solution to the issue lies in Two State Solution.

He particularly shared deep concerns over the plight of the innocent civilians who are being brutally targeted and are not being provided with sufficient humanitarian relief.

The UN Secretary General acknowledged the concerns and thanked General Syed Asim Munir for the visit to the UN Headquarters.

The Army Chief reaffirmed Pakistan's continuous support to the United Nations in all its earnest efforts.

INP adds: Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir has met with United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres at UN Headquarters in New York and conveyed Pakistan's concerns over the situation in Gaza, Indian-occupied Kashmir and Afghanistan.

General Asim Munir travelled to New York from Washington early Friday after concluding first leg of his visit to US which included discussions with top government and military officials. After his New York stopover, the COAS will now proceed to Tampa, Florida, for talks with General Michael E Kurilla, the commander of the US Central Command.

During his meeting with the UN chief, the Army Chief specifically highlighted the need to take practical steps for development and prosperity of the province and country after acquiring proper education.

The Governor was addressing the participants of 12th National Security Workshop-Balochistan (NSW-B), which concluded here on Saturday. He appreciated the holding of National Workshop and said that it paved the way for better understanding of the issues and hardships at the national and provincial level.



NEW YORK: Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir meeting with UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres

Governor Balochistan calls for taking practical steps after acquiring proper education

Independent Report

QUETTA: The Governor Balochistan, Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar has underlined the need to take practical steps for development and prosperity of the province and country after acquiring proper education.

Governor said that the real objective behind the workshop is to gather selective individuals of the society on a platform, increase their capacity and polish their hidden potential so that they may play their effective role in their respective sectors. He said that fortunately the participants of NSW-B got the opportunity of learning from the able and experienced teachers besides exchanging views and experiences with the people from different areas of the country.

Nation united against terrorism: President Alvi

Independent Report

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Saturday said the Pakistani nation stood with its security forces in their efforts to get rid of terrorists and miscreants who were spreading lawlessness. In a message in remembrance of the tragedy of the Army Public School that occurred on December 16, 2014, he said, "The nation pays tribute to the security forces for their sacrifices to restore peace and security in the country."

APS tragedy strengthened determination of nation against terrorism: PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar has said the tragic incident of Army Public School Peshawar has strengthened the determination of our nation against terrorism.

ers like children, PM Office Media Wing, in a press release, quoted the prime minister as saying.

In a message on the 9th anniversary of APS tragedy, he said that on that tragic day, terrorists had launched a cowardly attack on APS leading to a tragic incident which had grieved the entire world.

The unfortunate incident had strengthened the nation's resolve against terrorism, the prime minister said, giving a clear message to terrorists and enemies of peace that the Pakistani nation was united.

Expressing his grief, the prime minister said that recollection of the incident brought tears to his eyes.

Nine years back, the enemy had tried vainly to deter the resolve of the nation in the fight against terrorism by attacking their flow-

The caretaker prime minister further said that he along with the entire nation still remembered the great sacrifices of the students and paid tribute to them.

Principal APS Shaheed Tahira Qazi and other teachers stood against terrorists like a formidable wall and laid down their lives while saving the students, he added.

The caretaker prime minister said that the Pakistani nation had won the fight against terrorism and had foiled all the enemies' nefarious designs of sowing anarchy and disorder.

The timid terrorists could not succeed in their designs as the nation had fearless people like Shaheed Tahira Qazi and Shaheed Aitzaz Ahsan in its ranks who were ready to sacrifice their lives for the protection of their people, he added.



ISLAMABAD: Justice Sardar Tariq Masood, Senior Puisne Judge Supreme Court of Pakistan, taking oath as Acting Chief Justice of Pakistan in Supreme Court of Pakistan

Kuwait's Emir Sheikh Nawaf dies at 86, Sheikh Meshal named as successor

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Saturday expressed his deep grief over the death of Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf Al Ahmad Al Jaber Al Sabah. In a message posted on X, the prime minister prayed for the high ranks of the departed soul and said that Pakistan stood in solidarity with the Kuwaiti Royal Family and the people of Kuwait at this moment of grief.

closed. The emir was admitted to the hospital late last month due to what the state news agency described at the time as an emergency health problem but said that he was in stable condition.

He further said that the late Amir would always be remembered for his sterling contribution to strengthening Pak-Kuwait relations.

Crown Prince Sheikh Meshal al-Ahmad al-Sabah, 83, who has been Kuwait's de facto ruler since 2021, when the frail emir handed over most of his duties, was named as Sheikh Nawaf's successor.

He said that the security concerns have been increased in Pakistan after eviction of United States army from Afghanistan and resultantly the Afghan Taliban's rule there.

Sheikh Nawaf became emir in September 2020 following the death of his brother, Sheikh Sabah, who had ruled for more than a decade and shaped the state's foreign policy for over 50 years.

Caretaker Minister Home pays homage to martyrs of APS Peshawar tragedy

Independent Report

QUETTA: The caretaker Provincial Minister for Home, Mir Muhammad Zubair Jamali has paid homage to the martyrs of Army Public School Peshawar tragedy.

ated history for establishing peaceful Pakistan with their blood. This is why the whole nation is paying homage to the sacrifices of martyrs today, he maintained.

In an official statement issued here on eve of the 9th anniversary of APS Peshawar tragedy observed on Saturday, the Minister Home said that we haven't forgotten the martyrs of 16 December.

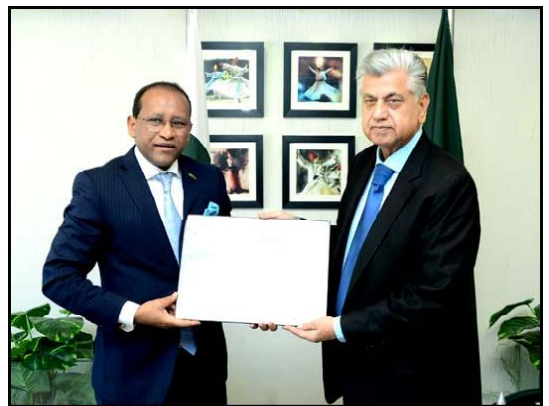
The Minister said that the great sacrifices of APS martyrs would always be remembered. In addition to this, the people of Balochistan would also remember the sacrifices rendered by the armed forces, police, levies and all innocent martyrs.

He said that martyr children and teachers of APS Peshawar had cre-

Solangi for advancing relations with Africa including Ethiopia

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for Information and Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi has said that Pakistan wants to further strengthen diplomatic, political, parliamentary, and trade relations with all countries in Africa, including Ethiopia.

In a meeting with Ethiopian Ambassador to Pakistan Jemal Beker Abdula, the minister said engaging Africa was a crucial component of Pakistan's foreign policy. It was the priority of the government of Pakistan to further strengthen its trade relations with African nations through economic diplomacy, he added.



During the meeting, they discussed matters of mutual interest, including regional and global issues, Engaging Africa policy, media collaboration, and bilateral relations between Pakistan and Ethiopia in the areas of politics, economy, and culture.

The minister said Pakistan and Ethiopia had long-standing brotherly relations steeped in shared history and mutual interest. The media was imperative for access to information, he said while underscoring the need for strengthening media cooperation between Pakistan and Ethiopia.

IMF clarifies of having no plan to urge Pakistan for raising tax on salaries

ISLAMABAD (INP): The resident representative of International Monetary Fund (IMF) in Pakistan has clarified that the lending body has no plan to urge Pakistan to increase taxes on salaries, business income and media reports in this connection are baseless.

representative in Pakistan Esther Perez Ruiz said that there have been such plan under consideration.

It should be mentioned here that there have been reports in media that the IMF asked Pakistan to cut the number of tax slabs for the salaried and business class from the existing seven to four, increasing tax incidence on the middle and upper-middle income group. There have also been reports of an increase in the maximum petroleum development levy.

The South Asian nation was operating under a caretaker government after an IMF loan programme, approved in July, helped avert a sovereign debt default.

Under the \$3 billion standby arrangement (SBA), Pakistan received \$1.2 billion from the IMF as the first tranche in July.

Under the bailout deal, the IMF also got Pakistan to raise \$1.34 billion in new taxation to meet fiscal adjustments. The measures fuelled all time high inflation of 38% year-on-year in May, the highest in Asia, which still is hovering above 30%.

General Elections 2023: Training of DROs & ROs to resume in Balochistan from today: PEC

Independent Report

QUETTA: The training of District Returning Officers (DROs) and Returning Officers (ROs) is scheduled to resume for the general elections 2023 in Balochistan from today (Sunday).



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

According to the Provincial Election Commissioner, Ejaz Anwar Chohan, the training of ROs would be conducted for two days i.e. today (Sunday) and tomorrow (Monday).

Moreover, the training of DROs is scheduled to be conducted on December 19, 2023.

It may be mentioned here that DROs would also take oath during the training sessions due to be conducted at four divisional headquarters including Quetta, Loralai, Sibi and Khuzdar.

Therefore, all 67 returning officers of the national and provincial constituencies have been directed to ensure their presence at their respective training places.

We don't want delay in election at any cost: Chairman PTI

ISLAMABAD (Online): Chairman PTI Barrister Gauhar Khan has said we don't want delay in election at any cost and it has been our request that elections are held in transparent manner.

He said this while talking to media men outside Adiala Jail here Saturday.

He stated no lawyer of PTI appeared in Supreme Court (SC) yesterday.

Presence of ROs for the sake of transparent election does not reflect transparent election.

PTI cannot be brought into dock, he remarked.

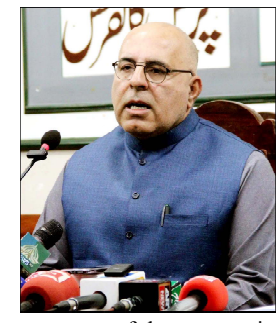
Our petition was this Returning officers be taken from judiciary, he added.

He claimed bid is being made to seek physical remand through bogus cases. This all is being done for political vengeance. Jail trial cannot be conducted. He underlined such trials are violation of basic human rights.

170,000 CNICs blocked pointing out fake ones: Terrorism's sanctuaries in Afghanistan are permanent threat for Pakistan: Jan

Independent Report

QUETTA: The caretaker Provincial Minister for Information, Jan Achakzai has asserted that we have demanded of Afghanistan time and again to hand over terrorists to Pakistan, as the sanctuaries of terrorism in Afghanistan are constant threat for our country.



He said that the security concerns have been increased in Pakistan after eviction of United States army from Afghanistan and resultantly the Afghan Taliban's rule there.

This and similar other views were expressed and details shared by the caretaker Minister Information while addressing a hurriedly called press conference here at Quetta press

If the backing of terrorists remained continued then it would sink Afghanistan. We have expelled the illegal immigrants affecting the national stability and

economy of the country in response to the terrorists' attacks by the TTP.

CM Domki to inaugurate dualization of Badini Link Road Quetta

QUETTA (APP): Balochistan Caretaker Chief Minister Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki will inaugurate the dualization of Badini Link road and also lay the foundation stone of Link Road from Sabzal to Samungli cross via Shahbo road to Airport Road Quetta on Sunday.

The construction work initiated under Quetta Development Package is near to completion as the interim government has taken measures to complete development projects within the stipulated time.

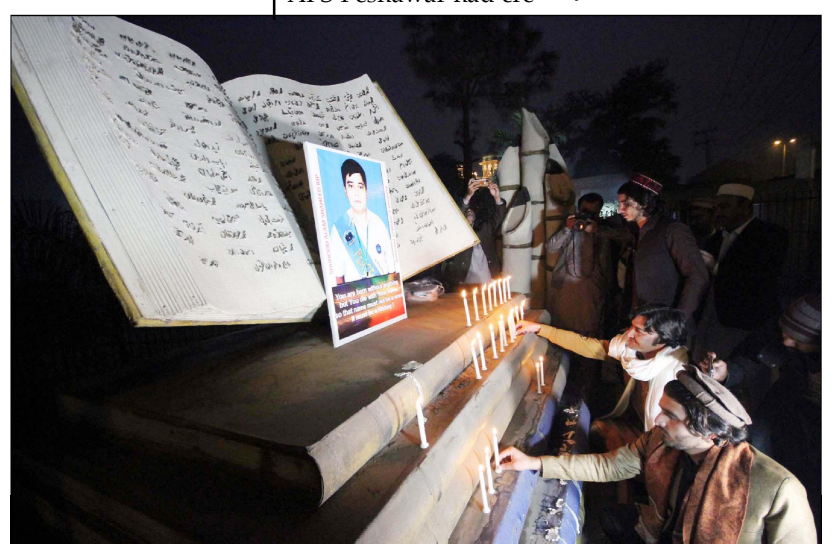
The government had allocated a special package for provincial capital to expand roads, improve sewerage system, installation of street lights and construction of footpaths to restore the lost beauty of Quetta and to provide better facilities to masses. The government had resolved to make the metropolitan city clean and an environment friendly city to attract local and foreign tourists and also taking efforts for plantation of trees in the city under the clean and Green drive.

The chief minister was himself inspected multiple times the ongoing development work Quetta to complete the construction work on time with quality and sustainability.

NAB arrests Fawad Ch. from Adiala Jail

ISLAMABAD (INP): The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) on Saturday arrested former PTI leader and federal minister Fawad Chaudhry in a corruption case.

Fawad Chaudhry was arrested from Adiala Jail after NAB Chairman Lt-Gen (ret'd) Nazir Ahmed Butt had signed the former's arrest warrant. According to the warrant, the former information minister was arrested in a corruption case and will be produced before the court.



PESHAWAR: A candle light vigil is being holding to pay homage to martyrs of Army Public School 2014 massacre, arranged by Civil Society, held at APS Martyrs Monument in Peshawar

Remembering APS Peshawar; 9 years of grief, resilience, unwavering resolve

ISLAMABAD (INP): The wounds of the Army Public School, Peshawar terrorist attack are still fresh nine years later.

December 16 will always be remembered as a dark day in the history of Pakistan. It marks a national tragedy that has wounded the hearts of every Pakistani.

In 2014, Pakistan was inflicted huge damage by terrorists targeting innocent children of the Army Public School in Peshawar. Six armed terrorists had attacked the school with modern weapons and targeted innocent children and teachers.

The terrorists ended up killing 149 people, including 132 children.

"They went to school, but never returned"

Army Public School Principal Tahira Qazi's dedication will be remem-

bered for years. The brave woman sacrificed her life but stood like a wall between the terrorists and the students.

The Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) claimed responsibility for the APS attack, saying it was in retaliation for Operation Zarb-e-Azb in North Waziristan.

These terrorists were trained in Afghanistan, from where they also brought in arms and ammunition for the attack. This heartbreaking tragedy brought tears to every eye and united the entire nation, without any religious or political distinction.

From Khyber to Karachi, the whole of Pakistan mourned the brutal martyrdom of innocent children and teachers.

The cowardly terrorists wanted to eliminate knowledge and learning

by attacking the school and targeted the future generation, but they could not dampen the morale of the nation. People of every school of thought throughout the country rejected the terrorist and evil mentality that propagated this cruelty and brutality.

The national APS tragedy also led to the formulation of a clear policy and consensus plan in the form of the "National Action Plan" to combat terrorism.

The entire world condemned this sad incident and strongly demanded that these terrorists be punished. Nine years have passed since the tragedy, but the wounds of the nation are still fresh even today. Terrorists are constantly using Afghanistan's territory to target innocent citizens of Pakistan.



GUJRANWALA: Amir Jamaat-e-Islami Sirajul Haq addressing Khushal Pakistan Road Karawan

840 militants arrested, over 70 killed in 2023

PESHAWAR (INP): In a significant blow to terrorism in the province, Pakistani security forces have apprehended over 840 militants and neutralized more than 70 terrorists in 2023.

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Anti-Terrorism Department's report highlights the ongoing commitment to eradicating terrorism from the region. The department confirmed that 840 militants were arrested throughout the year, disrupting recruitment networks and preventing further attacks. Additionally, over 70 terrorists were neutralized through targeted operations, further weakening their presence.

Caretaker Information Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Barrister Feroze Jamal Shah, commended the continuous ef-

forts of security forces in maintaining peace and stability. He emphasized that operations against terrorism are ongoing and will continue until complete eradication is achieved.

Furthermore, the police department has identified over 200 high-risk extremists and issued reward lists with substantial sums for their information or apprehension. This proactive approach aims to disrupt potential attacks and dismantle networks before they can cause harm.

While acknowledging the progress made, officials remain vigilant against the evolving tactics of terrorist groups. The department is committed to adapting its strategies and strengthening intelligence gathering to anticipate and thwart future threats.

Pakistan's hopes of winning first Test fade as Australia build big lead

Sports Desk
PERTH: Usman Khawaja and Steve Smith dug in to stretch Australia's lead and take the first Test away from Pakistan Saturday, as veteran spinner Nathan Lyon moved within one wicket of the 500-mark.

The hosts reached stumps on day three in Perth at 84-2, building their lead to 300 after bowling out the visitors on the cusp of tea for 271 in reply to their first innings total of 487.

Veteran spinner Lyon was the best of the bowlers with 3-66, but he was made to wait to reach a milestone that will put him in elite company alongside just seven other players.

At the close, Khawaja was on 34 and Smith 43 as Pakistan's hopes of a first Test win in Australia since 1995 faded.

The home side had a shaky start with first innings century-maker David Warner out for a duck.

The 37-year-old, fresh from his defiant 164, mistimed a pull shot from Khurram Shahzad and lobbed to Imam-ul-Haq for a comfortable catch at mid-wicket.

Marnus Labuschagne also surrendered cheaply on a pitch offering uneven bounce, out for two with Shahzad again the tormentor, tempting a big edge taken by wicketkeeper Sarfaraz Ahmed.

It left Australia tottering at 2-5. But Khawaja and Smith steadied the ship with an unbeaten 79-run partnership heading into day four and a potential declaration.

Chipping away Pakistan resumed on 132-2 after building a solid foundation in the run chase, but they were no match for Australia's top-class attack.

Stoic opener Haq began on 38 and nightwatchman Shahzad on seven.

Shahzad, on his debut, lasted just two balls before Pat Cummins took out his middle stump in the first over with a full and straight delivery.

That brought dangerman Babar Azam to the crease in his 50th Test, tentatively facing 13 balls before getting off the mark with a cover drive to the ropes off Cummins.

Energy Minister never asked to review levy on petroleum

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Energy, Petroleum Division, issued a clarification on Saturday, stating that any suggestion of a review of the Petroleum levy attributed to the Energy Minister is factually incorrect.

The ministry in a statement said, "Appropos a recent news item being attributed to the Energy Minister that Petroleum levy needs to be reviewed, the Ministry of Energy would like to clarify that the Energy Minister never mentioned or implied that the Petroleum levy should be reviewed." The statement further explained, that the Minister only said that taxes on power and petroleum consumers are high because FBR's tax collection through direct taxes is low in our country.



QUETTA: Beautiful eye-catching view of dark clouds during cloudy weather on the arrival of winter season, captured over the horizon of Quetta

Solangi visits local hospital, inquires about Naheed's health

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Saturday visited the local hospital to see the well-known poet, editor and columnist Kishwar Naheed.

Renowned poet Kishwar Naheed is undergoing treatment at CDA Hospital due to illness. The caretaker federal minister inquired about Kishwar Naheed's health.

Speaking on the occasion, the minister said that Kishwar Naheed has a prominent position in the literary circles of Pakistan.

She not only keeps a close eye on the political and social situation but also has excellent services for Pakistan's democracy, Murtaza Solangi maintained. He prayed for speedy recovery of Kishwar Naheed.

FIA retrieve commercial properties worth Rs 6.4 bln of ETPB

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federal Investigation Agency with the collaboration of district administration and local police retrieved worth Rs. 6.4 billion properties of Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB) from illegal occupants.

On the directives of the Director FIA Islamabad Zone, a raid was conducted by Deputy Director Anti-Corruption Circle Islamabad, Muhammad Afzal Khan Niazi, to retrieve properties of the Evacuee Trust Property Board during the past three months in the Rawalpindi region, said a spokesperson of FIA. The raiding teams included Assistant Director Waseem Abbas, Assistant Director Chaudhry Kausar, and ASI Mazhar Shah.

The operation was conducted by the directives of the Supreme Court, which had taken suo-motu notice of the matter. According to Spokesperson the seized property comprises a total area of 112 acres, 9 kanals, and 14 marlas.

Operations were conducted in Attock, Fateh Jang, and various locations in Rawalpindi. In the Rawalpindi region alone, 15 acres, 3 kanals, and 2 marlas of property were retrieved valued at Rs. 5.45 billion. Additionally, properties in Hassan Abdal measuring 97 acres, 6 kanals, and 12 marlas were reclaimed with a value of Rs. 589.39 million. The FIA spokesperson said systematic operations will continue against unauthorised occupants to ensure compliance with the court's orders.

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FM draws attention to Indian SC judgment on IIOJK

ISLAMABAD (APP): Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani has addressed letters to the leadership of the United Nations, Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the European Union, inviting their attention to the illegality of the Supreme Court of India on the status of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK).

In these letters, the Foreign Minister has underscored that under international law, domestic legislation and judicial verdicts cannot be invoked to determine the final status of an internationally-recognized disputed territory.

The Foreign Minister

has condemned the unlawful measures of the Indian authorities to consolidate their occupation of IIOJK and persistent suppression of the rights of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. India's illegal and unilateral actions of 5 August 2019, and a series of subsequent steps, are aimed at altering the demographic structure and political landscape of IIOJK. The clear goal of these unlawful steps is to convert Kashmiris into a disempowered community in their own land.

Foreign Minister Jilani has termed the recent judgment of the Supreme Court of India, a breach of international law and relevant

UN Security Council resolutions, especially Resolution 122 (1957). This endorsement of India's unlawful measures cannot override the provisions and prescriptions of the UN Security Council as contained in its resolutions on Jammu and Kashmir.

The Foreign Minister has called on the UN Security Council to ensure full implementation of its resolutions on Jammu and Kashmir dispute; and to urge India to end the grave and systematic human rights violations in IIOJK and to reverse all its illegal and unilateral actions in IIOJK undertaken since 5 August 2019.

Babar Azam's another milestone, 5th Pakistani batsman scores 13,000 runs

PERTH (Online): Pakistan's star batsman Babar Azam achieved a major milestone on the third day of the Perth Test against Australia on Saturday.

The 29-year-old batsman became the fifth Pakistani batsman to complete 13,000 runs in international cricket. His impressive average of 49.08 is the highest among the top five Pakistani batsmen.

Babar Azam has scored 31 centuries and 81 fifties in 301 innings. Inzamam-ul-Haq tops the list of highest run-scorers for Pakistan in international cricket with 20,541 runs, followed by Younis Khan (17,790), Mohammad Yousuf (17,134), Javed Miandad (16,213) and Babar Azam (13,007).

Australia all-rounder Mitchell Marsh dismissed Pakistan's star batsman and former captain Babar Azam in the first innings on the third day of the opening Test of the series in Perth on Saturday. After scoring 21 runs in the first session of the day, Babar Azam was caught by wicketkeeper Alex Carey.



DERA ALLAHYAR: SSP Jaffarabad Faryal Fareed along with other police officers addressing a Press conference

IIOJK not India's internal matter but an international dispute on UNSC agenda: APHC

SRINAGAR (INP): The All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) has decried the Indian Supreme Court's latest dictat validating the Narendra Modi-led government's action of repealing the Article 370 as Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir is not internal matter of India but an international dispute on the UNSC agenda.

According to Kashmir Media Service, the APHC spokesman in a statement in Srinagar said India is completely disregarding the Kashmiris' right to decide their future as per the UN resolutions and is relying on outright lies to divert attention from the human rights violations by its troops in occupied Kashmir.

The statement said

Kashmiri people are grieving over the recent verdict of India's salfionized Supreme Court on Article 370 which further exposed India's disregard for legal and democratic norms as the ruling was against the interests of people of Jammu and Kashmir.

The statement said India's denial of right to self-determination to Kashmiris is the main cause of the Kashmir dispute while its final settlement lies in the UN resolutions.

The spokesman termed the order as another assault on the rights of the Kashmiris. He said India through such dictats aggressively pushing to snatch everything from the Kashmiri people including

their land, resources and identity and turn them into a minority in their own land. However, he made it clear that the people of the occupied territory would never accept such illegal and anti-Kashmir decisions.

The salfionized Indian SC's biased, one-sided verdict cannot change the fact that New Delhi remains an occupier of an internationally recognized disputed territory of Jammu Kashmir, he said.

The statement urged the international community to pressurize India to stop its state terrorism in the occupied territory and resolved the Kashmir dispute as per the relevant UN resolutions and Kashmiris' aspirations.

Pakistan Railways to recover outstanding dues from federal, provincial depts

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Railways has asked its officials concerned to initiate the procedure to recover outstanding dues from the federal and provincial departments for using its land and various services.

The Ministry of Railways has asked the federal and provincial departments to pay their outstanding dues worth billions of rupees on account of using its land and other services, within the least possible time as the department was facing economic issues, the state news agency reported.

About the amount

payable against the different departments, the official said that over Rs 8.375 million (over 8 billion) are payable by different departments on account of using its land and various services.

He said the federal departments had to pay an amount of Rs 709.084 million, provincial departments Rs1980.217 million and autonomous and private bodies Rs 5685.736 million.

To a question, he said Pakistan Railways has upgraded as many as 181 vulnerable un-manned level crossings to manned level

crossings, out of 550 which are identified by the department over the entire railway network.

"The relevant provincial government provided the finances to Pakistan Railways for the upgradation of un-manned level crossings in the country," he added.

He said the department was taking several steps including the up-gradation of unmanned and vulnerable railway level crossings across the country in collaboration with respective provincial governments.



HUB: Heavy machineries busy in construction work of road carpeting of the one-way road under the supervision of local government departments, located on Sakran area in Hub

Mould-breaking book refutes Afghan narrative on Durand Line through evidence, IL

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Durand Line Agreement, international law, historical evidence, and the original maps exchanged at the time of the accord establish the present status of the Durand Line as an international border.

As such, the Durand Line issue is political and geostrategic, and its status as an internationally recognized border is indisputable. This was observed during the book launch of 'Revisiting the Durand Line: Historical and Legal Perspectives', authored by historian and researcher Dr Lutfur Rahman. The event was co-organized by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) and the School of Politics and International Relations (SPIR), Quaid-i-Azam University (QAU), Islamabad.

The session was addressed by Khalid Rahman, chairman, IPS, Ambassador Ahrar Hussain, former ambassador to Afghanistan and vice chairman, IPS, Dr Zafar Nawaz Jaspal, director and professor SPIR, QAU, Dr Razia Sultana, member Public Service Commission, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Dr

Lutfur Rahman, while Faheemullah Khan, lecturer, SPIR, acted as moderator.

The speakers said the book dispels the misconceptions through evidence-based research and citing international laws and principles. As further evidence, it also contains all the original maps exchanged in Kabul in November 1893 following the border agreement between the ruler of Afghanistan Ameer Abdur Rahman Khan and British Indian official Mortimer Durand.

Dr Lutfur Rahman debunked misconceptions about the Durand Line Agreement by centering his account on evidence and international law. Regarding one of the major misconceptions that the agreement was meant for one century and expired in 1993, he stated that it has no sunset clause. Rather the Article 2 of the agreement clearly suggests that the agreement settles the matter of demarcation once for all.

Even the notion that Ameer Abdur Rahman signed the treaty under duress is defied by historical records. The author clarified that the ameer had him-

self requested the British government to demarcate the border and directly took part in concluding the agreement as he felt threatened by the continuous expansion of the British and Russian empires.

The border of Afghanistan was clearly demarcated through meticulous ground surveys, mutually discussed agreements, and maps, in which several areas of British India were granted to Afghanistan as a goodwill gesture by the colonial rulers.

Dr Zafar Jaspal said that the Durand Line issue has been misinterpreted repeatedly, and such misconstrued claims should be resolved for good neighborly relations. The whole dilemma is political and geostrategic where the persistent irritancies and rivalry have proven no good to any state, said Dr Razia Sultana. She further stated that the Durand Line is not a valid historical problem but rather an issue of division of an ethnic group, i.e. Pakhtoons. This is not a strong point as Pakhtoons are very much integrated into Pakistan's political, economic, and military life.



Islamabad: Historian and researcher Dr. Lutfur Rahman is speaking at the launch of his new book on the Durand Line.

IHC rejects petition challenging delimitation of NA-53, PP-10 constituencies

ISLAMABAD (Online): Islamabad High Court (IHC) has rejected the petition challenging the delimitation of constituencies of PP-10 and NA-53.

Both the constituencies are electoral constituencies of Chaudhry Nisar where he contests election on both national assembly and provincial assembly seats.

Chief Justice (CJ) IHC Amer Farooq issued the written order.

The petition was filed by Sheikh Sajid ur Rehman close aide of Chaudhry Nisar.

It has been said in the written decision that Election Commission (EC) has to deal with several objections while carrying out delimitation of constituencies. It is not necessary for EC to state detailed reasons while dealing with every objection.

The decision further said there is no legal lacuna

in the delimitation of constituencies of NA-53 and PP-10.

This is the reason that court's interference is not needed in the delimitation of these constituencies.

It has also been said in the decision that the petitioner counsel too could not identify any irregularity in the delimitation of constituencies. Therefore, the petition is dismissed against the delimitation of these constituencies.



ISLAMABAD: Students of Open Air School of Master Ayub are taking gifts from Santa Claus at Serena hotel during the celebrations of Christmas, in Federal Capital.

India played nefarious role in Pakistan's dismemberment in 1971

ISLAMABAD (APP): India's nefarious role in dismemberment of Pakistan in 1971 is an established fact as its role in arming, training and instigating the Mukti Bahini was the greater factor in the creation of Bangladesh.

A report released by Kashmir Media Service, today, said Indian leaders, including its present-day fascist Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, have openly confessed about the Indian role to break up Pakistan in 1971.

It said India is fueling its hate for Pakistan into the minds and hearts of Bangladeshi people through reigniting twisted and fabricated lies of 1971, adding that its interference in internal affairs of Bangladesh

started right from its creation in 1971.

The report said animosity of the Bharatiya Janata Party towards Muslims is evident from rising Islamophobia in India under Modi and contributions by the leaders of Bengal have been pioneering and phenomenal in the Pakistan movement.

All India Muslim League, the party which championed the cause of Pakistan, itself was formed in Dhaka in 1906, it maintained.

It said that Bangladesh continued to maintain its Muslim character which proved that two-Nation Theory had not been drowned in the Bay of Bengal as claimed by Indira Gandhi in 1971.

IRSA releases 85,300 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Saturday released 85,300 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 37,500 cusecs.

According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1480.06 feet and its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 18,400 cusecs and 45,000 cusecs respectively.

The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1162.30 feet, which was 112.30 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 4,800 cusecs and 26,000 cusecs respectively.

Prominent scholar Nabi Bakhsh Baloch remembered

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prominent scholar, intellectual and literary figure Dr Nabi Bux Baloch was remembered on the occasion of his birth anniversary on Saturday.

Born on December 16, 1917 in village Jaffar Khan Leghari of district Sanghar, he got early education from High School Noshehro Feroz and graduated from Junagarh College. He got his masters degree in Arabic, from Aligarh University.

He received his doctorate degree from Columbia University in 1946. Baloch wrote several important books on Sindh's history. His most famous compilation is Shah Abdul Latif jo Risalo which comprises of ten volumes.

Nilofar praises Kashmir police for rescuing abducted woman, her daughter

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chairperson National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) Ms. Nilofar Bakhtiar acclaims Kashmir Police and civil society organizations on rescuing abducted woman Nazia Khoso along with her daughter and new born boy from the captivity of Kacha daocots.

She applauded professionalism of Kashmir (Sindh) Police and congratulated SSP Kashmir Rohail Khan Khoso on successful rescue operation.

She also appreciated the role of all civil society organizations those raised their voices for the safe come back of Nazia Khoso and highlighted this case on every available forum.

Nazia Khoso, now a

mother of two young kids, was abducted along with her two year old daughter few months ago by the daocot gang in Kacha when she was eight months pregnant.

Ms. Nilofar on her visit to Sindh in September this year, to get updates in murder case of young girl Fatima Phirero in Ranipur also spoke vigorously for the release of Nazia Khoso. She met with the parents and family of Nazia and personally visited high offices in Kashmir police to stress upon her safe release from this illegal and inhumane kidnapping.

Nazia and her children have been released safely two days back in a rescue operation conducted by Kashmir Police.

2 killed in road mishap

ISLAMABAD (APP): At least two people were killed in dumper-motorcycle collision in Kasur, late Friday.

According to detail, rescue sources told that the accident occurred at the Divalpur Road in Kot Sardar area of Kasur where a rashly-driven dumper hit a motorcycle, killing two persons on the spot, said a private news channel reported.

Police and rescue teams rushed to the site and shifted the bodies to nearby hospital.

The deceased were identified as Samiullah and Rizwan.

According to police spokesman, the driver of dumper managed to flee from the scene.



ISLAMABAD: A gypsy child collecting garbage at Fruit and vegetable market in the Federal Capital.

65pc HIOJK's teen students suffering from academic stress: Study

ISLAMABAD (APP): A new study conducted by the Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (IMHANS) has shown widespread academic stress prevalent among students in occupied Jammu and Kashmir, with health experts advising parents and guardians to closely monitor the children.

The study shows that at least 60-65 percent of school-going adolescents are suffering from academic-related stress in the occupied territory, Kashmir Media Service (KMS) reported. The study, titled "Prevalence of psychiatric morbidity among school-going adolescents in the age group of 13-19 years," asserts that there is a very high prevalence of psychi-

atric morbidity (anxiety combined with depression) of any kind among adolescents in Kashmir, many of which are unidentified and thus untreated.

The study found depression as the most common psychiatric illness among adolescents with a higher prevalence in males, while anxiety disorders are more common among females. The study was carried out on 16 schools in the twin districts of Srinagar and Ganderbal.

"Stress plays an essential role in the development of various illnesses. Academic stress, stresses from personal life and environment, as well as the ones arising from conflict may be important," the study says.

Dr Ubaid Rasool, one of the authors of the study, told the media that they wanted to carry out the study in rural and urban areas and thus chose Srinagar and Ganderbal for the purpose.

"Even though there were similar disorders in Srinagar and Ganderbal, the academic stress is more predominant in Ganderbal district which is a rural area," he added. The reason, he said, is that the kids in urban areas go for more outdoor activities than children from rural areas. The results of the study highlight a worrying pattern of academic stress affecting students of classes 9 to 12, revealing a substantial portion experiencing depression, anxiety, and various other mental health challenges.

PBM joins hands with NSER to strengthen framework

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Bait-ul-Maal (PBM) and National Socio Economic Registry (NSER) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in order to utilize the data of underprivileged people adequately for their assistance.

Managing Director (MD) of PBM Amir Fida Paracha, and DG National Socio Economic Registry (NSER), Dr Naveed Akbar were present at the signing of this agreement.

MD Amir Fida Paracha acknowledged this progressive step as a significant milestone in institutional partnership and expressed gratitude to Chairman Benazir Income Support Program, Dr. Amjad Saqib, for the collaboration and cooperation.

It is to mention here that the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) has organized data of individuals living below the poverty line through third-party surveys nationwide, which will now be accessible to Pakistan Bait-ul-Maal under this agreement.

This will not only boost the morale of those receiving dual assistance but will also assist in identifying eligible individuals.

Moreover, Pakistan Bait-ul-Maal will be connected with the National Socioeconomic Registry (NSER) system of BISP and its field staff will also be able to conduct surveys to identify eligible individuals when necessary, using tabs directly linked with NSER data.



ISLAMABAD: Workers of CDA are installing Dustbins on green belt along the Constitution Avenue in Federal Capital.

Bokhari issues directives to all party wings to begin upcoming election drive

ISLAMABAD (APP): Secretary General of the Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians (PPPP), Syed Nayyer Hussain Bokhari, issued directives to all party wings on Saturday to actively commence the general election campaign throughout the country.

Bokhari, in a statement, urged PPP leaders and workers to serve as ambassadors for Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari.

He specifically instructed the PPP Lawyers' Forum to provide legal guidance to the party's candidates. Additionally, he encouraged women to participate in door-to-door

campaigns to disseminate information about the party manifesto.

Bokhari further emphasized the role of the Peoples Student Federation, Peoples Youth, and Peoples Labour Bureau, urging their office bearers and workers to effectively convey Bilawal Bhutto's narrative to the masses in the upcoming elections.

Nayyer Bokhari highlighted Bilawal Bhutto's commitment to addressing critical issues such as poverty, unemployment, and inflation, emphasizing these as crucial components of the party's narrative.

Islamabad police conducts search operation

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad police on Saturday conducted a search and combing operation within the jurisdiction of Bhara Kahu police station and nabbed one suspect.

In adherence to specific directives from Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCPO) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, these operations are being systematically carried out across various sectors of the city.

The primary objective is to ensure the safety and security of the citizens of Islamabad.

In line with the ICCPO's instructions, the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD), in collaboration with local police teams under the supervision of SP CTD, executed a comprehensive search and comb-

ing operation in different areas falling under the purview of Bhara Kahu police station.

Throughout this operation, a comprehensive inspection was conducted on 77 residences, 14 motorcycles and three motor vehicles. Consequently, one suspicious individual was apprehended and a bike was impounded at local Police Station.

ICCPO Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan emphasized that the purpose behind these search and combing operations is to enhance security in the Federal Capital.

Zonal officers have been instructed to persist with these operations within their respective areas. The cooperation of citizens is earnestly requested during the inspection process.



ISLAMABAD: A painter is busy in making paintings on wall at Sector F-6 regarding the Christmas celebrations at Sector F-6 in Federal Capital.



ISLAMABAD: Younger girls are enjoying swings at Hills View Park in Federal Capital.

35 outlaws including 3 professional beggars, 11 absconders arrested

Independent Report
ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Police apprehended 35 outlaws including three professional beggars and 11 absconders 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 (ICCPO) 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 Aabpara police team arrested an accused namely Gulab Sher and recovered one 9mm pistol from his possession. The Kohsar police team arrested an accused namely Danish and recovered one dagger from his possession.

The Karachi Com-

pany police team arrested an accused namely Jan Agha and recovered one 30 bore pistol from his possession. The Shalimar police team arrested an accused namely Salman Mujahid and recovered 120 gram heroin from his possession. The Golra police team arrested an accused namely Ahmed Rashid and recovered 650 gram heroin from his possession, while the police team also arrested two accused namely Ghafar Shah and Muhammad Rashid involved in illegally refilling gas cylinders. Similarly, the Tarnol police team arrested an accused namely Abdul Wali and Muhammad Asif and recovered 2,381 gram heroin from their possession. The Sangiani police team arrested an accused namely Abdul Rehman and recovered 513 gram heroin from his possession, while the police team also arrested two accused namely Habib Ullah and Hamza Ahmed.

Finance professionals should take lead on public sector risk management

ISLAMABAD (INP): Top risks facing public sector organisations are financial challenges and an inability to meet changing demands and expectations of the public for services.

A global survey of finance professionals and others working in the public sector showed a key part of the global economy wrestling with significant risks, while not always having the tools to cope.

The research, drawing on responses from those working in a range of roles across the public sector – finance, risk, audit and ser-

vice delivery – found that, for their own organisations, they were worried about funding for public services and the ability to meet the evolving demands of delivering services, as well as finding the people with the right talent and skills.

In ACCA's survey the following five risks were highlighted as the most significant risks facing respondents' organisations (percentage figures represent the proportion of respondents identifying the risk as one of their 'top three'); Financial challenges – 49%; Meeting changing demands

and expectations for services – 35%; Talent and skills deficit – 35%; Poor organisational culture – 28%; and Ineffective leadership – 26%.

In response to the challenges facing the public sector, ACCA's new guide Calculated Risk makes the case for finance professionals taking a leading role in the risk management process.

Despite the skills finance professionals possess, the survey showed that many public sector organisations are not making effective use of their

capabilities in risk management. For example, only just over half of respondents (55%) who work in the finance function said they were regularly involved in identifying and reviewing relevant operational risks.

Mark Johnson, ACCA senior subject manager for the public sector, said: "Some public sector organisations are neglecting the valuable insight of staff working on the frontline. Identifying risk is a two-way process: organisations need to be made aware of any risks that are not al-

ready formally identified and those working in services are often in the best place to identify such risks. Using the knowledge and expertise of staff working in each part of an organisation to build up a profile of risk is critical for a comprehensive understanding of risk."

In an era where the outlook for public finances is challenging the public sector needs to move away from business as usual if it is to successfully negotiate the significant risks it faces. The finance function is well-placed to recognise

risks across the organisation and support leaders in addressing these risks. Ultimately resilience in organisation is built by developing skills and capabilities.

Public sector finance professionals who understand the threats and opportunities posed by risk can help build more resilient public services.

Read Calculated Risk: An introduction to finance professionals' role in understanding risk and building resilience in the public sector.

Sunday December 17, 2023

Polls on track

After a brief but worrisome period in which it seemed general elections would be delayed indefinitely, Friday's dramatic events appear to have reassured the nation that polls are on track, thanks to the Supreme Court's timely decision.

The ECP had petitioned the apex court after it had on Thursday stopped the training of election staff apparently to comply with the Lahore High Court's order suspending a notification appointing polling staff from the bureaucracy.

The SC bench, led by the chief justice of Pakistan, observed that the LHC had gone "well beyond" its jurisdiction and had acted "in undue haste" with reference to the PTI's petition challenging the appointment of bureaucrats for election duties. The SC reminded all of its Nov 3 verdict, which states that "no one should be allowed to, on any pretext, derail democracy."

Even before the ECP had applied the brakes to the election process, the rumour mill had been swirling with regard to delays to the Feb 8 polls. Sound bites from officials, politicians and commentators had been presented as 'evidence' that the polls would not be conducted as scheduled.

Moreover, some political actors had also tried to sow confusion; some had cited rising terror attacks, others the cold weather, to make a case for an indefinite delay.

Though the weather excuse borders on farcical, if some constituencies are affected by violence, by-polls can be held on these seats when the situation improves, though it is the state's duty to provide a terror-free atmosphere for the conduct of elections. Coming back to the case in the LHC, it was a bad idea for the PTI to move the court against the appointment of bureaucrats as returning officers and district returning officers, over fears that these individuals would facilitate 'rigging.' Strangely, bureaucrats were also appointed to help the ECP conduct the 2018 elections, which brought the PTI to power.

Moreover, when the judiciary is not interested in seconding its staffers to the ECP, what choice does the commission have but to requisition the bureaucracy for election duties? Furthermore, the LHC should have considered the bigger picture when issuing the order — the primacy of the constitutional requirement of elections.

We are already in constitutional limbo for failing to hold polls on time; this state of legal inertia cannot be allowed to continue indefinitely. No excuses should be provided by any side to justify further postponement of polls.

Though elections will not end our troubles overnight, the only solution to Pakistan's myriad woes lies in democratic continuity, not ad hocism. Therefore, especially after the SC has clarified matters, it is hoped that no more impediments are placed in the way of timely, transparent and fair elections. Democracy cannot be held in abeyance as it was during long periods of dictatorial rule.

Supreme court summons spymasters

By Qamar Bashir

Former Press Secretary to the President; Former Press Minister to the Embassy of Pakistan to France; Former MD, SRBC



In a historic move for Pakistan, the Supreme Court summoned retired Lt. General Faiz Hameed, a former spy chief, and Brigadier Irfan Ramay. However, it declined to summon former army chief Qamar Javaid Bajwa and Brigadier Faisal Marwat. Additionally, notices were issued to Arbab Mohammad Arif, former registrar of the Supreme Court of Pakistan, and former Chief Justice of Islamabad High Court Anwar Kansi. This action came after allegations made by Mr. Shaukat Siddique, a former Judge of the Islamabad High Court, accusing them of manipulating judicial proceedings, influencing bench formations favorable to the ISI, and seeking their approval for court decisions. The Supreme Court is seeking their responses and perspectives on these allegations.

While the appearance of these retired army officers in court remains uncertain, historical precedent suggests that Supreme Court summonses have often faced challenges in securing compliance. Past cases have been stalled or dismissed due to diverse factors, including political influence and military resistance to cooperation.

In the present political landscape, where there's a widespread perception that the military exerts significant influence across all state domains, including the judiciary, the act of issuing summonses to these officers represents a substantial leap forward in the country's

judicial history. During an open hearing, the Chief Justice issued these summonses, and the live telecast of the proceedings offered the entire population an engaging experience in the said case.

To better understand this significant case, it's essential to delve into its background. Mr. Shoukat Siddique was unceremoniously removed from service under Article 209(6) of the Constitution of Pakistan.

The President acted upon the recommendation of a five-member Supreme Judicial Council (SJC), which found the Judge guilty of misconduct and behavior unbecoming of a Judge due to a speech he delivered before the Rawalpindi District Bar Association in July 2021.

During his speech, Justice Siddique alleged that the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) personnel were interfering in judicial proceedings. He claimed that the ISI was exerting pressure on Chief Justice Muhammad Anwar of the Islamabad High Court (IHC) to form benches with judges influenced by the intelligence agency.

Moreover, he asserted that non-compliant judges were being removed from these benches under ISI's influence. He further alleged that the ISI compelled the IHC Chief Justice to prolong the imprisonment of Nawaz Sharif and his daughter until the 2018 elections and excluded Shaukat Aziz Siddique from the bench handling Sharif's appeals. Following this speech, a reference was filed on July 31 before the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC), charging Justice Siddique for accusing the establishment of manipulating judicial proceedings.

There were additional references filed against the judge. One was filed by a retired Capital Development Authority (CDA) employee, alleging the refurbishment of the judge's official residence beyond entitlement. Another show-cause notice was issued to Justice Siddique under Article 209 (5)(6) of the Constitution by the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) based on a reference moved by Advocate Kulsum Khaliq, representing former National Assembly member Jamshed Ahmed Dasti. This reference alleged that the high court judge objected to a compromise between the federal government and the Tehreek-i-Labbaik Ya Rasool Allah during a hearing on a case related to the 20-day Faizabad sit-in. The compromise had been facilitated by the armed forces. Following scrutiny of the reference, a meeting of the SJC on Feb 6 determined that the judge was guilty of misconduct and should be issued a show-cause notice in this regard.

The timing of the appeal's scheduling after a prolonged delay holds significant weight. Back in 2018, there was a perceived alignment between the judicial system and the army leadership to bring Imran Khan to power. During that time, anyone perceived as an obstacle to this alignment was either removed, marginalized, or silenced.

However, the current tide seems to favor Nawaz Sharif and is against Imran Khan. In this scenario, there's speculation that individuals involved in Nawaz Sharif's removal will face consequences, while those who supported him will be rewarded. This could potentially mean that Mr. Shoukat Siddique might be in line for recognition or reward, whereas General Faiz Hameed and his associates could face repercussions.

This situation aligns with Nawaz Sharif's recent national address, where he emphasized his return not for seeking retribution but to hold accountable those judges and bureaucrats, both civilian and military, who he claims were instrumental in his ousting from power. He highlighted the imprisonment of himself, his daughter, and close associates based on what he believes were unjust and fabricated charges.

During the proceedings, the judges adamantly pledged not to favor any party, yet they guided the lawyers to connect the case with a broader cause rather than framing it solely as absolving the judge from charges of misconduct.

The Supreme Court bench, comprising all five members, maintained a stern approach, often reprimanding and intimidating the lawyers who displayed remarkable restraint. The session seemed at a standstill at one point, with the Chief Justice suggesting that the case might not revolve around a significant national issue but rather the restoration of the judge's pension. He even summoned the attorney general for input on this matter.

The proceedings took a turn when the Chief Justice and another judge urged the lawyers to explicitly name the individuals and institutions allegedly involved in manipulating court proceedings in their favor. They emphasized the need for clarity instead of using vague terms like "establishment" or "certain elements."

One judge consistently pressed the lawyer about the alleged requests and influence of the ISI regarding the inclusion or removal of judges from specific benches, as well as

their demand to keep Nawaz and Maryam in custody until the 2018 elections. The lawyer affirmed that all these requests were meticulously adhered to.

The judges pressed the petitioner's lawyers to establish why they deemed the issues raised to be of national significance affecting the state and its institutions. They also directed the lawyers to provide a list of individuals they believed should appear in court to clarify their positions regarding the allegations against them.

The lawyers presented a comprehensive list of individuals they wished to cross-examine. To the surprise of everyone, the first name brought up was that of Retired General Qamar Javaid Bajwa. When asked for justification, the lawyer mentioned a statement by former ISI Chief General Faiz Hameed claiming that the Army Chief was displeased with him for his failure to manage a situation involving a high court judge in matters concerning the Army and ISI. The Chief Justice dismissed this as hearsay without evidence. However, after extensive debate, they agreed to issue summonses to four accused individuals.

While the allegations made by former Justice Shoukat Siddique are gravely serious, substantiating them with concrete evidence poses a formidable challenge. Within legal proceedings, assertions lacking substantial evidence may not wield considerable influence. Evidence plays a pivotal role in court, and unsupported claims might be deemed hearsay or speculation, lacking the weight required to sway the case. The burden of proof often rests on the accuser or plaintiff to furnish evidence sub-

stantiating their claims. Unsupported allegations may be deemed inadmissible or carry little weight in influencing the court's decision. Courts typically rely on credible and verifiable evidence to establish facts and reach judgments.

Furthermore, experienced spymasters possess the skill to meticulously erase any traces of their meetings, conversations, or manipulations. They deploy an array of techniques to obfuscate their locations, eliminate evidence, and, in extreme situations, neutralize witnesses. Their methods involve sophisticated evasion tactics, including altering appearances and utilizing burner phones to avoid surveillance. They employ encryption to scramble messages and files, making them unreadable without the requisite decryption key. Prior to disposal, they securely wipe data from devices like phones or laptops. Additionally, they leverage tools like VPNs, Tor, and other anonymizing technologies to obscure online activities and mask their IP addresses.

Considering the current political and security landscape, the trajectory of proceedings in this case will likely be subject to the discretion of the military establishment. It will likely continue as far as permitted by the army and cease as they deem fit. Nonetheless, the issuance of notices to retired army leadership marks a step in the right direction. It is crucial for the greater interests of the army as an institution, politicians, and the judiciary to ensure that the case proceeds strictly according to the constitution and the law. Adhering to these principles will strengthen the army, bolster democracy, and ultimately promote progress and prosperity for the people of the country.

The road to disaster



Tariq Khosa

Police and the judiciary are among the top corrupt institutions, according to Transparency International Pakistan's National Corruption Perceptions Survey 2023. The top 10 sectors perceived as very corrupt are police, tendering and contracting, judiciary, education, health, local government, land revenue administration, customs, excise, and income tax. As a former police chief, I am ashamed to admit that the public perception of police as one of the top corrupt departments is quite true. However, perceptions at times cannot expose the bitter truths about sacred cows and the powerful elite who are the root cause of this cancer of corruption in the body politic of our benighted nation. These inconvenient truths must be told.

As a public servant and law-enforcement officer who worked for the government from 1973 to 2011, I can say, without fear of contradiction, that successive political and military regimes have indulged in corrupt practices with impunity. In violation of their constitutional obligations, they have disregarded the moral and ethical standards demanded of public office holders. There are rogue elements within the state who consider themselves above the law and accountability. Many generals and judges shy away from public scrutiny of their assets. They believe their internal accountability mechanisms are effective

and that parliamentary or public oversight amounts to interference in their administrative and operational autonomy.

We also see the increasing militarisation of anti-corruption witch-hunting. Institutional anti-corruption bodies such as the National Account-ability Bureau (NAB), Federal Investigation Agency and Anti-Corruption Establishments generally follow the dictate of the deep state. Police commanders, who believe in the culture of integrity and strict internal and external accountability, are sidelined and given non-field staff assignments or consigned to nondescript roles without portfolios. Only compliant courtiers can thrive under an unaccountable system.

There are, of course, some exceptional police officers with the courage to say no to the illegal practices expected of them in an environment of sleaze and persecution. A senior serving police officer conceded that no organisation can earn public respect without performance legitimacy and strong self-accountability. However, he said: "We are less corrupt, but people perceive us otherwise as they are mostly directly affected by our acts and practices, that too often in public gaze and knowledge."

Exceptions apart, most of our politicians are corrupt and spineless. In order to win elections, they can go to any extent to curry favour with the string pullers and unelected elements of national power who call the shots. Except for a few national and regional parties, the mainstream political juggernaut is controlled by certain dynasties and families. Their leaders consider it their birthright to rule by hook or by crook.

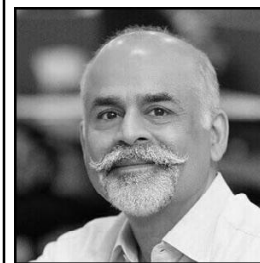
Now that elections

are approaching, the issue of political financing will come into play. Exorbitant non-refundable amounts are sought from all the candidates applying for tickets to fill the coffers of the parties going into the elections. One can expect opaque financial support to be available through courting real estate tycoons and big corporate business interests, along with indulging in bribery and secret deals via controversial elements. To avoid public scrutiny, stolen money is likely to be stashed in offshore havens, with beneficial ownership transparency disregarded through the questionable transfer of properties and ill-gotten wealth.

We need to ask why everyone is so grumpy these days? Why are so many Pakistanis despondent about the state of their country and its future? Why is everyone dissatisfied with the state of the economy, security and justice? The truth is that our rulers are not committed to the freedom of speech. They enforce the law when it works for them and their protégés. It is a culture of oppressors and the oppressed. Will the ruling demigods and the deep state abandon their game of thrones? Public perceptions should not be ignored. Yes, police and the judiciary are corrupt, but the biggest culprits are those who are responsible for state capture.

As human rights vanish from our national agenda, the fury of the victims grows. The state and the guardians of fundamental rights have failed the test of social contract. To avoid total disaster, the wave of toxicity can be stemmed by adopting a path of protection through collaboration, compassion and compromise. -- Courtesy Dawn

Our own Sinai



Shahzad Sharjeel

Indian journalist Vir Sanghvi has raised a question. More than the directness of his query, it is the lack of outrage it caused that is more surprising and even more pregnant with danger. He has asked if a modern state can forego the option of eliminating its enemies on foreign soil. Even before the legal, moral, and ethical caveats could be shimmed into the singular answer 'of course, it cannot' that he was quick to provide, he lobbed a more lethal and poignant suggestion: "Stop fussing over Khalistani targets, it is beyond us to get real Pakistani terrorists?"

He then mentioned a couple he thinks should be 'taken out'. Dawood Ibrahim, who he said continues to live in luxury first in Dubai and now in Karachi long after the 2008 attack on Taj Mumbai. He also named Hafiz Saeed in the same breath.

Premeditated murder as a conflict-resolution tool might be as old as human history. Take the Cain and Abel story, for instance. However, it refuses to be relegated to the category of 'old-fashioned', as right from the Hasan bin Sabah assassins to the present day, this method of dealing with opponents continues and is valorised. Democracies, monarchies, dictatorships, and every other form of state are partisan to it.

A furor was caused by Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, who accused the Indian government of orchestrating the murder of Hardeep

Nijjar, a Canadian national of Indian origin, near Vancouver in June this year. The allegations came in September, but fissures between the two were evident at the G-20 Summit in New Delhi where Trudeau apparently refused to stay in the hotel suite arranged by the host government, but eventually had to overstay in India by two when his plane developed some 'technical' fault.

Both governments huffed, and some famous 56-inch chests were puffed. Diplomats were thrown out, and visa services suspended. Just when the dust was settling, and cooperation over the Nijjar murder investigation was being worked out, the Americans rekindled the entire affair by very publicly accusing Indian officials of conspiring to get Gurpatwant Pannun, an American of Indian origin, assassinated on US soil. Pannun is a vocal proponent of an independent Khalistani state in Indian Punjab.

It is in this context that Sanghvi has posed his double-edged or, should we say, double-barrelled, question. While his argument addresses state-authorised murders on foreign soil more specifically, some may want to stretch it and ask, why should a state forego the right to protect itself against an enemy — a citizen or not — within its territorial jurisdiction? Now, it does not take a legal genius to respond that it could not be so because it would be extrajudicial, for there are courts, legal systems, and constitutional rights, and no one, not even a spy who has confessed, could be killed without a trial.

Similar mechanisms exist where multiple countries, boundaries, and jurisdictions come into play. These are called extradi-

national treaties, international courts, forums of arbitration under the aegis of organisations like the United Nations, global conventions, and charters that determine the treatment of the worst possible war criminals.

Israel has carried out hundreds of 'negative treatment of enemy' operations, a euphemism for murder sanctioned by the prime minister, in Gaza and against Hamas alone, not to mention countless such operations across the Middle East and worldwide. Every 'liquidation' was celebrated as one less threat to the state of Israel. Those who argue that taking out an individual criminal or a leader of a murderous group or government is better than risking large-scale wars and hundreds of thousands of lives must answer why all the Mossad and Shin Bet assassinations did not stop the Hamas attacks in October. Similarly, which large-scale war was Jamal Khashoggi's murder designed to prevent?

We can derive sadistic pleasure from our neighbour's discomfiture at the hands of the Canadians and their American cousins. But before telling Sanghvi, 'Yeah! Try it', we must remember that ghar ki baat ghar mein rahey tau bahter (family matters are better resolved in-house). We should do much introspection on sorting out our internal differences lawfully.

Political opponents and dissidents must be treated in keeping with the constitutional provisions to strengthen citizens' confidence in the state. The country has drifted a long way from the anthem's 'shad baad, manzil-i-murad' (may the aspired destination be a happy one), to the burials on Koh-i-Murad. -- Courtesy Dawn

In a first in country's history, Lahore receives artificial rain

Independent Report LAHORE: Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi's persistent efforts yielded success as, for the first time in the country's history, artificial rain was successfully tested in Lahore.

Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi, in a press conference at the Chief Minister's Office here on Saturday, announced the historic achievement, stating that after 15 days of continuous efforts, the first artificial rain has taken place in Pakistan.

In the initial mission, 48 flares were deployed for cloud seeding in the morning, followed by a second artificial rainfall mission. The precipitation occurred around Shadara and Muridke areas, benefiting from the necessary cloud cover and

wind. CM Mohsin Naqvi expressed gratitude that the artificial rain had incurred no financial cost.

Acknowledging the cooperation of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi thanked the UAE team, which had been in Pakistan for the past 15 days to facilitate artificial rain. He highlighted that Lahore, once ranked as the most polluted city globally by Airindex, faced significant challenges in experimenting with artificial rain, and he appreciated the support of the UAE President.

CM Naqvi extended gratitude to the federal government and institutions for their unwavering support. Both WASA and LWMC are on high alert, awaiting the results of the second

artificial rainfall mission, which will be evident by the next night.

The artificial rain experiment was a joint effort between the Department of Environment and the UAE team. Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi disclosed that the federal government was actively working on artificial rain technology, expressing optimism about more successes in the near future.

Artificial rainfall is a regular practice in the UAE, and the successful implementation on a 15 km stretch in Lahore was a gift from the UAE. The Punjab government provided complete technical support, and Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi conveyed thanks on behalf of the Punjab government to the UAE.



PESHAWAR: A delegation of Tribal elites of Sulamankhail from North Waziristan meeting with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Haji Ghulam Ali.

Caretaker CM KP announces quantum valley in Abbottabad & Haripur

ABBOTTABAD (APP): Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Justice Retired Syed Arshad Hussain Shah, on Saturday visited District Haripur and Abbottabad, and spent a very busy day.

During his visit, the Chief Minister paid visits to various higher education institutions including Pak-Austria Fachhochschule Institute of Applied Sciences, Haripur University, and Abbottabad University of Science & Technology, and inaugurated several developmental projects worth billions of rupees which include student hostel in Pak-Austria Fachhochschule Institute, Examination Block in Haripur University and two academic block in Abbottabad University of

Science and Technology.

Addressing as chief guests the inauguration ceremonies in these institutions, the Chief Minister announced to setting up Quantum Valley in Abbottabad and Haripur districts on the analogy of Silicon Valley of the United States wherein modern training and education would be imparted to the youth in the field of Information & Communication Technology, Artificial Intelligence and industrial technologies with its branches in other districts of the province as well.

The Chief Minister stressed upon the higher education Institutes to change the traditional scheme of education and training and align it with the market.

CM orders removal of all bottlenecks for smooth traffic flow, illegal parking

KARACHI (APP): The Caretaker Sindh Chief Minister Justice (Retd) Maqbool Baqar while presiding over a meeting regarding traffic issues has directed the Commissioner and Karachi police to start a vigorous crackdown against the illegal parking areas in the city and prosecute the culprits involved in the racket and onward no agency would designate parking slot without consultation with the Traffic police.

The CM said that there were different agencies involved in creating traffic problems in the city, therefore he has called a joint meeting of Karachi police, Traffic Police, traffic engineering bureau, SEPA.

The meeting was

attended by Caretaker Minister Home Brig @ Haris Nawaz, Minister Tourism and Environment Arshad Wali Mohammad, Mayor Karachi Muratza Wahab, Home Secretary Iqbal Memon, IG Police Riffat Mukhtar, Additional IG Karachi Khadim Rind, Commissioner Karachi Saleem Rajput, Secretary Transport Asad Zamin, DIG Traffic Iqbal Dara, DIG Driving Licenses Irfan Baloch, DG SEPA Waris Gabol, Director Traffic Engineering Tariq Raffi and other concerned. DIG Traffic Iqbal Dara briefed the chief minister on the overall traffic police strength, and the issues involved in traffic congestion in the city.

The traffic police have a total strength of

9077 against which 6699 are working which shows a shortfall of 26.1 per cent or 2378 policemen. The CM was told that the city has a network of 9500 km where around 6.5 million vehicles, including 4,054,546 motorcycles are plying. Approximately 350,000 new vehicles are registered every year in the city and around 65,000 Extra seat Rickshaws are running in the city on illegal routes. During 2023 around 1.62 million tickets were issued for violation of traffic laws against which Rs836.12 million fine was recovered.

It was pointed out that with the induction of more Mass Transit systems like Green and Orange lines, the traffic issues would be resolved.



GILGIT: Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Haji Gulbar Khan in a meeting with Advisor Information Eman Shah and other Journalist of GB at CM Secretariat.

Dr Jamal Nasir says: RMU, a national asset in the health sector

Independent Report RAWALPINDI: Caretaker Provincial Minister for Primary and Secondary Health and Population Welfare Punjab Dr Jamal Nasir has said that Rawalpindi Medical University (RMU) held a prominent position in the health sector and the nation was proud of its educational standard.

The minister expressed these views while addressing the 14th Convocation of RMU here on Saturday. It is the foremost institution of the country in medical education and the people associated with it have always worked with the spirit of humanitarian service in emergencies, the minister added.

Dr Jamal Nasir said that the services of the institution during the COVID-19 epidemic and floods were commendable. Dr Jamal said that today was a memorable and

auspicious day for the young graduates of Rawalpindi Medical University.

Congratulating the graduating doctors and their parents, he said that the University was playing a constructive role in the field of health and the whole nation values it.

He said that the medical profession was associated with human service and it was a matter of honour to be associated with this field.

Medical teaching hospitals were being established in five districts of Punjab while projects worth billions of rupees had been started in Rawalpindi.

He added that multi-billion projects had either been completed or were in the process of completion in 100 big hospitals, including 78 Tehsil headquarters hospitals and district headquarters hospitals across Punjab.

CM pays tribute to APS martyrs

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi, in his message on the anniversary of the martyrs of Army Public School Peshawar, affirmed that the significance of December 16 will forever evoke the memory of the profound sacrifices made by the martyrs.

The Chief Minister emphasized that the nation would remain eternally indebted to the sacrifices of the children and teachers of Army Public School. He acknowledged that these young souls inscribed the history of a secure Pakistan with their precious blood, laying the foundation for a peaceful nation.

Highlighting the poignant contribution of the little children who offered their lives for a noble cause, Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi underscored that the martyrs of APS played a pivotal role in uniting the Pakistani nation against terrorism. He credited the great sacrifices for inspiring unprecedented unity and consensus throughout the nation's fight against terrorism.

IGP discusses election security strategy with Election Commissioner

KARACHI (APP): The Inspector General of Police (IGP) of Sindh, Riffat Mukhtar Raja, held discussions with Election Commissioner Sharifullah (CPO) Karachi on Saturday.

They deliberated on security strategies and plans for the imminent general elections, focusing on constituency details, polling stations, staffing, and necessary security arrangements, according to

a spokesman for Sindh Police.

Emphasizing the police's dedication, the IGP assured a comprehensive security cover throughout the electoral process, ensuring the safety of ballot boxes.

He highlighted the importance of stakeholder consultation and the implementation of an effective security plan as key priorities for the Sindh Police ahead of the elections.



KARACHI: Caretaker Provincial Minister for Information, Minority Affairs, Social Protection Muhammad Ahmed Shah talking to media persons on the of the 18th International Book Fair at Expo Centre.

Police lodge 158 FIRs against underage drivers

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi District Police have registered 158 FIRs against underage drivers during the last 24 hours, said a police spokesman here on Saturday.

He informed that police on the directives of the City Police Officer, Rawalpindi were taking action by the law against underage drivers. The CPO had directed the City Traffic Police to take solid steps to control traffic rules violations and underage driving, he said.

Fatal road accidents occur due to speeding and reckless driving of the drivers particularly underage, he said and informed that Police had

initiated a drive against underage drivers without any discrimination.

Underage drivers not only endanger their own lives but the lives of other road users, he said adding that parents should keep a vigilant eye on their children to avert road accidents.

The vehicles and motorcycles of the underage drivers were also being impounded in respective police stations, he said.

In addition to issuing fines for underage driving, Police were also conducting awareness campaigns in schools and colleges to educate young individuals about the legal

PFA raids fake beverages unit, discards drinks

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab Food Authority (PFA) raided a fake carbonated drinks unit, located in Punjab Society's Khara Changi area here on Saturday and discarded adulterated drinks, banned chemicals and artificial flavourings.

The food safety teams registered cases against the unit owners and management, and confiscated a loader rickshaw, 1,500 empty bottles, 24-kg caps, water pump, compressor, two filling machines, three water tanks, plant and filters.

DG Food Authority Asim Javed said fake beverages were being prepared with substandard colours, chemicals and contaminated water, adding action was taken after drinks with fake labels of well-known brands were found on sale.

The fake product was found to be ready for supply, and a case was registered against those involved in the adulteration.



LAHORE: Federal Ombudsperson for Protection against Harassment of Women Fauzia Waqar meeting with Punjab Governor Muhammad Balighur-Rehman.

Minister inaugurates first opera music academy in Lahore

Independent Report LAHORE: Federal Minister for National Heritage & Culture Jamal Shah inaugurated country's first Opera Music Star Saira Arts Academy (SAA), here on Saturday.

He expressed his best wishes and prayers for fulfillment of Saira Arts Academy's vision, citing that music could address many of society's important issues.

Talking to the media, he highlighted the importance of Saira Arts Academy, saying it was very important to establish art institutions for the youth and the Saira's academy was specially created for them.

Establishment of the Saira Arts Academy was an initiative of Pakistan's first opera star Saira Peter, which would usher in a new era of music industry in the country.

Saira Peter told the media the Academy was

the grassroots initiative of young people who wanted to create a secure, nourishing space for new artists, especially talented female singers, to develop their music skills. She remarked that Lahore was a great city for art lovers, with a legacy of centuries of musical creation.

Director Saira Peter revealed that she had been approached by a large number of music aficionados, requesting her to open an academy to cater to students of opera and Western and Pakistani classical singing.

In his speech, Prof. Zafar Francis, founding chair of SAA's mother organisation.

The Sarah Foundation, explained how music is both scientific and spiritual, especially Sufi music, which produces purity and peace. He said that the SAA's aims was to communicate Pakistani values to the whole world.

DIKhan police arrested 10 criminals during crackdown

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): District police of D.I.Khan arrested ten criminals and recovered narcotics and weapons during the successful operations conducted in the limits of various police stations here Saturday.

According to the police spokesman, on the direction of District Police Officer Dera Abdul Rauf Babar Qaisrani various teams of Gomal University, Cantt, Kirri Khasor and Darazinda police stations conducted raids to arrest the criminal elements.

The team of Gomal University Police Station led by SHO Kazim Hussain arrested drug peddler Muhammad Zeeshan son of Muhammad Ikram resident of Kachi Paind Khan and

recovered 1076 grams of hashish and 103 grams of ice from his possession.

During another action, a team of Kirri Khasor police station led by SHO Malik Imran arrested notorious drug dealer Khalil son of Ismail resident of Dirkanwali and recovered 513 grams of hashish and 216 grams of ice from his possession.

Similarly, SHO Cantt police station Gul Sher Khan while carrying out operations against the criminal elements, arrested drug peddler Attaulah son of Amanullah resident of Thoyalasid and recovered 270 grams of ice from his possession.

Another accused Fazal resident of Awanabad was arrested and police recovered 30-bore pistol from his possession.

Christmas is festival of happiness; Kamran

RAWALPINDI (APP): Senator of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, Kamran Michael on Saturday said that Christmas is a festival of happiness in which everybody's participation makes this pleasure dual.

He expressed these views while speaking as a special guest at the Christmas cake-cutting ceremony organized by Pastor Naeem Bhatti.

The senator urged the Christmas community to remember the poor and deserving brothers in the joy of Christmas. Michael further said that the PML-N will sweep the upcoming general elections.

Blood of innocent martyrs of APS united nation against terrorism

PESHAWAR (APP): Nine years ago, this dark day had brought immense pain and sorrow for the families of innocent martyrs of Army Public School (APS), Peshawar where their loved ones were brutally massacred on a broad day in a deadly terrorist attack that wounded the hearts of every Pakistani.

Known as a black day in the country's history, December 16, 2014 was a dreadful day for the Sharif Gul's family whose elder son Hassnain Sharif, who was a 10th-grade student at APS Peshawar was martyred in a horrific gun attack along with 131 others students, which put the entire nation in deep shock.

"On that fateful day, my elder son Hussain

Sharif who had a great desire to join the Pakistan Army as SSG Commando, woke early in the morning, offered Fajr prayer, recited the Holy Quran as per his routine daily practice, and later left for school after a motherly kiss on his forehead by his mother, on main gate of our house," Sharif Gul said.

"Hassnain was a very obedient, intelligent, and disciplined son. To fulfill his dream wish, I shifted along with family to Peshawar and admitted him at APS where he showed outstanding results in academics, sports, and cocurricular activities" he recalled.

"I was busy in routine office work in Peshawar when my colleagues informed me about the

terrorist attack at APS. I rushed towards Warsak Road where the school was located amid gunshots, firings, smell of explosives and blasts. Later at night, I was informed that Hassnain had been martyred and his body was lying in the hospital from where it was collected for burial," Sharif Gul told APP with rolling down tears on his face.

The APS attack remains one of the most painful incidents in Pakistan's history when about six terrorists dressed in military uniforms entered the school premises and opened indiscriminate fire at students, teachers and staff.

Resultantly, 147 people including 132



KARACHI: Amir Jamat-e-Islami Hafiz Naeem-ur-Rehman is addressing press conference in Provincial Capital.



LARKANA: Activists of Sindh United Party (SUP) are holding protest demonstration for acceptance of their demands, held in Larkana.

students and their Principal Tahara Qazi were martyred in the deadly attack and many were injured. Principal Army Public School Shaheed Tahira Qazi and other teachers stood in front of terrorists as a rock wall to protect their students and sacrificed their lives.

The security forces of Pakistan, immediately after the attack, surrounded the school and killed all the terrorists after a successful operation and saved many precious lives of students and their teachers.

"The terrorist attack at APS had proved a defining moment in the country's history. It united the entire nation against the menace of terrorism and militancy in Pakistan,"

said Ikhhtar Wali Khan, former member Provincial Assembly while talking to APP.

He said the cowardly terrorists wanted to eliminate education, knowledge and learning by attacking students in the school, who were the future of Pakistan.

However, the enemy of education could not dampen the morale of the nation in Pakistan where people of every school of thought strongly rejected terrorism in all forms and manifestations.

He said a strong message was given to supporters of terrorism by the school administration after the reopening of APS in a couple of days and studies were restarted there.

Dr Umar Saif says: SIFC effective forum for economic stability, timely decisions of public interest

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication, Dr Saif Umar Saturday said that the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) serves as an effective forum for ensuring economic stability and making timely decisions in the public interest.

In a video statement, Dr Saif Umar said, "SIFC is instrumental in paving the way for digital transformation and attracting foreign direct investment in Pakistan."

He said, "Crucial decisions, beneficial to the masses, are being made through the SIFC forum in Information and Communication Technology (ICT)."

The minister expressed confidence that these initiatives would contribute to the rapid development and stability of the country's economy.

Dr Umar Saif further explained, "All stakeholders including the military and political leadership are present in the SIFC forum, which makes decision-making very easy."

"We are confident that with the presence of the Special Investment Facilitation Council, the upcoming government will also be able to make timely decisions for the country's development and public interests because we mustn't compromise on

our economic stability and public interests, we need to avoid departmental obstacles. Instead of unnecessary delay tactics, quick and effective decisions have to be taken in the interest of the country and the nation, for this purpose SIFC is the most effective forum" he added.

The minister said that since 2014, the case of hundreds of MHz of spectrum with Sun TV was pending.

The matter, he said was raised at the SIFC forum, and all the required legal requirements were met, after which the High Court of Sindh heard the case daily and the verdict of the case was pronounced on Thursday.



ISLAMABAD: Director General Pakistan National Council of the arts Muhammad Ayub Jamali inaugurated Versa Exhibition organized by the Rawalpindi Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry at Centaurus Mall.

ICCI calls for doubling Pak-Italian bilateral trade to realize actual trade potential

ISLAMABAD (INP): Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) said that the current bilateral trade volume of around one billion euros between Pakistan and Italy is not matching with the actual potential of both countries and efforts should be made to double it as both countries have the potential to do trade in many more items.

He said this while talking to Augusto Palmieri, First Secretary of the Embassy of Italy and Salvatore Parano, Director, Italian Trade Agency during their visit to ICCI.

Ahsan Bakhtawari said that both countries should work to develop strong business linkages between their private sectors to explore all untapped areas of bilateral cooperation. He said that many sectors of Pakistan's economy offer good

potential for joint ventures and investors and stressed that Italian investors should transfer technology and explore business and investment opportunities in Pakistan.

Speaking on the occasion, Augusto Palmieri, First Secretary of the Embassy of Italy, and Salvatore Parano, Director, Italian Trade Agency said that Italy's annual exports are over 700 billion euros and both countries should focus on diversification of trade to achieve better results.

They said that Italy is providing advanced technology solutions and Pakistan can benefit its economy by developing close cooperation in this sector with Italy. They said that both countries should encourage B2B meetings to establish contacts between their private sectors and explore new areas of bilateral trade.

China's shipbuilding sector maintains robust expansion

BEIJING (APP): China has maintained its top position in the global shipbuilding market in the first 11 months of 2023, with strong growth in both output and new orders, industry data showed.

The country's shipbuilding output climbed 12.3 percent year on year to 38.09 million deadweight tonnes (dwt) during the January-November period, accounting for 50.1 percent of the world's total, according to data from the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology.

New orders surged 63.8 percent year on year to 64.85 million dwt, taking up 65.9 percent of the world's total during the period, figures from the ministry showed.

The sector's holding orders totaled 134.09 million dwt at the end of November, expanding 29.4 percent year on year. The volume represented 53.4 percent of the global market share.

Decrease in petrol price: Pumps stop supply, transporters refuse to cut fares

ISLAMABAD (INP): The government has reduced the price of petrol to a large extent; however, the availability of the fuel to the public is now causing problems.

In a huge relief to the people, the petrol tariff has been reduced by a massive Rs14.

However, immediately after the announcement of reduction in prices of petroleum products, petrol pumps reportedly stopped its sale to people, causing major inconvenience to people.

The people working at the petrol pumps say that the petrol stock has been exhausted, and the supply will be resumed soon.

On the other hand, despite the decrease in prices of petroleum products, the transporters in Lahore have not reduced

the fares, and the passengers are forced to travel on the old fares.

People have complained that when the price of petrol increases, the fares are immediately increased. So the government should also reduce the fares, they demanded, saying people will get real relief if the fares drop.

Over in Faisalabad also, goods transporters have refused to slash their fares. They say that it is impossible to reduce the fares by Rs10, Rs20, adding that if there is a reduction of at least Rs100 in fuel rates, they will reduce the fares.

In Karachi, even the constant decrease in the prices of petroleum products could not alleviate the concerns of the people.

Secretary Livestock inaugurates poultry, hatchery labs

HYDERABAD (APP): The Sindh Secretary of Fisheries and Livestock Dr Hafeez Ahmed Sialy here on Saturday inaugurated Divisional Diagnostic and Research Poultry and Hatchery Laboratories at Animal Husbandry Hospital, Hussainabad. On the occasion, he inspected various sections of the facility and interacted with the staff and the officials.

The officials briefed the secretary that a range of pathology tests would be performed at the laboratory. According to them, one of the tests identified the nature and type of bacteria so that appropriate antibiotic medicines could be prescribed for poultry. They said that the laboratory was also equipped to test the water quality.



HYDERABAD: Motorcycle riders standing in queue to get petrol at PSO fuel station after decrease in petrol prices.



Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy Mehdi Safari is meeting Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tesori in Tehran.

Pak, China discussed transfer of Chinese technology to Pakistan's SEZs

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Commerce, Dr Gohar Ejaz has discussed exploring the transfer of Chinese technology to Pakistan's Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in China tour.

The minister along with a high-profile delegation, has concluded a visit to China. The comprehensive tour spanned three key Chinese cities, providing a platform for fostering collaborations across diverse sectors, said a press release issued here Saturday.

The delegation actively participated in the China-Pakistan Textile Summit, a pivotal event that brought together industry leaders from both nations. Engaging in insightful discussions, the delegates aimed to fortify

bilateral trade relations and explore avenues for increased cooperation.

A significant milestone during the visit was the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the China Chambers of Commerce and the All Pakistan Textile Mills Association (APTMA). This agreement marks a commitment to enhance collaboration and promote mutual interests in the textile sector.

The delegation comprised businessmen, seized the opportunity to engage in fruitful Business-to-Business (B2B) meetings with their Chinese counterparts. The focus was on enhancing textile imports and exports, with the ultimate goal of strengthening

economic ties between the two countries.

Exploring possibilities beyond textiles, the delegates delved into discussions on potential joint ventures across multiple sectors.

This exemplifies the collaborative spirit and shared vision for business growth between Pakistan and China. Emphasizing the importance of joint efforts, the delegates underscored the need for collaboration among business individuals from both nations. Discussions included the application of advanced Chinese technology to enhance value addition in Pakistan's industries. The delegates engaged in detailed discussions on how this transfer could drive innovation and economic development in Pakistan.

2 Chinese companies will set up factories to produce electric cars in Pakistan

KARACHI (INP): Twenty (20) major exporters of the Advisory Council under the leadership of Caretaker Minister of Commerce Gohar Ijaz reached Pakistan after completing their visit to China.

Former president of Federation Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FCCI) and member of the advisory council, Zubair Tufail, who is part of the delegation, told the media after reaching Karachi that the visit to China was very successful and China is ready for new investment in Pakistan. And especially in the auto, mineral, agricultural sector, China is preparing to invest, while it was agreed to start joint ventures in other sectors, including textiles, in addition, China's technology will be transferred to special economic zones in Pakistan.

Zubair Tufail said that the visit of the

Pakistani delegation to China headed by the caretaker minister of commerce Gohar Ijaz will speed up the trade relations between Pakistan and China and investments are moving towards Pakistan, the caretaker minister in finding markets and partners for Pakistani exporters. The trade has been extremely successful while his visit to China was also a part of 'Vision Pakistan 100 Billion Dollars'. Zubair Tufail said that Chinese President Xi Jinping has given a unique gift of CPEC to Pakistan, bringing together the businessmen of both countries, the BRI vision of President of the People's Republic of China is being pushed forward and in this context, Chinese industrialists will increase trade with Pakistan and for this purpose, business-to-business meetings were organized between the Pakistani delegation.

Weeds cause 42pc decrease in wheat production

FAISALABAD (APP): Farmers should make proper arrangements for elimination of weeds on priority basis as they badly affect the yield and cause reduction in wheat production up to 42 per cent.

According to a spokesman for the Agriculture (Extension) Department Mubeen Ahmad, weeds not only reduce the quantity of crop production but also play a major role for damaging quality of the grains.

He said that after comprehensive survey, the agricultural experts observed that the weeds cause up to 42 per cent production loss in wheat crop. The weeds not only absorb nutrients of the crop plants but these are also providing most suitable environment and place to the pests which are injurious to the crop production. Therefore, the farmers should take immediate steps to remove the weeds from the crops.

Business community stands firm with Pak forces, hails economic rejuvenation

ISLAMABAD (INP): In a resounding show of unity, Pakistan's Business Forum (PBF) has pledged unwavering support for the country's armed forces, hailing their crucial role in restoring peace and paving the way for economic rejuvenation.

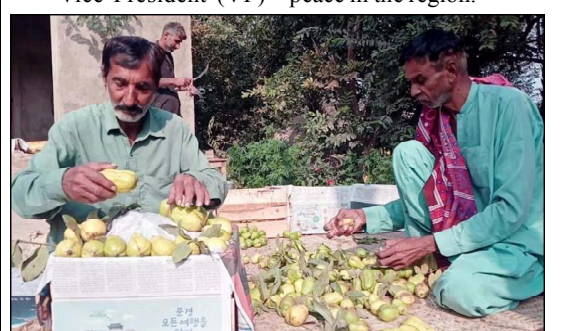
"This unified front sends a clear message as Pakistan stands united against terrorism and external threats, while simultaneously fostering a business-friendly environment for sustainable growth," said a press release issued here Saturday.

PBF President Mian Muhammad Usman led the charge, praising the military's relentless pursuit of terror eradication.

Vice President (VP)

Jahan Ara Wattoo, Chaudhry Ahmad Jawad and Provincial Chairmen Atif Ikram Sheikh, Muhammad Naseer Malik, Khawaja Mahboob ul Rehman, Ashfaq Paracha, Daroo Khan Achakzai and Shabnum Zafar in a collective message said, "We are proud of our armed forces for successfully flushing out terrorists from their hideouts and stamping out the menace of terrorism in the region paving way for complete restoration of peace in the country, a prerequisite for economic growth and development in the country."

They said, "We are immensely proud of our armed forces for their valiant efforts in flushing out terrorists and restoring peace in the region."



LARKANA: Laborers busy in packing Guava fruits in wooden cartons at field for sending it to market as demand of Guava increased in city during current season at workplace in Larkana.

Cold can affect mango plants badly

FAISALABAD (APP): The cold weather could affect vegetables, crops and orchards especially mango plants during winter. Therefore, the gardeners and farmers should take immediate steps to protect their plants from the cold.

A spokesman for the Agriculture (Extension) Department said here on Saturday that the cold was injurious to mango plants, especially during frost days. Therefore, the farmers should be alert and water the mango orchards repeatedly during winter as drought could aggravate the situation for mango plants.

Responding to a question, he said that drought was dangerous for mango plants and badly

affected them if the temperature touches 4 degree. The cold could destroy the mango nurseries if it was less than 4 degrees centigrade. However, the large plants were less affected due to their high immunity, so it was important to adopt appropriate strategies to deal with this situation to reduce the risk of damage.

After planting orchards, the farmers should take care for their protection from the effects of severe weather by adopting guideline set for this purpose by the agri scientists. He said that mango called as "King of Fruits" which was found in our country in a number of varieties.



ISLAMABAD: A street vendor is selling balloons along the road side at Sector F-6 in Federal Capital.

LESCO detects 294 power pilferers on 98th day of anti-theft campaign

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) has detected a total of 294 connections from where the customers were pilfering electricity in all its circles of five districts (Lahore, Sheikhupura, Nankana Sahib, Kasur and Okara) on the 98th day of grand anti-power theft campaign.

The LESCO spokesman told media here Saturday that the company has also submitted FIR applications against 294 electricity thieves, out of which 155 FIRs have been registered in respective police stations, while 11

accused have been arrested. Grand anti-power theft operations against electricity thieves are being conducted on the directives of the Federal Power Division and the LESCO Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Engineer Shahid Haider is supervising these operations. The LESCO chief vowed that the operations would continue without discrimination until the complete end of electricity theft. The electricity pilferers as well as the LESCO officers and employees who facilitate them are also being brought to justice.



ISLAMABAD: People are taking interest in Gem stones on stall during Gems Jewelry Show at Pak China Friendship Center, in Federal Capital.

FCCI stresses planning to solve poultry sector problems

FAISALABAD (APP): Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) Senior Vice President Dr Sajjad Arshad said on Saturday comprehensive planning was crucial to solve problems being faced by the poultry sector.

Addressing the first meeting of FCCI Standing Committee on Poultry, he said he tried his level best to get agriculture tariff for the poultry sector, but now they must file a petition to get justice from the judiciary. He said poultry was an integral part of agriculture, but the government was not ready to accept its due status. He mentioned drastic reduction in the prices of ingredients used for poultry feed.

He lamented that the

prices of poultry feed and vaccine had not been reduced proportionately and in this connection, we must make concerted efforts by involving all stakeholders. He stressed the need for mutual consultation to fix the poultry rates and said that farmers should sell out their birds of 2.5 kg weight. He said that steps should also be taken to discourage the brokers who are eroding the financial strength of the poultry sector. He assured that the problems identified by the standing committee would be resolved at the highest level. He also introduced FCCI and said that maximum farmers should get its membership to enhance their strength at this vocal platform of the business community.

PEC holds 'Final year design projects' competition

FAISALABAD (APP): Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) President Dr Khurram Tariq said on Saturday the young generation might be equipped with modern technologies to establish an import substitution industry by utilising domestic raw material. He was addressing the 'Final year design projects' competition, arranged by the Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) for their financial assistance, here. He stressed the need to innovate the engineering sector so that local industrialists could start manufacturing machinery and gradually upgrade it according to domestic needs and ecosystem. He also urged the academic institutions to focus on the practical training.

Commissioner says: Govt gives direct relief to public by reducing petroleum prices

MULTAN (APP): Commissioner Multan division, Engineer Aamir Khattak, directed officials concerned to monitor the prices of commodities in the market keeping in view the reduction in petroleum prices.

The government has given direct relief to the people by reducing the prices of petrol and its benefit should reach the general public.

He directed monitoring of supply line checking of grain and fruits and vegetable markets and wholesale dealers and tighten the noose against

commission mafia by making the demand and supply system transparent.

He ordered to ensure a cheap supply chain of food items including chicken, vegetables and pulses asked the wholesale dealers to make cheap supply possible.

Deputy Commissioners were asked to take steps to keep chicken prices stable and issue notification of official rates after the consultation with stakeholders.

Profiteering of local commodities in the market would not be tolerated.

Japan and Malaysia sign maritime security assistance deal

Monitoring Desk
 TOKYO: Japan and Malaysia signed a security assistance deal on Saturday including a grant of 400 million yen (\$2.8 million) to boost Malaysia's maritime security, as Asian nations seek to counter an increasingly assertive China.

Japan will provide equipment such as rescue boats and supplies under the official security assistance deal, signed by the two countries' foreign ministers on the sidelines of a Tokyo summit marking 50 years of ties between Japan and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Japanese Prime Minister Kishida welcomed the elevation of the Japan-Malaysia relationship to a

"comprehensive strategic partnership", Japan's foreign ministry said in a statement.

In addition to Malaysia, ASEAN members the Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei claim parts of the South China Sea disputed by China, which claims almost all of the waterway that is a conduit for more than \$3 trillion of annual ship-borne commerce. The Permanent Court of Arbitration in 2016 said China's claims had no legal basis.

China and Japan last week accused each other of maritime incursions after a confrontation between their coast guards in waters around islands they both claim in the East China Sea.

Japan's aid to Malaysia follows similar deals with the Philippines and Bangladesh this year and is part of a plan announced in April for Japan to provide developing countries with financial assistance to bolster their defences.

In the three-day summit through Sunday, Japan is offering ASEAN members support to boost their standing as international actors and help them manage their relations with others, including China, said an official at Japan's foreign ministry.

Kishida is expected to meet separately with the leaders of all the ASEAN members, which also include Cambodia, Singapore, Thailand, Laos and Timor-Leste.



Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim applaud as Japanese Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa poses with her Malaysian counterpart Mohamad Hasan after a signing ceremony at the prime minister's official residence in Tokyo, Japan.

Escalation can be avoided, Saudi FM says after attacks on ships

Monitoring Desk
 DUBAI: Saudi Arabia's foreign minister said in an answer to a question about attacks by Yemen's Houthis in the Red Sea that the region does not need any further escalation and he hopes it can be avoided.

The statement followed attacks from Houthi-controlled Yemen on two Liberian-flagged ships in the Bab al-Mandab Strait on Friday, underlining the threat to vessels in shipping lanes being targeted

by the group.

Prince Faisal bin Farhan told a press conference in Oslo he hoped a new resolution calling for a ceasefire in Gaza in the UN Security Council would get more support, "especially by the US who had previously vetoed the resolution."

"We don't think there's a justification not to call for a ceasefire in Gaza," Prince Faisal said after a meeting of Arab and Nordic foreign ministers.

North Korea delegation in China for talks: KCNA

Monitoring Desk
 SEOUL: A North Korean diplomatic delegation is visiting China for talks on strengthening cooperation, North Korean state media said on Saturday, as Pyongyang slowly opens its borders and resumes trade with its neighbours after the COVID-19 pandemic.

North Korean Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs Pak Myong Ho and counterpart Sun Weidong discussed boosting strategic cooperation and bilateral relations on Friday.

US keeps funding Ukraine's military despite it says it's out of money

Monitoring Desk
 WASHINGTON: The White House has been increasingly pressuring Congress to pass stalled legislation to support Ukraine's war against Russia, saying that funding has run out.

On Tuesday, however, President Joe Biden touted a new military aid package worth \$200 million for Ukraine.

Money is dwindling. But the announcement of more weapons being sent to Kyiv just underscores the complexity of the funding. So has the money run out? Or are there still a few bil-

lion dollars floating around?

In a Nov. 4 letter to Congress, White House budget director Shalanda Young said flatly: "We are out of money to support Ukraine in this fight. This isn't a next year problem. The time to help a democratic Ukraine fight against Russian aggression is right now."

Since then, the U.S. has announced three more aid packages totaling \$475 million.

That may seem contradictory, but it's due to the complex programs used to send aid to Ukraine.

Russia to test launch seven intercontinental ballistic missiles in 2024 - Ifax

Monitoring Desk
 MOSCOW: Russia plans to test launch seven intercontinental ballistic missiles in 2024, Sergei Karakayev, the commander of Russia's Strategic Missile Forces has said, the Interfax news agency reported on Saturday.

Russia gave the United States at least 24 hours notice of such launches and Washington afforded Moscow the same courtesy, Interfax cited Karakayev as telling the Russia's army's official Red Star newspaper.



Foreign ministers from Iceland, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Norway and the Palestinian Authority attend a press conference following a meeting in Oslo, Norway.

Investments must reflect COP28 outcome: Int'l Energy Agency

Monitoring Desk
 PARIS: Energy investments should be informed by the COP28 agreement to accelerate the move away from fossil fuels this decade, the head of the International Energy Agency (IEA) said on Friday.

"After COP28, governments, companies, investors, need to tell the people around the world what actions they are taking to move the world away from fossil fuels," Executive Director Fatih Birol told Reuters. Earlier this week at the climate summit in

Dubai, governments agreed to transition away from fossil fuels to avert the worst of climate change.

Countries are increasingly "making a clear link between the high use of fossil fuels and the extreme weather events," Birol said.

The COP28 agreement included some of the recommendations the IEA had been pushing previously, including the tripling of renewable energy capacity, and doubling of energy efficiency by 2030.

Experts worried Israel could flood tunnels

Monitoring Desk
 JERUSALEM: Israel has reportedly started to test a plan to flood Hamas's sprawling tunnel network, but experts say it is a dangerous option that poses huge risks to Gaza's besieged civilians.

The Israeli military is determined to destroy the tunnels, and army chief Herzi Halevi has suggested pumping water into them is a "good idea". Dubbed "the Gaza metro" by the Israeli military, there were 1,300 tunnels over 500 kilometres in Gaza at the start of the aggression in Oct, according to a study from US military academy West Point.

The maze of tunnels was initially used to bypass Israel's devastating blockade on the Gaza Strip after Hamas came to power in 2007, allegedly allowing the smuggling of people, goods and weaponry in and out of Egypt. Since entering Gaza in Oct, the Israeli military has found that the tunnel network is "even more extensive and deeper than they expected."

Europe must rearm as new threats loom, German minister says

Monitoring Desk
 BERLIN: Europe must race to ensure it can better defend itself as new military threats could emerge by the end of the decade even as the focus of security ally the United States shifts towards the Indo-Pacific.

"We Europeans must engage more to ensure security on our own continent," said Pistorius, noting however it would take time for the region to increase its own weapons production.

"We have about 5-8 years to catch up, in terms of armed forces, industry and society," he said.

as saying in an interview with Welt am Sonntag.

Meanwhile, the United States will likely reduce its military engagement in Europe as it turns more towards the Indo-Pacific.

"We Europeans must engage more to ensure security on our own continent," said Pistorius, noting however it would take time for the region to increase its own weapons production.

"We have about 5-8 years to catch up, in terms of armed forces, industry and society," he said.

Navalny taken from prison to unknown place

Monitoring Desk
 MOSCOW: Jailed Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny has been removed from a prison near Moscow and taken to an undisclosed location, his spokeswoman said on Friday, citing a court representative.

Supporters of Navalny, who was jailed in 2021 after surviving a poisoning assassination attempt, have sounded the alarm since early this month, when the Kremlin critic was last seen.

Kira Yarmysh said she was told that Navalny, serving a 19-year sentence, was removed from the Vladimir region near Moscow on Dec 11, signalling a potential prison transfer.

"It is not known where exactly" he was taken, Yarmysh added.

"I want to remind you that lawyers have not seen Alexei since Dec 6."



A young Palestinian boy cries amid the debris of his house, which was destroyed following Israeli bombardment in Rafah.

Leading Hong Kong democrat's son says trial outcome pre-determined

Monitoring Desk
 TAIPEI: The son of leading China critic and Hong Kong media tycoon Jimmy Lai said that he thought the outcome of his father's trial next week had already been decided but he was proud of him for standing up for his beliefs.

Lai's long-awaited trial under national security legislation imposed by China in 2020 opens in Hong Kong on Monday. He faces possible life imprisonment on charges he colluded with

foreign forces, including the United States.

Lai, 76, the founder of now-shuttered pro-democracy newspaper Apple Daily and one of the most prominent Hong Kong critics of China's Communist Party leadership, has faced a salvo of litigation since a wave of pro-democracy demonstrations in 2019.

He is already serving a 5-year, 9-month jail term for a fraud conviction over a lease dispute for his newspaper.

Dutch gov't allowed to ship F-35 parts to Israel

Monitoring Desk
 THE HAGUE: A Dutch court on Friday dismissed demands by human rights groups to block the Dutch government from exporting F-35 fighter jet parts to Israel, which they said were enabling war crimes in the besieged Gaza Strip.

Judges at the District Court in The Hague said they must leave the Dutch government a large degree of freedom when it comes to weighing political and policy issues in deciding on arms exports. The rights groups, which included the Dutch affiliate of Oxfam, said in their claim that Israel.

Poland makes first payment request for frozen EU funds

Monitoring Desk
 BRUSSELS: Poland will get an advance payment of EU financial aid this year and has requested a first payout on the rest of the cash that had been frozen over democratic backsliding, the bloc's chief executive and the country's new prime minister said on Friday.

Prime Minister Donald Tusk vowed to restore the rule of law in the EU's largest eastern state after ousting from power the nationalist Law and Justice (PiS) party that fought bitter battles with the EU for nearly a decade over democratic rights.

"I welcome your commitment to put the rule of law at the top of your

government's agenda," European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said after a meeting with Tusk in EU hub Brussels.

The bloc will transfer to Poland this year a first 5 billion euros (\$5.5 billion) advance payment. Poland has also made a payment application for nearly 7 billion euros. "Submitting a payment application is an important and long-awaited decision by Poles," Minister of Funds and Regional Policy Katarzyna Pełczynska-Nalecz said in a statement.

In announcing the first transfer - which comes under an EU programme to help energy transition away from fossil fuels and is free of the bloc's usual rule of law.

Family seeks consular help for Indian linked to Sikh murder plot

Monitoring Desk
 NEW DELHI: The family of an Indian man in Czech custody, whom the US accuses of involvement in an unsuccessful plot to kill a Sikh separatist on American soil, asked India's top court on Friday to direct the government to give him consular assistance.

The man, Nikhil Gupta, 52, has been accused by US prosecutors of working with an Indian government official on the plot to kill a New York City resident who advocated for a sovereign Sikh state in India.

Western nations urge Israel to halt settler violence in West Bank

Monitoring Desk
 PARIS: Western nations and the European Union on Friday urged Israel to "take concrete steps to halt unprecedented violence by Israeli settlers in the occupied West Bank," in a joint statement published by France's foreign ministry.

The call from Australia, Britain, Canada, France, the European Union and several other European countries — but notably excluding Germany and the United States — highlighted "an unprecedented number of attacks perpetrated by extremist settlers" since early Oct that they said had claimed eight Palestinian lives and wounded 83 people.

Reiterating that Israel's settlement policy "is illegal under international law," the signatories of Friday's statement said that "as the occupying power, Israel must protect Palestinian civilians in the West Bank" and "bring those responsible for this violence to justice".

Friday's statement comes days after EU chief Ursula von der Leyen backed imposing sanctions on "extremist" Israeli settlers — although not all of the bloc's 27 nations agree.

While some members such as Spain have sharply criticised Israeli aggression against Gazans, others including Germany stand firmly behind the state.

Niger junta agrees plan to restore democracy, Togo minister says

Monitoring Desk
 NIAMEY: Niger's military leaders have agreed a plan for restoring democratic rule which will be presented to regional bloc ECOWAS for approval, Togo's foreign minister Robert Dussey said.

Dussey went to Niger to negotiate with the junta on behalf of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which is pushing for a quick return to constitutional order after military officers seized power in a coup in July. "We had an enriching work session with the prime minister and the minister of foreign affairs of Niger. We worked and agreed on the content and timing of the transition," Dussey said on Niger state television late on Thursday.

"We are going to present this to the heads of states who are mediators and the ECOWAS Commission in the hope that in January, the timeline expected by ECOWAS will be known," he said, standing next to his Nigerien counterpart.

He did not give further details on what had been agreed.

ECOWAS, West Africa's main economic and political bloc, decided at a summit in Nigeria on Sunday to set up a committee of leaders from Togo, Sierra Leone and Benin to engage the Niger junta to agree "on a short transition roadmap".

The bloc said it would progressively ease sanctions on Niger based on the outcome of those talks.

Australia swelters through heat wave as firefighters battle bushfires

Monitoring Desk
 SYDNEY: Large parts of Australia on Saturday sweltered under heat wave conditions that prompted the nation's weather forecaster to issue bush fire warnings in several states.

In New South Wales, Australia's most populous state, more than 50 fires were burning on Saturday and a total fire ban was in place for many areas, including Sydney, the state's rural fire service said.

The agency said on social media platform X that more than 700 firefighters

and incident management personnel were working statewide to fight blazes amid "widespread high and extreme fire danger". Heat wave alerts and fire warnings were also in place for parts of Western Australia and the Northern Territory, while in South Australia heat wave conditions were forecast but no fire warning was issued, according to the Bureau of Meteorology.

The hot weather lifts the risk of bush fires in an already high-risk fire season amid an El Nino weather event.

Opposition cries foul as Congo readies for vote

Monitoring Desk
 GOMA: As Democratic Republic of Congo gears up for elections next week, the opposition and independent observers warn that issues including illegible voter cards, blocked campaign planes, and electoral list delays threaten the legitimacy of the results.

For months, the CENI election commission has rejected criticism it is failing to deliver a free and fair vote as promised, even as it flags logistical setbacks organising the presidential and legislative ballot across Africa's second-largest

country. Tensions have escalated in the final weeks of campaigning before the Dec 20 vote. Challengers to President Felix Tshisekedi have cried foul over what they call an uneven playing field and ratcheted up accusations the authorities plan to tip the election in their favour including through voter roll chicanery. The CENI and presidency deny this. At stake is not just the legitimacy of the next administration, but also wider stability, as disputes over perceived electoral malpractice often spark violent unrest in Congo.

Shipping firms suspend Red Sea traffic after Yemen rebel strikes

Monitoring Desk
 DUBAI: Two of the world's largest shipping firms, Maersk and Hapag-Lloyd, said Friday they were suspending passage through a Red Sea strait vital for global commerce, after Yemeni rebel attacks in the area.

The Iran-backed Huthis, who control much of Yemen but are not recognised internationally, say they're targeting shipping to pressure Israel during its two-month-old war with Palestinian Hamas militants in the Gaza Strip.

The maritime tensions have added to fears that the Gaza conflict could spread.

German transport company Hapag-Lloyd said it was halting Red Sea container ship traffic until December 18, after the Huthis attacked one of its vessels.

"Hapag-Lloyd is interrupting all container ship traffic across the Red Sea until Monday," the company said in a statement sent to AFP.

The statement came shortly after Danish firm

Maersk made a similar announcement.

"We have instructed all Maersk vessels in the area bound to pass through the Bab al-Mandab Strait to pause their journey until further notice," the company said.

Maersk said this followed a "near-miss incident involving Maersk Gibraltar yesterday" as well as Friday's attack, in which the rebels struck a Hapag-Lloyd cargo ship in the Red Sea.

A US defence official identified it as the Liberia-flagged Al-Jasrah, a 368-metre (1,207-foot) container ship built in 2016.

"We are aware that something launched from a Huthi-controlled region of Yemen struck this vessel which was damaged, and there was a report of a fire," the official told AFP, speaking on condition of anonymity so that he could discuss intelligence matters. A Hapag-Lloyd spokesman told AFP: "There has been an attack on one of our ships."



Migrants board a bus to be transported to a shelter after being processed, as Mexican families continue to be displaced by cartel violence and are requesting asylum in the U.S., in Nogales, Arizona, U.S.



LAHORE: President Dr Arif Alvi addressing the seminar titled 'Role of Insurance Ombudsman in strengthening Business sector'.

Insurance vital for welfare of community: Dr Arif Alvi

LAHORE (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi has said that insurance is highly important for welfare of the community and humanity. He said this while addressing a seminar on 'Role of Insurance Ombudsman to Strengthen Business Sector', held at Governor's House, on Saturday. He said that collective efforts were required to increase quantum of insurance in the country for larger benefit of people. He said that steps had been taken to formalise insurance for compassion of humans. Insurance was important in different ways but people did not trust the product, he said and added that there was need to bridge the trust gap. Basic concept behind insurance was community consciousness, he said and added that old age insurance was a state encouraged phenomenon. Dr Arif Alvi said, "Employees Old Age Benefits Institution is a social insurance institute while Benazir Income Support

Programme is also a financial support scheme." He said that it was basic function of the government to provide level playing field to all segments of society for better development. The president said that Scandinavian countries get high taxes and give more benefits, adding that if any country follow prejudices, this was not good at all. He said, "Elite exploitation and capitalism culture actually create unevenness in society." He said that world's few rich people hold almost 50 per cent wealth of the world.

Dr Arif Alvi said our beloved Holy Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) taught us about the essence behind charity and he added that alms-giving was all about compassion towards humanity. He said that Islamic laws were community related, adding that Islamic society was all about living in a society where love and care of each other could be

State institutions, masses to jointly defeat new wave of terrorism: Solangi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi Saturday said that the day of December 16 would always be remembered for the great sacrifices of the martyrs of Army Public School. In a message on the 9th anniversary of APS martyrs, he said, "Nine years have passed since the tragedy of APS, but the grief of those who lost their lives was still fresh today." The minister said that cowardly miscreants attacked the future of the nation, the young children and martyred them. Murtaza Solangi said adding no one could hold back their tears remembering that tragic day. Paying tributes to the

practised. He said that he used to think that wherever there was a democracy there would be compassion towards humanity, but situation in Gaza was totally opposite. He said the world should consider brown and black people equally. The president said that economic deprivations actually make generations lethargic. Dr Arif Alvi said that it was vital to inform people about Insurance Ombudsman that it was one stop shop for solution to their problems. He further said that he was also listening to appeals himself so that backlog could be cleared. Hazrat Umar (RA) taught us that decision of cases of people coming from far-flung areas should be done swiftly, relevant authority should contest case of the poor and uneducated people, decision should be revisited if any wrong was done, and the decisions should be implemented immediately.

Kakar participates in golden jubilee ceremony of St. Mary School

Independent Report QUETTA: The golden jubilee of St. Mary School Quetta was celebrated on Saturday. The Governor Balochistan, Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar participated in the ceremony of golden jubilee of St. Mary School. The Principal of St. Mary School, Asif John as well as other educationists, teachers and students of the school participated in the ceremony. Addressing the ceremony, Governor said that it is no less than an honour to participate in the golden jubilee celebrations of a prestigious educational institution like St. Mary School. He said that more than 20,000 students have studied and passed from the school during last 50 years. He said that the people belonging to Christian community are peace loving and human friendly. Their services are commendable in education and health sectors of the province, he added. The Governor stressed that let's make joint efforts for putting the province on path of educational development.

Israel's killing machine must be stopped in Gaza, West Bank: Pakistan tells UNGA

UNITED NATIONS (APP) - Pakistan, on behalf of a group of 14 countries, on Friday again pushed for a ceasefire in Gaza, while underscoring the need for an international mechanism to protect Palestinian civilians from Israel's bombing, and intensified efforts towards peacefully resolving the Middle East conflict. "The Israeli killing machine must be stopped in Gaza and the West Bank," Ambassador Munir Akram told the UN General Assembly which met to hear the remaining speakers of its Dec. 12 emergency session, when he made Pakistan's national statement. He said, "The international community must also establish an accountability mechanism and a special tribunal to investigate Israel's atrocity crimes." The 193-member Assembly has already adopted a resolution, by an overwhelming majority, demanding an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza and reiterating its insistence that parties to the conflict comply with international law, all hostages be released immediately and without conditions and humanitarian access be ensured. Drawing particular attention to the 134 UNRWA staff members who were killed in Gaza, he said this was the highest-ever-recorded killing of United Nations personnel in the history of the Organization. "Israel's indiscriminate attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, blockading of food and other essentials, and forced displacement of Palestinians are flagrant violations of humanitarian law and may amount to the crime of genocide," Ambassador Akram said. "The collective punishment endured by the besieged people of Gaza is unprecedented in modern history, he said. "We must also be appalled at those who, by blocking the call for a ceasefire in the Security Council, have enabled the continuation of the Israeli slaughter of innocents." Meanwhile in Tel Aviv, US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan reaffirmed Washington's continued support for Israel's brutal war on the Gaza Strip after he was told by top Israeli officials that the onslaught on the besieged Palestinian territory 'will last more than several months'.



QUETTA: Governor Balochistan Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar administering oath to newly elected cabinet of Balochistan Civil Service Officers Welfare Association

Governor sees key role of civil officers in establishing and maintaining good governance

Independent Report QUETTA: The Governor Balochistan, Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar has stated that there is a key role of civil officers in establishing and maintaining good governance. He said that the sense of responsibility among the responsible persons of the society creates easiness for the people as a whole. He said that the district administrative officers have deep look at everything and they better understand the situation of Balochistan. He said that improvement can be brought in the situation. The Governor was addressing the oath taking ceremony of Balochistan Civil Service Executive Branch Officers Welfare Association here on Saturday. Present on the occasion were administrative secretaries of provincial government departments, president of the newly elected president of the association, Mujeer Rehman Qamrani, retired bureaucrats Naseebullah Bazai, Agha Taimur Shah, Haider Ali Shikoh, Naseem Lehi and President of the Balochistan Civil Secretariat Officers Welfare Association, Abdul Malik Kakar besides the administrative officers of different districts. He stressed that we have to pay special focus on welfare of the people ridding of the wrong traditions and outdated system. He also exhorted the civil servants to discharge their duties as true public servants without coming in any pressure. He believed that the civil officers can play important role in establishing good governance and ridding the society of menace of corruption and safarish culture. In the end, the Governor congratulated the Balochistan Civil Secretariat Officers and hoped that the newly elected officers would mobilise all available resources to ensure rights of the people. Earlier, the Governor distributed commemorative shields among the participants of ceremony.



ISLAMABAD: Sardar Ahmad Jan Shakib, Afghanistan's ambassador to Pakistan meeting with JUI chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman at his residence

Provision of quality medical treatment facilities to masses top priority: Prince

Independent Report QUETTA: The caretaker Provincial Minister for Industries, Trade, Excise and Taxation, Prince Ahmed Ali has stated that provision of quality medical treatment facilities to the masses at their doorstep is topmost priority of the provincial government. The Minister said that every possible steps are being taken to provide best and standard facilities to the people. Prince Ahmed Ali was speaking on occasion of the provision of ambulance to district headquarter hospital Lasbela on Saturday. The interim Minister maintained that the process of bringing reforms in the healthcare sector and putting the department on modern lines is continued by the provincial government. He mentioned that the cost of treatment of a family up to Rs. 1 million annually is being bear by the government. The Minister said that the caretaker government has taken unprecedented measures for welfare of the people despite the limited resources and brief period. The District Health Officer Lasbela thanked the Provincial Minister for providing ambulance to the hospital. Meanwhile, the Minister handed over key of the state of art ambulance to DHO Lasbela.



QUETTA: Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party Provincial President, Malik Saadullah Tareen along with IPP Women Wing Provincial President, Rehana Habib Baloch and others addresses to media persons during press conference regarding joining of party, held at Quetta press club.

Chairman PYPM pays tribute to APS martyrs

QUETTA (APP): Chairman of Pakistan Youth Peace Movement (PYPM), Arbab Nasir Haider Kassi on Saturday paid tribute to the martyrs of Army Public School Peshawar and said that the sacrifices of Shuhada APS would always be remembered. The day of December 16, 2014 will always be remembered as a dark day in the history of the country, he said while addressing a ceremony held here in memory of the martyrs of the Army Public School Peshawar tragedy under the auspices of Pakistan Youth Peace Movement. Kassi said the heart-breaking incident of December 16, 2014, the grief and sorrow of the entire nation was indescribable. He said that even after 9 years, the grief of the APS tragedy is still alive in the hearts of the entire nation and we are proud of these bereaved families who have endured this great trauma. He said that the entire nation is an equal participant in the grief of these bereaved families. The sacrifices of the innocent heroes of APS will always be remembered in the history of the country. Haider Kassi said that the APS tragedy united the entire nation against terrorism and the armed forces have reiterated their efforts to eradicate terrorism with the support of the public, as a result of which terrorism was eradicated to a large extent. He said that today, once again, terrorists are trying to target our security forces, which the armed forces are fighting with full determination to deal with the menace of terrorism.



Caretaker Provincial Health Minister Dr. Amir Muhammad Khan Jozegai being briefed by Project Director Jhalawan Medical College Khuzdar about contractions.

Khaqan Abbasi decides to 'quit' PML-N

ISLAMABAD (INP): Former prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi has decided party ways with Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N). According to media reports, former premier will formally announce his decision in a press conference in the coming days. Khaqan Abbasi has decided to quit PML-N after consulting with his constituents, they say. The veteran politician asserted that he would not contest the general elections, terming the upcoming polls 'pointless'. "I would not contest upcoming polls, but can join new party after the general elections," said Shahid Khaqan Abbasi. He also announced to support PML-N candidate in the February 8 elections if party gives a chance to a common worker. Khaqan had previously stepped down from his role as the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Senior Vice President and did not attend party's ongoing meetings related to election tickets chaired by PML-N supreme Nawaz Sharif in Lahore. He also skipped Nawaz's homecoming rally on October 21.

Season's first snow blanket envelopes Quetta, Ziarat peaks

ISLAMABAD (APP): Several parts of the northern Pakistan, particularly the Quetta region as well as the Ziarat hill station wore a white sheet after the season's first snowfall that plummeted the temperatures below the freezing point in several areas. Areas of Balochistan including Quetta, Ziarat, Kalat, Qilla Saifullah, Zoab were reeling under biting cold. Temperature dropped further following first snowfall of the season, a report aired by a Private news channel reported. Land, trees and mountains were seen covered with about three inches to 1 foot of snow which was extremely bewitching for residents and tourists alike, a resident of area said. Like the beauty of the lake, the hearts of local residents are also beautiful as local people are very simple and hospitable, said a tourist. "People coming to enjoy the snow are advised to keep their tanks full," said a local while pointing to the long queue of stationary cars. He further urged visitors to bring proper winter gear including warm clothes and shoes, adding, "Please don't wear heels or dress shoes with leather soles." The enthusiastic tourists built snowmen and threw snowballs at each other, said another tourist, adding, some were posing for photographs and others were busy in taking selfies. To facilitate tourists, local police have also devised a comprehensive traffic plan, issued traffic advisories, and announced a helpline while constantly rescuing vehicles stuck in snow. He urged tourists to cooperate with traffic police so that the traffic mess, particularly during snowfall, could be avoided. "This enchanting snowfall has not only painted the region in a picturesque hue but has also elevated the winter experience," said a tourist. "The mesmerizing scenes of snow-covered mountains are attracting attention, making it an ideal destination for those seeking the magic of winter."

Moulana Abdul Khaliq resigns as Ameer JUI-N Loralai

Independent Report LORALAI: Moulana Abdul Khaliq, Ameer, JUI-N, Loralai has tendered resignation from the position of Ameer, JUI-N, Loralai due to his personal engagements. Provincial Executive Committee, JUI-N has elected Mufti Shafi-ud-Din as the new Ameer, JUI-N, Loralai. According to a statement issued by the provincial Secretariat of Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam (Nazriyati) on Saturday, provincial executive committee of JUI-N Balochistan elected Mufti Shafi-ud-Din as new Ameer, JUI-N, Loralai after Moulana Abdul Khaliq, Ameer, JUI-N, Loralai tendered resignation from the position of Ameer, JUI-N, Loralai due to his personal engagements.

Pakistan soon to introduce e-gates at its airports

ISLAMABAD (INP): To streamline the immigration process for passengers, Pakistan soon to introduce e-gates at Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad airports. According to the details, the authorities of Pakistan are currently engaged in discussion with the relevant company for the installation of e-gates at three international airports in the country. Sources close to the development claimed that the e-gates are soon to be installed at Jinnah International Airport in Karachi.



DHADAR: Senior politician and former MPA Sardar Yar Muhammad Rind talking with media men during his visit to Bolan Dam

Committee meets to review rules of judicial commission

ISLAMABAD (APP): A meeting of the committee constituted by the Chief Justice of Pakistan/ Chairman Judicial Commission of Pakistan to review Judicial Commission of Pakistan Rules 2010 convened here on Saturday. The committee met under the co-chairmanship of Mr. Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah and Justice (Retired) Manzoor Ahmed Malik, according to a press release. The members of the Committee including Justice Nadeem Akhtar, Senior Puisne Judge, High Court of Sindh (HCS), Justice Muhammad Hashim Khan Kakar, Senior Puisne Judge, High Court of Balochistan (HCB), Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim, Senior Puisne Judge Peshawar High Court (PHC), Justice Shehzad Ahmed Khan, Senior Puisne Judge Lahore High Court Lahore (LHC), Mansoor Usman Awan, Attorney General of Pakistan, Akhtar Hussain Senior Advocate, Zia U Hassan Lanjar Advocate, representative of Sindh Bar Council (SBC), Rahib Khan Buledi Advocate, Ahmed Farooq Khattak Advocate, representative of KPK Bar Council, Qazi Rafeuddin Babar Advocate. The Committee discussed its mandate, that is, to propose such rules of procedure for the Commission which comply with the collegial and inclusive decision-making process enshrined in Article 175A of the Constitution. The Committee deliberated on the process of calling nominations and meeting of the Commission, the procedure for initiating nomination for Supreme Court Judges, High Court Judges, and Federal Shariat Court Judges, representation of Advocates and Judicial Officers in High Court appointments, diversity in High Court appointments, criteria for determining merit, procedure and criteria for confirmation of Additional Judges and establishing a secretariat of the Commission. The Committee also resolved to finalize the draft Rules on 29th December 2023.



QUETTA: Muslim League (PML-N) Provincial President, Sheikh Jaffar Khan Mandokhail addressing during party joining ceremony at Quetta press club.