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BYC gives govt 3-day ultimatum for detainees' release as sit-in continues in Islamabad

Sit-in staged outside National Press Club; list of demands calls for quashing all cases against demonstrators, UN fact-finding mission on rights violations in Balochistan and more.

Monitoring Desk
ISLAMABAD: Baloch protesters demanding an end to enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings in their province issued a three-day ultimatum to the state on Saturday, calling for the immediate release of all demonstrators detained so far and the quashing of charges against them, failing which the demonstrators would be

"compelled to take harsh steps and the state and its administration shall be responsible for this".
The demands were issued by the Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC) as they claimed in a statement to the press that over 100 previously detained members were not presented in courts and thus "missing" while they continued their rally outside Islamabad's Na-

tional Press Club (NPC) amid the presence of the police.
The long march led by Baloch women — which started in Turbat on December 6 after the alleged "extrajudicial killing" of a Baloch youth by the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) officials — had reached the federal capital on Wednesday. However, the police had blocked entry points of the city along

with major arteries to prevent the protesters from reaching the NPC.
The Islamabad police had subsequently used brutal force to disperse and detain Baloch demonstrators with over 200 protesters taken into custody from different areas of the federal capital. The demonstrators were also met with tear gas, water cannons and police batons.

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ISLAMABAD: Governor Balochistan Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar and senior journalist Hamid Mir participating in sit-in by Baloch Yakjehti Committee outside the National Press Club



KARACHI: President Dr. Arif Alvi and Caretaker Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Dr. Aneeq Ahmed attending meeting with the delegation of Darul Uloom at Governor House

Court approves bail of Baloch protestors

ISLAMABAD (INP): The judicial magistrate on Saturday approved the bail of the arrested Baloch protestors — marching for the release of Baloch 'missing persons' in the federal capital.

According to the details, the judicial magistrate judge Muzir Abbas approved the bail of 162 arrested Baloch protestors and directed them to submit a surety bond of Rs 5000 against their bail.
Yesterday, President Dr Arif Alvi and Caretaker Prime Minister (PM) Anwarul Haq Kakar held a telephonic conversation wherein they expressed concern over the inappropriate police treatment of the Baloch protestors.

Discussing the situation, the president and prime minister viewed that the police should not have dealt with the protestors strictly, a President House press release said.
Meanwhile, PM Kakar told President Alvi that the detained protestors were being released on personal bonds.

Balochistan Governor Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar also called on President Alvi and discussed the overall situation in Balochistan province as well as police maltreatment against the Baloch protestors.

The governor viewed that the police should show restraint towards the protestors.



QUETTA: Central Senior Vice President Balochistan Awami Party Sajid Tareen addressing a Press conference on eve of party joining of Mir Maqbool Lehri and Mir Haseeb Lehri

Audio leaks case: IHC summons DG IB, DG FIA in person

ISLAMABAD (Online): Islamabad High Court (IHC) has summoned DG IB and DG FIA in person in audio leaks case.

The court has issued notice to all mobile companies.

FIA has sought time from court to probe into the matter of call leaks of PTI leader Latif Khosa and Bushra Bibi, wife of PTI founder.
Audio leaks case came up for hearing before IHC Saturday. Justice Babar Sattar heard the case. He has issued written order in this regard.

In the decision IB has been directed to conduct investigation in this matter and file detailed report thereof that the audio tape of Latif Khosa and Bushra Bibi was leaked. Who leaked it. Who is account holder.

IHC directed DG IB to appear before it in person on next hearing.

It has been said the court has inquired DG IB should tell who can carry

out surveillance of the citizens. Has state of Pakistan capability to stop this illegal surveillance. How can the recording and surveillance of phone calls be conducted.

FIA sought time from the court in connection with investigation into this call leaks matter.
IHC has also summoned DG FIA in person on next hearing.

Notice has been issued to chairman PTA to appear before the court in person on next hearing.
The court has inquired what steps can be taken for preserving the calls and data of mobile phone users. Chairman PTA and Members PTA should file affidavit about its correctness along with report.

It has been said in the court's order report be presented in regard to legal intervention on hearing or recording telephone calls in telecom operators license.

CM approves establishing Levis Force's Investigation wing

QUETTA (APP): Caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Ali Mardan Domki has approved establishing an investigation wing in the Levis Force, said a handout issued here on Saturday.
On the directives of Additional Chief Secretary Home Zahid Salim and DG Levis Naseebullah Kakar, the summary was moved for approval.

The CM Balochistan, on the recommendation of the Home and Tribal Affairs department and in view of the requirement of the force, granted consent to establish an investigation wing.

BNP Mengal chief files nomination papers for NA-264 Quetta

QUETTA (APP): Sardar Akhtar Jan Mengal, chief of the Balochistan National Party Mengal on Saturday submitted nomination papers for NA-264 Quetta.

Senior Vice President BNP-M Sajid Farin submitted the papers on behalf of the party's head. A large number of party leaders accompanied the senior vice president. Meanwhile, former speaker Balochistan Assembly and leader of PML-N Rahila Hameed Durani also filed nomination papers for reserved seats before the Provincial Election Commission and Returning Officer.

Draw for Regular Hajj Scheme to be held on Thursday

ISLAMABAD (INP): Spokesperson Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Muhammad Umar Butt, in a statement, said that the last date for Hajj applications, under regular scheme, will expire till banking hours today. He said over 66,000 applications have so far been received in the regular Hajj scheme. Muhammad Umar Butt further said that the last date for sponsorship scheme has been extended till 31st of this month on the insistence of overseas Pakistanis. The intending pilgrims can deposit money in dollars by the end of this month. Saudi Aviation has given a deadline of second January to airlines to submit the Hajj flights schedule.

President urges role of religious platforms for promoting literacy

KARACHI (APP): President Dr. Arif Alvi on Saturday, emphasizing on engagement of notables and Imams of Masjid to implement the guidelines of health and education said that religious platforms could be used for promoting literacy and imparting awareness of mental health in the country.

The president was chairing a meeting with the delegation of Darul Uloom Karachi at Sindh Governor House. Caretaker Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Dr. Aneeq Ahmed was also present in the meeting.

Alvi said that Masjid and Madaris (religious schools) could play an active role in the promotion of education and welfare in the country. He also urged

to develop a toolkit for mental health and wellness at the earliest.

He said that there was a need to make every possible effort together with Masjid and Madaris to educate about 36 percent of the country's out-of-school children.

The meeting discussed the role of Masjid in promoting the guiding principles of health and education in society.

The meeting also considered developing a collaborative approach between the government and religious institutions to promote comprehensive health and education guidelines. Earlier, a delegation from the Pakistan Institute of Living and Learning also called on the President and discussed matters about mental health.

Dr. Jozgezi says Govt committed to improving healthcare

QUETTA (APP): The Caretaker Provincial Health Minister Balochistan Dr Amir Muhammad Khan Jozgezi said that the incumbent government is committed to improving the healthcare system.

A handout issued by DGPR here on Saturday said that the minister expressed these views while talking to the caretaker provincial health minister of Sindh Dr Saad Niaz during his visit to Karachi health department. Secretary of Health Sindh and doctors were also present on this occasion.

The caretaker provincial health minister of Balochistan said that the two provinces should work

together under a joint plan to cooperate in the health situation.

He said that many successful public-private partnership projects are going on in Sindh regarding health, Balochistan also wants to benefit from these projects and experiences. "We have prepared a road map to bring the health system in Balochistan on track," he said, suggesting that the Sindh government cooperate in the inclusion of hospitals of Karachi in the panel of Balochistan health card. The Sindh Provincial Health Minister Dr Saad Niaz assured all possible support from the Sindh government.

15 injured in three blasts after gas pipeline leakage in Quetta

QUETTA (INP): In a tragic incident, a total of three explosions were reported in three different locations in Quetta city leaving 15 individuals injured.

According to media reports, blast occurred due to the gas pipeline leakage in Eastern Bypass, Nawar Kali, and Kuchlak, resulting in 15 individuals mostly children.

The rescue sources further claimed that the injured individuals were shifted to Civil Hospital and are being

treated in the burn ward. Last week, as many as three individuals were injured in an alleged gas pipeline explosion that was reported in Karachi's Gulshan-e-Iqbal area on Friday morning. According to the initial reports, the blast allegedly occurred in a gas pipeline under the Nipa Bridge near Gulshan-e-Iqbal area. The rescue officials reached the scene and initiated the shifting of the three injured individuals including a woman.



HUB: Buses seen parked on stand during strike called against Islamabad police used force to disperse and detain Baloch demonstrators in Islamabad

Citizens of all faiths enjoying equal rights in Pakistan: PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar on Saturday reiterated that citizens of all faiths including Hindus, Sikhs and Christians were enjoying equal rights in Pakistan with dignity and the government would ensure protection of their places of worship.

Speaking at an event organized to celebrate Christmas here, he felicitated the Christian community on behalf of the government and the people of Pakistan.

He said Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) signed the treaty of Najran that assured protection to the places of worship of Christians.

In view of that treaty, it was obligatory for the Muslims for all times to come to protect the religious places of Christians, he said adding, "We need to promote harmony, peace and love."

He recounted that a Christian King was the first one to lend support to the Muslims in their early days.

He said it was obligatory for Muslims to have faith in all prophets from Prophet Adam to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

All Prophets were a guiding light for humanity, he said adding spirituality was a cure for the ills of humanity despite all the technological progress that

humans had made.
He recalled the first speech of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah in the constituent assembly in which he outlined the basic principles of the state of Pakistan.

He quoted the Quaid as saying that "in course of time Hindus would cease to be Hindus and Muslims would cease to be Muslims, not in the religious sense because that is the personal faith of each individual, but in the political sense as citizens of the State."

In this way, Quaid-e-Azam made it clear that all Pakistani citizens had the same political rights, he stressed.

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ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Health Minister Balochistan Dr. Amir Muhammad Khan Jozgezi meeting with Managing Director PTV Syed Mubashir Tauqeer Shah

Alvi extends condolences to bereaved families of Shuhada

ISLAMABAD (Online): President Dr Arif Alvi has expressed condolences with the bereaved families of martyrs of Pakistan Army who laid down their lives in North Waziristan and Balochistan.

During separate telephonic conversations with the bereaved families, he expressed his sympathies.

President Dr Arif Alvi on Saturday expressed condolences with the bereaved families of Shuhada of Pakistan Army who laid down their lives in North Waziristan and Balochistan.

During separate telephonic conversations with the bereaved families, he expressed his sympathies, the President Secretariat Press Wing said in a press release.

Country's future tied to Constitution, election date secure: Solangi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Murtaza Solangi, explicitly stated that the election date has not been altered, there should be no uncertainty about it and the future of the country is aligned with the constitution and democracy.

Speaking to the media following his participation in the "Second National Training of Journalists on China-Pakistan Relationship in the New Era; An Assessment of Ten Years of CPEC, and How is this relationship report in Pakistani media," he emphasized that, in accordance with the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the country will be governed by elected representatives.

The Election Commission, having the exclusive authority to set, modify, and extend election dates, has unequivocally confirmed that the general elections are scheduled for February 8, 2024. Emphasizing that the election date remains unaltered, there should be no room for doubt on this matter. Responding to a question he said that an extension in the tenure of the caretaker government is not possible in accordance with constitutional provisions.

He remarked that Pakistan and China are steadfast, all-weather friends, and the bilateral relations of both nations will thrive under the caretaker government. Pointing to the recent visit of Caretaker Prime Minister Anwar ul Kakar, he mentioned that during his trip to China, over 20 agreements spanning various sectors were signed between the two countries. The future of Pak-China relations appears promising.

Author Mohammad Hanif returns Sitara-e-Imtiaz in protest over govt actions against Balochistan march

ISLAMABAD (INP): Author and journalist Mohammad Hanif returned his "Sitara e Imtiaz" award on Saturday in protest against government's crackdown on participants of the Balochistan march, which was conducted against enforced disappearance of their family members.

Hanif made the announcement in a post shared on social media platform X. "In protest, returning my Sitara e Imtiaz, given to me by a state that continues to abduct and torture Baloch citizens," he wrote. "Journalists of my generation have seen @SammiBaluch and @MahrangBaloch grow up in protest camps. Ashamed to witness a new generation being denied basic dignity," he added.

PML-N warns against projecting 'favourite' PTI ex-chairman as 'innocent'

LAHORE (INP): PML-N Spokesperson Marriyum Aurangzeb on Saturday questioned the practice of presenting the PTI chairman as a "favourite" and "innocent" whenever liked, as she expressed her party's reservations after the Supreme Court judges passed remarks while giving bail to him and Shah Mehmood Qureshi in the cipher case a day earlier.

She warned against issuing "innocence certificates" to one who had trampled the Constitution and said the people would decide about their future by exercising the right to vote in the upcoming general elections on Feb 8.

The issuance of innocence certificates doesn't

change the facts, Marriyum said at a press conference and added that an unsuccessful attempt was being made to save and impose the PTI founding chairman yet again.

The PTI founding chairman was imposed on the country and the people by projecting him as a "favourite" in 2018 and as an "innocent" in 2014, which won't be allowed, the PML-N leader made it clear.

Marriyum reminded the audience that the PTI former chairman was the one who had arrived at the Supreme Court in a Mercedes and was welcomed by the then chief justice with greetings like "good to see you".

The PML-N spokesperson wondered how the person involved in the cipher saga who had damaged Pakistan's foreign relations and orchestrated the May 9 attacks on state institutions could be declared innocent.

Marriyum remarked that they had every right to accept or reject the judgment and said they were not among greeted with "good to see you" at the country's top court, as she recalled how Nawaz Sharif - the three-time prime minister - was removed from office on frivolous charges and labelled as "Sicilian mafia" in the insulting remarks written in the Supreme Court verdict.

136 UN members killed in 75 days in Gaza

NEW YORK (Online): United Nations Secretary General (UNSG) Antonio Guterres has said that 136 members of the United Nations have been killed in Gaza in just 75 days.

According to a foreign news agency, in a statement, Antonio Guterres has said that this has never been seen in the history of the United Nations, many staff members were forced to evacuate their homes in Gaza.

He paid tribute to the workers who risked their lives for the citizens in Gaza. According to media reports, the number of martyred Palestinians has exceeded 20,000 in the Israeli bombardment on Gaza since October 7.



LAHORE: Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman in a group photo with a delegation of Sikh Community after a meeting

Nomination paper submission for NA, PA polls concludes today

ISLAMABAD (APP): The deadline for submitting nomination papers to contest the upcoming general elections for the National and Provincial Assembly is set to conclude this Sunday.

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has accepted to the appeals of various political parties, deciding to extend the deadline for filing nomination papers for the upcoming general elections until Sunday. As per the Commission's updated schedule, scrutiny of the nomination papers is slated to occur from Monday through the 30th of this month.

Appeals against the acceptance or rejection of nomination papers can be submitted until the 3rd of January, with decisions expected by the 10th of January. The Election Commission is set to release the

updated list of candidates on the 11th of January, and candidates have until the 12th of January to withdraw their papers. The allocation of electoral symbols will take place on the 13th of January, and the general elections are scheduled for the 8th of February.

Meanwhile, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has given more time to foreign observers who want to monitor the general elections. Now, they can submit their applications from December 31 to January 20. An official from the ECP informed APP that, up to this point, they have received responses from 103 representatives of foreign media living in Pakistan. The ECP has printed over 200,000 accreditation cards and appointed District Monitoring Officers and teams to oversee compliance with the code of conduct.

PTI set to challenge ECP verdict to regain electoral symbol

PESHAWAR (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf on Saturday decided to knock the door of Peshawar High Court against withdrawing electoral symbol bat from the party by Election Commission of Pakistan.

After announcement of verdict by the ECP on Friday, the PTI legal team members reached Peshawar High Court on Saturday to file a case.

Sources said the PTI had not received verified written order by the ECP so far.

The party said it will challenge the ECP decision as it receives verified decision of the commission. The party further said if it does not receive the verified copy, even then it will move the court against the decision. However, the court can object to non-submission of verified copy of the ECP decision with the appeal.

Earlier on Friday, the electoral watchdog ruled that the party did not hold the elections in line with its constitution, the Election Act, 2017, and the Election Rules, 2017, and was thus ineligible to obtain the election symbol of "bat".

A five-member bench, led by Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja, gave the decision on the petitions challenging PTI's intra-party elections.

Other members of the bench included ECP members Nisar Ahmed Durani, Shah Muhammad Jatoti, Babar Hassan Bharwana and Justice @ Ikrumullah Khan.

The reserved verdict was announced a day after the Peshawar High Court directed the ECP to decide the petitions filed against PTI's intra-party elections in accordance with the law.

In its decision, the ECP observed that "the PTI did

not comply with the Commission's directions rendered therein order dated 23rd November, 2023 and failed to hold intra-party election in accordance with PTI prevailing Constitution, 2019 and Election Act, 2017, and Election Rules, 2017.

Therefore the certificate dated 4th December, 2023 and Form-65 filed by the alleged Chairman, is hereby regretted and rejected accordingly. The provisions of Section 215 of the Election Act, 2017 are hereby invoked and PTI is hereby declared ineligible to obtain the Election Symbol, for which they have applied for."

It may be noted here that the ECP rendered PTI's intra-party polls invalidated, and hence Barrister Gohar Ali Khan, who became its new chairman, would no longer be the PTI chairman.



KARACHI: Caretaker Sindh Chief Minister, Justice (Retd) Maqbool Baqar performs groundbreaking ceremony of Karimabad Underpass, held in Karachi

PCB announces squad for ICC U19 Men's Cricket World Cup

LAHORE (APP): Saad Baig will lead the 15-member Pakistan U19 squad in the ICC U19 Men's Cricket World Cup 2023 in South Africa to be played from January 19 to February 11, 2024.

Among the squad are Ali Asfand and Mohammad Zeeshan, both of whom had represented Pakistan in the previous edition of U19 World Cup held in West Indies in January-February 2022.

Pakistan U19 squad - Saad Baig (captain and wicketkeeper), Ali Asfand (vice-captain), Ali Raza, Ahmad Hassan, Amir Hassan, Arfat Minhas, Azean Awais, Haroon Arshad, Khubaib Khalil, Mohammad Zeeshan, Naveed Ahmed Khan, Shahzaib Khan, Shamyil Hussain, Muhammad Riazullah and Ubaid Shah.

Chairman Junior Selection Committee Sohail Tanvir said: "I want to congratulate the 15 players who have made it into

the squad for South Africa and I am confident that this well-balanced side has the capability and potential to perform well in the World Cup.

"While picking the team, we have considered the conditions in South Africa where the pitches are conducive to pace bowling and have aimed to cover all bases."

Support staff - Shoaib Mohammad (Team Manager), Mohammad Yousaf (Head Coach), Rehman Riaz (Bowling Coach), Mansoor Amjad (Fielding Coach), Muhammad Masroor (Assistant Batting Coach), Umer Rashid Dar (Assistant Coach), Hafiz Naeem Ul Rasul (Team Physio), Usman Hashmi (Team Analyst) and Imran Ullah (Strength & Conditioning Coach).

The players named in the squad will assemble for a training camp, which will take place from 28 December 2023 to 6 January 2024 in Lahore.

Palestinian resistance delegation meets APHC-AJK leaders

ISLAMABAD (INP): A delegation of Palestinian Resistance Movement met APHC-AJK leaders in Islamabad on Saturday.

The delegation met APHC-AJK Convener Mahmood Ahmad Saghar, Ghulam Mohammad Safi, Mohammad Rafiq Dar, Sheikh Abdul Matin, Altaf Ahmad Butt and Imtiyaz Wani.

The Palestinian delegation was comprised of Dr Ashraf Awad, Nadel Saleh and Arif Ibad. Mahmood Ahmad Saghar on the occasion denounced India and Israel for subjecting the oppressed people of occupied Jammu and Kashmir and Palestine.

The Hurriyat leaders exposed the evil nexus between India and Israel to crush the freedom movements in the two regions.

The Palestinian delegation briefed the Hurriyat leaders about the background of the Palestinian issue and the current situation in the wake of Israeli aggression in Gaza and the West Bank.

Inflation caused of energy rates hike a serious challenge: Muhammad Ali

ISLAMABAD (INP): The presidential candidate of Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI) for 2024 election, Muhammad Ali Sheikh has said that the uncontrolled inflation caused of constant hike in energy rates and depreciation of local currency was most serious challenge to the country's economy.

He said the high cost of doing business has been hurting the economic growth, as the inflation rate bounced back to 29.2% in concluding month, hurting the trade and industry the most, who faced the brunt of a staggering 520% increase in gas prices.

While quoting the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics

(PBS), Muhammad Ali said that the Consumer Price Index (CPI) surged to 29.2% last month compared to a year ago. The increase was more than market expectations and has lessened the prospects for a cut in the interest rates, which stand at the country's highest ever level of 22%. This reading, the first announced by the PBS after the recently concluded International Monetary Fund (IMF) talks, in which the global lender also cut the inflation forecast for Pakistan to 22.8%, may strengthen the IMF's view of keeping the policy rate unchanged until core inflation starts easing out when the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meets on December 12th.

Repatriation of illegal foreigners including Afghans continues

ISLAMABAD (INP): Repatriation of illegal foreign nationals including Afghan nationals to their homeland was underway in a dignified and safe manner.

Besides other measures for the dignified return of Afghans to their country, transit camps equipped with all facilities have been established in various districts for their temporary accommodation.

One thousand five hundred sixty-two illegal Afghan nationals returned to their country the other day.

As many as 444,938 illegal Afghans have been repatriated to Afghanistan so far.



QUETTA: Leader of JUI Malik Sikandar Advocate talking with media men after submit nomination papers

Solid, timely measures vital to boost remittances

LAHORE (INP): Chairman Pakistan Industrial and Traders Associations Front (PIAF) Faheemur Rehman Saigol has said that foreign remittances flows are crucial which can support the country's account balance amidst low volumes of foreign direct investment (FDI) and nominal growth of exports.

In a statement issued on Saturday, he said that overseas Pakistanis living in Gulf should further be motivated to maintain an upward momentum in remittances, as they contributed more than 60 percent of the total inflows during last couple of months.

Faheemur Rehman Saigol said that remittances can help not only in financing the deficit in import payments but also in foreign debt repayments, suggesting the government to focus on structural reforms, which can revive Pakistan's economic growth with major focus on incentives for overseas Pakistanis workers.

He said that Pakistan has been witnessing a significant decline in workers' remittances on a year-on-year basis, however it surged by 5.34% on a month-on-month basis, reaching a total of \$2.21 billion, owing to several positive factors, including improved transparency and the implementation of stringent measures against dollar smuggling.

Citizens of all faiths enjoying...

The prime minister said Quaid-e-Azam foresaw that Muslims, Christians and other communities would be denied their religious freedoms in India as Hindutva was raising its head at that time.

"We will resist all kinds of fascism. Pakistan is the flag carrier of inclusiveness and harmony."

"We are free to choose our faith. God, Prophets and their companions did not force anybody to choose their faith. The free will is awarded by the divine. God respects my dignity then how can it be flouted by any government or ideology," he continued.

He said Pakistan had its challenges and it was a victim of terrorism and thousands of its martyrs performed their national duty and defended every inch of the territory of the great nation of Pakistan.

"Our valiant armed forces which included members of all religious communities were defending and protecting our shores, land, sea, and air and we take great pride in their valour," he added.

He lauded the role of minorities especially the Christian community in the progress of Pakistan in the fields of business, education and health.

Christian teachers and missionary schools contributed immensely in shaping societies in Paki-

stan, India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, he noted.

PM Kakar said when blasphemy was committed in the West against Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) it was painful for Muslims.

Blasphemy should not be allowed in the name of freedom of expression, he added.

Talking about the plight of Palestinians, he called for immediate peace in Palestine and the opening of a humanitarian corridor so that vital relief could reach the oppressed Palestinians.

"Everyone deserved peace and Pakistan wanted peace for everyone in the land of prophets."

Minister for Human Rights Khalid Georje appreciated the prime minister for taking significant steps for the betterment of Pakistan.

He said people of different faiths were living in the country in harmony, adding the Christian community was very patriotic and contributed to the peace and prosperity of Pakistan.

Special Representative to Prime Minister for Inter-Religious Harmony Maulana Tahir Ashrafi and leaders from different faiths were present at the event.

The prime minister along with the guests cut a cake to celebrate the occasion of Christmas.

BYC gives govt 3-day ultimatum...

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The events were strongly condemned by human rights organisations, politicians and analysts. On Thursday evening, the government said 90 per cent of the Baloch men and women taken into custody were released, except for the men who "could not be identified" by police. The police actions were censured by Islamabad High Court Chief Justice Aamer Farooq, President Dr Arif Alvi and caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar as well.

The Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC) earlier announced a rally and sit-in at the NPC for today, saying that it would also hold a press conference on the next step of the movement.

The press release issued from the group said nearly 350 demonstrators were arrested of which 33 were granted bail, over 250 were still in jail and over 100 were still not presented in court whose status was missing.

"We are issuing a three-day ultimatum to state for the withdrawal of FIRs (first information report) registered against peaceful protesters and releasing the 100+ Baloch students whose status is still missing," the press release said.

It warned that the long march would be "compelled to take harsh steps" for which the state and the administration would be responsible if the missing protesters were not produced and charges against them were not dropped.

It also demanded that FIRs against the demonstrators in different cities should also be quashed.

The BYC added that it

would continue its sit-in at the NPC till the demands were met.

Meanwhile, the Islamabad police earlier today said a court had issued orders to release 163 previously detained protesters on bail after directives from a committee constituted by the prime minister.

A subsequent post from the BYC said that news regarding the release of 167 protesters was "false".

"They were initially granted bail, but through various delay tactics, their release was cancelled. And currently, they are behind bars, while 100+ students are still missing. They have not been presented before any court, and their location is unknown."

Balochistan Governor Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar visited the demonstrators for negotiations and later left. "We have heard your message and we also want a solution," he said.

Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement leader Ali Wazir, former senator Farhatullah Babar and Jamaat-i-Islami Senator Mushtaq Ahmed also visited the sit-in while the latter two addressed it as well.

"The Baloch are demanding basic human rights. People who came to Islamabad to demand their rights were tortured," Babar said, adding that the "stepmotherly treatment" of the Baloch community should cease now.

The human rights veteran said enforced disappearances fell under the category of human rights violations, adding that those picked up should be released and brought to the courts if they were involved in any crime.

Mohammad Nawaz steps in as Noman Ali hospitalised in Australia, out of Test series

Sports Desk

MELBOURNE: Pakistan spinner Noman Ali was recovering on Saturday after being rushed to hospital with acute appendicitis, with the veteran ruled out of the rest of their Test series against Australia.

He has been replaced by Mohammad Nawaz, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) said in a statement issued on Saturday afternoon.

Left-arm spinner Nawaz, 29, who is already part of the 17-member T20I squad against New Zealand commencing from January 12, 2024 in New Zealand, will fly to Australia on the first available flight.

Wahab Riaz, chief selector men's cricket team, said: "It is really unfortunate that Noman Ali is not available for the Test matches. Due to logistical challenges, including visa issues for any new player,

and considering the requirement for a left-arm spinner, Nawaz was the best available choice for the side."

On Abrar Ahmed's availability, the team management is hopeful that Abrar will be available to the side for the third Test match at the Sydney Cricket Ground, commencing on Jan 3, 2024, the PCB said.

Noman Ali, 37, who did not feature during a heavy defeat in the opening Test in Perth, suffered severe abdominal pain on Friday.

"Noman Ali complained of sudden and severe abdominal pain yesterday, leading to examinations and scans in emergency that confirmed a diagnosis of acute appendicitis," the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) said.

"On surgeon's advice, he underwent Laparoscopic Appendectomy today," Ali, who has played 15 Tests, the last of which was

against Sri Lanka in July, was "stable and doing fine", but will take no further part in the three-Test series which resumes in Melbourne next week.

It is another blow for the visitors after pace bowler Khuram Shahzad was ruled out of the series on Thursday.

The 24-year-old impressed on his debut in Perth, finishing with match figures of 5-128 in the 360-run loss.

But he complained of discomfort and scans showed a stress fracture in the ribs along with an abdominal muscle tear.

Pakistan already had a weakened bowling attack after speedster Naseem Shah was omitted from the tour due to a long-term injury. Spinner Abrar Ahmed missed the Perth Test with leg discomfort, but could return for the second match in Melbourne that begins on December 26.



HYDERABAD: Members of Peoples Party (PPP-SB Group) holding protest demonstration against Islamabad police used force to disperse and detain Baloch demonstrators in Islamabad



ISLAMABAD: Boys and girls are participating in entry test of Al-Khidmat Foundation.

IHC declares Nov 2022 MD Cadre entrance test result valid for two years

ISLAMABAD (Online): Islamabad High Court (IHC) has declared the results of the November 2022 MD Cadre entrance test valid for two years. It has been said in IHC decision that results of the November 2022 MD Cadre entrance test is valid till November 2024. Justice Mian Gul Hassan Aurangzeb of IHC while announcing decision wrote petitioner Liba Rouf, successfully passed the MD Cadre exam in November 2022. When the petitioner passed the test, the result was valid for two years as per law. The petitioner challenged PMDC public notice

dated July 14, 2023. PMDC had said in the notice admission will not be given in 2023 to those who passed MD cadre in 2022. According to 2021 Regulations MD cadre results of November 2022 are valid for two years. This right cannot be withdrawn from petitioner through subsequent administrative decision. MD cadre result of the petitioner will be valid from November 2022 to November 2024. It was further said in the decision PMDC will pay the expenses incurred by the petitioner in the case. Khaliq ur Rehman Saifi advocate appeared on behalf of the petitioner.

Importance of information group increased manifold in age of narratives: Solangi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi has said that in the age of propaganda, narratives and counter narratives, the importance of the job of the officers of Information group had increased manifold. Delivering his keynote address at "Graduation Ceremony of Training Programmes Domain Specific 38th MCMC and 40th Specialised Training Programme", here the other day, he said the responsibility of officers of this group was countering propaganda of inimical forces and promote and project Pakistan's soft and positive image. He said unlike many other groups of civil service, the information group officers had to work hard to improve their skills by continuous study. "You have to love your job to improve your knowledge. You have to learn not only about media, media laws but politics, history, geography, art, culture, music and languages of the country," he added. He said that

the focus of the officers of the information group should be to adopt to rapidly changing media landscape. The minister said that when internet and social media were introduced, it was thought that new window of knowledge had been opened and the dependency of mainstream media would end. But unfortunately, now a new "political economy" has been invented at the social media and affluent persons could hire services of a few dozen people to spread fake news and create bogus trends.

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training Madad Ali Sindhhi graced the Ethiopian Pavilion with his presence at the Karachi Festival on Saturday. On arrival, the minister was welcomed by Ethiopian Ambassador to Pakistan, Jemal Beker Abdula. According to a press release issued by the Embassy, the Pavilion served as a captivating proof of the rich tapestry of Ethiopian tourism and culture to Pakistan. The minister, on the occasion, witnessed mesmerizing cultural performances at the pavilion and savoured Ethiopian coffee which had become the centre of attraction at the Karachi Feast. Madad Ali Sindhhi commended Ambassador Jemal Beker Abdula



ISLAMABAD: Students holding flags of different countries express solidarity with the children and people of Palestine during the annual sports day meet at the Preparatory School.

First ever digital census of Pak to help improving policy planning, decision making

ISLAMABAD (APP): The first-ever digital census of Pakistan completed in 2023 is not only a remarkable feat in the technological world but is also a big source for proper development planning and evidence-based decision-making through the provision of reliable data. "The new census has touched almost all the sectors and provides comprehensive data which can help policymakers in proper planning based on data-supported evidence," observed Chief Statistician, Dr Naem ul Zafar. Talking to APP at a Data Users and Producers Dialogue workshop organized by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) in Peshawar, Dr Naem ul Zafar said for the first time in the history of the country, data for the development of frame for the economic census was also integrated with the housing and population census. The exercise of integrating the economic census with the housing and population census has saved around Rs. Seven billion, Naem disclosed. He said the gigantic exercise is the first ever in the South Asia region and will be followed by neighbouring countries in coming years. About the details of the 2023 census, Dr Naem

said that would be uploaded online in January of 2024 after which people can benefit from it by getting a lot of information on the required sector. The digital census completed in a timeline of around 18 months also holds the distinction of first-ever uncontroversial census, he claimed. Member PBS, Muhammad Sarwar Gondal said the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics is committed to providing accurate, reliable and accurate data for informed decision-making. In this latest digital census, data of around 33 indicators are given by geotagging 40 million structures, he added.



ISLAMABAD: A family sitting around the fire to keep them warm as the temperature falls in city.

Pakistan's talented youth takes center stage at PNCA drama festival

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) on Saturday is buzzing with vibrant performances as the three-day drama festival unfolds on the second day, a diverse array of acts filled the stage, ranging from stand-up comedy and Sufi dance to puppet shows and thought-provoking plays. The Government College University Faisalabad brought the energy with a dance performance, while Team Reliant presented the intriguing play "Mystery 404." Quaid-e-Azam University showcased their talent with a stand-up comedy play titled "Robo Khan," and also treated the audience to a Rabab music performance. National Council of Arts (NCA) Rawalpindi impressed with a drama exhibition, and Peace University Wow captured hearts with their play "Meri Zara Nishaan." The festival, organized in collaboration with Quaid-e-Azam University Islamabad, features 23 university students and theatre groups from across Pakistan. Director PR Dr Bilal Karim said while talking to APP. The stage is set for a mix of performances, including cultural dances.

ISLAMABAD (APP): The scholarship committee of the undergraduate scholarship programme for Gilgit-Baltistan met at the Higher Education Commission (HEC) Secretariat to approve the selection of the third batch of students who will pursue their undergraduate studies in different public sector universities in Pakistan. The meeting, chaired by Executive Director HEC Dr Zia Ul-Qayyum, was attended yesterday by the Vice-Chancellor, Karakoram International University Gilgit, Dr Atta Ullah Shah, Vice-Chancellor, University of Baltistan Skardu, Dr Muhammad Naem Khan, Director General (Scholarships) HEC, Ms Aayesha Ikram, Assistant Chief (S&T) Planning Commission, Mr Muhammad Zaheer, Director Education (Colleges), Mr Juma Gul, and Mr Javed Hassan Awan, Project Director (GB Scholarships) HEC. For the intake of the third batch, HEC advertised the scholarship in August 2023.

HEC awards undergraduate scholarships to GB students

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TLP will field its candidates from all PA, NA constituencies

ISLAMABAD (Online): Tehreek Labaik Pakistan (TLP) will field its candidates from all provincial and national constituencies of Rawalpindi division. Central Ameer TLP Hafiz Saad Hussain Rizvi will also contest election from Attock National Assembly constituency NA-50. Ameer TLP of North Punjab Pir Syed Inayat-ul-Haq Shah will also participate in election from Attock constituency PP-2. Ameer TLP Rawalpindi division Haji Ramzan Awan will participate in election from Gujranwala constituency NA-52. Ameer TLP district Rawalpindi Chaudhry Taimur Khalid will also participate from constituency NA-53 of Rawalpindi. TLP is going to give big surprise from Rawalpindi division in general elections. The reason for TLP's popularity among people is poor-friendly policy. This time the people will overthrow the traditional politicians like Pharoah with the help of Crane.

Poet, Naat Khawan Warsi remembered

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prominent Urdu poet, critic, essayist, lyricist and scholar Muzaffar Warsi was remembered here on his birth anniversary. Born on December 23, 1933 in Meerut, his name was Mohammad Muzaffar ud din Siddiqui and he used his pen name "Warsi" making Muzaffar Warsi. He started his poetry by writing lyrics for songs for Pakistani movies but gradually changed direction and his style of poetry became more oriented towards writing Hamd and Naats. Warsi was one of the few distinguished voices and one of the most prominent poets of Pakistan. Warsi experimented with every genre of poetry including ghazal, nazam, naat and hamd. The unique style and diversity of themes made him prominent among the poets of his era. Muzaffar Warsi enlightened "Natia Poetry" with a new style and naats like "Ya Rahmatulil Alameen" and would always be remembered among people having a literary taste.

Famous actor Izhar Qazi remembered

ISLAMABAD (APP): Renowned film actor and singer Izhar Qazi was remembered on the occasion of his 16th death anniversary on Saturday. Born on 16 September, 1955 in Karachi, he began his professional career as an engineer at Pakistan Steel Mills. He was introduced to television drama writer Fatima Suraiyya Bajia, who was looking for a new face for the television serial Ana. He appeared as the romantic lead alongside Mehreen Ilahi, Shakil and Ghazala Kaifee in the 1982 serial. He later appeared in the serials Daira and Gardish with Shakeel and Saqi. After achieving television success, Qazi transitioned into the Lollywood film industry in 1986. His film debut was as the lead role in Nazar Shabbab's Ruby, alongside veteran co-stars Mustafa Qureshi, Shafi Mohammad, Sabeeta, and Rangleela. The film was met with critical acclaim. Director Jan Mohammad casts Qazi in his films. Qazi's collaborations with Jan Mohammad included popular films including Mania ki Bijliyan, Roop ki Rani, and Choron ka Baadshah. His most famous films were Love in Nepal, Aalimi Jasoos, Khazana and Sarkata Insaan. Izhar Qazi was died on 23 December 2007 in Karachi after suffering from heart attack. Qazi retired from the film industry in 2003.

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 23rd death anniversary of Malika-e-Tarannum Noor Jehan was observed on Saturday. Her real name was Allah Wasai. Born in Kasur in 1926, in a family of musicians, Noor Jehan started her musical career in Calcutta at the age of nine as a singer-child star. She was renowned as one of the greatest and most influential singers of her time in South Asia and was given the honorific title of Malika-e-Tarannum. Noor Jehan ruled the film industry for more than 35 years and recorded about 10,000 songs.

CTD Islamabad conducts a joint mock exercise at Naval Headquarters

ISLAMABAD: The Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) conducted a joint mock exercise at Naval Headquarters with a purpose to deal with any possible emergency situation and to ensure the safety of life and property of the citizens, a police public relations officer said. According to detail, following the special directions of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the mock exercises by the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) are being conducted in different areas of the city in order to prepare the force to deal with any untoward situation. Officials from the counter-terrorism department (CTD) and the Bomb Disposal Squad of Islamabad capital police participated in the mock exercise under the supervision of SP CTD Hamza Hamayoun. In the exercise, CTD, Bomb Disposal Squad and other Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) teams jointly demonstrated how to react to a situation by reaching the spot in a short time in case of any emergency and taking timely precautions, according to the standing order procedure. Islamabad Capital Police is taking all-out efforts to secure the lives and property of the residents and no stone will be left unturned in this regard. Citizens are requested to call "Pukar-15" for any information about any suspicious activity.

Remembering a hero: Islamabad police pay tribute to cop on first death anniversary

ISLAMABAD (APP): In an emotional ceremony, officers of the Islamabad Capital Police gathered to mark the first death anniversary of the brave martyr, Head Constable Syed Adeel Haseen Shah, in his hometown of District Pakpattan. This solemn event was orchestrated under the special directives of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCP) Dr Akbar Nasir Khan. During the event, the police officers took the opportunity to meet with the family of the late martyr, police force executed a touching guard of honour at the grave of the late Head Constable. Representing the ICCPO, officers laid a wreath of flowers on the martyr's grave, offering prayers in remembrance. The ceremony drew the attendance of Islamabad Capital Police officers and officials, and a large gathering of residents. During the event, the police officers took the opportunity to meet with the family of the late martyr,

Noor Jehan remembered on her death anniversary

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 23rd death anniversary of Malika-e-Tarannum Noor Jehan was observed on Saturday. Her real name was Allah Wasai. Born in Kasur in 1926, in a family of musicians, Noor Jehan started her musical career in Calcutta at the age of nine as a singer-child star. She was renowned as one of the greatest and most influential singers of her time in South Asia and was given the honorific title of Malika-e-Tarannum. Noor Jehan ruled the film industry for more than 35 years and recorded about 10,000 songs.

Elderly, medically vulnerable teachers appeal for exemption from polling duties

ISLAMABAD (APP): Elderly and medically vulnerable teaching and non-teaching staff of educational institutions have appealed for exemption from their duties at polling stations during general election 2024. The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has recently announced a training schedule for polling staff, a national duty that is mandatory and cannot be refused. The staff of educational institutions are predominantly called upon for polling duties. The lack of consideration for the health and well-being of many teachers is highlighted by the fact that even those suffering from chronic conditions like heart problems are being appointed for election duties. The situation is exacerbated by the apparent absence of engagement of staff from other ministries and divisions by the Election Commission, limiting the pool of resources available for such critical roles. This has raised concerns among the senior educators about the potential impact on their health. A senior women teacher, speaking to APP, expressed the physical challenges associated with age, stating, "I am 59 years old and at the verge of retirement and facing multiple health issues. The teachers like me should be exempted from the polling duty which is a hustle job because it involves a range of responsibilities that can be physically and mentally demanding." As per medical experts, individuals aged beyond the fifth decade often experience a decline in muscle strength, aerobic capacity, and cognitive abilities. Factors such as slower reaction times and caution increase with age, presenting a trade-off between speed and accuracy.

Senior police officers distribute gifts among Christian employees

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Capital Police arranged ceremonies in connection with Christmas and distributed gifts among the Christian officials and employees, a police public relations officer said. He said that Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Islamabad Muhammad Sarfraz Virk and Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Qaiser Niaz Gillani joined the ceremonies organized at traffic police headquarters and police lines headquarters held for Christian officials and employees of the police force. The event, held following the directions of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCP) Dr Akbar Nasir Khan, was attended by Christian officials, employees, and other senior police officers and officials of Islamabad Capital Police. On these occasions, the senior's police officers said that we are proud of our Christian employees who are serving in various wings of the force. They said that minorities enjoy equal rights in the country and are contributing significantly to its development. They further said that the Christmas event gives a lesson in brotherhood and humanity, and all of us should work together to promote interfaith harmony. They also expressed good wishes for them and announced holidays for Christian employees in the Islamabad Capital Police.



ISLAMABAD: SNGPL staffs welding gas pipes installing at Zeropoint area in federal capital.



Daily Voice of Masses
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Violent dispersal

In recent days, Islamabad has witnessed scenes that are not just deplorable but a blatant violation of the constitutional right to peaceful protest. The Baloch community, long marginalised and voiceless, took to Islamabad's streets to raise concerns over enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings in Balochistan. These serious allegations warrant thorough investigation, not brutality. The police action against these protesters, involving tear gas, water cannons, and baton charges, paints a grim picture of how state machinery can be misused against its own people. What is even more concerning are reports of women being bundled into buses and sent back to Quetta, after having been arrested.

This not only undermines the dignity of these individuals but also raises questions about the state's commitment to protecting its citizens' rights. The irony deepens with reports that some 50 protesters are themselves missing — the very issue they wanted to draw attention to. It is particularly disconcerting that such events transpired under a caretaker government led by a prime minister from Balochistan. One would expect greater sensitivity towards the issues plaguing a province where unaddressed socioeconomic woes are driving impressionable young people to join insurgent groups. Yet the reality is different. The Islamabad High Court's remarks in this context are noteworthy. Chief Justice Aamer Farooq's inquiry into why the protesters were being forcibly sent back to their province and his emphasis on their right to stay, protest, or return home underscore the judiciary's role in safeguarding constitutional liberties.

The issues of enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings in Balochistan are not new, but their persistent nature and the authorities' apathy towards resolving them are alarming. The voices from Balochistan speak of years of neglect and abuse. It is imperative that these voices be heard, and grievances addressed, not silenced. The government's response, particularly the assertions about the release of detained protesters, is in stark contrast to the ground realities and how the state deals with protesters who are far less marginalised, such as the stick-wielding students of Lal Masjid. Also, why is it that although Lal Masjid has again encroached upon state land, it is getting kid-glove treatment by way of mere CDA warnings? Such discrepancies erode public trust in the government and exacerbate the sense of injustice among the Baloch people. The situation calls for an immediate and unbiased inquiry into the police action against the Baloch protesters. The right to peaceful protest must be protected. It is also essential that Balochistan's long-standing issues are addressed comprehensively and transparently. The state must recognise and rectify its role in perpetuating these injustices and work towards building an inclusive, equitable, and just society where every citizen, irrespective of their ethnic background, feels safe and is heard.



Abdul Moiz Jaferi

At times, judges are put on the spot. It might be that the positions they have consistently stated throughout their career on a certain issue are on the line in a high-stakes human rights case. Or that they are hearing a case which external influences would rather they let linger if they can't decide it the way they're supposed to. Or it might just be that they are bored and don't want to hear that particular case any longer.

At these times, the shiniest tools in a judge's shed become procedural requirements. Has everyone been put on notice? Are the filings completed by all parties? Is everyone ready to proceed? Do we have enough time left in the roster sitting?

Proper procedure is necessary. It creates consistency, stability and a measure of predictability — all fundamental components of due process. Adherence to procedural norms helps prevent arbitrary justice such as crowd-funded dams and choice demolition of residential buildings. But in our constitutional and political circumstances, procedural overreliance is sometimes seen as a sign of cowardice.

A judge may attempt to forgo his duty by hiding behind procedural allowances in the law, which are crafted in a way to accord legitimacy to the state's intent in a particular case. What's the problem if police in Quetta want to investigate someone who has never been there? Surely there's no problem unless you have something to hide.

It was the apparently benign intent to adhere to procedure which allowed most of our Supreme Court to throw the current chief justice to the hounds he had exposed as hounds in his challenge to the reference against him. What's the problem with answering the taxman about these assets which don't belong to you? Surely, as you said, you

have nothing to hide.

It was the crutch of procedure which allowed for the state to hollow out Imran Riaz Khan, whilst the chief judge of the Lahore High Court found one excuse after another in procedure.

It is the pretence of adherence to procedure which creates room for the state to continue to use laws that are no longer on the books after the apex court has struck them down as unconstitutional.

There is an appeal yet to be heard; so we're not listening to the Supreme Court's directions. That the Supreme Court then sits in a larger capacity and undoes its own decision without asking for the state to account for its contemptuous disregard of the underlying order is a separate tragedy.

It is the breaking of this pretence, and the desire to see the forest for the trees, which causes actual tremors in the system. Such as Justice Babar Sattar asking the state to answer for its clear pattern of flouting court orders by way of repetitive detentions in political cases. But as long as individual judges like Justice Sattar are outliers, and

aren't supported by the strength of their colleagues acting in unison, they can be treated as outliers and their orders can be abused with disregard.

The Peshawar High Court issued orders to negate this trial by procedure. It ordered all district court judges to break these intellectual shackles and require a judicial order for the arrest of someone already on bail in another matter from a court. The Supreme Court suspended this order, finding no grounds in procedure which allow for such blanket protection. Our august court saw the tree and declared it a mutant. Whilst ignoring that the rest of the forest was on fire.

With Imran Riaz's release, the top judge of the Lahore High Court was the one actually set free from his intricate engagement with procedure over four months — assisted ably by Imran Riaz's lawyer who was rather publicly professing to be playing the role of middleman.

Sometimes it pays to be prince of procedure. Such as when Faisal Vawda managed to delay a hearing on his misdeclaration of nationality for over a year

until he had been booted onto a Senate ticket. Thereafter, the suddenly invigorated judge hearing the disqualification challenge made clear that had it not been for procedural limitations, justice would have had its day. Procedural compliance at times also helps to hide what a judge is made of. In terms of capability, there are broadly three kinds of judges. There are the few who can handle all cases, including fiscal and contractual matters. Expertise with numbers is a less-than-common trait amongst most otherwise lettered men, as Saqib Nisar made clear when he thought he could penalise his way into building a \$17 billion dam. Then there are the many judges who can handle all matters other than fiscal and contractual, which still requires a comprehensive understanding of procedural and civil law. All the judges left over are known as experts in criminal law.

Most criminal law in Pakistan revolves around whodunit. Case law and precedent are a poorly written and repetitive story of 'he said, she said and he said it when he was about to die so we must believe

him'.

Yet there are judges within the last subset of expertise who choose to hide behind decades of repetitive, outdated and inefficient procedure rather than resolve the simple issues that face criminal law benches in the superior courts.

This inevitably falls upon the constitutionalists to remedy, as Justice Mansoor Ali Shah has recently done with far-reaching and modernising judgments on evidentiary process and criminal procedure. With one well-reasoned order, 70 years of bad practice by the police and lower judiciary can be arrested.

Many judges have drunk at the fountain of knowledge, whilst some have just gargled. Such is the norm on benches all over the world. Yet the hitherto absolutely opaque method of judge-making in Pakistan ensures there are some serving on benches who are gifted with wisdom that one could only possess if one had subjected the fountain to an act of public vandalism. Unless, of course, there's something else going on entirely. -- Courtesy Dawn

Princes of procedure

Helping the poor access justice



Rida Tahir

What happens when an accused is brought before the magistrate who sends him/her to physical or judicial custody? S/he faces torture or physical punishment while the investigation is being conducted. On top of it, the burden of social stigma associated with being arrested and accused of a crime persists.

When the challan is finally presented in the trial court, they are uncertain about how to navigate the situation. What to do, what to say? Whether or not they are innocent or guilty, one thing is certain: these people are entitled to due process.

This is why free legal aid is a welfare provision and a legal right by the state to people who can otherwise not afford counsel and redressal from the legal system. Free legal aid is an essential element of a fair, humane and efficient criminal justice system (CJS). It is a key element of access to justice.

The right to legal aid has been enshrined in the constitution under Article 4 (due process), Article 9 (no person shall be deprived of life or liberty save in accordance with law), Article 10-A (right to fair trial), Article 25 (equality before the law) and Article 37(d) (inexpensive and expeditious justice).

An efficient legal aid system can significantly help improve access of vulnerable sections to justice and reduce legal exclusion. According to the 2022 report by the World Justice Project, Pakistan stands at 97/140 on the criminal justice factor whereas it ranks at 125/140 on the civil justice factor. The country ranks at 123/140 on the fundamental rights factor.

Overall, the country ranks at 129/140 on the rule of law index. Additionally, Pakistan ranks 142 out of 146 countries in the World Economic Forum's global gender gap report of 2023, highlighting the high level of vulnerability and marginalization faced by women litigants.

As of 2023, poverty is expected to reach 37.2 per cent in Pakistan, further exacerbating the situation and making it even more difficult for marginalized individuals to afford quality legal aid and advice.

With the intent to fulfil the constitutional obligation of the state towards citizen's right to free legal aid and assistance, the parliament of Pakistan enacted the Legal Aid and Justice Authority Act (LAJA) 2020 to provide legal aid to the marginalized and vulnerable sections of society.

LAJA is applicable across Pakistan. According to this law, legal, financial and other assistance for the purpose of safeguarding access to justice to the poor and vulnerable is to be conducted through the Legal Aid and Justice Authority (LAJA) and its offices in criminal cases.

However, the implementation of this Act has only been partial, due to which many litigants are unable to access justice. This is true, especially at the district levels. Justice must be impartial, and everyone must have equal access to justice.

Other than LAJA, federal-, provincial-, divi-

sional- and district-level legal aid mechanisms under various national and provincial legislations, policies and executive orders have also been established in each province. These include federal legislations including Suit by Pauper under Order 33 of Code of Civil Procedure, Section 161A of the Code of Criminal Procedure 1898: Legal Representation of Victim of Rape, Etc, the District Legal Empowerment Committee (Constitution & Functions) Rules 2011, Pakistan Bar Council Free Legal Aid Rules 1999, Legal assistance under Section 3 of the Juvenile Justice System Act 2018 (JISA) for children in conflict and contact with the law.

In line with the 18th Amendment, provincial legal aid agencies/authorities have also been established. In Punjab, the Punjab Legal Aid Agency was established on October 29, 2019 under the Punjab Legal Aid Act 2018. Similarly, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Legal Aid Act 2019 was enacted in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The laws are similar in nature. They provide for a provincial legal aid agency and stipulate the functions for the agency.

In Sindh, several legal aid mechanisms/procedures/mechanisms have been established at the provincial, divisional and district level. However, the mapping of legal aid mechanisms in Sindh conducted by the Sindh Human Rights Commission revealed that diverse legal aid mechanisms are scattered across the province for individuals unable to afford legal representation.

Three main and functioning committees have been formed by the Sindh government to provide citizens with free legal aid and assistance. A steering committee for legal aid and assistance to the vulnerable and marginalized segments of society in Sindh has been formed under the Sindh government's human rights department (HRD).

Additionally, two committees have been formed under the home department for free legal aid and assistance: the provincial subcommittee on 'diyat', 'arsh' and 'damani' (a federal government-led initiative) and the committee for the welfare of prisoners (CWP), a Sindh government-led initiative.

The study provides key recommendations for

the effective utilization of the scattered legal aid mechanisms for coordination among the various mechanisms and increased awareness of their existence and functions. One of the key recommendations is to establish a provincial legal aid authority to ensure a well-coordinated and efficient free legal aid mechanism in the province of Sindh.

Therefore, a considerable section of the population in Sindh is unable to access justice through the formal legal system mainly due to lack of financial resources and awareness regarding the scattered legal aid mechanisms across the country. Having a provincial legal aid authority will ensure that the scattered legal aid mechanism is provided to citizens on an equal basis, without discrimination across the province and at the district levels.

This is also the spirit of Article 7 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that: "All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law." -- Courtesy TheNews

Gender and population



Nida Kirmani

According to Pakistan's 2023 census, our country's population has officially surpassed the 240 million mark — an increase of 33.8m people since the previous census in 2017. The growth rate jumped from 2.4 per cent in 2017 to 2.55pc in 2023, which is a worrying reversal of what was an otherwise downward trend.

Over two decades ago, Pakistan committed to reaching replacement-level population growth rates (2.1pc) by 2020. However, the recent census figures indicate that we are even further from reaching this goal than we were six years ago; this is a clear indication of decades of failed policies and a lack of commitment on the part of the government to reaching this goal.

If we continue at this rate, Pakistan will move from being the sixth most populous country in the world to the fifth — a race we do not want to be winning. For anyone concerned about the well-being of those living in this country, particularly the well-being of its women, this should be serious cause for concern.

Pakistan's population growth rate stands in stark contrast to other countries in our region. India's growth rate in 2023 was 1.10pc, Nepal's 1.25pc, Bangladesh 1.26pc, and Sri Lanka a mere 0.83pc.

While economically advanced countries, such as Japan and South Korea, are worrying about an aging population, for developing countries like our own,

such a high growth rate is unsustainable and will inevitably lead to a host of environmental and social problems.

One consequence that we are currently facing is the increasing youth bulge, with millions of frustrated young women and men who are unable to be absorbed into the economy.

High population growth is a symptom of poverty and a lack of human development in general. Hence, the most underdeveloped province, Balochistan, also has the highest growth rate in the country (3.2pc). Consequently, Balochistan also has the highest maternal mortality rate of any of the provinces (298 per 100,000 births), which is by far the highest in the region.

Persistent poverty is one of the major factors behind the high growth rate. Contrary to the popular belief that poor people have more children because they are ignorant, having more kids for those lacking productive assets is actually a very rational decision.

The more children one has, the more people there are to contribute to the family income. If the cost of having a child outweighs the benefits in terms of income, then families are likely to have fewer children. But this is only a small part of the story.

Many women end up having more children not because they want to but simply because they do not have access to contraceptive methods or control over their health-related decision-making. Despite decades of population planning and technological advances in reproductive health, according to the UNFPA, 5.5m women in Pakistan had an unmet need for contraceptives in 2020 resulting in millions of unwanted pregnancies.

For this reason, Pakistan also has one of the highest abortion rates in the world — 50 per 1,000

pregnancies according to a study published by the Population Council in 2012. It can be assumed that this number has only increased given the current rise in the population growth rate overall.

Large family sizes with inadequate spacing are harmful to women's physical and mental health and hinder their full economic, social and political participation. Furthermore, discrimination against women and girls also leads to the practice of son preference; many families have more children in the hopes of producing more sons. It is a vicious cycle.

Until and unless gender equality is placed at the centre of the political agenda, and women and girls are valued for their full human potential, our population growth rates are unlikely to decrease. And until and unless the population growth rate starts to decline, the achievement of gender equality in Pakistan will remain a distant dream.

Even though it is women who bear the burden of childbearing and child-rearing, and despite the heaps of research pointing to the connection between women's empowerment and lower fertility rates, discussions of population planning, if they happen at all, rarely make any mention of women's rights. Rather, the focus is generally on 'family planning', which involves meeting blunt targets with regards to contraception.

While even this would be a welcome step given the government's poor track record over the past decades, a holistic approach focused on poverty reduction, equitable development, and most importantly, treating women not as targets for family planning but as full human beings is urgently required to bring the population growth rate down to sustainable levels. -- Courtesy Dawn

Breathing poison



Haseeb Asif

Pakistan was in attendance at the recently concluded COP28 in Dubai. The day earmarked Health Day on Dec 3 was marred by a layer of smog over the Emirati megacity. It was an altogether too familiar sight for our delegation there, given that our largest cities have some of the worst Air Quality Index (AQI) the world over.

Lahore is exceptionally bad. The World Health Organisation labels anything over an AQI value of 300 as 'hazardous'. Lahore's was recently 490. It often tops the world chart, vying with Delhi and Dhaka. But even in our other urban centres, nothing is close to a 'safe' AQI value of 100. We are breathing poison and it is killing us, slowly but surely. The WHO says that fossil-fuel emissions kill around four million people every year.

Pollutant particles less than 2.5 micrometres in diameter, also known as PM2.5, can enter the lungs and erode respiratory cilia which protect the body from the debris we breathe in. It enters the bloodstream and can cause heart disease, cancer and their assorted complications. The winter season in particular prevents warm air from rising and traps these pollutants closer to the ground.

Pakistan's average life expectancy is expected to be cut by more than five years. Children and pregnant women are especially at risk. Younger and younger people are developing asthma; the age at which heart disease and cancer become serious concerns will

decrease as well. That was said at a paediatricians' conference in January this year after the last smog fallout.

Our response this winter? Well, a rain dance of sorts. Last weekend, Lahore used cloud-seeding technology from the UAE to induce artificial rain for the first time to combat air pollution, but most research has found that only prolonged and heavy rain really makes an impact. A brief drizzle over smaller areas in the city might bring down some suspended soot and sulphate particles, but even as the chief minister of Punjab is spending money on 80-year-old technology, there is multiple construction work going on across the city — underpasses, flyovers, not to mention private housing societies that keep popping up like smallpox.

Yes, Pakistan's carbon emissions don't deserve the climate change backlash, but our smog problems have more to do with city planning and public policy. Karachi doesn't have proper public transport, the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad have more expressways than buses. And Lahore. Here's the thing about Lahore: even at the height of Covid, the government was allowing show-rooms to display new four-wheel drives and luxury vehicles. Even in the years of a respiratory pandemic we were putting vehicles on the streets that burn through exponentially more petrol and diesel. The Ring Road, the road-widening projects, the thinning green belts, these are all policies meant to facilitate private vehicles.

Lahore, and much of Pakistan's approach to smog, has been like an arsonist who also works for the fire brigade. The coal-burning brick kilns keep getting pushed out further past the suburbs — though you wouldn't even need so many brick kilns if you could press pause on the construction work for a sec-

ond — the annual crop burning keeps being heavily penalised, the emissions coming from India have been taken up at a diplomatic level, but things seem to be getting worse, not better.

Pakistan's Environmental Impact Assessment authority and the National Clean Air Policy are as stagnant as the air in Lahore.

At some point we're going to have to accept that we are emitting enough pollutants within the city limits to bring us to death's door, just a little faster with all the roadwork and luxury cars.

School and market closures are not sustainable solutions. Neither is declaring a smog emergency every month.

Implementation of a two-day work-from-home policy and wearing N95 masks can be sustainable, but perhaps the smartest thing so far was said by a high court judge advising the government to provide electric motorcycles for their own staff to reduce some emissions.

Just 25 years ago, in 1998, Beijing declared war on air pollution. The city was dominated by coal combustion and motor vehicles. Beijing focused on getting rid of coal-fired technology and on cleaner bio-organic fuels, industrial re-zoning and minimising pollutants such as carbon monoxide and sulphur dioxide. None of that would have been possible without a comprehensive air management system and strict environmental law enforcement. Even Delhi banned construction work this November. China, India, Bangladesh have looked into subsidised electric vehicles, more public transport, new brick kiln technologies and regulating construction sites. These are all policy matters to address structural problems. Artificial rain can't wash away bad city planning. -- Courtesy Dawn

Quaid-i-Azam believed in serving people: Governor

Independent Report
LAHORE: Punjab Governor Muhammad Balighur Rahman said on Saturday that Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah was a great thinker and politician, who believed in serving people. He was a sagacious and visionary leader, and under his able leadership, the workers Pakistan Movement sacrificed their lives for establishment of an independent Islamic state, he added.

The governor was addressing a prize-distribution ceremony, organised for the students, who had won the speech contests, held in connection with the Quaid-i-Azam Day observance here at Aiwani Karkunan Tehreek-e-Pakistan. A large number of students

participated in the speech competitions, organized by Idara-e-Nazriya Pakistan and Idara Tehreek-e-Pakistan, in collaboration with Directorate of Electronic Media and Publications, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

The governor said that the leadership of Quaid-i-Azam had become the means of creation of Pakistan and "today we are breathing in free atmosphere". He said, "Quaid-i-Azam was a great human being, from whose life we can learn a lot. He was a true human being and his opponents also testified to the fact. He was a fair and courageous man, who always believed in the rule of law."

Balighur Rahman said that establishment of a

separate state for Muslims on the basis of the Two-Nation Theory was a right decision of our elders. Seeing the treatment of Muslims in Indian Illegally Occupied Kashmir and other parts of India today, we should thank Allah Almighty that we are free and residents of an independent country. Quaid-i-Azam wanted to make Pakistan a cradle of Islam, he said and advised students, "We should stay away from elements which spread hatred and despair. MA Jinnah believed in constructive politics and we should follow in his footsteps." Idara Nazriya-e-Pakistan and Directorate of Electronic Media and Publications deserve congratulations for organising elocution competitions among students, he added.



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Haji Ghulam Ali and Brig. Malik Nasir Ali Awan addressing the 28th Annual Parents Day of Garrison Cadet College Kohat.

Quality education played pivotal role in country's progress: Governor

HYDERABAD (APP): The Governor Sindh, Muhammad Kamran Tessori on Saturday said that quality education always played a fundamental and pivotal role in the progress of any nation.

Addressing the 27th Parents Day at Cadet College Sanghar, Tessori appreciated the performance of the college's teachers and students in securing the top positions in the board exams.

Chairman and Members of the Board of Governors, the college's Principal, military and government officers, parents and notable

persons attended the event.

Tessori also praised the extracurricular activities which were being organized by the college.

The Governor also appreciated the Pakistan Navy for imparting quality education through its colleges in Sindh and the country's coastal belts.

Earlier, the cadets presented a guard of honour to the Governor in addition to staging a parade, PT show, gymnastics, tiger squad drill, horse show and tent packing.

The Governor also distributed awards among the best-performing cadets.

CM chairs meeting to discuss issues faced by public sector varsities

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Chief Minister, Justice Retired Syed Arshad Hussain Shah here on Saturday chaired a meeting to discuss issues being faced by public sector universities of the province.

Concerned caretaker provincial ministers, administrative secretaries of relevant provincial departments, the Chairman Higher Education Commission and other high-ups attended the meeting.

The participants discussed in detail the financial issues and administrative matters of the public sector

universities and reviewed the various proposals to steer these universities out of current financial crunches.

Both the provincial government and Higher Education Commission expressed their commitment to work jointly to address the financial and administrative issues being faced by public sector universities.

It was agreed that the government's grant to the universities would be subject to their improved financial discipline. The meeting also decided to complete the ongoing process for the appointment of vice-

chancellors in public sector universities as soon as possible.

The participants concurred with the proposal to merge university campuses having lower enrollments and introduce courses in line with the demand of the modern market and to ensure the implementation of an improved educational process as an essential service in higher educational institutions.

Addressing the meeting, caretaker CM highlighted the need to have a comprehensive and all-time solution to address the financial issues of government universities in the province.



LAHORE: Punjab Governor Balighur Rahman is addressing the speech competition ceremony in connection with Quaid-i-Azam Day at Nazaria-i-Pakistan Trust.

Pak Army establishes high-quality educational institution in N. Waziristan

PESHAWAR (APP): In an effort to uplift education in the deprived region of Sarbuzi in North Waziristan, the Pakistani military has inaugurated the Muhammad Model School, bringing top-notch educational facilities to children who have long lacked basic educational resources, officials sources said on Saturday.

Emphasizing the commitment to excellence, the Pakistani military ensures the establishment of the Muhammad Model School aligns with the highest educational standards.

For an extended period, children in the Sarbuzi region faced a lack of fundamental educational facilities. In response, the Pakistan Army extended support to establish the Muhammad Model School, aiming to adorn the children of Sarbuzi with the ornaments of education.

The Muhammad

Model School boasts the latest amenities, adorned with educational credentials. It provides students with the best growth opportunities, featuring state-of-the-art facilities for both male and female students.

To familiarize students with basic sciences, a well-equipped library is available, offering interesting books for exploration. Additionally, the school provides educational videos and documentaries, and has installed smart TVs to engage and captivate the students. To boost morale, the school offers free uniforms, stationery, and captivating books through school bags, ensuring students have the necessary tools for learning.

The school adopts the educational system of advanced nations and imparts Islamic and traditional moral values to students.

CM lays foundation of Karimabad underpass

KARACHI (APP): The Caretaker Sindh Chief Minister Justice (Retd), Maqbool Baqar performed the ground-breaking ceremony for the underpass being constructed at Karimabad.

The Karimabad underpass is being constructed for Rs1.35 million, its length is 1080 meters and its width is 6.1 meters. The project would be completed within 24 months.

The underpass project has been launched by KDA. The CM directed DG KDA to keep monitoring its quality and progress so that the project could be completed on time. The chief minister said that the project would help to reduce traffic congestion in the area.

KP Food Safety & Halal Food Authority raided different localities

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Food Safety and Halal Food Authority raided different localities in Peshawar and Haripur on the complaints received by the food safety teams during open kitchen held at Peshawar and Haripur, respectively.

The teams of the FS&HFA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa raided kebab shops on Charsadda Road in Peshawar. 600 kg of non-standard kebabs were exported and destroyed, with heavy fines imposed, a spokesman for the FS&HFA said.

He said 2000 kg of hazardous pickles were also seized from a warehouse after receiving a tip-off for warehouse

sales, and further action was initiated as per the Food Safety Act. The school canteens and kebab shops located on Kohat Road were also checked, a spokesman for the Food Authority said.

The Haripur Food Safety Team inspects biscuit and foodstuff factories in Hattar Industrial Estate, and improvement notices have also been issued to the factories on the principles of hygiene, a spokesman said.

The adulteration mafia must be eradicated by all means, Director General Food Authority Shafiqullah Khan told a media person after quick action from the officials and food inspectors.

ECP Sindh receives in all 1405 nomination papers so far

KARACHI (APP): The Provincial Election Commission of Sindh has said that a total of 1405 nomination papers have been received so far from Karachi Division for the upcoming general elections in 2024, to be held on February 8.

According to a spokesman for ECP Sindh, out of 1405 nomination papers, 333 forms had been received for 22 seats in the National Assembly and 1072 forms for 47 seats in the Provincial Assembly.



KARACHI: Sindh Minister for Education Mrs Rana Hussain addressing the Inter Boards Coordination Commission (IBCC) 1st Annual Conference 2023 at Muhammad Ali Jinnah University.

Foolproof security arrangements for Quaid Day, Charismas ordered

KARACHI (APP): The Caretaker Sindh Minister for Home and Prisons, Brig. @ Haris Nawaz, issued a set of directives to the police and other LEAs on Saturday to ensure foolproof security arrangements for the celebrations planned in connection with the birth anniversary of the father of the nation, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, and the festival of Christmas.

While issuing a directive to IGP Sindh, he said that the police should remain fully vigilant to thwart any nefarious design of miscreant elements. He directed that foolproof

security should be ensured around Mazar-e-Quaid, churches, worship places, shopping areas, markets, hotels, restaurants, parks, and other recreational sites in all districts of the province by exploiting all available resources.

"All district SSPs are to personally visit the security places and brief the deputied personnel about the necessary measures by keeping high alert security intact. SSPs should also make an audit of on-duty security personnel, especially around churches and Christian-populated areas," he added.

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Minister for Information and Culture Amir Mir visited the Sundas Foundation here on Saturday and inquired after the thalassaemia and other blood disorder patients.

On arrival, he was welcomed by foundation's president Muhammad Yasin and briefed about blood transfusion facilities and operational mechanisms. The minister engaged with the children and distributed meals and gifts among children, affected by thalassaemia. He also took part in a Christmas cake-cutting ceremony and distributed gifts among

PU food festival concludes

LAHORE (APP): Punjab University (PU) organized cycling, football, cricket and tug-of-war competitions for children on the second day of the Family Food Festival at Club's Lawn here on Saturday.

According to a spokesperson for the university, stalls of various items of food, drinks and garments were set up in the festival.

On the second day, Dean Faculty of Economics, Business and Administrative Sciences Prof Dr Mumtaz Anwar Chaudhry, Chairman Club Committee Dr Munawar Iqbal, teachers' families and children were present. In his address, Dr Munawar Iqbal said that the aim of the festival was to provide the best entertainment environment to teachers and their families.

He said that the family food festival provided an opportunity to teachers' families and children to get together.

Amir visits Sundas Foundation, distributes gifts among children

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FAISALABAD: Leader of Pakistan Muslim League (N) Raja Raiz submitting his nomination papers to RO to contest the upcoming General Election, in City.

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patients. He commended the Sundas Foundation for its remarkable 26-year dedication to providing free blood donations for individuals grappling with blood disorders. The foundation extends its services to thalassaemia patients across a broad spectrum, from infancy to 45 years, ensuring a consistent and timely blood supply while garnering crucial support from the government, Minister Amir Mir emphasised the importance of raising awareness about thalassaemia, advocating for premarital thalassaemia tests and discouraging cousin marriages.

Killer of 50 people killed in police encounter

LAHORE (Online): Terrorist behind killings of 50 people and attack on ISI office Faisalabad has been killed in police encounter along with his accomplice.

According to CTD authorities intelligence based raid was conducted in the area of Chinoti. The terrorist put up resistance during the operation. Both sides exchanged firing and Ghazanfar Nadim and his accomplice were killed. The efforts are underway to identify the accomplice.



LAHORE: Caretaker Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi being briefed by officials of FWO regarding under construction project of Lady Willingdon Hospital.

Tight security arrangements for Christmas

FAISALABAD (APP): The Police Department has deputed over 4,000 personnel to provide foolproof security cover to Christians' worship places for Christmas, here being celebrated on Sunday and Monday December 24-25, 2023 City Police Officer (CPO) Captain (Retired) Muhammad Ali Zia said here Saturday that 214 special pickets would also be erected at entry and exit points of the district to provide tight security to the Christian community and their churches.

He said that 4289 police officials and officers would perform security duty on Sunday.

Anti-encroachment operation enters 4th day

LAHORE (APP): In an effort to clear Lahore of encroachments, the district administration's anti-encroachment operations were carried out at four various points of the city while 98 individuals were arrested and 70 shops, restaurants were sealed during Friday's operation. Three truck-loads of material including four hand carts were impounded.

Various sheds and makeshift structures were demolished with the help of heavy machinery. Municipal Corporation Lahore (MCL), police and other departments are also taking part in the cleanup operation.

Commissioner Rafia Haider told media on Saturday that anti-encroachment operations were carried out at four various points of the city while 98 individuals were arrested and 70 shops, restaurants were sealed during Friday's operation. Three truck-loads of material including four hand carts were impounded.

Various sheds and makeshift structures were demolished with the help of heavy machinery. Municipal Corporation Lahore (MCL), police and other departments are also taking part in the cleanup operation.

850 degrees, medals awarded among students in Islamia College University

PESHAWAR (APP): The 8th convocation ceremony of Islamia College University took place, where more than 850 students from various disciplines were awarded degrees and gold medals. The ceremony included 500 girls and 350 boys students.

Distinguished guests at the event included the Provincial Minister for Higher Education, Dr Qasim Jan, who was the special guest, and the Vice Chancellor of Islamia College University, Professor Dr Gul Muhammad Khan. Former Vice Chancellor Dr Noshad, Dr Ali Muhammad, Professor Dr Inayat Ali Shah, Professor Abbas, Professor Dr Hifzullah, Registrar Dr Haroon, Senior Alumnus President Muhammad Zai, Deputy Director Admission Amir Zahoor, Provost Dr Syed Kamal, and Director Sports Ali were also present from

various departments.

Former Inspector General of Police, Ehtesham Ali Shah, and former Chancellor of the Engineering University, Iqtidar Ali Shah, also participated in the convocation. A total of 850 students received degrees during the convocation. This included 40 students awarded Ph.D. degrees, 115 students honored with gold medals, 80 students receiving MPhil degrees, and 40 students obtaining MS degrees.

This year's convocation at Islamia College witnessed the conferral of degrees to 500 female and 350 male students across various disciplines. Special guest Dr Qasim Jan, the Provincial Minister for Higher Education, expressed his delight, saying that revisiting Islamia College brought back fond memories, as he himself had been a student at this historic institution.



GILGIT: Speaker Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly Nazir Ahmad Advocate inaugurating the office of Idea Group of Company.



GILGIT: Speaker Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly Nazir Ahmad Advocate inaugurating the office of Idea Group of Company.

Finance Ministry denies delay in fund release for salaries, projects

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Finance Ministry here on Saturday categorically refuted as baseless the news item aired by a private news channel regarding a supposed delay in releasing funds for development projects and salaries.

In a rebuttal statement, the spokesperson for the ministry said that a particular news item on a private news channel regarding any delay in the release of funds for development projects and the salaries of federal government employees was baseless and false.

"It would have been appropriate for the news channel to contact the Finance Division's spokesperson before airing such news, but unfortunately this was not done," the spokesperson said.

track to meet all commitments of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) program, as evident from the smooth and successful completion of the Staff Level Agreement (SLA) of the first review, the statement added.

The statement also elaborated on the details of important fiscal highlights relating to fund availability, adding that the finance division has already released quarter 2 funds, both for current (salary pension and non-ERE) and development expenditures.

Further, the Planning, Development, and Special Initiative (PD & SI) Division has accordingly authorized funds for development expenditure to line ministries. No change has been made by the Finance Division or Planning Division in the release strategy, as wrongly

reported by the particular channel.

Moreover, the statement added that the finance division has released all Quarter 2 funds for the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), and transfer to beneficiaries is already well underway.

Similarly, all funds committed to subsidizing the power sector, in line with Circular Debt Management Plan (CDMP) requirements, have been made available by the division. Further, as per tradition, the release of salaries to the Christian community before Christmas has been ensured by the Finance Division.

The statement added that revenue collection by the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) and NTR collection by other ministries are fully on track.



ISLAMABAD: Vendors and Whole Sale traders are busy in bidding to buy Seasonal Fruits Oranges at Fruits and Vegetables Market in Federal Capital.

Economy is now showing signs of revival: S.M. Tanveer

ISLAMABAD (Online) S.M. Tanveer, Punjab's Minister for Industries and Commerce said that the government is working hard and pursuing reforms in various sectors due to which the economy is now showing some signs of revival and vowed that all possible efforts would be made to put Pakistan on track of sustainable growth. He said that a Business Facilitation Centre has been established in Punjab as a One Window Facility to automate the licenses and NOCs required for starting up or expanding businesses that would help boost business activities. He said this while addressing a dinner reception hosted by Atif Ikrām Sheikh, former President ICCI and Presidential candidate of UBG for FPCCI at his

residence.

S.M. Tanveer said that UBG has a clear vision to address the key issues of the business community, increase exports, strengthen foreign exchange reserves, and boost industrialization and this vision would be implemented after winning the upcoming elections of FPCCI to revive the economy. Ahsan Zafar Bakhari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) said that the role of FPCCI is very important in promoting the private sector in the country and assisting the government in boosting exports, encouraging foreign investment, stimulating economic activity and UBG will strengthen FPCCI to play this role effectively.

KP finance dept releases Rs 90 million for 74 TMEs

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Finance Department on Saturday released Rs90 million in funds for 74 TMEs across the province.

The finance department issued details indicating that TMA Hariapur received an order from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for up to Rs 8 million. Tehsil Ghazi in Hariapur has the second-highest order, at Rs 5 million, with Rs 4.50 million going to Dera Ismail Khan TMA.

According to the announcement, Bannu TMA has received Rs 2 million, Ghazni Khel Lacky Marwat has received Rs 1 million, and district Tank has received Rs 3.90 million.

Gold rates decline by Rs. 500

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold decreased by Rs. 500 and was sold at Rs. 219,300 on Saturday compared to its sale at Rs.219,800 on last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs. 429 to Rs.188,014 from Rs.188,443 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold went down to Rs. 172,347 from Rs. 172,740, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola and ten gram Silver remained stagnant at Rs. 2,650 and 2,271.94 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market decreased by \$2 to \$2,072 from \$2,074, the Association reported.



LAHORE: Senior Vice President Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry Zafar Mehmood Chaudhry presenting souvenir to Secretary Labour and Human Resources Punjab Naem Ghous.

Pakistan to benefit from e-commerce action plan launched in Shanghai

SHANGHAI (Online): A new business model, 'Silk Road e-commerce action plan launched here to benefit Pakistan and other BRI countries.

It will provide global consumers with a wealth of goods and services with its convenient, efficient and low-cost features, and we would like to ride the wave of it to boost bilateral trade," according to Aqeel Ahmed Chaudhry, director of the Pakistani national pavilion located in the Silk Road e-commerce cooperation pilot zone center, Pudong, Shanghai.

In a move to promote the Silk Road e-commerce as a novel business model, the government of Pudong, Shanghai, officially

released the "Action Plan for Advancing the Construction of the Silk Road E-commerce Cooperation Pilot Zone in Pudong New Area".

This initiative aims to leverage the convenience, efficiency, and cost-effectiveness of Silk Road e-commerce to offer a diverse range of products and services to consumers all around the world.

It is worth mentioning that the State Council has designated Shanghai as the pilot zone for Silk Road e-commerce cooperation on October 17, aiming at improving digital economic cooperation among countries along Belt and Road Initiative, deepening mechanism innovation, and

strengthening international cooperation.

According to the plan released last week, a comprehensive Silk Road e-commerce service system will be established by 2025, according to Gwadar Pro.

The focus will be on creating a high-quality Silk Road e-commerce cooperation pilot zone center, facilitating further trade cooperation among BRI countries through e-commerce.

Additionally, more Silk Road e-commerce national pavilions will be unveiled, with over 20 national pavilions and commodity centers expected to be established by 2025.

Punjab labour secretary, LCCI SVP discuss economic growth

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Labour and Human Resources Secretary Naem Ghous, along with Director General Labour Syeda Kulsum Hai and Director Labour Welfare Muhammad Shahid, conducted a meeting with Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) Senior Vice President Zafar Mehmood Chaudhry here on Saturday.

Focus of the discussion was on fostering a collaborative environment to enhance the growth of the business community for overall development of Pakistan.

The secretary emphasised pivotal role of the business community in progress and prosperity of the nation. He affirmed that the Punjab Labour Department was dedicated to serving as a facilitator, ensuring maximum facilities for trade and

industry. Ghous highlighted that the department has formulated policies with a vision to create a satisfied labour force capable of making optimal contributions to national growth.

Naem Ghous underlined the importance of promoting healthy labour management and industrial relations for socio-economic progress, emphasizing the fundamental role of the labour force in industrial development.

He commended the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry for its significant role in this regard and sought continued cooperation from the business community.

LCCI Senior Vice President Zafar Mehmood Chaudhry emphasized the need for trust-building between the business community and government departments.

PRA seals 13 housing colonies, 2 hotels

FAISALABAD (APP): The Punjab Revenue Authority (PRA) sealed 13 housing colonies and two hotels over non-payment of the dues.

A spokesman for the administration said on Saturday that Rs 60 million were outstanding against 13 housing colonies and two hotels, but their managers and developers failed to pay the amount despite repeated notices.

Therefore, the PRA commissioner issued orders for sealing the colonies and hotels.

Those facing action included Zamzam Hotel, National Hotel, Ideal Valley, al-Qasim Blossom View, Park View Homes, Riaz Garden Executive Block, Palm Villas, Ismail Housing Colony, Abdullah Valley, Palm Village Executive, Palm Village, Kamal Avenue City, Abdullah Block, etc., he added.



ISLAMABAD: A view of the grains loaded trucks parked in straight queue outside Floor Mills at Sector I-9 in Federal Capital.

China-Pakistan textile summit strengthens economic ties

BEIJING (APP): The China-Pakistan Textile and Apparel Executive Summit and Business Meetings were held in Kunshan, East China's Jiangsu Province, last week. At least 100 representatives from the Chinese and Pakistani governments, trade associations and textile and apparel enterprises attended the event.

In his opening speech, Deputy Mayor of Kunshan Zhang Feng noted that the year 2023 marked the 10th anniversary of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the initiation of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). As a flagship project of the Belt and Road, the CPEC has achieved significant cooperation results, particularly in the textile and apparel sector where

there is substantial complementarity and potential for collaboration between the two countries, he said.

He expressed the hope that the summit would further deepen exchanges and cooperation in the textile and apparel industry, Global Times reported. Gohar Ejaz, Federal Minister for Commerce and Industries of Pakistan emphasized Pakistan's traditional strength in textiles, citing natural conditions conducive to cotton production, a large and competitive workforce, a complete industrial chain, and favorable conditions for international market access. He highlighted the potential for joint ventures between Chinese and Pakistani enterprises to produce different products.

SCCI, Excise Office Islamabad launches vehicle verification process

PESHAWAR (APP): Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI), and Excise and Taxation Office Islamabad have launched the vehicles' physical verification process here at Chamber House, said a press release issued here on Saturday.

A large number of businessmen and citizens got their vehicles physically verified and appreciated the initiative. Excise officials including Mian Naseer, Asif Jehangir and Inman Kahut carried out physical verification of over 250 vehicles throughout the day. The initiative would help the business community and people of KP to verify their vehicles here rather than visiting Islamabad for verification.

Minister Umar Saif: SIFC timely decisions paving way to boost IT exports to \$10 bln

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication, Dr Umar Saif, on Saturday, said that the timely decisions made by the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) are yielding remarkable results and paving the way to boost Pakistan's IT exports to \$10 billion.

In a video message, the minister said, "We worked with the SIFC and the State Bank to make a significant policy intervention last month, allowing IT companies to keep 50% of their export revenue in dollars in an account in Pakistan and make their international expenses without any restrictions

from this amount." The minister said that, as a result of the government initiative, IT companies are beginning to bring their dollars back home, and the country's export revenue jumped by 14% in November, a 20% increase compared to last year.

At this rate, Dr Saif expressed hope that the country would cross \$3 billion in IT exports in a few months. "Our journey towards \$10 billion in IT export revenue is onwards and upwards," he added. The positive results are expected to attract more foreign investments, creating a ripple effect that will benefit the entire technology ecosystem, he added.



ISLAMABAD: People busy in selecting and purchasing warm coats at a vendors roadside setup.

PSM crashes last week after the sharpest decline

KARACHI (Online): Pakistan Stock Market (PSM) crashed after the sharpest decline last week, KSE 100 index decreased by 44400 points.

In the worst downturn, the index fell below the upper limits of 66,000, 65,000, 64,000, 63,000 and 62,000 points, due to which the index fell from a high of 66,100 points to a low of 61,700 points.

Due to downfall in business, more than 5 trillion rupees of investors have sunk in the market, as a result of which the total amount of capital decreased from 95 trillion rupees to 89 trillion rupees, while 64.16% share prices also decreased.

Last week, PSM was witnessed depressed for four day, during which the index lost 4670.48 points, but the index recovered by 245.56 points in one day, but due to the prevailing effects of depression, the market was seen more in the negative zone.

According to stock experts, the uncertainty regarding the general elections and the changing situation on the political horizon with each passing day is hurting the confidence of investors, due to which they are reluctant to take new positions and withdraw their hands from investments. While some local institutions and brokerage houses prefer to sell, the market appears to be in a downward trend.

ISLAMABAD: A vendor displays warm wears at his roadside setup near Aabpara market.

Pak delegation visits AiMall Tech, Shenzhen, China

BEIJING (APP): A delegation of Pakistan's Artificial Intelligence Technology Center (AITC) comprised of Director General Nadeem Ahmed, Technical Director Dr. Aminuddin Qureshi, Directors Dr. Syed Khurshid Hasnain and Kamran Qureshi had a visit to Chinese AI company, Shenzhen AiMall Tech. Co., Ltd. to discuss bilateral cooperation.

Both parties conducted in-depth discussions on various issues and future cooperation plans in the field of AI technology. Dr. Yang Heng, Chairman of AiMall, Chen Zai, Strategic Planning Director, and Ji Chuan, Technical Expert accompanied the visit.

Nadeem Ahmed analyzed the current development status of AI globally and in Pakistan, and introduced in detail the scientific research progress made by AITC in the field of AI through a video.

"So far, AITC has established multiple core artificial intelligence laboratories such as computer vision, natural language processing, machine learning and deep learning, and is committed to conducting high-quality AI technology research and development in various fields."

Dr. Yang briefly introduced the overall development, technology application, industrial layout and strategic planning of AiMall.

Rs. 560.016m fine imposed on 4,882 power pilferers

FAISALABAD (APP): The Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (FESCO) caught 4,882 power pilferers during the last 106 days, and imposed Rs. 560.016 million fine on them in various areas of the company during the ongoing special anti-power theft drive. Spokesman Tahir Sheikh said here on Saturday that over 12.288 million detection units were charged. Asumofover Rs.386.8 million was also recovered from the defaulters. He said that 4592 cases were registered against power theft in various police stations whereas the police also

arrested 3883 pilferers so far. Giving further details, he said that the FESCO teams detected electricity theft at 1551 points in Faisalabad district and imposed a fine of Rs.173.3 million on them under the head of 3841,000 million detection units.

In Jiang district, the FESCO teams caught 529 electricity thieves and imposed a fine of Rs.69.1 million under 1715,000 detection units. Similarly, 574 cases of electricity theft were detected in Bhakkar district and the company handed down the power pilferers with a fine of Rs.64.6 million.



ISLAMABAD: Visitors are taking interest in different stuff on stalls at Daman-e-Koh tourists spot in Federal Capital.

UN Security Council finally passes watered-down call for Gaza aid

Monitoring Desk
 UNITED NATIONS: Following numerous delays and intense negotiations, the UN Security Council finally adopted a significantly diluted resolution on Friday, which calls for an immediate acceleration of aid deliveries to Gaza. But it falls short of demanding an "urgent suspension of hostilities," as originally proposed in the UAE draft.

Thirteen of the 15 council members voted in favour of the resolution, with no member state voting against it.

The United States, leading the weeklong consensus negotiations, abstained due to the absence of a condemnation of Hamas. Russia also abstained, labelling the resolution as "toothless" and asserting that it permits Israel to continue military operations against the Pal-

estinians. Their abstentions, however, allowed the resolution to pass, as a negative vote by any of the five permanent UNSC members would have blocked it. The vote followed a US veto of a Russian amendment that aimed to reinstate the call for a suspension of hostilities. Ten members supported the amendment, the US opposed it, and four abstained. The resolution does not weaken Israel's control over aid deliveries to the 2.3 million people in Gaza, monitored via the Rafah crossing from Egypt and the Israeli-controlled Kerem Shalom crossing.

The softened language on a cessation of hostilities has left Arab and Muslim states frustrated, as they align with the Russian perspective that this approval effectively allows Israel to persist in attacking targets



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

France grounds plane carrying 300 Indians over 'human trafficking'

Monitoring Desk
 VATRY: A Nicaragua-bound plane carrying more than 300 Indian passengers has been grounded in France over suspected "human trafficking", authorities said on Friday.

The plane had taken off from the United Arab Emirates and was detained after an anonymous tipoff.

The aircraft carrying passengers "likely to be victims of human trafficking" was detained on Thursday, the Paris public prosecutor's office said.

The national anti-organised crime unit

JUNALCO has taken over the investigation, prosecutors said.

The prefecture in the north-eastern department of Marne said the A340, operated by Romanian company Legend Airlines, "remained grounded on the tarmac at Vatry airport following its landing" on Thursday.

Legend Air has a small fleet of four aircraft, according to the Flightradar website.

The plane had been due to refuel and was carrying 303 Indian nationals who had probably been



Yekaterina Duntsova, a former regional journalist who plans to run for Russian president in the March 2024 election, and her representatives attend a meeting with officials of the Central Election Commission to submit documents at an office in Moscow, Russia.

Stepping up tone, US says Iran 'deeply involved' in Huthi ship attacks

Monitoring Desk
 WASHINGTON: The United States on Friday accused Iran of close involvement in attacks on commercial ships by Yemen's Huthi rebels, stepping up the tone as Washington considers tougher measures including possible force.

The White House publicly released US intelligence as the Iranian-linked Yemenis persist with ship strikes they say are in solidarity with Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, where Israel is battling Hamas militants.

The White House said that Tehran's clerical state has provided drones and

Hamas and Palestinian Authority split on UN Gaza resolution

Monitoring Desk
 CAIRO: The Palestinian foreign ministry and the Islamist group Hamas issued opposing statements on Friday in response to the adoption by the United Nations Security Council of a resolution intended to help bring more humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip.

The Palestinian foreign ministry, which is part of the West Bank-based Palestinian Authority, called the resolution "a step in the right direction," and said it would help "end the aggression, ensure the arrival of aid and protect the Palestinian people."

31 killed in Tamil Nadu floods

Monitoring Desk
 CHENNAI: At least 31 people were killed in floods and heavy rain in India's southern state of Tamil Nadu this week, a top federal minister said on Friday, as rescuers struggled to reach scores still stranded in high waters.

Heavy rains have paralysed several districts of the state, inundating entire neighbourhoods, roads and railway tracks, days after a cyclone hit India's south-eastern coast, causing widespread damage.

"The (toll) number could change," federal Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman told reporters, adding that more than 40,000 people have been rescued so far and efforts are underway to reach those still stranded. The state is one of

Poland hopes truckers dispute can be solved

Monitoring Desk
 WARSAW: Poland's deputy infrastructure minister said on Friday that he hoped truckers' protests on the border with Ukraine could be solved before the end of the year.

Polish drivers have been blocking several crossings with Ukraine since Nov. 6, demanding the European Union reinstate a system whereby Ukrainian companies need permits to operate in the bloc and the same for European truckers to enter Ukraine.

"We had a long meeting with my (Ukrainian) counterpart... today we are agreeing on the last details that will lead to the final agreement," Polish deputy infrastructure minister Pawel Gancarz said during a press conference in Kyiv.

Ukraine says it shot down three Russian fighter-bombers in Kherson

Monitoring Desk
 KYIV: Ukraine's military said it has shot down three Russian fighter-bombers in the south of the country. Air force commander Mykola Oleschchuk said the Su-34 jets were downed around noon. In his announcement he noted a message found on a downed Russian drone which read "Die, bitches". "Great idea! Here is our response!" he said on Telegram.

In his nightly address on Friday, President Volodymyr Zelensky thanked the soldiers who shot down the Russian fighters in the Kherson region. "It's the gain of our Air Force and the direct action of the Odesa Anti-Aircraft Missile



A person lights a candle as people gather at a memorial during a vigil following a shooting at one of Charles University's buildings in Prague, Czech Republic.

Shock, tears as Prague reels from university shooting

Monitoring Desk
 PRAGUE: The mourners huddled in small groups, many tearful or visibly shocked, as they gathered Friday to pay their respects to victims of the shootings at Prague's Charles University.

Students gathered at the small memorial as flurries of snow and rain took turns with the winter sunshine. The day before, a 24-year-old student opened fire at the Faculty of Arts, killing 13 people inside the school before shooting himself dead.

He also wounded 25 people, one of whom died in hospital, bringing the total toll to 14. All lights were on inside the faculty on Friday morning, with police guards still deployed outside the building sealed off with police tape.

Across the street in Prague's historic centre, not far from the iconic 14th-century Charles Bridge, dozens of candles were lit mostly by young mourners in the nearby large square.

"I have come to pay tribute to the dead students, especially because this could have happened to anyone," technical university student Antonin Volavka told AFP after lighting his candle.

"It hit me really hard yesterday," said secondary school student Julie Grave, who added that she hoped to study at the faculty some day. "I mourned with the whole family and I guess I'll be like that for a long time," she said.

Initial DR Congo results trickle in after chaotic elections

Monitoring Desk
 KINSHASA: Initial results from a presidential poll in DR Congo began to trickle in on Friday after shambling elections spread over several days which the authorities deemed successful.

The central African nation's electoral commission, Ceni, announced results for Congolese voters living in South Africa, Belgium, France, Canada and the United States.

The results represent a minuscule proportion of the overall votes cast, but they indicated a provisional lead for incumbent President Felix Tshisekedi, who is running for a second term.

Poor but mineral-rich Democratic Republic of Congo held four concurrent polls on Wednesday to elect the president, lawmakers for national and provincial assemblies as well as local councillors.

Massive delays and bureaucratic chaos marred the vote and some polling booths were unable to open at all. Ceni extended voting in some areas until Thursday. In a statement, the electoral commission said that no polling station was authorised to open on Friday.

However, voting continued in some places on Friday, according to officials, especially in the more remote areas of the vast country the size of western Europe.



Migrants board a plane bound to southern Mexico as part of a repatriation flight to their countries, at the Piedras Negras International Airport, in Piedras Negras, Coahuila state, Mexico.

Nagorno-Karabakh dissolution not valid, says Armenian separatist leader

Monitoring Desk
 KARABAKH: The leader of Armenian separatists, who were ousted from the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan this year, on Friday said his previous decree ordering the dissolution of separatist institutions was not valid.

The statement appeared to undo a historic move by the separatists to dissolve the disputed territory that was at the centre of two costly wars between Armenia and Azerbaijan in 2020 and in the 1990s.

Lack of Arctic tankers puts Russia's LNG development dreams on ice

Monitoring Desk
 MOSCOW: Russia is hoping its shipments of liquefied natural gas (LNG) will offset a sharp fall in pipeline gas exports to Europe, but a shortage of gas tankers and sanctions hold back its plans, analysts and industry sources said.

Russia wants to boost its share of the LNG market to 20% by 2030 from 8% now, but a force majeure declaration by top producer Novatek (NVTK.MM) over LNG supplies from its future Arctic LNG 2 project due to sanctions shows the hurdles it faces.

Firms impose extra fees as Red Sea attacks hit global shipping

Monitoring Desk
 OSLO: Some of the world's largest shipping firms, including Maersk and CMA CGM, will impose extra charges after they re-routed ships in response to attacks on vessels in the Red Sea, as worries about disruption to global trade grow.

The surcharges, designed to cover longer voyages around Africa compared with routes via the Suez Canal, will add to rising costs for sea transport since Yemen's Houthis started targeting vessels.

Maersk and CMA CGM were the first to introduce the fees, followed by Germany's Hapag-Lloyd later on Friday.

The three are among leading shipping lines to have suspended the passage of vessels through the Red Sea that connects with the Suez Canal, the quickest sea route between Asia and Europe.

Instead, they are directing ships around the Cape of Good Hope at the southern tip of Africa, adding about 10 days to a journey that would normally take about 27 days from China to northern Europe.

Ukraine and Poland set to work on resolving 'problematic' issues

Monitoring Desk
 KYIV: Ukraine and Poland said on Friday they were ready to try to resolve "problematic" issues in their relations, suffering especially by a Polish truckers' blockade of border crossings.

The pledge emerged from a meeting in Kyiv between Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba and Polish counterpart Radoslaw Sikorski, who was on his first official trip abroad.

Ukraine has counted

India firm denies tampering with tests in probe of cough syrup deaths

Monitoring Desk
 NEW DELHI: India's Maiden Pharmaceuticals, whose cough syrups have been linked to the deaths of children in Gambia, on Saturday denied it had tampered with test samples or bribed officials to do so, as alleged in a complaint under investigation by local health officials.

An investigator with the state of Haryana's Food and Drug Administration told Reuters.



Carla Antonelli protests showing red gloves representing hands stained with blood during a vote to pass a proposal to strip back protections for transgender people at the regional parliament in Madrid, Spain.

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UN adopts diluted resolution on more aid to Gaza without calling for ceasefire

UNITED NATIONS (APP): After days of intense negotiations and many delays, the UN Security Council adopted a watered-down resolution Friday calling for boosting aid deliveries to traumatized civilians in war-torn Gaza but without the original call for an "urgent suspension of hostilities" between Israel and Hamas.

The vote in the 15-member Council on the revised UAE-drafted resolution was 13 votes in favour to none against. The US and Russia abstained for entirely different reasons.

It followed a US veto of a Russian amendment that would have restored the call for a suspension of hostilities. That vote was 10 members in favour, the US against and four abstentions. The resolution, among other elements, demanded immediate, safe and unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance at scale directly to the Palestinian civilian population throughout the Gaza Strip.

The revised text was negotiated during a week of diplomacy by the United States, the United Arab

Emirates on behalf of Arab nations and others.

The agreement came amid global outrage over a rising Gaza death toll in 11 weeks of Israeli bombardments and a worsening humanitarian crisis in the Palestinian enclave.

Council members met behind closed doors on Thursday to discuss a revised draft resolution, then delayed the vote so they could consult their capitals on the significant changes, aimed at avoiding a US veto.

A new text with a few minor revisions was circulated Friday morning. The vote, initially scheduled for Monday, has been delayed every day since then. Rather than watered down, US Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield described the resolution as "strong" and said it "is fully supported by the Arab group that provides them what they feel is needed to get humanitarian assistance on the ground."

But it was devoid of its key provision with teeth — a call for "the urgent suspension of hostilities to allow safe and unhindered humanitarian access, and for urgent steps.



President Dr. Arif Alvi addressing the Climate Change Conference by Rotary International District 3271 at Karachi.

President for changing attitudes to mitigate impacts of climate change

KARACHI (APP): President Dr. Arif Alvi on Saturday while stressing the need for changing attitudes to mitigate growing impacts of the climate change, said that everyone had to play his role in overcoming the effects of climate change.

He said that the people avoid to plant a tree outside of their houses and trees were cut down. He emphasized, 'Attitudes need to be changed.'

While addressing a two-day Climate Change Conference and Awards - 2023 organized by the Rotary International District 3271 at Bahria Auditorium, the President said that the human could not be separated from global warming.

He said that Pakistan put in a lot of efforts and started working on 10 billion tsunami programme to protect its environment. He said that they had visited a number of schools and planted saplings along with schoolchildren and made them aware of the effects of climate change.

Alvi advised the people living in multi-floor highrise to plant saplings in clay-pots and at least grow vegetables in their galleries for a better planet.

He said that the citizens specially of Karachi should be conscious of climate change effects as 500 million gallons of contaminated water was drained out in the sea on daily basis. He said that the people must conserve water and electricity and use alternative energy specially the solar system.

Speaking on education, health, skill development and technology, the President said that 20.8 million children were out-of-schools in the country.

He said that the country needed a big number of schools to put these out-of-school children to schools as technology could bridge this gap. He said that the children could be taught through the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI).

Alvi said that there was a shortage of teachers in the country which needed around 900000 teachers. He said that 90 percent failure was witnessed in the drug rehabilitation process. The President also highlighted the increasing issue of mental stress in almost every home. While talking about the participation of the woman, he said that the country could not develop without the empowerment of the women.

SC office returns PTI founder's appeal against Toshakhana case sentence

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Supreme Court of Pakistan office on Saturday returned the founder PTI's appeal against conviction in Toshakhana case with objections. According to the SC office objections, papers annexed with the appeal were incomplete. "The appeal can be submitted in the court with relevant documents by January 06."

The PTI founder filed appeal in the apex court seeking suspension of the sentence in Toshakhana case.

The petitioner pleaded to the court to declare the Islamabad High Court's decision as void.

"The sentence in Toshakhana case has already suspended. The high court only suspended the conviction but not announced complete decision," petitioner argued.

"The election commission taking advantage of the mistake issued notification of disqualification of the former PTI chairman," according to petition.

"The elections are coming closer, former PTI chairman is also former prime minister of the country," the petition read. "The leader of the largest party of the could not be kept out of the elections," petitioner said.

"The supreme court should suspend Toshakhana sentence so as he could participate in the election," according to the plea.

The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Thursday dismissed a petition by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder, seeking suspension of the trial court's verdict in the Toshakhana case.

On August 5, a trial court sentenced former prime minister to three years in prison after he was found guilty of graft in the Toshakhana case.

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KARACHI: Caretaker Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Hon'ble Aneeq Ahmed inaugurates Qamar un Nisa Healthcare Facility at Al-Nisa Community Centre.

Aneeq inaugurates Qamar-un-Nisa Healthcare facility

KARACHI (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed, Saturday, inaugurated Qamar-un-Nisa Healthcare Facility at the Al-Nisa Community Center Karachi. The launch of the health facility was made on the eve of the Golden Jubilee of Tanzeem-e-Falah-e-Khawateen Pakistan, according to a statement issued here.

Speaking at the inauguration ceremony the minister lauded the efforts of Qamar-un-Nisa Qamar, a social worker and an MNA, and said that she is the inspiration for all of us as she has devoted 50 years of her life to service the society, particularly needy and destitute people.

Every citizen should strive for the betterment of society following the footsteps of Qamar un Nisa who striven for the cause of humanity. The minister lauded Tanzeem-e-Falah-e-Khawateen Pakistan's endeavour to open a healthcare facility and urged that more such facilities were needed to ensure the provision of health facilities to the deserving masses.

PML-N expresses concern over court's decision in cipher case

LAHORE (Online): PML-N leader Malik Ahmad Khan while expressing grave concern over court's decision in cipher case, Supreme Court announced the decision of cipher case on Friday. PTI leveled allegation against a country. The court remarked official act does not apply to this matter.

He remarked PTI is very keen in closed envelope. Qasim Soori while sitting on chair of deputy speaker waved closed envelope saying we are sending this envelope to chief justice.

A brief cabinet meeting was held on cipher. The past government did politics making cipher basis.

He held several questions hit the mind following the court's decision in cipher case. Supreme Court announced the decision of cipher case on Friday. PTI leveled allegation against a country. The court remarked official act does not apply to this matter.

"PTI is much fond of closed envelope. May be 190 million pounds are there in envelope or he disposes the assemblies through closed envelope, he said this while addressing a press conference here along with PML-N leader Uzma Bokhari here Saturday.

He said we respect courts. But court's decision remains confined to bail.



ISLAMABAD: Iranian Ambassador Reza Amiri-Moghaddam meeting with Amir Jamaat-e-Islami Sirajul Haq.

Parvez Elahi's lawyer taken into custody

LAHORE (INP): Former Punjab chief minister Chaudhry Parvez Elahi's lawyer Amir Saeed Raan was taken into custody by unidentified people in Gujranwala. Amir Saeed Raan's brother Adam Saeed claimed Raan had to file nomination papers of Chaudhry Parvez Elahi for general elections 2024. He was taken into custody by unidentified people. Adam Saeed demanded authorities for recovery of his brother as early as possible. It may be recalled that about 10 months ago, Raan was taken away by some people.

Waving cipher at a political rally historical fact: Sharjeel

KARACHI (INP): PPP central leader Sharjeel Inam Memon has stated that the cipher saga was a drama staged for personal political gains that had led to the May 9 events, as senior party leader Sharjeel Inam Memon blasted the PTI founding chairman for his actions. "Don't make the nation's villain a hero," the PPP leader said and added that the real political years had spent years in prison and faced much tougher situation, but didn't compromise on their principles.

He said that the parties using their constitutional right were declared traitors by using the cipher drama and the youth had been misguided — a reference to the tactics used by the PTI leadership before and after passage of no-confidence motion.

Memon said they had great respect for the top court judges, but expressed his reservations over the remarks passed and observations given by the three-member bench which granted bail to the PTI founding chairman and the

then former foreign minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi.

Addressing a press conference in Karachi, he rejected the impression that the PTI former chairman was an important political leader and reminded media persons at a press conference in Karachi how he had been installed through the manipulated elections in 2018.

Waving the cipher at a political rally was a historical fact, he said and asked whether the leaders of large political parties were immune from the Constitution and law. Memon also recalled how the PTI founding chairman was welcomed at the Supreme Court by the then chief justice and noted that he had been and still was a favourite [ladla].

While noting that the judgment was public property which could be commented upon, he criticised the judges for declaring the PTI founding chairman as a big political leader.

"Those for whom rallies are 'arranged' are not big leaders."



QUETTA: Superintendent of Police (SP) Traffic Quetta, Malik Muhammad Javed Ahmed presents souvenir to DIG Police Quetta, Abdul Hayee Baloch during meeting held at his office in Quetta.



KARACHI: Families from Baluchistan Province holds protest in the favor of their demands in Provincial Capital.

Secretary Health directs to constitute Task Force to launch a campaign against illegal medical stores

Independent Report
QUETTA: The meeting of the Provincial Quality Board was held under the Chairmanship of the Secretary Health/ Chairman Quality Control Board, Abdullah Khan. The board members, the Additional Secretary Health Arif Khan, Achakzai, Professor Umar Jan, Mueez Khan Secretary QCB, and the law officer attended. For advice in the cases, the technical experts were cooped to provide input and advice.

It has been decided to regularly hold meetings of the Quality Control Board for regulating the drugs and medicine in the province in order to ensure quality for the health of the people.

In the last two months, the Quality Control Board has held sessions twice.

Cases were placed before the Board and disposed off in accordance with the Drugs Act 1976.

The Health Department Balochistan is committed to ensure institutional regulation of the drugs supply and sale in Balochistan to prevent the sale of illegal, spurious, and unregistered drugs.

The Secretary Health has directed to constitute Task Force under the Chairmanship of the Chief Drug Inspector to launch a campaign against illegal medical stores and medicine in Balochistan. The Task Force will supervise the work of the drug inspectors. Moreover, the Secretary Health has already tasked the District Health Committee to check the performance of the Drug Inspectors each month so that they improve efficiency.

SHC nominates six judges for election appellate tribunals
KARACHI (INP): Sindh High Court has constituted tribunals to hear appeals of election candidates against returning officers decisions on Saturday.

The high court has nominated six judges for appellate tribunals.

The court announced that Justice Arshad Hussain, Justice Khadim Hussain Tunio and Justice Adnan Karim will hear appeals in Karachi and Hyderabad.

Justice Irshad Ali and Justice Zulfikar Sanghi will hear appeals in Sukkur, while Justice Saleem Jessar will preside over the tribunal in Larkana to hear appeals about the ROs decisions on nomination papers of election candidates.

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Friday revised the nomination papers schedule for the general elections to be held on February 08, 2024.

The election body extended the date of submission of nomination papers by two days and announced that the nomination papers can be submitted upto December 24.

Following the nomination paper submission, the preliminary list of the candidates will be published on December 24.

The returning officers will scrutinize the candidates' nomination papers from December 25 till December 30. The polling will be held on February 08, 2024. It is pertinent to mention here that the Pakistan Muslim League- Nawaz (PML-N) wrote a letter to the ECP requesting to extend the date of submitting nomination papers by two days.

LAHORE: Central Secretary Information PML-N Marriyum Aurangzeb alongwith Uzma Bukhari addressing a Press conference.

FIA apprehends Baig for issuing counterfeit degrees

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Investigation Authority (FIA) has apprehended Muhammad Amin Baig in Sector F-10 for allegedly distributing fraudulent degrees under the guise of The Open International University, Sri Lanka.

The FIA spokesperson stated here Saturday that Inspector Kashmir Riaz and Ehtasham Gondal, members of the FIA team, found printed degrees, certificates, fake university stamps and admission forms in the possession of the accused. Investigations are going on with more revelations expected. Amin ran a fraudulent international council, providing MD degrees for \$1,000 and PhD degrees for \$1,500.

Amin's arrest was ordered by Deputy Director of Anti-Corruption Circle, Islamabad, Afzal Khan Niazi. Baig was conducting his unlawful operations through different agents.

MQM-P, PPP, JI leaders filed nomination papers

KARACHI (INP): Leaders of various political parties filed their nomination papers to contest the general elections 2024 for different Constituencies of the National and provincial assemblies. Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami Karachi, Hafiz Naqem-ur-Rehman filed nomination papers for NA-246, NA-250 and Sindh Assembly constituency PS-129 Karachi. PPP leader Saleem Mandviwala filed his nomination paper to contest the general elections 2024 from National Assembly constituency NA-241 at the Assistant Commissioner office, here. Senior Deputy

Convener Muttahida Qaumi Movement Pakistan, Dr. Farooq Sattar submitted nomination papers for NA-240 Karachi. MQM leader Arshad Vohra also filed nomination papers for NA-240 Karachi.

Talking to media, Dr. Farooq Sattar said that his party is going to field candidates in the election from all over Sindh province. MQM-P leader Mustafa Kamal filed nomination papers for NA-247 and NA-242 Karachi. MQM-P Leader Khawaja Izhar ul Hasan submitted nomination papers to contest the election for NA-247.