

Independent

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ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar meets a group of Envoys from African and Asian Countries.

PM vows befitting response in case of 2019-like aggression from India

Says no one should be delusional about Pakistan's response as it had an entire defence mechanism in place to protect its people; Reiterates government's resolve to respond to any threat, regardless of whether there were elections in the country or not.

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Monday warned that with a renewed determination and defence capability, Pakistan would befittingly respond if India resorted to any 2019-like aggression, ahead of the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. "Pakistan will exactly do the same as it did in 2019. We will hit their planes. We will respond in the same coin... Neither our bullets nor determination are old. Our bullets are new and our determination is quite renewed and fresh," the prime minister said in the podcast with a digital media channel.

He said that no one should be delusional about Pakistan's response as it had an entire defence mechanism in place to protect its people. He viewed that till the resolution of the Kashmir dispute, the potential for

conflict would continue to exist and anything could trigger any sort of exchange. Coming to the upcoming general elections in Pakistan, he said the threat of terrorism existed especially in the southern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and certain areas of Balochistan, posing significant vulnerabilities to candidates and their campaigns. However, the situation had not reached a level to question the legitimacy of the entire electoral process.

He reiterated the government's resolve to respond to any threat, regardless of whether there were elections in the country or not.

Asked about the Senate resolution passed recently calling for the postponement of the elections, the prime minister said, "I do not see any legal implications as the Senate resolution is not mandatory."

Zardari vows to provide sui gas to Dera Bugti if elected

No one can hamper Balochistan to progress under PPP leadership: Sarfaraz Bugti

DERA BUGTI (APP): Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Co-Chairman and former president Asif Ali Zardari on Tuesday vowed that his party after coming to power would lay a pipeline in Dera Bugti to provide Sui gas to the local people.

If voted to power, the PPP would also ensure the share of local people in gas fields and ample employment opportunities for them, he said while addressing a public meeting here through video link.

Zardari, who was unable to travel to Dera Bugti due to bad weather, promised that he would soon visit the area and meet the workers.

He said that he was well aware of the problems of the people of Dera Bugti in general and Balochistan in particular, and would take concrete steps to resolve

them.

The provision of jobs and the establishment of a best hospital in Dera Bugti were part of the PPP's election, he reiterated.

Zardari appreciated Sarfaraz Bugti, who joined the PPP recently and the party workers for organizing such a successful gathering in the cold weather conditions.

Meanwhile Pakistan Peoples Party leader and former caretaker interior minister Sarfaraz Bugti on Tuesday said that no one could hamper the Balochistan province - the land of martyrs, to develop and prosper under the leadership of PPP.

His party was fully determined to bring about concrete changes in the country if voted to power, he said while addressing a public gathering in Dera Bugti.

Former Balochistan chief minister Sanaullah Zehri, along with other prominent figures were present in the meeting, which was also addressed by PPP Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari via video link.

Bugti said the people of Balochistan had made unparalleled sacrifices for the restoration of peace in the region. The PPP would never let them down as it was the party of martyrs and its leadership was the real heirs of those who had laid down their lives for democracy.

"We feel the pain of the families of martyrs and will never leave them alone," he added.

Bugti offered his gratitude to the people of area for reposing trust in the PPP leadership, which was evident from their profound participation in the meeting.

Islamabad protest dharna of BYC being supported by facilitators of India

Independent Report

QUETTA: The caretaker Provincial Minister for Information, Jan Achakzai has charged that those involved in the facilitation of the protest dharna being staged by Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC) in Islamabad.

He said that those involved in the facilitation of India and terrorists can't develop Balochistan.

He said that no one speak about those innocent people martyred in different incidents of terrorism in Balochistan. He said that some 230 people were martyred by the terrorists in Balochistan last year.

This and similar other views were expressed by the Minister Information while addressing a hurriedly called press conference at the Quetta Press club on Tuesday.

The Minister Information said that one document regime policy has already been enforced in the best interest of the country and its people. He said that it was the decision of state of Pakistan which was enforced in form of the one document regime. Jan Achakzai asserted that no one can cross the border either from Pakistan or Afghanistan side without the passport. He said that more than 60 per cent Afghan refugees are included in the protest sit-in being staged in Chaman.

Those part of the Chaman protest are opposing the one document regime policy for their interest as they don't want it to be enforced, the Minister Information asserted.



RAWALPINDI: A view of meeting of Trilateral Defence Collaboration between Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkiye.

Pakistan to host 2-day global health security summit today

ISLAMABAD (INP): A two-day global health security summit is commencing in Islamabad on Tuesday (today) with the aim to ensure pandemic preparedness and response on equity basis.

This was stated by caretaker Minister for National Health Services Dr Nadeem Jan and caretaker Minister for Information and Broadcasting Murtaza Solangi at a news conference in Islamabad today.

Nadeem Jan said Prime Minister Anwaar ul Haq Kakar will inaugurate the moot and more than seventy national and international delegates will attend it. The

Pakistan, KSA & Turkiye vow to achieve shared objectives in defence domain

RAWALPINDI (APP): Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkiye have reaffirmed the importance of combining their intellectual, technical, financial and human resource to achieve shared objectives and attainment of self-sufficiency in the defence domain.

This resolve was expressed at the second meeting of Pakistan, KSA and Turkiye Trilateral Defence Collaboration in Rawalpindi on Tuesday.

The meeting provided an opportunity to discuss

PTI founder Imran arrested in GHQ attack case

RAWALPINDI (Online): Founder PTI Imran Khan has been arrested in GHQ attack case as well.

Rawalpindi police have arrested PTI founder in GHQ attack case.

The hearing of 12 cases related to May 9 incidents took place against PTI founder in Anti Terrorism Court (ATC) Rawalpindi.

Judge Malik Ijaz Asif heard the cases.

PTI founder was presented in the court from Adiala jail through video link.

The respective SHOs appeared in the court along with record of 12 cases.

RA Bazaar police told the court PTI founder was informed about his arrest in GHQ attack case.

RA Bazar police requested the court to grant physical remand of PTI founder in GHQ attack case.

The court directed police to investigate PTI founder in jail.

It is pertinent to mention here PTI founder is in Adiala jail on judicial remand in Toshakhana and 190 pounds references.

MQM, PML-N agree over seat-adjustment in Karachi

KARACHI (INP): The MQM-Pakistan and the PML-N have agreed over seat adjustment on Karachi's seats for the general election next month.

The sources sharing details of the meeting between the committees of two parties said that the PML-N will field its candidates on the national and provincial assemblies' seats of Karachi in NA-229 and NA-230. The MQM-P will field its candidates on NA-231 and its provincial constituencies.

Both parties decided that the PML-N will field its candidate in national assembly constituency of NA-239 in Karachi South district. The issue of seat adjustment on the NA-242 constituency of Keamari district is pending and it will be decided in next 48 hours, sources said. PML-N President Shehbaz Sharif and MQM leader Mustafa Kamal are the candidates from NA-242.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Murtaza Solangi and Caretaker Federal Minister for Health Dr. Nadeem Jan addressing a press conference at PID Media Center.

Imran Khan admitted article published by foreign journal was AI generated: Solangi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Murtaza Solangi on Tuesday said that former Chairman PTI had admitted that he didn't write the article published by The Economist and it was an artificial intelligence-generated write-up.

Using his social media platform X account, the minister said that the current Chairman of PTI did not endorse its anti-establishment and anti-American content but the PTI overseas, some semi-literate anchors and The Economist were jubilant over AI-generated shenanigans.

INP adds: Caretaker Minister for Information and Broadcasting Murtaza Solangi says caretaker government has no authority to postpone the elections.

Speaking in a PTV programme, he said according to Article 218(3) of the Constitution, it is constitutional prerogative of the Election Commission to give or change the date of elections. The Minister said, however, government will fully support to Election Commission of Pakistan to hold free, fair and transparent elections in the country.

SC rejects request to stay proceeding of SJC against Justice Naqvi

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Supreme Court of Pakistan on Tuesday rejected the request to stay the proceeding of Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) against Justice Mazhar Ali Akbar Naqvi.

A three-member bench of the top court, headed by Justice Amin ud Din Khan and comprising Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail and Justice Musarrat Hilali, heard the petition of Justice Naqvi. During the hearing, the court rejected the request to stay the proceeding of SJC against Justice Mazhar and instructed him to file the petition with amendment.

The further hearing of the case was then adjourned for indefinite period.

PM underscores need to enhance trade, economic linkages with African countries

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Tuesday, while acknowledging that Pakistan and Africa had enjoyed excellent political relations over the years, stressed the need to enhance trade and economic linkages which were yet to realize their full potential.

He also highlighted the importance Pakistan attached to Africa and expressed the desire to strengthen ties with African countries, at the bilateral as well as regional level.

The prime minister met a group of resident envoys representing African countries as well as select Asian countries over lunch, the PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

The meeting was attended by the Ambassadors



QUETTA: Former MPA Sana Baloch meeting with Governor Balochistan Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar

Establishment of new university in Rakhshan division to promote educational activities: Governor

QUETTA (APP): Governor Balochistan Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar on Tuesday said that establishment of a new university in Rakhshan division would play an important role in educational development and removal of backwardness in the area.

Concrete steps should be taken to ensure efficient functioning of new university in this area, he expressed these views while talking to former member of the provincial assembly Sana Baloch.

Governor Balochistan said that we are aware of the problems of electricity load-shedding in Rakhshan division and all necessary steps were being taken for its solution.

In the meeting, the overall situation of the Rakhshan division, functioning of new university and provision of all basic facilities to the people at their doorsteps were also discussed.

Governor Balochistan said that development schemes have been implemented in various sectors so that every person could enjoy the benefits in a proper manner.

He said that the government is also giving priority to educational development and for this, setting up of higher education institutions particularly new university would play a vital role to achieve objectives.

Sanaullah Zehri cleared to contest election

QUETTA (INP): Quetta's election tribunals have witnessed a day of dramatic turns, shaping the political landscape for the upcoming 2024 general elections. Benches led by Justices Mohammad Hashim Kakar and Mohammad Amir Nawazrana adjudicated on appeals filed by candidates whose nomination papers were rejected by returning officers.

Pakistan seeks \$2bn loan rollover from UAE

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan has requested the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to roll over a loan of \$2 billion.

According to sources in the Ministry of Finance, caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar wrote a letter to the UAE president stating that the loan of \$2 billion from the UAE was maturing in January.

Sources said a total of \$3 billion were deposited with the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) by the UAE, of which \$1 billion were going to mature on Jan 17 and another \$1 billion on Jan 23. They said the interest rate was 3 per cent on first amount and 6.5 per cent on the remaining \$1 billion.



QUETTA: Additional Chief Secretary Home Balochistan Zahid Saleem presiding over a meeting regarding electricity theft



QUETTA: Caretaker Information Minister Jan Achakzai meeting with Deputy Commissioner Quetta Lt. (Retd) Saad bin Asad

Training of polling staff continues: There's important role of polling staff in conducting free, fair & peaceful elections, says PEC

Independent Report

QUETTA: The Provincial Election Commissioner, Balochistan, Ejaz Anwar Chohan has stated that there is very important role of polling staff in conducting free, fair, transparent and peaceful elections.

Therefore, the polling staff should take wholehearted interest in the training process and understand it fully.

The Provincial Election Commissioner was speaking to the polling staff being trained at the training center set up for training of the polling staff here on Tuesday.

The polling staff including Assistant Presiding Officers and Polling Officers are being imparted training at the training centers these days. The Provincial Election Commissioner inspected the process of training of the polling staff at the training center.

He said that the process of training of the polling staff is continued since December 25, 2023 all over the province.

The process would remain continued till January 11, 2024, adding he mentioned.

Daily Voice of Masses Independent

Moving forward

Yesterday, Article 62 was, hopefully permanently, de-naturalised of its most lethal effect: lifetime disqualification of a lawmaker from holding public office.

Though several problematic 'morality' requirements in Articles 62 and 63 had been inserted in the Constitution during the Zia era, the 'lifetime disqualification' aspect under 62(1)(f) was a more recent innovation — one that happened five years ago, when the Supreme Court interpreted the clause to deem anyone legally determined to have failed the 'sadiq' and 'ameen' test to have lost forever the right to lead the people of Pakistan as an elected representative.

The verdict had been met with immediate outrage, and it was seen widely as the state hammering the final nails in the coffin meant for Nawaz Sharif's political career.

Yesterday, the Supreme Court finally undid its earlier mistake. A new set of judges agreed, by a majority of 6-1, that the old bench had overreached by 'reading into' the Constitution while taking a rather expansive view of how the clause ought to be interpreted.

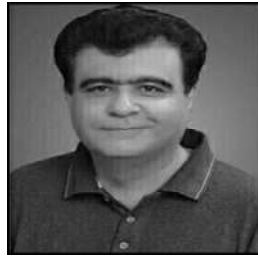
The new bench noted that there is no "law that provides for the procedure, process and the identification of the court of law for making the declaration mentioned in Article 62(1)(f) of the Constitution and the duration of such a declaration, for the purpose of disqualification thereunder, to meet the requirements of the fundamental right to a fair trial and due process guaranteed by Article 10A of the Constitution."

It declared that till the law is updated to address these deficiencies, disqualification under Article 62(1)(f) cannot hold for life. Positive as the news is, it should be pointed out that the clause remains very much intact.

It remains up to an elected government to, either with consensus or two-thirds majority, undo it. All the work has done is ensure it won't be used as Damocles' sword over a condemned politician's neck. It has long been argued, and by better legal minds, that the eligibility requirements for holding public office as currently laid out in the Constitution contain several provisions that are patently unrealistic or impossible to attain and must, therefore, be reconsidered.

This publication has long agreed with this view. There is nothing wrong with expecting national leaders to adhere to a high standard of conduct; however, when 'requirements' for qualification start demanding personality traits based on ideas of morality that will be interpreted very differently by different people, they lose their purpose altogether. It cannot be up to the law to choose, based on such arbitrary conditions, who is and who isn't 'morally deserving' of leadership and who, therefore, is to be allowed to participate in the electoral process. Such decisions should be left to the judgment of the voting citizenry.

Decaying politics



Dr Niaz Murtaza

Politics is to acquire and use power to achieve one's aims and is often autocratic (won via force to favour elites). However, its best form is democratic, where rulers present pro-poor policies to win and implement them. But elites have created many perverse political forms to prevail even in democracy: patronage, populist, fascist and religious politics.

Our politics is clearly elitist. Sadly, it has shown a huge drift to perverse political forms over time. Our mother political form was Muslim League's freedom one. Unlike Congress and Awami League's pro-poor left ideology, its politics were rightwing ethno-religious populism based on fear of Hindu rule sans a pro-poor vision. Yet this national politics hid many regional forms.

Muslim League co-opted feudal Unionists in Punjab and patronage politics ruled there for long, with elites winning by offering crumbs to familial voter blocs rather than pro-poor agendas. Yet Punjab voted for PPP's leftist agenda in 1970 but later adopted aberrant rightwing forms again like PML-N's patronage and PTI's populism (anti-elitist sans clear pro-poor agenda). So, which one will prevail in Punjab is unclear. A distinct Seraiki identity has emerged in its poorer southern region but is yet to spawn ethno-ideological politics there. After 1947, Pakhtuns stuck to Ghaffar Khan's leftist ethno-ideology for long. Religious parties as-

cended slowly in isolated areas like Dir, Kohistan and the south but PTI's religio-populist nationalism now holds sway despite the crackdown. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Hindko region, better off than many Pakhtun areas, has always stuck to patronage politics, like Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Kashmir.

Sindh and Baloch too started with leftist ethno-ideology led by G.M. Syed and Bizenjo. Among the Baloch, establishment ploys have stoked religious and feudal-led politics as older ethno-ideological parties face extinction. Sindh's latest switched to PPP's leftist ideology, but then adopted patronage politics. Ethno-ideological Sindh parties now get few votes. Mohajirs supported Muslim League's rightwing politics initially, swung to religious parties in 1970, then turned to MQM's ethno-populist quasi-fascism after 1980 and PTI in 2018.

With both PTI and MQM facing state oppression, religious parties (JI and TLP) are rising again. But like Punjab, the future of Mohajir politics remains unclear though it too may remain rightwing. Mohajir politics is the oddest nationally as despite their high education, income, global links and exposure, urban location (which makes mobilisation easy) and big intellectual pockets, they keep moving from one perverse political form to another.

So nationally, there is no ethnicity or region where ideological politics prevails. Even those who had it have embraced perverse politics. Stagnant patronage is now our main political form, vacuous populism its main challenger, religious extremist politics the main wild card, and terrorist politics the main spoiler, cutting a bleak view of our politics. This state is mainly due to the

establishment's autocratic politics that serves as the bedrock of our politics. It has ruled directly for 30 years and runs politics covertly, and even otherwise, by furthering various forms of political patronage. Our huge economic, security, social and foreign policy failures stem from our political failures. Our political failures exist because powerful forces have blocked our natural political evolution for six decades.

The view is not entirely bleak as small pro-poor forces are rising. Strangely, these are mainly in the two poorest and most violent areas: ex-Fata and Balochistan. The misery from poverty is magnified by terrorism — religious in ex-Fata and ethnic in Balochistan. PTM won two national seats in 2018 in ex-Fata.

Baloch forces are still loose as seen in Gwadar protests and Baloch march. So, politics in these areas now has three forms: patronage politics, militant politics, and mass politics, which rejects both.

The state is unwisely crushing it, not seeing its value in ending both forms of terrorism. The huge political energy of Baloch protests must crystallise into durable political forms like PTM. In my solidarity visits to the Baloch protest camp in Islamabad, I requested Mahrang Baloch and others to think on these lines.

Our political decay reflects a larger Saarc proclivity: Bangladesh embraces one-party autocracy, India has illiberal extremism and Sri Lanka stagnant politics. Yet nowhere are multiple crises and the need for mass politics bigger than in Pakistan. -- Courtesy Dawn

Health security



Arif Azad

The greatly anticipated Global Health Security Summit, one of the major calendar events on the global health security agenda, gets underway in Islamabad on January 10.

The two-day event draws delegates from over 40 countries and is the personal initiative of the current caretaker Health Minister, Dr Nadeem Jan, who worked hard to bring it to Pakistan since taking over as the third technocrat at the health ministry after Dr Zafar Mirza and Dr Faisal Sultan. This clearly shows that a technocrat with command over the brief can lead from the front on key health challenges facing the country. And herein lie many rays of hope for the health sector.

As a rule of thumb, global health security means the presence and development of robust and resilient public health systems that can help prevent, detect and respond to infectious disease threats. This assumes particular importance in our globalised world, where a disease threat anywhere is a disease threat everywhere. Remember the oft-repeated line during the Covid-19 pandemic: no one is safe until everybody is safe? The Covid pandemic underscored the necessity of global solidarity and working across borders and governments in a whole-of-the-world approach to infectious diseases. In this context, the global health security agenda represents global efforts to strengthen the world's ability to prevent, detect and respond to infec-

tious disease threats.

Global health security gained policy salience after the Ebola outbreak. It led to the adoption of the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA) in 2014, with the initial involvement of 40 countries. With more than 70 countries now signing up for the GHSA 2024, it is expanding its footprint and reach to the rest of the globe. The key elements of the GHSA involve developing sustainable financing mechanisms, promoting multisector collaboration, improving information sharing across countries and strengthening the accountability of member states to their country commitments.

While global health security had long been a concern, the Covid pandemic helped — a further shift towards it. This was manifested in the interest of the media, the general public and health policy officials in cross-border infections. Not only this, the Covid pandemic also kick-started discussions on the need for pandemic preparedness and response treaties, as well as revision of existing International Health Regulations (IHR). In parallel, the GHSA also acquired its present shape, intersecting and feeding into debates about new pandemic treaties and revisions to the IHR.

Pakistan has signed onto GHSA 24, and the National Institute of Health (NIH) has been leading on both GHSA and IHR. GHSA 24 requires member countries to develop leadership and technical knowledge and initiate collaborative efforts to sustain health security in the long term. The GHSA requires countries to show demonstrable progress in health security-related technical areas, as well as complete a joint external evaluation and reach a level of demonstrated capacity in at

least five technical areas.

Pakistan participated in a joint external evaluation in 2023. Based on the assessment, an action plan for health security is now being formulated. The summit offers an opportunity to not only review the progress Pakistan has made but also to benefit from the best global practices on show. Pakistan faces many challenges when it comes to infectious diseases. Tuberculosis and anti-microbial diseases remain issues of significant concern. Anti-microbial resistance in Pakistan is mounting, and what has been called a silent pandemic may balloon into a grand pandemic if not collectively addressed.

The work on building up a resilient public health system is of vital importance with respect to the global health security agenda. Yet, there is a long way to go when it comes to strengthening public health systems in Pakistan. The examples of Korea and Japan, where robust public health systems proved crucial in beating back the Covid pandemic, are illustrative in this regard.

Pakistan will obviously be looking to invest more in health systems, especially where laboratory and surveillance capacities are concerned. Funding for pandemic preparedness is also a long-standing issue, which is being negotiated in the new pandemic preparedness treaty. One funding window for pandemic preparedness and response has been opened up by the World Bank. Pakistan needs to be alive to such new funding streams. The global health summit offers an ideal opportunity to seize on these and other emerging opportunities and make use of them. More importantly, political ownership of GHSA is also a must. -- Courtesy Dawn

Commerce News

ECC approves mechanism for weighted average price of urea

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet on Tuesday approved a mechanism for the weighted average price of urea, directing the National Fertilizer Marketing Limited (NFML) to ensure a reasonable price for the commodity and the Ministry of Industries and Production to provide oversight to the whole process.

The ECC meeting presided over by Minister for Finance, Revenue, and Economic Affairs Dr Shamshad Akhtar, took

this decision after discussing a summary of the Ministry of Industries and Production seeking approval of a mechanism for the sale of imported urea at a 'basket price' along with locally manufactured urea at length.

Among others, the meeting was also attended by Minister for Privatization and Inter-Provincial Coordination Fawad Hasan Fawad, Minister of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Sami Saeed, Deputy Chairman Planning Commission Dr Muhammad Jehanzaeb

Khan, Minister for Law and Justice, Water Resources and Climate Change Ahmed Irfan Aslam, Advisor to PM on Finance Dr Waqar Masood, Federal Secretaries, and other senior government officers of the relevant ministries, a news release said.

On another agenda item, the ECC deliberated on a summary of the Intelligence Bureau (IB) for the provision of additional funds of Rs.250 million during the current financial year 2023-24.

The IB representatives briefed the

committee about the recent surge of terrorism which needed effective countermeasures to thwart the nefarious designs of terrorists.

The ECC approved the funds as a Technical Supplementary Grant (TSG) for up-gradation, technical enhancement and field activities of the Intelligence Bureau with releases on a need basis. The committee considered and approved the summary of National Health Services Regulation and Coordination for the provision of Technical Supplementary Grant (TSG).



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Finance, Revenue and Economic Affairs, Dr. Shamshad Akhtar chairing a meeting of Economic Coordination Committee of the Cabinet.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for IT & Telecommunication Dr. Umar Saif Launch Pakistan Startup Fund during ceremony organized by Ignite and Ministry of IT & Telecommunication.

CM announces 26,000 interest free electric motorbikes, rickshaws for public

Independent Report
LAHORE: Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi unveiled a groundbreaking initiative, announcing the distribution of 26,000 electric motorbikes and rickshaws to the public on interest-free basis — a groundbreaking milestone in Pakistan's history.

The announcement took place at a special function organized by the

Punjab Transport Department at a local hotel on Tuesday, where the chief minister also inaugurated the Qingqi Rickshaw Registration Program across Punjab.

CM Naqvi presented the first license for electric rickshaw manufacturing to the CEO of Sazgar Company, marking the formal commencement of the electric rickshaw

industry in Punjab.

At the event, he disclosed plans to provide 10,000 electric bikes to students, facilitated by the Bank of Punjab, while another 10,000 electric rickshaws would be supported by Punjab Bank.

Notably, 2,000 electric three-wheeler bikes would be granted to special individuals free of interest.

Saif launches Startup Fund to catalyze investments for Pak

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Information Technology Dr Umar Saif on Tuesday launched the Pakistan Startup Fund, aimed at catalyzing investments in Pakistani startups.

The launching ceremony was attended by local and international venture capitalists, diplomats, and renowned technology companies. Dr Saif, while

addressing the event, said that the government had allocated Rs 2 billion for the Pakistan Startup Fund to accelerate venture capital investment in the country.

He said the Fund would provide financial assistance to the startups, with each receiving 30% support, while venture capitalists would contribute the remaining 70% of the capital.

Pakistan's exports to Afghanistan increase by 9.10% in 5 months

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's export of goods and services to Afghanistan witnessed an increase of 9.10 per cent during the first five months of the current fiscal year (2023-24) as compared to the exports of the corresponding period of last year, State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) reported.

The overall exports to Afghanistan were recorded at US \$232.697 million during July-November (2023-24) against exports of US \$213.282 million during

July-November (2022-23), SBP data revealed.

On a year-to-year basis, the exports to Afghanistan also surged by 39.30 per cent from \$37.263 million in November 2022, against the exports of \$51.911 million in November 2023.

Meanwhile, on a month-on-month basis, the exports to Afghanistan however witnessed a nominal decline of 0.50 per cent during November 2023 as compared to the exports of \$52.177 million.

Pakistan, Egypt agrees to focus on collaboration in key economic sectors

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and Egypt on Tuesday agreed to focus on fostering collaboration in key economic sectors, including agriculture, textiles, engineering, and services.

Dr. Gohar Ejaz, Federal Minister for Commerce, Industries and Investments, engaged in discussions with Ahmed Samir, the Minister of Commerce of Egypt and Chief Guest of the 4th Pakistan-Africa Trade

Development Conference (PATDC) and Single Country Exhibition (SCE), said a press release issued here on Tuesday.

Both parties recognized the mutual benefits that can arise from expanding economic and trade ties between Pakistan and Egypt.

The meeting, held in the presence of policymakers and business leaders from various countries, facilitated a convergence of diverse

ideas and opinions, creating an enriching environment for meaningful discussions.

This event serves as a crucial platform aimed at fostering economic ties and exploring investment opportunities between Pakistan and Egypt.

The discussions underscored the commitment of both nations to deepening economic cooperation and leveraging each other's strengths in key sectors.

DC for ensuring sale of fertilizers at fixed prices

BAHAWALPUR (APP): Deputy Commissioner (DC) Bahawalpur Zaheer Anwar Jappa on Tuesday said that the sale of fertilizer should be ensured at fixed rates. Fertilizer supply should be improved at the tehsil level. He expressed these views in the meeting held in his office. He directed that legal action be taken against the dealers who sell fertilizer at more than the fixed rates.

E-bikes, rickshaws to revolutionize transport sector: Minister

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Provincial Transport Minister Ibrahain Hassan Murad said that provision of 10,000 electric bikes to students will be an important milestone in Punjab. Speaking at opening ceremony of electric bikes registration here Tuesday, he said that 2.5 million three-wheelers were running illegally across Punjab, which are being

registered. He said that today is a historic day for the transport department as e-vehicles will bring revolution in the transport sector. The Caretaker Provincial Transport Minister said that the license for e-rickshaws has been issued to Sazgar while 10,000 electric bikes will prove to be an important milestone in Punjab.

CM inaugurates desilting drive after 10 years gap

Independent Report
LAHORE: Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi inaugurated the desilting campaign from the Lahore canal near Muslim Town Morr for removing silt from 17000 km long canals across the province. Provincial ministers SM Tanveer, Amir Mir, Azfar Ali Nasir, commissioner Lahore, secretary irrigation, CCPO and others were also present. The CM removed silt through crane, stating that the first phase would continue till January 31, while embankments of 5000 km long canals would

be repaired in the second phase, spanning over two months. Water would be available to 3 to 4 lakh acres of land after the desilting of canals; he added and further stated that the desilting drive has been launched after a long gap. Talking to the media, he said that the silt would be removed from 17000 km long canals in the first phase as services of LIMS (Laboratory Information Management System) have been acquired for round-the-clock monitoring. For this purpose, concerned staff, DCs and commissioners have also

been trained through LIMS as this drive would be continuously monitored through satellite images and NESPAK would also monitor it as a third party, he added. CM Naqvi mentioned that complaints have been received about the mixing of drainage water in the Lahore canal at some points, adding that a committee comprising MD WASA and DC would probe the matter, as it could not be allowed. He appealed to the citizens to avoid polluting the canal as the government could not do everything all alone.



LAHORE: Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi along with provincial ministers and others high ups formerly inaugurates de-silting of Canals across Punjab.

Nation commends heroic sacrifices of police: Feroze

Independent Report
PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister for Information and Public Relations Barrister Feroze Jamal Shah Kakakhel on Tuesday paid tribute and expressed the nation's profound gratitude for the unwavering sacrifices made by the Police.

Along with Chief Secretary Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry and Inspector General of Police Akhtar Hayat Khan, Barrister Feroze Jamal Shah Kakakhel visited Lady Reading Hospital to personally extend support to the injured policemen following the tragic Bajaur

bomb blast. Visiting the surgical emergency ward, he met each injured official and officer individually, inquiring about their well-being and assessing the treatment facilities.

During this occasion, Barrister Kakakhel commended the resilient spirit and high morale displayed by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police men. He prayed for the swift recovery of the injured, acknowledging their selfless dedication for protecting the nation. Barrister Kakakhel emphasized the nation's collective admiration for the sacrifices made by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police.

May-9 violence: ATC extends interim bail of Asad till Feb 10

Independent Report
LAHORE (APP): An anti-terrorism court (ATC) on Tuesday extended the interim bail of former federal minister Asad Umar till February 10 in 7 cases related to May-9 violence.

Judge Muhammad Arshad Javed conducted proceedings on the bail applications of the former minister. Asad Umar's counsel submitted an exemption application on behalf of his client, in the course of proceedings, and requested the court to exempt his client from personal appearance for one-day. At this, the court allowed the request and extended the interim bail of the former minister till February 10.

Minister urges prompt activation of Nowshera Aviation Training Center

Independent Report
PESHAWAR (APP): Minister for Technical Education and Industries, Dr. Amir Abdullah has directed the swift activation of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa School of Aviation Training and Services setup in Nowshera.

He emphasized the need to establish this centre as a hub for aviation training initiatives in the region. During his sudden visit to Nowshera, the minister inspected the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa School of Aviation Training

and Services, accompanied by Managing Director Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority, Amir Afaq, and Managing Director Small Industries Development Board, Ghazanfar Ali.

During the visit, the officials informed the minister that the school had received new machinery for training purposes in 2019. On this occasion, the minister expressed regret over the non-utilization of the state-of-the-art training centre and its machinery.

Security official dies, six injured in Tank road mishap

Independent Report
PESHAWAR (APP): A security personnel were died while six others injured when a vehicle carrying them, skidded off the road and met with an accident in Manji khel area of Tank district on Tuesday.

Local police informed a vehicle was on its way to Dera Ismail Khan from Asman Manza area of South Waziristan when it met with an accident. As a result, security officials embraced martyrdom while six others were injured. The injured were shifted to CMH Dera Ismail Khan.

Governor stresses to maintain financial discipline in varsities

Independent Report
PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali chairing a senate meeting of the University of Swabi (UoS) here Tuesday directed universities of the province to maintain financial discipline keeping in resources of the province.

The senate meeting was also attended by Vice Chancellor UoS, Nasir Jamal and concerned officials of education, establishment, finance and higher education commission. KP Governor said

that the provincial government is paying Rs. 56 billion annually in lieu of salaries stressing that universities should explore new ways to overcome financial difficulties. He desired that varsities devise new plans to improve administrative, educational and financial affairs.

The governor highlighted the need for research-based education and said that it would help improve capacity building of students and prepare them to meet challenges of emerging world.



LAHORE: Political Counsellor of the United Kingdom in Pakistan, Ms Zoe Weir, meeting with President Istehkaam Pakistan Party Abdul Aleem Khan.

PHOTA organizes awareness seminar

Independent Report
LAHORE: Caretaker Provincial Health Minister Prof. Dr. Javed Akram participated as special guest in the awareness seminar organized by Punjab Human Organ Transplantation Authority (PHOTA) at a local hotel on Tuesday.

Secretary Auqaf Syed Tahir Raza Bukhari, King Edward Medical University (KEMU) Vice Chancellor (VC) Prof Dr Mehmood Ayaz, Fatima Jinnah Medical University (FJMU) VC Prof. Dr. Khalid Masood Gondal, Amirud Din Medical College's Principal Prof. Dr. Sardar Al-Farid Zafar, PHOTA Director General Prof. Dr. Shehzad Anwar, Punjab Institute of Neuro

Sciences (PINS) MS Prof. Dr. Jodai Saleem, Pakistan Kidney and Liver Institute (PKLI) Dean Professor Dr. Faisal Saud Dar and a number of other scholars attended the seminar.

Caretaker Provincial Health Minister Prof Dr. Javed Akram said that Pakistan is facing many problems in the health sector. "We have to adopt a better lifestyle to lead a better life. We are currently paying a heavy price for the habit of eating fast food."

He added that PKLI is an exemplary institution. Recently, three human lives have been saved at the Institute. Indiscriminate action is being taken against the elements involved in the heinous business of illegal transplantation of human.



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Haji Ghulam Ali, Caretaker Provincial Minister from Information Barrister Jamal Shah offering Fateha for Bomb Blast victims of Iranian city Karman during their visit to Iranian Council General.

NCCIA being set up to check cyber crimes: DG FIA

Independent Report
FAISALABAD (APP): The National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA) is being established to check increasing cyber crimes while stringent measures were being taken to control smuggling, said Rai Ijaz Ahmad, Director Federal Investigation Agency (FIA).

Addressing a meeting in the Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI), he advised the business community to switch over to transparent transactions through government channels instead

of making payments through "Hawala Hundi" to avoid any financial implication. Rai Ijaz said that the Financial Management Unit in State Bank of Pakistan was electronically monitoring available financial data and "red-flag" dubious, irregular and out of proportion transactions.

He said that businessmen should take extra care and avoid indulging in illegal traditional practices as the monitoring system was going to be stricter in the coming days.

Corps Commander visits SBBWU, interacts with students

Independent Report
PESHAWAR (APP): Corps Commander Peshawar on Tuesday visited Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University (SBBWU) Peshawar and had an interactive session with its students and faculty members.

He applauded the tremendous achievements of women from the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in all fields of life, including their pivotal role in nation-building, said a news release.

International News

Blinken carries Arab message to Israel: keep Palestinian state hope alive

Monitoring Desk
GAZA: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, on his latest mission to rein in the Gaza war, told Israeli leaders on Tuesday there was still a chance of winning acceptance from their Arab neighbours, if they create a path to a viable Palestinian state.

On his fourth trip to the region since October in a so far largely fruitless quest to tamp down the violence, Blinken said he would share what he had heard in two days of talks with Jordan, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia.

His talks would include a meeting with the Israeli war cabinet formed in the wake of the Oct. 7

attacks by Palestinian militants from Hamas, which rules Gaza, that Israel says killed 1,200 people.

The Israeli offensive has killed more than 23,000 Palestinians, destroyed much of Gaza and displaced most of the population of 2.3 million at least once, creating a dramatic and worsening humanitarian crisis.

Blinken had already said he would press Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government on the "absolute imperative" to do more to protect Gaza's civilians and allow humanitarian aid to reach them. His boss, President Joe Biden, said overnight that Washington was quietly pushing Israel to begin

withdrawing some of its forces.

Blinken's meetings around the region have focused on trying to chart a longer-term approach to the decades-old Israel-Palestinian conflict, as part of a path toward ending the Gaza war. After his meetings with Arab allies, he said they wanted integration with Israel—a long-term Israeli aim—but only if that included a "practical pathway" to a Palestinian state.

"I know of your own efforts, over many years, to build much greater connectivity and integration in the Middle East, and I think there are actually real opportunities there," he told his Israeli counterpart Israel Katz on Tuesday.



France's newly appointed Prime Minister Gabriel Attal arrives for the handover ceremony with outgoing Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne at the Hotel Matignon in Paris, France.

Egypt rejects Israeli request to monitor buffer zone with Gaza

Monitoring Desk
CAIRO: Egypt has rejected a proposal by Israel for greater Israeli oversight over the buffer zone on the Egypt-Gaza border and is prioritising efforts to broker a ceasefire before working on post-war arrangements, three Egyptian security sources said.

Egypt shares a 13km (8 mile) border with Gaza which is the only border of the Palestinian coastal enclave not directly con-

trolled by Israel. Along with Qatar, Egypt has also played a leading role in talks to broker a new ceasefire in Gaza and secure a deal for the release of Israeli hostages held by Hamas.

Israeli sources said that during those talks Israel had approached Egypt about securing the Philadelphi Corridor, a narrow buffer zone along the border, as part of Israeli plans to prevent future attacks.

Russia detains US citizen on drugs charges

Monitoring Desk
MOSCOW: A US citizen has been detained in Russia on drugs charges which can carry up to 20 years in prison, a Moscow court said on Tuesday.

Moscow's Ostankino District Court said that on Jan. 6 Robert Romanov Woodland had been remanded in custody until March 5 on charges relating to the illegal acquisition or possession of drugs.

Russian internet news site Mash said that Woodland, 32, was charged with attempted large-scale production and sale of illegal drugs. He was detained on Jan. 5, Mash said.

A Facebook account in the name of Robert Woodland indicated that he had been working as an English teacher in Russia, and lived outside Moscow. It was not immediately possible to contact Woodland in Russian custody. In 2020, Woodland, who was known to friends as "Rob", told a Russian newspaper that he was adopted in 1993 by US citizens from an orphanage in Perm, in the Urals.



The wife of Hamza Wael Dahdouh, a journalist with the Al Jazeera television network, and his father Al Jazeera's bureau chief in Gaza, Wael Al-Dahdouh mourn over his body during his funeral, after he was killed in a reported Israeli air strike in Rafah in the Gaza Strip.

Ukraine has deficit of anti-aircraft guided missiles - air force

Monitoring Desk
KYIV: Ukraine has a deficit of anti-aircraft guided missiles nearly two years after Russia's full-scale invasion. Air Force spokesman Yuriy Ihnat said on Tuesday.

Ukraine has relied heavily on military and financial aid from its Western allies since the invasion in February 2022, but political wrangling has delayed the disbursement of major aid packages for this year.

Ihnat told Ukrainian television that Ukraine had used a "considerable reserve" of missiles defend-

ing itself against recent attacks, and added: "It is clear that there is a deficit of anti-aircraft guided missiles."

Russia has stepped up missile and drone attacks on Ukraine in the past few weeks, firing hundreds of missiles and drones at Ukrainian cities far behind the frontline, Ukrainian officials have said.

In the latest strike this week, Russia fired 51 missiles of various types, killing at least four people and hitting civilian infrastructure, they said.

Gabriel Attal becomes France's youngest prime minister as Macron seeks reset

Monitoring Desk
PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron appointed 34-year-old Education Minister Gabriel Attal as his new prime minister on Tuesday, seeking to breathe new life into his second mandate ahead of European parliament elections.

The move will not necessarily lead to any major political shift, but signals a desire for Macron to try to move beyond last year's unpopular pension and immigration reforms

and improve his centrist party's chances in the June EU ballot.

Attal will be France's youngest prime minister and the first to be openly gay.

Opinion polls show Macron's camp trailing far-right leader Marine Le Pen's party by around eight to 10 percentage points.

Attal, a close Macron ally who became a household name as government spokesman during the Covid-19 pandemic, will replace outgoing Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne.

Taiwan says China launched a satellite

Monitoring Desk
TAIPEI: Taiwan's Defense Ministry issued an alert Tuesday saying China had launched a satellite and urging caution days before the island's elections.

Taiwan holds presidential and parliamentary elections on Saturday which China has described as a choice between war and peace.

The bilingual alert sent to residents' mobile phones cautioned in English that there was a missile flyover. The Defense Ministry later issued a statement apologizing to the public for the faulty English translation and clarifying that China had launched a rocket carrying a satellite—not a missile.

US vows to boost Afghan refugees' relocation

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: The US State Department has informed Congress of its commitment to enhancing its capacity to process applications of Afghan refugees stranded in Pakistan.

This initiative, which began in July 2023 on a limited scale, aims to address the plight of Afghan refugees seeking asylum in Pakistan.

US, UK say Bangladesh elections were not free, fair

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: The US and UK on Monday criticized the Bangladesh general election that saw the ruling Awami League retain power as "not free" nor democratic as the polls held a day earlier were boycotted by the opposition after months of violence.

The two Western allies also condemned the incidents of violence and alleged intimidation of opposition members in the months leading up to the election and urged Bangladesh's government to credibly investigate them.

The United States shared the view that the weekend's elections in Bangladesh were not free and fair, the US State Department said on Monday, adding that Washington was concerned by reports of vote irregularities and condemned violence that took place. Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina

swept to a fourth straight term in power, with her party winning almost 75% of the seats in Sunday's general election.

But the main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) boycotted the vote and turnout was low.

"The United States remains concerned by the arrests of thousands of political opposition members and by reports of irregularities on elections day," a US State Department spokesperson said on Monday.

"The United States shares the view with other observers that these elections were not free or fair and we regret that not all parties participated." The ruling Awami League party won 222 seats out of 298, according to unofficial results released by the Election Commission. The election was Bangladesh's 12th since independence from Pakistan in 1971.

Gaza cease-fire protests block New York City bridges, and over 300 are arrested

Monitoring Desk
NEW YORK: Hundreds of protesters calling for an immediate cease-fire in the Israel-Hamas war blocked traffic in New York City at crucial bridges and a tunnel, disrupting the Monday morning commute and leading to more than 300 arrests.

A steady stream of demonstrations have broken out in cities across the United States and in other countries during the three-month war in the Gaza Strip.

Protesters interrupted President Joe Biden's campaign speech Monday at a church in South Carolina with chants of "cease-fire now," and were removed from the building.

In Manhattan, people chanting and holding anti-war signs sat in roadways

and locked themselves together using zip ties and even cement-filled tires, which at times required officers to use power tools to pry the demonstrators apart.

The New York Police Department said 325 people were arrested, with many facing misdemeanor charges.

Demonstrators had gathered at City Hall Plaza at around 9 a.m. before marching to the protest sites at the Brooklyn, Manhattan and Williamsburg bridges as well as the Holland Tunnel to New Jersey.

Protest organizers included the Palestinian Youth Movement and Jewish-led groups long opposed to Israel's policies toward the Palestinians, such as Jewish Voice for Peace.

Tribunal dismisses appeals against acceptance of papers of Maulvi Sarwar & Hamal

Independent Report
QUETTA: The Appellate Tribunals headed by two judges of Balochistan High Court (BHC) continued hearing of the appeals against acceptance and rejection of the nomination papers of the candidates by the respective Returning Officers, here in Quetta on Tuesday. The Tribunals comprising Mr. Justice Muhammad Hashim Kakar and Mr. Justice Muhammad Amir Nawaz Rana heard the appeals.

The Tribunal comprising Mr. Justice Hashim Kakar dismissed the appeal that challenged the acceptance of nomination papers of JUI candidate, Maulvi Muhammad Sarwar.

The Tribunal upheld the judgment of concerned Returning Officer regarding acceptance of the nomination papers of Maulvi Sarwar.

Similarly, the Tribunal headed by Mr. Justice Kakar also dismissed the appeal filed against acceptance of nomination papers of the BNP-M leader, Mir Hamal Kalmati.

Meanwhile, the division bench of High Court comprising Mr. Justice Rozi Khan Baraich and Mr. Justice Ejaz Swati heard the constitutional petitions filed against the judgments of Appellate Tribunals.

The court deferred hearing of the constitutional petition of the BNP leader Sanaullah Baloch against acceptance of the papers of PML-N leader and candidate, Mir Shoaib Nausherwani for today (Wednesday). The BNP's leader had challenged the decision of Tribunal about allowing Nausherwani to contest the elections.



ISLAMABAD: UNICEF's representative in Pakistan Abdullah Fadil called on caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.

Politics of dynasties, master-slave division no more acceptable: Siraj

TALAGANG (INP): Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), Sirajul Haq has said that politics of dynasties and the master-slave division are no longer acceptable to the people of Pakistan.

Addressing an election campaign rally here on Tuesday, he asserted that the people would bury the status quo on February 8.

Sirajul Haq highlighted that the country was still under the influence of a colonial system, as past rulers failed to implement reforms. Instead, they focused on looting resources, building personal factories, and investing in foreign properties through shell companies.

He said there was no significant difference among the policies of the three former ruling parties—the PML-N, PPP and PTI. He stated that mafias invest in major parties and reap returns once those parties come to power.

The JI chief said that the former rulers failed to address the economic challenges, burdening the country with heavy debts. He criticized the rulers for neglecting the people of Occupied Kashmir facing Indian forces' brutalities and for choosing silence over Israeli forces' genocide in Gaza. He emphasized that the ruling elite aimed to please Washington, considering it crucial for their rule in Pakistan. He pledged that JI would advocate for the causes of Kashmir and Palestine and implement the laws of the Quran.

ANF seizes huge quantity of narcotics from Mian Ghundi area of Quetta

Independent Report
QUETTA: The Anti Narcotics Force (ANF) recovered huge quantity of narcotics from Mian Ghundi area in Quetta suburb on Tuesday.

According to the spokesman of ANF, the ANF team raided in the Mian Ghundi area and recovered some 240 kilogram of charas and 120 kilogram of heroin from there.

The huge quantity of narcotics' consignment was concealed for smuggling purposes from the area to the interior parts of the country. No arrest, however, was reported in the seizure.

Meanwhile, ANF also recovered 18 kilogram opium and 5 kilogram charas from a vehicle on way in Uthal area the same day.

During the operation, two accused were arrested by the ANF team, the spokesman mentioned.

The cases have been registered against the culprits under the Anti-Narcotics Act.



QUETTA: Balochistan Grand Alliance Senior Leader, Nawabzada Haji Lashkari Raisani along with others addresses to media persons during press conference held at Quetta press club.

Qambrani withdraws for BGA candidate: Lashkari vows to wage struggle for transparent system in country

Independent Report
QUETTA: The head of Balochistan Grand Alliance (BGA), Nawabzada Lashkari Raisani has made a pledge to wage struggle for bringing transparent system in the country.

He said that there has always been disappointment in the country's system or at least the affairs have been uncertain in the system. This was stated by Nawabzada Lashkari Raisani while addressing a press conference here at Quetta Press Club on Tuesday.

Other leaders of BGA including Mir Humayun Aziz Kurd, Razaur Rehman and others were also present.

The tribal personality and candidate for NA-264, Mir Nasir Qambrani, who was also present on the occasion, announced to join the BGA.

Qambrani also announced to withdraw his candidature in favour of the BGA's candidate Mir Humayun Aziz Kurd from NA-264.

Nawabzada Lashkari Raisani welcomed Mir Nasir Qambrani and hoped that the candidates of alliance would play their role for resolving the public issues.

Referring the series of seminars held on the title of re-imagining Pakistan in the past, Lashkari Raisani said that we had made an attempt of highlighting the issues outside the parliament under the Re-imagining Pakistan.

Then, we had not decided to form a political party, Nawabzada Lashkari Raisani maintained.



ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi chairing a meeting on implementing employment quota for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

President for implementing job quota for persons with disabilities

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Tuesday underscored the need to implement employment quota for persons with disabilities (PWDs) at all levels of the government for their financial empowerment.

He suggested that the government departments should identify jobs for PWDs and provide them employment as per their skill sets to increase their inclusion in the workforce, President Secretariat Press Wing said in a press release.

The president expressed these views while chairing a meeting on implementing employment quota for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs), at Aiwan-e-Sadr. Secretary Ministry of Human Rights Allah Dino Khawaja, Secretary Federal Public Service Commission (FPSC) Syed Hasnain Mehdi, Special Secretary Establishment Division Ali Tahir and senior officials of the government attended the meeting.

Highlighting the need to make PWDs productive members of society, the president said that they made up almost 12% of Pakistan's population and affirmative actions like job quotas could help overcome existing barriers to their employment.

He underscored the need to equip PWDs with employable skills and link them with potential employers to provide jobs to them as per the nature and severity of their disability.

The president emphasized the need for attitudinal change towards PWDs by the society to encourage them to actively participate in socio-economic activities. He recalled that he had been urging private schools to admit children with disabilities and take measures to promote inclusive education in mainstream educational institutions.

Secretary FPSC briefed the meeting about the steps taken by them for the facilitation of PWDs.

He informed that PWDs were eligible to appear in CSS exams against all occupational groups and FPSC was especially facilitating them by providing them additional time and writing assistants during the exams.

It was also apprised that PWDs were being given two-year relaxation in the upper age limit under the CSS Competitive Examination Rules.

Khattak unveils party manifesto for elections

PESHAWAR (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Pervez Khattak unveiled the manifesto for the upcoming elections. Addressing a press conference, Khattak mentioned providing free emergency treatment to 1.8 million people through health cards. He said the recruitment of staff in hospitals and police and reforms were made during his tenure as KP chief minister. He recounted the feats of his five-year tenure as KP chief minister.

Khattak expressed concern over the discontinuation of health cards, highlighting its injustice to the needy. He outlined plans to engage with the federation for electricity and gas revenue for the province, citing the establishment of 250 small hydro projects during his tenure.

Maritime Security Exercise SEA GUARD-24 commences at Karachi

KARACHI (INP): The opening brief of Exercise SEA GUARD-24 was held at Karachi on Tuesday with Commander Coast Vice Admiral Raja Rab Nawaz as Chief Guest.

Representatives of various ministries, departments and organizations having linkages with maritime sector like Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Maritime Affairs, Ministry of Livestock and Fishing Sindh, Ministry of National Food Security and Research, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Narcotics Control, private entities and NGOs were involved in the exercise to support multifaceted challenges of Maritime arena both from traditional and non-traditional threats.

The session which includes Pakistan National Shipping Corporation, Anti-Narcotics Force, Pakistan Coast Guards, PMSA, KPT, Port QASIM, BYCO Petroleum was attended by leadership of various organizations in addition to other prominent figures from private sector and fishing community.

Exercise Sea Guard aims to synergize efforts of stakeholders while remaining within their legal framework through a common pedestal of Joint Maritime Information Coordination Centre (JMICC) to ensure security of Maritime Zones of Pakistan. During the opening brief, participants were briefed about working methodology and contributions of JMICC to ensure maritime safety and security along our Coastline.

Commander Coast Vice Admiral Raja Rab Nawaz applauded the efforts of all stakeholders.



QUETTA: A delegation of Darul Amaal Welfare Organization led by Adnan Arif Jahangir meeting with Governor Balochistan Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar

Steps being taken for improving power supply situation in GB

Independent Report
GILGIT: The steps are continued for improving the situation of electricity supply in Gilgit Baltistan, in light of the special directives of Chief Minister GB.

The crackdown has already been started against the illegal electricity connections, shunt meters as well as against the defaulters of electricity dues and power pilferers in all districts of the province.

The general public has been appealed to pay the utility bills well in time. In this regard, the Chief Engineer Power, Ghulam Murtaza has stated that steps are being taken to reduce the duration of electricity load shedding in the Gilgit Division. He expressed the hope that the electricity supply would be improved as a result of commissioning of new projects in the power sector.

The Chief Engineer said that the Power Department is working round the clock to reduce the load shedding despite reduction in the water quantity due to the lack of raining and snowfall this year. He also said that the Power Department is extremely busy in ensuring the electricity supply to the respectable consumers mainly because of the special interest taken by Chief Minister Gilgit Baltistan.

Corruption case: Court hands over co-accused of Pervaiz Elahi to NAB

LAHORE (APP): An accountability court on Tuesday handed over Asif Mehmood, a co-accused of former chief minister Punjab Chaudhry Parvez Elahi in a corruption case, to National Accountability Bureau (NAB) on 7-day physical remand.

Earlier, the NAB officials produced co-accused Asif Mehmood before Accountability Court Judge Zubair Shahzad Kiyani.

The investigation officer submitted that the custody of the accused was required for investigations.

Asghar Achakzai urges masses to defeat so-called nationalist religious groups in elections

Independent Report
CHAMAN: The provincial president of Awami National Party (ANP) Asghar Khan Achakzai has stated that the defeated elements are baffled out after being scared from popularity of the party.

He said that the people would defeat the so-called nationalist and religious groups in the next general elections of February 8 in the country.

He said that ANP is a responsible political Democratic Party and as such the so-called groups can't prove to be its alternate.

He urged the party workers and other responsible persons to focus on the upcoming elections.

Asghar Khan Achakzai was addressing a joining ceremony in Daman Miralzai Killi Haji Muhammad Rasool Noorzai under the auspices of ANP Tehsil Sadar on Tuesday. The leading personalities of Mirgi branch of Noorzai tribe including Abdul Hadi, Lal Muhammad Khan, Muhammad Hashim and Abdul Rauf Ghaffar announced to join ANP along with a large number of companions and families after resigning from JUI.



KARACHI: 'Commander Coast Vice Admiral Raja Rab Nawaz addressing opening brief of Maritime Security Exercise SEA GUARD-24

PM assures govt's full support to UNICEF on public welfare projects

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Tuesday assured the government's full support to the United Nations International Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF) for launching the projects of public welfare in Pakistan.

"The government will provide all possible facilities to the UNICEF for launching welfare projects in education, health and other sectors," he said while talking to the UNICEF's representative in Pakistan Abdullah Fadil who called on him here.

During the meeting, Abdullah Fadil briefed the prime minister on the steps taken by UNICEF in various areas of Pakistan.

He told the prime minister that during the last five years, around US\$1 billion projects had been established in a range of fields including humanitarian aid, clean drinking water, food supply, education, and health under UNICEF in Pakistan.

The prime minister appreciated UNICEF Pakistan for successfully launching several projects for public welfare.

Terming UNICEF's role in the anti-polio drive in Pakistan as of special importance, he said a positive change in the anti-polio vaccination drive was being seen among the masses due to mutual collaboration of the government of Pakistan and UNICEF.

The prime minister also appreciated UNICEF for taking steps in the education sector in Azad Jammu and Kashmir despite intense Indian criticism.

He asked Abdullah Fadil to constitute a new and effective strategy to provide education to the out of school children in Pakistan.

He also supported the steps taken by UNICEF to introduce modern technology in the education sector in underdeveloped areas of the country.

"The illiteracy rate in the country can be brought down significantly by helping the students of remote areas get access to the state of the art information through tablets," the prime minister added.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training, Mr. Madad Ali Sindhi met with Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture Jamal Shah and Secretary Information Ms Shahera Shahid to discuss the arrangements of celebration of 100 years of Shaikh Ayaz.

Minorities have constitutional protection for rights including religious freedom: Governor

Independent Report
QUETTA: The Governor Balochistan, Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar has stated that all the minorities have the constitutional protection of all rights including the religious freedom in Pakistan.

The Governor also noted with pleasure that all minorities including Christian community are playing positive and effective role in construction and development of the province and country.

Malik Abdul Wali Khan stated so while speaking to a delegation who called on him under leadership of head of Darul Amal Welfare Organization, Adnan Arif Jahangir here on Tuesday.

The members of delegation apprised the Governor about the issues being faced by the minorities.

They also made certain demands for resolving the issues.

The Governor gave patient hearing to the issues as mentioned by the members of delegation.

He assured of his every possible cooperation to resolve the issues.

Ex-PTI chairman, wife indicted in Toshakhana case

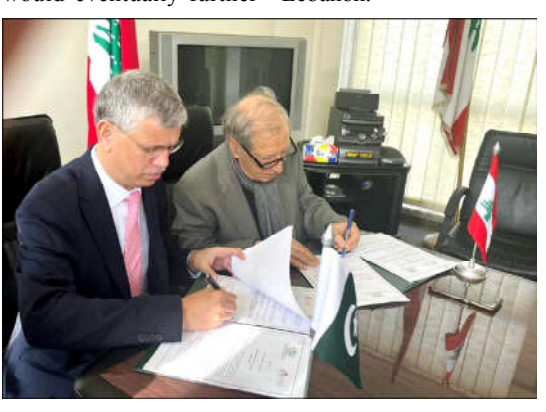
RAWALPINDI (INP): An accountability court indicted on Tuesday Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan and his spouse Bushra Bibi in the Toshakhana reference.

Accountability Court Judge Muhammad Bashir announced the decision during a hearing in the case today which was conducted in Adiala jail. National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Deputy Prosecutor General Sardar Muzaffar Abbasi and Amjad Pervez, Special Prosecutors Irfan Bhola, Sohail Arif and others appeared in the court.

Pak, Lebanon sign accord for media regulatory bodies' cooperation

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and Lebanon have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to promote cooperation between the regulatory bodies of their media which would eventually further strengthen the bilateral relations.

The MoU was signed between the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) and the Audiovisual Council of Lebanon (CNA) in Beirut.



ambassador of Pakistan to Lebanon Salman Athar signed the MoU with President of the National Audiovisual Council of Lebanon Hadi Mahfouz on behalf of PEMRA.

Balochistan cabinet decides to build cricket academy for youth in Quetta: Jan

QUETTA (APP): Balochistan Caretaker Minister for Information, Jan Achakzai on Tuesday said that Balochistan cabinet has decided to build a cricket academy for youth in Quetta.

He expressed these views while addressing a press conference here.

Jan Achakzai said that youth of this province had made bright names in sports field.

He said that the cricket academy will run under the supervision of a well-known cricketer Ahmed Shahzad who would share a road map with cricketers of provincial areas of Balochistan. He further stated that Ahmed Shahzad would play a role in hunting talented players from this region. He said that young athletes would be encouraged by training and for this, the establishment of a cricket academy would provide opportunities to the young people to show their professional skills in the field of sports.

In reply to a question about the Afghan issue, he said that Afghan patients could come to Pakistan for medical treatment with valid documents.

He, however, said that no illegal foreign person could enter this country without valid documents. To another question, he said that Pakistan is a democratic country and everyone has the right to protest peacefully.