

Independent

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Armed forces fully prepared to thwart any aggression: COAS

Lauds operational preparedness of PAF in incorporating state-of-the-art weapon systems

RAWALPINDI (Online): An Induction and Operationalization Ceremony was held at an operational base of Pakistan Air Force, today.

General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M) Chief of Army Staff, attended the distinguished ceremony as the Chief Guest.

Upon his arrival at the base, Chief of Army Staff was received by Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force.

The ceremony showcased the newly inducted weapon systems and defence assets of PAF.

Upon his arrival, a smartly turned-out contingent of Pakistan Air Force presented Guard of Honour to the COAS.



During his speech CAS highlighted the latest inductions in the PAF's arsenal comprising of J-10C fighter jets, air mobility platforms, modern Radars, Unmanned Aerial Systems, Loitering munition capabilities and Long Range Vectors which have significantly bolstered the aerial defence capabilities of the country.

CAS also mentioned that Center of Excellence for Air Mobility & Aviation Safety, College of Air Defence and reinvigoration of Air Power Centre of Excellence alongside operationalization of National Aerospace Science and Technology Park has provided PAF the capability to stay abreast with the evolving challenges. He emphasized upon the progress achieved by PAF in the emerging domains of Cyber and Space technologies to ensure an impenetrable defence of the country.

Appellate Tribunal hears appeals of candidates: Abdul Khaliq Hazara, Ahmed Nawaz, Zakir Kasi, Muhammad Hussain allowed to contest elections

Independent Report
QUETTA: The Appellate Tribunal has allowed candidates of different parties to contest the upcoming general elections in the Province. The Tribunal comprising the senior judge of Balochistan High Court, Mr. Justice Muhammad Hashim Kakar heard the appeals of candidates against rejection of their nomination papers.

The Tribunal restored the papers of leader and candidate of Balochistan National Party, Ahmed Nawaz Baloch allowing him to contest the election.

His papers were rejected by the concerned Returning Officer from PB-44.

Similarly, the Chairman of Hazara Democratic Party, Abdul Khaliq Hazara was also allowed to contest the elections. The papers of Hazara were rejected on the basis of lack of bank statement.

As the objection was

cleared thus his papers were accepted.

Meanwhile, the Tribunal also allowed Muhammad Hussain to contest the elections from PB-42. His papers were rejected on the basis that he didn't attach the utility bill of electricity with the papers. Moreover, an independent candidate namely Zakir Hussain Kasi was allowed to contest the general elections from PB-41.

However, the Tribunal directed the BNP candidate Malik Naseer Shahwani to bring the fresh bank statement. It may be mentioned here that papers of Naseer Shahwani were rejected from PB-46. His papers were rejected by the concerned Returning Officer.

The Appellate Tribunal also restored the nomination papers of PPP leader Tahir Mehmood Khan and an independent candidate, Mufti Gulab allowing them to contest the elections.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate, Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani exchanging views with Fahad Sulaiman Khalif AlKharusi, Ambassador of Sultanate of Oman during meeting held at Parliament House in Islamabad.

Human trafficking menace insurmountable sans improved economic situation: Solangi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Limited presence of the members of the Upper House.

The questions pertaining to the government measures and their outcomes to curb the human of human trafficking were put to the floor by Senator Kamran Murtaza of Jamaat Ulema-i-Islam Pakistan (JUI-P), Senator Mushtaq Ahmed Khan of Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan (JIP) and independent Senator Nuzhat Sadiq.

Solangi noted that the Senators had raised important points, whereas the solution lied in the fact that the country had to fix its economy.

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LAHORE: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar in an interactive session with the students of Beaconhouse National University.

No one has impunity to spread violence; State to ensure law & order: PM Kakar

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Tuesday reiterated that the State would not allow anyone to unleash violence and kill people in the name of political, ethnic and religious divides as it was its responsibility to ensure law and order.

The prime minister, in a lengthy interaction with the students of the Beaconhouse National University, said that no one could be given a licence to kill and eliminate others on the basis of political, ethnic and religious differences.

"To maintain law and order is the responsibility of the State, and I assure you that such elements will never prevail on the State of Pakistan," he asserted.

The prime minister, elaborating his viewpoint while responding to a question, said that the one who reverted to fighting

with the State and the countrymen would get the befitting response.

He said that the government would not allow terrorists and militants to kill people with impunity as they had openly declared fight against the State and the civilians in the country.

"We have accepted their challenge," he said and expressed the resolve to fully respond to all threats with full force.

To another query, he said that the government functioned primarily on revenue generation system. The country had a tax collection of over Rs 9,000 billion, but there was tax evasion of more than almost Rs 10,000 billion.

The lack of effective revenue system had been a persistent problem which required effective steps to rectify.

He said that it was a consistent story with different past political set-

ups and military dictators.

For strengthening of economy, it was the first and foremost requirement to develop a robust tax system, he added, citing the Scandinavian countries with the highest tax revenue figures to their GDP (Gross Domestic Product).

The caretaker prime minister said that if the interim set-up in the country could achieve the target, then why not an elected government! If they were not able to achieve such, then there was a serious flaw in the governance system, he opined.

He also underlined the need of improvement in the structure of bureaucracy and the governance system.

About a question related to Gaza, the caretaker prime minister said that Israel was displaying a force of brutality with impunity.



QUETTA: A delegation of Taraqi Foundation led by Essa Khan Kakar meeting with Governor Balochistan Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar

U.S. Ambassador calls on FM Jilani

ISLAMABAD (Online): U.S. Ambassador Donald Blome met today with Caretaker Foreign Minister Jilani to discuss a wide range of important bilateral issues, including expanded diplomatic engagement, the safe and efficient processing of Afghan citizens eligible for resettlement to the United States, as well as other issues of mutual interest.

The US Ambassador to Pakistan, Donald Bloom, called on Foreign Minister today. Discussions focused on some major aspects of bilateral relations including the recent visit of the Chief of Army Staff to the United States.

Former FM Sartaj Aziz passes away

Islamabad: Former federal minister for finance Sartaj Aziz passed away on Tuesday at the age of 95.

PML-N leader Ahsan Iqbal shared the message on social media.

Born in 1929, Mr Aziz had a long career encompassing public office, academia, and the civil service.

He shaped economic strategies that led Pakistan through pivotal periods while holding prominent posts in the Planning Commission and the Ministry of Finance.

Governor calls for executing dev. schemes as per public needs under comprehensive planning

Independent Report
QUETTA: The Governor Balochistan, Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar has emphasized upon executing the development schemes by the welfare organizations as per requirements of the general public under comprehensive planning so as to yield better results.

We can get better results if the development schemes are implemented to benefit large number of people instead of small schemes in different areas making them role model for other areas as well.

The Governor said that there is a need to promote sense of responsibility among masses in order to make the development process more effective and result oriented.

He was speaking to a delegation of Taraqi Foundation who called on him under leadership of ESA Khan Kakar here at the Governor House on Tuesday.

The members of delegation apprised the Governor about the performance of the Foundation.

Arms, ammunition, and explosives were recovered from the killed terrorists.

A sanitization operation is currently underway to eliminate any other terrorists found in the area, as the security forces of Pakistan are determined to eradicate the menace of terrorism from the country.

Exercise BARRACUDA-XII commences at Karachi

KARACHI (APP): International Exercise BARRACUDA-XII formally commences here at Headquarters Pakistan Maritime Security Agency (PMSA), on Tuesday.

The event started with an impressive flag hoisting ceremony followed by wreath laying on Shuhada (martyrs) monument, a Pakistan Navy news release said.

The ceremony was attended by observers from 13 friendly countries and officers of Pakistan Navy and PMSA. Exercise BARRACUDA-XII

is scheduled from January 02-04 and comprising Harbour and Sea phases.

The opening brief of the exercise was held at Karachi. Federal Minister for Climate Change Ahmed Irfan Aslam graced the occasion as Chief Guest.

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SC expresses resolve to end enforced disappearances once and for all

CJP says matter of missing persons is of serious nature; Says every institution should remain within its limits; We cannot order Parliament to legislate

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa on Tuesday said that the Supreme Court wanted to solve the problem of missing persons and enforced disappearances "once and for all".

"This country belongs to all of us, even those who may have other points of view," he said. "This matter will only be resolved when we all work together and take responsibility.

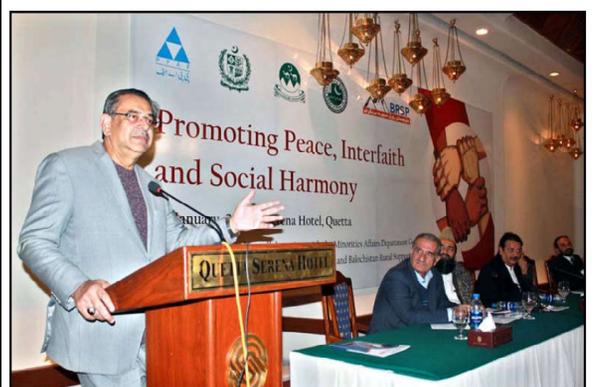
Let's make Pakistan strong from within. If Pakistan is strong from within, no outside forces can touch it," the CJP added.

Justice Isa passed these remarks as a three-member bench comprising the CJP, Justice Musarrat Hilali and Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar heard a set of petitions against missing persons.

One of the pleas included an application filed by former senator and senior lawyer Aitzaz Ahsan.

Online adds: Supreme Court (SC) while adjourning hearing of enforced disappearances and missing persons case till today (Wednesday) has sought reply from Attorney General (AG).

Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa has remarked we cannot order parliament to legislate. Every institution should remain within its limits.



QUETTA: Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Aneeq Ahmed addressing a seminar titled Promoting Peace, Interfaith and Social Harmony.

Security forces kill four terrorists in NW operation

RAWALPINDI (APP): Four terrorists, including a suicide bomber, were killed in an intelligence-based operation in North Waziristan on Tuesday.

During the operation, an intense exchange of fire took place between our troops and the terrorists.

According to Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the slain terrorists had been actively involved in numerous terrorist activities against the security forces. They were also planning to conduct a high-profile terrorist attack, which was averted due to the proactive response by the security forces.

Arms, ammunition, and explosives were recovered from the killed terrorists.

A sanitization operation is currently underway to eliminate any other terrorists found in the area, as the security forces of Pakistan are determined to eradicate the menace of terrorism from the country.

Aneeq advocates collective action for national interfaith harmony

QUETTA (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Aneeq Ahmed, stressed on Tuesday stressed the need for collective efforts to promote peace and interfaith harmony in the country.

Speaking in a seminar organized by BRSP in collaboration with PPAF, Federal Minister for Religious Affairs Aneeq Ahmed, Caretaker Minister for Home and Tribal Affairs Balochistan Mir Zubair Jamali, and Balochistan Minister for Education Qadir Bakhs Baloch underscored the significance of religious scholars, federal and provincial governments, civil society, and media in advancing peace, interfaith, and social harmony in Balochistan.

The Federal Minister said a sum of Rs 100,000 reduction has been made in this year's Hajj package. The Ministry has also developed a mobile application to assist pilgrims throughout their Hajj journey and stay in Saudi Arabia, along with the provision of complimentary mobile SIMs for Hajjaj.

Aneeq Ahmed stated that the Ministry will provide Abayas with the Pakistani flag embossed for female pilgrims this year. He emphasized the government's tangible efforts to foster interfaith harmony, highlighting the pressing need for dialogue among religions and civilizations to establish peace.

The members of delegation apprised the Governor about the performance of the Foundation.

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ECP issues notices to BNP, PkMAP & JUI on violation of election Code of Conduct

Independent Report
QUETTA: The Election Commission of Pakistan has issued notices to three political parties on violation of election code of conduct.

According to the official sources, the notices were issued to Balochistan National Party, Pashtoonkhw Milli Awami Party and Jamiat Ulema Islam.

The notices were sent to the provincial heads of the parties.

As per the notices, the parties painted the street light poles with parties flags in Sariab area.

It was mentioned in the notices that the parties can't hoist their flags at the public buildings or any other properties.

It has been directed to the concerned parties to remove the colour from the poles of street light within three days.

Otherwise legal action would be taken against them, it was warned.

Daily Voice of Masses Independent

SBP's projections

The State Bank Governor's Annual Report for FY2023 is "cautiously optimistic" about the economy. It projects headline price inflation to drop, the current account deficit to narrow, and GDP to expand during the ongoing fiscal year.

However, the report warns, this outlook hinges on the absence of adverse shocks stemming from geopolitical tensions, unforeseen climate events and unfavourable movements in global commodity prices. That aside, the bank expects inflation to slow down to 20pc-22pc, the current account gap to narrow to 0.5pc-1.5pc of GDP, and the economy to grow by 2pc-3pc. The projected recovery is modest but still a source of comfort after a tumultuous year in which Pakistan barely avoided default.

"The economic landscape of Pakistan has faced unprecedented challenges throughout the fiscal year," the report notes, highlighting that political uncertainty was another factor impacting business and consumer sentiments, thus affecting economic activity. The report asserts the "SBP's commitment to maintain price stability", highlighting the "crucial role of fiscal policy and effective administration in supporting stability". But, such assertions have featured in most previous SBP reports, including the bank's monetary policy statements, in the last few years.

There is no doubt about the core role of fiscal policy in our balance-of-payments crisis as well as escalating inflation — the bank cannot absolve itself of its own part. Its past projections have often proved wrong, and the SBP has been behind the curve when it comes to taming inflation and checking the dollar's flight.

It may be impossible to undo the past but with 2023 behind us, many want to know if our rulers have learnt their lesson and are prepared to meet the upcoming challenges. This year should see stabilisation. The new government, which will take office after the February polls, will have its work cut out.

The first and most crucial challenge for it would be to negotiate a bigger, medium-term IMF loan to stabilise the external sector and raise funds from other bilateral, multilateral and commercial creditors in order to build the country's foreign exchange reserves. Such a deal will entail a series of difficult fiscal, governance and structural reforms. The question is: will a government taking office as a result of a tainted election and questionable mandate be able to execute the required reforms and make tough decisions? This year is going to be a defining one for Pakistan's future trajectory. Many countries have managed to turn their crises into opportunities for fixing their respective economies.

All our economic challenges, including the ongoing balance-of-payment crisis and shortage of foreign currency, can be fixed. We are at a crucial juncture from where we can turn either way: towards a brighter and prosperous future or total collapse. It is all in our own hands.

Fertiliser subsidy



Aijaz A. Nizamani

Wheat is the most important dietary component in food consumed in Pakistan. The same is reflected in Pakistan's cultivation trends, with over 22 million acres of farmland — more than 50 per cent of the cropped area — allocated to wheat crops in the winter. The winter season is when fertiliser requirements peak, and fertiliser plants have to compete with power plants for natural gas in order to produce nitrogenous fertiliser.

However, dwindling domestic supplies and increased competition in the international market for natural gas have made these competing demands nearly impossible for Pakistani policymakers to manage. Invariably, bureaucrats and politicians make a mess of the situation, and the high cost of their mess is passed on to consumers and producers alike. It is no surprise that the country imports millions of tonnes of wheat worth hundreds of millions of dollars every year.

The current year's budget has allocated Rs30 billion for fertiliser subsidies. This subsidy is used to pay for cheap gas to fertiliser plants, which, in return, are supposed to provide their urea and phosphatic fertiliser products at administered rates to farmers through their distribution networks. The list of ministries and bureaucracies involved in the disbursement of this subsidy is mind-boggling. For a comparatively low figure of Rs30bn, the list of ministries involved includes the Ministry of Industries and Production,

the Ministry of Petroleum, the Oil & Gas Regulatory Authority, the Cabinet Division, the Ministry of Food Security and Research and the Ministry of Finance.

Since their bureaucrats get caught up in turf wars, making timely decisions is not possible. Each year, delayed government decisions on setting gas prices for fertiliser plants also result in bottlenecks in the value chain. Gas supply bottlenecks give rise to discrimination: the Competition Commission of Pakistan is often approached by plants that do not receive enough supply of gas, while others are reportedly favoured.

The impact of this mismanagement is seen in the small-town markets of rural Pakistan, where farmers are paying between Rs5,000 and Rs5,500 for a bag of urea in the black market, which is supposed to be sold at Rs3,250 this season. The situation was no different under the PTI government when farmers queued all day to receive just two bags of fertiliser.

Industry sources say the country has enough plant capacity to produce more fertiliser than needed by local farmers. So, why are wheat farmers forced to buy from the black market each year in winter, especially for a crop as important as wheat? The price differential is not the only issue: producers also suffer from what economists call high transaction costs, as well as the loss of valuable time. They are unable to provide crops with vital plant nutrients when they are critically needed, resulting in loss of production, which is ultimately met through wheat imports.

The fertiliser subsidy is not provided to farmers but to fertiliser plants — in other words, to industrialists. The rationale provided for this arrangement is that it ul-

timately helps farmers. However, as the experience every year shows, it does not work that way, as farmers invariably pay more than administered prices for their requirements. Some studies done by the Pakistan Institute for Development Economics also show that the fertiliser subsidy does not significantly impact food costs for the poor. The logical question is: why not do away with the subsidy altogether when both consumers and producers (farmers) do not get the value it is paid for?

Since farmers are net losers in this subsidy regime, it is they who should demand a liberal fertiliser import and export mechanism. It looks like even fertiliser manufacturers are not averse to a market-based mechanism: they believe they can export fertiliser under such a regime, bringing in as much as \$500m in foreign exchange. Free imports and an export facilitation policy would go a long way towards improving food security while cutting out meddlesome bureaucracies.

This will, undoubtedly, require government regulation, but this must be light and enable activity, instead of stifling it. The next question would be how to incentivise the wheat crop in case the fertiliser subsidy is done away with. The solution lies in direct fiscal transfers to farmers, as is done in all OECD countries. The government may support a certain amount, like Rs5,000 per acre, with a ceiling of 10 acres per farmer. This will be a targeted production subsidy for small and medium farmers. It can easily be put into practice using satellite and technology, and disbursed directly to farmers' bank accounts with minimum involvement of bureaucratic personnel. -- Courtesy Dawn

Mass extinction



Aisha Khan

The end of the 28th session of the Conference of Parties in December 2023 moved the needle forward on climate action but not at the pace needed to avert the sixth mass extinction. As eco-anxiety grows and optimists try to rationalise slow progress, with the inherent constraints of multilateral processes, the clock keeps ticking, reminding us of the perils and predilections of change and the timescale for keeping life systems alive.

The conversation on climate has become so jargon filled and technical in its approach that at times it loses sight of the here and now, becoming occasionally delusional and sometimes capricious.

Anatomically, modern humans emerged around 200,000 years ago in a process of evolution from ancestral Homo sapiens dating back six million years. Civilisation as we know it started around 6,000 years back and the advent of the industrial age began in 1850.

In the span of 173 years, humans have successfully landed on the moon but degraded ecosystems and destroyed the environment on planet Earth. Today, with advancements in science and technology, life expectancy has increased, progress in communication has transformed connectivity and creature comforts have enhanced life quality beyond imagination.

Ironically, all this has come at the cost of development that has turned into an existential threat. The main culprit for disrupting planetary balance are greenhouse gases.

As we enter 2024, it is important to put some things in perspective. The blame game at negotiations has gone on for 28 years. Perhaps it is time to take more individual responsibility and combine the two to save our species. A change in perspective may also alter thinking and help in finding solutions faster.

The dilemma facing the world is not only about how to reduce carbon emissions; in fact, it is more about how to retain existing lifestyles without compromising on quality or changing consumption patterns.

At COP28 Sultan al-Jaber earned flak for his statement that was interpreted to mean that giving up fossil fuels is tantamount to going back to the cave age. Seen in a broader perspective, perhaps it suggests that no one is quite ready yet to give up on lifestyles supported by fossil fuel. This applies to people from all tiers of society, across sectors, institutions and affiliations.

The outcry every year at climate summits is on the ascendant, and disappointment outshines hope. However, the fundamental question that holds the key to the climate conundrum remains unanswered. How much are we willing as citizens and societies to give up on current consumption patterns to embrace a low-carbon-footprint lifestyle? After all, it is possible to curtail supply by reducing demand.

Data demonstrates that modern food systems drive 90 per cent of deforestation and 60pc of biodiversity loss, and account for 70pc of the world's use of freshwater. Overall, food systems alone contribute to over one-third of global greenhouse emissions. By going vegan the global population could reduce greenhouse gas emissions from food production by 28pc. And yet

only 1-2pc of the world population is vegan.

The list of possible individual actions is as long as the list of commitments made by nations at climate summits.

Extinction is not a new phenomenon on planet Earth. There have been five previous mass extinctions. Many researchers argue that we are in the middle of a sixth mass extinction. The common denominator in all previous extinctions was a drastic change in the carbon cycle. The Permian-Triassic Extinction that took place 250m years ago was the largest mass extinction event in Earth's history, affecting a range of species. The loss of biodiversity ended all life.

Today, the overgrowth and transformative behaviour of a single species is destroying habitats and unleashing a crisis. A European Commission modelling study shows likely extinction of 27pc of plants and animals by 2100. This continued disruption in the biosphere poses an extinction threat to one-half of Earth's higher life forms by the turn of the century.

From all evidence, it seems that human beings are an aberration in the evolutionary process. They show scant respect for nature, are wasteful in their use of natural resources, degrade the environment, harm biodiversity, destroy the ecosystems that support them, and kill their own species. Rich, developing and poor nations all follow the same exploitative pattern of human behaviour. The home truth is that the battle for human survival will not be won at the negotiating tables but by solutions provided by science and technology. Evolution will not stop with Homo sapiens. We might even be taken over by other forms of life in a new world order governed by artificial intelligence. -- Courtesy Dawn

Commerce News

High-profile Chinese business delegation meets Planning Minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): A high-profile business delegation of China, led by the Chairman of Chang Chinag Chamber of Commerce Li Ting, met with Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Muhammad Sami Saeed on Tuesday.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed potential collaboration opportunities between Pakistan and China in various sectors, fostering business expansion and

exploring new investment avenues, a news release said.

Comprising eight members, the delegation represented diverse industries such as import and export, technology, electronics, machinery, office supplies, apparel, and building materials. The discussions centred on strengthening bilateral ties and identifying strategic areas for mutually beneficial partnerships.

Minister Sami Saeed

emphasized key sectors for investment, including Agriculture, Information Technology & Telecommunications, Mines & Minerals and Energy sectors.

He highlighted the opportunities to utilize Special Economic Zones (SEZs), stating that Pakistan encourages foreign investment, especially Chinese investors for the joint ventures and relocation of industries to Pakistan.



LAHORE: A delegation of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry led by Federal Minister of Commerce and Industry, Gohar Ijaz, Federal Minister of Finance, Dr. Shamshad Akhtar and Provincial Minister of Industry and Commerce, S. M. Tanveer in a group photo with Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman at Governor House.

BISP Savings Scheme Landmark step to instill financial independence among vulnerable sections

ISLAMABAD (APP): The newly launched 'Savings Scheme' by the internationally acclaimed Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) will prove as a landmark step towards instilling financial independence and promoting a savings culture among the vulnerable sections of society.

The BISP Saving Scheme is aimed at providing a financial buffer to the piece-rate workers for unexpected expenses

and emergencies, making them self-reliant. According to the Director General National Socio Economic Registry (NSER) BISP, Naveed Akbar, the piece rate workers were the biggest affected during the COVID-19 who found it hard to earn their livelihood as they lacked savings. Therefore to mitigate their sufferings, the government provided one-time financial assistance to them of Rs. 12,000 during that difficult time.

Gold rates up by Rs.1,600

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold increased by Rs.1,600 and was sold at Rs.221,300 on Tuesday compared to its sale at Rs.219,700 on the last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs.1,372 to Rs.189,729 from Rs.188,357 whereas the price of 10 grams 22 karat gold went up to Rs.173,918 from Rs.172,661, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola and ten-gram silver remained unchanged at Rs2,680 and Rs.2,297.66 respectively.



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New FPCCI Regional Chairman, VPs assume offices

LAHORE: Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry's (FPCCI) newly elected Regional Chairman and Vice President Zaki Aijaz Qureshi and Vice President Zain Iftikhar Chaudhry assumed the charge of their offices in a ceremony held here at FPCCI Regional Office on Tuesday.

A special ceremony was held in honor of the newly elected officials in which Punjab's Minister for Industries and Commerce and Patron in Chief of United Business Group (UBG) SM Tanveer, former President FPCCI Zubair

Tufail, former Senior Vice President FPCCI Aamir Atta Bajwa, former LCCI President Almas Hyder, Momin Ali Malik, Ali Hussam Asghar, Ahmed Chennai, Mian Zahid Hussain, Muhammad Sohail, Zafar Mahmood Chaudhry, Malik Tahir Javed, Mian Shafiqat, Sohail Lashari, Mahmood Ghaznavi, Khawaja Shahzad Nasir and a large number of businessmen participated in the ceremony and congratulated to the newly-elected office-bearers on their historic success in the FPCCI elections.

Railways staff' efforts for record revenue earning of Rs. 41.b acknowledged

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Federal Minister for Communication, Railways and Maritime Affairs, Shahid Ashraf Tarar has commended the efforts of Railways Staff and management for record revenue earning of 41 billion rupees during the first half of the fiscal year 2023-24.

There is a 46 percent increase in revenue of Pakistan Railways in comparison to the same period of last year, said a

news release. Pakistan Railways earned revenue of 24 billion rupees from passenger trains and 11.5 billion from freight trains in the first six months. Income from other sectors was about five billion rupees. The increase in revenue is the result of effective and efficient reforms introduced by Pakistan Railways management and the tireless work and dedication of railway employees.

Export set to reach the targeted capacity of \$3bln per month soon

ISLAMABAD (Online): Dr. Gohar Ejaz, the Minister for Commerce, Industries and Investment announced today that exports in December 2023 increased by 22.2% to USD 2.812 billion from USD 2.301 billion in December 2022. He said that the increase is 9.3% with USD 2.573 billion exports in November 2023.

He also said that the said positive trend extends to

imports as well which decreased by 12.25% in December 2023 to USD4.514 billion compared to USD 5.144 billion in December 2022.

Looking at the broader picture, the exports in Jul-Dec 2023 witnessed continued export growth and increased by 5.2% to USD 14.981 billion from USD 14.244 billion during the same period in preceding year. Notably, imports during this period saw a

significant 16.28% reduction compared to the same period in 2022, falling from USD 31.209 billion to a much lower USD 26.129 billion.

These developments translate to a substantial narrowing of the trade deficit. In December 2023 alone, the deficit shrank by a significant 40% to USD 1.7 billion, representing a decrease of USD 1.141 billion compared to the previous year.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Three ships namely, MSC Jemima, Luna Rossa and IVS Crimson Creek carrying Container, Wheat and Coal, berthed at Container Terminal, Grain Terminal and Bulk Terminal respectively on Monday.

Meanwhile four more ships, Maersk Kensington, Rich Rainbow, FSM and Limra also arrived at outer-anchorage of the Port Qasim during last 24 hours to load/unload Containers, Palm oil and LPGs respectively.

A total of ten ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them two ships, Ullswater and Sunray are left the port on today morning and three more ships, MSC Jemima, Leila Confidence and Al-Bidda are expected.

FTO disposes of 17,101 complaints in 3 years

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Tax Ombudsman (FTO) on Tuesday released its three years performance report from 2021 to 2023, during which the department disposed of around 17,101 complaints.

Addressing a press conference, FTO Registrar Muhammad Majid Qureshi along with Advisor Media Nazim

Saleem and Advisor Customs Dr Arslan Subcutegene highlighted performance of the FTO year by year.

The performance report covered three major aspects of the organization including registration of complaints, disposal of complaints, and implementation of the recommendations.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for IT and Telecommunication Dr. Umar Saif in a meeting with British High Commissioner to Pakistan Ms. Jane Marriott.

KP govt invests in youth prosperity: CM

Inaugurates technical training under 'Khushal KP Programme'

PESHAWAR (APP): Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Justice (Retd) Arshad Hussain Shah said on Tuesday that youth are our assets, and the KP government is investing in them to build prosperity.

He addressed the inaugural ceremony of the Khushal Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Program, which aims to create technical training and employment opportunities for the youth.

He expressed concern over the longstanding issue of unemployment in the country, emphasizing the distress caused by witnessing the youth facing

joblessness. "We have implemented a program prioritizing the training of the youth on preferential grounds," he said.

He highlighted that this training program is a crucial component of the Khushal Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Program, describing it as a comprehensive initiative that will have lasting effects.

He stated that this is a program for the welfare of humanity, and its success requires collective efforts. In the first phase, over one hundred thousand young individuals will undergo vocational

courses, aimed at equipping them with skills beyond just information technology.

Chief Minister outlined the program's definitive goal of providing training to at least five hundred thousand youth, ultimately facilitating their employment.

He emphasized the clear roadmap established for the welfare of the youth, which will also serve as a helpful guide for the incoming government. As part of the programme, initially, over 0.1 million young individuals will undergo various courses, including IT, in addition to other fields.

Governor requested to play role in preventing use of e-cigarettes among youth

PESHAWAR (APP): Blue Veins and the Provincial Alliance for Sustainable Tobacco Control, a CSOs led alliance working to lead tobacco control initiatives, has requested Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali to play his effective role in preventing use of e-cigarettes and vapes among young population.

In a letter to Governor KP Haji Ghulam Ali, both Blue Veins and Provincial Alliance for Sustainable

Tobacco Control brought his attention to a pressing issue that is affecting the youth of the province.

"The leadership of Governor, Haji Ghulam Ali can set a precedent for other provinces of Pakistan, showcasing Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as role model for proactive and preventive health governance," reads the letter. A concerning rise in use of e-cigarettes and vapes has been observed among youngsters in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, adds the letter.



HYDERABAD: People warm their hands on bonfire to save themselves from cold waves during the winter season, in Hyderabad.

Former CJ PHC, Qaisar Rasheed passes away

PESHAWAR (APP): Former Chief Justice Peshawar High Court (PHC), Justice Qaisar Rasheed breathed his last at a local hospital here on Tuesday.

Hospital sources said, Justice Qaisar Rasheed was admitted to the hospital for the last many days. Justice Rasheed was on a ventilator for the last three days and today he left this mortal world.

One killed, another injured

FAISALABAD (APP): A woman was killed in an accident while a youth was injured during a robbery near here on Tuesday.

According to the Rescue 1122, a woman was hit to death by a rashly driven car near Kohistan express service. The victim was later identified as Zahra Kalsoom of Muzaffar Colony Saman Abad. The body was handed over to police while the driver fled away.



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Haji Ghulam Ali inaugurates academic block for Bachelors Degree Programme Paramedics at Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto Postgraduate Paramedical Institute.

Punjab CM says: Efforts would be made to induce artificial rainfall with assistance of the UAE team

LAHORE: Ahmed Al-Kamal, head of the cloud-seeding team from the United Arab Emirates' meteorology department, chief pilot Michael Anstis and pilot Col Ubaid called on Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi at his office on Tuesday.

The CM thanked the

team members for their endeavors to induce artificial rainfall to reduce smog and expressed gratitude for the UAE's cooperation, acknowledging it as the first-ever successful attempt at artificial rainfall in Lahore's history.

Chief Minister Naqvi stated that the Punjab government appreciates the

collaboration with the UAE, and reiterated the need for artificial rainfall to combat smog. He assured that further efforts would be made to induce artificial rainfall, once again, when the required atmospheric conditions are met, with the assistance of the UAE team. Highlighting the success of the first-ever artificial rainfall in Lahore,

Certificate of Sadiq, Ameen being maintained for play boy: Mian Latif

LAHORE (Online): PML-N leader Mian Javed Latif has said certificate of Sadiq and Ameen is being maintained for play boy.

"The country is undergoing uncertain situation at economic, political level, he said this while talking to media men here Tuesday.

He went on to say those who are making policies are not accepting their mistakes.

He held millions of rupees were spent on those who made narrative on social media. Had some one investigated then it would have come to surface the links of May 9 and 10 incidents go to which countries.

He questioned can the armed forces of the country

be threatened.

He remarked May 9, 10 attack is matter of grave concern for the institutions. No one is there to ask from those who were schemers of 2017-18.

He added 7 to 8 months have passed and now mitti pao program cannot work.

Had Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif attacked defence institutions.

Today much cry is raised on the matter of election symbol but no one had spoken in our case, he observed.

The sword of disqualification is being hung on the head of the person who has been acquitted.

ANF recovers 214 kg drugs in nine operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting nine operations across the country managed to recover over 214 kg drugs and arrested six accused including a woman, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Tuesday.

He informed that 2.4 kg heroin was recovered from the possession of a passenger, going to Doha on Qatar Airways at Lahore Airport.

100 grams heroin was recovered from a parcel booked for Sri Lanka at a courier office on Shahrah-e-Faisal, Karachi.

209 kg hashish was recovered in four operations conducted near Morgah border area.

Minister Murad reviews PUNJMIN performance

LAHORE (APP): Provincial Minister for Mines and Minerals Ibrahim Hassan Murad, during a meeting held here on Tuesday, reviewed the performance of Punjab Minerals Development Corporation (PUNJMIN) and advocated its digital transformation.

PUNJMIN Managing Director presented updates on salt projects, coal projects, and the Mianwali project, emphasizing progress through a detailed presentation.

During the briefing, it was revealed that PUNJMIN is set to digitize its operations, adopting Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP). However,

the initiative requires skilled professionals in IT, mining engineering, and accounting. A request for relaxation in new recruitment has been sent to the Chief Minister's office.

The minister highlighted the importance of digitalization for enhancing the corporation's efficiency, citing its profitability due to effective government strategies. He noted the positive impact of increased industrial salt prices on government revenue. Stressing the need for continued improvement, the minister instructed PUNJMIN to implement e-bidding and e-auction systems to curb corruption.



HYDERABAD: Residents of Gul Goth Muhammad Jakro are holding protest demonstration for acceptance of their demands, at Hyderabad press club.

World-class sports complex, universities to be built in Zafarwal: Ahsan Iqbal

ZAFARWAL (APP): Zafarwal that I will soon build a sports complex in Zafarwal like the Narawal Sports Complex, where world-class sports and coaches are available."

He said that the future of Pakistan was linked to the youth and for their bright future, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) had taken practical steps. "More steps will be taken for their welfare in the future. More than 7,000 youths are studying in three universities in Narawal and world-class universities will also be set up in Zafarwal soon," he added.

Senior Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader and candidate for NA-76 Narawal and PP-54 Zafarwal constituencies, Prof. Ahsan Iqbal announced building a world-class sports complex for the youth of Zafarwal, so that they could participate in sports activities and bring laurels to the country.

He expressed these views at the closing ceremony of the All Punjab Shah Faisal Shaheed Football Tournament here on Tuesday. The former federal minister said, "I promise to the youth of

International News

China willing to work with US for stable relationship: Xi

BEIJING: China's President Xi Jinping on Monday said he was willing to work with the United States to promote stable bilateral ties, exchanging congratulations with his US counterpart Joe Biden on the 45th anniversary of diplomatic relations, state media said.

Xi, in his message, said both countries have "weathered the storms and moved forward in general", which has enhanced the well-being of their peoples and contributed to world peace, stability and prosperity, according to the ministry statement.

Xi called China and US forming ties "a major event" in the history of bilateral relations and in international relations.

China-US ties have

been frosty but Biden administration officials have visited Beijing and met with their counterparts to rebuild communications and trust in the months leading up to a high-stakes summit between Xi and Biden in San Francisco in November, deemed an opportunity to cool tensions between the world's two largest economies.

Xi said the summit has pointed out the direction for both nations' ties, under a future-oriented vision.

"I am willing to work with President Biden to continue to steer and navigate the China-US relationship for the benefit of China and the US and the two peoples, and to promote the cause of world peace and development," Xi said.

The US is due its presidential election in No-

vember, in which former president and outspoken critic of China Donald Trump is campaigning against Biden to come back for a second term.

Xi also exchanged New Year's messages with North Korea leader Kim Jong Un, and both announced 2024 to be a "friendship year" for both countries, launching a series of activities for that, the Chinese foreign ministry said separately. Xi said China is willing to work with North Korea to deepen strategic mutual trust, enhance exchanges and cooperation, promote greater bilateral ties and make new contributions to the maintenance of peace and stability in the region. On New Year's Eve, the Chinese leader exchanged greetings with Russian President Vladimir Putin as well.



South Korean opposition party leader Lee Jae-myung, who was attacked in Busan, gets off from a helicopter on a stretcher to be transported to Seoul National University Hospital, at a heliport in Seoul.

Ukraine's Zelenskiy says Russia suffering heavy losses

KYIV: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said Russian forces are suffering heavy losses and the notion that Moscow is winning the nearly two-year-old war is only a "feeling" not based on reality.

"Thousands, thousands of killed Russian soldiers, nobody even took them away," he told The Economist magazine in an interview published on Monday, referring to fighting around the besieged eastern town of Avdiivka

which he visited last week.

He provided no evidence to back up his assertion but Western military analysts agree Russia is paying a heavy price in men and equipment for relatively minor gains in eastern and southern Ukraine. There was no response to a request for comment from Russian officials on Zelenskiy's remarks. Russian officials have said Western estimates of Russian death tolls are vastly exaggerated and almost always underestimate Ukrainian losses.

UN to boost food ration for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh

DHAKA: The United Nations will increase the food ration for each Rohingya refugee in Bangladesh by \$2 a month, to \$10 from Jan. 1, the World Food Programme (WFP) said on Tuesday, as it thanked donors for coming to the rescue of a cash-strapped effort.

The United Nations had cut food aid last year to the refugees by a third, to \$8 each every month, as it had raised less than half of the \$876 million required to support them.

Nearly a million members of the Muslim minority from Myanmar live in bamboo-and-plastic camps in Bangladesh's border district of Cox's Bazar, most of them having fled a military crackdown in 2017.

The WFP cut the refugees' food entitlement to \$10 from \$12 in March, and further in June, to stand at \$8 each a month, in the wake of a severe funding crunch.



ISTANBUL: Tens of thousands of people demonstrate to show solidarity with the Palestinian people amid the Gaza crisis, at the Galata Bridge.

Gaza war to continue through 2024, warns Tel Aviv

GAZA STRIP: Israel warned on Wednesday that its war in Gaza would continue throughout 2024 as unrelenting strikes killed at least 25 people in the besieged enclave on New Year's Day.

Israel's military spokesman Daniel Hagari said in a New Year's message that some of the 300,000 army reservists would get a break in order to prepare for the "prolonged fighting" ahead.

"The army must plan ahead, understanding that

we will be required for additional tasks and warfare throughout this year," Hagari said.

"We are also currently adapting the planning of the force deployment in Gaza and the reserve system. Some of the reservists will return to their families and employment this week.

"This will significantly ease the burden on the economy and allow them to gather strength for the upcoming activities in the next year, as the fighting will continue and they will still be required," Hagari added.

South Korean opposition leader in intensive care after being stabbed in the neck

SEOUL: South Korean opposition leader Lee Jae-myung was recovering in intensive care after he was stabbed in the neck on Tuesday by a man who pushed through a crowd pretending to be his supporter, his party said.

Lee was surrounded by journalists when a man lunged and struck him on the left side of his neck, Busan police official Son Je-han said at a press briefing.

Lee was first taken to a hospital in Busan, then flown to the capital Seoul where he underwent a two-hour surgery. Kwon Chil-seung of Lee's Democratic Party told reporters. "Damage to the internal jugular vein was confirmed," Kwon said.

Lee was conscious after the surgery and is "currently admitted to the intensive care unit and is recovering", Kwon added. The attacker was arrested at the scene.

Five dead as planes catch fire after collision at Japan's Haneda airport

TOKYO: A passenger plane and a Japanese coast guard aircraft collided on the runway at Tokyo's Haneda Airport on Tuesday which claimed five lives.

Transport Minister Tetsuo Saito confirmed that all 379 occupants of Japan Airlines flight JAL-516 got out safely before the plane was entirely engulfed in flames. The pilot of the coast guard plane also escaped, but five crewmembers died, Saito said.

Bangladeshi Nobel winner convicted of violating labour laws

DHAKA: Nobel peace laureate Muhammad Yunus was convicted on Monday of violating Bangladesh's labour laws in a case decried by his supporters as politically motivated.

Yunus, 83, is credited with lifting millions out of poverty with his pioneering microfinance bank but has earned the enmity of longtime Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who has accused him of "sucking blood" from the poor.

Japan quake toll nears 50 with many feared trapped in freezing cold

TOKYO: A powerful earthquake that hit Japan on New Year's Day killed at least 48 people, with rescue teams struggling in freezing temperatures on Tuesday to reach isolated areas where many people are feared trapped under toppled buildings.

In Suzu, a coastal town of just over 5,000 households near the quake's epicentre, 90 per cent of houses may have been destroyed, according to its mayor Masuhiro Izumiya.

"The quake is catastrophic," he said.

The quake with a preliminary magnitude of 7.6 struck on Monday after-

noon, prompting people in western coastal areas to flee to higher ground as tsunami waves swept cars and houses into the water.

Around 200 tremors were detected since the quake first hit on Monday, according to the Japan Meteorological Agency, which warned more strong shocks could hit in the coming days.

A Coast Guard aircraft en route to deliver aid to the quake-hit region collided with a commercial aeroplane in Tokyo's Haneda airport on Tuesday, killing five Coast Guard crew while all 379 on board the Japan Airlines flight miraculously escaped a fire.



Palestinians protest in solidarity with Gaza in Ramallah, in the occupied West Bank.

Somalia to hold emergency meeting on Somaliland-Ethiopia deal

MOGADISHU: Somalia will hold an emergency cabinet meeting on Tuesday, state media said, after the breakthrough region of Somaliland struck a controversial deal with Ethiopia giving Addis Ababa access to the Red Sea.

Monday's surprise pact has triggered fury in Mogadishu, which considers it a violation of its sovereignty. It was announced only days after Somalia's central government had agreed to resume dialogue with the separatist northern region after years of stalemate. Somaliland has been seeking full statehood since claiming independence from Somalia in 1991,

a move fiercely opposed by Mogadishu and not recognised internationally.

The Addis Ababa agreement gives landlocked Ethiopia long-desired access to the Red Sea, a key waterway for global trade.

"This historic agreement ensures Ethiopia's access to the Red Sea for their naval forces, reciprocated by formal recognition of the Republic of Somaliland, marking this as a significant diplomatic milestone for our country," Somaliland's foreign ministry said in a statement. Somali National Television said on X, formerly Twitter, that there would be an emergency cabinet meeting on Tuesday to discuss the agreement.

PPP to clinch majority in upcoming general elections: Kundi

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): Pakistan Peoples Party Information Secretary Faisal Karim Kundi expressed optimism that his party will clinch a majority in the upcoming general elections.

Speaking to a press conference in Dera Ismail Khan he said: "The formation of an alliance against our party is not a new thing. The time will tell who is going to be the country's next premier. The elections should be held on time."

He demanded a level playing field for all political parties in the run-up to the general elections to ensure a free, fair and transparent electoral exercise.

He asserted that no party should be coerced or marginalized in the political process, advocating for equal opportunities for everyone to engage in politics.

Kundi said that JUI-F wants to run away from the elections by attributing excuses to the country's situation.

He said: "We want the conduct of the general elections in a peaceful way. There can be political differences, but there is no chance of personal differences."



LAHORE: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar meets with the President of Pakistan Muslim League (Q).

Aftab Sherpao says Voters reaching polling stations to face difficulty in poor law, order

PESHAWAR (APP): Qaumi Watan Party (QWP) Chairman Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao on Tuesday said that the voters would face difficulty in reaching the polling stations in the prevailing poor law and order.

Addressing a gathering in Tangi tehsil in Charsadda, he said that the candidates would also face problems with running their election campaign.

On this occasion PTI Nazim Muhammad Nisar Khan, along with his family members and supporters, announced joining the QWP.

The QWP Chairman said that the law and order was getting worse with each passing day. He said that the political forces would have to join hands and work hard to steer the country out of the prevailing circumstances.

He said that the country faced three major challenges in the year 2023 which included political instability, economic crisis and rising acts of terrorism.

He said that which ever political party came to power after the 2024 general election would have to work hard to address these challenges. He added that the ones demanding level-playing field should recall whether it was provided to the other political forces for the 2018 general election.

Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao said that experiments with the political system caused colossal loss to the economy therefore such practices should be stopped. He said the Imran Khan experiment caused economic stagnation, inflation and political instability. "What service was done to the country by bringing him to power?" he asked.



Chairman Gwadar Port Authority Pasand Khan presiding over 1st meeting of executive body of Pak-China Technical & Vocational Institute Gwadar University.

Senator Samina Zehri If there is problem of missing persons, why don't they go to the MPA, MNA and Sardars

ISLAMABAD (APP): In our society, especially in Balochistan, women are given a lot of respect and it is sad to see our girls and mothers from Balochistan who are sitting outside in the cold weather and it is very sad and sad that the way they are sitting on a sit-in.

These views were expressed by Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri in her speech at the Senate. She said that not only in Balochistan but in the whole country, women are respected and women's honor is important for everyone and women who are sitting for their rights are also respected by all of us but if there is a problem of missing persons, why don't they go to the MPA, MNA and Sardars of the area from which people are disappearing?

The tribal system of Balochistan has JIRGA and chieftaincy system and women sitting on the streets like this is a matter of moment for this system. This problem should be solved first by those representatives and chiefs who got votes from these areas

and are sitting in the Houses. Coming to Islamabad and protesting is beyond understanding.

Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri said in her senate speech that the problem of missing persons is not today's problem but an old problem, then why was this problem raised as the elections were approaching.

She said that when any good or big work is done in this country such problems come to the fore and instead of solving them at the lower level, they are referred to Islamabad. Why is this so? The politics of sit-ins have caused immense damage to the country and now as the date of elections is approaching, this sit-in has started. It should be that the MNN, MPA and Sardar Nawab of every region should listen to this problem and try to solve it properly, but unfortunately, this critical problem was not seen and understood properly.

The representatives of these areas have never understood the people there what they want. What does the unemployed youth want?



ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi chairing a meeting during his visit to the Federal Ombudsman Secretariat for Protection Against Harassment at Workplace (FOSPAP) Head Office.

Jamali describes promotion of peace & inter-faith harmony important need of hour

INDEPENDENT REPORT QUETTA: The caretaker Provincial Minister for Home, Mir Zubair Jamali has underlined the need to promote peace and inter-faith harmony.

He said that peace and interfaith harmony is an important need of the hour.

He said that there is forgiveness in the rights of Allah but not in the rights of people.

We have to make our self accountability to bring change in the society putting an end to the negative things within us.

These and similar other views were expressed by the caretaker Minister while addressing a seminar on peace, interfaith and social harmony held under the auspices of Balochistan Rural Support Programme and PPAF in collaboration with here on Tuesday.

Also present in the seminar were the caretaker Minister for Education, Dr Qadir Bakhsh Baloch, Ad-

ditional Secretary for Minorities Affairs, Mamoon Achakzai, chairman Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee, Maulana Abdul Khair Azad, Air Vice Marshal (R) Ejaz Mehmood Malik, acting Chief Executive Officer, Nadir Gul, Chief Executive Officer of BRSP, Dr Tahir Rasheed, Chairman board of directors BRSP, Anwar Saleem Kasi, senior government officials, social activists besides religious leaders belonging to different schools of thoughts.

Addressing the seminar, Mir Zubair Jamali also stressed that we have to take well care of people of all the religions.

He said that we can address the social problems being faced in the country by promoting interfaith harmony.

He said that humanity is a common thing among all belonging to any religious group.

He said that every individual would have to play

one's role for establishing law and order and promoting brotherhood in the country.

Speaking on the occasion, Maulana Abdul Khair Azad said that there's a need to promote harmony among us.

In addition to this, we have to protect the rights of minorities.

He said that our religion teaches lesson of humanity.

The caretaker Minister for Education, Qadir Bakhsh, Mrs. Roshan Khurshid Bharucha, religious scholar Dr Qari Abdul Rasheed and others also addressed the seminar and underscored the need for promotion of peace and interfaith harmony.

Meanwhile, the book entitled Paigham-e-Pakistan was also launched published on the joint national narrative for tackling the increasing extremism and lacking tolerance in the society.



QUETTA: Members NCRS Pirbholal Sitani and Khalid Anam addressing a seminar on draft bill 2023-24 of child employment

NCRC holds third consultation in Balochistan to improve prohibition of child domestic Labour Bill 2024

INDEPENDENT REPORT QUETTA: The National Commission on the Rights of the Child (NCRC) commenced 3rd consultation in Balochistan aimed at discussing the Prohibition of Child Domestic Labour Bill 2024 with key stakeholders. The Prohibition of Child Domestic Labour Bill 2024 seeks to instigate transformative change by reinforcing legal measures against those involved in engaging children in domestic labor. By classifying Child Domestic Labour (CDL) as a non-compoundable, non-bailable, and cognizable offense, the NCRC underscores its commitment

to prioritizing the rights and well-being of children. This proposed bill intends to amend the Pakistan Penal Code, 1860, and the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898, criminalizing CDL and eliminating this widespread menace. Titled the Criminal Amendment (Prohibition of Child Domestic Labor) Bill, 2024, it signifies a dedicated effort to protect the rights and dignity of children across Pakistan. The bill proposes the addition of a new section, 374-A, to the Pakistan Penal Code, 1860, specifically addressing child domestic labor. This section criminalizes the employ-

ment, recruitment, harboring, transportation, or provision of a child below the age of eighteen years for domestic labor, with penalties including imprisonment ranging from two to seven years and a fine not less than five hundred thousand rupees. The offenses related to child domestic labor are categorized as non-bailable, non-compoundable, and cognizable.

Embarking on the path toward widespread societal change, the NCRC has outlined a series of consultations at the provincial level to refine and strengthen the proposed bill.



QUETTA: A delegation led by Mayor Chaman Haji Habibullah Achakzai meeting with Chairman PkMAP Mehmood Khan Achakzai.

Dr. Nadeem proposes allocation of 2 pc of GDP for health sector

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination, Dr. Nadeem Jan on Tuesday proposed allocation of two percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for the health sector.

In response to a calling attention notice moved by Senator Prof. Dr. Mehr Taj Roghani regarding the non-availability of vaccines, especially the anti-diphtheria serum in the country, with a specific focus on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa leading to the unfortunate deaths of chil-

dren, the minister said that our request to the next government would be to allocate at least two percent of the GDP for health, a sector that has been overlooked by all previous governments.

Regarding the Anti-Diphtheria Serum (ADC), he clarified that the provision and procurement of ADC was the responsibilities of the provinces.

However, he added that the federal government can play a role in facilitating resource generation and providing guidelines in this regard.

President emphasizes need to provide employment opportunities to women

ISLAMABAD (INP): President Dr. Arif Alvi has emphasized the need to provide employment opportunities and enabling working-environment to women to increase their economic participation.

He was speaking at a meeting chaired by him during his visit to the Federal Ombudsman Secretariat for Protection Against Harassment at Workplace (FOSPAP) in Islamabad Tuesday.

Federal Ombudsperson for Protection Against Harassment at Workplace, Ms Fausia Viqar, Secretary FOSPAP, Mr Arif Karim, advisors and officials of FOSPAP attended the meeting.

Ms Fausia Viqar gave a detailed presentation about the role and achievements of FOSPAP in protecting women's rights.

She informed that FOSPAP was providing speedy justice in harass-

ment at the workplace and property cases of women who had been deprived of their ownership rights. She informed that 725 harassment cases were registered with FOSPAP, during 2023, out of which 517 cases had been decided.

She said that an upsurge had been witnessed in the registration of harassment and women's property cases with FOSPAP due to the awareness campaign about its role and functions. She apprised the meeting that harassment of women and denial of property rights to women were pervasive issues in Pakistan. Appreciating the continued support of the President Dr Arif Alvi, she told the meeting that so far 208 representations against the decisions of FOSPAP had been filed with the President, out of which only 10 were under process with the office of the President

while the rest had been decided. The President called for taking appropriate legislative measures at the federal and provincial levels to ensure the protection of women's property rights, besides discouraging the transfer of property by women to their family members due to pressures. He said that he was conducting personal hearings of the Ombudsperson's cases to expedite the process of justice. He stated that highlighting important decisions of FOSPAP in harassment and women's property cases through media would help increase awareness about the role of the Ombudsman. He said that police at the local level needed to improve their response to women's complaints in property cases, adding that police officials should be educated about the provisions of the Enforcement of Women's Property Rights Act, 2020.



QUETTA: Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed chairing a meeting with Religious Scholars of various religions.

Caretaker PM meets Ch Shujaat

LAHORE (Online): Caretaker Prime Minister (PM) Anwaar ul Haq reached residence of PML-Q president Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain and inquired about his welfare.

Sources told Online Care taker PM met Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain at his residence. The two exchanged views on overall political and economic situation of the country.

Sources said Caretaker PM inquired about welfare of Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain.

Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi also accompanied caretaker PM.

Privatization of HEC completed

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Privatization Commission of Pakistan on Tuesday completed the privatization process of Heavy Electrical Complex (HEC) by handing over the share certificates to the buyer M/s IMS Engineering (Pvt) Limited.

In a final settlement of Rs1.4 billion transaction, the buyer IMS Engineering has not only made full payment but has also taken over additional liabilities of Rs 752 million payable to the Bank of Khyber. The Bank of Khyber issued an NOC for the conclusion of the transaction, said a press release.

The Chairman IMS Engineering, Mahmood Haq expressed that plans for better utilization of the facility are already in place and that they expect to be able to make exports of \$250-300 million in two to three years.

Privatization, Fawad Hasan Fawad congratulated all the stake holders who contributed towards the conclusion of the sale agreement including the SIFC, State Bank of Pakistan, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Industries, Chief Secretary KPK, the Bank of Khyber, the Financial Advisor and the team of Privatization Commission.

Sheikh files appeal against rejection of nomination papers

ISLAMABAD (INP): Awami Muslim League chief and former federal minister Sheikh Rashid on Tuesday lodged an appeal against the rejection of his nomination papers from the NA-56 constituency in Rawalpindi.

In a statement to a private TV channel, Sheikh Rashid's lawyer asserted that the receipts for rest house arrears are fabricated, emphasizing that Sheikh Rashid never stayed at the rest house. The legal representative urged the annulment of the returning officer's decision to reject the nomination papers. The rejection of Sheikh Rashid's nomination papers was officially communicated on January 1.

Asad Qaiser calls for 'free and fair' elections

SWABI (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader and former speaker of the National Assembly (NA) Asad Qaiser on Tuesday called for 'free and fair' elections in the country.

In an exclusive interview with a private TV channel Asad Qaiser urged the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to play a more effective role in ensuring the 'free and fair' polls in the country.

He termed the election commission's role during the upcoming general election 2024 as 'worst', stating that the electoral watchdog should play its role as a neutral institution.

"Such elections will not bring stability but things will get worse in Pakistan," Qaiser asserted, he accused the ECP of "supporting" a political party, and stated that, despite the pre-poll rigging tactics, PTI will win the upcoming elections.



ISLAMABAD: Chairperson and Women Commission Women Wing of Azad Kashmir Ms. Rehana Khan meeting with the Caretaker Foreign Minister of Pakistan Jalil Abbas Jilani.

No case of JN.1 Corona variant reported in Pak: Health Ministry

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Health on Tuesday said that so far, no case of the JN.1 variant of Corona has been reported in any part of the country.

According to the spokesperson of the ministry, a new variant of Corona, JN.1, Omicron, has been reported in some countries as per media reports, which is a matter of concern.

Meanwhile, caretaker federal Minister for Health Dr Nadeem Jan said that the government is continuously monitoring the situation as this subvirus of Omicron was found in some countries. He said that the risk of this variant spreading in Pakistan is very low, but caution is necessary.

The minister assured to proper implementation of the recommendations of international health regulations.

Dr Nadeem Jan said that there is an effective screening system at international airports at entry and exit routes of the country.

PML-N's final candidate list expected to unveil on January 10

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Dr Nisar Ahmad Cheema on Tuesday revealed that the party's candidate list would be finalized by January 10th.

Talking to a private news channel, Dr. Cheema said that Nawaz Sharif was personally conducting interviews with potential candidates who will represent PML-N in the upcoming elections.

Dr. Cheema further said, "Once the candidate announcements are made, we anticipate a surge in the

election campaign, reaching every corner of the country."

He emphasized Nawaz Sharif's unparalleled commitment to the political landscape, citing it as a manifestation of seriousness rarely seen in Pakistan's political history. "Nawaz Sharif's track record of accomplishments for the people of Pakistan is unparalleled," he added.

In light of the current challenges facing the country, Dr. Cheema concluded that Nawaz Sharif remains a pivotal option for steering Pakistan out of crises.



QUETTA: Caretaker Provincial Ministers Captain (ret'd) Muhammad Zubair Jamali, Abdul Qadir Baloch, Abdul Khair Azad and other addressing participants of a seminar titled Promoting Peace, Interfaith and Social Harmony