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RAWALPINDI: View of missiles fired by Pakistan Armed Forces to target terrorist hideouts inside the Iranian border after Iran violated the country's sovereignty and launched a strike in Balochistan.

Govt. & security institutions fully alert to establish peace:
Effective administrative strategy prepared to tackle any untoward law & order situation in Balochistan: CM



Independent Report

QUETTA: The caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki has stated that the government and security institutions are fully alert for establishing peace in all districts of the province including border areas, and an effective administrative strategy has been prepared to tackle any situation of law and order in the prov-

ince. The Chief Minister was presiding over a high level meeting held to review the measures for the general elections and for maintaining law & order in the province including the border areas, here at the Chief Minister secretariat on Thursday.

Those who were present in the meeting were included Chief Secretary Shakeel Qadir Khan, Addi-

Terrorists to be swiftly & decisively crushed: Entire nation stands united with Pak Army, maintains CT Minister Information

Independent Report

QUETTA: The caretaker Provincial Minister for Information, Jan Achakzai has stated that the people of Balochistan express their gratitude to the Pakistan Military for their unwavering protection.

In a tweet on his social media account X on Thursday, Jan Achakzai said that the entire nation stands with you (Military) today, yesterday, today and tomorrow. He said that "best assured, the terrorists belonging to the banned organizations including Baloch Liberation Front (BLF) / Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) would be swiftly and decisively crushed, whether they attempt to infiltrate our borders or operate from within."

Pakistan calls for just, peaceful solution of Kashmir, Palestine issues

KAMPALA (INP): Pakistan has called for just, peaceful, and expeditious resolution of the longstanding Kashmir and Palestine disputes.

Summit in Kampala, Uganda. He said Pakistan will continue to support the movement's efforts towards peace, equality, co-operation, and well-being for all. The Foreign Minister also highlighted Pakistan's commitment to the Non-Aligned Movement and its founding principles.

According to Kashmir Media Service, the demand was made by Pakistan Foreign Minister, Jalil Abbas Jilani, at the Ministerial meeting of the 19th NAM



QUETTA: Country Director World Food Program Ms. Coco Ushiyama meeting with Chief Secretary Balochistan Shakeel Qadir Khan

PEMRA asks TV channels to cover Pak-Iran tension with 'utmost care'

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Electronic Media Regulation Authority (PEMRA) on Thursday directed all the satellite TV channel licensees to exercise "utmost care" while reporting over "tension between Pakistan and Iran".

The CAA however said that a strict monitoring of the flights from western direction including Iran has been initiated.

"All air-borne activities on western borders of the country being thoroughly monitored," he said. "The CAA has received instructions with regard to extra alert for the incoming flights from western direction," sources said.

Info Ministers says: Airspace violation by Iran under investigation

ISLAMABAD (Online): Caretaker Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi has said the government has lodged protest with Iranian authorities over "unprovoked violation" of its airspace, confirming that the "illegal move" is under investigation.

While speaking in a private television talk show, Murtaza Solangi said Pakistan would take appropriate measures while keeping the relevant international laws in the view especially regarding the sovereignty of the state.

To a query, the minister said no political party is being treated discriminately but who were involved in the May 9 incidents, had been arrested and their arrests had nothing to do with the elections.

Murtaza Solangi said the apex court's decision over the intra-party polls of the PTI would promote democracy within the parties.

No airspace ban decided for Iran, says CAA

KARACHI (INP): The Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority has said that no decision yet taken for banning airspace for Iran, a spokesperson of CAA said on Thursday.

A spokesperson said that the CAA didn't receive any instruction with regard to ban on commercial flights between Iran and Pakistan.

Operation Marg Bar Sarmachar: Pakistan carried out effective strikes against terrorists' hideouts inside Iran: ISPR

Sole objective of act was in pursuit of Pakistan's own security and national interest- FO; PM Kakar cuts short World Economic Forum visit in Davos; China offers to mediate as Pakistan-Iran border tensions flare

Bureau Report

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan Armed Forces, in the early hours on Thursday, carried out effective strikes against hideouts during an intelligence-based operation inside Iran, used by terrorists, responsible for recent attacks in Pakistan. The precision strikes were carried out using killer drones, rockets, loitering munitions and stand-off weapons whereas maximum care was taken to

avoid collateral damage, an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release said. The hideouts used by terrorist organisations, namely Balochistan Liberation Army and Balochistan Liberation Front, were successfully struck in an intelligence based operation, code name 'Marg Bar Sarmachar'.

The targeted hideouts were being used by notorious terrorists including Dosta alias Chairman, Bajjar alias Soghat, Sahil alias Shafaq, Asghar alias Basham and Wazir alias Wazi, amongst others.

Pakistan Armed Forces remain in a perpetual state of readiness to ensure safety of Pakistan citizens against acts of terrorism. "Our resolve to ensure that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Pakistan is respected and safeguarded against any misadventure,

remains unwavering. We reaffirm our determination to defeat all enemies of Pakistan with the support of the people of Pakistan," the ISPR said. It added that going forward, dialogue and cooperation were deemed prudent in resolving bilateral issues between the two neighbouring brotherly countries. Meanwhile Pakistan on Thursday morning carried out a series of "highly coordinated" and "specifically targeted precision" military strikes against terrorist hideouts in Sistan-o-Baluchistan province of Iran, killing a number of terrorists. "This morning Pakistan undertook a series of highly coordinated and specifically targeted precision military strikes against terrorist hideouts in Sistan-o-Baluchistan province of Iran.

President says: Pak will not compromise on its national security, territorial integrity

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Thursday said that Pakistan would not compromise on its national security and territorial integrity and would take all necessary measures to defend its soil.

He stated that terrorism was a common challenge that required global efforts for its elimination.

In a statement issued by the President House Press Wing, he lauded the professionalism of the Armed Forces of Pakistan that targeted the terrorist hideouts in the Sistan-o-Baluchistan province of Iran, while avoiding civilian casualties.

He said that Pakistan fully respected the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states and expected the same from other nations not to violate international law.

The president said that Pakistan and Iran were brotherly countries and they needed to resolve issues through dialogue and mutual consultation.

Nawaz Sharif vows to make Pakistan stand on its feet

HAFIZABAD (INP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supremo and former prime minister Nawaz Sharif vowed to make Pakistan stand on its own feet again.

He said that Pakistanism was a common challenge that required global efforts for its elimination.



Addressing his maiden public gathering of election 2024 campaign, Nawaz Shari said that he was ousted

from power by the five Supreme Court judges just because he refused to take a salary from his son.

Nawaz claimed if he had not been removed from power there would have been no gas loadshedding, inflation and unemployment in the country.

The former prime minister further said that before he came to power, terrorism had brought Pakistan to standstill but he took Pakistan out of the crisis.

Moreover, Nawaz Sharif promised that he would bring back Pakistan on the road of development after coming to power.

Central Secretary Information claims: BNP to emerge major political party in elections if free & fair elections conducted

Independent Report

QUETTA: The central Secretary Information of Balochistan National Party (BNP), Agha Hassan Baloch has claimed that the BNP would emerge as major political party in upcoming general elections in the province, if the same (elections) were conducted free, fair and in transparent manner.

He said that the election campaign is being run by the party all over the province, and it is gaining acceptability following the campaign.

Agha Hasan Baloch was addressing press conference here at Quetta Press club on Thursday.

He urged the Election Commission of Pakistan to take steps for free and fair elections in the country including Balochistan. He said that if the issues are really to be resolved then the seriousness would have to be demonstrated.

He said that the caretaker government has crossed its limits, it would have to work in the same.

Referring the tension between Iran and Pakistan, the BNP leader said that Balochs are settled at both sides of the Pak-Iran border and they would suffer due to the situation.



QUETTA: Balochistan National Party (BNP) Central Leader, Agha Hassan Baloch addresses to media persons during press conference, at Quetta press club.

NSC meeting likely on Pakistan-Iran tension

ISLAMABAD (Online): National Security Council (NSC) meeting is likely to be convened on tense situation between Pakistan and Iran.



The date for meeting will be determined on return of care taker Prime Minister (PM) Anwaarull Haq Kakar to home

DAVOS: Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia, His Highness Faisal bin Farhan bin Abdullah calls on the Caretaker Prime Minister, Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum.

Sources said the meeting will null prevailing post-attack situation as Pakistan retaliated against unprovoked violation of its airspace by Iran and targeted militant hideouts in the neighbouring country.

Pakistan desires to deepen bilateral engagement with Saudi Arabia: PM

The meeting will be attended by chiefs of Army, Navy and Air Force. The meeting will also review law and order situation in the country, besides affairs relating to holding of general elections in February. The participants will be also briefed about operation against Baloch militants in Iran.

DAVOS (APP): Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia, Faisal bin Farhan bin Abdullah Thursday called on Caretaker Prime Minister, Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on the sidelines of the 54th annual meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF).

Prime Minister Kakar noted that close brotherly relations between the two countries were a factor in regional stability. He said Pakistan desires to deepen bilateral engagement including through trade, investment and people-to-people exchanges. The prime minister appreciated the leadership of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques and underlined the highest esteem the people of Pakistan held for the leadership and the people of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Important decisions will be taken in the meeting in the perspective of national security related matters and tense situation between Pakistan and Iran.

The prime minister underlined the strategic importance of close brotherly relations between Pakistan and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, rooted in common cultural heritage and shared interests.

The two sides also reviewed regional developments.

Pakistan envoy to Iran Mudassar Tipu arrives back in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Ambassador to Iran Muhammad Mudassar Tipu arrived back in the country from Tehran after tensions between the neighbourly countries escalated on Thursday.

Bilawal pledges to issue 'Kisan Card' after coming into power

Mudassar Tipu arrived back in Islamabad today morning after Pakistan had decided to recall its envoy from Iran following an air attack on a Pakistani village which left two children dead.

NAUSHAHRO FEROZE (INP): Pakistan People's Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari announced to give "Kisan Card" to provide relief to the farmers on the pattern of

said and added that the needy people will also get free electricity up to 300 units in the "Jiyala's government". The PPP chairman said that now only two parties

According to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pakistani Ambassador Mudassar Tipu held farewell meetings with Pakistani diplomatic staff in Tehran before heading back to the country.



JIT decides to take stern action against responsible for launching anti judiciary campaign

ISLAMABAD (Online): First meeting of JIT was held in FIA headquarters Islamabad on the matter of prevention of anti judiciary material.

Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP).

are vying the General Elections 2024, reiterating the real contest would be between "Arrow" and "Lion"

The meeting was presided over by Additional Director General (ADG) FIA.

Addressing a public gathering in connections with the General Elections 2024 in Naushahro Feroze, the PPP chairman said that his party will form the federal as well as the Sindh government with support of the people. He said that after becoming the prime minister, he would increase the basic salary to two times.

Bilawal said that he once again came to Naushahro Feroze with a request to vote for the PPP. "The people of Naushahro Feroze also voted for the PPP candidates during the 2018 elections. You people also welcomed me on way to long march," he added.

It has been decided in the meeting to take stern action against those involved in maligning judiciary on social media.

"We will also build three million new houses for the poor and give them ownership rights," Bilawal

Bilawal said that his party has a special plan for Naushahro Feroze which has suffered the most damage during the floods.

As per sources officers of sensitive institutions presented report on plan of action in the meeting.

US condemns Iran's strikes on Pakistan, Syria, Iraq

The meeting directed PTA to collect and present the details of those involved in fomenting, uploading, sharing and commenting hate material.

WASHINGTON (INP): The United States has condemned Iran's recent attacks in Pakistan, Iraq and Syria, which Tehran said were carried out against "anti-Iranian terrorist groups".

pecially in this region, where it's been the focus of our diplomatic efforts since October 7".

Sources said the arrest of those responsible for spreading anti judiciary material is likely in next phase.

"So we do condemn those strikes. We've seen Iran violate the sovereign borders of three of its neighbors in just the past couple of days," State Department spokesman Matthew Miller told reporters during a briefing.

Pakistan on Wednesday recalled its ambassador to Islamabad after an airstrike in Balochistan killed two children. The raid took place late on Tuesday following similar attacks in Iraq and Syria.

Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said the attack near the two countries' shared border was "unprovoked" and a violation of Pakistan's sovereignty.

Ties between Pakistan, KSA deep rooted due to common religion and culture: Baligh

Independent Report
LAHORE: Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) Nawaf Bin Saeed Ahmad Al-Malki called on Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman and discussed matters of mutual interest, promotion of bilateral relations, and mutual cooperation during a meeting at the Governor's House here on Thursday.

Speaking on the occasion, the Governor Punjab said that Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have long historical brotherly relations.

He said that the ties between Pakistan and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are deep rooted due to common religion and

culture. He said that the Saudi government is taking very good steps regarding tourism. He said that the simplification of the visa policy by the Saudi government for foreign tourists is a good initiative. The Governor Punjab said that the Saudi government's new investment initiatives in Pakistan are encouraging. He said that it is good to see that more Saudi business delegations are visiting Pakistan. He said that there are favourable opportunities in Pakistan for Saudi investors.

The Governor further said that there should be maximum exchange of student delegations between

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. He said that Saudi companies are also investing in semiconductors, which are the basis of all technologies. He said that Pakistani universities are providing quality education in medical and various other disciplines. He said that Pakistani doctors are known for professional competence all over the world. He said that Saudi students should come to study in Pakistani universities.

On this occasion, Punjab Governor Muhammad Balighur Rehman and the Saudi Ambassador also discussed the situation in Palestine.



LAHORE: Saudi Ambassador Nawaf Bin Saeed Ahmad Al-Malki called on Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rahman at Governor House.

KP CM meets PAJCCI delegation; discusses closure of Pak-Afghan border

PESHAWAR (APP): Caretaker Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Justice @ Syed Arshad Hussain Shah on Thursday held a meeting with a delegation comprising members of the Pak-Afghan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PAJCCI) and discussed problems being faced by businessmen due to the closure of Pak-Afghan border.

Caretaker Minister for Industries, Commerce & Technical Education, Dr Amer Abdullah, Secretary

Industries and other relevant officials were present on the occasion.

The delegation members included Coordinator PAJCCI, Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi, President Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI), Faud Ishaq, Director PAJCCI, Imtiaz Ahmad Ali, Vice Chairman All Pakistan Customs Agents Association, Farooq Ahmad and Ex. Presidents SCCI, Zahid Shinwari and Faiz Muhammad Faizi.

The delegation

apprised Caretaker Chief Minister Justice @ Syed Arshad Hussain that hundreds of goods-laden trucks were stuck on both sides of Pakistan and Afghanistan due to the closure of the border.

They said a large number of trucks were carrying perishable items like fresh fruit, vegetables, poultry and other items which may get rotten due to border crossing restrictions, inflicting significant financial losses on the business community of both countries.

Caretaker KP Minister chairs meeting of reforms committees

Independent Report
PESHAWAR: Caretaker Provincial Minister for Local Government and rural development Amir Nadeem Durrani said that the caretaker government's mandate is limited but our effort is to give a better roadmap to the next elected government. He said I desire to work for the betterment of the people adding that reforms in local government are the need of the hour.

Appreciating the efforts of the Reforms Committee, he said the local government department should develop long and short-term plans. He expressed these

views while presiding over the joint meeting of the Reforms Committees formed to review the problems and challenges faced by Urban Area Development Authorities, TMAs, WSSCs and Peshawar Development Authority here on Thursday. The meeting was held in the conference room of the local government which was attended by the members of the reforms' committees.

At the meeting, Nadeem Durrani was brief about the establishment of the reforms committees and was told that Urban Area Development Authorities, TMAs, WSSCs.



LAHORE: H.E. Leslie Scanlon; Canadian High Commissioner meeting with Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Raza Naqvi.

Youth Alliance protest against black marketing, artificial scarcity of urea

Tanveer Ahmed Soomro
MIRPUR MATHILO: In Mirpur Mathelo, on the call of youth alliance against black marketing and artificial scarcity of urea fertilizer, farmers and political social leaders staged a protest outside the office of Deputy Commissioner Ghotki in Mirpur Mathelo. And shouting slogans against the dealers of urea fertilizer.

According to the details, due to the nexus of the dealers of urea fertilizer in Mirpur Mathelo, the series of black marketing of artificial shortage of urea fertilizer has not ended. The lead-

ers staged a protest outside the office of Deputy Commissioner Ghotki in Mirpur Mathelo and locked the main gate of Deputy Commissioner Ghotki's office, Ayaz Khahawar, Waqar Bozdar and others while talking to the media. said that they have been protesting against the black marketing of urea fertilizer for the past two months, but no action has been taken against the dealers who sold urea fertilizer worth Rs. 35 hundred for Rs. 6,000. Fertilizer has exceeded six thousand rupees which is cruelty and abuse to the farmers.



LAHORE: Special Assistant to Prime Minister Allama Tahir Ashrafi talking to the media at Jamia Islamia Manzoor Cantt.

Effective reforms essential for promotion of business, investment: Dr Amer

Independent Report
PESHAWAR: KP Caretaker Minister for Industries, Commerce & Technical Education and Newly Merged Districts Affairs, Dr Amer Abdullah has said that bringing effective reforms in the governance system with time is essential for the promotion of business activities and investment.

Speaking as a chief guest at a consultation workshop in a local hotel regarding possible reforms in the rules and regulations for the business and investment

sector here on Thursday, the Caretaker Minister said that he wants to improve the rules and regulations while keeping the public interest and rights in mind.

The workshop was jointly organized by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Board of Investment and Trade (KP-BoIT) and the Federal Board of Investment (BoI) (Prime Minister's Office). Besides, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Secretary Industries Syed Zulfikar Ali Shah, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Oil.

New PEC Punjab takes charge

LAHORE (APP): Newly-posted Provincial Election Commissioner (PEC) Punjab Aijaz Anwar Chohan took charge of his office here on Thursday.

According to a spokesperson of PEC Punjab, Joint Provincial Election Commissioner Sain Bakhsh Channar welcomed the provincial election chief on his arrival at the PEC office. Aijaz Anwar Chohan also chaired an introductory meeting of the officers wherein the director elections gave a detailed briefing regarding the preparations for the general elections, to be held on February 8, 2024.

Addressing the meeting, the PEC Punjab urged the officers to perform their duties with hard work, honesty and integrity and establish a strong chain of communication with their field officers to ensure timely completion of all stages of the general elections.

He said that punctuality and dedication should be ensured in the office so that all the affairs were completed in a good manner.

ANF recovers 389 kg drugs in 11 operations; arrests 10 accused

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting 11 operations across the country managed to recover 389 kg drugs and arrested 10 accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Thursday.

He informed that five hashish-filled capsules were recovered from the stomach of a passenger going to Abu Dhabi at Bacha Khan Airport.

250 grams intoxicated tablets were recovered from two passengers going to Muscat from Multan

Airport.

210 grams Ice drug was recovered from a passenger going to Doha at Jinnah Airport Karachi.

88 grams heroin was recovered from a passenger going to Malaysia at Allama Iqbal Airport.

354,400 intoxicated tablets were recovered from a container being sent to Thailand from South Asia Pakistan Terminal Karachi. In seventh operation, 210 kg hashish and 7 kg opium were recovered in two separate operations conducted near Theera Orakzai area.

US political officer meets PPP leader

LAHORE (APP): The Political Officer of the American High Commission, Robert Kane, met with the Additional Secretary General of Pakistan People's Party Zulfikar Ali Bader at his residence, in which he discussed the current political and economic situation of the country and bilateral relations between Pakistan and the United States.

Apart from this, the environment of general elections in Pakistan and the impact of elections on the country's development and prosperity were also discussed.

International News

Houthi strike another US vessel

SANA'A (Online): Yemen's Houthi rebels have taken responsibility for an attack on the US-owned cargo vessel Genco Picardy, a spokesman for the militant group announced on Wednesday.

The United Kingdom Trade Organization (UKMTO) had received a report of an attack on a merchant ship around 60 nautical miles southeast of the Yemeni port of Aden.

"Master reports vessel was hit on the port side by an Uncrewed Aerial System," the UKMTO said in their incident report late on Wednesday, referring to a likely drone attack. The report said the resulting fire was extinguished and that the vessel and crew were safe and proceeding to their next port of call.

Houthi spokesman Brigadier General Yahya Saree claimed responsibility for the attack in a televised address, naming the vessel as the US-owned Genco Picardy.

"The naval forces of the Yemeni Armed Forces carried out a targeting operation against the American ship... in the Gulf of Aden... leaving direct hits," Saree said. He reiterated that Yemeni armed forces "will not hesitate to target all sources of threat in the Arab and Red Seas within the legitimate right to defend dear Yemen and to continue supporting the oppressed Palestinian people."

The US Central Command said on X (formerly Twitter) that the ship was indeed US-owned and op-

erated, while flying the flag of the Marshall Islands. "There were no injuries and some damage reported," CENTCOM said, adding that the ship was "seaworthy and continuing underway."

The Houthi has carried out dozens of drone and missile attacks in the Red Sea since the beginning of the Israel-Hamas war in October.

The militant group has vowed to continue until the war ends and the blockade of Gaza is lifted.

The increased risk of attack has forced major shipping firms to respond by avoiding the Suez Canal, the fastest cargo route from Asia to Europe. The traffic route normally accounts for 15% of the world's commercial shipping.



S. Iswaran, Singapore's former transport minister, arrives at the State Courts in Singapore.

Tel Aviv steps up Gaza strikes after medicine-aid deal

Monitoring Desk
GAZA CITY: Tel Aviv stepped up air strikes on Wednesday over the Gaza Strip's south, where medicines were expected to be delivered for Israeli prisoners in exchange for humanitarian aid under a newly brokered deal.

But nearly 24 hours after the deal was announced on Tuesday night, a Hamas official set new conditions for providing the drugs, insisting Israel must not inspect the trucks carrying them.

Violence has also surged in the Israeli-occupied West Bank since Oct 7 to a level not seen since the second Palestinian uprising between 2000 and 2005.

Israeli army raids and attacks by settlers have killed around 350 people in the territory, according to a tally based on sources from both sides. Air strikes and artillery fire targeted Khan Yunis throughout Tuesday night, according to eyewitnesses in the southern Gaza Strip's biggest city.

23 killed in Thai fireworks factory blast

Monitoring Desk
BANGKOK: Twenty-three people died after an explosion at a fireworks factory in central Thailand on Wednesday, the provincial governor said.

Images shared by the local rescue service showed metal debris littered on the ground, and a huge plume of black smoke. The blast occurred at around 3pm (0800 GMT) near Sala Khao township, in central Suphan Buri province.

"We received reports from EOD team that there were 23 confirmed dead," Nattapat Suwanprateep, Suphan Buri province governor.

Biden aims for North Carolina as 2024 election comes into focus

WASHINGTON (Internews): U.S. President Joe Biden will fix his gaze on one of the prizes of the 2024 election three days after Donald Trump's Iowa Republican primary triumph, taking his economic pitch to closely contested North Carolina on Thursday.

After Trump's 51% win in the Iowa caucus cemented his front-runner status for Republicans, Biden heads to North Carolina, the state his Democrats are most optimistic about converting in 2024. Trump narrowly won the state in 2020 by 74,483 votes and 1.3 percentage points. The trip, tied

to the rollout of new funds for broadband internet, is Biden's fourth this month to an anticipated battleground state in the 2024 presidential election.

It comes as Biden's re-election campaign, launched nearly nine months ago, revs up into general-election mode with hires across a series of the states where voting preferences can swing to either party. Since 1980, North Carolina has only backed one Democrat in a presidential election: Barack Obama in 2008. But Biden's loss there in 2020 was narrower than Obama's in 2012 and Hillary Clinton's in 2016.



Smoke rising after an explosion at a fireworks factory near Sala Khao township in Thailand's Suphan Buri province.

Red Sea ship diversions boost bunker demand, prices in Africa, Mediterranean

SINGAPORE/CAPE TOWN / LONDON (Internews): The re-routing of a growing number of ships around Africa to avoid potential attacks in the Red Sea is altering refueling patterns and boosting demand for bunker fuel at far-flung ports, from the Mauritius to South Africa to the Canary Islands.

Ships are also expected to top up more at Singapore and Rotterdam, the two busiest bunkering ports and where fuel is competitively priced, as they try to hedge against uncertainty over route changes, traders and analysts said.

Attacks by Yemen's Houthi militia on merchant

ships in the Red Sea and retaliatory U.S. strikes have ratcheted-up tensions in the Middle East as the Gaza war rages on.

The attacks by the Iran-allied Houthis, which they say are in support of Palestinians, target a route that accounts for about 15% of the world's shipping traffic and acts as a vital conduit between Europe and Asia.

Hundreds of large vessels have rerouted along the southern tip of Africa, adding 10-14 days of travel, to avoid drone and missile attacks by the Houthis.

"Ships are diverting away from the Red Sea and re-routing around the coast of South and West Africa.



Israeli forces search a Red Crescent ambulance during a raid in Tulkarm, occupied West Bank.

Japan counts down to precision 'moon sniper' landing mission

TOKYO (Internews): Japan aims to become the fifth country to put a spacecraft on the moon when it attempts a precision landing on Friday, in what would be a boost for a space programme that has suffered a wave of setbacks and been eclipsed by rival China.

Dubbed the "moon sniper", the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) probe is attempting to land within 100 metres (328 feet) of its target, a technology

JAXA says is unprecedented and essential in the search for moon water and human habitability. Japan is increasingly looking to play a bigger role in space, partnering with close ally Washington to respond to China's military and technological might, including in space. Japan boasts a number of private-sector space startups and aims to send an astronaut to the moon as part of NASA's Artemis programme.

Singapore transport minister resigns over corruption charges

SINGAPORE (AFP/APP): Singapore's transport minister has resigned his post after being charged with 27 offences in a corruption probe that has also ensnared a billionaire hotel tycoon. S. Iswaran was arrested in July of 2023 and released on bail in connection with a rare top-level graft investigation in the city-state.

Iswaran, 61, said he would plead not guilty to the charges filed by the powerful Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau when he appeared in court on Thursday.

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong revealed shortly after Thursday's hearing that Iswaran had submitted his resignation from the government, parliament and ruling People's Action Party (PAP) on January 16 after being given formal notice of the charges against him.

Iswaran has also pledged to return the money received as part of his salary and allowances since his arrest, Lee said.

Plight of Palestinians echoes in US Senate

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: The plight of the Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank echoed in the US Senate on Tuesday evening as senators debated a resolution questioning US aid to Israel.

The lawmakers overwhelmingly rejected the move by Senator Bernie Sanders, a former presidential candidate, to tie US aid to Israel's treatment of Palestinians but he did succeed in generating a passionate debate on the issue.

The Senate voted 72 to 11 against the resolution, with nine Democrats, and one Re-

publican, Rand Paul, supporting Sanders. The Hill, a Washington newspaper focusing on Congressional activities, observed that "the number of Democrats who supported the measure reflects rising dissatisfaction among progressives over the civilian casualties in Gaza, which are now said to exceed 24,000."

The newspaper pointed out that those backing the proposal were "sending a pointed message to President Joe Biden that the war in Gaza is becoming a major problem for his party."

Winter weather upends travel in Germany for a second day

BERLIN (Internews): Heavy snowfall and icy conditions upended air, car and train travel across Germany for a second day on Thursday.

At Frankfurt airport, Germany's largest hub, more than 300 out of almost 1,000 planned arrivals and departures were cancelled in the morning, according to a spokesman.

Trains to and from Paris were again cancelled, German rail operator Deutsche Bahn said, and for other train journeys.

Pak Navy vows concrete action to enhance maritime security

KARACHI (APP): Vice Chief of Naval Staff Ovais Ahmed Bilgrami has emphasized the Pakistan Navy's commitment to addressing current simmering issues in a tangible way, aiming to ensure security in the country's maritime zones.

He made these remarks during the concluding ceremony of the inaugural Maritime Security Exercise SEA GUARD-24 in Karachi today.

During his address, he stated that the exercise aimed to review response procedures against maritime security incidents, identify gaps, and propose ways to improve the response mechanism.

Highlighting the scope of the exercise, the Vice Naval Chief mentioned that it provided an opportunity to strengthen and rejuvenate the bonds among diverse maritime stakeholders in the country, including shipping, fishing, law enforcement, and private entities, through a common platform—the Joint Maritime Information Coordination Centre.

Ovais Ahmed Bilgrami expressed appreciation for the efforts of all stakeholders in making the exercise a success, as it served as a platform for engaging in tactical exercises, exchanging best practices, and fostering mutual understanding.



ISLAMABAD: A delegation of Kashmir Education Foundation called on President Dr. Arif Alvi at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Chinese military expert Pakistan's plan to buy Chinese FC-31 stealth fighter jets 'win-win' cooperation

BEIJING (APP): Pakistan's plan to procure FC-31 stealth fighter jets from China will not only significantly enhance the Pakistan Air Force (PAF)'s capabilities, but also open up the international market for the Chinese aircraft, marking a win-win cooperation, Chinese military expert said.

The FC-31 has strong comprehensive air combat capabilities, including its stealth advantages that allow it to spot opponents first and launch surprise attacks, Wei Dongxu, a Beijing-based military expert, told the Global Times.

The aircraft has outstanding situational awareness and can carry a wide selection of munitions, including not only air-to-air missiles but also precision bombs as well as air-to-ground and air-to-surface missiles, Wei said.

The PAF has long been using weapons and equipment procured from China, including J-10C medium fighter jets, JF-17 light fighter jets, HQ-9BE long-range surface-to-air missile systems, HQ-16FE mid-to-long-range surface-to-air missile systems and the YLC-8E anti-stealth 3D surveillance radar systems.

Pakistan will have no difficulties integrating the FC-31 into its combat systems, and the stealth aircraft will in return significantly enhance its military capabilities by a generation, experts said.

The FC-31 will allow the PAF to enjoy a generational gap over its rivals with fast delivery, while Pakistan's main rival will not likely get stealth fighter jets anytime soon, Wei said.

The purchase plan will also benefit China, Wei said, noting that if Pakistan finalizes the deal, other countries, particularly those from the Middle East, could also follow.

In potential joint exercises with other countries, the Pakistan Air Force could display the capabilities of the FC-31, and more potential customers will get to know how competitive the Chinese aircraft is, Wei said.

Independently developed by the state-owned Aviation Industry Corporation of China (AVIC), the FC-31 is a single-seat, twin-engine, medium stealth fighter jet that analysts said is comparable with, if not superior to, the US' F-35.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate, Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani exchanging views with Mohamed Eboo, Resident Representative of Canada during meeting held at Parliament House in Islamabad.

Federal minister announces to organize awareness sessions on interfaith harmony in rural areas

KARACHI (APP): Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed Thursday announced that the government under its endeavour to promote interfaith harmony will organize awareness sessions on the subject in rural areas especially in schools and colleges across the country.

He was addressing a seminar titled "Religious Minorities and Interfaith Social Tolerance in Pakistan" organized by Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony in collaboration with Iqra University Karachi.

The Federal Minister, speaking at the occasion, said that all human beings were family of Almighty Allah and he taught mankind through his last Prophet Muhammad SAW to be kind and polite in their dealings.

Prophet Muhammad's (SAW) teachings on tolerance, embedded in the conquest of Mecca and Treaty of Hudeibia, should always be kept in mind while dealing with the people of different faiths, Aneeq Ahmed stated adding that the hearts of non-Muslim brothers could be won through kindness and politeness rather than misplaced arguments.

While expressing condemnation on incidents like Jarana, he said that if anyone receives information about any act of blasphemy one must verify and report it to higher authorities instead of taking the law into hands and resorting to violence. The Minister commended the role of Ulama for raising voices against the intolerable acts in society and uttered that the message of interfaith harmony should be disseminated through knowledge and evidence.

Aneeq Ahmed said that the ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony was organizing a series of awareness events on interfaith harmony in cities, particularly in higher education institutions.

President says: Use of technology vital to increase literacy rate

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Thursday stressed the need to increase use of the technology in the education sector of Azad Jammu and Kashmir to increase the overall literacy rate in the area.

He was talking to a delegation of the Kashmir Education Foundation which called on him at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

The president said the education could be brought to the remote and difficult areas with the help of technology.

He said the use of information technology in the education sector will reduce costs while it would

also help increasing the number of students while maintaining the quality of education.

President Alvi maintained that around 28 million children in Pakistan do not go to school while thousands of new schools would be needed to educate those children.

He said mosques could also be used as educational centers for this purpose.

The delegation briefed the president about the Foundation's role in promoting quality education and literacy in Azad Jammu and Kashmir and rural Punjab.

Azad Jammu and

Kashmir Textbook Board Chairman Syed Tufail Hussain Bukhari and Foundation Chairman Muzaffar Muhammad Qureshi also participated in the meeting.

It was informed in the meeting that the foundation runs three schools and a teacher training college in Punjab and Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

The delegation informed the president that the aim of the foundation was to promote education and character-building of the youth.

The president appreciated the foundation's role in promoting education in Azad Jammu and Kashmir and rural Punjab.



DAVOS: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar held a meeting with Sultan Ahmed bin Sulayem, Group Chairman and CEO of UAE-based DP World, a multinational logistics company on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum.

UNICEF assures full cooperation to work on better healthcare of mother & infants in Balochistan

Independent Report

QUETTA: The country Director UNICEF, Abdullah A. Fadil has assured that the UNICEF would extend full cooperation to work on the better healthcare of the mothers and infants in the province.

He also assured to work on the roadmap and work plan of the provincial government in this regard.

The country Director of UNICEF was in meeting with the caretaker Minister Health, Dr. Amir

Muhammad Khan Jogezi

ing.

The UNICEF representatives also briefed the overall functioning and contribution of the Fund in health sector of Balochistan.

Earlier, the Minister Health Dr. Jogezi appreciated the services being rendered by UNICEF in the health sector of the province.

He told that the government is ensuring effective steps for saving the people from diseases.



DAVOS: Caretaker Federal Minister for IT and Telecommunication Dr. Umar Saif addressing Pakistani professionals in Switzerland.

Pak isn't Iraq or Syria, it will respond if treated this way: ex-envoy

ISLAMABAD (INP): Former Pakistani ambassador Abdul Basit has issued a strong response to Iran's recent airstrikes in Balochistan, claiming that Pakistan "is not Iraq or Syria" and warning of further consequences.

Basit, speaking to a private TV news channel, highlighted that if Pakistan is treated in this way, it will respond also. He also highlighted the history of concern and cooperation with Iran, but asserted that Tehran's "unprovoked" attack, which killed two children, has pushed the relationship to a critical point.

He stressed that Islamabad has "responded appropriately" by recalling its ambassador and blocking Tehran's envoy.

The former ambassador pointed to Iran's growing regional ambitions, claiming that its "expansion of capabilities across Asia" is a "dangerous game." He further warned that Tehran's actions will only lead to its own isolation, urging them to resolve the dispute diplomatically and avoid creating further conflict.

Basit also drew a historical parallel, recalling Iran's 2010 arrest and execution of the Junallah chief, the predecessor to the targeted Jaish-ul-Adl group. This, he argued, demonstrates Iran's capacity for cooperation, a path he hopes they will choose once again.

Egypt envoy of calls on Minister for Defense, security issues discuss

RAWALPINDI (Online): Ambassador of Egypt Dr Ihab Abdel Hamid Hasan has called on Minister for Defense Lieutenant General (retired) Anwar Ali Haider in his office Defense Ministry Rawalpindi on Thursday.

Defense Minister said that Pakistan and Egypt have cordial historical and traditional relations.

Defense Minister said that both countries can work for collaborative projects and cooperation in

Defense industry by gathering their military strength.

Egypt and Pakistan have immense potential to develop in all sectors because both countries are facing common challenges and have common strategic interests. We hold the same desires for peace and development. The guest thanked the Defense Minister and expressed his government's commitment to work with Pakistan in all matters of mutual interest, including defense.



QUETTA: Country Director UNICEF Abdullah A Fadel and Ms. Maryam meeting with caretaker Provincial Health Minister Dr. Amir Muhammad Jogezi

PTA hosts workshop on IPv6 Transition & Routing Security

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) organized a two-day workshop on 'IPv6 Transition' and 'Routing Security' in collaboration with the Asia-Pacific Network Information Centre (APNIC), the Internet Society (ISOC), and the Pakistan Network Operators Group (PKNOG). The workshop featured esteemed foreign speakers and witnessed ac-

tive participation from professionals in the telecom industry, underscoring the collective commitment to staying abreast of technological advancements, said a news release issued here on Thursday. Speaking on the occasion, Chairman PTA, Major General @ Hafeez Ur Rehman said that PTA is well aware of the importance of capacity building therefore it is working closely with international stakeholders.

Efforts should be made to avoid complication with Iran, Khawaja Asif

ISLAMABAD (Online): Former Defense Minister Khawaja Asif said that we should try to avoid complication with Iran.

While talking to Private TV channel, Khawaja Asif said that during our tenure, we had very good relations with Iran. Pakistan had played an active role in resolving Saudi Arabia-Iran conflict.

PML-N leader said that Pakistan and Iran

should make a joint strategy to deal with terrorism.

Baloch separatist movements are going on in Pakistan and Iran.

Khawaja Asif said that Pakistan and Iran need to jointly deal with these movements.

It is pertinent to say that according to foreign office, Pakistan has targeted specific hideouts of terrorist in Sistan province of Iran this morning.

IHC accepts petitions against jail trial of Toshakhana, £190 million reference

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Thursday accepted the petitions of PTI founder against the trial of Toshakhana case and the £190 million reference in jail, for hearing. IHC bench comprising Justice Gul Hassan Aurangzeb and Justice Arbab Tahir heard the PTI founder's plea against the jail trial for the two cases. The court issued directives to the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) and the Interior Ministry to submit their replies on Monday. It also issued directives to schedule the case to be heard by any available bench on Monday.

Jan Achakzai visits SSP Traffic office; praises control mechanism

Independent Report QUETTA: The caretaker Provincial Minister for Information, Jan Achakzai visited the Office of Senior Superintendent of Police (Traffic) here on Thursday.

The caretaker Minister Information met the SSP Traffic Behram Khan Mandokhail who briefed him about the functioning of the Traffic Police and the traffic management system in Quetta city.

He stressed the need to create awareness among the citizens about the traffic laws.

Seminar on role of women in peace, nation building organized in Turbat

TURBAT (APP): A seminar was organized here on Thursday on the role of women in peace and nation building.

About 400 girl students and faculty participated in the seminar held at Sheikh Fatima bin Mubarak Cadet College Turbat through Voice of Balochistan (VoB).

The students came from University of Turbat, Government Girls College Turbat, University Makran, Panjgur and Uni-

versity of Gwadar.

Prominent politician Zubaida Jalal was the chief guest while the panelists were journalist and anchor SAMAA news Kiran Naz, Minister for Women Development Shania Khan, Principal Mand Girls High School Rahima Jalal, social activist and politician Meena Majeed Baloch, Prof Dr Gul Hassan of University of Turbat and researcher BBTN Dr Siraj Bashir.



QUETTA: Commissioner Quetta Division Hamza Shafqaat inspecting Solid Waste Plant

SHC allows Fahmida, Zulfiqar Mirza to contest election

KARACHI (Online): Sindh High Court (SHC) has allowed Fahmida Mirza and Zulfiqar Mirza to contest election.

The court has accepted constitutional petitions of Fahmida Mirza and Zulfiqar Mirza.

Fahmida Mirza and Zulfiqar Mirza had filed nomination papers from NA-223 while Zulfiqar Mirza had filed nomination papers from PS-70, 71 and 72.

Returning officer and election tribunal had rejected their nomination papers. Fahmida Mirza and Zulfiqar Mirza were charged that they were bank defaulters.

Finance Minister appreciates digital transformation efforts

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Finance, Revenue and Economic Affairs, Dr. Shamsah Akhtar, here on Thursday commended the initiatives undertaken by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Karandaaz for the digital transformation of Pakistan. Speaking at the 'Pakistan Digital Stake' Workshop here, the Minister said the creation of Digital Stake by these organizations was in line with the government's policy of digitization. She said digital transactions play a vital role in empowering both urban residents and business individuals, offering them the flexibility to complete financial transactions promptly and with ease.

The collaborative efforts extend beyond the private sector, with active participation from key government institutions such as the State Bank of Pakistan, the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) and the Accountability Bureau.

These entities are contributing significantly to the implementation of the "Pakistan Digital Stake," reinforcing the government's commitment to the digitalization agenda, she added.

Dr. Shamsah Akhtar underscored the importance of the project for Pakistan's progress, asserting, this initiative was of utmost importance for the development of the country adding the government would use all available resources to ensure its success.

The minister reiterated the government's commitment to financial inclusion, economic self-sufficiency, poverty reduction, and transparency in governance. Drawing inspiration from the positive impacts of digital transformation in the United Arab Emirates, Estonia, and Singapore, Dr. Shamsah Akhtar expressed confidence in the potential of "Digital Stake" to bring similar improvements to Pakistan. The "Pakistan Digital Stake" aims to establish the country on digital lines, creating opportunities for millions of Pakistanis to engage in daily financial transactions seamlessly.