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Chief of the Army Staff, General Syed Asim Munir interacting with the officers and troops at the occasion of witnessing firing of different air defence weapon systems during Exercise Al-Bayza-III, 2024 at Sonmiani.

Armed forces modernizing their systems in line with country's requirements, says Army Chief

RAWALPINDI (Online): General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff, (COAS), witnessed firing of different Air Defence weapon systems during Exercise Al-Bayza-III, 2024 at Sonmiani. COAS viewed integrated fire and battle maneuvers of Army Air Defence systems which includes High to Medium Air Defence Weapons System (HIMADS), Low to Medium Air Defence System (LOMAD), Short Range Air Defence system (SHORADS) and Extended Short Range Air Defence system (ESHORADS). In a landmark achieve-

ment and milestone in enhancing the Air Defence of the aerial frontiers of Pakistan, HIMAD system in maiden fire was able to successfully engage the target at maximum ranges along with other layered weapon systems which were tested during the exercise. COAS highly appreciated the remarkable achievement of engaging targets with precision and operational readiness of Corps of Army Air Defence. While interacting with the officers and troops, COAS highlighted that Armed Forces of Pakistan are modernising their systems in line with our re-

quirements to deter and be able to respond to any threat emanating against Pakistan. Corps Commander Karachi, Commander Army Air Defence, Inspector General Training & Evaluation and Inspector General Arms also witnessed the exercise. Earlier, COAS visited Army Air Defence Center. He laid floral wreath at Yadgar e Shuhada and paid homage to martyrs of Armed Forces. COAS installed Lieutenant General Muhammad Zafar Iqbal, HI (M), as Colonel Commandant of Army Air Defence Corps.



LAHORE: Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari talking to media persons during his visit to Minhaj-ul-Quran Secretariat in Lahore.

BC constable on anti-polio security duty gunned down in Quetta

QUETTA: A constable of the Balochistan Constabulary (BC), Jamil Ahmed was shot dead by unknown armed assailants in the eastern-by pass area on Friday. According to police, the BC constable was on duty of security of the anti-polio teams in the Eastern-by pass area when unknown armed med targeted him and shot him dead. The reports suggested that Jamil Ahmed sustained multiple bullets injuries and

shifted by the rescue team to the civil hospital in critical condition. He was provided necessary medical assistance but he succumbed to the serious injuries in the evening and died. Meanwhile, his funeral prayer was offered at the police lines the same night. The commandant of BC Chaudhary Salman and other senior police officers attended his funeral prayer. Later his body was dispatched to his native area Dera Ghazi Khan for burial.

CTD arrests terrorists planning attacks on Maulana, Aimal Wali

PESHAWAR (APP): In a successful operation, the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) in Peshawar on Friday announced the arrest of two alleged suicide bombers affiliated with Daesh Khorasan (ISIS) from the Matni area. CTD Superintendent of Police (SP) Najam-ul-Hussain told the media persons that the apprehended terrorists were planning suicide attacks targeting key political figures.

SP CTD Najam-ul-Hussain disclosed that the outlawed ISIS had previously been linked to targeted killings of individuals representing various schools of thought in the region six months ago.

According to SP CTD, the arrested individuals were plotting a suicide attack on Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman. Furthermore, it was disclosed that the terrorists had intentions to target Awami National Party (ANP) Presi-

Two terrorists killed in North Waziristan

RAWALPINDI (Online): Security forces conducted an intelligence based operation in North Waziristan District, on reported presence of terrorists.

During the conduct of operation, after an intense fire exchange, two terrorists; Abdullah Khadri and Khalid Janan were killed. The killed terrorists remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities in the area including target killing of innocent civilians. Sanitization operation is being conducted to eliminate any other terrorist found in the area as the Security forces of Pakistan are determined to wipe out the menace of terrorism from country.

Italian envoy pays farewell call on PM Boosting trade, investment ties with Italy in diverse sectors need of hour: PM

ISLAMABAD (Online): The Ambassador of Italy to Pakistan, Andreas Ferrarese, paid a farewell call on Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar earlier today. During the meeting, the Prime Minister appreciated the Ambassador's contributions to strengthening bilateral relations, noting his efforts to foster economic ties and facilitate cooperation in various fields. While acknowledging Pakistan's longstanding friendly relations with Italy, the Prime Minister emphasized the need to boost trade, investment and cooperation in diverse areas including mi-

gration and mobility, agricultural technology, education as well as tourism. The Italian Ambassador thanked the Prime Minister for receiving him and expressed gratitude for the excellent cooperation he received throughout his stay in Pakistan. He also briefed the Prime Minister on key developments during his tenure. The Ambassador praised the valuable contributions of the vibrant Pakistani diaspora to Italy's economic development. The Prime Minister wished the outgoing ambassador success in his future endeavours.

We are contesting elections for public service; we will end unemployment & inflation

JARANWALA (Online): Chairman of PPP Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that PPP is contesting elections for public service. We will end unemployment and inflation. The journey of public service was started by leader of people, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Bibi Shaheed laid down her life for the completion of that and we will continue this public service. While giving interview to Online after Tandlianwala visit, he said that we were given the manifesto and consciousness by Shaheed Bibi, so if we get win the PPP elections then we will change the destiny of the country and nation by implementing the 10-point agenda.

He said that "Wasila Haq Wasila Rozgar" are projects of PPP and we will start such welfare projects like Benazir Income Support for every sector which will bring prosperity to every home and will end the worst inflation, poverty and unemployment. The wheel of industries will run, the workers will get employment. Agricultural revolution will come when farmer will be prosperous. New universities will be built wherever necessary, including Tandlianwala, just as 2 million houses are being built for flood victims in Sindh and Baluchistan. Similarly 3 million houses will be built in Punjab.

PML-N, PPP opposes taking away bat symbol from PTI

KARACHI (Online): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Pakistan People's Party (PPP) opposed taking away the symbol of the bat from Tehreek-e-Insaf. Speaking on a private TV program, PML-N leader Javed Latif said that his election symbol should not be taken away from any political party. People's Party leader Nasir Hussain Shah said that we have a clear stand that Tehreek-e-Insaf should be allowed to participate in elections with the symbol of a bat. Tehreek-e-Insaf leader Naem Panjtoha said that despite 26 hours of the Peshawar High Court's (PHC) order, Election

Commission Pakistan (ECP) has not allotted the bat symbol to PTI. Senior PML-N leader Mian Javed Latif said that the resignation of Justice Ijaz-ul-Ahsan did not create a crisis in the Supreme Court. The crisis in the Supreme Court was created when Saqib Nisar started giving decisions of his own choice. Justice Ejaz-ul-Ahsan Faizabad Dharna Case has been patronizing those who gave references and those who made references against it. When you make decisions under pressure, how was justice done? Well, if the institution wants to wash away the stains of the past, then it is good.



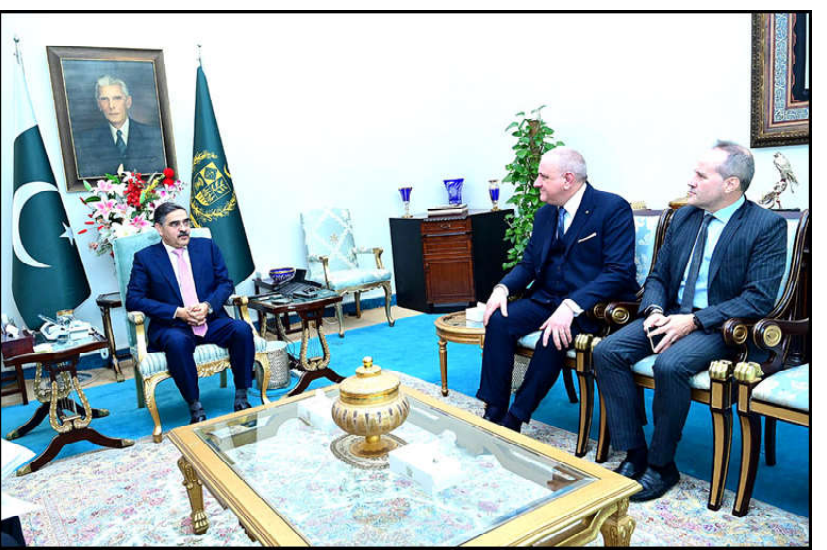
QUETTA: A delegation led by Chairman Karawan Lashaar Pakistan Mir Abbas Lashari meeting with Governor Balochistan Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar

Bat symbol case

ECP is constitutional institution, nobody can interfere in its work: CJP

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Supreme Court (SC) on Friday said regulating political parties is the job of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). These remarks were made by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Justice Qazi Faez Isa while hearing the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) appeal against the Peshawar High Court (PHC) verdict restoring the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) electoral symbol — bat. "SC will not interfere in the domain of the Election Commission of Pakistan. However, if ECP commits any unconstitutional act then the court can look into it," the CJP added. A three-member bench of the apex court headed by Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa and comprising Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar and Justice Musarat Hilali hearing the electoral body's appeal. The proceedings of the case are being broadcast live on the SC website and YouTube channel. Barrister Gohar, Shoaib Shaheen, Niazullah and Waleed Iqbal attended court proceedings today. PTI's lawyer Hamid Khan in his remarks said the SC has clar-

ified that no institution can file an appeal against the verdicts. The ECP can file a review on appeals else there will be no worth of its decisions, the CJP remarked and added if the argument of PTI is accepted then questions will also be raised on its appeal in Peshawar High Court. The CJP Isa asked Makhdoom whether the PHC's written order had been issued or not, the latter replied that it had not been. The lawyer then read out the PHC order that restored the PTI's 'bat' symbol. He said that the ECP had not yet received "any notice" of the PHC order, to which the chief justice said, "I have not read the case file either." The top judge asked Makhdoom when he would be ready to present the case, at which the counsel urged the SC to adjourn the hearing till Monday. Makhdoom further said that the political parties would be allotted electoral symbols tomorrow. The top judge observed that to adjourn the hearing till Monday, the PHC's recent verdict would have to be suspended.



ISLAMABAD: Italian Ambassador to Pakistan, Andreas Ferrarese pays a farewell call on Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.

Alvi accepts resignation of Justice Ijaz-ul-Ahsan

ISLAMABAD (Online): President Dr. Arif Alvi has accepted the resignation of Supreme Court's Judge Justice Ijaz-ul-Ahsan. Justice Ijaz-ul-Ahsan has tendered resignation under article 179 and 206 (1) of the constitution. The President has accepted the resignation of Justice Ijaz-ul-Ahsan on the advice of the Prime Minister.

Another resolution to delay Feb 8 polls submitted in Senate

ISLAMABAD (Online): Resolution seeking postponement of general election for three months in view of security challenges in the country has been submitted in Senate. The resolution has been filed by senator Hidayat Ullah from Independent parliamentary group with his signatures. The resolution said there is grave concern over the attacks on the candidates. Terror incidents are on rise across the country. The general election be postponed for three months. Protecting life and property of people is responsibility of state. The growing incidents of terrorism in the country

including armed attacks in North Waziristan, Bajore, Swabi and Turbat wherein an elderly nationalist leader was injured critically and one candidate was killed have created the environment of fear and insecurity in the country. The Senate accepts it that holding general election is constitutional obligation. The constitution insists on ensuring free and fair election and protection of life and property of people equally, he senate urges on Election Commission and Supreme Court to consider sympathetically holding of election peacefully and postpone the election for three months in view of security challenges.

Rajab Al-Murajab to start today as crescent sighted

ISLAMABAD (APP): The month of Rajab Al-Murajab will commence on Saturday as the crescent for the new Islamic month was sighted on Friday evening.



KABUL: JUI Chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman met with Afghan Interior Minister Siraj ud din Haqqani.

Chairman PkMAP withdraws candidature in favour JUI-F chief from NA-265

QUETTA: The Chairman Pashtoonkhwaw Milli Awami Party (PkMAP), Mehmoond Khan Achakzai has withdrawn his candidature in favour of the central Ameer of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) Maulana Fzlor Rehman from NA-265. According to the press release of the Party, Chairman PkMAP has withdrawn his candidature in favour of the JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman from the national assembly constituency of Pishin.

Shehbaz Sharif withdraws from election in Karachi

KARACHI (INP): Former prime minister and Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N) president Shehbaz Sharif will not contest election from NA-242 constituency in Karachi. Shehbaz withdrew his nomination papers after Muttahida Quami Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) refused to withdraw its candidates Mustafa Kamal from NA-242. Meanwhile, PML-N Senator Nehal Hashmi said that Khawaja Shoaib will be PML-N's candidate from NA-242 in place of Shehbaz Sharif as no consensus reached with MQM-P for seat adjustment.

Abbasi declares upcoming election purposeless to contest

ISLAMABAD (INP): Former Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi has officially announced his decision not to contest the upcoming election, citing personal reasons and expressing discontent with the current state of Muslim League-N's politics. During a TV Channel program, Abbasi stated that he considers the election purposeless and believes

political leaders have failed to guide the country. Abbasi emphasized that his decision not to contest is personal, disclosed six months ago, but clarified that he remains responsive to calls from Nawaz Sharif. Commenting on the Murree constituency, he mentioned that party recommendations favored a worker for the ticket, leaving the final decision to the people.

Daily Voice of Masses
Independent

Terror wave

A spate of deadly recent terrorist attacks illustrates the grim fact that unless the state takes comprehensive counterterrorism measures, the militancy-related bloodshed witnessed in 2023 is likely to continue in the new year.

Many of the attacks have targeted police personnel, particularly those tasked with guarding polio teams. The week began on a sombre note when at least seven policemen guarding vaccinators were martyred in Bajaur on Monday in an IED blast targeting their vehicle. On Tuesday, two police officers lost their lives in a reported gunfight with militants in Bannu. These personnel were also escorting polio teams.

Wednesday also witnessed significant bloodshed, as three law enforcers were martyred when a police post was attacked in Kohat, while two army men lost their lives in Lakki Marwat. On the same day an election candidate was gunned down in North Waziristan, while another hopeful survived an attack in Turbat.

In the aforementioned attacks, terrorists have struck both 'hard' targets, in the form of security personnel, as well as 'soft' ones, such as election hopefuls. They show just how vulnerable police personnel are, particularly those serving in areas of KP and Balochistan experiencing a renewed wave of terrorist violence.

As mentioned, 2023 was not a good year where terror-related casualties are concerned. According to figures compiled by a think tank, there were over 1,500 violence-linked fatalities last year from nearly 800 terror attacks. It is particularly tragic that those protecting polio vaccinators have themselves come in the line of fire. This is not a new development; around a hundred people have been killed in polio-related incidents since 2012. A recalibration of the national CT strategy is long overdue, particularly in order to protect the lives of soldiers and police personnel serving on the front lines. While military personnel are relatively better equipped, police officers also need to be supplied safety gear that can help save lives.

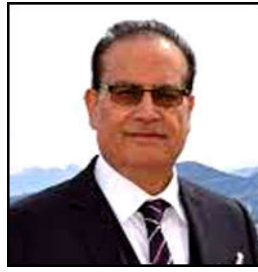
Moreover, those protecting polio teams should be provided multi-layered security. While the state must keep using diplomatic channels to communicate to the Afghan Taliban that their soil cannot be used by forces inimical to Pakistan, internal efforts are equally necessary to flush out militants from our own territory.

Unless efforts to uproot militancy succeed, the next, and inevitable step, will require military operations that will displace communities, and require more sacrifices from security personnel and dedicated funds. And as an election looms, candidates and voters in militancy-affected areas need security in order to freely campaign, and cast their ballots without fear, respectively. All security and intelligence agencies need to be on the same page, and together with the civil administration, the militant threat needs to be neutralised.

Two resigned, others may follow...

By Qamar Bashir

Press Secretary to the President(Rtd); Former Press Minister at Embassy of Pakistan to France; Former MD, SRBC



In Pakistan, an atmosphere of palpable excitement and tumult prevails, akin to the thick smog in Punjab and Lahore, where visibility is so limited that even one's own hands become unseen. Every passing moment is laden with significant and breaking news, constantly keeping the public on edge. Unfortunately, this pervasive frenzy is not a harbinger of hope but rather a thick cloud of war alarms that hangs over the nation, casting a shadow on aspirations for a better future. In this relentless struggle to outmaneuver rivals, the foundational pillars of the state and its institutions are engaged in a perilous game of pulling each other down.

The Senate, pitted against the Judiciary, has taken a bold step by passing a resolution calling for an indefinite delay in the upcoming elections. This move, a direct challenge to the Supreme Court of Pakistan, which had firmly set the election date for February 8, 2024, serves as a mockery of the highest court's historic decision.

The Supreme Court, issued a stern rebuke to the Lahore High Court, asserting in no uncertain terms that the court is complicit with those seeking to delay elections for their vested interests.

The PTI's struggle over the BAT symbol has become a legal rollercoaster, marked by

conflicting decisions. Despite the Peshawar High Court's back-and-forth on allocating the symbol, the Election Commission chose to disregard court orders and withhold the emblem. PTI swiftly responded by filing a contempt petition, slated for tomorrow (12th Jan 2024). The Election Commission is all set to file an appeal before the Supreme Court. The deliberate choice of the Peshawar High Court, over the potentially jurisdictional Islamabad High Court, underscores PTI's resolute belief in the latter's compromise.

The two judges of the Supreme Court have already tendered their resignations, with the looming possibility of more following suit. If this trend continues, it could plunge the credibility and impartiality of both the Supreme Court and the Chief Justice into intense scrutiny, potentially rendering the apex court practically dysfunctional.

The rift within the Supreme Court was initiated by an audacious move from an unfamiliar lawyer, Mian Dawood, who, in February 2023, filed a complaint against Justice Mazhar Naqvi. The complaint alleges violations of the code of conduct for judges outlined in Clause (8) of Article 209 of the Constitution. The accusations leveled against Justice Naqvi include misconduct, the creation of illegal assets, and the accumulation of wealth through frontmen. Later, this complaint was turned into a formal complaint.

The SJC issued two show-cause notices, demanding that Justice Naqvi explain the appar-

ent inconsistencies in his financial records.

Justice Naqvi, vehemently denied any wrongdoing and labeled the show-cause notices as politically motivated tools wielded against him. He filed a petition with the Supreme Court seeking a stay order. The Supreme Court's dismissal of Naqvi's petition proved to be a turning point. With the SJC investigation set to move forward, Naqvi opted for a dramatic exit. In a concise resignation letter, he maintained his innocence but acknowledged that continuing under such a cloud of suspicion was untenable.

Justice Naqvi's resignation left more questions than answers. Did it signify an admission of guilt, or was it a strategic retreat from a perceived unfair process? Was it a tacit acknowledgement of wrongdoing or a desperate attempt to escape scrutiny? As a former Deputy Commissioner of Income Tax with over a decade of experience, I assert with confidence that the allegations against Muzhar Naqvi, revolving around property transactions at significantly disparate values, resonate across civil and military officers, politicians, judges, and business figures. If such practices were absent, and all individuals adhered strictly to legal obligations, our nation might have charted a different course.

The inherent inconsistency in the handling of similar circumstances, particularly the parallel allegations against Qazi Faez Isa, raises questions about the fairness of the entire episode. In a situation where allegations against Isa were

dismissed, and accusations of amassing wealth exceeding 12 billion by former Army Chief Qamar Javid Bajwa only led to the incarceration of those disclosing this information, it suggests a nuanced and potentially unjust dimension to the legal proceedings.

Recalling the allegations against Qazi Faez Isa, pertaining to the acquisition of three London properties leased in the names of his wife and children between 2011 and 2015, raises parallels with the current situation, emphasizing the need for consistency and fairness in addressing such matters across different individuals and institutions. Let us peruse, the Supreme Judicial Council decision point wise.

The reference to be of no legal effect, non maintainable whatsoever and stands quashed. Reference was filed with mala fide intention, prematurity and lack of evidence. Government agencies including the FIA secretly obtained information about the petitioner and his family in clear transgression of Articles 4 and 14 of the Constitution.

Similar observations can be extended to the case involving Justice Mazhar Naqvi. The petitioner, in this instance, is a lawyer who doesn't bear any direct impact from the alleged property transactions with Justice Naqvi. There is no record of the petitioner engaging in property transactions with the judge, neither as a buyer nor a seller, and therefore, lacks a legitimate basis to possess detailed information about Justice Naqvi's properties or their transactional

intricacies.

It becomes apparent that the origin of such detailed information is likely rooted in the historical practices of influential and powerful sectors, known for exerting pressure, offering bribes, and cultivating relationships with judges. It's a recurring pattern that references or complaints are often filed against judges and officials who resist yielding to illegal demands made through proxies. This underscores the challenges and pressures faced by those within the judiciary who choose to uphold their integrity and independence in the face of external influence. Having reviewed the income tax and wealth tax returns of numerous politicians, bureaucrats, and military officials during my tenure, the reality is that the allegations leveled against Justice Mazhar are likely applicable to the tax returns of many individuals.

The narrative takes a disconcerting turn when defending vested interests led to the sweeping abolition of laws and the abrupt halt of critical surveys. During an economic survey in 2001 that documented previously undisclosed immovable properties of numerous army officers, not only was the wealth tax abolished, but the entire survey was abruptly terminated.

In light of this context, a pertinent question emerges: why was the applicant who filed the reference not summoned for an inquiry into the sources of information within the FBR? Why did the FBR, exclusively vested with jurisdiction over tax matters, escape

admonishment for leaking sensitive information against an honorable judge? Why did the SJC encroach upon the exclusive jurisdiction of the FBR? The inconsistency in arguments, notably the acceptance of similar arguments in the case of Qazi Faez Isa but their rejection in the case of Justice Mazhar Naqvi, raises eyebrows.

These apparent contradictions and discrepancies in the arguments and proceedings of the SJC likely contributed to Justice Ijaz Ul Ahsan dissent and subsequent resignation. In his dissenting note, he unequivocally called for the withdrawal of the show cause notice issued to Justice Mazhar Naqvi. Expressing concern over the council's actions, he criticized the hasty and unconventional proceedings, deeming them contrary to established traditions and legal requirements. The looming possibility of other judges with similar reservations following suit in resigning could render the Supreme Court dysfunctional for a considerable period. A political dimension becomes apparent in what is perceived as part of the London plan, as articulated by spokesperson Marriyum Aurangzeb. In response to the resignations of Justice Ijaz Ul Ahsan and Mazhar Ali Akbar Naqvi, she declared that the alleged conspiracy bench against former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had reached its conclusion. This political interpretation adds a layer of complexity to the resignations, suggesting a connection to broader political agendas and machinations.

Commerce News

1st special credit guarantee company for SMEs inaugurated

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ministry of Finance and Karandaaz here Friday launched Pakistan's first special credit guarantee company namely the National Credit Guarantee Company Limited (NCGCL), with an objective to provide financial assistance to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the country.

The inauguration ceremony, among others, was attended by representatives from the British High Commission, Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCP), State Bank of Pakistan, and the Ministry of Finance.

NCGCL, the joint venture of Ministry of Finance and Karandaaz aims, to enhance financial accessibility through

special credit guarantee facilities, particularly focusing on expanding financial reach for businesses operating at the small and medium scale across the board.

Speaking on the occasion, Federal Minister for Finance, Revenue and Economic Affairs, Dr. Shamshad highlighted the significance of this revolutionary initiative. She said, private credit for SMEs in Pakistan stands at a mere 5.2 percent, declining from 7.7 percent in the last five years in the country.

She said the credit level was significantly lower compared to other South Asia, which has an average of over 17 percent, undoubtedly they do better on exports and they do better on competitiveness.

She said, reality is that SMEs sector accounts

90 percent of formally registered businesses, contributes to around 40 percent of GDP and employees around 80 percent of non-agriculture labour forces, offering an opportunity to low income strata.

She was of the view that inadequate investment in SME sector, globally recognized to enhance competitiveness of countries and industries and value addition as well as employment generation, has hindered Pakistan's sustainable growth and development.

She said launching of NCGCL was a far reaching institutional reform that is being launched, adding the purpose of this transformative step was to facilitate smoother capital investment paths for small businesses.



KARACHI: Workers prepare different political parties flags and banners ahead of the forthcoming general election in Provincial Capital.

Zong 4G, ASA Pakistan signs agreement for communication & data connectivity solutions

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Zong 4G Pakistan's leading digital communication company, has signed a corporate partnership agreement with ASA Pakistan Limited, a leading Microfinance Bank, to provide data and voice services for their customers.

Farooq Raza Khan, Director Govt. & Corporate Sales & Services Zong CMPAK and CEO ASA Pakistan Saeed Uddin Khan signed the

partnership on behalf of their respective organizations.

"Zong Business team strives to provide each client with industry-leading tailored solutions that can enhance their business productivity and streamline their processes," a news release said. A spokesperson for Zong 4G said, "Our partnership with ASA Pakistan (MFB) Limited is a testament to our commitment to excellence and innovation.

1st cross-border oil project hits 300,000 tons mark: SCODA

BEIJING (APP): The first international bulk oil trade project, a collaboration between the Pakistan-China Center, Pakistan, and East Sea Group, China, was launched recently in the China-SCO Local Economic and Trade Cooperation Demonstration Area (SCODA), Qingdao, Shandong, China.

Under the project, the initial batch of Malaysia blend crude oil, totalling 300,000 tons, underscores a deepening of investment cooperation between SCODA and Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) member countries, China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Friday.

Fang Yulong, Chief Executive Officer of East Sea Group, expressed confidence in expanding into the SCO member countries' markets, attributing it to the support and assistance received from SCODA.



WASHINGTON: Chairman Investment Board Sardar Amjad Jalil met with Pakistan's Ambassador to America Sardar Masood Khan.

Pakistan to be connected with high-speed 'optical fiber network soon: Aisha

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication (MoITT) Additional Secretary Aisha Humera Chaudhry Friday said that the government is all set to launch a landmark project 'optical fibre' to improve broadband connectivity and to boost deployment of digital infrastructure across the country.

Talking to PTV news channel, she said that the government and telecom companies would

strengthen urban and remote areas with high-speed broadband connectivity, adding, that all available resources and facilities were being provided for the digital gateway initiative. She said the government was striving hard to ensure the availability of affordable high-speed Internet service to the citizens, particularly the students, and for that purpose, it was focusing on laying 'optical fibre' across the country. She further mentioned that the

Ministry of IT and Telecom is fully cooperating with the telecom industry.

Replying to a query, she highlighted that said that the provision of broadband services to the residents of the un-served and under-served areas of Pakistan is as much needed as for the big cities.

By increasing the optical fibre cable, the connectivity will be faster, and better internet facilities will be provided to the users, she added.

Weekly inflation up by 1.36 pc

ISLAMABAD (APP): The weekly inflation measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), witnessed an increase of 1.36 per cent for the combined consumption groups during the week ended on January 11, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday.

According to the PBS data, the SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 317.92 points as compared to 313.66 points during the past

week.

As compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 44.16 per cent. The weekly SPI with the base year 2015-16 =100 covers 17 urban centres and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups.

The SPI for the lowest consumption group up to Rs. 17,732, increased by 1.20 percent and went up to 312.23 points from last week's 308.53 points.

Gold rates up by Rs.200

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold increased by Rs.200 and was sold at Rs. 216,500 on Friday compared to its sale at Rs. 216,300 on last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs. 172 to Rs. 185,614 from Rs. 185,442 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold went up to Rs. 170,146 from Rs. 169,989 the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

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

President FPCCI stresses the need to revisit the economic policies

Independent Report

ISLAMABAD: President FPCCI Mr. Atif Ikram Sheikh said that the business community is the backbone of the economy and the FPCCI would take all possible measures to address their key issues. He said that he strongly believing in teamwork, he would ensure maximum participation of the business Community representing different Chambers and Associations of the country for economic

leading role in development of Pakistan as well as to solve the problems of Unemployment also.

He reiterated that now it's our duty to take steps to resolve the issues and problems of Business Community of Pakistan without any differences for the betterment of Pakistan and for the betterment of Business Community of Pakistan.

He was addressing different delegations of the members of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce &



prosperity and development of the country, along with welfare of the business community.

He further said that we will play positive role and take necessary initiatives to solve the problems faced by business community of Pakistan and FPCCI will play

Industry (ICCI), Pakistan Overseas Employment Promoters Association (POEPA) & Rawalpindi Chamber of Small Traders & Small Industry who visited FPCCI Capital Office for presenting bouquets and felicitations to the whole team of UBG on historic victory in the recent elections of FPCCI.

IMF tranche: LCCI sees positive impact on economy

LAHORE (INP): Office-bearers of the Lahore Chamber of Commerce & Industry including President Kashif Anwar, Senior Vice President Zafar Mehmood Chaudhry and Vice President Adnan Khalid Butt on Friday welcomed the approval of a \$700 million tranche by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for Pakistan, hailing it as 'excellent news for the economy'.

They commended the present regime for its efforts, acknowledging the approval from the IMF Executive Board after completing the first review of Pakistan's economic reform programme.

The LCCI office-bearers anticipated that the approved \$700 million would invigorate economic indicators, instill confidence in both local and foreign investors, stabilize the rupee, and positively impact the stock market.

Highlighting the importance of encouraging expatriate Pakistanis, they urged for increased home remittances and support for export-oriented industries to boost exports.

In the wake of this positive development, the LCCI office-bearers urged authorities to focus on two key areas for economic reform.

Women empowerment is very important for gender equality: Baligh

Independent Report
LAHORE: Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman attended a ceremony organized by the National Commission on Status of Women, Government of Pakistan, regarding the empowerment of women as chief guest at a local hotel today.

Chairperson National Commission on Status of Women Nilofar Bakhtiar and others were present on this occasion. Addressing the ceremony, Punjab Governor Muhammad Balighur Rehman said that women empowerment is very important for gender equality. He said that women are contributing to the development of country by working side by side in various fields along with looking after their families and children.

He said that our religion, Islam, and the Constitution of Pakistan guarantee equal economic, social, and human rights for all citizens. In our religion, the example of Hazrat Khadija (RA) is in front of us, who was a successful business woman.

He said that in order to empower women, it is very important to provide them with easy access to educational institutions and facilities in educational institutions. He said that economic independence not only increases the confidence of women but also reduces the burden on other family members.

In our society, women are working in every field and proving their mettle, adding he said that today Pakistani women are aerospace engineers, pilots, police officers. Even

in our villages, women work side by side with men in the fields. Governor Punjab further said that by empowering women, the goals of development in the country's economy can be achieved.

He said that the performance and skills of women are much better than men in many fields. Governor Punjab said that the governments that started institutions like Commission on Status of Women and projects like Women on Wheels to empower women should be appreciated. Governor Punjab said that the Government of Pakistan and many institutions of the Government of Punjab are active for women's welfare, economic independence and poverty alleviation by providing women with easy loans.



PESHAWAR: Chairman Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Squash Association Qamar Zaman. Called on Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah.

Minister underscores urgency to address climate change challenges

Independent Report
PESHAWAR: Provincial Caretaker Finance Minister, Ahmad Rasul Bangash here Friday underscored the urgency of addressing climate change challenges, recognizing them as a global imperative that demands collective action.

He was the Chief Guest in a workshop that was organized by UK-Aid-funded Sustainable Energy and Economic Development (SEED). The workshop titled

'Navigating Voluntary Carbon Markets in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa' was aimed to explore how KP can realize its significant capacity for nature-based solutions and renewable energy projects.

Caretaker minister highlighted the adverse impacts already affecting communities and ecosystems emphasizing the need for innovative approaches to mitigate environmental risks and build resilience.

Dr Javed says: Govt has introduced AI in hospitals

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Punjab Health Minister Prof Dr. Javed Akram said that the government had introduced a historic artificial intelligence systems in government hospitals across the province.

Speaking at a book launch event, he emphasized the need for innovation in daily life and highlighted the pivotal role of technology in the development of powerful economies worldwide.

During his address, Dr. Akram stressed the importance of evidence-based policies in addressing Pakistan's challenges and advocated for local technology development instead of relying on imports. He lamented the absence of biotechnology plants in Pakistan and urged a collective effort, suggesting an all-party conference to enhance the system.



LAHORE: Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur-Rehman addressing the ceremony regarding Women Empowerment organized by National Commission on Status of Women.

KP Govt ready for transparent conduct of elections: CM KP

PESHAWAR (APP): Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Syed Arshad Hussain Shah here on Friday said that transparent conduct of elections was the primary responsibility of the caretaker government and the government was ready in this regard.

Addressing a ceremony, he said that the Supreme Court and the Election Commission had been informed in connection with the free elections, adding that there was a shortage of 56,000 officials to perform the election duty. The chief minister is

also taking steps for the betterment of the province and the people.

He said that the provincial government was actively working for peace, order, better governance and provision of facilities to the people and taking pragmatic steps in this regard.

The CM said that the government was working for the welfare of the people and taking measures to train 500,000 youth to send them to Gulf countries for better opportunities.

After the inclusion of tribal districts, the share of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has

increased, adding that the Prime Minister was keen to address the problems here and had established a committee in this regard.

Meanwhile, as an important step towards good governance in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Caretaker Chief Minister Justice @ Syed Arshad Hussain Shah on Friday launched a Digital Dashboard under the "Khushal Khyber Pakhtunkhwa" Initiative for real-time monitoring of provincial departments, and other public service delivery outlets at divisional and district levels.

Six dacoits killed in two police encounters

RAWALPINDI (APP): Six dacoits were killed here as a result of heavy cross-firing during two police encounters in the jurisdiction of Race Course and Morgah Police Stations, said a police spokesman.

He informed that Rawalpindi District Police on Thursday in an important action in the case of the murder of a British citizen during a robbery three days ago, succeeded to kill four dacoits, members of an inter-provincial gang who were involved in the incident.

According to details, the dacoits opened firing on the police party in the

Race Course area late on Thursday night and during cross-firing, four were killed.

The suspects had shot dead a citizen namely Tasaraf Mehmood on his return from the UK in the Race Course area. The gang used police uniforms during the robbery incidents. Members of the inter-provincial gang were also involved in dacoits in Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, Rawalpindi.

City Police Officer, Rawalpindi Syed Khalid Hamdani had taken notice of the incident of murder of a British citizen during a robbery and formed special teams to arrest the accused.

Naqvi visits Mayo Hospital

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi has directed to install appropriate-sized signboards for the convenience of patients and their attendants at Mayo Hospital, during an inspection of the hospital's emergency block, which is in its final stage on Friday.

He further directed that the finishing touches should be completed expeditiously with high standards.

The CM also emphasized the need for the timely completion of all tasks while maintaining the quality of work. The KEMU principal was also present.

Naqvi displeased with poor cleanliness in PIC

Independent Report
LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi expressed displeasure over poor cleanliness, marks of dust and stains on tiles and counters during his inspection of the newly constructed emergency of the Punjab Institute of Cardiology (PIC).

He also enquired about the well-being of a patient in a wheelchair, lifting a fallen file from the floor and placing it back on the wheelchair. The patient expressed gratitude to the CM for his gesture. He also addressed the complaint of a patient from Gujrat about delayed scheduling for angiography. Ordering immediate action, he instructed the MS to expedite the angiography procedure. The health secretary and others were also present.

He directed immediate improvements in cleanliness arrangements. He emphasized that poor cleanliness in the new emergency was unacceptable.

He also enquired about the well-being of a patient in a wheelchair, lifting a fallen file from the floor and placing it back on the wheelchair. The patient expressed gratitude to the CM for his gesture. He also addressed the complaint of a patient from Gujrat about delayed scheduling for angiography. Ordering immediate action, he instructed the MS to expedite the angiography procedure. The health secretary and others were also present.



LAHORE: Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi enquiring about the health of patient sitting on a wheel chair during his visit to (New Emergency) Punjab Institute of Cardiology.

Real beauty of Abbottabad to be restored thru KPCIP

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister for Irrigation, Communications and Works Ahmad Jan and Caretaker Provincial Local Government Minister Amir Nadeem Durrani Friday

have said that we all have to restore the original beauty of Abbottabad city by working responsibly on the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa City Improvement Project (KPCIP).

They said that the major issues of Abbottabad city are clean drinking

water, cleanliness, traffic restoration, shifting of solid waste and installation of solid waste plant and construction of Abbottabad Motorway Interchange.

Both expressed these views while presiding over a high-level meeting of officers of various departments at Commissioner House Abbottabad following the directives of caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Justice Retired Syed Arshad Hussain Shah.

International News

US, British militaries launch massive retaliatory strike against Iranian-backed Houthis in Yemen

Houthi rebels say US-led strikes in Yemen killed 5 of their forces, raising Mideast tensions

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: The U.S. and British militaries bombed more than a dozen sites used by the Iranian-backed Houthis in Yemen on Thursday, in a massive retaliatory strike using warship- and submarine-launched Tomahawk missiles and fighter jets, U.S. officials said.

The U.S. Air Force's Mideast command said it struck over 60 targets at 16 sites in Yemen, including "command-and-control nodes, munitions depots, launching systems, production facilities and air defense radar systems."

President Joe Biden said the strikes were meant to demonstrate that the U.S. and its allies "will not tolerate" the militant group's ceaseless attacks on the Red Sea. And he said they only made the move after attempts at diplomatic negotiations and careful deliberation.

Meanwhile: U.S.-led airstrikes on Yemen's Houthi rebels in response to their attacks on Red Sea shipping pulled the world's focus Friday back on the years-long war raging there,

even as tensions rise across a Middle East already torn by Israel's war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

The strikes killed at least five people and wounded six, the Houthis said, without elaborating on what was targeted.

Associated Press journalists in Yemen's capital, Sanaa, heard four explosions early Friday local time.

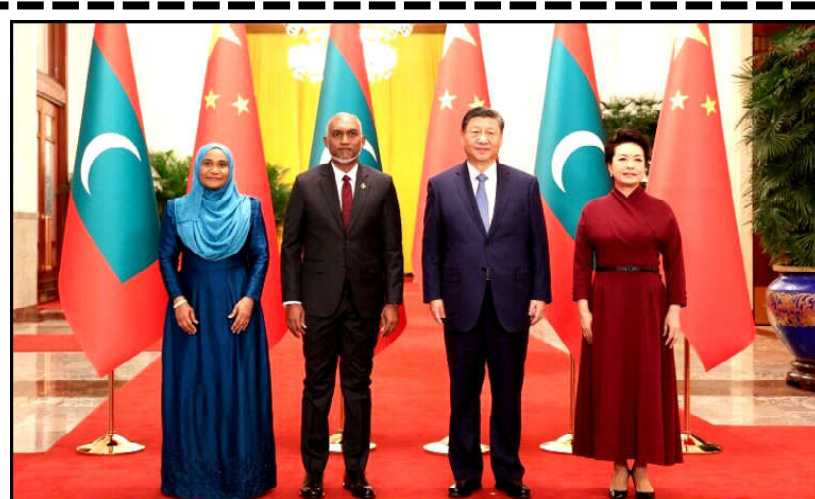
Two residents of Hodeida, Amin Ali Saleh and Hani Ahmed, said they heard five strong explosions hitting the western port area of the city, which lies on the Red Sea and is the largest port city controlled by the Houthis. Eyewitnesses who spoke with the AP also said they saw strikes in Taiz and Dhamar, cities south of Sanaa.

Russia condemns US and UK for 'irresponsible' strikes on Yemen

Monitoring Desk
MOSCOW: Russia condemned the United States and Britain on Friday for their military strikes on Yemen, which Moscow said amounted to an irresponsible adventure that risked sowing chaos across the entire Middle East.

The United States and Britain launched strikes from the air and sea against Houthi military targets in Yemen in response to the Iran-backed movement's attacks on ships in the Red Sea since the start of the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza.

Russia, an ally of Iran and a partner of key Arab powers, called for an urgent meeting of the United Nations Security Council on Friday to discuss the issue. "We strongly condemn these irresponsible actions by the United States and its allies," Maria Zakharova, Russia's foreign ministry spokeswoman, told reporters.



Maldives' President Mohamed Muizzu, his wife Sajidha Mohamed, Chinese President Xi Jinping and his wife Peng Liyuan posing for photos during a welcome ceremony at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing.

Erdogan accuses US, Britain of trying to turn Red Sea into 'sea of blood'

Monitoring Desk
ANKARA: Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan on Friday slammed the US and British strikes on Houthi targets in Yemen as a disproportionate use of force and accused the two countries of trying to turn the Red Sea into a "sea of blood". Turkey, a NATO member, has strongly criticised Israel for its war in Gaza aimed at wiping out Palestinian militant group Hamas, and has repeatedly slammed Western countries for supporting Israel's campaign.

Asked by reporters about the overnight air and sea strikes by U.S. and British forces across Yemen in retaliation against Iran-backed Houthi forces for attacks on Red Sea shipping, the Turkish president said these were not proportionate. "All that has been done is a disproportionate use of force," Erdogan said after Friday prayers in Istanbul. "At the moment, they are trying to turn the Red Sea into a sea of blood and Yemen, with the Houthis and by using all of its force."

Blast kills two in Kabul's Hazara enclave

Monitoring Desk
KABUL: Two people were killed and 12 wounded in an explosion in western Kabul on Thursday, police said, in the third deadly blast to hit the Afghan capital in less than a week.

Kabul police spokesman Khalid Zadran said a grenade was detonated outside a commercial centre in the Dasht-e-Barchi area, an enclave of the historically oppressed Hazara community.

"The initial information shows that unfortunately two civilian compatriots were martyred and 12 others were wounded," Zadran said in a statement. By early evening the road in front of the centre was open but dozens of security personnel.

China urges all parties in Yemen to prevent conflict expansion

Monitoring Desk
BEIJING: Expressing concern over escalation of tensions in the Red Sea, a Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson on Friday called on all sides to prevent the Yemen conflict from expanding. "We urge the relevant parties to keep calm and exercise restraint to prevent the conflict from expanding," Mao Ning said during the regular briefing.

Finnish presidential frontrunner seeks 'more European' NATO

Monitoring Desk
HELSINKI: Finnish presidential frontrunner Alexander Stubb said on Thursday NATO should become "more European" and that his country would remain an important partner for the United States whether or not Donald Trump is re-elected.

In an interview with Reuters, Stubb promised unconditional support for Ukraine and ruled out an improvement in Finland's relations with Russian President Vladimir Putin until Moscow stops the war against Kyiv.

Stubb, 55, leads opinion polls before Finland's Jan. 28 presidential election, which precedes presidential elections this year in neighbouring Russia and the United States.

The former prime minister hopes to succeed Sauli Niinisto, who is retiring at 75 after two six-year terms, having been nicknamed "the Putin whisperer" for his role in keeping lines open with Russia's leader before the 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

Helsinki's relations with Moscow deteriorated after the invasion and sank further when Finland, in a historic break with tradition prompted by the invasion, joined NATO last April. Stubb signalled clearly that he would lean towards the West if elected president and said it was "very important that we in Europe take care of our own defence."

"So in that sense, I'm very much along the lines of the current Finnish president, Sauli Niinisto, who said that we need a more European NATO," he said in the interview.

"I think the Americans will not leave us alone (on our own), but it's always useful to be prepared in the situation whereby we have to take more responsibility for our own defence."

Serbia says it is disappointed with possible US sale of anti-tank missiles to Kosovo

Monitoring Desk
BELGRADE: The United States has received Kosovo's request to purchase Javelin anti-tank missiles, the U.S. State Department will send Kosovo's request to Congress, which reviews foreign arms sales.

Kosovo is a former Serbian province which declared independence in 2008. The U.S. and most Western nations recognize Kosovo's statehood, while Serbia as well as ally Russia and China don't.

Serbia's president said that "for us, it is of great importance that the peace in the region is not broken and that Serbia will continue to act responsibly and contribute to stability in the Balkans."

The proposed sale of the missile system to Kosovo comes during tensions in the region.



South Africa's Minister of Justice Ronald Lamola stands near pro-Palestinian protesters after addressing the media near the International Court of Justice (ICJ), on the day judges hear a request for emergency measures by South Africa to order Israel to stop its military actions in Gaza, in The Hague, Netherlands.

World watches as Israel faces genocide case

Monitoring Desk
THE HAGUE: South Africa accused Israel on Thursday of carrying out genocide in Gaza and demanded that the UN's top court order an emergency suspension of Israel's devastating military campaign in the Palestinian enclave.

On the first of two days of hearings at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), also known as the World Court, South Africa said Israel's attack on Gaza, which has demolished much of the coastal enclave and killed more than 23,000 people, aimed to bring

about "the destruction of the (territory's) population."

"The intent to destroy Gaza has been nurtured at the highest level of state," Tembeka Ngcukaitobi, advocate of the High Court of South Africa, told the court. He said Israel's political and military leaders, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, were among "the genocidal inciters."

"That is evident from the way in which this military attack is being conducted," he said.

Israel rejected the accusations of genocide as

Mushaal Mullick says Kashmir Consultative Committees to raise awareness at grassroots level

RAWALPINDI (APP): Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) for Human Rights and Women Empowerment, Mushaal Hussein Mullick, on Friday, said that the primary objective of the district-level consultative committees was to address the Kashmir issue at the grassroots level for comprehensive understanding, engagement with the community and to create a platform for meaningful discussions, advocacy, and actions that resonate with the local population.

Speaking at the inaugural session of the Rawalpindi District-level Kashmir Consultative Committee, she highlighted the significance of such meetings and emphasized that similar gatherings would be organized in various districts.

Mullick announced that the inaugural sessions

of the District-level Kashmir Consultative Committees in Lahore, Faisalabad, and Gujranwala were in the preparation phase and would be convened shortly. She further said that District-level Committees comprise intellectuals spanning various age groups and diverse backgrounds.

Mushaal emphasized that these gatherings would play a pivotal role in organizing and propagating the Kashmir cause at the grassroots level. She underscored that Kashmir stood as a symbol of unity for Pakistan, transcending diverse beliefs and affiliations.

The SAPM further said that people from all walks of life hold profound reverence for the Kashmir cause, and through these district-level consultations, the aim was to solidify this unity further.

She urged students and academics to contrib-

ute by writing articles, research papers, and essays on the Jammu and Kashmir issue to raise local and global awareness. She expressed her commitment to personally lead door-to-door campaigns to unite people for the Kashmir cause and promote collective efforts to advocate for justice and the rights of the oppressed people of IIOJK. Mushaal voiced deep concern over the ongoing demographic changes being implemented by India in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). She highlighted the persecution faced by peaceful leaders of the people of Jammu and Kashmir and emphasized that such actions were intended to demoralize the Kashmiri people. She asserted that these tactics employed by India would never diminish the unwavering zeal and courage of the Kashmiri people.



KARACHI: Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir inaugurating the second chapter of National Aerospace Science and Technology Park Silicon.

Martyrs rendered sacrifices of lives remembered in Chaman

Independent Report
QUETTA: The martyrs rendered sacrifice of their lives for cause of country remembered at a ceremony in Chaman on Friday.

The district administration of Chaman and social organizations celebrated the Martyrs' Day at the ceremony. A grand rally was also taken out marking the Martyrs' Day.

The social activists belonging to different social organizations, leaders and members of the traders' community participated in the rally.

The participants paid homage to the martyrs for their sacrifices rendered for defence of the country and protection of life and property of the masses.

The rally was led by Additional Deputy Commissioner Arif Khan Kakar, SP Shahid Jamil Kakar,

Muhammad Ali Achakzai, Saeed Ali Shah and Malik Barat Khan Durran.

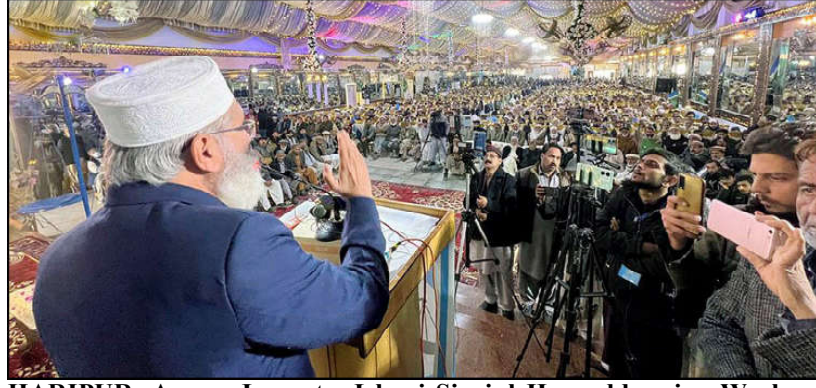
The participants of rally were carrying the placards and banners rendered inscribed with the slogans marking the Martyrs' Day.

They also chanted slogans of long live Pakistan and in favour of the martyrs.

Meanwhile, the Deputy Commissioner Chaman, Captain (Retd) Raja Athar Abbas appreciated Muhammad Ali Achakzai and district administration for organizing the Martyrs' Day in Chaman.

He said that we have to be proud of the sacrifices of martyrs who rendered sacrifices of their lives.

He also said that the martyrs have sacrificed their lives for defence of the country and nation.



HARIPUR: Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami Sirajul Haq addressing Workers Convention

CPDI urges effective regulation of trans-fats in all foods, banning unhealthy foods

QUETTA (APP): The Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives (CPDI) has issued an urgent appeal to the Chief Secretary Balochistan, Secretary Food Balochistan and other key officers of the provincial government to address the increasing incidence and prevalence of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) in Pakistan.

According to the latest health statistics, around 60 percent of deaths are attributed to NCDs such as cardio-vascular diseases, diabetes, obesity and hypertension. In addition, the NCDs are a leading cause of not only premature mortality i.e., before the age of 70, but these are also increasing burden of disabilities and unhealthy life years causing people huge financial losses as well as reduction in life years. The three dietary risk factors that the CPDI letter warns against include the excessive use of unhealthy oils and fats, added sugar in foods and drinks, and high content of sodium in food items.

In a letter, the CPDI, a non-partisan civil society

organization, has urged the Balochistan Government to implement concrete measures banning such unhealthy food and beverages from public procurements, official meetings, and functions. Highlighting the rising numbers of diabetes and cardiovascular diseases in Pakistan due to the unregulated consumption of food containing harmful ingredients like sugar, sodium, and trans-fatty acids (TFAs) in fats, CPDI emphasizes the urgent need of proactive official policies and regulations aimed at mitigating dietary risk factors and improving public health.

Studies reveal that approximately 33 million people in Pakistan suffer from diabetes, additional 10 million are pre-diabetic, and 918 cases per 100,000 individuals are affected by cardiovascular diseases.

The CPDI has also urged the provincial government to engage with the Pakistan Standards and Quality Control Authority (PSQCA) to expedite the formulation of mandatory and enforceable standards for all food items to regu-

late unhealthy content, for example, the quantity of TFAs should not be more than 2 percent. Moreover, CPDI has urged to restrict the availability of unhealthy food in schools, hospitals, and public parks; eliminate government subsidies on harmful products such as sugars and banaspati ghee; and implement public awareness campaigns to inform consumers about dietary risk factors. CPDI has suggested the government to "provide subsidies to healthy foods so that people enjoy better health status and contribute more to the GDP as mentally and physically active citizens". Mukhtar Ahmad Ali, Executive Director, CPDI, expressed the hope that these measures will significantly and positively address the NCDs related public health crisis in the country. "Medical research shows that the national burden of diseases, deaths, and disabilities in Pakistan is changing, and we need to take serious measures to control dietary risk factors so that our healthcare system does not cave down.

Pakistan, Egypt agree to continue working together to enhance cooperation

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and Egypt on Friday agreed to continue to engage further and work together to advance mutually beneficial cooperation and dialogue between the two countries.

The bilateral relations were discussed in a meeting between Additional Foreign Secretary (Middle East) Ambassador Rizwan Saeed Sheikh with Egyptian Assistant Foreign Minister for Asia Ahmed Shaheen.

Pakistan's Ambassador to Egypt, Ambassador Sajid Bilal was also present in the meeting.

The two sides reviewed the broad range of bilateral relations including political, trade and invest-

ment ties. They also discussed ways to further strengthen bilateral relations including by convening the next round of Joint Ministerial Commission meetings and Annual Bilateral Consultations later this year in Islamabad.

Additional Foreign Secretary and the Assistant Foreign Minister for Asia appreciated the successful holding of the Fourth Pakistan-Africa Trade Development Conference and Single Country Exhibition held in Cairo from January 9-11, 2024, which coincided with the 75th anniversary celebrations of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Egypt.



Demmo of Anti Narcotics Operation being conducted during Exercise Sea Guard 24.

Bilawal, Tarar to lock horns as PML-N announces candidates from Lahore

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chairman Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Attaullah Tarar are set to lock horns as PML-N on Friday released list of its candidates for the National Assembly and Punjab Assembly from Lahore District for the Feb 8 general elections.

As per the PML-N's released list issued on X, it has fielded veteran politician Sheikh Rohail Asghar for the NA-121 constituency in Lahore.

The PML-N has issued the ticket to Ayaz Sadiq for NA-120, who was earlier planning to contest the polls from NA-121.

The biggest contest of country would be witnessed in Lahore between PML-N fielded former

minister Attaullah Tarar against Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal-Bhutto Zardari in NA-127.

Meanwhile, the PML-N supreme Nawaz Sharif will contest from NA-130, President Shehbaz Sharif from NA-123, Hamza Shehbaz from NA-118, Maryam Nawaz from NA-119 and NA-159 and Khawaja Saad Rafique from NA-122.

For the provincial assembly seats, Shehbaz Sharif will also contest polls from PP-164 and PP-158, while Hamza and Maryam from PP-147 and PP-159 constituencies, respectively.

Earlier, it was reported that differences among the PML-N ranks emerged as the party could not decide on its ticket holder from NA 143.

PML-Q announces not to forge any seat to seat adjustment with PML-N

LAHORE (Online): PML-Q has announced not to forge any seat to seat adjustment with PML-N. PML-Q has made it clear that party has played its role for the development and prosperity of the country always and it will not accept any seat to seat adjustment to the extent of interest of some person.

The emergency meeting of PML-Q was held under Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain here Friday.

The party spokesperson said in a statement after meeting that PML-N has issued tickets to its candidates against other candidates. We will not allow our candidates to become victim to double standard and will not forge seat to seat adjustment with PML-N. Chaudhry Salik Hussain said PML-N has issued tickets to its candidates against him and his brother Chaudhry Shafay Hussain in Gujarat. We are ready to contest election without seat to seat adjustment.

PML-Q had sought 14 seats of National assembly from PML-N but PML-N has agreed to give maximum 3 seats.



QUETTA: Additional Chief Secretary Home Zahid Saleem and Inspector General of Police Balochistan Abdul Khaliq Sheikh presenting memorial shield to Additional IG & Commandant Balochistan Constabulary Salman Chaudhry upon transfer

One-day workshop organized on Disaster Risk Management Plan & Data Collection

"Services of engineering consultants & experts hired for disaster risk management plan in Balochistan"

Independent Report
QUETTA: One-day workshop was held on the District Disaster Risk Management (DDRM) and Data Collection in Sibi on Friday.

Organized by the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA), the workshop was attended by the Deputy Commissioner Sibi, Dr. Khuda-e-Rahim Mirwan, Additional Deputy Commissioner General, Ali Asghar Magi and officers of other concerned departments including PDMA.

The General Manager Project, PDMA, Ahmed Ali and DDRM Expert,

Muhammad Ismail Khan briefed the participants about the identification of the risk threats and preparations of the Disaster risk management plan on the scientific grounds in Sibi and its adjoining areas.

They also informed about the disaster risk management and data collection under the Geological Information System besides other related activities of the institution.

Addressing the workshop, Deputy Commissioner stressed the need to make effective planning for managing risk in case of natural disasters in the on-



LAHORE: A German delegation of international food wholesaler, METRO Group, led by its CEO Dr Steffen Greubel, calls on President Dr Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Government taking steps to boost FDI: President Alvi

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Friday said the government was taking steps to promote Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Pakistan.

Talking to a German delegation of international food wholesaler, METRO Group, led by its CEO Dr Steffen Greubel here at Aiwan-e-Sadr, the president said Pakistan was an attractive destination for the foreign investment and business.

The president also appreciated the METRO Group for their investment in Pakistan.

The delegation briefed the president about business and investment of the METRO Group in Pakistan.

The delegation told that keeping in view the conducive environment for the foreign investment in Pakistan, the METRO Company desired to further expand the business activities in the country.

Besides, the delegation was of the view that Pakistan was an attractive destination for business, investment and tourism.

Steps being taken to improve law & order situation

QUETTA (APP): Deputy Commissioner (DC) Hamood-ur Rahman on Friday said that measures were being taken to improve the law and order situation in the Ziarat district.

He shared these views while chairing a meeting of Levies Force Officers regarding the law and order situation.

In the meeting, the Deputy Commissioner was given a detailed briefing about the law and order situation in the Ziarat district.

The meeting was attended by Assistant Commissioner Ziarat Muhammad Hanif Noorzai, Assistant Commissioner Sanjavi Moeem Baloch and in-charge of police stations.

PTA conducts raids against illegal issuance of SIMs

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) Zonal Offices in Lahore and Sukkur, in collaboration with the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Cyber Crime Circles, successfully conducted raids against franchises of two mobile phone companies in Sharaqpur Sharif and Kandhkot. The aim was to curb the illegal issuance of SIMs, which is often associated with criminal activities such as fraud, identity theft, and other illicit operations said a news release issued here on Friday.

COAS terms NASTP a project of national, strategic significance

RAWALPINDI (Online): General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff, (COAS) attended inauguration ceremony of the second chapter of National Aerospace Science and Technology Park (NASTP) Silicon, held at Karachi. COAS was Chief Guest at the occasion.

COAS termed NASTP a project of national and strategic significance that would yield manifold benefits for the country since it would spur technological progress and foster self-reliance by offering a platform for the nation's youth and future generations.

COAS praised the efforts of PAF, its leadership in the achievement of yet another milestone of NASTP Silicon.

Chief of Air Staff shared the vision for NASTP to become one of the best Aerospace, Cyber & IT Clusters and transform national landscape with design, R&D and innovation centers for emerging and disruptive technologies to accrue maximum social, economic, security and scientific dividends for the country.

On his arrival at the venue, COAS was received by Air Chief Marshal, Zabeer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff.

Later, COAS also visited Corps Headquarters Karachi. Corps Commander Karachi Corps welcomed the COAS and briefed him about operational preparedness, training matters and administrative measures being taken for the welfare of the troops and Shuhada families.



QUETTA: A delegation of Joint Action Committee University of Balochistan led by Nazeer Ahmed Lehari meeting with Governor Balochistan Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar

Pakistan wants good, equal relations with countries: Hamza

QUETTA (APP)-Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)'s Balochistan President's Political Adviser Hamza Khan Nasir on Friday said that Pakistan's economic interests were linked with America.

Pakistan is a dream of good and equal relations with all countries, both the countries are working for the elimination of nationalized terrorism and the establishment of peace and harmony, he mentioned.

In a statement issued here, Hamza Khan Nasir said that Pakistan was a free and independent country, Pakistan wanted good relations with all countries including America on the basis of equality.

He said that America has had friendly relations with Pakistan for 75 years,

which would become stronger with passage of time.

He said that the economic interests of Pakistan and America were connected with each other, both countries should further strengthen and stabilize economic relations so that the people and businessmen of both countries could be benefited.

He said that America has always supported Pakistan in difficult times and the relations between the two countries would become stronger with passage of time adding that America was also cooperating fully with Pakistan to end terrorism.

He said that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf has always tried to establish relations with all countries on the basis of equality.

Muhammad Asif Tareen says: Role of BLEP exemplary in development of Agri. & farmers in Balochistan

Independent Report
QUETTA: There is an exemplary role of BLEP in development and growth of agriculture sector and farmers in Balochistan.

This would bring improvement in the economy besides creating opportunities of livelihood for the people.

The Pishin Chamber of Commerce would work together with BLEP for development of the agriculture sector and wellbeing of the farmers.

This was stated by the Patron-in-Chief of PCCI and Executive Member of Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and

Industry (FPCCI), Muhammad Asif Tareen in a statement issued here after his visit to the BLEP on Friday.

He said that the source of income of majority of the people is associated with the agriculture.

He said that the loss in agriculture in Balochistan means the loss of people and their livelihood in the province.

He regretfully pointed out that the agriculture sector and farmers have suffered a lot rather reached at the brink of destruction because of the drought, lack of electricity and attention of the government.



QUETTA: Muslim League (PML-N) Provincial General Secretary, Jamal Shah Kakar addresses to media persons during press conference.