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SIFC Committee reviews progress to further improve investment climate

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Apex Committee of Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) chaired by Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Wednesday reviewed progress on various measures being undertaken to improve the investment climate.

The Committee approved various policy level interventions to further facilitate the investors including strengthening of domestic dispute resolution mechanism.

The committee also reviewed various projects and initiatives being pursued through the platform of SIFC.

It reviewed progress on privatization and appreciated the collaborative approach of various stakeholders in timely completion of various critical benchmarks and gave directions to maintain the momentum, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

The meeting was attended by Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir, members of the caretaker

federal cabinet, caretaker provincial chief ministers and high level officials. The committee also developed consensus on fast tracking the infrastructural development to facilitate the investors, especially in remote areas of the country.

The committee appreciated the ongoing inclusive approach towards human resource development to support emerging needs in key sectors of economy. The federal ministries presented progress on the projects being steered in key sectors and gave plans for timely realization of the envisaged investments.

The PM directed all the stakeholders to vigorously pursue various SIFC's initiatives to ensure their accomplishment within stipulated timeframe. The COAS assured unwavering resolve of the Pakistan Army to support government's initiatives aimed at economic recovery of the country.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar chairs a meeting of 8th meeting of Apex Committee of Special Investment Facilitation Council.



ISLAMABAD: President, Dr. Arif Alvi being briefed about the role and performance of National Book Foundation held at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

President for increasing access of visually impaired to books, education

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr. Arif Alvi on Wednesday directed to take necessary actions aimed at greater access of the visually impaired to books and knowledge. Chairing a meeting to review the role and performance of National Book Foundation at Aiwan-e-Sadr, the president said that the intellectual and individual development was possible by promoting the culture of book reading in the country.

During the meeting, Managing Director NBF Dr Raja Mazhar Hameed briefed the president about role and performance of the Foundation. He said the National Book Foundation was taking measures for the people affected by dyslexia.

The meeting was told that the Foundation was preparing books for the dyslexic children from class prep to 8th that would be available during the academic year 2024-25.

It was informed that the Foundation's Braille

Press in Karachi was providing the books to the visually impaired for Rs 10 only. The books would help increasing the access of the visually impaired children to education.

"The Foundation would issue the books for the visually impaired children of class prep to 8th of 431 schools of Islamabad."

It was further informed in the meeting that the NBF was publishing books in braille on a range of topics and it was also ensuring the availability of books in Pakistan and abroad.

Pak to continue engaging with Afghanistan: FM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani on Wednesday reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to continued engagement and mutually beneficial ties with Afghanistan. He also underscored the im-



portance of addressing all issues of concern to harness the full potential for regional trade and connectivity.

The foreign minister received a delegation led by Haji Mullah Shirin, Governor of Kandahar and Deputy Head of Military Intelligence and Strategy of Afghanistan, Foreign Office Spokesperson said in a press release. They exchanged views on key issues of mutual concern, including peace and security, as well as people-to-people contacts.

The visiting dignitary appreciated Pakistan for the generous support extended to millions of Afghans for over four decades and agreed to continue high-level engagement and dialogue to further strengthen bilateral relations. Earlier, the Afghan delegation led by Haji Mullah Shirin also participated in the 6th session of Pakistan-Afghanistan Joint Coordination Committee (JCC). In the JCC meeting, the two sides discussed coordination mechanisms to facilitate cross border movement with a view to promoting people-to-people contacts.

Separately, on X, the foreign minister posted that he had a productive meeting with Mullah Shirin, Governor of Kandahar.

NIH issues advisory on JN.1 sub-variant of COVID-19

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Institute of Health (NIH) has issued an advisory for the prevention and control of JN.1 Sub-variant of the COVID-19 virus. According to NIH, the objective of the advisory was to alert and facilitate the health authorities and other stakeholders for ensuring timely prevention and control measures encompassing preparedness to deal with such patients in future. The advisory said that JN.1 is classified as a Variant of Interest (VOI) and fundamentally an offshoot of BA.2.86 sub-variant omicron variant.

The COVID-19 virus, very first reported in August 2023 by US-CDC. However, in recent weeks, JN.1 has been reported in many countries, and its prevalence is rapidly increasing globally. This rapid growth is observed across the three WHO regions with consistent sharing of SARS-CoV-2 sequences.

He said that the event will explore opportunities of joint working and pool funding for health security, across the region and globe in addition to the sustainable domestic funding for its five-year health security plan 2024-28. Dr. Nadeem Jan said that the Global Health Security Summit will be attended by top health experts from around the world. He added an integrated strategy to deal with epidemics will be formed at the global conference. The minister said that by holding the international conference, the positive image of Pakistan will be presented.

IHC bars police, admin from using force against Baloch protesters

ISLAMABAD (INP): Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday barred the authorities in the federal capital from removing the Baloch protesters sitting outside the National Press Club, ARY News reported.

The IHC, responding to the plea, issued an order and barred the police from removing Baloch Family members who were sitting outside the National Press Club.

The court emphasized the importance of safeguarding the rights of individuals engaged in peaceful protests and directed the police authorities not to 'harass' the people sitting outside the National Press Club.

The court adjourned the hearing till January 05 and directed the Deputy Commissioner and SSP Operations to appear personally in court on January 5, addressing the matter in their individual capacities.

During a press conference, the Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar said that the issue of Baloch families from Balochistan was being projected in negative and in sharp contrast to realities as Balochs were standing with the state of Pakistan.

Responding to different media queries during his visit to the Business Facilitation Center, the prime minister said that terrorists and armed militants had been involved in the killing of people of Balochistan.

Blow for PTI as PHC restores ECP order stripping party of 'bat' electoral symbol

PTI says it will approach Supreme Court against verdict

PESHAWAR (INP): The Peshawar High Court (PHC) on Wednesday revoked the stay order and restored the ECP decision to declare PTI intra-party polls null and void and stripping it of its election symbol — bat.

On December 26, the high court announced the verdict on PTI's petition challenging the ECP's verdict, which had stripped PTI of using the 'bat' symbol.

A single-member bench comprising Justice Ejaz Khan announced the reserved verdict on a review plea filed by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) against the January 26 single-member bench order.

Meanwhile the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on Wednesday announced to approach Supreme



QUETTA: Caretaker Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed talking to media persons after visiting Hajji Camp.

Govt making efforts to ensure all facilities in Hajji Camps: Aneeq Ahmed

QUETTA (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed on Wednesday said the government is making efforts to fulfill all the needs of the Hajji camps to facilitate the pilgrims better.

During his visit to Hajji Camp Quetta, he said the purpose of visiting Hajji Camp is to review the facilities provided to the pilgrims.

The minister said the government has inked various agreements to provide better facilities to the pilgrims.

Aneeq Ahmed said the government has already completed all the Hajji arrangements which will take place in June.

He said the reason for the decline in Hajji applications is the repatriation of Afghan refugees who used to perform Hajj illegally on Pakistani passports.

He added a mobile app has been launched for the convenience of the pilgrims, which will provide many facilities to the pilgrims.

Courts standing with every political party regarding elections: CJP

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa has said that courts are standing with every political party regarding the elections.

On Wednesday, a three-member bench, headed by CJP Isa and comprising Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar and Justice Musarrat Hilali, heard the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) petition regarding the level playing field in elections.

The Supreme Court later adjourned the hearing in the case till January 8.

At the outset of the hearing, the PTI's lawyers submitted additional documents to the Supreme Court stating that the

nomination papers of 668 key PTI leaders, as well as around 2,000 proposers and seconders have been rejected.

According to the additional documents, 56 cases of snatching of nomination papers of PTI leaders took place, while proposers and seconders were also arrested, and it was decided to place video evidence in this regard in the Supreme Court.

During the hearing of the case, CJP Isa expressed indignation at the prefix of Sardar along with the name of PTI lawyer Latif Khosa. He remarked that the Sardar-Nawab system ceases to exist now and would not be tolerated in court.

The chief justice told Latif Khosa that his government of the PPP legislated on abolishing the chieftaincy system, while now his sons had also become sardars. At this, Khosa replied that it was written by the stenographer and wouldn't happen again.

Khosa's arguments, opening his arguments, took the stance that a level playing field was necessary for healthy competition. At this, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar remarked that this is a case of contempt of court, not a new petition. He then asked about the contempt committed by the ECP.



LAHORE: Peoples Party (PPP) Co-Chairman, Asif Ali Zardari and PPP Chairman, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari preside over Central Executive Committee (CEC) meeting of the party held at Bilawal House in Lahore.

Imran, Fawad indicted in contempt of EC case

ISLAMABAD (Online): PTI founder Imran Khan and former federal minister Fawad Chaudhry have been indicted in contempt of Election Commission (EC) case. Both the accused pleaded not guilty. The contempt of EC case came up for hearing in Adiala jail Wednesday. Members of EC heard the case.

During the course of hearing EC indicted Imran Khan and Fawad Chaudhry and read out charge sheet.

Imran Khan and Fawad Chaudhry pleaded not guilty. PTI founder alleged EC members are showing partiality. The hearing of contempt of EC case was adjourned till January 16.

Pakistan strongly condemns terrorist attack in Kerman, Iran

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan on Wednesday strongly condemned a dastardly terrorist attack that took place earlier today in the Martyrs Cemetery of the provincial capital of Kerman, Iran, resulting in large number of deaths and injuries. "Pakistan stands in full solidarity with the Government and brotherly people of Iran in this hour of grief and tragedy," Foreign Office Spokesperson said in a press statement.

Pakistan believed that terrorism was a menace and threat to regional and global peace and security that needed to be confronted through bilateral and regional cooperation, it was added.

PPP core committee picks Bilawal as prime ministerial candidate

LAHORE (INP): Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Central Executive Committee (CEC) on Wednesday endorsed Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari as the party's official candidate for the position of Prime Minister.

The decision was met with unanimous approval during the hybrid meeting held at Bilawal House, where key party members gathered to deliberate on key matters.

Chaired jointly by Asif Zardari and Bilawal Bhutto, the meeting addressed pivotal issues such as the upcoming general elections, the party's election campaign, and the formulation of the party manifesto.

Meanwhile, the participants also engaged in comprehensive discussions regarding the current political landscape of the country and its diplomatic relationships.

President Asif Ali Zardari formally proposed Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari as the prime ministerial candidate on behalf of the PPP, a proposal that received unanimous approval from the CEC.

Expressing unwavering confidence in the leadership of Asif Ali Zardari and Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, the members of the CEC acknowledged their pivotal roles in steering the party towards its goals.

More than 100 killed in terrorist attacks near tomb of Iranian Guards' Soleimani

DUBAI: Two explosions caused by terrorist attacks killed more than 100 people and wounded scores at a ceremony in Iran to commemorate top commander Qassem Soleimani who was killed by a US drone in 2020. Iranian officials said on Wednesday.

Iranian state television reported a first and then a second blast during an anniversary event at the cemetery where Soleimani is buried in the southeastern city of Kerman.

An unnamed official told the state news agency IRNA that "Two explosive devices planted along the road leading to Kerman's Martyrs' Cemetery were detonated remotely by terrorists".

Babak Yektaparas, a spokesperson for Iran's emergency services, was reported as saying 73 people had been killed and 170 injured. State television said later that at least 100 people had been killed.

No group has yet claimed responsibility for the attacks.

Global Health Security Summit to explore opportunities of joint working: Dr Nadeem

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Global Health Security Summit will serve as a great opportunity of bringing together, international and national experts in the concerned field and learning by sharing of expertise and knowledge for a safer world. In a media briefing, Caretaker Federal Minister for Health, Dr. Nadeem Jan said that the Global Health Security Summit is being held on January 10, 11 here in the federal capital.

He said that the strategic objectives of the conference are to collaborate with global leaders in order to ensure equity-based pandemic preparedness financing for low and middle-income countries and mutual exchange of knowledge and rich experience with member states and experts around summit thematic areas which focuses on vaccine equity, patent deregulation and transfer of technology. The minister said that the conference will secure global and regional partnership with international organizations for aligning its health security priorities with those of global and regional priorities, in order to strengthen its core capacities through technical assistance.

He said that the event will explore opportunities of joint working and pool funding for health security, across the region and globe in addition to the sustainable domestic funding for its five-year health security plan 2024-28. Dr. Nadeem Jan said that the Global Health Security Summit will be attended by top health experts from around the world. He added an integrated strategy to deal with epidemics will be formed at the global conference. The minister said that by holding the international conference, the positive image of Pakistan will be presented.

Daily Voice of Masses Independent

Terrorism surge

While Pakistan's leadership remains almost exclusively occupied in political machinations, militants and terrorist outfits have been spreading their vicious tentacles. Violence-related deaths, according to recently released statistics from two major security think tanks, shot to a six-year high in 2023 as the country lost hard-earned ground to inimical forces. Some 789 terror attacks and counter-terrorism operations resulted in more than 1,500 deaths in 2023, including close to 1,000 civilian and security forces lives lost. There were around as many injuries as the total number of fatalities. The state's failures seem particularly damning, considering that the trends had shown a persistent increase in violent incidents in the preceding two years as well. Despite the warning signs, the year 2023 saw a staggering 69pc increase in militant attacks over the previous year. The enemies of Pakistan operated with near impunity, striking 53 times per month on average in 2023, compared to 32 times per month a year earlier.

Among the provinces, KP and Balochistan were the hardest hit, with 84pc of the attacks taking place on their soil and accounting for 90pc of all deaths. Yet, considering the state's recent actions, one would be hard-pressed to find any intent to put out the fires raging there. Indeed, the state only seems to be stirring the pot further with its short-sighted refusal to deal patiently and amicably with two long-running protest campaigns in the two provinces — the Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement in KP and protests by relatives of missing persons in Balochistan — even though they have merely been demanding basic rights. Another deeply concerning fact that emerged from one of the reports was that banned terrorist outfits accounted for only 17pc of all terrorist attacks, which suggests that the spectrum of threats to Pakistani interests present on its soil is growing and needs to be mapped more thoroughly.

The released data shows that the target of militant and terrorist outfits' activities has remained focused on security forces, with the overwhelming proportion of deaths recorded being those of front-line security personnel. This should be a cause for great worry for decision-makers responsible for security, as the deepening fissures between the citizenry and the state owing to the sociopolitical instability roiling the country are ripe to be exploited by hostile elements. They must not be allowed to take advantage of it — but for that, the country's security apparatus will need to reprioritise and focus its energies on countering this grave threat. This will necessarily entail putting out the fires raging through the country amidst widespread public dissatisfaction with state policies, and resisting the urge to exert control with force. We seem to be passing through a sensitive period where any misstep may trigger long-lasting repercussions that could haunt us for years.

SC's Response to Level Playing Concerns

By Qamar Bashir

Former Press Secretary to the President; Former Press Minister to the Embassy of Pakistan to France; Former MD, SRBC



Witnessing the live streaming of the Supreme Court's proceedings to ensure a level playing field for all political parties, notably PTI, was an exhilarating and rare opportunity for me and indeed a rewarding experience for the entire nation. The courtroom drama unfolded as a battle of wits, with arguments scoring points and constitutional provisions being quoted. The determined Chief Justice persistently opposed the contempt of court proceedings against the Election Commission, Chief Secretary, and IG Police of Punjab. This was based on the contention that the Election Commission had complied with the Supreme Court's directives by issuing letters to all provincial election commissioners and the government, emphasizing the need for a fair electoral landscape.

Amidst this intense debate, Mr. Sardar Latif Khosa emerged as a persistent voice, asserting that the Election Commission's responsibility extended beyond mere letters; it was also tasked with ensuring the actual implementation of the Supreme Court's directives in both letter and spirit. He argued that the Punjab provincial administration's disregard for these instructions amounted to a violation of the court's order, constituting contempt.

Just as Mr. Khosa's argument seemed to be faltering, an unexpected turn occurred. He drew attention to a paragraph in the Election Commission's report, revealing widespread allegations of abductions, constraints on PTI candidates and their supporters, and incidents where the RO of office was inaccessible due to

police cordoning, preventing PTI candidates from filing nomination papers. This revelation inadvertently bolstered Mr. Khosa's case, providing the Chief Justice with convincing evidence to admit the petition and issue notices to the Punjab advocate general, inspector general, and chief secretary. The Supreme Court sought explanations regarding the alleged lack of a level-playing field in the upcoming general elections.

This pivotal moment led the court to also direct a report from officials concerning the implementation of its order, specifically addressing the party's concerns. The proceedings were adjourned till January 8, signaling the gravity and importance of the case and its potential implications for ensuring fair and transparent elections.

It goes without saying that a fair and equitable political landscape in nascent democracies like Pakistan necessitates certain critical conditions. This includes equal access to resources, transparent electoral processes, freedom of expression, impartial institutions, and fair media coverage. These conditions foster a democratic environment where all political entities have an equal chance to present their policies, ensuring a level playing field. Such fairness isn't just a democratic ideal but a necessity for the country's stability and legitimacy. It encourages trust among citizens in the democratic system, promoting active participation and ensuring that the voices of all segments of society are heard and valued.

The responsibility for creating and maintaining a level playing field is shared among various stakeholders. Government institutions such as the election commission, judiciary, and law enforcement agencies play a pivotal role in ensuring fair elections and opportunities for all parties. Political entities themselves bear the responsibility of upholding democratic principles and advocating for equitable com-

petition. Civil society groups, along with the media, serve as watchdogs, monitoring and highlighting any biases or discrepancies in the electoral process.

The absence of a level playing field during elections reverberates across multiple fronts, amplifying negative repercussions. Political parties suffer from eroded trust and diminished legitimacy, directly impacting their ability to govern effectively and gain public confidence. Societal repercussions include unrest and disenfranchisement, eroding social cohesion. Countrywide, political instability disrupts policymaking and governance, affecting economic stability and deterring both foreign and domestic investment. Businesses grapple with uncertainty, impacting long-term planning and market stability. Internationally, a compromised electoral environment tarnishes a country's reputation, weakening diplomatic relations and eroding confidence in its commitment to democratic principles. Collectively, these consequences compromise long-term growth, stability, and global standing.

The systematic targeting and imprisonment of a major political party's leadership severely disrupt the foundational principles of fair competition in elections. Such actions not only impede the functioning of the targeted party but also undermine the democratic ethos of the nation. Similarly, when another political faction faces harassment and violent obstructions to their activities, it exacerbates the lack of fairness and safety in the electoral arena. These instances paint a troubling picture of an imbalanced and unjust political landscape, challenging the very essence of a level playing field in democratic processes. The pathways for redressal and seeking justice amidst such allegations and injustices are entrenched within established institutional mechanisms. The Election Commission stands as a pivotal entity responsible for overseeing fair elections; thus, parties encountering

discrimination or hindrances in the electoral process can formally report grievances to this body. Additionally, judicial avenues serve as vital forums for challenging unjust detentions, harassment, or violations of political rights, providing a means for legal recourse. Human rights commissions, both domestic and international, offer platforms to investigate and address such violations, safeguarding democratic principles. Yet, navigating these institutional channels might encounter obstacles when institutions themselves face compromise or influence. In such complex scenarios, mobilizing civil society becomes imperative, leveraging public support to advocate for fairness and justice. Engaging with international organizations, leveraging diplomatic channels, and bringing global attention to these violations serve as alternate avenues to spotlight injustices, applying external pressure to restore democratic norms. Effectively addressing these challenges requires a multi-pronged approach, combining institutional redressal with public mobilization and international advocacy to safeguard the integrity of the democratic process. When a major political party approaches the Supreme Court of Pakistan seeking redressal for a lack of a level playing field, the court encounters certain limitations. Upholding political neutrality while addressing constitutional rights is paramount. However, the court's jurisdiction might be confined when matters directly fall under the purview of other institutions like the Election Commission or the government's executive actions. Operating within legal frameworks and past precedents, the court must tread cautiously, ensuring its interventions align with existing laws and constitutional provisions.

The court's role mandates upholding the rule of law while respecting constitutional boundaries. It should safeguard constitutional rights without overstepping its jurisdiction. While intervening to uphold democratic

principles is permissible, the court must refrain from excessive interference with the functioning of other branches of government or independent bodies, unless absolutely necessary. Many courts around the world were confronted with similar situations. In the United States, the pivotal case of **Citizens United v. FEC** marked a watershed moment in the U.S. Supreme Court's rulings on elections. The decision, affirming corporations' and unions' rights to unlimited independent political spending under the protection of the First Amendment, reshaped campaign finance regulations.

Within India's legal landscape, **Kuldip Nayyar v. Union of India** exemplified the Supreme Court's commitment to fostering free and fair elections. The petition challenged the existing electoral framework, arguing that voters should have the option to reject all candidates contesting in an election if they found none of them suitable or deserving of their vote. The Supreme Court, acknowledging the importance of voters' rights and the need for electoral reforms, ruled in favor of introducing the NOTA option on ballot papers, allowing voters to express their dissatisfaction with contesting candidates effectively.

Kenya's Supreme Court made history with its ruling in **Raila Odinga v. IEBC & others**, where the court nullified presidential election results due to irregularities. This landmark decision emphasized the critical importance of conducting transparent and fair elections, showcasing the judiciary's intervention to safeguard democratic principles and electoral integrity. The lack of level playing field will not only mar the result of the elections but also prompt the prolonged litigation in the post election scenario. The aggrieved parties are most likely to approach the Supreme Court to nullify election results due to concrete evidence of rigging will involve various potential outcomes.

The Supreme court is playing a proactive role to ensure that elections are held in a free and fair manner. There are two possible and expected decisions by the supreme court. In one scenario the SC despite compelling arguments from PTI's legal counsel court may observe procedural limitations in directly attributing contempt. After thorough scrutiny and hearing the responses from the officials, the Supreme Court might issue directives for better implementation of Election Commission orders but refrains from labeling the actions as contempt due to lack of conclusive

In an alternate scenario, the Supreme Court may take a stern stance against the alleged disregard of Election Commission directives by the Punjab administration and police. Despite the administration's counter-arguments and explanations, the court finds substantial evidence suggesting deliberate actions hindering PTI's participation, thus constituting contempt. The Chief Justice may express strong displeasure over the reported incidents of hindrance faced by PTI candidates during the electoral process, highlighting the criticality of ensuring a level playing field for all political parties. The court, after careful consideration and thorough examination of the evidence presented, holds the IG Police and Chief Secretary accountable for failing to uphold the Election Commission's directives. The Supreme Court may reprimand, possibly imposing fines or penalties, and issue stringent directives to ensure strict adherence to Election Commission orders in future elections. However, the final verdict of the Supreme Court in such scenarios would largely hinge on the evidence presented, the court's interpretation of contempt in this context, and the extent of the officials' compliance or disregard for the Election Commission's directives. It would aim to reinforce the sanctity of fair electoral processes while balancing accountability with procedural considerations.

Commerce News

Pakistani traders ride county's booming economy

BEIJING (APP): More Pakistani traders are settling in the Tashikurgan Tajik autonomous county of Kashgar, China's Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, to tap the strong business potential. As the county is close to their homes, they said it's easy to commute and fit into the local community. Booming tourism also brings more tourists, which benefits their businesses.

Murad Shah, a Pakistani jeweler, said his gemstone store in the county has welcomed about 100 to 200 tourists a

diverse culture and landscape, and so many good attractions to see," he said, adding he is hopeful about the future. China Daily reported. One good reason for him to open a store in the county is that his hometown, a small village in Pakistan, is just 200 kilometers away, which can be reached in only three hours by car. Another reason is that China is developing very fast with a sound economy, he said. "Many Pakistanis prefer to do business here because there is money here," Shah said.



LAHORE: President Fish Market Chaudry Muhammad Aslam addressing press conference at press club in Provincial Capital.

8.17 million cotton bales reach ginneries across Pak, 77% increase recorded

MULTAN (APP): Seed cotton (Phutti) equivalent to 8.17 million or 81,71,082 bales have reached ginneries across Pakistan till Dec 31, 2023 recording an increase in arrivals by 77.14 per cent compared to corresponding period of the year 2022.

According to a fortnightly report issued by Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association (PCGA) here Wednesday, arrivals to factories increased by over 3.5 million bales, hence the 77.14 per cent increase recorded in 2023 till Dec 31 compared to 2022.

Over 4 million or 40,78,769 bales' arrival was recorded at ginning

factories in Punjab, showing a surge by over 1.3 million bales compared to the year 2022 calculated at 47.66 per cent. In Sindh, arrivals were recorded at over 4 million or 40,92,313 bales, showing a jump by 2.24 million bales, recording a whopping 121.16 per cent increase compared to corresponding period of 2022.

Over 8 million or 80,82,744 bales were converted into bales at ginning factories. Textile sector continued to maintain its position as the biggest buyer with a figure of over 7.3 million or 73,14,127 bales bought while exporters and traders bought 2,92,126 bales.



LAHORE: Punjab Governor Muhammad Baligh-ur-Rehman in a group photo with delegation of Anjuman-e-Tajiran led by Waqar Ahmed Mian.

Fiscal deficit curtailed at 0.8% of GDP, primary surplus improves

ISLAMABAD (APP): Update and Outlook for December 2023.

Consequently, the fiscal deficit has been curtailed to 0.8 percent of GDP, the report says, adding the primary surplus continued to improve owing to contained growth in non-markup spending and was recorded at Rs.1429.7 billion (1.4 percent of GDP) during July-October FY2024 from Rs.136.2 billion, 0.2 percent of GDP last year.

The breakup data shows that the fiscal deficit was recorded at Rs.861.7 billion during the period

under review compared to deficit of Rs.1265.8 billion during the same period of last year, which was 1.5 percent of GDP. Meanwhile, the net federal revenue receipts increased to Rs.2806.6 billion in July-October FY2024 from Rs.1316.8 billion last year.

The sharp rise in revenues has been largely attributed to considerable improvement in non-tax revenues that grew by more than 300 percent during the period under review.

In absolute terms, it increased to Rs. 1586.5

billion against Rs. 346.4 billion last year. This growth in non-tax collection has been observed across all major heads, indicating a broad-based increase.

Similarly, receipts from FBR tax collections grew by 29 percent to Rs.2748.4 billion against Rs.2138.7 billion last year. The net provisional FBR tax collection maintained its momentum with 29.6 percent growth to reach Rs.3484.7 billion during July-November FY2024 from Rs.2688.4 billion last year.

Rupee gains 17 paise against Dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistani Rupee on Wednesday witnessed appreciation of 17 paise against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs281.72 against the previous day's closing of Rs281.89. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market stood at Rs 280.5 and Rs283 respectively.

The price of the Euro decreased by Rs 2.19 to close at Rs308.62 against the last day's closing of Rs310.81.

Punjab Governor says:

Business community playing key role in the socio-economic development of the country

Independent Report
LAHORE: The delegation of Anjuman e Tajiran Lahore led by Waqar Ahmed Mian called on Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman at Governor House Lahore, here today.

Speaking on the occasion, Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman said that the business community is playing a key role in the socio-economic development of the

country. He said that he has been frequently meeting the delegations belonging to the business community. Governor Punjab said that the strengthening of the business community in the country creates employment opportunities in the country. He said businessmen not only feed their families but also become a source of employment for many families. Governor Punjab said that it is commendable

that the businessmen are active in philanthropic work and are lending helping hands to the people who need support in the society. He said that the business community came forward and helped people during earthquake, covid epidemic, and floods. On this occasion, the delegation of the traders' body informed the Punjab Governor about various problems including law and order, parking, electric wires, street lights,

Atif Ikram says: FPCCI will devise charter of economy to meet the economic challenges

Independent Report
ISLAMABAD: Newly elected President FPCCI Atif Ikram Sheikh arrives in the FPCCI Capital Office Islamabad with a big crowd consisting of the members of business community of Islamabad

was arranged to congratulate him and celebrated his historic victory in FPCCI's election. Earlier the crowd escorted him from his residence to FPCCI Capital House Islamabad. Various business



and adjacent areas. The Chairman Capital Office Karim Aziz Malik and Chairman Coordination Malik Sohail Hussain and Vice Presidents of FPCCI namely Ashfaq Ahmed and Tariq Jadoon, warmly welcomed him and showered flower leaves on him. On this occasion, on a festive event, special band

leaders of UBG and Founder Group of Islamabad CCI prominently Zubair Malik, Tariq Sadiq, Former Presidents FPCCI Rauf Alam, Zubair Ahmed Malik, former Vice President PCCI and General Secretary UBG Zafar Bakhtawari, Chairman Founder Group ICCI Khalid Iqbal Malik, Mian Akram Farid.

KTH chief calls for exploiting all resources to attract FDI

LAHORE (APP): Coordinator to Minister of State and Federal Tax Ombudsman and

Kyrgyzstan Trade House (KTH) Chairman Meher Kashif Younis said on Wednesday the government should fully exploit an ideal geographical location of the country, which has abundance of natural and human resources, to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) and boost exports to deal with the economic challenges.

Talking to a delegation of industrialists, led by Chaudhry Faran Shahid here, he said there was pressing need for making

policies that facilitate development and implementation of quality technological infrastructure.

A small and medium enterprises policy, with orientation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) that underscores importance of technology in creating value within businesses is essential for fostering economic growth. He said despite Pakistan's aspirations to become a digital economy, its existing digital infrastructure requires significant improvements to fully realize its potential.

Doctor posted at newly created post of paediatric gastroenterologist at LGH

Independent Report
LAHORE: Punjab Government has created a new post of Associate Professor of Gastroenterology for the Department of Pediatrics in Lahore General Hospital. According to the details Associate Professor Dr. Hassan Suleman Malik has been posted on this new vacancy and he has assumed his responsibilities as well. Principal Ameer Uddin Medical College Prof. Dr. Al Farid Zafar welcomed this appointment of Associate Professor Dr. Hasan

Suleman Malik on the new post in the Department of Pediatrics and said that this step taken by the Punjab Government for Lahore General Hospital will certainly help to improve medical facilities for children's health. Moreover, it will be helpful for children to deal with diseases of stomach, intestines and there will be a significant increase in the treatment for better diagnostic, tests as endoscopy facilities will be available to them, which will make it easier for the children and their parents.



LAHORE: Deputy Commissioner Rafia Haider along with Secretary Auqaf Dr. Syed Tahir Raza Bukhari being briefed during their visits to the site of under construction Shrine of Bibi Pak Daman, in Provincial Capital.

KU Computational Chemistry Scientist elected as PAS fellow

KARACHI (INP): The Pakistan Academy of Sciences (PAS) has elected Dr. Zaheer-Ul-Haq, a Professor at the Dr. Panjwani Center for Molecular Medicine and Drug Research (PCMD), University of Karachi, as a fellow of the Pakistan Academy of Sciences (PAS).

scientist's knowledge, are elected fellows. PAS promotes higher studies and research on pure and applied sciences in Pakistan and disseminates scientific knowledge. Prof. Dr. Farzana Shaheen, the Director of the ICCBS, University of Karachi, congratulated Prof. Zaheer-Ul-Haq for his achievement. It is pertinent to mention here that Prof. Zaheer-Ul-Haq is a distinguished scientist renowned for his exceptional contributions to the field of Computational Chemistry.

According to the spokesman of the International Center for Chemical and Biological Sciences (ICCBS), University of Karachi, only scientists of the highest merit, who have made outstanding contributions to advancing



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Haji Ghulam Ali presides over the meeting to review financial issues of Universities of Province.

Good conduct towards citizens, effective policing hallmarks of successful police officer: Naqvi

Independent Report
LAHORE: 34 under-training ASPs of the 50th common training program at the Pakistan Police Academy called on Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi at his office. Addressing them, CM Naqvi emphasized the need to abandon the archaic policing system and embrace the new era of policing to serve the public better. He highlighted that good conduct towards citizens and effective policing are the hallmarks

of a successful police officer, making their tasks easier. He emphasized that Islamic teachings and basic human values encourage positive interactions with the public. The CM stressed the importance of maintaining a positive reputation and building a successful career through improved public handling and effective policing. Mohsin Naqvi urged police and administrative officers to pay attention to resolving the issues faced by citizens. He encouraged young police officers to engage in positive interactions with the public, demonstrating good behavior and dedication to problem-solving. He emphasized that both public handling and policing skills are equally essential, with a 50% focus on each. Furthermore, he advised police officers to exhibit good behavior towards citizens, seniors, and visitors, and to handle situations that cannot be resolved according to the law with patience and empathy.

11.5 million new licenses issued to citizens in a short span of time

Independent Report
LAHORE: As a result of prompt steps taken by Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi to ease the driving license issuance to the public, 11.5 million new driving licenses have been issued in a short span of time. Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi visited police khidmat markaz at liberty late at night and inspected online tests conducted. He directed to change broken tiles without delay and appreciated the facilities provided at the khidmat markaz.

KP Govt initiated economic plan to bring merged districts at par with other regions

Independent Report
PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government has initiated a comprehensive economic plan "High Impact Economic Plan" with the purpose of bringing the Newly Merged Districts of the province on at par with other regions of the country and province, in the process of development. In view of the abundance of natural resources in the merged districts, have been prioritized in the above mentioned development plan so that to make maximum utilization of them, while 10 important sectors included industry, commerce and technical education, mines and mineral development, agriculture, energy and power, livestock, forestry and environment, irrigation and water, sports, tourism and youth affairs, roads & communication and border economy have been declared as important targets for the development process.

Even UC chairman 'can deliver more than' PTI founder: Ahsan Iqbal

NAROWAL (INP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) senior leader Ahsan Iqbal said on Wednesday that even the UC chairman could deliver better than the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder. Addressing the workers' convention in Narowal, the former planning minister said, "Four out of the five years had been wasted by the PTI. Few persons were involved in orchestrating the conspiracy to impose the PTI founder in 2018." "The PTI founder had harmed the country," Iqbal said. Speaking about the forthcoming elections, Iqbal said, "I have three basic principles of staging the politics, which are peace, education, and development." Iqbal said on Friday there is a dire need to decide about the country's fate on February 8. Speaking to the media in Lahore, the former planning minister took a swipe at the political opponents, saying, "Some people had harmed the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project." He recalled the events that transpired on May 9, stating, "Those who were involved in May 9 vandalism cannot wash their strains by making excuses."



HYDERABAD: Milli Yakjehti Council Central President, Sahibzada Dr. AbulKhair Muhammad Zubair addresses during Khatoon-e-Jannat O Mashaikh Seminar organized by Paigham-e-Hussain International in Hyderabad.

8500 POs arrested, challan tickets issued to 1.75m drivers in 2023

FAISALABAD (INP): The Punjab Highway Patrol (PHP) arrested 8,500 proclaimed offenders (POs) and issued challan tickets to 1.75 million drivers over violation of traffic rules and regulations during 2023. A PHP spokesman for Faisalabad region said here on Wednesday that patrolling police checked 17.6 million people and 9.4 million vehicles on highways and main roads of the province through e-police post app during 2023, which helped in decreasing crimes on roads up to 45 per cent, compared to the crime ratio during 2022. During this period, the PHP jaws succeeded in arresting 500 POs of category-A and 8,000 of category-B, besides nabbing 1,300 illicit weapons-holders. The teams recovered 970 pistols, 138 rifles and 91 Kalashnikovs from the arrested people. The PHP police also seized 3,559 stolen vehicles including 190 stolen cars, 3,184 motorcycles and 185 other vehicles.

International News

US warns Israel, clarifies Gaza belongs to Palestinians

WASHINGTON (INP): The United States rejected the inflammatory and irresponsible statements from Israeli Ministers Smotrich and Ben Gvir and clarified there should be no mass displacement of Palestinians from Gaza. Far-right Israeli ministers Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich said this week that Israel should "encourage emigration" from the coastal enclave, home to an estimated 2.3 million Palestinians. "If there are 100,000 or 200,000 Arabs in Gaza and not two million Arabs, the entire discussion on the day after [the war ends] will be totally different," Smotrich said on Sunday, calling for the "voluntary migration" of Palestinians. The Israeli army has said it is "prepared for any scenario" after a strike in Beirut that killed Hamas's deputy chief, stoking fears the war in the Gaza Strip could boil over into wider regional conflict. A high-level security official in Lebanon told foreign news agency that Saleh al-Aruri was killed along with his bodyguards in a strike by Israel, which has vowed to destroy Hamas after the movement's shock October 7 attacks. A second security official confirmed the information, while Hamas TV also reported Israel had killed Aruri in Lebanon. Israeli army spokes-



People gather at the scene of explosions during a ceremony held to mark the death of late Iranian General Qassem Soleimani, in Kerman, Iran.

Killing of Hamas deputy leader in Beirut raises risk of Gaza war spreading

Monitoring Desk
BEIRUT: Israel killed Hamas deputy leader Saleh al-Aruri in a drone strike in Lebanon's capital Beirut on Tuesday, Lebanese and Palestinian security sources said, raising the potential risk of war in Gaza spreading well beyond the Palestinian enclave. Arouri, 57, was the first senior Hamas political leader to be assassinated since Israel launched a shattering air and ground offensive against the group almost three months ago after its shock assault and rampage into Israeli towns. Lebanon's heavily armed Hezbollah group, a Hamas ally, has been exchanging near-daily fire with Israel across Lebanon's southern border since the war in Gaza began in October. Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah has warned Israel against carrying out any assassinations on Lebanese soil, vowing a "severe reaction." Hezbollah said on Tuesday it had targeted a group of Israeli soldiers in the vicinity of Marj with missiles, following Arouri's killing.

Putin says Russia will 'intensify' attacks on Ukraine

Monitoring Desk
KYIV: President Vladimir Putin said Monday that Moscow would intensify strikes on military targets in Ukraine, after an unprecedented Ukrainian attack over the weekend on the Russian city of Belgorod. The Ukrainian attack on Saturday, which killed 25 people including five children, came after Moscow launched a large-scale attack on Ukrainian cities. Meanwhile, Kyiv said Russia had targeted the country with a "record" number of drones on New Year's Day. "We're going to intensify the strikes. No crime against civilians will rest unpunished, that's for certain," Putin said during a visit to a military hospital. His comments came at the end of a deadly week in Ukraine, with both sides hitting each other with large-scale attacks. Putin said Russia would continue to hit what he called "military installations." "We are doing that today and tomorrow we will continue doing it," Putin announced, speaking almost two years into Moscow's military offensive in Ukraine. "What happened in Belgorod is a terrorist act," Putin told wounded Russian soldiers sitting near him in hospital pyjamas and sanitary masks.



Governor of the Belgorod region, shows aftermath of a missile strike on the region as Moscow said it had downed nine missiles fired by Kyiv.

Philippine military says second joint patrol with US underway in South China Sea

Monitoring Desk
MANILA: The Philippines and the United States began a two-day joint patrol in the South China Sea on Wednesday, the Philippine military said in a statement, a move that would likely irk China. Security engagements between the treaty allies soared last year amid growing tensions in the South China Sea, where the Philippines and China have traded blame over a spate of run-ins. The Philippines and the US first launched joint patrols in November, holding military drills for three days in waters near Taiwan and in the West Philippine Sea, Manila's term for South China Sea waters within its exclusive economic zone. The Philippine military said their second joint patrol this week involved four vessels from the Philippine navy and four ships from the US Indo-Pacific command that include an aircraft carrier, a

Tens of thousands hold anti-Israeli protest in Istanbul

Monitoring Desk
ISTANBUL: Tens of thousands marched in Istanbul Monday to protest "murderer" Israel's war in Gaza and the killing of Turkish soldiers by outlawed Kurdish militants in Iraq. The rally, called by a foundation which counts Bilal Erdogan, the son of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, among its members started after crowds performed morning prayers at Istanbul's iconic mosques, including Hagia Sophia and the Blue Mosque. Protesters waving Turkish and Palestinian flags rallied to the Galata Bridge over the Bosphorus chanting: "Murderer Israel, get out of Palestine" and "Allahu Akbar" (God is the greatest). Tens of thousands of people joined the rally "Mercy for our martyrs and a curse on Israel", the official Anadolu news agency reported.

Overseas figures refute allegations in Hong Kong security trial for Jimmy Lai

Monitoring Desk
HONG KONG: Several overseas activists, right campaigners and politicians named in a national security trial for Hong Kong democrat Jimmy Lai refuted allegations levelled by a government prosecutor in court that they colluded with him. Lai, 76, founder of now-shuttered pro-democracy newspaper Apple Daily and a leading critic of the Chinese Communist Party, faces two counts of conspiracy to collude with foreign forces - including calling for sanctions against Hong Kong and Chinese officials - under a China-

Dr Umar Saif announces 10,000 'E-Rozgar Centers' for freelancers from Jan 11

ISLAMABAD (INP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunications Dr. Umar Saif Wednesday disclosed that the government would initiate a project to establish 10,000 country-wide E-Rozgar centers equipped with the latest facilities to facilitate freelancers and start-ups from January 11.

This historic initiative was aimed to address the current challenge faced by approximately 1.5 million freelancers who lacked suitable workspaces, he mentioned while speaking in an exclusive interview with a Private news channel.

The freelancers equipped with the tools and environment to thrive in the digital landscape is need of the hour, he further added. He explained that the establishment of joint e-centers will increase investment in the country and create new employment opportunities.

Dr Umar also urged the youth to become entrepreneurs as they could easily earn more stipends per month through E-Rozgar.

Replying to a question, the minister said from January 7 another project would be initiated to introduce a

standardized test for IT graduates through the Higher Education Commission to gauge their skills and offer them internships after passing the test.

"Those who pass the test will be given a mandatory internship in the IT industry. Pakistani universities produce around 75,000 IT graduates every year, out of which, only 3,000 are eligible to be employed by IT companies," he added.

He also expressed hope that IT exports will increase to \$4 billion after the State Bank of Pakistan allowed the IT companies to retain 50% of their receipts in dollar accounts.

"We wanted to empower the youth of the country with info-tech skills and that it was making all-out efforts for the purpose", he added.

"IT and Telecom is working on all those projects that will create employment opportunities in the country for youngsters in the future," he mentioned.

The ministry is trying its best to move Pakistan forward in the field of education through the provision of IT skills and empowering skilled manpower in IT industries, he said.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Parliamentary Committee on China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed presenting a shield to CDA sanitation workers during the farewell party at E-7 Park.

Conspiracies and nefarious designs of anti-state elements to be foiled, asserts Maulana Khabeer

Independent Report

QUETTA: The Chairman Markazi Ruet-e-Hilal Committee, Maulana Abdul Khabeer Azad has stated that the entire nation and ulema karam (religious leaders) are standing by their armed forces, and as such conspiracies and nefarious designs of the anti-state elements would be foiled.

He said that Islam is a religion of peace and preaches brotherhood and harmony, and it is responsibility of the religious leaders of the country to give lesson of good things to the nation.



Maulana Abdul Khabeer Azad was addressing the Paitham-e-Pakistan Aman Conference (Message of peace) organized by the Majlis-e-Ulema Pakistan here at the Quetta Press Club on Wednesday.

The eminent religious leaders from different schools of thoughts as well as the leading religious personalities of different minorities participated in the conference on the crucial topic. The chairman Ruet-e-Hilal Committee said that it is welcoming and appreciable to hold Paitham-e-Pakistan Aman conference in Quetta.

He said that the people from all religions are attending the conference and united on the platform of MUP.

Influenza causing respiratory illness among people in Pak

ISLAMABAD (INP): A subtype H3N2 Influenza-A virus, causing severe respiratory illness in people across Pakistan, the National Institute of Health report said Wednesday.

The National Institute of Health (NIH) in its recent report stated that thousands of severe respiratory illness cases are being reported every week across Pakistan. Meanwhile, the NIH in its report further added that the Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) is causing illness among children across the country. The health experts warned the patients not to consume antibiotics if they have influenza symptoms and suggested using a mask and washing hands frequently to prevent the disease.

weakened immune systems. The report further added that the real cause of severe respiratory illness is because of the subtype H3N2 Influenza-A virus, not COVID-19, as the rate of coronavirus cases in Pakistan is less than one percent.

Meanwhile, the NIH in its report further added that the Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) is causing illness among children across the country. The health experts warned the patients not to consume antibiotics if they have influenza symptoms and suggested using a mask and washing hands frequently to prevent the disease.

The health experts revealed that the Influenza virus can be dangerous for the elderly and people with



ISLAMABAD: General Secretary (Tehreek Nafaz-e-Fiqh-e-Jafariya) Allama Basharat Hussain Imami talking to media persons outside Election Commission in Federal Capital.

Dense fog disrupts air and road traffic

ISLAMABAD (Online): Thick fog enveloped the plains of the country, especially parts of the Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces on night between Tuesday and Wednesday, paralyzing routine life and disrupting road and air traffic.

The flight operation at the Islamabad International Airport was also affected.

As many as 30 flights of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) and other national and international flights had to be cancelled after dense fog disrupted the flights' operation at the Islamabad International Airport on Wednesday.

The flights, which were cancelled, had to shuttle between Islamabad and Lahore, Islamabad and Karachi, Islamabad and Beijing, Islamabad and Sharjah, Islamabad and Riyadh and Islamabad and Jeddah.

Similarly, PIA's flights to Gilgit and Skardu were delayed for several hours. The situation is no different with the flights of

other airlines such as SereneAir, Airblue and AirSial which were delayed for over 12 hours.

PIA's incoming flight from Dubai landed at the airport after a delay of 18 hours.

On the other hand, the airport's management said that the flight's operation would resume as soon as visibility improved.

The thick fog has badly affected the flow of road traffic in several cities. According to a Motorway spokesperson, the Motorway M1 Section from Peshawar Toll Plaza to Rashakai Interchange in KP, Motorway M2 from Lahore to Islamabad have been closed for all kind of traffic.

The Motorway police have appealed the drivers to use Grand Trunk (GT) Road for travelling. They have also urged the drivers to drive slowly and switch on fog lights.

The Motorway police have also requested the people to stay home and avoid unnecessary travelling.

Mohsin Dawar safe after attack on vehicle in Miranshah

MIRANSHAH (INP): Former lawmaker and National Democratic Movement (NDM) Chairman Mohsin Dawar remained unhurt after his vehicle came under fire in North Waziristan's Miranshah on Wednesday, police said.

North Waziristan District Police Officer (DPO) Rohan Zeb said Dawar was targeted during an election campaign in the area. "The vehicle carrying the former lawmaker was bulletproof," he told reporters.

Fire guts several shops at Islamabad's Aabpara market

ISLAMABAD (INP): A massive fire broke out at Aabpara Market in Islamabad on Wednesday engulfing several garment shops.

The blaze started in a cloth (dupatta) shop in the market in the morning which spread to other shops later.

A Rescue spokesman said that the fire completely burnt three shops while materials in the adjacent shop were damaged.

Fire brigade officials informed that smoke could be seen rising from Aabpara Market where fire spread quickly, and the police were informed of the incident by the area's residents.

The fire brigade was informed about the blaze around 9 o'clock and fire tenders were actively participating in the operation to douse the blaze.

CDA to auction plots in next week

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Capital Development Authority (CDA) has decided to conduct an auction of plots in Islamabad, alleviating the budgetary constraints faced by the civic body. According to the CDA official, the plot auction is set to take place from 10 to 12 January at the F9 Park in Gandhara Hall.

Plots located on Blue Area, Centers, and Park Road will be included in the auction. The auction list includes petrol pumps, Class Three shopping centers, agro farms, and apartment plots, along with fruit and vegetable shops, IT centers, and hostel plots.

Identical rulings by ROs surprises Election Tribunal Judge

ISLAMABAD (INP): Hearing at the Election Tribunal of the Islamabad High Court on Wednesday, Justice Arbab Muhammad Tahir expressed astonishment at what appeared to be arbitrary decisions made by separate returning officers. The tribunal was addressing an appeal lodged by PTI leader Advocate Shoaib Shaheen, contesting the rejection of his nomination form.

During the proceedings, Justice Arbab Muhammad Tahir noted with surprise that the returning officers for both NA 47 and NA 48 constituencies were identical. Shaheen contested this, asserting that the officers for the two constituencies were different. However, Justice Tahir pointed out that there was not a single word of difference in the orders issued by the two returning officers, suggesting a striking similarity that raised suspicions about the decision-making process.

Shoaib Shaheen defended his stance, claiming that while the officers might be different, the orders seemed to be crafted in the same place, evident from their exact replication.

Expressing concern, Justice Arbab Muhammad Tahir emphasized the lack of variation between the two orders, raising questions about the independence and fairness of the decision-making process. After the arguments from both parties, the Islamabad Election Tribunal reserved its decision on the matter.

PTI leader Niazullah Niazi, addressing the media outside the Islamabad High Court, shed light on the unusual circumstances surrounding the objection-raising process on December 30. Niazi revealed that the returning officers spent four hours that night scrutinizing nomination papers and raised objections that he described as "ridiculous." He further stated that even the judge found some objections amusing. Notably, an identical decision was issued by three different circles of returning officers, adding another layer of suspicion to the overall electoral proceedings.

The Election Tribunal's decision is now eagerly awaited as questions about the integrity of the election process in NA 47 and NA 48 linger.

Safe City Islamabad demonstrated exemplary performance in 2023

Independent Report

ISLAMABAD: Following the special directives of Islamabad Capital Police Officer (ICCP), Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Safe City Islamabad is actively contributing to the oversight of public safety, crime control, assistance in investigations, and providing emergency help to citizens, a public relations officer said.

During 2023, Safe City Islamabad utilized all available resources for facilitating the citizens. Various facilities were provided to 1,92,144 individuals through Police Khidmat Markazs.

Furthermore, the Safe City Emergency Response Unit received 1,39,717 calls through the Pucar-15 emergency helpline. Safe City effectively monitored 1,03,951 suspicious activities including crimes, vehicles and traffic violations throughout the city using modern high-tech cameras.

Moreover, data of 42,332 individuals was collected in the Police Station Record Management System, leading to the arrest of 16,169 individuals involved in various offenses.

Safe City's Hotel Eye software allowed for the surveillance of over a million people and the arrest of 49 criminals.

Safe City significantly increased the efficiency of overall challan payments from 6% to 32%. The Dolphin Squad's Police Emergency Response Unit (PERU) app was introduced to promptly respond to any emergencies allowing citizens to report incidents immediately.

The ICT-15 app was developed for citizen facilitation to seek immediate police assistance. The Safe City Monitoring System added 239 new high-tech cameras, 23 new vehicles were branded, and 15 smart cars were included in the Police Mobile fleet.

The CPO Safe City/Traffic conducted special awareness lectures on drug prevention in renowned educational institutions across Islamabad. 92 children involved in illegal activities were apprehended by Islamabad Capital Police and handed over to their parents through the School Chalo campaign, which was made possible with the as-

stance of Safe City Islamabad.

Safe City expanded its coverage to 97% of the federal capital areas by adding 900 new cameras, and 50 facial recognition cameras at entry and exit points.

For better communication systems the Safe City Islamabad transitioned to the TETRA system from VHF and reactivated the 5-BTS of the TETRA network.

Safe City Data Center increased its technical capacity to 1.3 PB of data storage, commissioned IVS 3800 controllers for video surveillance and improved federal government TETRA network coverage to 100%.

A research and development section was initiated in Safe City Islamabad, where students from various educational institutions developed various software.

However, a data hub was established in a short span of time of three months, gathering data from all provinces and dividing it into 25 different categories and providing it to all law enforcement organizations.

SC declares disqualification of PML-Q former MNA correct for holding fake degree

ISLAMABAD (Online): Supreme Court (SC) has declared the disqualification of PML-Q former Member of National Assembly (MNA) Khadim Hussain on the basis of fake degree correct.

The Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa remarked it is better not to run case after the death of petitioner. The fake degree matter ended with the death of the petitioner.

The CJP gave these remarks while presiding over a 3 members bench of SC during the hearing of the case Wednesday. The CJP inquired has the case any criminal aspect. If it is there then we hear the case. The counsel Khawaja Haris told the court the family members of petitioner insist to abolish taint of fake degree after hearing the case. The petitioner got the entire education in the name of Muhammad Akhtar Khadim. He did politics in the name of Khadim Hussain. He got national identity card in this name. Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar remarked had the petitioner been alive then some thing could be proved. He inquired how the family members of the deceased will prove correct name after death. The CJP remarked show us some affidavit or documents as evidence. when the stance is about changing name then presenting evidence is your responsibility.



ISLAMABAD: CDA staffer busy in win work during foggy on early morning hours in capital City.

Pak-China Friendship Hospital in Gwadar prepares for first patients

BEIJING (APP): The Pakistan-China Friendship Hospital in the port city of Gwadar is preparing to admit its first patients.

The foundation stone for the hospital was laid in 2020. It's part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and it's been called a symbol of the two countries' deep-rooted friendship. Zhou Wenwei, Chief Consultant, Pakistan-China Friendship Hospital told CGTN, "China and Pakistan have a long history of friendship, and in the course of the Belt and Road Initiative, China wanted to invest in this hospital in Gwadar to benefit the local people." Just days before its formal inauguration, I was given exclusive access to the 150-bed facility.

"The Pak-China Friendship Hospital is

equipped with modern facilities and advanced medical technology, ensuring that residents of Gwadar and the surrounding areas have access to high-quality healthcare. Essential healthcare services were previously limited in the region. DR Atab Head of Indus Hospital Campus, Gwadar said, This hospital is equipped with state-of-the-art equipment, the construction is beautiful, and it will serve the purpose for the next twenty-five years. The people of this area have a lot of respect for the Chinese people, and we are also very thankful to them that they have provided us with this health facility." China's commerce ministry funded the project which cost an estimated 30.5 million dollars and covers an area of eight acres.



ISLAMABAD: Rescue workers are busy in fire extinguishing as fire broke out at Aabpara market due to short circuit in Federal Capital.

CDA taking concrete measures to protect natural beauty of capital

ISLAMABAD (INP): Under the directions of Chief Commissioner Islamabad and Chairman CDA Capt. @ Anwar ul Haq, concrete and effective measures have been taken to protect the natural beauty of Islamabad from environmental pollution and smog.

In this regard, the Enforcement Wing Wednesday conducted a mega operation against the owners of the plastic factory in Islamabad's Sector I-13, Shams Colony, whose smoke was causing environmental pollution in the area.

The owners were summoned and presented before the court of Senior Special Magistrate CDA.

The Senior Special Magistrate ordered that the factories of the accused be

sealed immediately and sentenced the accused to imprisonment and fine and remanded in custody.

According to the details, Chief Commissioner Islamabad and Chairman CDA issued strict instructions to the Enforcement, Environment and Sanitation Wing a few days ago to take immediate action to keep the natural beauty of Islamabad free from environmental pollution and smog.

The operation should be carried out without discrimination and interruption, otherwise departmental action will be taken against the concerned officials.

On this occasion, the CDA administration said that no one would be allowed to destroy the natural scenery beauty of Islamabad.



ISLAMABAD: A view of funeral prayers of Former Federal Minister Sartaj Aziz at H-8 grave yield.