

Independent

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Karachi

Ph: 0300-3898091 Vol: 05. No. 358 Jamadi-us-Sani 26, 1445 AH Tuesday January 09, 2024 Pages 04 Price Rs. 12.00

Come what may, general election to take place on February 8: Bilawal

ISLAMABAD (inp): Ruling out the possibility of delay in the February 8 general election, Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari has said the polls will be held on time, come what may.

Talking to journalists outside the Supreme Court on Monday, the former foreign minister said: "The election will be held on February 8 [as per schedule] even if [they] get a resolution passed from the United Nations (UN). He asked the nation to prepare for the upcoming elections in the country.

His remarks came days after the Senate approved a non-binding resolution seeking a delay in the general elections, set to be staged next month, drawing strong criticism from mainstream political parties.

Responding to a question, Bilawal asked if the words of a few senators

have more weightage than those of the Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa.

In November last year, the top judge had remarked: "God willing, the elections will be held on February 8." He made the remarks during the hearing of multiple pleas seeking timely elections within 90 days of the dissolution of the assemblies.

The apex court had ordered the caretaker setup to ensure the conduct of general elections on February 8, a day after President Arif Alvi and Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja unanimously agreed on the aforementioned date during a meeting held at the President's House.

Bilawal hoped the PPP would sweep the upcoming elections, including in Karachi and Hyderabad.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman PPP Bilawal Bhutto Zardari along with daughter of former Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Sanam Bhutto and Asifa Bhutto talking with media persons outside Supreme Court after attending former Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto "murder case" in Federal Capital.

Sindh Health minister inaugurates 7-day anti polio campaign

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Caretaker Health Minister, Dr. Saad Khalid Niazi, Monday, inaugurated 7-day anti-polio campaign by administering polio drops to children at Urban Health Center Landhi Karachi.

Over 10.3 million children under 5 years of age will be vaccinated against polio virus during the ongoing campaign that will be carried out in all 30 districts of Sindh from January 8 to 14.

Around 37,000 vaccination teams will perform their duties while 4,225 security personnel will be deployed for the security of the polio teams.

Dr. Saad Khalid Niazi while speaking at the occasion said that Polio virus has been detected in 13 environmental samples obtained from 28 places in Sindh while two children of UC

Gujrat District East Karachi were infected with poliovirus in the previous year.

According to National Emergency Operation Center, the results of all the environmental samples found so far had links to Afghanistan, he said and urged on the need for a coordinated and comprehensive strategy at the federal level to deal with the situation.

He said that Polio had been eradicated from the entire world except Afghanistan and Pakistan and we are determined to eradicate the deadly disease from the country.

Stressing the collective role of all the citizens particularly parents and teachers the minister appealed to the parents to ensure vaccination of their children against polio.



LAHORE: British High Commissioner Jean Marriot meeting with PML (N) quaid Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, Shahbaz Sharif and Maryam Nawaz are also present.

Six cops martyred, 27 injured in bomb blast targeting police vehicle

BAJAUR (APP): At least six police officials were martyred and 27 wounded in a bomb explosion targeting a police vehicle in Belot Farsh area of Mamund tehsil in Bajaur district here Monday.

DPO Bajaur and Rescue 1122 spokesman told reporters that the cops were going to provide security to the polio vaccination teams when a roadside bomb exploded, killing six policemen and injuring 27 others. The martyred cops were identified as Habib ur Rahim, resident of Inayat Killay, Munasib Khan of Tarkho, Muhammad Rauf Khan of Trakho Serai, Khan Muhammad, resident of Mamond and Ali Rehman.

Rescue 1122 said the injured included Adnan,

Haroon, Siraj, Wali Jan, Sahibzada, Lehad Ali, Rehman Gul, Shahid, Zafar Khan, Ahmad, Abdul Raziq, Muhammad Israr, Jahangir, Faiz ur Rehman, Sadbar, Hafiz, Hayat Ullah, Sher Muhammad, Abdullah, Sahib, Nemat Ullah, Sher Alam, Jalil, Habib Ullah and Ameer Zada. The deceased and injured have been shifted to Khar hospital, where an emergency was declared. Police said blood donation was sought by the hospital authorities for treatment of the victims. All the casualties were police personnel.

Ten of the critical injured have been shifted to Peshawar while 12 were under treatment at Bajaur Headquarters Hospital Khar.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister, Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar chairs a meeting on the matters related to National Highway Authority (NHA), in Islamabad.

In boost to Nawaz and Tareen: SC nullifies lifetime disqualification of parliamentarians under Article 62

SC issues ruling with 6-1 majority; disqualification under Article 62 capped at 5 years; Justice Afridi differs with fellow judges; PML-N, PPP, IPP welcome SC's landmark judgment

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Supreme Court on Monday nullified the lifetime disqualification of parliamentarians under Article 62(1)(f) of the Constitution with a 6-1 majority judgment.

The seven-member larger bench headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa and comprising Justice Syed

Mansoor Ali Shah, Justice Yahya Afridi, Justice Amin ud Din Khan, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail, Justice Ali Mazhar and Justice Musarrat Hilali had reserved the verdict on January 5, which was announced today.

The seven-page written order read: "Article 62(1)(f) is not a self-ex-

ecutory provision as it does not by itself specify the court of law that is to make the declaration mentioned therein nor does it provide for any procedure for making, and any period for disqualification incurred by, such declaration.

"There is no law that provides for the procedure, process and the iden-

tification of the court of law for making the declaration mentioned in Article 62(1)(f) of the Constitution and the duration of such a declaration, for the purpose of disqualification thereunder, to meet the requirements of the fundamental right to a fair trial and due process guaranteed by Article 10A of the Constitution.

Asif Zardari, Bilawal condemn terrorist incident in Bajaur

KARACHI (APP): Former President Asif Ali Zardari on Monday vehemently condemned a terrorist incident in Bajaur. He said that volunteers in the field for the eradication of polio are being targeted.

While expressing his grief and sorrow over the martyrdom of the police officers on duty, he said that they were the brave policemen of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Asif Zardari said that the nation was proud of them. He also expressed his sympathy and offered condolence to the bereaved families of the martyred policemen and prayed for the speedy recovery of the injured.

Meanwhile: The Chairman of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has vehemently condemned a terrorist incident in Bajaur here on Monday.

He expressed his grief and sorrow over the martyrdom of the policemen of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Solangi urges media to include ECP's version on election related news

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for Information, Broadcasting, and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Monday urged the media to include the version of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) in all election-related news.

"Stick to the facts and verify if there is any doubt," said the minister in a post on X, formerly Twitter. The minister's post also included a press release from the ECP, which rebutted false news on a matter related to the elections.

School to start 9 am due to cold weather in Sindh

KARACHI (INP): Sindh Government has announced that school timings in public as well as private sector schools in Sindh (Except Karachi Region i-e 8:30 am) will start from 9 am till January 31, 2024.

According to notification issued here on Monday, all the government and private schools shall function from 9:00 am till 31st January, 2024.

PM orders completion of Karachi-Chaman Highway for improved Balochistan connectivity

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Monday directed completion of work at the Karachi-Chaman Highway as part of improving the road network across the country.

Chairing a review meeting on the projects relating to National High Authority (NHA), he said the step would not only facilitate the people of Balochistan

but also prove as an alternate corridor for other areas. PM Kakar said the road infrastructure was crucial in ensuring development and progress of a country, especially the areas having potential of foreign investment.

He stressed improved road infrastructure in Balochistan to ensure its connectivity with rest of the country.



KARACHI: Governor Gilgit Balitistan Syed Mehdi Shah meeting with Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori.

Sindh caretaker minister highlights foreign investment boost, international cooperation

KARACHI (APP): Sindh's Caretaker Home Minister, Brigadier (Rtd.) Haris Nawaz, emphasized the government's commitment to facilitating foreign investors, aiming to bolster investment prospects.

In a meeting with Croatian Ambassador Dr Drago Stambuk, Nawaz highlighted the advantageous outcomes for investors stemming from the government's economic reforms.

He underscored Pakistan's dedicated focus on attracting foreign investment to fortify economic stability and expressed the country's desire to foster amicable relations with all nations.

Addressing the distress faced by the people of Occupied Jammu and Kashmir under the Indian government, Haris Nawaz urged the international community to alleviate their plight, emphasizing the imperative of resolving the Kashmir issue per United Nations resolutions.

The meeting primarily delved into discussions concerning cooperation, bilateral trade, and various shared interests.

Additionally, topics encompassed the expulsion of illegally residing foreigners, specifically in Sindh, and initiatives to maintain law and order in the region.



KARACHI: A lady health worker administers Polio drops to a child during Polio eradication campaign in Provincial Capital.

CM issues directive to officials to control crime, maintain law in provincial areas

KARACHI (APP): Caretaker Chief Minister Sindh Justice (Retd) Maqbool Baqar on Monday issued directives to Inspector General of Police (IGP) Sindh for taking immediate measures to control crime and maintain law and order situation in the provincial areas.

He directed IGP to take action against those police officers who had failed to maintain peace and tranquility in their respective duty areas. He said that steps should be taken to stop kidnapping and other criminal activities being reported in different parts.

He said that DIGs and SSPs should take notice of heinous activities in Sukkur and Larkana ranges.

Expressing concerns over rising criminal cases, he ordered the IGP to take action against the officers concerned on duty who are unable to maintain law and order situation in their areas. He also directed IGP to immediately recover the abducted persons and present a report without delay. He said that police officers should also take measures regarding security so that next elections could be held in a peaceful environment.



RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General Asim Munir exchanging views with Hamad Bin Isa Salman Al Khalifa, King of Bahrain during meeting held in Bahrain.

Bahrain lauds Pakistan Army's counter-terrorism achievements

RAWALPINDI (Online): H.H General Shaikh Mohammad bin Isa Al Khalifa, Commander of Bahrain National Guard.

During the meetings, matters of mutual interest including bilateral military and security cooperation were discussed. The dignitaries lauded Pakistan Army's achievements in fight against terrorism and continued efforts for regional peace and stability.

Pakistan Saudi Arabia sign annual Hajj agreement

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed, along with Saudi Minister of Hajj and Umrah Dr. Tawfiq bin Fawzan Al-Rabiah, signed the annual Hajj agreement between



Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

According to the spokesman of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed had unveiled the Hajj policy for 2024 in November 2023.

Meanwhile, the International Hajj Expo 2024 commenced in the Saudi city of Jeddah on Monday. During the Expo, additional agreements will be signed to enhance the experience for Hajj pilgrims. A Pakistani delegation will also explore stalls from various companies.



KABUL: Amir Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) Maulana Fazlur Rehman meeting with Prime Minister of Afghanistan Mulla Hassan Akhund.

Spencer Eye Hospital an asset of Karachi: Murtaza Wahab

KARACHI (APP): Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab has said that Spencer Eye Hospital is an asset of Karachi and we will not allow it to be destroyed. He said this on the occasion of a surprise visit to Spencer Eye Hospital on Monday. Municipal Commissioner Syed Afzal Zaidi and other officers were also with him.

He said that the presence of all doctors and paramedical staff in the hospital should be ensured and those guilty of negligence should not be forgiven in any case.

He said that improving medical institutions run by KMC is the priority and whatever steps are neces-

sary will be taken in this regard. Barrister Murtaza Wahab inspected the various wards, operation theaters, refraction rooms, and doctor's rooms of Spencer Eye Hospital and checked the attendance register of the staff.

He enquired about the medical procedures used in the hospital and directed them to adopt modern procedures for eye treatment in the hospital and to update all the equipment and machinery to modern requirements. The Mayor said that in the past Spencer Eye Hospital was famous all over the world including Pakistan for eye treatment and patients from far and wide used to

come here for treatment. Cornea transplantation was done regularly here to restore eyesight to a large number of people, he said.

He said that this hospital was the only hospital in Karachi and Pakistan where the best and most experienced eye surgeons provided services and the most complex operations were successfully performed. If attention had been paid to it in the past, this hospital would have been providing the best eye treatment facilities even today, he added.

Barrister Murtaza Wahab also met the patients in the hospital on this occasion and asked them about their problems.

One crucial year of extraordinary achievements

Undoubtedly it was an extraordinary year of extraordinary achievements made by an extraordinary person. He is no other but the Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir who completed one year as the COAS recently. General Syed Asim Munir had taken command as COAS on November 29, 2022 at the times when Pakistan was really facing numbers of challenges, economic crisis, poor law and order condition and also the political instability. When we talk about the achievements during a period of just one year as Army Chief there are some of the most important goals and success which Pakistan achieve due to the efforts of General Asim Munir. During this year, under his leadership, the Pakistani armed forces and affiliated institutions tirelessly worked to make the country successful on every front. When General Asim Munir assumed command, the country was politically and economically vulnerable. There were fears that it might default in few days, leading to upheaval in the military. Things got to a point where rumors began to circulate about Pakistan's nuclear assets falling into the wrong hands. All in all, the entire country was gripped by a strong grip of panic and uncertainty. It was during those days that General Asim Munir stepped to the front with a determined resolve. The tenacity with which he steered the military towards pulling the country out of these challenges should be appreciated. He initiated steps to improve the economic and military aspects of Pakistan all the while focusing on a vision that aimed at the betterment of the nation.

Taking command during a crucial time, he recognized the necessity of the IMF program for the country. General Asim Munir engaged with strategic allies like Saudi Arabia and the UAE, ensuring them of credible progress during their diplomatic visits and managed to secure a \$3 billion deposit. This Saudi and Emirati injection of confidence, in turn, paved the way for Pakistan to enter the IMF program. Following this, a special Investment Council was established, based on General Asim Munir's vision, aiming to provide protection for investments within the country. As per the vision, this could only be achieved if all obstacles hindering economic stability were removed and steps taken to control inflation. General Asim Munir's personal efforts within the business community instilled confidence in the nation's progress. The Investment Council's long-term program for foreign investment includes the significant involvement of the COAS. Saudi Arabia acknowledged the success of General Asim Munir's efforts, pledging a \$25 billion fund solely for Pakistan. The UAE is also working on a \$20 to \$22 billion investment program. Meanwhile, chatter on the street celebrated that China's investment in Pakistan is evident. After General Asim Munir took charge, he revived projects under the CPEC. Some questioned the inclusion of the Army Chief in the Investment Council, but it should be remembered that going beyond its traditional role, the Pakistani military has played a crucial hand in bringing foreign investment, especially in projects requiring security clearance.

The military's support is vital for investment, and General Asim Munir's inclusion in this forum has provided credibility. Pakistan's deep-rooted relations with these countries and past experiences demonstrate that the military has played a significant role in enhancing ties when civilian leadership fell short.



By Qamar Bashir
Press Secretary to the President; Former Press Minister at Embassy of Pakistan to France; Former MD, SRBC

5-Strategic Communications to derail elections...

The interim government has orchestrated a coordinated effort to obstruct or delay the impending elections through a multifaceted strategic communication strategy. This intricate approach, executed subtly, revolves around five pivotal narratives: prioritizing financial and economic stability over electoral processes, justifying the interim government's continuity citing security concerns, leveraging adverse weather conditions to advocate for postponement, associating the pursuit of justice for the 9th May incident with election timing, and crucially, emphasizing that aggrieved parties won't accept election outcomes, potentially plunging the country into chaos. This narrative underscores the rationale for postponing elections until all parties consent to accept the election results, portraying it as a crucial step towards averting potential unrest and chaos.

From a Public Relations perspective, each narrative serves as a strategic tool to shift focus away from the electoral process, weaving a complex web of reasoning to legitimize the government's intent to circumvent or postpone the elections in favor of its continuation.

Communication Strategy 1 begins by addressing the severity of the financial and economic situation in Pakistan. Emphasize the challenges, such as debt burden, inflation, and economic instability, impacting the daily lives of citizens. Stress the crucial need for stability to ensure the well-being and prosperity of the nation.

Present a bleak picture of what might happen without immediate corrective measures. Illustrate the interim government's proactive steps and policies taken to stabilize the economy. Highlight achievements and ongoing efforts to mitigate the crisis, emphasizing that they are promising but need time to yield positive results. Frame it as a sacrifice for a stable and prosperous future. Emphasizing the need for unity and cooperation, suggesting that delaying elections is a collective decision for the greater benefit of Pakistan.

Leveraging Communication Channels by utilizing television, radio, newspapers, and social media to disseminate the message widely and consistently. Arrange speeches by influential figures to reinforce the narrative of financial emergency and the necessity of stability. Using Slogan: "Ensuring Stability, Securing Tomorrow: Let Our Economy Flourish First!" Visual Imagery: Infographics, charts showing economic indicators improving, visuals depicting stability leading to prosperity.

The SC campaign-2 begins by prioritizing citizens' safety above electoral processes, emphasizing the broader regional implications of Pakistan's security situation. The postponement of elections is positioned as a measure to safeguard citizens' lives, reinforcing that public safety remains paramount. Continuous engagement through regular updates and open dialogues with stakeholders, including security forces and international partners to ensure transparency, address concerns, and gather support for this crucial strategy.

Various media platforms are used extensively—television, radio, newspapers, and social media—to disseminate a consistent message about the critical need for stability.

Key influential figures are engaged to deliver speeches reinforcing the narrative. Visual aids, including infographics showcasing pressing security challenges. It vividly depicts Pakistan's volatile security landscape, emphasizing the gravity of significant domestic, regional, and international security threats with the slogan "Terrorism and Instability." The campaign advocates for a "Security First Approach," stressing that conducting elections amid such turmoil risks citizen safety and democratic integrity. It aims to showcase the interim government's unwavering commitment to national security, highlighting ongoing efforts to combat terrorism and restore stability.

Strategic Communication-3. The Campaign Title: "Prioritizing Public Safety: Postponement Due to Severe Weather Conditions". The Key Message: "Postponing Elections for Public Safety Amid Harsh Winter Weather". Illustrating the severity of the ongoing winter weather across the country, emphasizing its adverse impact on public safety and accessibility to polling stations. Emphasize that the extreme weather conditions will deprive a significant portion of the population from exercising their fundamental right to vote. Frame the decision to postpone elections as a necessary step to prioritize the safety and well-being of citizens. Highlight the dangers posed by severe weather, such as transportation hazards, potential accidents, and health risks, making it unsafe for citizens to travel to polling stations. Emphasize the government's duty to ensure citizens' safety and well-being above all else. Position the postponement as a temporary delay, ensuring that citizens will have the opportunity to exercise their

voting rights when weather conditions improve. To achieve the results, utilize television, radio, newspapers, and social media to ensure a consistent and clear message about the weather-related challenges and the decision's necessity for public safety. Keep the public informed about weather improvements and any developments regarding rescheduling elections. Sample Slogan: "Safety First: Weathering the Storm for a Fair Election Tomorrow!". Visual Imagery: Visuals portraying harsh winter weather conditions, safety precautions, and images illustrating citizens' difficulties in reaching polling stations.

Strategic Communication-4 begins with the campaign to delay elections until the culprits of the 9th May incident are brought to justice. Campaign Title: "Justice Before Democracy: Holding Accountable the Culprits of 9th May". Key Message: "Postponing Elections for Justice: Prioritizing Accountability and National Reconciliation". Communication Strategy: Shedding light on the significance of addressing the unresolved 9th May incident, emphasizing its impact on national reconciliation and stability. Appeal to the public sentiment for accountability, stressing that bringing culprits to justice is crucial for healing and moving forward as a nation. Frame the resolution of the 9th May incident as a precondition for holding fair and transparent elections. Highlight that accountability fosters national unity and reconciliation, laying the groundwork for a stronger democratic future. Utilize various media platforms, arrange speeches by influential figures, keep the public informed about progress made in addressing the 9th May incident, showcasing steps taken towards accountability. Sample Slogan: "Justice Prevails: Ensuring Ac-

countability for a Stronger Democracy. Visual Imagery: Visuals depicting the pursuit of justice, accountability processes, and images illustrating national unity and reconciliation. Communication Strategy-5 Title: "Ensuring Fairness: Postponing Elections for Inclusive Resolution". Key Message: "Postponing Elections to Address Fairness Concerns: Prioritizing National Unity and Trust in the Democratic Process". It begins with acknowledging concerns raised by political parties, particularly PTI, regarding fairness and transparency in the election process. Emphasize the necessity of creating an environment where all parties accept the election results to prevent post-election chaos. Position postponement as a means to ensure a more stable and consensus-driven electoral outcome. Leverage Communication Channels Television, radio, newspapers, and social media—to communicate the rationale behind postponement and the commitment to fairness. Arrange discussions and forums for direct engagement with political parties to address concerns and seek collaborative solutions. Ensuring that decisions regarding the electoral process are made in the best interest of the nation. Sample Slogan: "Fairness Unites: Postponing for an Inclusive Electoral Process. Visual Imagery: Graphics symbolizing fairness, inclusivity, and unity among political parties, aiming for a harmonious electoral process.

These five strategies, while aimed at achieving certain objectives, raise concerns about their alignment with constitutional principles. It's evident that our nation, already fragile, cannot endure another unconstitutional disruption, as any illegal actions to achieve these goals could result in dire consequences. Despite our history marked by martial laws and setbacks, there's

a recurring pattern where powerful forces often achieve their objectives by disregarding, manipulating, or violating the constitution without facing consequences.

The constitution provides for holding provincial assembly elections within 90 days of dissolution, yet despite court orders in September 2023, elections in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab provinces were delayed with total impunity. The absence of fresh elections since the National Assembly's dissolution in April 2023 raises questions about adherence to reasonable timeframes implied by constitutional provisions. Legal experts have raised concerns about the interim government's decisions, suggesting they might overstep constitutional limitations. Issues surrounding the independence of the judiciary and media under the interim setup add complexity to the situation. The Supreme Court and the interim government are going to face off once again on the question of holding elections on 8th February.

The nation is keeping its fingers crossed. It's critical to emphasize the importance of upholding the rule of law and respecting the decisions made by the Supreme Court. In any democratic society, institutions must function independently within their prescribed roles. If there's a disagreement or concern about a decision, the appropriate and lawful approach is to address it through legal channels, such as filing appeals or presenting arguments in court that adhere to the legal framework and the constitution. Attempting to circumvent or undermine the decisions of the Supreme Court through illegal or unconstitutional means can have severe consequences, not just for the democratic process but also for the stability and credibility of the country's institutions.

Commerce News

Govt to ensure uninterrupted power supply to Karachi: PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Monday said that the government, in collaboration with the K-Electric, would ensure an uninterrupted power supply to Karachi to meet its needs.

The prime minister, in a meeting with a K-Electric delegation headed by Chief Executive Officer Moonis Abdullah Alvi,

instructed the Ministry of Energy to address the issues confronting the company through mutual consultation. He said policies should be formulated considering the purchasing power of the electricity consumers as well as their welfare.

The delegation members thanked the prime minister for resolving the longstanding issues faced by the K-Electric and for the approval of

Rs 390 billion investment plan for the company, tariff for renewable energy projects of 640 megawatts, and the provision of an additional 1000 MW of electricity. They viewed that such initiatives by the government had given a positive message to the investors.

In the meeting, the prime minister was briefed about different matters of the K-Electric. The

delegation also included K-Electric Chief Finance Officer Muhammad Aamir Ghaziani and Regulatory Officer Imran Qureshi. The meeting was attended by Caretaker Energy Minister Muhammad Ali, Chairman of National Electric Power Regulatory Authority Wasim Mukhtar, Chief Executive Officer of Central Power Purchasing Agency Rehan Akhtar, and other senior officers.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar meeting with a delegation of K-Electric.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Privatisation, Fawad Hassan Fawad chaired a consultative session with Financial Advisors for divestment of PIACL.

FPCCI invites Chinese investors for investment, JVs in local businesses

Independent Report
ISLAMABAD: The Federation Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) has invited Chinese investors from different sectors of the economy for investment and Joint Ventures in local businesses. It is the right time for Chinese investors to earn lucrative returns on their investments in Pakistan and FPCCI assures to connect the Chinese investors with the right partners in Pakistan for joint ventures, this was stated by Mr. Karim Aziz Malik Chairman of FPCCI Capital Office while meeting Chinese investors delegation, said a press

release issued here. The Chinese investors visited FPCCI Capital Office under the leadership of Mr. Zhang Yang, Director Chongjiang Federation of Investment and Commerce and Chairman of Chang Jiang Management Company. On this occasion, Ashfaq Ahmed, Vice President and Chairman of the Coordination Capital Office Malik Sohail Hussain, Tariq Sadiq, and others were also present.

Addressing the delegation, Mr. Karim Aziz Malik further said that Pakistan provides attractive incentives and liberal policies for investment in all sectors of the economy for

foreign and local investors. These incentives are available in special schemes and in traditional as well as non-traditional sectors of the economy which offer great opportunities to the business community to invest in the country and to have maximum profit on their investments, he said.

Mr. Karim Aziz Malik briefed the delegation that Pakistan's top exportable items include textile made-up, cotton, knitted and non-knitted apparel, Rice, Pink Salt, Plastic Articles, Leather Articles, Automobiles, Mining, Gems Stones, Among many others.

Pakistan's cotton export to China crosses \$617 million in 2023

ISLAMABAD (Online): Experts in Pakistani cotton expressed optimism about the growth of the country's cotton sector and yarn exports to China and other countries, which are rising annually despite floods and other challenges.

According to the Ministry of Commerce, sources said that as per the General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China (GACC), China imported more than \$617.62 million worth of cotton yarn from Pakistan in the first eleven months of 2023.

Uncombed single cotton yarn containing 85% or above, (commodity code 52051200) crossed \$ 414.70 million from

January – November of 2023.

Data further showed that cotton yarn (commodity code 52051100) crossed \$195.097 million in the first eleven months of 2023, while last year in the same period it was \$106.76 million. Uncombed cabled cotton yarn (commodity code 52053200) crossed \$5.27 million from January to November 2023.

In the first eleven months of 2023, more than 237964.907 tons of cotton yarn in the top three items were imported from Pakistan. Sajjad Mazahir, General Manager of China Operations Keywin Trading Ltd.



ISLAMABAD: A florist is sparing water on the flowers for preserving their freshness, F-6 Flower Market in Federal.

First standardized quality test for 75,000 IT graduates to be conducted on Jan, 15: Minister

ISLAMABAD (INP): Minister for Information Technology, Dr Umar Saif, has said that the first standardized quality test for the 75,000 information technology graduates will be conducted on January 15.

In an interview with a private TV channel, Dr Saif highlighted significant decisions made to revamp IT education in collaboration with various entities, including HEC, the National Computing Accreditation Council, the

Examination Testing Council, the Pakistan Software Export Board, and the Pakistan Software Houses Association.

Dr. Saif said students who successfully pass the test will be offered job opportunities through the Industry Placement Program.

He added that funds will be allocated to support special industry courses in universities, aiming to prepare students for current industry trends and needs.

He explained that the National Computing Accreditation Council will consider the pass rate of students to determine a university's rating and the permissible enrollment of IT students.

Emphasizing the importance of aligning educational institutions with industry requirements, he stressed the need for facilitating industry-specific training to bridge the gap between academic knowledge and practical industry needs.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Three ships namely, Ananya Naree, Seapower-I and Oriental Jasmine scheduled to load/offload Rice, Wheat and Chemicals, berthed at Multi-Purpose Terminal, Grain Terminal and Engro Terminal respectively on Sunday. Meanwhile four more ships, MSC Jemima, MSC Antigua, Yihai and Flex Volunteer also arrived at outer-anchorage of the Port Qasim during last 24 hours to load/offload Containers, Palm Kernel and LNG respectively.

SNGPL imposes fines of Rs 3.47m for illegal gas use

ISLAMABAD (APP): Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL) has undertaken a robust campaign against gas theft, resulting in the imposition of fines totalling Rs 3.47 million and the disconnection of 347 unauthorized connections. The spokesperson for SNGPL said that the regional team's actions included disconnecting 13 connections due to the illegal use of gas and 23

connections for the use of compressors.

In Rawalpindi and Islamabad, 98 connections were severed due to the illegal use of gas, leading to fines amounting to Rs 0.30 million in gas theft cases. The city of Multan witnessed 25 connections being disconnected for the illegal use of gas, with an additional 25 connections cut off for the use of compressors, resulting in fines totalling Rs 0.050 million.

GB to host 'winter sports festival' from January 15: Minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): Gilgit-Baltistan's Minister of Planning and Development Raja Nasir Ali Khan Monday said that the snow-covered GB region to host a seven-day long 'Winter sports festival' from January 15 to 25 to draw millions of local and foreign tourists where more than fifty-two teams including 12 female athletes will participate in the event.

Talking to the PTV news channel, the minister of GB said that the event aims to showcase the region's beauty and highlight the soft image of Pakistan around the world, adding, that Gilgit-Baltistan has also

inaugurated 'the Ice Hockey Championship' in the winter sports festival this year.

He said the potential of Gilgit-Baltistan will host major international events, including the Asian Games and the 2026 Olympics, showcasing Pakistan positively on the global stage.

He said these winter sports have historically remained popular across GB, like ice skating, Skiing etc. Replying to a question, he said hundreds of athletes from different ten districts would take part in the seven-day event, adding, they would be competing in skating, ice hockey, and ice curling.



PESHAWAR: Advisor to Caretaker CM KPK for Housing Muhammad Ashfaq Khan bring briefed regarding Housing Department.

PFA DG inaugurates 'Eat safe food campaign'

LAHORE: Punjab Food Authority (PFA) Director General Muhammad Asim Javid inaugurated the 'Eat Safe Food Campaign' intending to improve the food quality at dhabas and food stalls.

In the first phase, Lahore's 15 markets have been selected for this campaign and it is to be extended very soon across Punjab. Hygiene training will be given to small food points workers without charging any fee while medical screening of all food handlers and other workers will also be done.

The PFA DG expressed these views while talking to the media on the occasion of

inaugurating the campaign at Shadman Market. He said that this initiative of PFA will help improve the diet and health of the common man.

He said that initially the campaign was started from 15 different markets of the provincial metropolis including Barkat Market, Taxili Gate, G1 Market, Chauburji, Regal Chowk, Shadman Market, Food Street Old Anarkali, Food Street Shahi Qila, Kareem Block, Gawalmandi Food Street, Lakshmi Chowk, Liberty Market, Moon Market Iqbal Town, Moon Market Gulshan Ravi, Neela Gumbad Anarkali markets.



PESHAWAR: A delegation led by Malik Noshad meeting with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Haji Ghulam Ali.

CM inspects Ring Road project, orders timely completion

Also orders to complete Manawan Cancer Hospital this month

LAHORE: Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi conducted a site visit to the Lahore Ring Road Southern Loop 3 Project here on Monday.

Inspecting the 8 km long project on Maraka Multan Road, Naqvi provided necessary directives for the project's prompt completion. Expressing optimism, he highlighted that the Ring Road Southern Loop 3's conclusion would enhance transportation facilities for the public, with the

anticipated completion date set for January 31.

During the visit, the chief minister emphasized the adherence to high standards in executing the project. Addressing concerns, he instructed the Commissioner Lahore to expedite matters with LESCO (Lahore Electric Supply Company). Frontier Works Organization (FWO) officials briefed the CM on the project's progress. Speaking to the media after the inspection, the chief minister acknowledged

weather-related challenges affecting the project's timeline. He cited dehumidification as a time-consuming process, causing work delays. Despite these hurdles, he assured continuous efforts for timely project completion, emphasizing round-the-clock monitoring by provincial ministers and designated teams. Naqvi expressed confidence in the future government's ability to surpass current accomplishments. Touching on challenges in

the CBD project, he mentioned an ongoing meeting to address concerns. Naqvi concluded by stressing the government's commitment to maintaining quality work, irrespective of criticism.

He emphasized the Election Commission's role in making security decisions. Regarding security, both the chief minister and the Governor provide feedback to the Election Commission, particularly in light of recent security issues in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

CM removes CEO CBD for slow work on project

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Monday removed the CEO Central Business District (CBD) for showing slowness in the CBD project.

The Chief Minister Punjab visited CBD and expressed his deep displeasure over the delay in the CBD project and removed the CEO CBD Imran Amin from the position.

According to sources, Secretary Housing Sajid Zafar Dal has been given additional charge of CBD.

AJK Court suspends press club elections

MUZAFFARABAD (APP): Additional District and session Judge Muzaffarabad on Monday suspended elections of Central Press Club (CPC) conducted on Sunday in violation of the court's earlier order under petition filed by Farooq Khan Mughal, member CPC versus Raja Ifkhar Ahmad and others and summoned the respondents in person on Wednesday in contempt of court. The District and session Judge on Saturday had issued a stay order against the election on the plea of petitioner till

Cop martyred, three injured in firing in judicial complex

PESHAWAR (APP): A cop embraced martyrdom and three persons sustained injuries in an incident of firing outside the Anti-Terrorism Court, within the judicial complex.

The petitioner contended in his main application that he was a candidate for the presidential election and outgoing president who was also in the run for the next tenure deleted his and his nominator and second's name from the voter list at the last moment in a bid to keep them away from the electoral process.

CS orders for effective axle load management system

LAHORE: Chief Secretary Punjab Zahid Akhtar Zaman on Monday directed the transport department to make the axle load management system more effective in the province.

He gave this directive while presiding over a meeting at the Civil Secretariat. The meeting decided that the toll tax on all roads would be collected online to ensure transparency. The chief secretary said that axle load management was being successfully implemented

on 1700 kilometers of highways in the province and permanent weigh stations had been established at nine places in the province for checking freight vehicles. He said that as per law, an action was being taken against vehicles for overloading.

The chief secretary said that roads built at a cost of billions of rupees were damaged due to non-implementation of axle load laws, adding that accidents and damage to roads could be avoided through axle load management.



HYDERABAD: DHO Lala Jaffar Worker administering polio drops to a child during anti-polio campaign at Bhitai hospital.

South Punjab hospital upgradation in progress with rapid pace: ACS

MULTAN (APP): Additional Chief Secretary (South Punjab) Capt. (Rtd) Saqib Zafar said on Monday a comprehensive upgradation of all major hospitals across the province was going on at a rapid pace.

During an inspection at Bahawal Victoria Hospital, Bahawalpur, Capt. Saqib Zafar outlined the ambitious project, detailing the construction of new floors, doors, windows, and ceilings. He said the initiative involves a complete overhaul of electrical and plumbing systems to enhance facilities. The plan is being extended to all major hospitals in South Punjab, he added.

Capt. Saqib Zafar emphasized the urgency of completing the work by February 28 while maintaining a high standard of construction. Earlier, he inspected various sections of hospital, including the Outpatient Department (OPD), Emergency, different blocks, wards, operation theaters, and the Intensive Care Unit (ICU).

1.107 billion rupees have been allocated for upgrading Bahawalpur Victoria Hospital.

Present during the inspection were Secretary Specialized Health South Punjab Afzal Nasir Khan, Additional Secretary C&W Ghulam Yasin, Medical Superintendent Dr. Aamir Bukhari, SE Buildings Anwar Adil, and XEN Arshad Nadeem.

International News

Western allies seek rapid end to Gaza war as Israel presses on

ABU DHABI: The United States and its allies in the Group of Seven are seeking a quick way out of the military phase of the Gaza conflict, Italy said on Monday, as U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and his EU and German counterparts toured the region.

Blinken was holding talks on Gaza in the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia on Monday before heading on to Israel, aiming to kick start concerted peace efforts that he says are needed to avoid a wider conflagration.

He began a five-day Middle East diplomatic ef-

fort in Jordan and Qatar on Sunday, his fourth visit to the region since deadly Oct. 7 attacks on Israel by Hamas militants in Gaza sparked a massive Israeli assault that shows no signs of ending.

Other Iranian-backed militant groups have weighed in, attacking Israeli forces on the border with Lebanon, U.S. troops in Iraq and Syria and commercial ships in the Red Sea. Israel has also cracked down on Palestinians in the occupied West Bank.

Germany's foreign minister Annalena Baerbock was in Israel on Monday and the European Union's

top diplomat Josep Borrell was in Lebanon in a sign of international concern.

"G7 countries are working with the Israeli government to find a rapid way out of the military phase," the Italian Foreign Ministry quoted minister Antonio Tajani as saying as Italy began its one-year presidency of the Group of Seven.

An Israeli strike on south Lebanon on Monday killed a senior commander in Hezbollah's elite Radwan force, three security sources told Reuters, the latest in daily clashes across Israel's northern border.



AMMAN: Jordan's King Abdullah II speaks to US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, as the latter arrived in the Middle East to ensure the violence in Gaza does not spread.

Jordan presses US on Gaza ceasefire

AMMAN: Jordan's king on Sunday urged the top US diplomat to push for a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and end the humanitarian crisis brought by three months of war.

King Abdullah II made the remarks to US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who is on a Middle East tour aiming to ensure Israel's war on Gaza does not spread.

He told Mr Blinken that Washington had a major role to play in pressuring Israel into an immediate ceasefire, and warned of the "catastrophic repercussions" of the continuation of war in Gaza, which began on Oct 7 after a Hamas raid on Israel.

Israel's subsequent air and ground assault had killed 22,835 Palestinians by Sunday, according to Palestinian health officials, including at least 113 killed and 250 others injured over the past 24 hours.

An Israeli air strike on a car near Rafah in southern Gaza on Sunday claimed the lives of two Palestinian journalists who were out reporting, according to health officials in Gaza and the journalists' union there.

EU Council President Michel says to step down in July

BRUSSELS: Belgian politician Charles Michel has announced he will step down as European Council president after running in the European Parliament elections set for June.

The surprise move will heighten speculation about who will be the next EU leaders as negotiations begin for a new round of top jobs in November.

EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen of Germany, who like Michel was appointed to her post in 2019, has so far kept quiet on whether she intends to seek a second term.

US fighters to fly over Bosnia

SARAJEVO: Two F-16 fighter jets will fly over Bosnia on Monday to underline US support for its territorial integrity against "secessionist activity" by Serbs at odds with the country's 1990s Dayton peace accords, the US embassy in Sarajevo said.

The overflight will be part of bilateral air-to-ground training conducted along with Bosnia's national armed forces in areas of the Balkan country's north not controlled by Serbs, the US Embassy in Sarajevo said in a statement.

Macron moves to name new prime minister in govt reshuffle

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron could choose a new prime minister as soon as Monday, according to his entourage, as he seeks a new look for a widely criticised government.

The position of Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne has been tenuous ever since an immigration bill pushed by Macron was voted down in parliament last month. It was finally passed with many controversial changes imposed by the centre-right opposition.

Macron, who is also facing a growing challenge from the far-right National Rally of Marine Le Pen, met with Borne Sunday night. His office said the discussion centred on flooding in northern France and a looming freeze across the country, but observers said they likely discussed a widely-predicted cabinet reshuffle. Francois Bayrou, a centrist leader whose early

endorsement of Macron was key to his initial 2017 election success, told BFM television that "a change is necessary" in the government make-up.

Under the French system, the president sets general policies, but the prime minister is responsible for day-to-day government management, meaning they often pay the price when an administration runs into turbulence.

In 20 months as prime minister, the 62-year-old Borne—France's second female head of government—has pushed through key reforms on pensions and immigration in some 30 new laws and has overcome previous doubts about her future.

But Macron has over the past week consulted with key figures including Bayrou, Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire, and former prime minister Edouard Philippe about reinventing the administration.

Al Jazeera says two Gaza journalists killed in Israeli strike

GAZA STRIP: Al Jazeera said on Sunday two of its Palestinian journalists in the Gaza Strip were killed in an Israeli strike on their car, in what the Qatar-based media network claimed was a "targeted killing".

Hamza Wael Dahdouh and Mustafa Thuria, who also worked as a video stringer for AFP and other news organisations, were killed while they were "on their way to carry out their duty" for the channel in the Gaza Strip, the network said.

A third freelance journalist travelling with them, Hazem Rajab, was seriously injured. The health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza also confirmed the deaths and blamed an Israeli strike. Witnesses told AFP that two rockets were fired at the car — one hit the front

of the vehicle and the other hit Hamza who was sitting next to the driver.

"We later found the body parts (of those in the car). The ambulance then came and carried those who were in the car," a witness, who declined to give his name for security reasons, told AFP.

The Israeli army told AFP that it had "struck a terrorist who operated an aircraft that posed a threat to IDF troops", adding that it was "aware of the reports that during the strike, two other suspects who were in the same vehicle as the terrorist were also hit".

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the journalists' deaths were an "unimaginable tragedy".

"And that's also been the case for... far too many innocent Palestinian men, women and children."



Protesters at the 'All Denmark on the Streets for Palestine Ceasefire Now!' demonstration march from Frederiksberg City Hall to Copenhagen City Hall.

Four killed in combined Russian air strike on Ukraine

KYIV: Russia sent dozens of missiles across Ukraine early on Monday, killing at least four civilians and hitting residential areas and commercial sites in its latest combined air attack, Ukrainian authorities said.

Two people were killed in the western Khmelnytskyi region, local officials reported, where critical infrastructure had also been struck.

In Kryvyi Rih, a 62-year-old was killed and a shopping centre and scores of private homes and apart-

ment buildings damaged after nine Russian missiles hit the south central city, said Oleksandr Vilkul, the mayor. "The mad enemy once again struck civilians," regional governor Serhiy Lysak wrote on the Telegram messaging app. "Directed missiles at people."

Russia said it hit military-industrial targets in Ukraine from sea and air on Monday. "This morning, a multiple attack was carried out with high-precision, long-range, sea and air-based weapons, including the Kinzhal hypersonic missile system.

Mass killer Breivik sues Norway in bid to end prison isolation

OSLO: Anders Behring Breivik, the far-right fanatic who killed 77 people in a bombing and shooting rampage in Norway in 2011, will ask a court on Monday to end his isolation in prison, saying it violates his human rights.

The 44-year-old, who emailed out copies of a manifesto before his attacks setting out his theories, is also suing the state in a bid to lift restrictions on his correspondence with the outside world.

Breivik killed eight people with a car bomb in Oslo then gunned down 69 others, most of them teenagers, at a Labour Party youth camp in Norway's worst peacetime atrocity.

His case has been a grim test for a country that is still shaken to its core by the horror of his acts but has also long taken pride in the rehabilitation efforts of its justice system. Breivik spends his time in a section of Ringerike high-security prison, 70km (40 miles).

Who is responsible for execution of Bhutto among SC, prosecution and martial law: CJP

ISLAMABAD (Online): Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa has remarked who is responsible for execution of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto among Supreme Court (SC), prosecution and martial law administrator.

He further remarked where there is politics in case and there is no justice then the court should hear it again. He remarked there was martial law at that time and a former Prime Minister (PM) was executed.

Work hard and tell us as to why this court cannot re-open the remaining cases. President should also send the references of the remaining cases. There is an interview of a judge in this case. Some other thing will be there in the remaining cases.

The CJP gave these remarks while presiding over 9-member larger bench of SC during the hearing of presidential reference on Bhutto judicial murder case Monday.

Afghan PM says

Kabul has no intention of causing harm to Pakistan

Monitoring Desk
ISLAMABAD: Afghan Prime Minister Mullah Hasan Akhund on Monday reassured Maulana Fazlur Rehman, the emir of the Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F), that Kabul has no intention of causing harm to Pakistan or any other country.

The Afghan premier's statement came during a meeting with Fazl, who is leading an 11-member delegation, which touched down in Kabul on Sunday.

"Islamic Emirate will not permit any threat to be

posed to any country," Akhund was cited in a statement released by Afghan government spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid. He also highlighted the crucial role of religious scholars in resolving issues and dispelling misunderstandings between Islamabad and Kabul.

Fazl was extended an invitation by the interim Afghan government last month, marking his first visit to Afghanistan since the Taliban assumed control in 2021.



RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General Asim Munir exchanging views with Field Marshal Khalifa Bin Ahmed Al Khalifa, Commander of Bahrain Defence Forces and General Shaikh Mohammad Bin Isa Al Khalifa, Commander of Bahrain National Guard during meeting held in Bahrain.

PM directs LEAs to accelerate efforts to eradicate smuggling

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Monday directed the relevant law enforcement agencies, including the Frontier Corps, Pakistan Customs and district administrations to expedite their efforts to completely curb smuggling.

He observed that with abhorrent practice of smuggling, few influential people were benefited and stressed that with the establishment of special economic zones and industries in the border areas of the country, provision of alternate livelihood opportunities to the inhabitants should be ensured.

The caretaker prime

minister chaired a review meeting regarding the Afghan Transit Trade and anti-smuggling operations which was attended by Caretaker Finance Minister Dr Shamsad Akhtar, chief secretaries of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces, inspectors general of Frontier Corps (FC), federal secretaries and other relevant senior officials, the PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

A report over the Afghan Transit Trade and curbing of smuggling was presented in the meeting.

The meeting was also informed about the performance of Pakistan Customs, FC, district admin-

istrations and National Logistics Corporation (NLC) in the border areas. All these agencies had been working to curb smuggling at the border areas which led to saving of national exchequer from the huge damage caused by the millions of tonnes smuggling of illegal goods. The caretaker prime minister directed for formulation of a comprehensive mechanism for provision of employment opportunities to the local people through social safety and imparting of skill sets.

He also directed the Ministry of Trade to ensure strict monitoring of the transit trade and apprise the relevant authorities about

the trends over export of goods.

He also expressed the resolve to end smuggling which was causing huge losses to the nation, and reiterated that the government would not allow those local elements who had been claiming in a grotesque manner of providing job opportunities to the people through smuggling.

The prime minister further said that the caretaker government would continue taking steps to end smuggling till the completion of its tenure and directed the NLC to complete its scanning and checking project at the Chaman border on priority basis.

Pakistan Navy, Royal Saudi Naval Forces hold expert level Staff Talks

ISLAMABAD (INP): A six-member delegation of Pakistan Navy headed by Vice Chief of the Naval Staff Vice Admiral Ovais Ahmed Bilgrami visited Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The visit was aimed to hold expert level Staff Talks between Pakistan Navy and Royal Saudi Naval Forces.

During the visit, Vice Chief also called on Commander of the Royal Saudi Naval Forces HE Vice Ad-

miral Fahad Bin Abdullah Al Ghofaily.

In the meetings, matters of mutual interest and avenues to further enhance bilateral cooperation came under discussion.

Pakistan Navy and Royal Saudi Naval Forces enjoy extremely close relations and cooperate in number of operational and training matters prominently the regular conduct of major maritime exercise Naseem Al Bahr.



SAUDI ARABIA: Vice Chief of the Naval Staff Vice Admiral Ovais Ahmed Bilgrami exchanging views with Commander of the Royal Saudi Naval Forces HE Vice Admiral Fahad Bin Abdullah Al Ghofaily during visited Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Pakistan rejects designation as "Country of Particular Concern" by US

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan on Monday categorically rejected its designation as "a Country of Particular Concern" by the United States State Department, calling it "detached from ground realities".

"We are deeply dismayed that the designation is based on biased and arbitrary assessment, detached from ground realities," Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said in a statement.

She said that Pakistan was a pluralistic country, with a rich tradition of interfaith harmony. In line with its Constitution, Pakistan had undertaken wide ranging measures to promote religious freedom and protect minority rights, she added.

"We note with deep concern that India, the biggest and serial violator of religious freedom, has once again been excluded from the US State Department's designation list. This is despite clear recommendation by the US Commission on

International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) as well as public concerns raised by international human rights constituencies about India's maltreatment of religious minorities.

This conspicuous omission raises serious questions about the credibility, transparency and objectivity of the entire process," the spokesperson remarked.

She said that Pakistan remained convinced that such discriminatory, unilateral and subjective exercises were counterproductive and undermined the shared objective to advance religious freedom globally.

"Pakistan strongly believes that the contemporary challenge of religious intolerance, xenophobia and Islamophobia can be best countered through constructive engagement and collective efforts based on mutual understanding and respect. With a similar spirit, Pakistan has bilaterally engaged the US," the spokesperson added.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar chairs a review meeting regarding Afghan Transit Trade and Anti-Smuggling operations.

Commissioner directs DCs to prepare effective plan for General Elections

HYDERABAD (APP): The Commissioner Hyderabad Syed Khalid Hyder Shah has directed all Deputy Commissioners to prepare an effective plan regarding the provision of missing facilities at polling stations, required staff and sensitive polling stations in upcoming general elections.

He issued such directives while presiding over a meeting regarding arrangements for holding General Elections 2024 in his office on Monday.

DIG Police Hyderabad Tariq Razaq Dharejo, Regional Election Commissioner Hyderabad Azhar Hussain Tanweri, DC Hyderabad Tariq Qureshi, SSP Hyderabad Amjad Shaikh, Chief Engineer Education Works Ahmed Ali Shah, DC Matiari Lal Dino Mangi and all the officers of the concerned departments attended the meeting while Deputy Commis-

sioners and SSPs of the division participated in the meeting through video link.

Commissioner Hyderabad informed that new furniture had been provided to all the educational institutions during the last two years and now there should not be a shortage of furniture at the polling stations.

He underlined the need to provide missing facilities at the polling stations without delay.

Commissioner Hyderabad also asked to identify sensitive polling stations in their respective districts so that CCTV cameras could be installed there.

Chief Engineer Education Works Ahmed Ali Shah briefing the meeting informed that 4654 polling stations in the division were being visited to ensure provision of required facilities in polling stations.

Shehbaz Sharif allowed to contest election from NA-242

KARACHI (Online): Former Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif has been allowed to contest election from NA-242 Karachi. Election Tribunal has restored nomination papers of Shehbaz Sharif from NA-242 Karachi. The objections raised by Qadir Khan Mandokhel from PPP were rejected.

Masood Khan Mandokhel PPP candidate had challenged nomination papers of Shehbaz Sharif.

The appellant said returning officer had rejected his nomination papers. The returning officer has accepted nomination papers of Shehbaz Sharif in haste by ignoring the legal requirements. December 29 decision of returning officer be declared nullified.

PML-N leader Rana Mashhood has said that Shehbaz Sharif has been allowed to contest election in NA-242. We demand level playing field for all parties.

Global GDB decline will add to Pakistan's economic issues: Mian Zahid

KARACHI (INP): Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain has said that the shrinking global GDP will further add to economic problems of Pakistan.

Talking to business community on Monday, he urged the policymakers should take action to tackle the situation, with a special focus on rising debt, inflation, and the value of the rupee. Mian Zahid Hussain said that the economy should be headed in the right direction, and development barriers should be taken down to improve the situation.

The global GDP will shrink this year, while there will be a slight improvement in Pakistan's GDP, he noted. The business leader said that inflation, the ru-

pee, and rising debt need to be given special attention this year, while the growth rate was likely to improve further if energy prices and political tensions ease.

Many international organisations believe that Pakistan's growth rate will be 2 percent this year, while India's GDP was likely to be 6.2 percent, he said adding that Pakistan's GDP may increase from 2% to 2.4% in 2025.

In the opinion of international organisations, the food security situation in Pakistan may be more disturbed this year, which should be taken seriously, he underlined.

Mian Zahid said that global GDP will fall to 2.4 percent this year from last year's 2.7 percent. Reasons for a decline in global GDP include high interest rates, political conflicts, reduced trade, and the possibility of natural disasters.

Bilawal hugs Latif Khosa at Supreme Court

ISLAMABAD (INP): People present at the premises of the Supreme Court (SC) on Monday witnessed an interesting scene when former foreign minister and PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Sardar Latif Khosa, who has recently joined the PTI after remaining part of the PPP for a long time, came face to face with each other.

On seeing Latif Khosa, Bilawal, whose happiness knew no bounds, exclaimed with joy, "Dekho, dekho, mene kia dekha (Look, what I have seen).

Tribunal rejects GDA leaders Zulfikar Mirza, Fahmida Mirza's appeals

KARACHI (INP): The Appellate Election Tribunal in Karachi on Monday rejected the appeals filed by Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA) leaders from Badin Zulfikar Mirza, also a former Sindh home minister, and his wife Fahmida Mirza, also a former National Assembly (NA) speaker, against the rejection of their nomination papers by the returning officers (ROs).

Both Fahmida and Zulfikar had filed papers for the NA and the Sindh Assembly constituencies NA-223 Badin and PS-70, PS71 and PS-72, respectively.

Karachi lawyers' shutdown City Courts, strike over police FIR

KARACHI (INP): The city's lawyers on Monday staged protest strike after the traffic police booked some lawyers in a case.

The lawyers' shutdown the City Courts' gates denying entry to litigators in the court complex.

The lawyers' strike has been resulted in deferral of hundreds of cases fixed for hearing by the courts.

The prisoners from jails did not transport to courts for hearing of their cases.



KARACHI: Members of Muttahida Ulema Mahaz Pakistan are holding protest demonstration against Israeli cruel and inhumane acts and express unity with the innocent people of Palestine, held at Karachi press club.

DC visits polio fixed points, inspected polio campaign

HYDERABAD (APP): Deputy Commissioner Zahir Hussain Rind on Monday inspected the ongoing Polio Vaccination Campaign and checked records of polio teams during his visit to the different areas of Nawabshah city.

Talking to members of polio teams, DC said that polio drops must be administered to all children under the age of five years to make the campaign successful.

Officials of the health

department were also directed to ensure the vigilance of polio teams and to identify issues faced by them in evening meetings.

DC appealed to parents for polio vaccination of their children to prevent them from lifelong disability.

Later DC visited Polio fixed points at Talka Sakrand and inspected the available health facilities. Focal person Dr Raiz Shah was also present on the occasion.

MQM-P to participate in general elections: Zafar Siddiqui

HYDERABAD (APP): The Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) Hyderabad chapter organizer Zafar Ahmed Siddiqui has said his party will land in the electoral battle during the upcoming general elections with optimal energy.

Addressing the party's office bearers during a meeting here on Monday Siddiqui added that MQM-P would continue to represent and fight for the country's middle class. He maintained that since the day the party was formed, it had relentlessly struggled for the rights of the middle class and the poor people of the country.

Karachi street crimes: more than 90,000 cases reported in 2023

KARACHI (INP): The rate of street crimes in Karachi has reportedly increased by approximately 11.11 percent in the year 2023 with over 90,000 incidents reported compared to the year 2022 where more than 80,000 cases were reported.

Karachi police released the data of street crimes for the year 2023 according to which more than 90,000 incidents were reported in the metropolis.



BAJAUR: A view of police van after bomb attack

Former MPA Abdul Jabbar Khan vows to serve people after winning general elections

HYDERABAD (APP): Former MPA of Pakistan People's Party Abdul Jabbar Khan while expressing gratitude to Party leadership for awarding him party ticket to contest elections from PS-62, has vowed to serve people after winning the provincial seat.

In a statement on Monday Abdul Jabbar Khan said that we have carried out record development work in our constituency and resolved major issues on priority basis like road network, clean drinking water and

other amenities.

He said that credit of executing all uplift schemes goes to the previous Government of Pakistan People's Party which approved our schemes and ensured provision of facilities for masses particularly for the labour class.

He said that after winning elections from PS-62 development schemes will be carried out according to the vision and manifesto of the Pakistan People's Party to provide every possible relief to the people.

5th Convocation of SMBBMU Larkana held

LARKANA (APP): The 5th Convocation of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Medical University (SMBBMU) Larkana was held on Monday at the main campus of the varsity.

Meanwhile, the 14th Convocation of Chandka Medical College (CMC) Larkana, 3rd Convocation of Bibi Aseefa Dental College Larkana, 4th Convocation of Benazir Institute of Nurs-

ing and Community Health Sciences (BINCHS) Larkana and 6th Convocation of Ghulam Muhammad Maher Medical College (GMMMC) Sukkur, were also held at the same varsity.

Vice Chancellor of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Medical University (SMBBMU) Larkana, Professor Dr. Nusrat Shah presided over the Convocation. While, Vice Chancellor of Begum Nusrat Bhutto University, Sukkur, Dr. Tehmina Nagaraj and the former Vice Chancellor of SMBBMU Larkana, Professor Dr. Ghulam Asghar Chana were the guests of honour on the occasion.

More than 500 medical graduates including Girls medical graduates of batches 43 to 46 who qualify their MBBS degrees

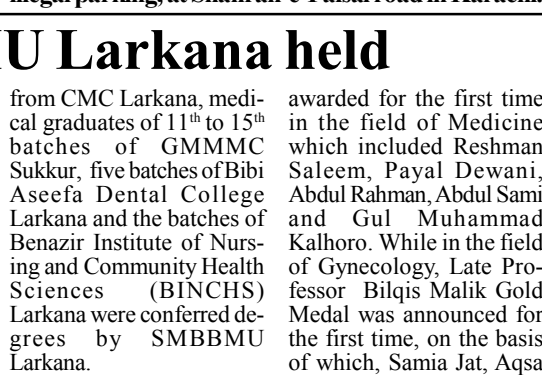
from CMC Larkana, medical graduates of 11th to 15th batches of GMMMC Sukkur, five batches of Bibi Aseefa Dental College Larkana and the batches of Benazir Institute of Nursing and Community Health Sciences (BINCHS) Larkana were conferred degrees by SMBBMU Larkana.

As many as 75 gold medals were awarded in total to the meritorious graduates of SMBBMU, CMC, graduates of Bibi Aseefa Dental College and graduates of BINCHS Larkana and medical graduates of GM Maher Medical College (GMMMC) Sukkur received medals.

In his address on the occasion of the Convocation of SMBBMU Larkana, Vice Chancellor of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Medical University (SMBBMU) Larkana, Professor Dr. Nusrat Shah has exhorted medical graduates to serve the ailing humanity with dedication and devotion and without discrimination.



LARKANA: Vice Chancellor Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Medical University Prof. Dr. Nusrat Shah giving away degrees among successful graduate doctors during 5th convocation of SMBBMU.



KARACHI: A large numbers of vehicles stuck in traffic jam due to negligence of traffic police staffs and illegal parking, at Shahrah-e-Faisal road in Karachi.