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Expels Iranian ambassador: Recalls envoy from Tehran Pakistan suspends diplomatic ties with Iran over completely unacceptable airstrike

Pakistan reserves right to respond, FM warns Iranian counterpart

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan on Wednesday decided to recall its ambassador from Iran and suspend all high-level visits following the unprovoked violation of its airspace by Iran on Tuesday night.

Foreign Office spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch, in a televised press statement, said that Pakistan had also conveyed that the Iranian ambassador to Pakistan who was currently visiting Iran might not return for the time being.

"We have conveyed this message to the Iranian Government. We have also informed them that Pakistan has decided to recall its ambassador from Iran and

that the Iranian Ambassador to Pakistan who is currently visiting Iran may not return for the time being," the spokesperson remarked. She said that the unprovoked and blatant breach of Pakistan's sovereignty by Iran was a violation of international law and the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. She said that the said illegal act was completely unacceptable and had no justification whatsoever. "Pakistan reserves the right to respond to this illegal act. The responsibility for the consequences will lie squarely with Iran," she said. The spokesperson said that Pakistan had also decided to

suspend all high-level visits which were ongoing or were planned between Pakistan and Iran in the coming days.

Earlier, warning Tehran of "serious consequences", the FO had lamented that the "unacceptable violation" of Pakistani sovereignty took place despite the existence of several channels of communication between the two neighbouring countries.

Islamabad has already communicated strong condemnation of Tehran's move to the Iranian Charge d'affaires who was told that the consequences of such an unprovoked move lie squarely with Iran.



KARACHI: Caretaker Sindh Chief Minister, Justice (Retd) Maqbool Baqar and Federal Secretary for Housing preside over a meeting to discuss the construction of high rises in place of Old Quarters-Jahangir etc through video link, held at CM House in Karachi.

Zardari addresses election office inaugural ceremony in NA-127

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians (PPPP) President Asif Ali Zardari declared the party's unwavering dedication to the will of workers while addressing the inaugural ceremony of an election office in NA-127 constituency, here on Wednesday.

He claimed that PPP Chairman Bilawal-Bhutto Zardari would secure victory in NA-127, with Faisal Mir as the candidate from PP-161, and form the government after elections. He highlighting the enduring

nature of the PPP's political journey and related his encounters with the inmates during his incarceration. He emphasised the resilience of the PPP party's system, driven by workers' aspirations. He claimed that Bilawal-Bhutto would lead the party to victory and eventually become the prime minister.

Prominent party leaders, including Rana Farooq Saeed, Chaudhry Aslam Gill, Faisal Mir, Adnan Sarwar Gorski, and Mian Misbah, also spoke at the event.



LAHORE: Peoples Party Parliamentarians (PPPP) President, Asif Ali Zardari addresses to his supporters during public gathering meeting regarding inauguration ceremony of Election Campaigns in connection of the General Election 2024, held at Peko Road NA-127 constituency in Lahore.

Learning process for teachers never ends: Rana Hussain

HYDERABAD (APP): Caretaker Sindh Minister for Education and Women Development Rana Hussain has said that in the past educational institutes were established with the objective and spirit to secure the future of the young generation however preservation of such buildings and related emotions was now our responsibility. She expressed these views on the occasion of the conclusion ceremony of the faculty professional development Programme at Government College University Hyderabad on Wednesday.

Vice Chancellor of Government College of University Prof. Tayyab Zareef, Pro Vice Chancellor Sindh University Thatta

Campus Dr. Rafique, Director of Professional Development Dr. Amjad Ali, Teachers and other officers were also present.

The minister said that the learning process for teachers never ends and in this connection Sindh Government keeping in view the need for professional development at the School and College level has prepared various training programmes so that the teaching standard of the teachers could be improved. She said that it was a moment of immense pleasure that Government College University has taken responsibility for the professional development of its teachers and also accomplished its goal in this regard.

Elected govt will have to work seriously to cope with challenges: Solangi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Wednesday expressed the hope that the government coming to power after the February 8 elections would work for the betterment of the country and its people.

The country was facing economic difficulties, coupled with political polarization and the next elected government would have to work seriously to cope with the challenges, Solangi said during an informal conversation with journalists covering the activities of Election Commission of Pakistan at a luncheon.

The minister said it was the people's responsibility to elect a leadership who could amicably tackle the challenges being faced by Pakistan.

EC decision correct, if we had not gone to SC, our writ would have ended, EC

ISLAMABAD (Online): Election Commission (EC) had decided to side with Supreme Court (SC) against High Court's decision on PTI electoral symbol, "bat" decision. In this regard, spokesperson of EC said that Peshawar High Court had challenged the jurisdiction of the election commission.

If we had not gone to Supreme Court, our writ would have ended. EC has given legally correct decision. EC further said that in the light of Supreme Court's decision, now every political party will conduct intra party elections properly. EC makes decisions on merit according to powers, constitution and Election Act. It should be noted that the Supreme Court of Pakistan annulled the decision of the Peshawar High Court to revoke the electoral symbol of the bat from PTI and reinstated the decision of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP).



SANGHAR: Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari addresses to his supporters during public gathering meeting in connection of General Election 2024 coming ahead, in Sanghar.

'Lion wants someone else to hunt for him', Bilawal takes dig at PML-N

SHAHADAPUR (INP): Amid rising political temperatures ahead of the February 8 general elections, Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari has thrown shade on Nawaz-led Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) once again.

Political parties are expediting their electioneering with a series of manifestos, new vows, and past performances. Besides, PML-N and PPP are eye-

ing the premier's office and desperately swaying voters to elect them to power.

"Only jiyalas are present in the electoral field and fully ready to contest [general polls]," said the PPP chairman while addressing a public meeting in Shahdadpur.

"On the other hand, 'lion' [PML-N's electoral sign] is hiding like a cat and wanting someone else to hunt for him," he said taking a dig at the Nawaz-led party.

Sindh, Fed govt to sign MoU for implementation of Urban rebuilding plan

KARACHI (INP): Caretaker Sindh Chief Minister Justice (Retd) Maqbool Baqar in order to implement his Urban Rebuilding Plan under which high rises would be constructed at the vacant plots of old quarters - Matrin, Claton, and Jahangir Quarters, has decided to sign Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Federal Ministry of Housing & Works.

This emerged in a

meeting the chief minister held with the Federal Ministry of Housing & Works through a video link. Federal Secretary of Housing & Works Dr Shahzad Bangash along with his team participated in the meeting through a video link from Islamabad. The CM was assisted by Mayor Karachi Murtaza Wahab, Chairman P&D Shakil Mangnejo, Secretary Local Government Manzoor Shaikh, DG P&D Asad Zamin and others.



KARACHI: Sindh Governor Kamran Khan Tessori addressing to media persons upon arrival from Iran.

Sindh information minister pays tribute to Mirza Abid Abbas

HYDERABAD (APP): Sindh Caretaker Minister for Information, Social Protection and Minority Affairs Mohammad Ahmed Shah has said that Abid Abbas was an asset of our country who led his life with principles and satisfaction and we should remember our heroes.

He was addressing at the inauguration ceremony of a library in memory of late Mirza Abid Abbas, former Principal of City College and father of former DG ISPR Major General Athar Abbas at the College Auditorium here Wednesday. Renowned journalists Mazhar Abbas, Azhar Abbas and Zafar Abbas were also present on the occasion.

The minister said we have made wrong persons as our heroes in present

times and forgotten the real heroes and well wishers of Hyderabad. He said that in the past, intellectuals and educationists were the torch bearers of the society but today, unfortunately wealthy people had become our leaders and now our society had been converted into a capital society.

He lauded the efforts of the College Principal for organizing a programme to remember our past heroes and well wishers adding that in future, such programmes would be organized to remember other heroes of Hyderabad city.

He informed that they were going to organize a three-day literature festival at Public School Latifabad where a session on heroes of this city would be included.



HYDERABAD: Caretaker Sindh Information Minister Ahmed Shah addressing during inauguration ceremony of late Mirza Abid Abbas Memorial Library at Government City College.

ECP warns against false info from fake CEC WhatsApp account

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has cautioned the public to remain vigilant and disregard false information spread through a fake WhatsApp account impersonating Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikandar Sultan Raja.

According to an ECP spokesperson, the recently identified fake WhatsApp account is being circulated with a picture of the CEC.

PTI founder among other PTI leaders out of election race

LAHORE (INP): The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Wednesday upheld the election Appellate Tribunal's decision that dismissed the appeals of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan and other party leaders regarding the rejection of nomination papers by the returning officers (ROs) for upcoming general elections.

The former prime minister had submitted his nomination papers from NA-122 Lahore and NA-89 Mianwali for the general elections scheduled for Feb 8, both of which were rejected by the respective ROs. Subsequently, he contested these decisions before the election appellate tribunals, where his appeals were also dismissed.

In response, PTI founder Imran Khan filed a writ petition with the larger LHC bench against the tribunal's decision. Similarly, 60 other PTI leaders had submitted petitions in the LHC against the rejection of their nomination papers.

China urges Iran, Pakistan to 'exercise restraint' following air strike

BEIJING (INP): China on Wednesday urged Pakistan and Iran to show "restraint", after Islamabad denounced what it described as the "unprovoked violation of its airspace by Iran".

According to a statement released by the Foreign Office (FO) after midnight, strikes in Pakistani territory resulted in "deaths of two innocent children while injuring three girls". Speaking at a regular briefing on Wednesday, China Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Mao Ning said: "We call on both sides to exercise restraint, avoid actions that would lead to an escalation of tension and work together to maintain peace and stability."

"We consider both Iran and Pakistan as close neighbours and major Islamic countries," she added.

Two killed, 25 injured in accident

LASBELLA (APP): Two passengers were killed and 25 others sustained injuries when a bus en route from Quetta to Karachi overturned near Bella, Hub.

The rescue teams reached the site and shifted dead bodies and injured to a nearby, a private news channel reported.

PM optimistic about political, economic stability after Feb 8 general election

DAVOS (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Wednesday expressed confidence that a stable government would be formed after forthcoming general elections, scheduled for February 8, eventually leading to sustainable economic stability in the country.

"I do see and project that there will be great growth in Pakistan. There will be a sense of stability. The growth will be slow but it will be sustainable," the prime minister said in an interview with CNBC on the sidelines of the 54th annual meeting of World Economic Forum (WEF).

He said that the speculations regarding holding the elections, had been addressed and everyone was certain about the election date of 8th of February. PM Kakar said it was

the top priority of the caretaker setup to bring economic revival and to focus on growth and other economic indicators.

He said the next government had to follow a clear principle of spending less and earning more to achieve economic stability. "We need to bring back the non-documented economy into the documented economy and transform our state to a more viable economic entity," he added.

He highlighted that the caretaker government would publish a white paper on its 4-5 months performance. "We did introduce and revamp the programme within taxation system, we brought structural changes that would be passed through the Cabinet formerly by the end of the month, after that it would be in place as policy."



DAVOS: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar addressing the Pathfinder's Pakistan Breakfast meeting held on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum.

Quran, Seerah solution to all contemporary issues of world: Aneeq Ahmed

KARACHI (INP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Aneeq Ahmed has said that Quran and Sirat e Tayyaba provide us guidance and set basic principles concerning to every field of life urging students to develop comprehension of religion as well as contemporary issues.

While addressing a conference on "Sirat un Nabi (SAW) and contemporary challenges and their solutions" jointly organized by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Iqra University here on Wednesday, he said that it had been imperative that students not only understand the religion of Islam but also comprehend requirements of the contemporary era as well as economic, social and other

issues in the light of teachings of Islam and keep themselves abreast of developing global situation.

Aneeq Ahmed said that religious obligations (Deen) and demands of worldly pursuits (Dunya) are intertwined and we have to search the solution of contemporary issues in the light of Quran and Sirat-e-Tayyaba adding that true comprehension of religion could not be achieved without understanding the worldly affairs.

Islam emphasizes on practical action and application of knowledge and life of Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) is a guiding example for every human being, he noted and added that Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) set standards for individuals, society and state and those must be followed.



KARACHI: Caretaker Federal Minister of Religious Affairs & Interfaith Harmony, Aneeq Ahmed addressing during Conference on Sirat-un-Nabi (SAW) and Contemporary Challenges and their solution at Iqra University.

Chairman NAB assures businessmen of all out support to tackle existing challenges

KARACHI (INP): Chairman National Accountability Bureau (NAB), Lieutenant General Retired Nazir Ahmed has leadership of the business community of extending all out support to tackle all challenges faced by them.

He made the assurance during a series of meetings with the business leaders of Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), Karachi Chamber of Commerce & Industry (KCCI) and other top business community leaders.

During these meetings with Chairman NAB, the business leaders held significant discussions regarding addressing pressing economic challenges and propelling the nation to-

ward growth. They suggested a number of proposals to help steer the country out of the economic turmoil.

Lt Gen Retd Nazir Ahmed responded positively and said that he wants to assure the business communities that NAB will not harass them and they should openly play their key role in the development of the country. He said that they should be fully focused on wealth creation activities and should do business without any fear.

The Chairman NAB stressed that extreme importance would be given to wealth creation activities/projects which will be encouraged and will be protected from unwarranted pressures and intimidation.

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Iran's unprovoked airspace violation of Pakistan - a heinous crime

Iran has carried out missile strike violating the Pakistan's airspace in Panjur area of Balochistan the other day. Undoubtedly, the Iran's unprovoked airspace violation is a heinous attack on Pakistan's sovereignty and integrity, which can have serious consequences in future.

The otherwise unexpected strike has claimed lives of two innocent children and left three girls injured. While Iran is claiming that the missile strike was carried out against a terrorist organization, but death of innocent children in the unprovoked strike is sheer denial of Iran's claim.

There's no denying the fact that the entire responsibility of this attack rests with the Iranian government, IRGC and Iranian intelligence. Despite existence of multiple channels of communication between the two countries, the operation was carried out contrary to international law, which clearly violated Pakistan's airspace. It is also a mockery that a fake press release was also issued from an organization called Jaish-ul-Adl to justify this incident. Seeing Pakistan's reaction, Iran realized its wrong and foolish action.

Matter of fact remains that the organization namely Jaish-ul-Adl, is being run by the IRGC itself. Now they want to get rid of this problem, that's why a false statement was issued from Jaish-ul-Adl again that these rockets went across the border by mistake and actually the target was Jaish al-Adl camp inside Sistan, Iran.

It is very ridiculous that a terrorist organization itself is giving explanations for rockets fired by the IRGC, accidentally crossing the border. This clearly shows that the accounts attributed to Jaish-ul-Adl are being operated by IRGC and Iranian intelligence itself. While on the other hand, there is great anger in Pakistan over this action by Iran.

It is also a reality that the banned militant organizations including Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) and Baloch Liberation Front (BLF) have camps inside Iran. The world knows that the Indian spy Kaloboshan Yadav had also been operating from Iran. This unprovoked airspace violation of Pakistan by Iran is a great mistake and no doubt, this incident can never be ignored. As a result of this action, the entire Pakistani nation is now demanding a strong and similar response from the state. Pakistan reserves the right to respond in any way. Foreign office has summoned the Iranian Charge d'affaires and a strong protest has been recorded. The announcement for Iranian ambassador not to return and the recalling of the Pakistani ambassador from Iran came as a very strong response from Pakistan. Even before this incident, infiltration and terrorist activities took place from the territory of Iran. In January 2023, in Panjur District, four security personnel were martyred in terrorist activities from inside the Iranian border, while in April 2023, terrorists from Iranian territory attacked Pakistani forces in Kech. It is worth mentioning here that Iran's security agencies are not on the same page due to which the Iranian government is facing serious challenges at the diplomatic level.

Ready to shift?



Touqir Hussain

Nearly three years have passed since the announcement regarding Pakistan's pivot from geopolitics to geo-economics. So far, this policy shift has proved nothing more than rhetoric.

A country's geopolitical value signifies its relevance in international relations beyond its own region, especially its capability as an ally or partner in Great Power rivalry. The country has a place in geo-economics if, by virtue of its geopolitical location, infrastructure, or resources, it can play a meaningful role in the global economy — perhaps as a manufacturing base or a link in supply chains. Or it could be a source of energy, or serve as a hub for transit trade or energy flows. Pakistan is relevant to both geopolitics and geo-economics. But its policy planners should ask themselves if they really have to choose between the two. Or whether such choice is indeed possible. Also, is geopolitics the problem and geo-economics the solution to Pakistan's economic woes? The truth is, Pakistan did not prioritise its people's socioeconomic well-being. Its governance model preferred the elite over the people, security over development, dependence over self-reliance, and status quo over progress. The system is now damaging more than the economy. Pakistan may be eligible for geo-economics but is not yet qualified for it.

Geopolitics is only partly to blame. It remains important to Pakistan's foreign policy, though the extent of its relevance has

changed. Situated between South Asia, Central Asia, Iran and the Middle East, and living in the strategic shadow of China and Russia, Pakistan has geopolitical salience, putting it at the crossroads of geopolitical rivalries and ambitions it can take advantage of. But geopolitics can only be an asset if Pakistan is stable. For an unstable country, it is a liability and poses risks. For instance, if a big power loses, its ally loses too, as has happened to Pakistan in America's wars.

Washington's war aims have always been different from Pakistan's, and its strategy often flawed. If the pivot to geo-economics means Pakistan would no longer be part of such high-risk geopolitics, this is to be welcomed. America's wars also incited Pakistan's own geostrategic ambitions, that brought it as much harm as did US policies. If Pakistan has relinquished this policy, it is a good step.

Geopolitics remains a guiding principle for US-Pakistan ties except that it now provokes conflict in the context of US-China rivalry. Pakistan is seen as advancing China's geopolitical aims. It will have to reach some understanding with Washington on strategic and security issues, otherwise these will keep colliding with prospects of cooperation with the US, a crucial economic partner, and thus limit Pakistan's geo-economic role. Even in the Gulf countries, Pakistan's traditional friends, economics now beats to the rhythm of geopolitics as these states navigate between the US-Europe-India axis and China's geopolitical outreach. Geopolitics will figure in Pakistan's relations with them, too. Pakistan must rethink not only geopolitics but also geo-economics. The fact is, its real value in geo-economics won't be evident until Afghanistan stabilises, ties with India improve, and it becomes a hub for pipelines and trade with Central Asia. However, given its structural economic weaknesses, poor governance, and lack of political stability, Pakistan's economy is not quite prepared for geo-economics. The change will not come easily, as there is a clash between elite interests and sound economic policies.

Pakistan's poor economic policies have been a way to safeguard its elite-led system. Policies, especially those related to taxes, subsidies, tariff--s, and exports, were designed so as not to lead to the erosion of the social structure that maintains the feudal system, or collide with the financial interests of the business/industrial elite, not to mention the extraordinary allocation of resources to the defence sector. The system must reform. Pakistan must be able to improve the economy on the margins without systemic changes, and have a higher growth rate. But what good is the growth rate if it makes little difference to poverty, social indicators and human security? A population with poor education and healthcare is hardly producing economically. Martin Raiser, World Bank regional vice president for South Asia, recently spoke of Pakistan's "poor human development outcomes and increasing poverty", and underlined the necessity of addressing the "acute human capital crisis". Pakistan cannot abandon or escape geopolitics. And geo-economics will remain beyond its grasp if it fails to make the necessary reforms. The alternative: Pakistan will be stuck where it is, at best. -- Courtesy Dawn

Lenin's legacy



Mahir Ali

An intriguing triptych included in Iqbal's second volume of verse, Baal-i-Jibreel, envisages Vladimir Lenin in the presence of God, explaining why the state of the world prompted his disbelief and wondering when divine intervention would rectify global ills. In rhythmic verse, the angels sent to investigate report back, corroborating the Russian revolutionary's narrative.

In the last and best known of the three poems, the angels are commanded to investigate the overthrow of the existing order, kicking off with a verse that echoes The Internationale — in Victor Kiernan's translation, "Rise, and from their slumber wake the poor ones of my world! Shake the walls and windows of the mansions of the great..."

That's a reflection of the extent to which the Russian upheavals of 1917 affected the rest of the world, not least the vast expanse of the colonised Global South. The direction Russia took towards the end of World War I inspired shock and awe. The overthrow of the tsar and the prospect of replacing absolutism with bourgeois democracy was dramatic enough, but by the time Lenin returned in April from his exile in Switzerland, he realised the meagre gains were unsustainable.

Even some of Lenin's closest comrades were taken aback by his enthusiasm for a takeover, but the pros-

pect of 'all power to the soviets' — the elected bodies of workers', soldiers' and eventually peasants' representatives that shared power with the post-tsarist government — and the promise of land, bread and peace — resonated with the proletariat of Petrograd (as St Petersburg had been renamed to banish the German influence).

The takeover was eventually almost painless, but the survival of the new regime was unlikely. The tsarist White Army, assisted by American, French and British forces (among others), joined hands to bury the Bolsheviks. But a late recruit to the Bolshevik cause, Leon Trotsky, turned out to be a formidable commander despite his military inexperience and, after much death and destruction on both sides, the nascent Red Army ultimately triumphed.

The Russia that emerged from this maelstrom was a far cry from what Lenin had envisaged, and he set about trying to rectify its wayward course. And he made no secret of it. Laid low by an assassination attempt in 1918 and subsequently stricken by strokes that led to bouts of paralysis, Lenin was just about well enough to speak at the fourth congress of the Communist International in November 1922, in what turned out to be his last public speech, acknowledging that "we have done, and will still do, a host of foolish things". He knew by then that his days were numbered, but from his sick bed later that year he still sought to alter the revolution's trajectory with a series of dictated notes that focused on reorganising both the Communist Party and the economy, banishing the tsarist bureaucracy that had survived the

revolution, and sidelining Joseph Stalin, who had acquired too much power within the party and could not be trusted to use it wisely. He obviously could not have known at that stage that Stalin's absolute power would lead in the 1930s to the execution of Lenin's closest comrades. The common misperception shared by both friends and foes of the transformative Bolshevik endeavour is that Stalinism flowed seamlessly out of Leninism. There can be little doubt, though, that the Soviet Union would have emerged as a rather different entity if Lenin had survived for another decade, or been succeeded by a collective leadership. Lenin was adamant that accession to the USSR must be voluntary. It didn't quite work out that way, but the relatively peaceful dissolution of the Soviet Union nearly seven decades later testified to his reluctant opposition to the 'great Russian chauvinism', epitomised by Vladimir Putin's stupid invasion of Ukraine. Mikhail Gorbachev remained an admirer of Lenin, and his glasnost and perestroika in the 1980s-1990s were partly echoes of what Lenin sought to achieve in the 1920s.

Even the most strident enemies of Bolshevism acknowledged that Lenin's death on Jan 21, 1924, stripped the Soviet Union of an invaluable guide. The worship of Lenin thereafter, with little understanding of what he stood for, was a travesty he would have detested. Notwithstanding the USSR's fate, if a different world is to emerge in the 21st century, the triumphs and tragedies that embellished or thwarted Lenin's audacious project cannot be ignored. -- Courtesy Dawn

Commerce News

PM Kakar for equitable chances to all to benefit from modern technology

DAVOS (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Wednesday called for providing equitable opportunities to all nations and regions to grab the fruits of modern technology. Speaking at a forum titled "Trade Tech's Trillion-Dollar Promise" on the sidelines of the 54th annual meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF), the prime minister said utilizing the state of the art technology was vital to achieve the targets of fast development.

Stressing the need to ensure equitable opportunities to all to secure the technology, the prime minister said equitable opportunities was key to ensure

sustainable global development. Keeping in view the development of technology, PM Kakar maintained that the digital economy would attain more importance in the days to come. He said every region of the world should be benefited from the development being made in the technology sector.

As regards the issues of trade and business, he said the private sector should be encouraged to boost investment. Further he added that the private sector should take a lead to help the government resolving the challenges of trade and business. "The government do think in a

different way and manner when it approaches towards challenges of trade and business, while the private entities and the business people have different opinion," he said adding the private entities should become the opinion maker and influencing and contributing more towards it. Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar ul Haq Kakar held a meeting with Chief Executive Officer of CocaCola Company, James Quincey on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos today.

In the meeting, the Prime Minister highlighted the steps taken by the government to facilitate business and investment in Pakistan.



LAHORE: Regional Chairman PFCII Zaki Ejaz in a group photo with participants during round table discussion on packaging sector in his visit to Regional Office Lahore.

Pakistan secures second LNG cargo from SOCAR

ISLAMABAD (APP): The government on Wednesday announced securing the second LNG cargo from the State Oil Company of the Azerbaijan Republic (SOCAR) under the Government-to-Government Framework Agreement between Pakistan LNG Limited (PLL) and SOCAR. "The cargo is scheduled for delivery in February 2024, further

strengthening the energy partnership between Pakistan and Azerbaijan" the Ministry of Petroleum said in a news release. PLL and SOCAR signed a landmark Framework Agreement under the Government-to-Government arrangement, marking a significant milestone in the bilateral energy cooperation between the two countries.

FBR denies reports of protest by IRS officers

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) on Wednesday has rebutted the baseless news circulating in certain sections of the media regarding a planned protest by IRS officers. According to the FBR's official Twitter handle, the FBR clarified that no such protest was taking place and assured that its offices would continue to function as per routine.

Senate body seeks details of budget, following austerity measures

Independent Report
ISLAMABAD: The Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Revenue on Wednesday directed the Finance Division to provide details of the budget saved following the issuance of austerity measures notification, issued by the Finance Division. The Secretary of the Finance Division stated that the Government was complying with austerity measures, resulting in government spending for the current fiscal year, staying within the budget.

A meeting of the Committee was held at Parliament House on Wednesday with Senator Saleem Mandviwalla in the Chair. The Senate deliberated on the Bill titled "State Owned Enterprises (Governance and Operations) (Amendment) Bill, 2023." Senator Bahramand Khan Tangi, the bill's mover, stated that the primary objective was to restrain the Board of Directors and Chief Executive Officers of the state owned enterprises from using company assets for political and monetary purposes, proposing disqualification for such actions.

FPCCI seeks industry status for packaging sector

Independent Report
LAHORE: Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) Regional Chairman and Vice President Zaki Ajiz on Wednesday demanded the government grant industry status to the packaging sector. He expressed these views while addressing the FPCCI's Round Table Discussion on the 'Packaging sector: 'Challenges and opportunities', here at FPCCI Regional Office. Managing Director and CEO of Packages Limited, Syed

Hyder Ali, Director & CEO of Century Paper & Board Mills Limited Aftab Ahmed, Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) Vice President Adnan Khalid Butt, Chairman Pakistan Association of Printing And Graphic Arts Industry Saad Haleem Khan, Senior Vice Chairman of All Pakistan Corrugated Cartons Manufacturers Association (APCCMA) Khawaja Tariq Mehmood, Chairman of Flexible Packaging Association of Converters of Pakistan Mujahid Ali Shaikh,



CEO of CocaCola Company, James Quincey calls on Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Shipping activity reported at the Port where three ships namely, MSC United VII, High Challenge and Poly World carrying containers, palm oil and coal, berthed at container Terminal, Liquid Terminal and Bulk Cargo Terminal respectively on Tuesday 16th January, 2024. Meanwhile another containership 'Maersk Cape Town' also arrived at outer-anchorage of the Port Qasim on today January 17th, 2024.

Gold rates down by Rs.3,600

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold decreased by Rs.3,600 and was sold at Rs.213,700 on Wednesday compared to its sale at Rs.217,300 on last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs.3,087 to Rs.183,213 from Rs.186,300 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold went down to Rs.167,945 from Rs.170,775 the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported. The price of per tola silver decreased by Rs.50 to Rs.2,600 whereas that of ten gram silver declined by Rs.42.86 to Rs.2,229.08.

Dr Saif says: ICT exports increased by 22.67% in Dec 2023

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Dr Umar Saif on Wednesday said that the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) export remittances had increased by 22.67 percent in the month of December 2023. A total of \$303 million ITC exports proceeds were received in December, following a 13% increase in November 2023, the minister said in statement. Dr Umar Saif said that facilitative measures, such as allowing to retain 50%



DOHA: SAPM, Jawad Sohrab Malik meets Dr. Ali bin Samikh Al Marri, Labour Minister of the State of Qatar.

Punjab Green wheels program to provide E-bikes, E-rickshaws

Independent Report
LAHORE: Caretaker provincial minister for transport of Punjab Ibrahim Hasan Murad on Wednesday marked a pivotal moment in Punjab's history by integrating 26,000 electric vehicles into its urban fabric.

Talking to a private news channel, he said the initiative caters to students, low-income citizens, women, and people with disabilities. Through this program, the government has decided to give the university students 10,000 electric bikes on a subsidy, he added. He said, "Punjab's commitment to sustainable transportation is not just a step forward; it's a leap into a greener, cleaner future."

The minister said that another historic milestone was achieved with the issuance of electric vehicle (EV) licenses for the first time in Pakistan.

Naqvi visits Ring Road Southern Loop-3 project, inspects construction work

Independent Report
LAHORE: Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi paid a detailed visit to the Lahore Ring Road Southern Loop 3-project, here on Wednesday.

He inspected the 8-km long whole route from Maraka Multan Road up to Adda Plot and reviewed asphalt laying work and shook hands with the labourers. Mohsin Naqvi also checked the temperature of asphalt along with construction of the walls. He while ordering to expedite asphalt laying work directed to increase the resources so that the project could be completed within the stipulated time frame.

"The support of the whole Punjab government's team stands with you," the CM said that hopefully, this project would be completed at the earliest. Mohsin Naqvi in order to accelerate pace of work on the project, issued directions to the Provincial Minister Bilal Afzal and Secretary Communication & Works in this regard. He inspected ongoing construction activities on the project. FWO officials gave a briefing about progress being made on the project.

The CM underscored that people would be provided excellent transportation facilities with the completion of Ring Road Southern Loop-3 Project, adding that 8-km long Southern Loop-3 project would be opened for traffic soon. It was informed during the briefing that 6 out of 8 main structures have been completed while 20 small structures have also been completed. Approximately, 70 per cent work of the project has been completed. Provincial ministers Azfar Ali Nasir, Bilal Afzal, Secretary C&W, Commissioner Lahore/DG LDA, Chairman Lahore Ring Road Authority, MD NESPAK, Project Director LESCO and FWO officials were also present.



LAHORE: Special Assistant to Prime Minister and Chairman Pakistan Ulema-e-Islam Council, Allama Tahir Ashrafi is presenting shield to Saudi Arabia's ambassador Noor Al Lamki during Haramain al-Shareefain conference at local hotel.

Govt making efforts to facilitate pilgrims: Tahir Ashrafi

LAHORE (APP): Special Representative to the Prime Minister on Interfaith Harmony and Middle East Hafiz Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi said on Wednesday the government was making efforts to provide optimal facilities to prospective pilgrims.

Addressing the Tazeeq-e-Haramain Al-Sharifain Conference, organised by Hajj Organisers Association of Pakistan (HOAP) Punjab zone, at a hotel here, he said Saudi Arabia was dedicated to enhancing facilities for the Hajj and Umrah pilgrims.

He said that an effective system had been put in place to ensure effective monitoring of facilities to be provided to Hajj pilgrims. Under the system, Hajj pilgrims' complaints would be resolved speedily. Ashrafi, who is also the chairman of Pakistan Ulema Council, said the relationship between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia is strong.

UAE artificial rain experts calls on CM

LAHORE (APP): Members of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) team, who orchestrated artificial rainfall in Lahore recently, called on Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi at his office on Wednesday. The CM greeted the team members, expressing gratitude individually during the meeting.

Among those present were Ahmed Al Kamal, Head of Cloud Seeding for the UAE NCM Team, Pilot Col. Obaid Halaf, Pilot Michael Anstis, Head of Cloud Seeding Department Abdullah Al Haman, Arnold Ningala and Verglottedoloto.

KP CM chairs meeting to discuss traffic issues of Abbottabad

PESHAWAR (APP): Chief Caretaker of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah on Wednesday chaired a meeting to discuss traffic issues of divisional headquarter Abbottabad.

Spokesperson to Chief Minister Brigadier (R) Syed Mujtaba Tirmizi and high ups of the transport department and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Urban Mobility Authority (KPUMA) attended the meeting.

The meeting was briefed about the proposed Urban Mobility Plan for Abbottabad and, it was told that under the Urban Transport Package-II, consultancy services are under process to develop Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMPS) for three major cities of the province including Peshawar, Abbottabad and Mingora.

Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMPS) will have concept designs of priority urban mobility projects for aforementioned cities. The participants were also informed about different options for Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service in Abbottabad on the model of BRT project of Peshawar.



LARKANA: Women and girls on the way back to their homes after filling water in pots.

QWP flays social media campaign against SC

PESHAWAR (APP): Election Commission of Pakistan about the intra-party election of the PTI was based on merit and in accordance with the law. However, he expressed resentment over the launching of the smear campaign against the judges of the Supreme Court.

Addressing a gathering at Mandani area in Charsadda district, he said the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) lost its electoral symbol bat due to its own follies. He said that PTI founding chairman Imran Khan was responsible for the situation his party was facing.

The QWP chief said that the recent decision of the Supreme Court upholding the ruling of the

country was already facing a host of issues and it could not afford confrontation and unrest. Aftab Sherpao said that some elements were out to create disturbance for their vested interests.

The QWP leader said that holding a free, fair and transparent election was the only way to take the country towards economic and political stability.



PESHAWAR: Peoples Party (PPP) Leader, Asma Alamgir along with Syed Zahir Ali Shah and others addressing a press conference, in Peshawar.

Govt to start rehabilitation center for women drug addicts soon

Independent Report
PESHAWAR: Provincial Caretaker Minister for Social Welfare, Justice Retired Irshad Qaisar has said that very soon government would start a rehabilitation center in Peshawar for women drug addicts.

Secretary Social Welfare Farooq Khan, Senior Planning Officer and the relevant officials of the department.

Secretary Social Welfare Anela Durrani participated in the meeting through video link.

The minister said that the facility would be first government level rehabilitation center where only women suffering from drug abuse would be rehabilitated and treated.

ACS South Punjab visits BVH to inspect ongoing work

BAHAWALPUR (APP): Additional Chief Secretary South Punjab Captain (ret) Saqib Zafar visited the under-construction Outdoor Department of Bahawal Victoria Hospital.

He inspected the ongoing upgradation works in various wards of the hospital. Secretary of Communication and Works South Punjab Jawad Akram was also present with him.

He inspected the revamping and renovation work of the outdoor department of Bahawal Victoria Hospital. He directed that officers of the Buildings Department should complete the construction works within a specific period. Secretary Communication and Works Department Jawad Akram briefed ACS South Punjab about the degradation work.

He said that various wards including TB Ward, Medical Ward, Surgery Ward, Emergency Block, and Old CCU are being renovated. He informed ACS about the details of ongoing construction works in CU and other wards.

KP HCIP conducts workshop to upgrade primary healthcare services

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Human Capital Investment Project (KP HCIP) Health Department here Wednesday conducted a day long workshop to upgrade Primary Healthcare Services (PHS) in selected districts of the province. The workshop focused on the assessment of stakeholder needs for development of training modules improving the availability, utilization and quality of healthcare services. The workshop aimed to gather crucial information about existing training manuals or modules, evaluating their strengths and weaknesses, aligning them with on-ground needs and identifying potential improvements in a clear and concise manner.

Advisor to Caretaker Chief Minister for Health, Dr. Riaz Anwar commended KP HCIP and said that the initiative would play pivotal role in fostering positive changes within the health system.

International News

Cease fire in Gaza or risk 'greater war', warns UN chief

Monitoring Desk
UNITED NATIONS: UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres has emphasised the urgent need for a humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza after more than 100 days of escalating violence.

"Tamp down the flames of wider war because the longer the conflict in Gaza continues, the greater the risk of escalation and miscalculation," he warned in a statement issued on Monday evening.

He stated that "an immediate humanitarian ceasefire" was necessary to ensure an uninterrupted supply of emergency aid and to facilitate the release of prisoners.

Guterres noted that the onslaught on Gaza by Israeli forces over these 100 days "has unleashed wholesale destruction and levels of civilian killings at a rate that is unprecedented during my years as Secretary General".

He pointed out that "the vast majority of those killed are women and children, adding that "nothing can justify the collective punishment of the Palestinian people".

Stressing the need to end the hostilities, he said: "The humanitarian situation in Gaza is beyond words. Nowhere and no one is safe."

Guterres expressed serious concern about the daily exchanges of fire across the Blue Line as well, warning of potential broader escalation affecting regional stability. "Stop playing with fire across the Blue Line, de-escalate, and bring hostilities to an end in accordance with (relevant) Security Council resolutions," he said.

The Blue Line refers to the border demarcation between Israel and Lebanon, established by the United Nations in 2000 following the withdrawal of Israeli forces from southern Lebanon. Earlier this month, Israel carried out a drone strike across the Blue Line to kill Hamas's deputy chief Saleh Al Arouri, leading to regular clashes across the border.



UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres attends the 54th annual meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

Nazis, no thank you'; Germans take to streets to call for AfD ban

BERLIN/COLOGNE (Internews): Protests against the far-right Alternative for Germany party are gaining momentum in the wake of a report that two senior party members joined a meeting to discuss plans for the mass deportation of citizens of foreign origin.

While the party has long railed against immigrants, the proposals for "unassimilated citizens" to be deported to "a model state in North Africa," reported by outlet Corrective, has struck a nerve in Germany. Some have compared them to the Nazis' initial plan to deport European Jews to Madagascar.

The line has long since been crossed," protester Stephan Kalsh said at a demonstration in Cologne on Tuesday evening, where many protesters called for the party to be banned.

It was the latest in a wave of protests around the country that have attracted tens of thousands since the story broke last week. Some have been attended by high-ranking officials like Chancellor Olaf Scholz and Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock.

The AfD, which is polling second in nationwide surveys, has denied the plans are party policy. Co-leader Alice Weidel parted ways with one of her advisers who participated in the talks.

Still, Germany's domestic spy chief Thomas Haldenwang has warned of extremist movements within the AfD, which is under security surveillance.

The reports of the plans have drawn widespread condemnation from political and security leaders. Scholz urged democrats to stand against far-right "fanatics" while Haldenwang called for the "silent majority" to wake up.

Chinese PM sees trade barriers as a threat to global economy

Monitoring Desk
DAVOS: Chinese Prime Minister Li Qiang told the world's political and business elites in Davos on Tuesday that "discriminatory" trade barriers were a threat to the global economy, in a not-so-subtle dig at the United States.

Li's remarks came as the World Economic Forum's (WEF) 54th annual conference is preoccupied with a slew of global risks, including war in Ukraine and bombardment in Gaza, climate change and the rapid rise of artificial intelligence.

Li shared the spotlight with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy, who attended the forum in person for the first time in an effort to maintain military support from Kyiv's allies after nearly two years of war with Russia.

Li spoke just days after a tense presidential election in Taiwan, the democratic island that Beijing claims as part of China.

But the most senior Chinese official to attend the WEF since 2017.

UK PM Sunak faces major test in showdown over Rwanda asylum plan

LONDON (Internews): British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak faces a major parliamentary showdown on Wednesday over his plan to send asylum seekers to Rwanda, with many of his own lawmakers threatening to rebel after they lost an initial bid to toughen his proposed law.

The government comfortably defeated attempts to strengthen the bill late on Tuesday that had been backed by almost a fifth of lawmakers from Sunak's Conservative Party in what was the biggest rebellion yet against the British prime minister.

Iraq recalls envoy from Iran after missile strike

Monitoring Desk
DUBAI: An Iranian missile strike on targets in northern Iraq set off an unusual dispute between the neighbouring allies on Tuesday, with Baghdad recalling its ambassador in protest and Tehran insisting the attack was intended to deter threats from Israeli spies.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards said they had hit an Israeli espionage centre in Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdistan region, while the elite force said they also struck in Syria against the militant Islamic State group. The strike appeared likely to deepen worries about worsening instability across the Middle East, with Iran's allies also entering the fray from Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Yemen.

There has also been concern that Iraq could again become a theatre for regional conflict after a series of US strikes on alleged Iran-linked groups. Those strikes came in response to "dozens of attacks" on US forces in the region since Oct 7. The Guards said the late Monday attack, Iran's first direct military strike in the region linked to the Gaza crisis.

Muslim youth stabbed to death in Delhi

NEW DELHI (INP): A 19-year-old Muslim youth was stabbed to death by three individuals in New Delhi.

The incident took place in the Jamia Masjid area of the Indian capital.

The deceased was identified as Armaan alias Kasim, a resident of Loni area of Ghaziabad city of the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh.

As per reports, the deceased and his father used to work as street vendors in Meena Bazar area of New Delhi.

Trump attends rape defamation case in New York

NEW YORK (INP): Donald Trump went straight from his victory in the Republican Iowa caucuses to a New York courtroom Tuesday for the start of a defamation trial brought by writer E. Jean Carroll after an earlier jury found he had sexually assaulted her in the 1990s.

In court, the former US president did not make any statements, and he and Carroll avoided looking at each other while jurors were being selected, according to reporters allowed inside the courtroom.

But Trump continued attacking Carroll on his Truth Social platform, reposting a clip from an interview she gave to CNN and writing, "Can you believe I have to defend myself against this woman's fake story?!"

Addressing supporters at a rally in New Hampshire later in the day, Trump said he planned to attend daily court proceedings in the "phony" case in New York over the next several days, while continuing campaigning. "Early in the morning I go to a Biden witch hunt," Trump said in the northeastern state, which will hold the nation's second presidential nomination contest next Tuesday. "And then I come here in the afternoon, and I stop, we make speeches and we get the votes."

The shocking defamation case, which would likely once have been enough to wreck any politician's career, has had no visible impact on Trump's bid to retake the White House—and if anything is boosting his standing with his party's right wing. Carroll, 80, is seeking more than \$10 million in damages in the civil trial.



Chinese Premier Li Qiang and Ireland's Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar meet at Farnleigh House, in Phoenix Park, Dublin, Ireland.

Russia is developing ties with North Korea in all areas: Kremlin

MOSCOW (Internews): Russia is developing its relations with North Korea in all areas, including "sensitive" ones, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Wednesday.

North Korea's foreign minister lauded comradeship ties with Russia on Tuesday and then held rare talks in the Kremlin with President Vladimir Putin, who has been invited by Kim Jong Un to visit the reclusive nuclear-armed country.

Asked about the talks in Moscow, Peskov said the situation on the Korean peninsula was discussed, but that the main focus was on developing bilateral relations.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea is our very important partner, and we are focused on the further development of our relations in all areas, including in sensitive areas," Peskov told reporters.

Lithuania found guilty in CIA torture case

Monitoring Desk
STRASBOURG: The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) on Tuesday condemned Lithuania over the torture of a Saudi man in a secret CIA prison, the second case to target the Baltic nation.

Judges found that Lithuania had violated several provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights, which it upholds, especially articles 2 (right to life) and 3 (prohibition of inhuman or degrading treatment), the court said.

Lithuania must also pay Mustafa Al Hawasvi 100,000 euros (\$109,000) in damages for "blinding" or hooding, solitary confinement, the continuous use of leg shackles, and exposure to noise and light."

Such techniques were "standard CIA practice under the secret detainee programme at the time", although not "the harshest" applied in Lithuania, the court added. Al Hawasvi, born in 1968, was captured in Pakistan in 2003 and suspected by US authorities of involvement in the Sept 11.

PM says: Pakistan needs to be more competitive, attractive to benefit from industrialisation

DAVOS (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Wednesday said that Pakistan needed to be more competitive and attractive to facilitate the journey of industrialisation in the region.

The prime minister, addressing an event titled "20th Pakistan Breakfast at Davos 2024" held by Pathfinders Group on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum, said a trading activity of around \$336 trillion trade was happening in China, and GCC countries were also entering into the manufacturing industry. He said China had acquired the transformation stage to relocate some of its industry and Pakistan could be one of those destinations.

Similarly, the GCC countries were rich with capital but had geographical disadvantages with the options of either importing the manpower or taking their capital to countries

with a conducive environment and cheap energy and labour.

He told the gathering of intellectuals, writers and representatives of welfare organisations, that Pakistan was a unique place owing to its diversified culture, geography and topography with the eight highest peaks, deserts of Thar and Balochistan and the plains of Punjab. Calling human resources the biggest asset of Pakistan, he said 60 percent of its 240 million population was under 30 years of age which meant whole of energy and required direction.

Highlighting the achievements of his government, Prime Minister Kakar said the governance structure was improving and that the government would leave behind a blueprint for the next government enabling it to respond to the challenges. "I am quite sanguine that people are feeling a deep sense of

positivity," he said and mentioned the structural changes and revamping of the taxation system.

He said "spend less on government and earn more" were the two lessons or takeaways of the incumbent government which was also facilitating the private sector to earn money and pay taxes.

Referring to Pakistan's ideal geographical situation, he said the whole of Central Asia was looking to have connectivity through Pakistan which had the highest population in the ECO region.

The prime minister also gave a historical background of Pakistan's identity rooted in centuries-old civilizations, diversified culture and languages and said that Pakistan was not a story of a specific religion but a way broader than that with its own ambiance, colors, and cuisines.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination, Dr. Nadeem Jan witnesses the grant signing ceremony between Pakistan and Japan to support Pakistan's Polio Programme.

Bilawal condemns attack on PPP candidate's house in Turbat

KARACHI (INP): Pakistan People's Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari strongly condemned the grenade attack on the house of the party's candidate, contesting the general election from Turbat, Balochistan.

Asghar Rind is contesting elections for the provincial assembly seat in the Kech district of Balochistan.

Unknown men attacked PPP leader Mir Asghar Rind's house in Turbat with hand grenade.

The brother of Asghar Rind was injured in the attack, while the outlaws es-

caped unhurt from the spot. The injured brother of the PPP leader was rushed to the hospital for medical treatment.

Following the hand grenade attack on Mr Rind's residence, law enforcement agencies initiated a search operation in the area. No group has claimed responsibility for the assault on Mr Rind's home.

The PPP chairman strongly denounced the attack and demanded that Balochistan's caretaker government take action. He also prayed for early recovery of Asghar Rind's injured brother.

Fake news - a biggest threat to democracy & journalism: Solangi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Wednesday said that the fake news had become the biggest threat to democracy and journalism.

Highlighting the issue of fake news, disinformation and misinformation on the social media platform 'X', the minister referred to the doctor notifications and statements of institutions being circulated on social media regarding elections.

Condemning a fake press release issued in the name of the Election Commission of Pakistan, he said such unethical moves were on the rise as the date of elections was nearing.

"Today, a fake directive was forged and circulated in the name of Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister.

Nawaz Sharif decides to launch election campaign from today

LAHORE (Online): PML-N Quaid Nawaz Sharif has decided to launch election campaign from January 18 (today) in connection with general election.

According to sources Nawaz Sharif at the start of his election campaign will address the public meeting in Hafizabad. He will come up in the field with election narrative comprising economic road map.

Maryum Nawaz too will address the public meeting.

Earlier Maryum Nawaz has launched election campaign. She attended the public meeting held in Okara a day before. A day before Maryum Nawaz participated in public gathering held in her electoral constituency PP-159.

YouTuber faces 5-year prison term in blackmail case

KARACHI (INP): The owner of a YouTube channel has been handed a harsh sentence by the Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) for engaging in blackmail against a clinic owner and reporter.

The court delivered its verdict in a case related to blackmail and extortion for monetary gains through a clinic's YouTube channel. The Anti-Terrorism Court found the YouTube channel's reporter and owner guilty in the case of blackmail and extortion. The channel owner, Muzammil Aslam Munga, and reporter Wasim Abbas Hashmi have been sentenced to five years in prison each.

Additionally, the court imposed a fine of ten thousand rupees on both accused individuals. Despite being granted bail, both offenders have been taken into custody and sent to jail.

Arif Solangi, the clinic owner, had filed a case

Two criminals injured, held after fire exchange

KARACHI (INP): Two criminals were injured and held with arms and motorcycle after exchange of fire here on Wednesday.

The police engaged a two-member criminal gang and an exchange of fire took place near Aatta Chowk in PIB Colony of Karachi.

In cross firing, both criminals including Anas and Husnain were injured and held.

The police recovered arms and motorcycle from possession of the detainees and they were shifted to hospital.

First Lady calls for universal access to assistive technology

DAVOS (APP): First Lady Begum Samina Alvi on Wednesday called for ensuring universal access to assistive technology for persons with disabilities, the aging population and those suffering from non-communicable diseases.

The first lady, in her keynote address at an event themed "Unlock the Every Day: advancing the SDGs through the power of Assistive Technology" on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum 2024, urged global leaders to prioritize the integration of assistive technology in their national plans and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) strategies.

"Unlock the Every Day" is the first-ever global campaign on assistive technology (AT) that has been launched to raise awareness about everyone's right to AT such as wheelchairs, glasses, hearing aids, prostheses and digital devices regardless of their geographic and socio-economic background.

The event, organized by Devex and ATScale at the SDG Tent in Davos, was attended by high-level leaders specializing in disability inclusion, technology and impact investment, and aimed to explore the transformative power of AT in revolutionizing the lives of millions of people who have special needs.



DAVOS: First Lady Begum Samina Alvi speaking at an event themed "Unlock the Every Day: advancing the SDGs through the power of Assistive Technology" on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum 2024.

Commissioner directs DCs to monitor prices of commodities

HYDERABAD (APP): Divisional Commissioner Hyderabad Syed Khalid Hyder Shah has directed all Deputy Commissioners to pay surprise visits of markets and control prices of daily use items and take strict action against profiteers besides seal their shops and impose fine.

He issued these directives while chairing a meeting to control prices of daily use items and ensuring sale of commodities at government fixed rates.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Commissioner Tariq Qureshi, Deputy Director Planning and Development Hyderabad Sanaullah Rind and other officers while other Deputy Commissioners participated through video link.

Commissioner warned that no trader would be allowed to plunder poor people through artificial price hike and strict action would be taken against profiteers and for this checking of lists of daily use items displayed in shops should be ensured on daily basis in district and raids to be conducted in markets.

He also instructed all DCs to visit at least five health centers and schools in their jurisdiction and review availability of facilities being provided in the centers and highlight laxity.

Commissioner Sukkur visits SRSO complex

SUKKUR (APP): The Divisional Commissioner Sukkur, Fayyaz Hussain Abbasi visited the Sindh Rural Support Organization (SRSO), complex here on Wednesday.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO), SRSO, Muhammad Dittal Kalhoro welcomed the Divisional Commissioner and gave a briefing on the organization and its various ongoing programs and projects during a meeting with all sector heads.

On the occasion, the CEO of the SRSO shared his organization's approach and highlighted interventions made at the community level for financial, social, and economic empowerment of rural communities through small entrepreneurship with a women-led household-based approach.

Talked about, the Union Council-Based Poverty Reduction Program (UCBPRP) of the Government of Sindh, Mr Kalhoro said that UCBPRP was a symbol in terms of service delivery to the poorest rural population through social mobilization to empower the local communities by socially and economically enabling them to improve their livelihood and increase their earnings through Income Generating Grants (IGG) and Community Fund as was given as an interest-free loan under this program.



HYDERABAD: Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM-P) Leader, Dr. Irfan Gill Magi along with Waseem Hussain, Member Rabta Committee addressing a press conference, at Zonal Office in Hyderabad.

Tribal Chieftain Sardar Himmat Ali Khan Kamariyo passes away

SHIKARPUR: The tribal Chieftain Sardar Himmat Ali Khan Kamariyo Passed away yesterday night whose Nimaz-e-Janaza was held at Tarai on Wednesday.

The Sardar Himmat Ali Khan Kamariyo was laid down in peace with weight eyes in his ancestors graveyard. The large number of community men, family members and friends, Ex-Elected representatives and notables attended his Nimaz-e-Janaza and funeral ceremony at village Tarai.

The late Sardar Himmat Ali Khan Kamariyo was very familiar in holding Jirgas and prominent tribal Chieftain of the Province Sindh.



ISLAMABAD: Chief Election Commissioner, Mr. Sultan Raja, presiding over a meeting on General Elections at ECP Secretariat.

Sherry Rehman stresses timely electoral process, level playing field amid symbol allocation concerns

ISLAMABAD (Online): Senator Sherry Rehman, Vice-President of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), on Wednesday, reiterated her party's commitment to a timely electoral process for a seamless democratic transition and stressed that a level playing field in the polls can only be guaranteed once all PPP candidates receive their electoral symbols on time.

Senator Rehman's statements came in response to concerns raised by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) regarding potential delays in certain constituencies, as revealed in their announce-

ment on Tuesday. While ballot paper printing for the 2024 elections has commenced, apprehensions linger over possible polling delays due to numerous pleas for a change of election symbols in related constituencies.

Speaking to reporters, Senator Rehman said: "The PPP is the only party in the country that adopted a proactive approach to electioneering by launching its formal campaign on December 27, 2023, while Chairman Bilawal Bhutto and Aseefa Bhutto Zardari have been actively participating in campaign activities.

PCG seizes large quantity drugs

KARACHI (APP): The Pakistan Coast Guards (PCG) announced on Wednesday that they successfully confiscated a substantial amount of hashish in Pasni, Balochistan.

Acting on intelligence about potential large-scale drug smuggling in the region, the PCG initiated a search operation.

Under the direction of the area commander, mobile patrol units discovered and recovered 1755 kg of high-quality hashish hidden in the mountains of the Kolanch area.

The seized drugs were destined for international smuggling, with an estimated global market value of approximately \$29.28 million.

The Director General of Pakistan Coast Guards commended the diligent efforts and performance of PCG personnel.

Armed assailants kill petrol pump owner

HYDERABAD (APP): The armed motorcycle riders killed the owner of a petrol pump in the limits of Sakhri Pir police station on Wednesday. The attackers managed to escape after the incident.

According to the police spokesperson, the incident occurred near the Lohar Market and Memon Hospital, where armed assailants fired shots at Raheel Memon, the owner of the petrol pump, resulting in his tragic death. He informed that the deceased had an old dispute of boundary wall with the assailant Rashid Malah.

The police sources say that on Wednesday, both parties were returning from the court when Rashid Malah and an unidentified accomplice opened fire on Raheel Memon's car and escaped.

Cops kill dacoit during 'encounter' in Hyderabad

Hyderabad (INP): A robber was fatally shot dead by police in an encounter, while his partner managed to escape, in Doctor Colony on Wednesday.

The authorities were informed about two robbers intending to loot valuables and cash from residents in the colony.

On reaching the hideout of the criminals, they initiated gunfire against the cops. In response to which, the police reacted accordingly, and silenced the criminals' weapons.

After the encounter, police conducted a search operation in the area, discovering the dead body of the robber identified as Hashim.

Police revealed that the killed accused Hashim, had a criminal history and was wanted in connection of several terrible crimes.

Concerted efforts crucial for progress, prosperity of Pakistan: Shehbaz

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President Shehbaz Sharif has said that concerted efforts, coupled with viable policies, are inevitable to put the country on the road to progress and prosperity.

Talking to the media here on Wednesday, he said that 250 million people would use their right to vote wisely on February 8 and decide on the future of the country.

He said the PML-N had launched its election campaign vigorously and, under the able leadership of party Quaid Nawaz Sharif, all leaders would actively participate in the campaign. These election are very crucial in determining the fate and future of Pakistan, he said.

He recalled that in 2017, Pakistan was rapidly developing under the leadership of Nawaz Sharif, and day and night struggle had been made to end darkness from the country. Every sector of the country was progressing at that time, but the development process was halted.

He said that scholarships worth millions of rupees were distributed among students in the previous tenure of Nawaz Sharif. The PML-N saved the country from bankruptcy and brought about the economic stability.



TANDOALLAHYAR: Peoples Party (PPP) Leader, Aseefa Bhutto Zardari addresses during women convention in connection of General Election 2024 coming ahead, at Shahpur Rizvi Village in Tando Allahyar.



KARACHI (APP): The Consul General of the People's Republic of China in Karachi Yang Yundong has said that China had achieved high-quality development targets in the year 2023 with an estimated Gross Domestic Product of 5.2 percent.

Expediting the pace of work in game changer China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project, major achievements were also made and several high-profile projects were in the completion stage that would benefit the people of Pakistan, he said while addressing the ceremony for awarding certification of recognizing the contribution made by media Friends in Pakistan here at Karachi Consulate on Wednesday.

Yang Yundong said over the past year, China's economy had successfully withstood international risks and the downward pressure resulting from a combination of multiple domestic factors.



HYDERABAD: Police officials inspecting the site after assassination of Petrol Pump Owner, in Hyderabad.