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

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



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

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

Dosta alias Chairman, Bajjar alias Soghat, Sahil alias Shafaq, Asghar alias Basham and Wazir alias Wazi, amongst others.

Pakistan Armed Forces remain in a perpetual state of readiness to ensure safety of Pakistan citizens against acts of terrorism.

"Our resolve to ensure that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Pakistan is respected and safeguarded against any misadventure, remains unwavering. We reaffirm our determination to defeat all enemies of Pakistan with the support of the people of Pakistan," the ISPR said. It added that going forward, dialogue and cooperation were deemed prudent in resolving bilateral issues between the two neighbouring brotherly countries.



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

President says:

Pak will not compromise on its national security, territorial integrity

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Thursday said that Pakistan would not compromise on its national security and territorial integrity and would take all necessary measures to defend its soil. In a statement issued by the President House Press Wing, he lauded the

professionalism of the Armed Forces of Pakistan that targeted the terrorist hideouts in the Sistan-o-Baluchistan province of Iran, while avoiding civilian casualties.

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

"All the licensees are directed to avoid telecasting/breaking any unsubstantiated news on recent development surfaced between Pakistan and Iran," PEMRA said in a

letter addressed to all the licensees operating in "news & current affairs and regional languages". The Authority urged them to verify the related information from the relevant institutions before broadcasting or airing. "Licensees are expected to present factual information / reports through their transmission and support state narrative at this crucial time as and when released from the relevant institution," it added.



NAUSHAHRO FEROZE: Chairman Pakistan People's Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari addressing to public gathering during Election Campaign at Tharo Shah Bypass.

Pak desires to deepen bilateral engagement with Saudi Arabia: PM

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

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

cultural heritage and shared interests.

The two sides also reviewed regional developments. Prime Minister Kakar noted that close brotherly relations between the two countries were a factor in regional stability.

He said Pakistan desires to deepen bilateral engagement including through trade, investment and people-to-people exchanges.

Info Ministers says: Airspace violation by Iran under investigation

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

While speaking in a private television talk show, Murtaza Solangi said Pakistan would take appropriate measures while keeping the relevant interna-

tional laws in the view especially regarding the sovereignty of the state.

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

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



KARACHI: Caretaker Federal Minister of Religious Affairs & Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed addressing at seminar on Religious Minorities and Interfaith Social Tolerance in Pakistan at IQRA University.

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

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

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

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

Prophet Muhammad's (SAW)

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

While expressing condemnation on incidents like Jarantwala, he said that if anyone receives information about any act of blasphemy one must verify and report it to higher authorities instead of taking the law into hands and resorting to violence.

The Minister commended the role of Ulema for raising voices against the intolerable acts in society and uttered that the message of interfaith harmony should be disseminated through knowledge and evidence.

NSC meeting likely on Pakistan-Iran tension

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

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

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

The meeting will be attended by chiefs of Army, Navy and Air Force.

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

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

Solangi condoles with family of journalist Babar Ayaz

KARACHI (INP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi visited the residence of senior journalist Babar Ayaz on Thursday to condole his death with the bereaved family.

Expressing his heartfelt condolences to the family of Babar Ayaz, the minister recited Fataha for the departed soul.

While paying tribute to the deceased for his journalistic services, Murtaza Solangi said that Babar Ayaz was a sincere, peace-loving and eternal democratic person.

The journalistic services of Babar Ayaz would always be remembered, he added. The information minister prayed to Allah Almighty to rest the departed soul in eternal peace and grant courage to the bereaved family to bear this loss with fortitude.

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

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

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

"We will also build three million new houses for the poor and give them ownership rights," Bilawal said and added that the needy people will also get free electricity up to 300 units in the "Jiyala's government".

The PPP chairman assured he would fight against poverty, unemployment and inflation after coming into power. "I visited the whole world and brought UN Secretary General to Pakistan to show him how much Pakistan was damaged by the floods," Bilawal said.



LAHORE: Peoples Party Parliamentarians (PPPP) President, Asif Ali Zardari exchanging views with Sahibzada Abul Khair Muhammad Zubair, Chief of Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan (JUP) during meeting held at Bilawal House in Lahore.

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

WASHINGTON (INP): The United States has condemned Iran's recent attacks in Pakistan, Iraq and Syria, which Tehran said were carried out against "anti-Iranian terrorist groups". "So we do condemn those strikes. We've seen Iran violate the sovereign borders of three of its neighbors in just the past couple of days," State Department spokesman Matthew Miller told reporters during a briefing.

He further said, in response to a question, that the US always wanted to see peace and stability, "especially in this region, where it's been the focus of our diplomatic efforts since October 7".

Pakistan on Wednesday recalled its ambassador to Iran and blocked an Iranian envoy from returning to Islamabad after an airstrike in Balochistan killed two children. The raid took place late

on Tuesday following similar attacks in Iraq and Syria. Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Murtaza Zahra Baloch said the attack near the two countries' shared border was "unprovoked" and a violation of Pakistan's sovereignty. Iran's Mehr news agency announced that the "missile and drone attack" targeted the Pakistani headquarters of Jaish al-Adl, an organization founded in 2012 and blacklisted by Iran as a terrorist group.

Jaish al-Adl has carried out several attacks on Iran in recent years.

Iran said other missile attacks were aimed at "spy headquarters" and "terrorist" targets in Syria and Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan region.

The attack comes as the Middle East is reeling from the Israel-Gaza crisis and attacks on ships in the Red Sea by Yemen's Iranian-backed Houthi rebels.



HYDERABAD: Caretaker Minister for Tourism and Environment Arshad Wali Muhammad giving degree award to the graduates during 12th Convocation of Sindh Agriculture University Tandojam.

No airspace ban decided for Iran, says CAA

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

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

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

"All air-borne activities on western borders of the country being thoroughly monitored," he said.

"The CAA has received instructions with regard to extra alert for the

incoming flights from western direction," sources said. Sources said that such strict monitoring of the flights from the west were not ordered earlier.

CAA sources, however, said that the airspace of Pakistan and Iran has still been opened for commercial flights.

Bilateral tensions have increased after Iran's missile strike in Pakistan on Tuesday night. Pakistan responded the aggression with retaliatory strikes within Iran on Thursday morning.

Pakistan on Wednesday denounced the strikes near the countries' shared border, recalled its ambassador from Iran and blocked Tehran's envoy from returning to Islamabad.



KARACHI: Vice Chief of the Naval Staff, Vice Admiral Ovais Ahmed Bilgrami in a group photo with national stakeholders and participants of Pakistan Navy maiden Maritime Security Exercise SEA GUARD-24.

Daily Voice of Masses
Independent

Iranian strikes

Relations between Pakistan and Iran stand at a very delicate juncture after the latter struck targets inside Pakistani territory on Tuesday. While Tehran has claimed it hit "strongholds" of the Jaish al-Adl terrorist group in the air strikes, Pakistan says two minors had lost their lives in the Panjgur attack.

On Monday, Iran had carried out similar strikes inside Iraq and Syria, hitting what it said were "spy headquarters" and "terrorist" bases in these states. The Foreign Office has reacted with a sternly worded statement, condemning this unjustifiable violation of Pakistani sovereignty and warning of "serious consequences".

Indeed, the attack, as it said, is "completely unacceptable" — and Tehran should take note. The situation is deteriorating rapidly, as on Wednesday Pakistan recalled its ambassador from Tehran and suspended all high-level bilateral visits. The Iranian envoy in Pakistan, currently in his home country, will also not be allowed to return to Islamabad. The violation of Pakistani territory is totally indefensible; such unilateral actions — especially resulting in the loss of innocent lives — may do irreparable harm to bilateral ties. The activity of militant groups on both sides of the border is one of the biggest irritants in the bilateral relationship, and Pakistan and Iran need to address this issue in a mature fashion to ensure the situation does not worsen further.

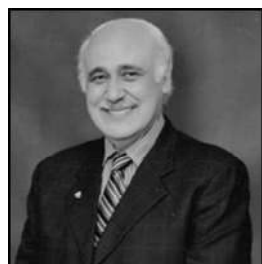
There were several terrorist attacks last year, with the last major incident occurring in December 2023, in which 11 Iranian law enforcers were killed in an ambush on a police station.

Iranian officials had claimed the assailants entered from Pakistan. Meanwhile there were also two attacks last year, apparently originating from Iran, in which several Pakistani troops were martyred.

Border security, particularly the elimination of safe spaces for terrorist groups, is an area both states must work on jointly, instead of pursuing unilateral actions. The immediate need is to prevent a rupture in ties. China, which enjoys cordial relations with both states, and has urged "both sides to exercise restraint", can perhaps use its good offices to help resolve this sensitive matter.

Meanwhile, it is also true that various foreign actors would like to see a permanent break in Pakistan-Iran ties; the capitals of both countries must, therefore, prevent an escalation and work to restore calm.

After matters have cooled down, the mechanism that exists for border security management should be actively used to target militants threatening either state's security through joint operations. Under no circumstances should either state's sovereignty be violated through unilateral actions. The Iranian authorities must particularly work to prevent a repeat of such attacks. At a time when the fires of conflict threaten to consume the region, both sides must act with restraint and statesmanship to prevent this crisis from growing.



F.S. Aijazuddin

Recently, I needed material on the 1971 East Pakistan crisis from a section in my library. There, I unearthed a squirm of termites feasting on my books. As I consigned their residual fragments to a pyre, it occurred to me that, whereas once I owned my books, now they owned me. My remaining days would be consumed in ensuring their preservation.

My collection had been built up over years, since the mid-1960s. Sporadic purchases gave way to more selective acquisitions which were germane to whichever of my books I happened to be working on. Their subjects covered Pahari painting, Sikh art, British and European artists working in the north of the subcontinent, antique maps, on Dr Henry Kissinger's secret visit to Beijing in July 1971, US foreign policy towards Pakistan between 1969-74, and the journeys of the British vicereine Charlotte, Lady Canning, from Kolkata to the Khyber Pass.

I justified spending money on these books because they were essential for reference purposes, as books were not as accessible as they are today on the internet or through search engines. As one author put it, my library is "a cave of words that I'd made myself".

Intellectual hermits may burrow themselves in such caverns of learning, trying to decide whether to read a book or to write one, but they have perforce also to live in an outer world. The Turkish Nobel laureate,

Read, and gone

Orhan Pamuk, lamented: "I live in a country singularly devoid of books and libraries [...] in a country that views the non-reader as the norm and the reader as somehow defective."

Over the years, he expanded his library until he had more than 12,000 volumes. In a moment of candour, he admitted that he had truly loved only "perhaps 10 or 15" of them. The rest he needed for his work. "If I were to compare my library to that of a well-read friend in a rich Western country, his would have fewer books than mine does."

That is not surprising. The tradition of public libraries predates the ancient Great Library at Alexandria, said to contain 400,000 scrolls before it was burnt down. Over the centuries, most developed countries have regarded libraries as necessary adjuncts to education. School libraries became a barometer of their attitude to education.

One author admitted that his parents bore him but he was reared by libraries. Private libraries have always been a luxury. Bibliophiles know that each book has an identity of its own; each set of covers contains the output of a creative mind; each volume is a friend who never fails. Together, they are the sum of many lifetimes and the accumulated wisdom of the ages. Pamuk mentions that it took an earthquake for him to decide that he needed to weed out his library. "Like a sultan pacing among a crowd of slaves, singling the ones to be lashed, like a capitalist pointing out the lackeys to be sacked, I made my selection summarily."

The decision to balkanise my library was made for me by ravenous termites. Following the historian Shelby Foote's maxim, that "a university is just a group of buildings gathered around a library", I donated 500 of my books to Lums in Lahore, where students could broaden their minds beyond management sciences, engineering and law.

They can delve into the origins of Mehrgarh, the history of the Mughals, the Sikhs and British rule. They can see Pakistan through the eyes of more recent chroniclers like Herbert Feldman and S.M. Burke. Through the memoirs of former politicians, retired bureaucrats, and extinct state functionaries, they can relive their careers. And they will be able to uncurl secrets not taken by authors to the grave.

Books on interfaith subjects have proved more difficult to place. There are too few Hindus, Sikhs, and Zoroastrians left to form a bulk readership.

Will one ever stop buying books? Pamuk tried, but found to his dismay that he continued acquiring them faster than he could throw them away: "For me, the imperative is not to own good books but to write them."

But then, if authors stopped buying books, where would they find a readership for theirs? The nightmare of every author/bibliophile is if his precious library ends up on the footpath. I found a Persian/Urdu/English dictionary signed by Ghulam Mustafa Tabassum for sale on a hand-cart in Anarkali bazaar. And I bought in Peshawar a romanised version of the Injil-i-Muqqadas (the New Testament), dated 1860, weighed on a scale against some stones.

Perhaps the Ancient Egyptians were wiser than we thought. Their tombs were incised with hieroglyphics, ensuring they took enough reading matter with them to last beyond eternity. -- Courtesy Dawn

Time to reflect



Rashid Amjad

In a recent article in Dawn, the World Bank South Asia vice president, together with the country director, put forward a five-point development strategy to move Pakistan onto a path of sustained and equitable growth. Encompassing improving human capital, generating additional revenues, opening up the economy, transforming agriculture and removing energy inefficiencies, few would disagree with their listed priorities in the medium to long term.

Yet they seem to overlook that the real problem Pakistan faces is in the immediate future; its economy comes to a grinding halt whenever any attempt is made to move it off the ground and move forward. Why?

To illustrate: after achieving near six per cent growth in the preceding two years, 2022-23, the economy abruptly reversed direction as economic growth became negative, inflation rose to an unprecedented 35pc, the country came perilously close to default as reserves fell to less than a month of imports, and poverty levels increased. Even given specific factors such as external shocks (war in Europe, resulting in a sharp rise in oil and food prices) and internal shocks (floods) coupled with poor economic management, it was not the first time this had happened. Over the last three decades, we have gone through frequently recurring stop-go cycles in which episodes of growth have become shorter and shorter, and

episodes of very low growth longer and more frequent.

It is time we seriously questioned some critical aspects of the macroeconomic model we have followed, which has created this recurring situation. While no one can deny that, by running huge unsustainable fiscal deficits, our own policymakers must share a large part of the blame, we must also seriously examine some IMF conditionalities, which, rather than improving, accentuate the problem by opting for purely market-driven solutions to resolve basic structural deficiencies in the economy.

To elaborate, the IMF's solution to our recurring stop-go cycles was to opt for a market-driven exchange rate and reduce tariffs on imported raw material to encourage more competitive exports — which, in theory, was not unwise. But in doing so, it failed to take into account the working of Pakistan's complex, multi-layered, imperfect foreign exchange market. With a large diaspora and migrant workers abroad who send back as remittances an amount equal to or slightly more than our total export earnings, foreign exchange transfers by resident Pakistanis (including for investment in real estate abroad), hoarders, smugglers and profiteers in the domestic market had disastrous consequences. The rupee-dollar exchange rate came crashing down from Rs110 in 2018 to Rs340 in 2023 once the market-driven exchange rate was introduced, triggering uncertainty and fanning inflation. Foreign reserves again fell to disastrously low levels, fuelled also by large inflows of imports resulting from lower tariffs, thereby bringing the economy to the very edge of default.

The exchange rate would have gone further down — possibly to

Rs400 by June 2024 — but for the timely strong-arm action taken by the government's new and powerful economic decision-making body, the Special Investment Facilitation Council. The SIFC came down hard on hoarders, profiteers and illegal currency networks manipulating the exchange rate market (including some commercial banks, one is sorry to suggest). Since then, the exchange rate has steadied at between Rs280 and Rs300 to the dollar. To move out of these recurring crises and reignite growth with macroeconomic stability, it is important for the next elected government to propose important changes in a future continuation of the IMF programme, which, given our current situation, is highly desirable. These are as follows:

Move away from the market-driven exchange rate in favour of a managed exchange rate, while ensuring that it is in line with the real effective exchange rate to maintain export competitiveness and adjust for relative rises in inflation.

Build up our reserves in as short a time as possible through innovative solutions, including diverting at least 10pc of any new foreign investment into a sovereign reserve fund and 10 to 15pc of foreign exchange from the remittances sent annually by our workers and diaspora abroad. Draw a red line at a level below which our reserves will not be allowed to fall (say, initially three months' imports or \$15 billion) and if they do, take suitable measures to reduce imports.

A prudently managed exchange rate supported by adequate reserves would reduce market uncertainty and lift economic activity and investment, ensuring steady growth--th. The country urgently needs to revive growth with macroeconomic stability. -- Courtesy Dawn

Commerce News

Pakistan, Dubai ink over \$3 bln pact in diverse fields

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and Dubai have inked more than \$3 billion investment pact in diverse fields including cooperation in railways, economic zones and infrastructure development.

at Qasim International Container Terminal which is Pakistan's leading trade gateway and plans to develop an economic zone near the terminal.

Both governments have signed two Inter-Governmental Framework Agreements to strengthen their relations in the marine and logistics sectors, including the potential establishment of a Dedicated Freight Corridor and Economic Zone near Karachi.

The DP World will act on behalf of the Dubai Government, while Pakistan Railways and Port Qasim Authority will act on behalf of the Pakistan Government, for the development of the projects.

The rail-based Dedicated Freight Corridor is planned to run from Karachi Port on the

Arabian Sea, passing through Karachi, Pakistan's most populous city, to the Pipri Marshalling Yard, approximately 50 km away.

This would decongest Karachi besides improving road safety. It will significantly improve efficiency, and transport times and reduce the overall cost of logistics.

Pakistan Railways is Pakistan's national, state-owned railway company, owning and operating nearly 8,000 route-km of railway across the country, from Peshawar in the northwest to Karachi in the south. The Qasim International Container Terminal, a second framework agreement was signed with Pakistan's Ministry of Maritime Affairs to dredge the navigation channel.



DAVOS: Caretaker Prime Minister, Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar witnessing Federal Minister for Communications, Railways, & Maritime Affairs Shahid Ashraf Tarar and Government of Dubai inked more than \$3 billion investment pact on cooperation in Railways, Economic Zones and Infrastructure at the World Economic Forum.

Minister says: Govt initiative in exploration sector to attract investment

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister of Energy, Muhammad Ali, expressed hope on Thursday that the government's initiative in the exploration sector would attract investment in the oil and gas sectors.

During his presentation at the National Seminar on "Pakistan's Economy Crisis: Challenges and the Way Forward," organized by NUST, the minister outlined that the government is set to permit leading oil and gas E&P companies, including

OGDCL, PPL, GHPL, Mari Gas, and foreign entities, to directly sell 50 percent of gas to the private sector and the remaining 50 percent to state-owned gas companies. This initiative aims to encourage companies to invest more in oil and gas exploration.

Muhammad Ali emphasized the importance of geographical and seismic studies to enhance onshore and offshore exploration. He called for investment in refineries, explorations, and terminal infrastructure, stressing the need for research and

development in hydrocarbons, renewables, and minerals sectors to meet domestic energy requirements.

The minister highlighted the significance of optimizing allocations for natural gas, revisiting priority orders, and revising Petroleum and LPG policies for the conversion of domestic consumers from natural gas to LPG. He also advocated for devolution of power to ease business processes and investment in Genco's for efficiency improvement.

IT exports witnesses remarkable surge in December 2023, Saif

ISLAMABAD (APP): Interim IT Minister Dr Umar Saif Thursday said that Pakistan's Information Technology exports experienced a remarkable surge of 22% in December 2023, reaching a total of \$303 million where annually millions of youths across the country will get opportunities to sit and work.

Talking to PTV news channel, he explained that Pakistan has recently undertaken historic steps

to facilitate the country's burgeoning workforce of freelancers and to promote the IT industry.

The government had launched an initiative to build 10,000 co-working spaces across Pakistan for online freelancers, he added.

Dr Saif said that information and communication technology is the main key to opening the door to stabilising and strengthening Pakistan's economy.

Pak total liquid foreign reserves reach \$13.145 billion

KARACHI (APP): The total liquid foreign reserves of Pakistan stood at US\$ 13,145.1 million while reserves held by State Bank reached \$ 8,027.4 million in the week ended on January 12, 2023.

The State Bank of Pakistan, in a statement issued here on Thursday, informed that SBP's reserves decreased by \$127 million to \$8,027.4 million due to debt repayments during the week under review.

Govt releases Rs3,097.50 mln for agriculture sector uplift projects

ISLAMABAD (APP): The government has released an amount of Rs3,097.50 million for various agriculture and livestock uplift projects under the Public Sector Development Program (PSDP) 2023-24 as against the total allocation of Rs8.850 billion.

The amount was released during the first 06 months of the current financial year (July-December) for the completion of different ongoing development schemes, besides initiating the new projects of vital importance, said an official in the Ministry of National

Food Security and Research.

Talking to APP here on Monday, he said that out of the total released funds, an amount of Rs429.97 million had spent so far on different development schemes during the period under review for achieving sustainable agriculture growth and economic development of the country. The government has allocated Rs8.850 billion for the Ministry of National Food Security and Research in its PSDP 2023-24 for different projects relating to agriculture and livestock sectors' development in the country, he added.



ISLAMABAD: Minister for Finance, Revenue and Economic Affairs, Dr. Shamshad Akhtar is delivering her keynote address to Digital Transformation-Envisioning the Pakistan Digital Stack workshop.

Shamshad stresses to lower revenue expenditure gap

ISLAMABAD (Online): Dr Shamshad Akhtar, Caretaker Federal Minister for Finance, Revenue and Economic Affairs, during the keynote address on Pakistan's economic challenges and the way forward, said a press release issued here.

She highlighted five key areas that have increased the vulnerability of Pakistan's economy to domestic and global shocks: first, unsustainable fiscal policy due to revenue gaps and unproductive expenditure, second, fiscal unsustainability has enhanced government recourse to public debt which has increased.



LAHORE: CEO Trade Development Authority of Pakistan Muhammad Zubair Motiwala inaugurates the 3rd Engineering and Health Care Show at Expo Center.

Pakistan achieves record breaking exports target in 2nd quarter of FY, 2024

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Commerce on Thursday said that Pakistan has achieved record-breaking exports target and surpassing expectations at the end of second quarter of Financial Year 2024.

In a remarkable turn of events, Pakistan has transitioned from facing potential default to achieving a record-breaking surplus in its current account, showcasing the nation's

resilience and commitment to economic stability, said a press release issued here. In December 2023, Pakistan achieved an impressive current account surplus of \$397 million. This surplus contributed to the overall surplus of \$198 million in the second quarter of Financial Year 2024.

This substantial increase in surplus is a testament to the effective economic strategies implemented by the government.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

Industries and other relevant officials were present on the occasion.

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

The delegation

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

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

Caretaker KP Minister chairs meeting of reforms committees

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

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

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

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



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

Youth Alliance protest against black marketing, artificial scarcity of urea

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

New PEC Punjab takes charge

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Airport.

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

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

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

US political officer meets PPP leader

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

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

International News

Houthi strike another US vessel

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

Tel Aviv steps up Gaza strikes after medicine-aid deal

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

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

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

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

23 killed in Thai fireworks factory blast

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

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

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

Biden aims for North Carolina as 2024 election comes into focus

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

Attacks by Yemen's Houthi militia on merchant

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

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

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

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



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

Japan counts down to precision 'moon sniper' landing mission

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

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

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

Singapore transport minister resigns over corruption charges

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

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

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

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

Plight of Palestinians echoes in US Senate

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

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

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

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

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

Winter weather upends travel in Germany for a second day

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

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

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

Use of technology vital to increase literacy rate: President

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

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

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

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

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

President Alvi maintained that around 28 million children in Pakistan do not go to school while thousands of new schools would be needed to educate those children. He said mosques could also be used as educational centers for this purpose.

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

Azad Jammu and Kashmir Textbook Board

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

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

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

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



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

Pakistan Navy vows concrete action to enhance maritime security

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

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

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

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

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

Pakistan envoy to Iran Mudassar Tipu arrives back in Islamabad

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

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

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

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

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

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

He stressed that Islamabad has "responded appropriately" by recalling its ambassador and blocking

Tehran's envoy.

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

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

Court orders to release PTI Sindh president Haleem Adil Sheikh

KARACHI (Online): City court has ordered to release PTI Sindh president Haleem Adil Sheikh.

The court has issued release order of Haleem Adil Sheikh in the case registered against him in city court police station.

The court had approved bail of Haleem Adil Sheikh against surety bonds in the sum of Rs 50000.

The court remarked Haleem Adil Sheikh be released from jail if he is not wanted in any other case.

Ali Zaidi is also nominated in the case.

Case was registered on the charges of helping Hassan Niazi to escape.

In Sindh High Court (SHC) The state counsels sought time to offer arguments on two different petitions against the arrest of Haleem Adil Sheikh.

ADC visits bus terminal, checked facilities

SUKKUR (APP): Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Sukkur, Liaqat Ali Kalhor on Thursday paid a visit to Sukkur bus terminals to check facilities there and ensure the implementation of officially notified fares for different cities.

He undertook the visit in line with directives of Deputy Commissioner (DC) Sukkur Fayyaz Hussain Mahesar to extend relief to people by ensuring compliance by the public transporters in the wake of a reduction in fares following a decrease in prices of fuel.

He met with owners of transports and inquired from passengers about facilities and fares.

He directed the transporters to comply with the officially notified fares, otherwise strict action would be taken against them.

Rangers recover cache of arms, ammunition in Karachi

KARACHI (INP): Paramilitary Rangers in an intelligence-based raid recovered large haul of arms and ammunition, a spokesman on Thursday, Rangers said that the weapons and munitions were recovered from a vacant plot of land in Jahanabad adjacent to Lyari. The weapons belong to a Lyari gang commander Bilal Arshad alias Pappu group, spokesman said. The law enforcement agency recovered one Kalashnikov, one 223 rifle, 10 pistols and live rounds.

A criminal affiliated with the Lyari gang war, was arrested this month after an encounter with police in Kalri police station jurisdiction. Police officials claimed that the arrested man identified as Farhad Ahmed, was an operative of the Lyari gang war's Badshah group and was allegedly involved in several criminal activities including targeted killings, kidnappings, and extortion.

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

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

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

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

missiles, Wei said.

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

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

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



TANDO ALLAHYAR: Peoples Party (PPP) leader, Aseefa Bhutto Zardari interacts with supporters during public gathering meeting regarding the election campaign in connection of the General Election 2024, held at Liaquat Gate area in Tando Allahyar.

Aseefa Bhutto Zardari Champions Progressive Change in Province-wide Campaign

KARACHI (Online): Aseefa Bhutto Zardari has been vigorously campaigning across Sindh in preparation for the upcoming general elections. Her recent rally in Tando Mohammad Khan, accompanied by local candidates Syed Naveed Qamar, Syed Aijaz Hussain Shah Bukhari, and Khuram Karim Soomro, marks a significant highlight in her provincial tour, which so far has included stops in Tando Allahyar, Tando Jam, Nawabshah, Sanghar, and Malir.

During her impassioned speech in Tando Mohammad Khan, Aseefa Bhutto Zardari emphasized the PPP's commitment to addressing key issues such as inflation, unemployment, and poverty. She highlighted the party's dedication to understanding and

alleviating the struggles of the poor, a cornerstone of the PPP's ethos under the leadership of the Bhutto family.

Further, Aseefa Bhutto Zardari underscored the party's vision as outlined in Bilawal Bhutto's 10-point 'Awami Muahida', focusing on economic growth, healthcare, education, and housing. She urged voters to recognize the PPP's genuine efforts in making tangible improvements in their lives, contrasting this with other political entities driven by power motives.

A significant point of pride for the PPP, as mentioned by Aseefa, is the reconstruction initiative for the 18,750 houses damaged in recent floods, with nearly 3,000 already underway.



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

Finance Minister lauds digital transformation efforts

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Finance, Revenue and Economic Affairs, Dr. Shamsad Akhtar, here on Thursday commended the initiatives undertaken by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Karandaz for the digital transformation of Pakistan.

Speaking at the 'Pakistan Digital Stake' Workshop here, the Minister said the creation of Digital Stake by these organizations was in line with the government's policy of digitization.

She said digital transactions play a vital role in empowering both urban residents and business individuals, offering them the flexibility to complete financial

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

These entities are contributing significantly to the implementation of the 'Pakistan Digital Stake,' reinforcing the government's commitment to the digitization agenda, she added. Dr. Shamsad Akhtar underscored the importance of the project for Pakistan's progress, asserting, this initiative was of utmost importance for the development.

SHC allows Fahmida Mirza, Zulfiqar Mirza to contest election

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

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

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

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

Later Fahmida Mirza and Zulfiqar Mirza filed constitutional petitions in SHC against the decision of appellate tribunal. The complainant has said he will resort to Supreme Court (SC) against the decision of SHC.

Mayor Sukkur monitors repairs & maintenance work of city roads

SUKKUR (APP): Mayor Sukkur Barrister Arslan Sheikh on Thursday monitored repair and maintenance work being carried out at different roads in the city.

Commissioner Sukkur Municipal Corporation (SMC), Deputy Mayor Dr Arshad Mughal and other officers were also present.

The Mayor inspected the pace of work and directed the contractors to timely complete the city roads.

He directed the officer Infrastructure to ensure regular visit of the engineer concerned while instructing the project head to complete the task on time.

He directed all officers concerned to monitor each rehabilitation project of the city on a daily basis.

Woman arrested for newborn trafficking in Karachi

KARACHI (INP): Karachi police claimed to have arrested a female suspect allegedly involved in the illegal trafficking of newborns and recovered an infant from her possession.

According to details, the arrested trafficker, Fatima, was engaged in purchasing newborns from hospitals and various rural areas in Karachi.

The Kharadar Police claimed that the rescued newborn was bought by the suspect from a village near Thatta for Rs 200,000 and traveled to Karachi with the intention of 'selling' the newborn. The police lodged a case against the arrested newborn trafficker Fatima.

AC visits sanitation & cleanliness in different roads, residential areas

SUKKUR (APP): Assistant Commissioner Sukkur city, Sobia Falak Rao along with Municipal officers on Thursday visited different areas of the city and reviewed the sanitation system.

The assistant commissioner paid a visit to different roads of the city.

On this occasion, she lauded the efforts of the Sukkur Municipal Corporation authorities in connection with cleanliness and sanitation.

AC also asked them to take action to improve the cleanliness system to clean the residential areas.

She also reviewed the cleanliness arrangements at

different Muhallas and streets in the city and warned the sanitary staff to ensure cleanliness like city roads on daily basis.

She said that open manholes should be closed immediately, and garbage cans should be installed at different places in the city so that the beauty of the city could be maintained.

AC Sobia Rao said the cleanliness of the city must be ensured to provide a clean environment to the citizens.

She appealed to the citizens not to throw garbage in drains but it should be placed in designated places so that it could be disposed of easily.



KARACHI: Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM-H) Chief, Afaq Ahmed addresses to media persons during press conference, at Afaq House in Karachi.

Divisional Commissioner Sukkur reviews election preparations

SUKKUR (APP): Divisional Commissioner Sukkur, Fayyaz Hussain Abbasi on Thursday chaired a meeting to review election preparations and the implementation of the code of conduct.

The meeting focused on matters related to election preparedness, adherence to the code of conduct by all participating political parties, effective implementation of law and order during the electoral process, and ensuring strict compliance with the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) issued by the Election Commission.

The Divisional Commissioner

urged all candidates to adhere strictly to the code of conduct to maintain the integrity of the electoral Process.

Deputy Commissioners (DCs) of Sukkur, Khairpur and Ghotki districts gave their detailed briefing to all electoral representatives regarding the code of conduct in their respective districts.

Wing Commander Rangers and SSP Sukkur addressed the candidates on matters related to law enforcement during the elections, emphasizing the importance of respecting the law and order to ensure a peaceful and orderly electoral process.



KARACHI: Leaders and supporters of Jamat-e-Islami (JI) are holding protest demonstration against prolonged sui-gas load shedding during winter season, held outside SSGC Head-Office building in Karachi.

VC chairs SMIU's Senate meeting

KARACHI (APP): The 7th Senate meeting of Sindh Madressatul Islam University (SMIU) was held on Thursday at Senate Hall with Vice Chancellor Dr. Mujeeb Sahrai in chair the meeting on behalf of the Chief Minister Sindh, who authorized him for it due to his other engagements.

According to the spokesman, the Senate meeting after a detailed discussion approved the minutes of the 6th Senate meetings and actions taken on its decisions. It also passed resolution on the annual budget estimates for the financial year 2023-24 and revised budget estimated for the financial year 2022-23. Another resolution on the annual statement of accounts for the financial year 2022-23 against non-development recurring resources was passed.

Apart from it, a resolution on the annual statement of accounts relating to the development projects of the university for the financial year 2022-23 including expansion of SMIU's city campus and development of SMIU's Malir Campus in the education city was passed.

Speaking at the meeting the Vice Chancellor Dr. Mujeeb Sahrai said SMIU came out from the deficit, now it is stable in many ways, this is why it fully concentrates on quality education and research and development projects.

The vice chancellor said they were living in the competent world, where many challenges are ahead of us, but the universities of the country have to make themselves financially sustainable by generating their own resources and SMIU is working on it.

Dr. Mujeeb Sahrai said a high-tech lab for researchers has been established at SMIU with the cost of 11 million rupees, which were donated by an alumnus Dr. Ibrahim Mulla. Likewise, seven research journals are being published and these are recognized by the HEC.



KARACHI: View of huge fire flames rise from burning vehicle after traffic accident, at Lyari Expressway Garden in Karachi.