

Independent

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Karachi

Ph: 0300-3898091 Vol: 06. No. 16 Rajab 19, 1445 AH Wednesday January 31, 2024 Pages 04 Price Rs. 12.00

President Alvi says:

Mass awareness, life skills, vital for integration of special children into society

KARACHI (APP): President Dr. Arif Alvi on Tuesday underscored the significance of mass awareness about special requirements of persons with different abilities and equipping them with education and living skills for their meaningful integration into society.

He was speaking during the visit of the Society for Children in Need of Special Assistance (SCINOSA) Day Home - an institute for individuals with Down syndrome and other mental challenges - along with the First Lady Samina Arif Alvi.

The president emphasized that children with different abilities, were part of the society and equipping them with living skills could enable them to lead a meaningful life and perform daily chores at their own.

He also stressed the need for creating special employment opportunities for differently-abled persons in

accordance with their capabilities and teaching them the specific skills, required for those jobs.

"Approach towards children with different abilities has been changing across the globe with the emphasis on their enrollment in routine schools and we in Pakistan as well need to step forward and work together for breaking the taboos and social stigma, attached to mental and physical challenges," he noted.

Federal and Sindh governments have made laudable progress in that regard by reserving special quota for differently-abled persons in public sector jobs while the banking sector was also inducting special persons, Dr. Alvi said adding that Governor SBP and heads of different banks had also assured of additional steps in that regard in a recent meeting on inclusion and empowerment of special persons and women.



KARACHI: President Dr. Arif Alvi addressing the gathering at Society for Children in Need of Special Attention (SCINOSA).

Imran, Qureshi sentenced to 10 years in jail in cipher case

PTI top brass vehemently rejects verdict; urges supporters to stay calm

RAWALPINDI (INP): A special court established under the Official Secrets Act on Tuesday handed both former prime minister Imran Khan and ex-foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi 10 years in jail in the cipher case.

The cipher case pertains to a diplomatic document that the Federal Investigation Agency's charge sheet alleges was never returned by Imran. The PTI has long held that the document contained a threat from the United States to oust Imran as prime minister.

The short verbal verdict was announced soon after recording the statements of the two accused under Section 342 during the hearing on Tuesday, as the court held a swift hearing of the matter despite the delaying tactics used by the defence.

Earlier, questionnaires

were prepared to record their statements as the court resumed the hearing of the cipher case. On the other hand, the PTI had moved the Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Tuesday morning to challenge the appointment of state defence counsel for the two accused in the cipher case, requesting it to declare the special court's Jan 26 orders.

Earlier on Monday, a lengthy hearing of the cipher case was held by the special court in Adiala jail during which cross-examination of 11 witnesses was completed. Also on Monday, a lengthy hearing of the cipher case was held by the special court established under the Official Secrets Act in Adiala jail during which cross-examination of 11 witnesses was completed.

During the hearing conducted by Abul Hasnat

Muhammad Zulqarnain, the special court judge, a total of 25 witnesses were presented before the court. The prominent names among those cross-examined by the two sets of lawyers include former foreign secretary Sohail Mehmood, former principal secretary to the PM Azam Khan, former Interior Secretary Yusuf Naseem Khokhar, interior secretary Aftab Akbar Durrani and former ambassador to the United States Asad Majeed.

Earlier in the day, the cipher case proceedings were again disrupted as the two accused got angry and started shouting. As the situation worsened, the special court judge opted for a temporary break after which the hearing started again.

Qureshi objected to the state-appointed defence counsel during

cross-examination, expressing difficulty attending court in the current situation. PTI lawyer Salman Safdar noted that the Islamabad High Court had deemed the trial invalid, yet the case persisted in this court for the third time.

Meanwhile in the aftermath, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) top leadership vehemently rejected on Tuesday the verdict handed down by a special court under the Official Secrets Act, which sentenced former premier Imran Khan and ex-foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi to 10 years in jail in the cipher case.

In response to the special court's decision, Barrister Gohar Ali Khan, a central leader of Tehreek-e-Insaf, addressed the media, urging party supporters to exhibit restraint and avoid expressing anger.

Politics of revenge, hatred to be put to end: Bilawal

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Tuesday vowed to put an end to politics of revenge.

He said 18 or 17 federal departments which were to be devolved after the 18th amendments were currently costing Rs 300 billion to the national exchequer and would divert schemes for the masses' uplift.

Similarly, he said that the government of their opponents provided a subsidy worth Rs 1500 billion on an annual basis to the richest class of the country and this amount could also be utilized for the betterment of the poor.

He urged the people to vote for his party to remove their sense of deprivation and change the destiny of KP including Dera Ismail Khan.

He also called upon his workers to educate people about the importance of vote which deter-

mined the country's future. Thus, he suggested the people use the power of vote wisely.

He said the real contest was between only the two parties PPP and Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N).

He said the people had already witnessed that other parties badly failed to deliver and hoped that the PPP would emerge as the winning party based on its performance.

He also condemned the inappropriate language in politics.

Earlier, PPP Central Information Secretary Faisal Karim Kundi, while addressing the public gatherings thanked the people of Dera Ismail Khan for making the PPP program successful.

He said the participation of people in large numbers proved Dera Ismail Khan as Mini-Larkana for PPP. "The people of Dera announced their decision in the favour of PPP," he said.



DERA ISMAIL KHAN: Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari addresses to his supporters during public gathering meeting as a part of Election Campaign in connection of the General Election 2024 coming ahead, held in Dera Ismail Khan.

Federal cabinet gives nod to restructuring, digitisation of FBR

Customs, Inland Revenue DGs to be given full administrative, financial and operational powers

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federal Cabinet, in a meeting, on Tuesday approved restructuring and digitization of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) on the recommendations of the Revenue Division.

The approval was accorded in a meeting chaired by Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.

The meeting was apprised of the recommendations of an inter-ministerial committee that held its meeting on 23rd January under the caretaker finance minister. During its previous meeting, effective amendments were made in the summary after a comprehensive debate which was submitted in the

cabinet's meeting today. PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

Under these reforms, a Federal Tax Policy Board would be constituted in the Revenue Division that would be tasked to formulate tax policy, fixation of revenue targets and work for coordination among the stakeholders.

The federal minister for finance would head the Federal Policy Board. Under the new scheme, Customs and Inland Revenue departments would be separated and work under specific director generals in the relevant cadres who would also enjoy complete authority over the administrative, financial and operational matters.



ISLAMABAD: US Ambassador to Pakistan Donald Blome, Federal Secretary Ministry of National Heritage and Culture Division Humaira Ahmed are signing documents during MoU signing "Bilateral Cultural Property Agreement Signing Ceremony" at Sir Syed Memorial Museum, in the Federal Capital.

MQM-P announces support for GDA candidates in Sanghar

HYDERABAD (APP): The MQM Pakistan has announced its support for the candidates of the Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA) in the Sanghar district. All MQM-P candidates in the Sanghar district have withdrawn in favour of GDA candidates.

According to reports, MQM Pakistan candidates in Sanghar district have withdrawn their candidature in favour of GDA candidates from two National Assembly constituencies and 5 Provincial Assembly constituencies. This announcement was made by

Muhammad Arif Shaikh, the district in-charge of MQM Pakistan, Sanghar, at the zonal office of Tando Adam, in the presence of the candidates.

He said that the alliance formed in Sindh includes GDA, MQM, Muslim League (N), JUI and other parties, and wherever a party has the majority, other parties will support it.

He said that as per the directives of the party leadership, they have announced their support for all GDA candidates in Sanghar district.

KARACHI: Indonesian Consul General Dr. June Kuncoro Hadinigrat calls on Sindh Governor Kamran Khan Tessori at Governor House.

Caretaker PM underlines need for effective criminal justice system

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Tuesday said that under the constitution, only parliament was mandated to legislate and stressed further reforms in the criminal justice system.

Expressing his views on a private TV (Aik) news morning show, he opined that the conviction rate under the contemporary criminal justice system was very low, reflecting deficiencies and efforts to be made to plug the loopholes through effective legislation.

To a question about terrorist groups in Balochistan province, the prime minister said that non-state actors had no

right to unleash violence and the State had the responsibility to counter such terrorist acts.

About 90,000 people in the country had lost their lives in waves of terrorism, he said, adding whether it was not the onus of political parties and the parliamentarians to improve upon the criminal justice system to expedite the conviction rate!

The prime minister maintained that he was speaking about the whole justice system, especially its lower tiers.

"Whose responsibility was to improve it? Carrying out legislative business under the constitution is the onus of parliament," he reiterated.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Interior and Commerce, Dr. Gohar Ejaz meeting with Saudi Ambassador H.E. Nawaf bin Saeed Al Malkiy.

Sindh Culture Minister inaugurates first modern scientific lab to preserve archives, artifacts

KARACHI (APP): Caretaker Minister for Culture, Archives and Antiquities Sindh Dr. Syed Junaid Ali Shah here on Tuesday inaugurated a state-of-the-art Scientific Laboratory aimed at preserving archives and artifacts.

The Laboratory was named "Exploration and Excavation Branch Scientific Laboratory and Data Center," established in Karachi to facilitate research on archives and artifacts and ensure their preservation in modern ways. Situated near the historic site of Romi graveyard, the Laboratory was poised to become a hub for preserving cultural heritage.

The inauguration cer-

emony was attended by dignitaries including Khalid Chachar, Secretary of Culture and Antiquities Sindh; Abdul Aleem Lashari, former Secretary of Culture; Mansoor Ahmed Kanaso, Director General of Antiquities; Ijaz Sheikh, Director General of Libraries Sindh; Dr. Kaleemullah Lashari; Resident Director Roshan Ali Kanaso, Deputy Director Atif Hussain Vigho and others.

The minister emphasized that the preservation of archives and artifacts was a national responsibility. This state-of-the-art scientific laboratory marks the first of its kind at the national level in Sindh.

ECP seeks report from CS, IG regarding Sibi blast

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Tuesday sought a report from the Chief Secretary and Inspector General (IG) of Balochistan regarding the Sibi blast.

The ECP spokesperson, in a statement, said that the Election Commission of Pakistan has taken notice of the blast that occurred during a political rally in the district of Sibi.

According to media reports, at least four people were killed, and five others were wounded in a bomb blast at a political party rally in Balochistan's Sibi.

Pak-KSA agree to increase bilateral economic, trade ties

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on Tuesday agreed for increasing bilateral economic and trade relations to enhance the business integration between the two countries.

Saudi Ambassador Nawaf bin Saeed Al-Malkiy met with Caretaker Minister for Interior and Commerce Dr. Gohar Ejaz here to negotiate bilateral economic cooperation, said a press release issued here.

In the meeting, the interior secretary, commerce secretary and other high officials were also present.

Karachi weather turns cold after early morning showers

KARACHI (INP): The weather turned cold after several parts of Karachi received light showers early Tuesday morning. According to the meteorological department, the drizzle was reported in parts of Karachi, which turned the weather cold in the city. The parts of Karachi that received rain include Shahra-e-Faisal, Nursery, Saddar, Kala Pul, Gulistan-e-Jauhar, Airport, Malir, and others.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar chairs meeting of the Federal Cabinet.

EU delegation held meeting with Sindh Home Minister to discuss election arrangements

KARACHI (APP): A four-member delegation of the European Union called on Sindh Caretaker Minister for Home and Prison Brig. H. Harris Nawaz here on Tuesday and discussed in detail the arrangements for the February 08 elections.

Home Secretary Sindh Iqbal Memon was also present on the occasion.

The meeting also discussed the measures with special reference to law & order and administrative arrangements to ensure free, fair and transparent polls.

The Home Minister briefed the delegation about the security measures and said that full cooperation was being extended to the Election Commission of

Pakistan in transparently conducting the elections.

He reiterated the government's resolve to fulfil its duty of ensuring timely, free, fair and transparent elections, stressing that the caretaker setup would remain fully impartial.

He added that it was the constitutional responsibility of the caretaker government to provide full security to the voters and contesting candidates and the government had been taking measures to this end in a proper manner.

The EU delegation hoped with a positive note that the caretaker government, ECP will be able to hold free and fair elections by the constitution of Pakistan.



ISLAMABAD: Vice Chief of the Naval Staff Vice Admiral Ovais Ahmed Bilgrami exchanging views with Secretary General of the Iraqi Ministry of Defence, Lieutenant General Ahmed Dawood during his visit to Naval Headquarters.

EC stops PM from introducing major reforms in FBR

ISLAMABAD (online): Election Commission (EC) has taken notice on the matter of restructuring of FBR and stopped caretaker Prime Minister (PM) from introducing major reforms therein.

Secretary EC has written a letter to principal secretary of PM wherein concern was voiced over the matter of restructuring of FBR. Caretaker PM was stopped from introducing reforms.

It has been said in the letter that only elected government can introduce reforms in FBR. Election is going to be held on February 8 in the country. Elected government will come to power in election which is authorized to introduce reforms in FBR.

OIC chief, Pakistan envoy discuss prospects of cooperation

JEDDAH (APP): Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Syed Mohammad Fawad Sher has met with OIC Secretary-General Houssein Ibrahim Taha.

In the meeting held at the OIC headquarters of the General Secretariat in Jeddah, they discussed the prospects of cooperation between the OIC and Pakistan, efforts to enhance Joint Islamic Action, and a number of issues on the OIC agenda, said an OIC's press release received Tuesday.

Daily Voice of Masses
Independent

Mending fences

From exchanging missile strikes two weeks ago to trading compliments, Pakistan and Iran have managed to handle a potentially explosive crisis in a mature fashion.

On Jan 16, Iran had bizarrely launched strikes on Panjgur hitting, what it said, were terrorists affiliated with the Jaish al-Adl outfit. Pakistan said two children died in the incident. Two days later, Pakistan replied to the violation of its sovereignty by striking targets in the Iranian town of Saravan neutralising, as per the state, several Baloch separatists.

But the acrimony seemed a thing of the past as caretaker Foreign Minister Jilani met his Iranian counterpart Hossein Amir-Abdollahian in Islamabad on Monday, indicating that the crisis was now behind both states. It is also hoped that as relations improve, the brutal murder of nine Pakistani workers in Saravan on Saturday is fully probed.

Mr Amir-Abdollahian said both countries were "one nation" while observing that "third countries" were aiding militants in the common border area. Meanwhile, Mr Jilani said that a "high-level mechanism" was being established to oversee bilateral cooperation, while adding that liaison officers would be stationed in Turbat and Zahedan.

Indeed, this display of cooperation is a welcome change from the acrimonious exchanges that had threatened to scuttle bilateral ties. Both sides chose to handle the crisis with wisdom, as opposed to jingoistic nationalism. This should serve as a template to manage all future bilateral ties.

While the exchange of pleasantries makes for good optics, both Islamabad and Tehran need to get down to business and address the single biggest irritant that stands in the way of better ties: border security. Both sides have pledged to work for collective security, and these promises should be followed by action to secure their common border.

Whether it is religiously motivated militants working against Iran that allegedly find refuge in Pakistan, or Baloch separatists plotting against Pakistan on Iranian soil, both sides need to address the threats these non-state actors pose through mutual cooperation; under no circumstances should unilateral action be taken, as Iran did a few weeks ago. The crisis was defused this time, but there is no guarantee that similar rational behaviour will prevail in the future. With regard to the killing of Pakistani workers, those involved in this heinous crime need to be identified and brought to justice, while Tehran should ensure security for all Pakistanis living in or visiting Iran. A few weeks from now a new administration will take over in Islamabad, and it will be up to the new rulers to build on the points agreed to during the foreign ministers' meeting. Both sides should also be wary of inimical foreign actors working to destabilise the border areas in the hopes of souring the Pakistan-Iran relationship.

'Climate aid'

Umar Farooq

Post-COP28, it is imperative to examine Pakistan's unique stance in the climate change dialogue. Pakistan now faces a new kind of challenge — one that is environmental in nature but deeply rooted in its sociopolitical fabric.

Pakistan, despite its minimal contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions, is at the forefront of climate change impacts. The country's vulnerability to environmental disasters is not solely due to global climatic changes; it is also profoundly exacerbated by local factors. Rapid urbanisation, characterised by subpar housing societies and an obsession with cars and expansive urban highways, along with rampant deforestation and excessive reliance on fossil fuels, have collectively precipitated a series of environmental crises.

These developments, while possibly benefiting the bureaucracy and enabling politicians to exploit taxpayer funds, have led the country towards a situation that is nearly irreparable. These local issues, often eclipsed by the broader narrative of global climate politics, are the actual catalysts for Pakistan's escalating environmental degradation.

At the heart of these challenges lies Pakistan's persistent dependence on inefficient and hazardous fossil fuels. Additionally, environmental protection regulators, run by an ad hoc bureaucracy that is adept at nothing except staging price control ops against street vendors, have failed to establish procedures to control emissions effectively.

The problem with

Pakistan's approach to environmental issues is a deeply ingrained dependency mindset. Traditionally, the country has sought external aid to address its problems. While bureaucracy and NGOs continue to receive aid, these funds often merely suffice to support the lifestyles of a few profiteers, offering negligible benefits to the community or the environment. However, in a world increasingly focused on environmental integrity and sustainable development, this dependent approach poses a significant threat to Pakistan's future.

Triggered by the greenwashing controversy, there is focus on a more stringent approach that prioritises substantial emission reductions before considering the trading of carbon credits. This global trend towards "green conditionalities" poses a new challenge for countries like Pakistan. With the carbon credit market more competitive and stringent, without regulations we are out of the park.

Another emerging dimension in the global environmental paradigm is the focus on natural capital credits. European and UK policymakers are currently developing new codes that place greater emphasis on ecosystem services, such as tokens and credits derived from river catchment areas and the blue economy. For countries like Pakistan, this presents an opportunity and a challenge. The opportunity lies in harnessing its rich biodiversity and aquatic resources for ecological restoration and economic benefit. The challenge, however, is in developing the necessary frameworks and capabilities to participate effectively in these emerging markets.

The implications of this global shift are profound for nations like Pakistan. Despite promises of famous 'climate aid' cheered by a few toadies, the reality is that funds often fail to materialise. Furthermore, controversies surrounding 'junk' carbon credits have led to a significant focus shift towards high-integrity environmental codes. The future is likely to see a discouragement of secondary market trading of these credits. Even if Pakistan embarks on extensive reforestation for carbon sequestration, the absence of a robust mechanism to validate and trade these credits renders them virtually valueless in the global market. This scenario mirrors the plight of Pakistan's textile industry, which suffered when the world moved towards more water-efficient textile production methods, rendering Pakistan's traditional, water-intensive methods obsolete.

For Pakistan, a country where human rights issues and displacement concerns are significant and where the human rights index ranks low, the global shift towards environmental justice presents a profound challenge. Future climate aid and environmental investments are likely to come with stringent green conditionalities that demand not just local initiatives but also adherence to the principles of environmental justice. As Pakistan stands at this environmental crossroads, the message is clear: the time for meaningful action is now. The country must break free from the shackles of dependency and chart a new course towards environmental sustainability. -- Courtesy Dawn

Prioritising youth

Arooj Waheed Dar

For the last decade or so, development economists have been sounding the alarm about Pakistan's youth demographic, saying that if not leveraged as an opportunity, it could turn into a ticking time bomb. Ominously, the ticking time bomb appears set to explode, pumped with ammunition in the form of propaganda and action against, arguably, the only politician in recent times that the youth have resonated with.

Banning the PTI founder's mention on the media, confiscating the party's electoral sign, imprisoning its leadership, and obstructing its election campaign are measures that have turned a major party into a victim in the eyes of a large part of the electorate. Those responsible for these actions perhaps forget the power of sympathy votes. Had the PTI been allowed to complete its term, its poor economic performance would have been enough to keep it from returning to power. But that was not an option for its powerful detractors.

There are concerns that in this situation the party's youth following will have few qualms about resorting to violence, propaganda, or other extreme measures if encouraged in this direction by the politicians they support. This is the rotten fruit that years of not investing in the youth has borne. Unfortunately, the youth demographic has yet to realise the impact of the controversial economic policies implemented by the PTI when it was in power.

To counter the negativity propagated by the PTI government, a well-thought-out strategy is needed. This is not the 20th century where censorship, media

crackdowns, arrests, and other intimidatory tactics are going to silence people. Stifling and suffocating the voice of the youth is only going to make them more rebellious. In fact, it is for this very reason that they have come to see the PTI as a symbol of resistance against injustices and the absence of equal opportunities over the years.

With elections coming up, there is a serious need for policymaking circles to reconsider the direction they want to take the country in, especially with regard to the youth. Addressing the youth at conferences to emphasise the importance of democratic governments simply doesn't cut it. What is needed is a strategic policy to address the issues of growing intolerance in society by focusing on the three E's: education, employment, and entrepreneurship.

Poor educational outcomes and dearth of employment opportunities have adversely impacted the employability of the youth, becoming the root cause of intolerance in society. With youth unemployment on the rise, there is a need to develop vocational training programmes that establish direct connections with employment opportunities within key industries, and abroad in countries that require trained workers. The content of these courses should meet international standards, and must be offered both in person and online to ensure inclusivity.

Schemes that incentivise students to study harder, such as merit-based scholarships, tuition reimbursement programmes, and technology and gadget incentives should be expanded. In this regard,

the laptop scheme was a good initiative which needs to be reintroduced. Educational travel grants should be provided to students who do well in academics. These grants can be offered with a view to facilitating participation in workshops, short courses, and conferences, and thus encouraging an environment that promotes re-search and innovation.

To help create employment opportunities, a series of reforms that facilitate financial inclusion and innovation need to be undertaken to cultivate a conducive atmosphere for the growth of a start-up culture. Viable and innovative business proposals from young minds at the grassroots level should have equal and unrestricted access to capital, enabling them to launch their own entrepreneurial ventures. Programmes and digital applications can be launched to link budding entrepreneurs with potential investors and mentors for guidance and financial assistance.

Most importantly, equitable digitalisation must be ensured so that youth across Pakistan can have access to online education, employment, and e-commerce opportunities. This is a crucial concern that demands the collective effort of the politicians in the country, regardless of the issues that create divisions among them. They must agree on the core concept of the three Es in order to chalk a way forward for the youth of Pakistan. They must realise that channelising the youth's energy in the right direction is both a moral obligation, and a socioeconomic imperative. -- Courtesy Dawn

Commerce News

PM for concerted efforts to explore oil & gas reserves

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Tuesday, while pointing to the abundant natural resources in the country, underlined the need for concerted efforts to explore onshore and offshore oil and gas reserves.

He was addressing the Petroleum Conference 2024 as the chief guest. Chief of the Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir was the guest of honour.

The prime minister affirmed the government's readiness to contribute in infrastructure development, logistics, and security to bolster

exploration and production efforts.

He further stated that the conference reflected a collective commitment to fully utilise the immense mineral potential so as to ensure energy self-sufficiency and transform Pakistan into a regional exporter of energy.

He appreciated the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) and the Federal Ministry of Energy for fostering an investor-friendly environment by streamlining regulations and procedures.

Country Manager, Kuwait Foreign Petroleum Exploration

Company Ali Taha Al-Temimi appreciated unrelenting efforts of the Government of Pakistan in bringing the stakeholders together for formulating policy recommendations and boosting investment in the petroleum sector.

Provincial chief ministers, minister for energy, secretary petroleum, government representatives, policy makers, foreign and domestic investors from the energy and petroleum (E&P) sector and international delegates also attended the conference.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar addresses the participants of Petroleum Conference.

PTA making collaborative measures for ease of doing business

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) Chairman Major General Hafeez ur Rehman on Tuesday said that the PTA was taking many collaborative efforts to promote ease of doing business and attract foreign investment. Talking to a delegation of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) led by its President Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari which called on him, Hafeez said that such collaborations would help address industry challenges and facilitate more favourable business environment.

He said that Pakistan's telecommunications and digital technology sectors were undergoing transformative changes,

driven by the development of comprehensive regulatory frameworks.

"The PTA is working to provide customers with affordable and high quality services and ensure reasonable returns to investors," he said, adding that the mobile phone sector had achieved a remarkable growth of 29% during the last five years due to which mobile services were available to 90% of the country's population while the broadband subscribers had soared to over 130 million.

He assured that the PTA would continue to focus on improving coverage, access and quality of services to promote ease of doing business and attract more investment.



SARGODHA: Vendors displaying orange to attract the customers in front of market.

Fertilizer industry urges nationwide dealers to ensure Urea sales at announced MRPs

LAHORE: In a groundbreaking move, leading fertilizer manufacturing companies in Pakistan, including Fauji Fertilizer Company Limited (FFC), Fauji

the fertilizer dealers in a constructive dialogue and formulate immediate strategies aimed at reducing nationwide urea prices to benefit the farmers.

Attended by major fertilizer dealers from

urea and other fertilizers at manufacturer-recommended prices.

Representatives from the fertilizer industry, including Mr. Ather Javed, Group General Manager Marketing, Fauji Fertilizer



Fertilizer Bin-Qasim Limited (FFBL), Engro Fertilizers Limited, Fatima Fertilizer Company Limited, and Agritech Limited, jointly hosted a convention with nationwide dealers on January 29, 2024, at Faletts Hotel, Lahore. The primary objective of this convention was to engage

across the country, the convention facilitated a strategic discourse on vital topics such as fertilizer demand and supply situation, urea imports by the Government of Pakistan to fill the demand-supply gap, and the development of effective strategies to ensure the availability of

Company Ltd; Mr. Shakeel Ahmad, Advisor Fauji Fertilizer Bin-Qasim Limited, Ms. Rabel Sadozai, Director Marketing & Sales, Fatima Fertilizer Company Limited; Mr. Atif Muhammad Ali, Vice President Marketing, Engro Fertilizers Limited; Mr. Tanweer Raza.

Adoption of aeroponic technology to ensure virus free seed potato production: Dr. Kausar

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Minister for the National Food Security and Research Dr Kausar Abdullah Malik Tuesday said that adoption of Aeroponic technology will not only boost potato production but also ensure the availability of virus-free seeds.

The technology will contribute significantly to the agricultural sector's improvement, he said while addressing a ceremony held at National Agriculture Research Center in which

he also highlighted the achievements of Korea-funded Technical Cooperation Projects (TCP), that focusing on seed potato production by using aeroponic technology.

The caretaker minister lauded the remarkable growth in potato cultivation and production during past two decades.

Only 2 percent of potato seed requirement is being fulfilled locally and the country relied on

importing 98% of its seed demand, he said adding that with the implementation of this cutting-edge technology, Pakistan is poised to achieve self-sufficiency in potato seed production.

Dr Kausar reiterated the government's commitment to prioritizing the agricultural sector, expressing gratitude to the Korean government for its invaluable support in driving agricultural development initiatives in Pakistan.

Six development schemes approved

LAHORE (APP): The 45th meeting of Provincial Development Working Party (PDWP) chaired by Planning and Development Board's (P&D Board) Punjab, Chairman Iftikhar Ali Sahoo here Tuesday, approved six developmental schemes of the SHC&ME (Specialized Health Care and Medical Education) and FW&F (Forest, Wildlife and Fisheries) sector with an estimated cost of Rs 8895.681 million. The approved schemes are as follows: Program for

Strategic Transformation/ Revamping of Tertiary Care Hospitals in Punjab (Bahawalpur Victoria Hospital, (Revised) at the cost of the Rs 2005.698 million; Program for Revamping OPD Blocks in Tertiary Care Hospitals in Punjab (Nawaz Sharif Hospital Yakkhi Gate, Lahore) at the cost of the Rs 632.742 million; Program for Revamping OPD Blocks in Tertiary Care Hospitals in Punjab (Lady Aitchison Hospital, Lahore) (Revised) at the cost of the Rs 510.668.

Shipping Activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Port activities reported at Port Qasim where five ships namely, MSC Mumbai-VIII, Maersk Atlanta, MSC Yukta-X, Encore and Tromso scheduled to load/offload Containers, Rice and Palm oil, berthed at Container Terminal, Multi-Purpose Terminal and Liquid Terminal respectively during last 24 hours. Meanwhile a bulk cargo carrier 'Sea Bird' to load 41,900 tonnes of Rice also arrived at outer-anchorage of the Port Qasim during the same period.

SCCI, PHDEC to collaborate for uplift of horticulture sector in KP

PESHAWAR (APP): Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) and Pakistan Horticulture Development and Export Company (PHDEC) on Tuesday agreed to collaborate for development of the horticulture sector in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. According to details, an important meeting between SCCI president Fuad Ishaq and Manager of Pakistan Horticulture Development and Export

Company (PHDEC) Raheel Abbas held at the Chamber house, in which agreement reached for joint work for development of horticulture sector, enhancing capacity building of stakeholders, launching coaching programs and joint ventures to efficient tap potentials in horticulture sector.

The meeting thoroughly discussed framing of a holistic plan for development and promotion of horticulture sector, technical information.

CM initiates divisional meetings to ensure secure, fair elections

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LAHORE: Initiating a series of divisional meetings, Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi chaired a crucial session at the Commissioner's Office in DG Khan, focusing on ensuring fair and free elections within a peaceful environment.

The meeting extensively reviewed the arrangements for the upcoming general elections and the security plan, with the Provincial Election Commission participating via video link, said a handout issued here on Tuesday.

Chief Minister Naqvi, emphasizing the need for foolproof security arrangements across Punjab, affirmed the citizens' right to vote in a

tranquil environment. He called for meticulous planning to ensure the secure delivery of election materials, directing Inspector General of Police Dr. Usman Anwar to promptly finalize comprehensive Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

Underlining the adherence to the Election Commission's code of conduct, Naqvi stated that all political parties and independent candidates have the right to conduct election campaigns. The chief minister stressed the importance of maintaining a conducive atmosphere for political activities.

Chief Secretary, Commissioner of Dera Ghazi Khan, RPO, Deputy Commissioner, secretaries

concerned, and senior officials attended the meeting.

Meanwhile, Caretaker Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Tuesday inaugurated 133 bedded DG Khan Institute of Cardiology besides multi-million road projects to facilitate the people of the area.

After inaugurating health facilities, he inspected 'Accident & Emergency' and other wards.

All wards and departments of state-of-the-art hospitals are fully functional for medical facilities.

During a briefing, the caretaker CM was told that Angiography, CTscan and other facilities are being conducted at the hospital.



GILGIT: Provincial Ministers Gilgit-Baltistan addressing a press conference regarding wheat subsidy.

KPCTA arranges "Grand Peace Fair" to promote positive image of province

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority (KPCTA) in collaboration with Department of International Relations Peshawar University and International Relations Students Association (IRSA) organized a two-day "Grand Peace Fair" on Tuesday to orient youth of the province about peace, harmony and project positive image of the province and merged areas.

Caretaker Minister for Newly Merged Districts (NMDs), Amir Abdullah and Brigadier Tashfeen attended the event as Chief Guests.

Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Muhammad Saleem, President (IRSA) Ahmad Ali Khan and Incharge (IRSA) Dr. Khurshaid were also present on the occasion.

On the first day, a panel discussion on peace was arranged that was moderated by Dr. Saima Raza. The panel comprised Caretaker Minister for Newly Merged Districts (NMDs) Amir Abdullah, Professor Dr. Hussain Shaheed, Senior Journalist Saleem Safi, Senior Journalist Mushtaq Yousufzai, Dr. Amir Raza, and Senior Journalist Shams Mohammad.

PHC extends interim bail of PTI candidates

PESHAWAR (APP): A single-member bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) on Tuesday extended the interim bail of eight candidates of Pakistan Tehreek e Insaaf (PTI), including the former provincial law minister, Imtiaz Shahid Qureshi till February 12, 2024.

During the hearing conducted by Justice Sahibzada Asadullah, the defendants' lawyer Sikandar Hayat Shah told the court that former Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Law Minister, Imtiaz Shahid Qureshi, Aftab Alam Advocate, Daud Shah, Naseem Afridi, Abdur Rehman, Shafi Jan, Khurram Zeeshan Advocate and Salman Shinwari.

Governor KP meets with winning team of Lacrosse Championship

PESHAWAR (APP): The winning team of women lacrosse championship and officer bearers of Pakistan Lacrosse Federation called on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor, Haji Ghulam Ali here on Tuesday.

The team and officer bearer of the Federation expressed gratitude to the Governor for his invitation and support to teams during the championship. They also presented a shield to governor as a token of appreciation.

Speaking on the occasion, the Governor highlighted the potential of KP youngsters in sports and congratulated the KP team for his

extraordinary performance in the championship.

I am proud of these girls who continued studies and proved their mettle in playing field, the Governor said and added that these girls would be provided support and financial assistance.

He said that the caretaker government and concerned authorities would be contacted to facilitate these girls who are gifted with talent and persistence to pursue their passion.

Haji Ghulam Ali said these girls are capable to bring fame for the country if provided help and proper platforms to present their talent.



BADIN: Bibi Aseefa Bhutto Zardari, the daughter of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto addressing to Party workers rally at DC Chowk during Election Campaign.



KARACHI: Policemen detain activists of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party outside high court who arrived their case hearing in the Provincial Capital.

Canal Road to be closed to traffic on Feb 4-6: WASA

FAISALABAD (APP): Water & Sanitation Agency (WASA) Managing Director (MD) Amir Aziz said that the Canal Road would remain closed for traffic from February 4 to 6 due to canal crossing of water supply pipelines.

During a meeting here on Tuesday, he said that WASA was executing the mega water supply project with the financial assistance of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) to facilitate the residents of Faisalabad with potable drinking water in ample quantity.

In this connection, WASA would lay water supply pipelines in the city which would also cross the Rakh Branch Canal near FESCO Headquarters. Hence, the WASA had decided to close the Canal Road for vehicular traffic, he added.

FAISALABAD (APP): Deeply entrenched in caste system, the industrial hub of Pakistan is once again witnessing the old faces contesting 2024 elections embracing more or less the same slogans of economic revival, jobs and ameliorating the lot of people.

Although social media has revolutionized the society in the awareness regime, yet the old doctrine of caste and incentives based politics still persists in most parts of the country and Faisalabad is not an exception.

Known as Manchester of Pakistan -

Faisalabad district is generally dominated by Jutt, Rajpoot, Gujjar, Arain, Ansari, Baloch bradaris with some other clans settled here even prior to the Independence of Pakistan.

Besides having their strong caste base, these candidates also own the tickets of key national political parties like Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz and Pakistan Peoples' Party with some candidates contesting as independents and claiming to be supported by PTI whose symbol of 'Bat' was suspended by the ECP due to faulty intra party

elections. Daily life interactions, participation in funerals and weddings, disputes resolution at courts and police stations as well as local development work once again surfaces as mainstay in keeping the vote bank intact.

Future promises and hopes like always are also in the heart of election campaign with PML-N ensuring to putting the country on strong economic footing and PPP promising employment, salaries increase, BISP expansion and grassroots development. Electioneering gained

momentum in Faisalabad - the third biggest metropolis of the country with a recent public meeting by PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari. But, political pundits foresee a major impetus in the campaign after PML-N supreme Muhammad Nawaz Sharif's public gathering on February 02.

With the February 08 elections zeroing in, the candidates from main political parties and the independents are diligently wooing voters by arranging public meetings and serving voters at election camps (Deras) with food, tea and even providing them

logistics for personal use. Housing over eight million populace, 5,297,899 Faisalabad voters including 2,841,085 male and 2,456,814 female - would be voting to elect 10 MNAs and 21 MPAs out of 277 and 574 candidates contesting elections respectively for National and Provincial Assembly seats.

Political figures like Rana Sanaulah Khan, Abid Sher Ali, Haji Akram Ansari, Rana Farooq Saeed Khan, Hafiz Mumtaz Ahmad, Hamayun Akhtar Khan, Ali Afzal Sahi, Mina Irfan Mannan, Shahbaz Babar, Arif Gill.

Faisalabad - Old faces in a new political paradigm

Faisalabad district is generally dominated by Jutt, Rajpoot, Gujjar, Arain, Ansari, Baloch bradaris with some other clans settled here even prior to the Independence of Pakistan. Besides having their strong caste base, these candidates also own the tickets of key national political parties like Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz and Pakistan Peoples' Party with some candidates contesting as independents and claiming to be supported by PTI whose symbol of 'Bat' was suspended by the ECP due to faulty intra party elections. Daily life interactions, participation in funerals and weddings, disputes resolution at courts and police stations as well as local development work once again surfaces as mainstay in keeping the vote bank intact. Future promises and hopes like always are also in the heart of election campaign with PML-N ensuring to putting the country on strong economic footing and PPP promising employment, salaries increase, BISP expansion and grassroots development. Electioneering gained momentum in Faisalabad - the third biggest metropolis of the country with a recent public meeting by PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari. But, political pundits foresee a major impetus in the campaign after PML-N supreme Muhammad Nawaz Sharif's public gathering on February 02. With the February 08 elections zeroing in, the candidates from main political parties and the independents are diligently wooing voters by arranging public meetings and serving voters at election camps (Deras) with food, tea and even providing them logistics for personal use. Housing over eight million populace, 5,297,899 Faisalabad voters including 2,841,085 male and 2,456,814 female - would be voting to elect 10 MNAs and 21 MPAs out of 277 and 574 candidates contesting elections respectively for National and Provincial Assembly seats. Political figures like Rana Sanaulah Khan, Abid Sher Ali, Haji Akram Ansari, Rana Farooq Saeed Khan, Hafiz Mumtaz Ahmad, Hamayun Akhtar Khan, Ali Afzal Sahi, Mina Irfan Mannan, Shahbaz Babar, Arif Gill.

International News

US doesn't want wider war with Iran, says White House

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: The United States does not want a wider war with Iran or the region, the White House said on Monday, adding that the administration believes a single drone strike on its forces in the Middle East since the Gaza war began.

National security spokesman John Kirby also told MSNBC in an interview that talks to release prisoners in Gaza have been constructive and that then US sees a framework for another deal.

Gazans said the renewed violence made a mockery of a ruling by the World Court calling on Israel to do more to help civilians. Health officials say 26,637 Palestinians have been killed in the conflict with thousands more bodies likely under the rubble

of destroyed buildings across the coastal territory. On the other hand, Israel relaunched an assault overnight on Gaza's main northern city, weeks after retreat, residents said, while Washington considered its response to the first deadly strike on its forces in the Middle East since the Gaza war began.

Three US servicemen were killed and at least 34 wounded in a drone attack in Jordan near the Syrian border for which US Central Command immediately blamed Iran. US President Joe Biden said the attacks were carried out by Iran-backed groups operating in Syria and Iraq.

While Iran has denied any involvement, Biden ordered "retaliatory" attacks on Iranian-backed groups. At the same time, the US president stopped short

of hitting Iran directly for fear of igniting a broader war amid violence that has already hampered global trade through attacks on ships in the Red Sea. "Have no doubt, we will hold all those responsible to account at a time and in a manner of our choosing," Biden said.

Inside Gaza, residents said Israeli air strikes on neighbourhoods across Gaza City killed and wounded many people. While tanks shelled the eastern areas of the city, naval boats fired shells and gun rounds at the beachfront areas in the west, they said.

Among those killed were two Palestinian journalists, Essam El-lulu and Hussein Attalah, along with several members of their families, health officials and the journalist union said.



US National Security Council spokesmans John Kirby speaks during the daily briefing in the Brady Briefing Room of the White House in Washington, DC.

Ukraine hails constructive talks with Hungary

Monitoring Desk
UZHGOROD: Ukraine's foreign minister on Monday thanked Hungary for "constructive" talks, ahead of a European summit where Kyiv hopes Hungary's Viktor Orban will lift a veto on a multi-billion-euro EU aid package.

Relations between the two neighbours have been strained over the past few years and were further aggravated when Prime Minister Orban in December vetoed 50 billion euros (\$54 billion) in EU aid for Kyiv. In an effort to mend ties

and "find solutions" to their differences, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky suggested a direct meeting with Orban. Monday's talks between Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto and Ukraine's top diplomat Dmytro Kuleba around the city of Uzhhorod in western Ukraine were intended to lay the groundwork.

Szjijarto has not visited Ukraine since Russia launched its offensive against Kyiv in February 2022, although he has been to Moscow on several occasions.

Ukraine says two killed in overnight Russian attacks

KYIV (INP): Ukraine said Tuesday that two people had been killed and at least five more wounded in the latest overnight Russian attacks across the country targeting military and energy infrastructure. Moscow's army, meanwhile, said its air defences downed 21 Ukrainian drones over Russian territory and the annexed Crimean peninsula, as Kyiv steps up cross border aerial attacks.

Kyiv said Russian forces had launched two missiles and 35 attack drones across Ukraine and that 20 of the unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) had bypassed air defence systems. "The enemy directed some of the attack UAVs along front line territories, trying to hit fuel and energy infrastructure, and civilian and military facilities near the front line and the state border with the Russia," the air force said in a statement.

Officials in Kyiv have urged Western allies to bolster its air defence capabilities and said gaining control of the country's air space is a priority for this year.



Hong Kong's Secretary for Justice Paul Lam, Chief Executive John Lee and Secretary for Security Chris Tang Ping-keung attend a press conference regarding the legislation of Article 23 national security laws, in Hong Kong.

North Korea fires cruise missiles into sea

SEOUL (INP): North Korea fired multiple unidentified cruise missiles on Tuesday into the sea off its west coast, South Korea's military said, the third time Pyongyang has tested cruise missiles in less than a week. The missiles were launched at around 7 a.m. (2200 GMT on Monday), Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement. South Korean and US intelligence authorities were closely monitoring the situation and analysing the details of the launch, it said.

The launch comes amid a rise in tension on the Korean peninsula and follows a barrage of cruise missiles fired by Pyongyang off its east coast on Sunday. Sunday's launch was a test of the new submarine-launched cruise missiles (SLCM) dubbed "Pulhwasal-3-31" and leader Kim Jong Un supervised the test, North Korean state media KCNA reported on Monday.

Last week's missiles were also Pulhwasal-3-31, KCNA said, adding that they were the "strategic", which typically refers to nuclear-capable weapons.

Israeli troops to 'go into action' soon at Lebanon border, says Israeli minister

Monitoring Desk
JERUSALEM: Israeli troops will "very soon go into action" near the country's northern border with Lebanon, Defence Minister Yoav Gallant said on Monday, as tensions surge amid the crisis in Gaza. Gallant told troops near the border with the besieged Gaza Strip that others were being deployed to Israel's north. "They will very soon go into action [...] so the forces in the north are reinforced," Gallant said, according to video released by

Saudi project clears 733 Houthi mines in Yemen in a week

RIYADH (Internews): Project Masam, a Saudi initiative to clear land mines in Yemen, in the last week of January dismantled 733 mines planted by the Iran-backed Houthi militia.

Overseen by the Saudi aid agency KSR relief, the project's special teams destroyed 602 pieces of unexploded ordnance, 126 anti-tank mines, three improvised explosive devices, and two anti-personnel mines.

Saudi Arabia to launch 'Dream of the Desert' train

RIYADH (INP): Saudi Arabia has unveiled the plan to launch the 'Dream of the Desert' train service. A first-of-its-kind in the Middle East and North Africa region. The 40-cabin luxury train will add extra quality services and options to the kingdom's means of transportation, as per SPA. Saudi Arabia Railways (SAR) partnered with the Italian Arsenale Group, a specialist in administration, to launch the 'Dream of the Desert' service.

Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh to discuss Gaza ceasefire proposal in Cairo

GAZA (Online): The Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh says the group has received a ceasefire proposal put forward after talks in Paris and that he will visit Cairo to discuss it.

Haniyeh said the group's aim remained to end Israel's military offensive in Gaza and secure a full pull-out of Israeli forces from the territory.

Israel would struggle to accept such terms, but Qatar, the US and Egypt are hoping to see if the two sides can be persuaded to accept a ceasefire lasting at least a month, during which thousands of Palestinian prisoners would be released in return for the release of a large group of hostages.

The proposal, described as a framework, was hammered out between

Egypt, Qatar, the US and Israel on Sunday in talks in Paris. The location of the talks meant that Hamas negotiators could not be present.

The Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, may be willing to accept a drawback in troops in Gaza during a ceasefire or humanitarian pause, but is unlikely to accept any permanent ceasefire that leaves Hamas military forces intact and capable of mounting a further threat to Israel. Previously, he has said he is prepared to accept a lengthy ceasefire, but on the condition there is no requirement to end hostilities.

Haniyeh said: "Our response to the proposal will be on the basis that the priority is stopping the aggression against Gaza and withdrawing the occupation forces from the Strip".

New Hong Kong national security law to add five crimes

Monitoring Desk
HONG KONG: Hong Kong will create its own national security law "as soon as possible", city leader John Lee said on Tuesday, adding insurrection and other crimes not covered by existing legislation imposed by Beijing four years ago.

Massive pro-democracy protests rocked the finance hub in 2019, bringing hundreds of thousands of people to the streets to call for greater freedoms.

In response, Beijing imposed a national security law to punish four major crimes - secession, subversion, terrorism, and collusion with foreign forces - with sentences ranging up to life in prison.

Officials on Tuesday said Hong Kong's security law - mandated by Article 23 of the city's mini-constitution - will cover five offences: treason, insurrection, espionage, destructive activities endangering national security, and external

interference. "While we society as a whole looks calm and very safe, we still have to watch out for potential sabotage and undercurrents that try to create troubles, particularly some of the independent Hong Kong ideas that are still embedded in some people's minds," Lee told a press conference.

"The threats to national security are real, we have experienced them and suffered from them badly [...] we don't want to go through that painful experience again," he said, adding that "some foreign agents may still be active in Hong Kong".

"I must stress that the Basic Law Article 23 legislation must be done [...] as soon as possible," Lee said, noting the city had waited 26 years to make it a reality.

Lee said the consultation process for the law - which runs until the end of February.

PPP public welfare manifesto attracts opponent voters: Zardari

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari said that his party's election campaign was attracting voters of political opponents due to public welfare manifesto.

PPP chairman Bilawal has started a vigorous election campaign in Punjab and the results in the province would be surprising, Zardari told a private news channel.

The former president emphasized the need on constructive criticism during election campaigns instead of blaming their rivals.

He expressed his

views on various political matters, including the performance of key political figures and the challenges facing the nation.

Zardari expressed his concern for Balochistan's future within Pakistan, emphasizing the need to care for the Baloch people and address their issues with affection.

The PPP co-Chairman noted that political turmoil is expected to decrease after the elections, suggesting that negotiations and discussions can pave the way for a more stable political environment.

Asif Zardari hinted at talks with various political

parties, highlighting his commitment to dialogue and collaboration for the greater good.

He advised all the political parties to reach out to people across the country, from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to Balochistan to win their confidence in upcoming elections.

Describing Bilawal Bhutto as a reflection of PPP's ideology, he stressed his party's commitment to pushing forward its agenda.

Zardari expressed confidence that the PPP will achieve favorable results in the general elections without relying on independent candidates.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Minister for Planning Development & Special Initiatives, Muhammad Sami Saeed chairs the 3rd meeting of the Policy & Strategy Committee/Oversight Board for Post-Flood Resilient, Recovery, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Framework (4RF) at the Planning Ministry.

Security measures for 2024 general elections scrutinized in high-level meeting

KARACHI (APP): A high-level meeting, chaired by Inspector General Police (IGP) Sindh Riffat Mukhtar Raja delved into police security arrangements and readiness for the upcoming 2024 general elections. The officers received briefings and directives to conduct on-ground assessments of security measures and deployments in their respective areas.

The IGP Sindh emphasized the importance of finalizing and implementing election preparations at the zone and district levels, considering past incidents. He stressed upon the need for

heightened security, especially during nighttime political events and gatherings, based on leaders' confidence and recommendations.

The Sindh Police chief underscored the immediate reporting of any code of conduct violations to the Election Commission and urged strict legal action against individuals involved in weapon display or disturbances in the areas.

The meeting saw participation from Additional IGP Karachi, DIGPs and district SSPs, ensuring comprehensive discussions on election security strategies.

PPP candidates booked on murder charge after clash with MQM-P

KARACHI (INP): Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) has lodged a first information report (FIR) against the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) candidates for the General Elections 2024 and others on charges of 'killing' its worker during the clash in Karachi's Nazimabad area.

As per reports, the MQM-P filed an application with Gulbahar police station under murder and terrorism-related clauses of the Pakistan Penal Code and Anti-Terrorism Act, 1997.

SBP initiates process for issuance of new banknotes by announcing an art competition

KARACHI (APP): State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) initiating process for designing and issuing a new banknotes series of all existing denominations on Tuesday, announced an art competition to acquire innovative and thematic design ideas.

The central bank, in a statement issued here, said that it intended to complete the process involving a number of steps and stages from initial selection of design ideas to approval of the final printable design by the federal government within the next two years.

"The existing banknote series will remain in circulation even after the issuance of new series. Any decision on withdrawal of the existing series from circulation will be taken in a gradual and phased manner, once the new banknotes are issued and are in circulation in sufficient quantities," it added.

As part of the initial process of designing the new banknote series, the SBP is organizing an Art Competition to have innovative and thematic design ideas for the new banknote series.



SHIKARPUR: Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Shikarpur, Dr. Muhammad Imran Khan along with Deputy Commissioner (District Returning Officer) Altaf Chachar, Pakistan Army, Rangers and Police officials visiting sensitive polling stations in Kacha area of Khanpur as the security measures high alert to avoid outward incident during General Elections 2024 coming ahead, in Shikarpur.

SSP Malir for strict security measures amid Election-2024

KARACHI (APP): Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) district Malir Tariq Elahi Mastoi has directed all the officials concerned to make fool-proof security arrangements at highly sensitive polling stations during the general election 2024.

He said this while chairing a meeting to discuss the security arrangements for the election to be held on February 08, in a meeting held at the SP office Malir, said a spokesperson on Tuesday.

He directed the DIB In-charge Malir district to prepare and release the contingency plan regarding the poll-

ing station immediately. He further directed that all DSPs and SHOs should provide fool proof security arrangements to political gatherings, rallies and processions held in their respective areas. Tariq Elahi Mastoi said that effective security arrangements be adopted at the polling stations. The polling staff and staffers responsible for transportation of election material on the polling day be also provided full security, he directed.

He directed to establish monitoring office immediately at SSP Malir office and also ensure availability of the staff round-the-clock.



KAHUTA: Peoples Party Parliamentarians (PPPP) President, Asif Ali Zardari addresses during public gathering meeting as a part of election campaign in connection of General Election 2024 coming ahead, in Kahuta.

Preparations for holding free, fair elections to be completed soon: ECP

KARACHI (APP): Preparations for holding free and fair general elections across the country including Sindh are under process and will soon be completed as printing of ballot papers was in progress.

According to a press release, the printing of ballot papers will be completed by February 02 and then their delivery will be initiated with the help of Security institutions, DROs and ROs of the respective provinces.

Election Commission has provided facilities to the voters to get information regarding their vote status through SMS service by sending

CNIC number to 8300, the statement said.

This facility will enable people to get information about the polling station where they would have to cast their votes.

Meanwhile, ECP has so far provided training to 0.97 polling staff out of 976000 and the training process will be completed within three days.

The ECP has taken notice of the incident of firing among two political parties activists in Karachi and sought reports from Chief Secretary and IG Sindh so that action can be taken against responsible persons.

Sindh govt enhances minimum wage for contingency staff

KARACHI (APP): The Sindh Government has enhanced the minimum wage for employees working on a continent basis with effect from July 01, 2023.

According to the notification issued here on Tuesday, with the approval of competent Authority i.e., Secretary GA, SGA&CD, minimum wages of contingent paid staff (working on a continent basis) have been enhanced from 25000 to 32000 per month with effect from July 01, 2023.

Aseefa to lead election campaign rally in Hyderabad

HYDERABAD (APP): Pakistan Peoples Party's (PPP's) leader Aseefa Bhutto Zardari, daughter of PPP's Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari, will lead a party rally in Hyderabad on January 31.

The PPP Sindh's spokesman and candidate of PS-64 former Senator Aajiz Dhamrah informed here on Tuesday that the rally would start from Karan Khan Shoro village in the PS-60 constituency in Qasimabad.

He added that the rally would pass through Marvi Town, Alamdard Chowk, Naseem Nagar Chowk, Qasim Chowk, City Gate, Hala Naka, Ghangro Mori and Fateh Chowk areas before culminating at Giddu Chowk on Autobahn road.

Officers concerned acknowledged the valuable cooperation of the Sindh government in this regard.

Minister discusses peaceful conduct of General Elections

SUKKUR (APP): Caretaker Minister for Law and Human Rights Sindh, Barrister Muhammad Umar Soomro has held a meeting with concerned officers to discuss the peaceful conduct of up-coming general elections and review the preparations here.

Minister in his re-marks, assured full support from the Sindh government for the seamless execution of the election process.

He emphasized the

implemen-tation of the Election Commission's code of conduct, and measures will be taken to ensure compliance.

The minister further stated that law enforcement, in-cluding the police and other security agencies, will play a pivotal role in upholding the rule of law during the electoral process.

Officers concerned acknowledged the valuable cooperation of the Sindh government in this regard.



HYDERABAD: Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Vice Chief, Dr. Mairaj-ul-Huda Siddiqui addresses during protest demonstration against Hesco over the prolong electric load shedding, over billing, over reading bills and others, outside HESCO Headquarters located on Hussainabad in Hyderabad.

Ameer JI Karachi leads rally during election campaign in NA-249 Karachi

KARACHI (APP): Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami Karachi Hafiz Naem-ur-Rehman led the rally taken out by his party in connection with the election campaign in the National Assembly Constituency-NA 249 Liaquatabad district Central here on Tuesday. On the occasion, Hafiz Naemur will contest the general election 2024 from two NA constituencies in Karachi NA-246 and NA-250, addressed the people at Dakhana Chowrang, Muhammad Chowk, Choona Depo, Sindh Hotel and other places. He called upon the youth of his party to go door-to-door and on every street to contact the people including their relatives, loved ones, and friends to request them to exercise votes in favor of JI candidates.

He said that JI's election symbol "Tarrazoo" is

the sign of the people of Karachi and the sign of progress. People should come out of their homes on February 8 and exercise their votes in favor of JI-backed candidates, he appealed.

President Liaquatabad Market Association Babar Khan Bangash welcomed Hafiz Naemur Rahman on his arrival at the Dakhana Chowrang and flowers were showered on him. The youth on the occasion raised enthusiastic slogans while the residents of the area welcomed the Jamaat-e-Islami leaders.

He also appreciated the efforts of JI's NA-249 candidate Muslim Pervaiz and candidate for PS 127 Muhammad Masood Ali Khan. Chairman UC-1 Shahabuddin, Chairman UC 06 Moeen Abbas Madani, Chairman UC 4 Ubaid Ahmed Khan, and other notables were also present on this occasion.



KARACHI: Hamas spokesman Dr. Khalid Al-Qaddoumi addressing during meet the press at press club in the Provincial Capital.

Pak-US sign agreement to protect Pakistan's cultural heritage

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan and the United States signed an agreement here on Tuesday with an aim to protect the cultural heritage of Pakistan.

The agreement was signed by Pakistan Secretary of National Heritage and Culture Humaira Ahmed and Ambassador of US to Pakistan Donald Blome, said a press release issued by US embassy.

According to details, the agreement establishes import restrictions on certain types of archaeological and ethnological materials originating from Pakistan and entering the United States. The agreement facilitates the return of these cultural objects to the people of Pakistan. The cultural property agreement demonstrates the strong US and Pakistani commitment to disrupt the theft and trafficking of cultural objects and our shared goal of protecting Pakistan's rich and diverse cultural heritage.

The signing of agreement underscores the United States' global commitment to cultural heritage protection and preservation.

The United States has been unwavering in its commitment to protect and preserve cultural heritage around the world and to restrict trafficking in cultural property, which may be used to fund terrorist and criminal networks.

To date, the United States has returned over 175 cultural objects to Pakistan, and this agreement simplifies the process. Since 2001, the United States government has supported 35 cultural heritage preservation projects across Pakistan with more than \$8.4 million USD.

tunities for the US museums and the American public to learn about and experience Pakistan's history and culture.

"This agreement protects unique and historically significant artifacts for future generations. It also demonstrates US support for the principles of tolerance and respect for diversity – principles by which the people of this region have lived for centuries," said Ambassador Blome.



KARACHI: Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM-P) Senior Deputy Convener, Dr. Farooq Sattar addresses to his supporters during public gathering meeting as a part of Election Campaign in connection of the General Election 2024 coming ahead, held at Jama Clothes Market area in Karachi.

Secretary Education directs concerned officers to ensure basic facilities at polling stations before elections

HYDERABAD (APP): Secretary Education Sindh Shireen Narejo has directed all concerned officers to ensure early availability of all basic facilities at the polling stations before the forthcoming general elections 2024. She said that due to flood and rains in 2022, almost all schools were ruined and no negligence should be made in early repairing of the school buildings so that the election process could be carried out in a better way.

In a video link meeting with the Deputy Commissioners of all the districts of the division and the officials of the Works and Service Department here Tuesday, the Secretary Education further said that the districts which were suffering from slow behavior should complete the work in the next 48 hours and submit the report otherwise strict action would

be taken against them. Furniture has been provided which will be delivered to the schools soon, he said and added that the election was very close and the Deputy Commissioners should prepare a contingency plan for providing facilities to the voters.

The Divisional Commissioner directed the Deputy Commissioners to complete the works at most sensitive polling stations on boundary areas on priority basis so that the law and order situation can be maintained. In this regard, the DCs formed teams to monitor the entire process, he said.

The Divisional Commissioner instructed the concerned scholars to install solar panels at the polling stations where there is a problem of electricity so that the election process can be conducted in a better way.



MOHENJO DARO: Deputy Consul General of the US Consulate General Karachi, Jimmy Mauldin is visiting and expressed keen interest in the historical ruins of the World Heritage Monuments of Mohenjo Daro.

D.C chaired election meeting on law & order

LARKANA (APP): Deputy Commissioner and District Returning Officer Larkana Sharjeel Noor Chana has urged the police officials to make proper arrangements for security in the upcoming general election 2024 and to ensure law and order in any case. He expressed these views here on Tuesday while presiding over the meeting with the candidates of political parties.

The candidates have been urged to ensure full implementation of the Code of Conduct issued by the Election Commission of Pakistan so that the election is conducted smoothly, it added. He further said that the code of conduct issued by the Election Commission should be implemented without any difference.

He said that the election is a national duty, therefore all political parties and candidates should cooperate with the administration so that the election is con-

ducted smoothly. He also said that representatives and candidates should abide by the law and cooperate fully with law enforcement agencies. He further said that in this regard, a control room has also been set up in his office, whose phone number is 1410254-074, which can be contacted if there is any problem.

On this occasion, District Election Commissioner Larkana Attaullah Brohi welcomed the candidates and said that the code of conduct issued by the Election Commission of Pakistan should be fully implemented so that the election can be transparent.

He said that we have an effort to make Larkana an ideal district. Speaking on this occasion, Colonel Rangers said that the candidates of the political parties should follow the code of conduct and law and order will be maintained in any case so that the election can be conducted smoothly.