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Senate adopts resolution calling to postpone elections

Non-binding resolution moved by Senator Dilawar Khan highlights concerns over security situation, cold weather; Caretaker government, PML-N oppose the move; Political parties slam resolution

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Senate on Friday adopted a resolution calling for the postponement of general elections scheduled for February 8 in order to facilitate the effective participation of people across the country in the electioneering process in view of security and harsh weather conditions.

The resolution, moved by independent Senator Dilawar Khan, was passed by the House with a majority vote. However, there was low attendance.

Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi and Senator Afhan Ullah Khan of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) opposed the resolution.

Senator Dilawar, while presenting the resolution, urged the chair to postpone the agenda for taking up the matter of serious concern. He read out the resolution, which maintained that the Constitution of Pakistan "upholds the right to vote

for every citizen of Pakistan."

The resolution read: "The constitutional duty assigned to the Election Commission of Pakistan to conduct free and fair elections is contingent upon inclusivity and ensuring the participation of all regions and people.

The voter turnout in colder areas remains notably high during moderate weather conditions; January and February are recognized as the coldest months in a majority of the

areas of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

"Various groups and political parties have expressed significant reservations regarding anticipated difficulties in ensuring the participation of residents in cold areas during the electioneering process."

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QUETTA: Caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki expressing his views during a briefing on eve of his visit to Sheikh Muhammad bin Zayed Al-Nahyan Institute of Cardiology Quetta (ICQ)

Caretaker CM praises high standard ICQ; terms no less than any private hospital

Mir Ali Mardan Domki assures provision of grant for purchase of items required for PET scan and nuclear medicines in ICQ

Independent Report

QUETTA: The caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki has categorically stated that the Institute of Cardiology Quetta (ICQ) is a state-of-the-art hospital of Balochistan, and it's high standard is no less than any most expensive private hospital of the country.

He said that the ICQ is determined to provide quality healthcare facilities to the poor patients of the province.

The caretaker Chief Minister was on visit of the Sheikh Muhammad bin Zayed Al-Nahyan ICQ on Friday. During the visit, he visited different sections of the Institute.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Minister assured that the grant would be ensured for purchase of the items required for the PET scan and nuclear medicines in the Institute.

He also assured to release the funds already approved for construction of the road from Kach More to the Institute.

Moreover, the facility of transport would also be provided to the patients for movement from and to the Institute of Cardiology.

Similarly, the street lights would also be installed from Kach More to the Institute, the caretaker Chief Minister assured further.

While on the other hand, the orders are being issued for mobile patrolling after establishing police check post at the Kach More.

He assured that the solarization of Institute of Cardiology would also be done to resolve the electricity issues there.

PM asks envoys to identify avenues for Pakistan's int'l economic collaborations

Reiterates Pakistan's continued support for Kashmiris' right to self determination

Independent Report

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Friday asked Pakistan's envoys in the United States and the United Kingdom to identify the new avenues for Pakistan's economic collaborations at international level.

The prime minister, in a meeting with Pakistan's Ambassador in the US Masood Khan and Ambassador in the UK Dr Muhammad Faisal, instructed them to constantly highlight the Kashmir cause as well as Pakistan's stance on Palestine issue.

The envoys briefed the prime minister about the performance of their respective missions and also got the prime minister's instructions on Pakistan's foreign policy.

The prime minister also directed the envoys to hold road shows for attracting foreign investment to the projects initiated under the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC).

Calling the overseas Pakistanis a national asset, Prime Minister Kakar asked the Pakistani missions to address the problems faced by the expatriates on priority basis.

He also called for persuading the Pakistani diaspora to invest their capital in Pakistan.

Meanwhile Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Friday reiterated that Pakistan would continue to extend its full political, diplomatic, and moral support to the valiant Kashmiri people in their just struggle for their rights including the inalienable right to self-determination, by the relevant resolutions of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

"Today, Kashmiris around the world are observing the 75th anniversary of the Resolution adopted by the United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan (UNCIP), providing that the Jammu and Kashmir dispute will be decided through the democratic method of a free and impartial plebiscite under the UN auspices, the prime minister said in a message on the occasion of Self-Determination Day.



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Permanent Representative in UN Mr. Munir Akram calls on caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.

SC reserves judgment regarding interpretation of Article 62 (1)(f)

ISLAMABAD (APP): A seven-member larger bench of the Supreme Court on Friday reserved its judgment in the case pertaining to the interpretation of Article 62(1)(f) of the Constitution and disqualification tenure.

The bench headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa and comprising Justice Mansoor Ali Shah, Justice Yahya Afridi, Justice Amin Ud Din Khan, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar and Justice Musarrat Hilali heard the case.

The bench reserved the

verdict after all the respondents concluded their arguments.

During the course of proceedings, the CJP observed that the court would announce the short order soon.

Attorney General for Pakistan Mansoor Usman Awan and Jahangir Tareen's lawyer Makhdoom Ali Khan gave arguments before the bench.

The apex court had taken notice of the lifetime disqualification under Article 62(1)(f) in the appeal of former MPA Mir Badshah Qaisrani against his disqualification.

President approves reconstitution of CCI

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr. Arif Alvi on Friday approved reconstitution of the Council of Common Interests (CCI) on the advice of the prime minister.

The president gave the approval under Article 153 of the Constitution. The CCI would be headed by the Prime Minister of Pakistan while the chief ministers of the four provinces and three federal ministers would be members of the council.

The three federal cabinet members include Federal Minister of Finance and Revenue, Minister of Privatization, and Minister of Law and Justice.

Abdul Ghafoor Kalmati dies in Karachi

Independent Report

QUETTA: The former Provincial Minister, Mir Abdul Ghafoor Kalmati died after protracted illness in Karachi on Friday.

The family sources said that Kalmati was admitted in a private hospital of Karachi.

Later, his body was shifted to Gwadar from Karachi for burial. He would be laid to rest in the ancestral graveyard in Gwadar today (Saturday).

Sunni Ulema Council leader Masood Usmani killed in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD (INP): Sunni Ulema Council (SUC) leader Maulana Masood ur Rehman Usmani was shot dead by unknown assailants in Islamabad on Friday evening. According to police, unknown armed men opened fire on the vehicle Deputy General Secretary Sunni Ulema Council Masood Usmani.

He was rushed to hospital where doctors pronounced him dead. Soon after the incident, police personnel reached the crime scene and cordoned off the area.

All preparations completed by GoB for February 8 general elections, CS briefed

Best arrangements being ensured for security of on most sensitive and sensitive polling stations; funds released for repair of 55 polling stations in flood hit areas

Independent Report

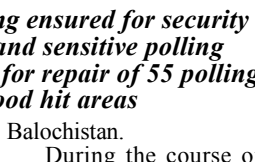
QUETTA: The Government of Balochistan has completed all necessary arrangements and preparations for the upcoming general elections in Balochistan as elsewhere in the country on February 8, 2024.

This was informed by the concerned high ups at the meeting of secretaries committee held regarding preparations of the general elections in the province, here on Friday morning.

The Chief Secretary Balochistan, Shakeel Qadir Khan presided over the meeting.

The Provincial Election Commissioner, Ejaz Anwar Chohan and other concerned high ups were also present in the meeting.

The Provincial Election Commissioner and Secretary Local Government Department briefed the meeting about the preparations of elections in



COLOMBO: Secretary Defence Lt Gen (Retired) Hamood Uz Zaman Khan calls on President of Sri Lanka, Ranil Wickremesinghe at Presidential Secretariat Sri Lanka.

'We engaging with transporters on Yaro-Chaman Highway to reopen route': Jan Achakzai

QUETTA (APP): Balochistan Information Minister Jan Achakzai on Friday said that we were actively engaging with the transporters on the Yaro-Chaman Highway to find a solution and reopen the route.

He said that the local administration was working closely with transporters to address their concerns, said a press release.

He said that the primary demand of the demonstrators was the release of trucks currently held up in Chaman by another group of protesters in Parlat, who demanding the government to remove the passport requirement.

Most-wanted terrorist gunned down in Tank operation

TANK (INP): A most-wanted terrorist with Rs2.5 million reward on his head was gunned down along with an accomplice by security forces during an operation in Tank district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

According to an ISPR statement released on Friday morning, most-wanted terrorist Gul Yousaf alias Toor was neutralized in a gunbattle with troops during an intelligence-based operation which was conducted on the night between January 4 and 5 in Tank district.

"During the conduct of operation, after an intense fire exchange, two terrorists, including HVT (high-value target) Gul Yousaf @ Toor, were sent to hell," the ISPR said, adding "Terrorist Gul Yousaf remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities against security forces.

He said that Levies force has delivered and thus gained trust of the masses. He said that our jawans have rendered sacrifice of their lives for protection of the life and property of the masses.

The Minister Home was addressing the passing out parade of Balochistan Levies force on Friday.

The Director General

No directives from PM, cabinet for delay in elections: Solangi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs, Murtaza Solangi on Friday said that there was no directives from the Prime Minister or the federal cabinet for delay in general elections.

Talking to the media outside the Parliament House, the minister said that he did not get a chance to give arguments in the resolution on the postponement of the elections in the upper house.

According to Article 218(3) of the Constitution, it was the power of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), to conduct elections, give a date or change the date for elections, he said. "We cannot interfere in the affairs of a constitutional body," Murtaza Solangi said.

Acknowledging the problems mentioned in the resolution were the real problems, he said adding that these problems had existed before in the history of Pakistan's Parliamentary politics and elections.

The minister maintained that it was the government's responsibility to look into the issues of harsh weather and other matters including providing security. "So far, no signal has been received from any quarters regarding postponement of elections," he said. "Only the ECP, he said had the constitutional authority to postpone the elections.



MUZAFFERABAD: Activists of Pasban-e-Hurriyat Jammu and Kashmir holds placards and shouting slogans during protest against the Indian oppression, to mark the Self-Determination Day, in City.

All out efforts made for increasing capacity of Levies force: Jamali

Independent Report

QUETTA: The caretaker Provincial Minister for Home, Captain (Retd) Mir Muhammad Zubair Jamali has stated that Levies force has become professional force in the province and as such all out efforts are being made to increase capacity of the force.

He said that Levies force has delivered and thus gained trust of the masses. He said that our jawans have rendered sacrifice of their lives for protection of the life and property of the masses.

The Minister Home was addressing the passing out parade of Balochistan Levies force on Friday.

The Director General

FM calls for immediate cessation of human rights violation in IIOJK

From Czechangez Khan Jadoon

ISLAMABAD: The Foreign Minister, Jalil Abbas Jilani, on the Occasion of Right to Self-Determination Day said that the fifth of January is annually observed as the Right to Self-Determination Day for the people of Jammu and Kashmir. On this day in 1949, the United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan (UNCIP) adopted a resolution that guarantees a free and fair plebiscite in Jammu and Kashmir, to enable the Kashmiri people to realize their right to self-determination.

The right to self-determination is a fundamental principle of international law. Every year, the UN General Assembly adopts a resolution that reaffirms the legal right of people to decide their own destiny. It expresses unequivocal support for the realization of the right to self-determination for people under for-

ign occupation. Regrettably, the Kashmiri people have not been able to exercise this inalienable right.

He added that the India is taking a number of steps to consolidate its occupation of the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), which is an internationally-recognized disputed territory.

Following its illegal and unilateral actions of 5 August 2019, India's efforts have been aimed at engineering demographic and political changes so that the Kashmiris are reduced to a disempowered community in their own land. The Indian Supreme Court's recent verdict is yet another manifestation of India's desire to undermine the right to self-determination of the Kashmiri people.

India is also subjecting the Kashmiri people to systematic human rights violations. It has created an environment of fear to crush dissent in IIOJK.



QUETTA: Caretaker Home Minister Captain (retd) Muhammad Zubair Jamali in a group photo with jawans who got special commando training during passing out parade of Balochistan Levies force

Hazlewood has Pakistan reeling after Jamal's 3rd Test heroics

SYDNEY (AFP/APP): Josh Hazlewood claimed three wickets in an electrifying over to bowl Australia into a potential winning position over Pakistan in an absorbing third Test in Sydney on Friday.

Paceman Hazlewood ripped through to reduce the tourists from 67 for four to go to the close on the third day at 68 for seven, a lead of 82, on a deteriorating Sydney Cricket Ground pitch.

Pakistan's last genuine hopes of building a challenging target for Australia to chase in the fourth innings hinge on Mohammad Rizwan, who is six not out, and bowling hero Aamer Jamal, who is yet to score.

Hazlewood swung the contest, taking 4-9 off five overs, after Australia snared two wickets for just one run in the first eight balls of the second innings to rock the Pakistan top order.

"On this wicket we were attacking the stumps as much as Pakistan were doing," Hazlewood said.

"A lead of 82 but, as you can see, the wicket, it's quite tough. Anything around 130 would be ideal to chase.

"Rizwan is a dangerous player, hopefully we will see the back of him early tomorrow."

The visitors looked to have the edge after dismissing

Australia for 299, to take a first-innings lead of 14, on the back of an inspired 6-69 from Jamal.

In a superb four-wicket spell after tea, Jamal first had Mitchell Marsh caught at mid-off by Shan Masood for 54.

Two balls later he had Pat Cummins lbw for a duck and followed up with the dismissals of Nathan Lyon (5) and Hazlewood (0).

"I am over the moon. Feeling proud to be representing my country at such a level and performing for them," Jamal said. "This is a wonderful achievement for me."

"I just back myself every time. Even if I concede runs, I back myself."

The stung Australians roared back removing Abdullah Shafiq for his second duck of the Test and skipper Shan Masood first ball.

Young debutant Saim Ayub, out without scoring in the first innings, showed poise and technique in putting on 56 runs with Babar Azam, before he was lbw to Lyon for 33. It was Lyon's 50th Test wicket.

Azam fell 14 balls later, getting a nick off Travis Head to wicketkeeper Alex Carey for 23.

Then Hazlewood struck with his electrifying fifth over, the penultimate one of the day.



QUETTA: Members of Sunni Ulema Council are holding rally on the occasion of death anniversary of the first Caliph Hazrat Abu Bakar Siddique (RA) at Quetta press club.



MULTAN: Peoples Party (PPP) Co-Chairman, Asif Ali Zardari along with other leaders cutting a cake during the 96th birth anniversary ceremony of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto held at Peoples Secretariat in Multan.

Senate Committee deliberates on Bill titled "The Cutting of Trees (Prohibition) (Amendment) Bill, 2023"

From Our Special Correspondent

ISLAMABAD: A Meeting of Senate Standing Committee on Interior was held at Parliament House on Friday with Senator Mohsin Aziz in Chair.

The Senate Committee deliberated on the Bill titled "The Cutting of Trees (Prohibition) (Amendment) Bill, 2023." Senator Palwasha Muhammad Zai Khan, the bill's mover, stated that the aim of the bill is to protect the environment of the city, given the country's current climate crisis.

She emphasized that the bill serves as an epitome for the provinces. She added that centuries-old trees have been cut down to meet the housing needs of the city, and such practices should be stopped once and for all. Officials informed the committee that certain provisions in the CDA exclusively deal with the protection of trees, and the CDA is also empowered to impose fines on wrongdoers.

The committee deferred the deliberations on the bill until the next meeting. Furthermore, the committee discussed the Bill titled "The Rehriban (Street Vendors) Livelihood Protection Bill, 2023." Senator Sania Nishtar, the bill's mover,

explained that there are approximately one million street vendors in the country, generating Rs. 900 Billion in annual sales. Unfortunately, there is no legal framework in place to regulate these street vendors. She stated that the purpose of the bill is to protect street vendors from the vandalism of municipal staff and shopkeepers and to provide a secure livelihood for street vendors.

Officials apprised the committee that the bill is in conflict with the Local Government Act, and certain bylaws are already in place for the regulation of street vendors. The committee deferred the deliberations on the bill until the next meeting. Moreover, the Senate body deliberated on the Bill titled "The National Database and Registration Authority Bill, 2023."

Senator Fawzia Arshad, the bill's mover, stated that the primary objective of the bill is to make it mandatory for NADRA to provide registration facilities to persons with disabilities, prisoners, transgender persons, and religious minorities.

She maintained that the dynamics of national identification have rapidly changed during the past decade, and it is essential to

conform the NADRA ordinance to the present time. Moreover, NADRA officials apprised the committee that the NADRA ordinance makes it mandatory for every citizen to register themselves with NADRA, and refusal to do so is an offense.

The committee deferred the deliberations on the bill until the next meeting. Additionally, the committee was briefed by the FIA and Pakistan Telecommunication Authority on actions against the menace of the growing exposure of children to online pornography. Officials apprised the committee that a specialized unit named "Unit to Counter Online Child Abuse" has been dedicated to countering child abuse. Moreover, a total of 184 FIRs have been registered on child pornography in the last two years, and 225 offenders have been arrested. Currently, the conviction rate in child pornography cases stands at 27 percent. Senator Mohsin Aziz commented that there is a dire need to enhance the conviction rate in child abuse cases, with a special focus on raising awareness against this menace.

The committee also recommended that websites containing questionable material should be banned, as the internet has adverse effects on the younger generation. In attendance were Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri, Senator Saifullah Abro, Senator Shahadat Awan, Senator Fawzia Arshad, Senator Dilawar Khan, Senator Sania Nishtar, Senator Palwasha Muhammad Zia Khan, Secretary Interior Ministry Aftab Khalid Durrani, Chairman NADRA, Lieutenant General Muhammad Munir Afsar, Chairman CDA Capt(R) Anwar ul Haq, Chairman PTA Maj.General (R) Hafeezur Rehman and other senior officials of relevant departments were also in attendance.

All preparations completed...

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process of training of the staff would be completed by January 31, 2024.

Moreover, the control rooms would be set up at the Election Commission of Pakistan, Provincial Election Commissioner offices as well as divisional and district levels, it was also informed.

Addressing the meeting, Chief Secretary directed to the concerned to remain effective the monitoring teams formed for monitoring of the elections. The implementation on election code of conduct should be ensured, he directed further. Similarly, all the basic



QUETTA: Administrator Quetta, Jabbar Baloch is giving a detailed briefing to Muhammad Hamza Shafiqat, Commissioner Quetta and Saad Bin Asad, DC Quetta about the vehicles used by the Metropolitan Corporation, in Quetta.

January 5, 1949 resolution provides base to Kashmiris' struggle: Speakers

ISLAMABAD (INP): All Parties Hurriyat Conference Azad Jammu and Kashmir (APHC-AJK) chapter organized a seminar, today, in Islamabad in connection with the Self-Determination Day.

APHC-AJK Convener Mahmood Ahmad Saghar chaired the meeting while Lord Mayor of Stoke-on-Trent, London, Majid Khan was the chief guest.

Convener Mahmood Ahmad Saghar and other speakers highlighting the importance of the resolution adopted by the United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan (UNCIP) on Kashmir in January 5, 1949 provides the basis for the freedom struggle of the Kashmiris and recognizes their right to self-determination. They said the Kashmiris have rendered unparalleled sacrifices for securing their right to self-determination and the process continues even today.

The speakers said despite using all the resources India failed to suppress the freedom spirit of the Kashmiris, adding it should create conducive environment for the peaceful settlement of the lingering Kashmir dispute by realizing the ground realities.

They appealed to the United Nations to implement its resolutions regarding Kashmir and urged the international human rights

organizations to take notice of the increasing violations of human rights in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir. The settlement of the Kashmir dispute is imperative for the establishment of permanent peace in South Asia, they added.

The speakers also expressed serious concern over the prevailing situation in the occupied territory and lamented that the Indian troops were killing youth in custody, barging into houses, arresting people, torturing residents, including women and elderly people, and destroying property. They termed India's repressive actions in occupied Kashmir as illegal, unconstitutional and against the international laws and United Nations resolutions.

At the end, a special prayer was offered for the martyrs of occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

The speakers included Chairman of Jammu and Kashmir Self-Determination Movement International, Raja Najabat Hussain, APHC-AJK leaders Muhammad Farooq Rehman, Sheikh Abdul Mateen, Intiaz Wani, Mir Tahir Masood, Altaf Hussain Wani, Muhammad Hussain Khateeb, Khursheed Mir, Showkat Ahmed, Sheikh Majid, Syed Mushtaq Gilani and others.

Eager to modern education; students lament educational backwardness in modern era

By Rafiullah Mandokhail

ZHOB: 'Despite the fact that education and development are interdependent. The countries experienced accelerated development have done so by modernizing and facilitating meaningful education, but in this era of science and technology, we are deprived of the modern educational opportunities. Our problems are ranging from poverty, unemployment and low literacy rate and state-of-the-art educational institutions. Historically and geographically important, Zhob has always remained a backward, remote district of Pashtoon-Baloch province,' lamented the Pashtoonkhwah student organization here on Friday.

Addressing a crowded press conference, the provincial deputy organizers of Pashtoonkhwah student organization Emal Sarwan, Samad Afghan, district secretary Amir-ul-Bashar, district senior co-secretary Irfanullah, secretary BUITEMS Zhob campus Qahir Khan Kakar, office bearers and activists said that the densely populated district Zhob shares borders with South Waziristan, Afghanistan, Loralai and Dera Ismail Khan but ironically deprived of all the basic amenities of life including a state-of-the-art university even in this modern era. 'Today, there are

twenty universities alone in Faisalabad, twenty-five universities in the Punjab capital Lahore and over two dozen universities in the federal capital Islamabad and Rawalpindi, but unfortunately, our literacy rate is still very low as compared

A few years back, the construction work of the campus was started on two hundred acres of land near Killi Hassanzai,' they lauded.

'They said, the sub-campus of Panjgur and Turbat varsities have been granted university status,



to other provinces,' they said.

The students said that Pashtoon-Baloch province, particularly Southern Pashtoonkhwah, is facing numerous problems including poverty, backwardness, illiteracy, unrest and unemployment. Keeping in mind the educational backwardness, the utmost priority of the higher education commission, governor, the caretaker CM and the provincial education minister should be modern education.

'Establishment of BUITEMS Zhob campus is a much appreciated initiative, where both girls and boys students from this backward region are studying in different disciplines.

The students have demanded the upgradation of BUITEMS Zhob campus into university, so that the educational backwardness could be eliminated.

Govt. issues directives for election of PCB chairman's slot: Solangi told Senate

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Parliamentary Affairs, Murtaza Solangi, informed the Senate on Friday that the government has issued directives for the elections of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman's slot. In response to Senator Mushtaq Ahmad's question during question hours in the Senate, he said that the appointment of the PCB Chairman was made by the previous government, not by the caretaker government.

The Minister said that the current Chairman of the PCB has previously worked in this position.

He added that the present government has limited the powers of the PCB Chairman, and the chairman of the PCB cannot make vital decisions independently under the current government's directives.

Senate adopts resolution calling to postpone elections...

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It noted that the recent incidents, including the foiled attempts on the lives of Jamiaat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman and former MNA Mohsin Dawar, as well as threatening calls targeting Awami National Party's Provincial Chief Aimal Wali Khan and other political figures, had raised concerns about the safety of political leaders.

"The Ministry of Interior has conveyed serious threats to the lives of prominent politicians, further exacerbating the challenges faced by political parties in exercising their right to free and fair election campaigning," the resolution added.

There had been a marked increase in attacks on security forces and citizens claiming precious lives particularly in northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces, it further said.

The resolution read: "The intelligence agencies have warned of militant attack threats on election rallies in the two provinces; increase in attacks targeting both security forces and civilians, resulting in the loss of valuable lives, particularly in the northwestern region of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces;

"Alerts issued by intelligence agencies, indicating

imminent threats of militant attacks on election rallies within the aforementioned provinces may have potential impact on the safety of citizens and the democratic electoral process;

"Cognizant of the resurgence of the Covid-19 virus in the country and health sector's concerns about potential further spread;

"Reaffirms that while holding the judgment of the Honourable Supreme Court of Pakistan regarding the elections date in the highest esteem for the Upper House of the Parliament, the Senate of Pakistan, being the defender of the rights of all federating units, is obligated to ensure the constitutional guarantees and to alleviate fears of the smaller provinces especially vulnerable geographical territories.

"The Senate of Pakistan hereby resolves that conducting elections without addressing legitimate concerns, facilitating sufficient opportunities for election campaigns, and guaranteeing the safety of politicians and citizens would amount to a violation of the fundamental right to vote and political participation, as safeguarded by the Constitution of Pakistan;

"The elections scheduled for 8th February 2024

may be postponed to facilitate the effective participation of people from all areas of Pakistan and belonging to all political shades in the electioneering process. This delay aims to protect and uphold their constitutional right to political participation;

"The Election Commission of Pakistan is urged to promptly implement the postponement and ensure that all necessary arrangements are in place to facilitate the smooth conduct of elections on the revised date;

"The process of filing of nomination papers and scrutiny shall continue with the revised/extended timelines;

"The Election Commission of Pakistan shall engage proactively with relevant stakeholders, political parties, and communities in an environment conducive to free and fair elections.

"The Senate of Pakistan expresses confidence in the ability of the Election Commission of Pakistan to effectively manage and oversee the revised election schedule, ensuring the integrity and fairness of the electoral process."

Opposing the resolution, Senator Afnanullah said though the current security situation in the country was not good but the

elections could not be delayed on that count. The polls were held in 2008 and 2013 despite worst conditions then.

Moreover, two general elections in the past had been held in the month of February, he added.

Afnanullah questioned whether the country of 240 million people could be run without constitutional institutions. The mover probably "don't want a parliament in the country," he added.

The United Kingdom and the United States had not deferred elections even during the World War II, but here weather conditions were being cited as an excuse to delay the polls, he regretted.

Some elements wanted delay of elections for their "personal benefits", he added.

Speaking in the House, independent Senator Hidayatullah said that he had got registered nine first information reports in the past two weeks against threats he had been receiving.

"The provincial candidate of the JUI-F escaped a bomb blast yesterday," he added.

Balochistan Awami Party's Senator Manzoor Ahmed Kakar supported the resolution, saying that both security and economic conditions in the country

had worsened over time. Senator Kauda Babar said elections could not be held in many parts of the country because of extreme weather conditions in February.

Later, the session was prorogued sine die after passage of the resolution.

After the Senate adopted a resolution seeking a delay in general elections with just a month left in the much-awaited polls, political parties Friday rejected the non-binding resolution, saying that further deferring the electoral process would be "unconstitutional".

The majority of the lawmakers present in the legislature approved the resolution — seeking polls delay in the light of extreme weather in hilly areas and the deteriorating security situation — moved by independent lawmaker Senator Dilawar Khan earlier in the day.

Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Senator Sherry Rehman, while addressing a press conference after the resolution was approved in the upper house of parliament, said that the party has a clear stance that the elections should not be put off.

"We absolutely do not support the delay in elections," she said, adding that the PPP didn't favour the Senate resolution.

Dr Nadeem Jan says: Capital's public hospitals bear liabilities of Rs12 b impacting quality of health facilities

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for National Health Services, Dr Nadeem Jan on Friday told the Upper House of the Parliament that there was no severe shortage of medicines in the public hospitals of the federal capital, however, due to their liabilities of Rs12 billion a decline in healthcare facilities and quality of services was witnessed.

The minister was responding to the queries of the Senators during the question hour session at the commencement of the 334th Session of the Senate chaired by Chairman Senate, Sadiq Sanjrani.

Earlier, the Chairman Senate at the commencement of the proceedings, extended his regards and greetings on Jumma to the members.

Upon the request of Senator Sadiq Abbasi, the Chairman Senate urged the House to hold fateha (prayer) on the demise of

the late former senator, finance minister and national security advisor Sartaj Aziz who had passed away on January 2, 2024 at the age of 94.

Senator Mushtaq Ahmed on his directive led the prayer and urged the members to also recite fateha for the six labourers killed by the terrorists in North Waziristan.

Senator Sadiq Abbasi of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) while paying tribute to the former Senator Sartaj Aziz said he was a towering personality of the country who served for many international organizations, remained general secretary of Muslim League, remained senator, and finance minister.

He had rendered great services in education sector and promoted Beaconhouse School System which was acknowledged by the latter. He wrote many books on the

politics, and economics of Pakistan and was an expert in agriculture.

Senator Mushtaq Ahmed of Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan (JIP) said the caretaker government had denied an increase in the prices of medicines which was regrettable as only 300% increase alone in anti-epileptic drug was noticed.

Responding to the Senator's query, Caretaker Health Minister Nadeem Jan said there was no increase in medicines during the interim government's tenure. He said the policy on this matter was formed in 2018 that stated that pharmaceutical companies under CPI can raise 7 percent increase on essential and 10 percent on non-essential medicines. However, in 2022 the policy was reviewed and it was recommended that 20 percent on essential and 14 percent on essential can be increased by the pharmaceutical companies under CPI, he added.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Aneeq Ahmed addressing a seminar on Interfaith Harmony at IQRA University H-9.

Jamal Shah directs to accelerate conservation work during Rawat Fort visit

Our correspondent
ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture Jamal Shah on Friday visited Rawat Fort and give instruction to complete the conservation work speedily.

Federal Secretary National Heritage & Culture Ms. Humaira Ahmad, Director General Department of Archaeology and Museum (DOAM) Dr Abdul Azeem and other senior officers were also present on the occasion.

The senior officials or DOAM briefed the Minister and Secretary National Heritage and Culture Division

regarding a project for preservation, restoration, and preservation and development of Rawat Fort.

Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture Jamal Shah said that Department of Archaeology & Museums has started a project for preservation, restoration, and preservation of Rawat Fort. Jamal Shah said that the main objectives of the project is to conserve, develop and exhibit our cultural heritage through scientific and traditional techniques. The project will not only prevent the site from further decay, but will pre-

serve them for coming generations and will also enhance tourism in the country as well as in the area, he said.

The Minister said that archaeological excavation, conservation and restoration work is intensive and will provide short-term employment to the people in the project area. Rawat, an ancient Sarai is situated about 25 miles from Rawalpindi towards Jhelum close to the GT road.

The present small fortress Sarai appears to have been built during the sultanate period in early 15th century A.D.

Lawyers raise concern over Indian SC verdict on Kashmir

ISLAMABAD (APP): A delegation of lawyers from various Bar Councils of Pakistan on Friday expressed serious concern over Indian Supreme Court's verdict on Kashmir and urged to formulate a comprehensive framework to challenge the decision at the international level.

A delegation comprising representatives from various Bar Councils of Pakistan including the Islamabad Bar Council, Azad Kashmir Bar Council, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Bar Council, called upon Federal Minister for Law and Justice

Ahmad Irfan Aslam to discuss the pressing issue of the Indian Supreme Court's decision to uphold the Indian government's revocation of special status for the state of Jammu and Kashmir, said a press release. During the meeting, members of the delegation raised their concerns about the potential implications of the said decision on the status of the people of IIOJK. The lawyers highlighted the need for Pakistan to formulate a robust counter-narrative and a comprehensive framework to challenge the verdict at the international level.

Tax clearance certificate issued to Sanjrani

ISLAMABAD (Online): Tax clearance certificate has been issued to chairman Senate Sadiq Sanjrani.

Tax clearance certificate has been issued by FBR.

The candidates will take part in the election easily due to issuance of tax clearance certificate.

Zulfiqar Bhutto remembered on his 96th birth anniversary

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 96th birth anniversary of former Prime Minister and founder of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto (ZAB) was observed on Friday.

The PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and PPP Co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari paid tribute to the former premier Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto.

Bilawal Bhutto in a message on X on the birth anniversary of his grandfather said ZAB gave the Constitution and the nuclear program to the country. He paid rich tributes to the Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto for his political vision and wisdom for the country.

Bilawal vowed to continue his grandfather's legacy and to complete the popular slogan of PPP 'roti, kapra aur makaaan' in the upcoming elections of 2024 to be held on February 8.

Call for using face masks to avoid contraction of influenza

ISLAMABAD (APP): A health expert on Friday advised citizens to use face masks and wash their hands to avoid contraction of the influenza virus as it is easily transmissible from an infected person to others.

"Most patients are complaining of high fever, cough, body pains, runny nose, headaches and sore throat due to the influenza virus," Dr Halar Shaikh, a general physician told a private news channel.

He said most patients were complaining of high fever, cough, body pains, runny nose, headaches and sore throat due to the virus. Shaikh urged the infected people to stay home for at least 24 hours; limit contact with others.

Solangi reiterates Pakistan's commitment to continue support for Kashmir cause

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Murtaza Solangi said on Friday reiterated the commitment of the government and people of Pakistan to contribute support for Kashmir cause.

"Today we reiterate our commitment that Pakistan will continue to support Kashmiris politically, diplomatically and morally till they get their rightful rights and the success of their freedom struggle," Murtaza Solangi said in a message on the occasion of Kashmir Self-Determination Day.

Kashmiri people on both sides of the Line of Control and around the world were celebrating the right to self-determination today, Murtaza Solangi said.

The minister said that United Nations Security Council, through a resolution on January 5, 1949, gave the Kashmiri people the right to decide their future as per their wishes.

Today, 75 years have passed since this promise

made to the Kashmiri people, but unfortunately this promise has not been fulfilled till date, Murtaza Solangi lamented.

The minister urged the United Nations to honour the promises made to the Kashmiri people and support their struggle for self-determination.

The people of Jammu and Kashmir were waiting for a peaceful resolution of the Kashmir dispute as per the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council, he maintained.

The minister said the UN Security Council should fulfill its commitments.

India was trying to strengthen its grip on occupied Jammu and Kashmir, Murtaza Solangi said adding the decision of the Supreme Court of India on 11 December 2023 regarding the status of the disputed territory was the latest step in this direction.

India, he said was leaving no stone unturned to change the demography of Occupied Jammu and Kashmir based on religion.



ISLAMABAD: Pakistani High Commissioner in the UK Dr. Muhammad Faisal calls on Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.

Lawmakers reaffirm to continue unyielding support for Palestine

ISLAMABAD (INP): Lawmakers in the Upper House of Parliament on Friday reaffirmed continued unyielding support for Palestine and also emphasized Pakistan's unwavering support for its people.

Speaking in Senate here on Friday, Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed asserted that the entire Pakistani nation including parliament will stand resolutely until the independent state of Palestine is established, with Al Quds Sharif as its capital.

Senator Mushtaq Ahmed of JI acknowledged the significant sacrifices made by the innocent people of Gaza and Palestine, expressing confidence in the eventual freedom of Palestine, with Al Quds Sharif as its capital.

He called on the international community to hold Israel accountable for its aggression in Palestine, urging the OIC to conduct a public hearing on Israel's

war crimes and crimes against humanity.

He further advocated for Pakistan's continued support for a ceasefire in Palestine and overall peace in the region.

Leader of the House, Senator Ishaq Dar, echoed the sentiments expressed by Senators Mushahid Hussain Syed and Mushtaq Ahmed, affirming full support for Palestine. He emphasized that Pakistan is committed to standing behind Palestine in its quest for sovereignty.

Senator Maulvi Faiz Muhammad expressed his steadfast support for the Palestinian cause and pledged to continue backing it.

Speaking on a point of public importance, Senator Dost Muhammad Khan urged the government to address the issues facing ex-FATA, emphasizing the importance of providing the region with its committed share.



ISLAMABAD: National University of Sciences and Technology and NADRA Technologies Limited have formalized a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), facilitating collaboration in research, development and innovation of biometric technologies.

DC Islamabad kicks off anti-polio drive targeting 400,000 children

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Commissioner Islamabad Irfan Nawaz Memon has inaugurated an extensive anti-polio campaign aiming to vaccinate 400,000 children under the age of five years.

Accompanied by a dedicated team, including Additional Deputy Commissioners, District Health Officer and Assistant Commissioners, the Deputy Commissioner personally administered polio drops, setting a determined tone for the initiative, ICT spokesman Dr Abdullah Tabassum told on Friday.

The week long drive involves a comprehensive strategy to reach and every household and street in the federal capital. The polio workers and teams are diligently going door-to-door, ensuring that no child is left without the vital vaccine to

guarantee effective coverage, Assistant Commissioners will supervise the teams in their respective jurisdictions.

Highlighting the importance of the campaign, the DC emphasized the presence of positive polio cases in nearby areas. With Islamabad being a hub of nationwide movement, he urged the citizens to exercise heightened caution.

The Deputy Commissioner's call for vigilance underscores the need for a collective effort to maintain the capital's polio-free status.

The DC urged the parents to ensure their children receive two doses of polio drops. The emphasis on the dual doses aligns with the global strategy to eradicate polio and underscores the community's role in achieving a polio-free Pakistan.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture Jamal Shah visits Rawat Fort to revive conservation work.

Talented Science students can apply for participating in Int'l Science Olympiads

ISLAMABAD (APP): The talented Science students can register through the STEM Career Programme for participating in the upcoming International Science Olympiads (ISOs) scheduled to be held in the month of July, 2025. International Science Olympiads include 66th International Mathematical Olympiad (IMO) in Australia, 57th International Chemistry Olympiad (ICHO) in UAE, 36th International Biology Olympiad (IBO) in Philippines and 55th International Physics Olympiad (IPHO) in France. According to an official source, the STEM Career Programme is a joint venture of HEC and PIEAS and aims to inspire youth of the nation to opt for careers in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and prepare them for participation in the annual International Olympiad in Physics,

Chemistry, Biology and Mathematics, exhibiting the country's natural talent in these competitions.

About the eligibility criteria, the official source revealed that the students must have aggregate marks of 60 percent or more in core subjects i.e. Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Mathematics in last exam while the age should be less than 20 years at the time of participation in ISOs.

The current students of Pre-9th, 9th, 10th and 11th (Matric/O Level, or F.Sc-I/A-Level-1) can apply for the programme. While students who are currently studying in F.Sc (Part-II)/A-Level (Part-II) and University Students are not eligible to apply. The intended participants can register through www.stem.edu.pk till the last date February 18, 2024 while the nationwide screening test will be conducted in the major cities of the country on March 03, 2024.

Capital Police ensuring foolproof security measures in High Security Zone



Independent Report
ISLAMABAD: Following the special directions of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad Capital Police is actively engaged in ensuring effective security arrangements during the hearings of significant cases in the superior courts situated in high-security zone, a public relations officer said.

He said that, the Islamabad Capital Police teams in the high-security zone are diligently fulfilling their duties to ensure the effective security arrangements during the hearings of crucial cases in the superior courts.

Senior police officers have directed the officers and personnel on duty to

ensure the security of important government offices, superior courts, and embassies located in the high-security zone. All officers and personnel were also directed to perform their duties with utmost dedication to uphold peace and security, with no room for negligence or complacency during duty hours.

The Islamabad Capital Police is taking all possible measures to safeguard the lives and property of the citizens. Any disturbance to the public peace will not be tolerated.

Citizens are urged to cooperate with the police and report any suspicious activities or objects to their respective police station or dial emergency helpline "Pucar-15" or "ICT-15" application.

JKNF urges UNSC role to settle Kashmir dispute

ISLAMABAD (APP): Termination of the UN proposed roadmap as the most feasible solution to the Kashmir dispute the Jammu and Kashmir National Front (JKNF) while seeking the UN Security Council (UNSC) role has asked it to play its much-needed role in the implementation of the 5th January 1949 resolution that seeks resolution of the dispute based on right to self-determination.

In a statement issued here today, JKNF spokesperson Shafiq ur Rehman said that for more than seven decades, India's belligerent military occupation has been major hurdle in the way of peaceful settlement to the long-drawn conflict, said a press release here on Thursday.

ET directs PTI leader Zafar to clear property tax dues till Monday

ISLAMABAD (Online): Election Tribunal (ET) has directed PTI leader Syed Zafar Ali Shah to clear property tax dues till Monday.

The petition filed against rejection of nomination papers of PTI leader Syed Zafar Ali Shah came up for hearing before Justice Arbab Muhammad Tahir of ET Friday.

The court remarked it is matter of property tax and two vehicles. We will hear it on Monday. Zafar Sahb you have to pay some dues of CDA.

Zafar Ali Shah said we have not been issued any notice. The department should tell us at least. It was not in our knowledge that some dues were payable by us. It was said at the time of scrutiny that your dues are clear. It was informed by the Election Commission that there were some outstanding dues of property tax against Zafar Ali Shah.

PRMI Cross fertilization of reform interventions

ISLAMABAD (APP): The speakers in seminar have discussed the Pakistan Regulatory Modernization Initiative (PRMI) and its pivotal role in enhancing the regulatory landscape of the country.

Representatives from across Pakistan gathered in Islamabad for an enlightening seminar organized by ReMIT to discuss the Pakistan Regulatory Modernization Initiative (PRMI) and its pivotal role in enhancing the regulatory landscape of the country, said a press release issued here on Friday.

The event served as a platform for provinces and regions to showcase progress, share successes, address challenges, and outline future plans regarding regulatory reforms. Secretary Board of Investment, Dr. Sohail Rajput expressed the paramount importance of regulatory reforms in adapting to changing circumstances and optimizing governance structures. As Pakistan strives to enhance its investment climate, the focus lies in reducing unnecessary regulatory burdens and streamlining business processes at provincial and local levels, he said.

Addressing the audience of the seminar, Secretary

Rajput expressed gratitude for their presence and underscored the importance of the gathering, emphasizing the need to discuss the evolving regulatory landscape in the country.

He highlighted that in an era marked by rapid technological advancements, shifting economic landscapes, and evolving societal expectations, regulatory reforms have gained paramount significance.

Secretary BOI said that such reforms are deemed vital for adapting to changing circumstances, fostering innovation, and ensuring the efficient functioning of both public and private sectors.

Acknowledging the diligent efforts of provincial and regional governments in the past year, Secretary Rajput commended positive changes brought about through business reforms in various economic sectors. He stressed the role of reducing unnecessary regulatory burdens and streamlining business processes at the provincial and local levels to enhance the investment climate in Pakistan. The seminar provided each province and region with the opportunity to present progress in areas like PRMI, key regulatory reform successes.



ISLAMABAD: Senator Mohsin Aziz, Chairman Senate Standing Committee on Interior presiding over a meeting of the committee at Parliament House.

Daily Voice of Masses
Independent
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Gathering storm?

Any hopes that the new year would bring some stability to the Middle East have been quickly dashed. Instead, fears are growing that the volatile region's intertwined conflicts will explode into something much larger — and uglier.

The first week of 2024 has been marked by two pivotal acts of violence linked to the ongoing Israeli slaughter in Gaza, as well as the larger confrontation between Iran and the US-Israel combine. On Wednesday, the Iranian city of Kerman witnessed two bomb blasts near the tomb of Iranian general Qassem Soleimani.

Over 80 mourners who had gathered to mark the anniversary of Soleimani's assassination by the US in 2020 were killed in the Kerman atrocity. The bombings are amongst the highest mass-casualty attacks Iran has suffered in many years.

Only a day earlier, top Hamas leader Saleh Al Arouri, along with other colleagues, was assassinated in a missile strike in Beirut's Dahiyeh neighbourhood — a stronghold of Iran-backed Hezbollah.

It is unclear who is responsible for the Kerman blasts; terrorists belonging to the self-styled Islamic State group have struck Iranian targets in the past, while Israel has also carried out assassination campaigns against Iranian military and government figures.

Amongst these was the murder of a top Pasdaran commander in Syria late last year. With regard to the Arouri assassination, there is little doubt that Tel Aviv is responsible.

Israel usually maintains an air of ambiguity about its murderous foreign operations. But in the current circumstances, it would be playing with fire by trying to provoke its adversaries in Iran, Lebanon and elsewhere in the region into striking back.

If the Iranians or Hezbollah were to react to these attacks, Israel could play the victim card and draw its American protectors deeper into the Middle East quagmire.

The resultant conflict would shake the international order to its core. So far, both Tehran and Hezbollah have marked their responses with restraint. But it will be hard for them to maintain this posture if Israel continues with its provocative behaviour. Though logic would dictate that de-confliction mechanisms be deployed immediately to bring down the temperature, the reality is that a larger conflict may not be a matter of 'if' but 'when'.

Of course, if Israel were to stop its genocidal campaign in the Gaza Strip, things could be controlled. But the extremists at the helm in Tel Aviv do not appear to be interested in this option, while Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has a vested interest in prolonging the conflict to escape domestic censure.

Washington's policymakers must explain if they are okay with their Israeli allies setting the Middle East on fire; there are no signs yet they would rather work towards reining in Tel Aviv.

**Faisal Bari**

All of us must have seen at some point or the other, a man in police uniform driving his motorcycle the wrong way on a one-way street and not wearing a helmet. We have also seen cars with green number plates parked in 'no parking' areas, and police and army vehicles ignoring traffic signals.

We have seen police officials misbehave with protesters or people in custody. Whether it is a chief justice being dragged by the hair, a former foreign minister being handled roughly or ordinary citizens being slapped and pushed around, there are plenty of examples. It does not matter which party is in power at the time. What is happening to those who are out of power, is what was happening to others when the

former held the reins.

We have been witnessing deputy commissioners (DCs) misusing Maintenance of Public Order (MPO) provisions across Pakistan. Police and other law enforcers have been capitalising on the registration of cases to arrest those people the state does not want to see free.

We see many FIRs being registered against one person. We see names recorded in FIRs even of those known not to have violated the law. Sometimes, FIRs are sealed and their contents not disclosed. Another practice is to register multiple FIRs regarding the same incident in different jurisdictions, and even register FIRs in different provinces to allow remand for a few days in order to move people from one province to another.

These tactics have been used before and are still being used by law-enforcement agencies. This is not in the service of justice alone. There are plenty of judicial observations and decisions which show the abuse of the powers the police and other LEAs have.

The abuse of power is hard to stop or rectify.

A journalist was abducted and went missing for months. Even after his return, LEAs and the judicial system haven't really bothered to find out where he was, who abducted him and under which law, and what happened to him. People 'missing' for years have not been produced before the courts. Their loved ones have been protesting on the streets for years. In some cases, it is not even clear where the 'missing' are being kept, and some relatives do not even know if their loved ones are dead or alive.

What is common to all these instances? The exercise of power? Definitely. Legally, the state has the power to use coercion, even violence in certain situations. Where the legitimate use of power is for the people's protection, power can also be abused, even if there are differences of opinion on the valid/non-valid use of coercion. Regardless, the state has power.

But clearly, these instances are examples of the abuse of power too. No law allows policemen to

drive in the wrong direction unless it is an emergency. No law gives police or army vehicles the power to break traffic laws. DCs cannot abuse MPO powers, and there is no law that makes exceptions in the case of due process and fair trial for the accused.

But what makes abuses possible and allows them to thrive is the impunity offered to perpetrators; this impunity is due to the fact that the abuses have implicit or explicit state support. Can a DC abuse the MPO when the state does not want him or her to do so?

He or she would be an OSD before the day is over. But look at how the game was played between the Islamabad DC and the Islamabad High Court. Even if there is some cost imposed on the DC, he or she could walk away so long as there is state support.

That is exactly why these abuses are hard to stop or rectify. If an individual police officer or DC or even a judge tries to stop the abuse or roll back its impact, there will be plenty of other officers willing to do the state's bid-

ding and plenty of judges who will not take on the case or who will take the state's side.

Imran Riaz was missing for four months. How many court hearings were there for his case? Was it pressure by the courts that saw his return? It doesn't seem to be the case. It seems the state had achieved whatever it wanted before letting him go. The Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances was formed in 2011.

What has it been able to achieve since then? Has anyone ever been held responsible for the disappearances? Are not the relatives of the missing still on the streets of the federal capital?

So, it seems clear that if it is the state and some of the most powerful institutions within it that allow selected acts of abuse of power to be committed with impunity, there is hardly a way to stop it.

Who can stop the state or these institutions? Other institutions within the state and society, of course. That is what happens in many countries. But what if the other insti-

tutions are weak? What if political parties, the legislature and judiciary are weak or divided, and the media is throttled or compromised, and civil society has not been allowed to flourish? That is exactly what a poorly developed institutional structure looks like and this is exactly the place we are in. Institutions are weak or almost non-existent.

Weak institutions hamper us in other pursuits too, including economic growth and development, but that is a topic for another time. For the moment, we can acknowledge the conundrum we face, and the quandary we are in, in terms of law and rights and mull over this situation.

We can either develop multiple poles of power or have multiple points of view in the stronger institution to balance things out.

Or other institutions can balance out the most powerful institution. If neither is possible, and that looks to be currently the case, it is hard to see how the abuse of power, given impunity by the state, can stop. -- Courtesy Dawn

Remembering Sartaj Aziz**Shafqat Kakakhel**

Pakistan has lost one of its most outstanding sons and indefatigable soldiers; the nation just a few days back said goodbye to one of the last surviving soldiers of the Pakistan Movement, who devoted his seven decades-long engagement in national affairs to promote Pakistan's economic development, national security and diplomacy, and democratic governance.

He worked tirelessly and selflessly, eschewing the pursuit of personal gain, and believed in resolving inter-provincial differences through dialogue, mutual respect and accommodation, and collaboration.

Born in 1929 in Mardan, Sartaj Aziz got his higher education from Islamia College and Hailey College of Commerce. He joined the civil service in

1950 and a decade later joined the bunch of accomplished economists who turned the country's Planning Commission into an autonomous, vibrant, and productive development policy institution.

Sartaj joined the UN Food and Agriculture Organization in 1971 and was elevated to head the prestigious World Food Council. He was deputy secretary general of the World Food Conference, held in 1974, and influenced its decisions including the creation of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). Noted economist Dame Barbara Ward has written: "Without Sartaj Aziz, there would have been no Rome Forum. I admire him for his wisdom, dedication, and hard work with which he organized the World Food Conference... His work for the welfare of the hungry and the poor deserves better recognition."

Sartaj served as vice president of IFAD. Initially set up as a billion-dollar fund, IFAD has since disbursed over \$19 billion for food production programmes, turning food-deficient developing countries into food-growing

economies. In 1975, Sartaj Aziz became one of the founding members of the Third World Forum which brought together scientists and economists of developing nations to articulate the common perspectives of poor countries on global development issues.

In 1976, Sartaj Aziz was elected president of the Society for International Development (SID). He inspired the development of two significant global initiatives: the North-South Round Table, and a Research Program for Alternative Development Strategies. In the 1970s, Sartaj Aziz was recognized as "an internationally celebrated crusader against hunger and poverty".

In 1984, Sartaj returned home and was appointed minister of state for food and agriculture. He chaired the National Commission on Agricultural Development whose seminal report suggested pathways for sustained agricultural growth for ensuring Pakistan's food security. He was elected a member of the Pakistan Senate in 1985 and was re-elected in 1988 and 1994 from the erstwhile NWFP. Sartaj Aziz served as minister for finance, plan-

ning and economic affairs (1997-98) and as foreign minister (1998-1999).

In 2004, he became vice-chancellor of Beaconhouse National University in Lahore and served in that position until 2013. From 2013 till 2017, Sartaj returned to political life and served as adviser to the prime minister for foreign affairs and national security adviser until 2017. His last year in public life was as the deputy chairman of the Planning Commission.

A notable feature of Sartaj Aziz's public life was his ability, as head of national commissions/committees, to resolve some of the most intractable national issues, such as the accord on the apportionment of the Indus Basin waters (1991); a contingency plan for food security (2008); reforms in former Fata and their integration into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (2016); political reforms in Gilgit-Baltistan (2017) and, last but not least, the National Water Policy, a comprehensive blueprint for integrated management of water resources, along with a Water Charter signed by the chief ministers of the four provinces.

Sartaj Aziz was a dynamic speaker and a prolific writer. His books and monographs included: 'Industrial Location Policy of Pakistan' (1969); 'Hunger, Politics, and Markets: the Real Issues in the Food Crisis' (1976); 'Rural Development: Learning from China' (1978); 'Agricultural Policies for the 1990s', published by the OECD, (1990); 'Hunger, Poverty, and Development: Life and Work of Sartaj Aziz', edited by Anwar Adil, (2009). In 2009, Sartaj Aziz's autobiography, 'Between Dreams and Realities: Some Milestones in Pakistan's History', was published by Oxford University Press. An updated version was published in 2019.

In December 2018, the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) in Islamabad celebrated Sartaj Aziz's life and achievements by designating him as a "living legend". The award ceremony was addressed by distinguished personalities, including Shahid Hamid, Dr Hafiz Pasha, Shoaib Sultan Khan, Jalil Abbas Jilani, Salima Hashmi, and Tariq Banuri. Dr Adil Najam, Dr Samia Nishtar, and Dr Ishrat Husain sent their messages

paying rich tributes to Sartaj Aziz's achievements.

Sartaj's autobiography includes an epilogue in which he describes what he called "four important lessons from our history". The lessons are noted below: First, Pakistan "can survive as a dynamic and viable political entity only through a genuine democratic framework, since democracy ensures a sense of participation and a sense of identity to all the federating units and sub-units..."

Third, a "democratic system and especially a parliamentary federal system can survive only if the three pillars of state, namely, the parliament, the judiciary, and the executive function within the parameters laid down by the constitution..."

Fourth, the vitality of a nation "does not come only from its economic progress and the size of its military, but also from its shared values, cultural heritage, and social energy. In this context, the classical definition of a 'nation' with a common language and a common culture, has been replaced with the modern concept of the nation-state with a diverse range of cultures, languages and ethnic groups". -- Courtesy TheNews

Prudent living**Amin Valliani**

Presently, many countries are going through a painful cost-of-living crisis. A few years ago, the world faced the Covid-19 pandemic, which affected millions across the globe. Many lost their lives, while others suffered huge economic losses. The global economy has not been able to fully recover from these shocks. In such a situation, families need to be vigilant, especially about how to surmount day-to-day economic challenges.

Economic stability is essential for any family to survive and prosper. Therefore, every family should try and improve its economic status while abiding by the ethics of Islam such as hard work, saving, sharing, and gratitude to Allah, etc.

The economy depends on earthly resources. Islam says: "He it is Who created for you all that is in the earth..." (2:29). This means that there is no dearth of resources on earth. Allah is the Creator and continues to create resources for humanity. The science of economics helps guide us on how resources are to be used.

Islam enjoins Muslims to practise moderation, instead of being miserly or becoming spendthrifts. Allah says: "And let not your hand be tied (like a miser) to your neck, nor stretch it forth to its utmost reach (like a spendthrift), so that you become blameworthy and in severe poverty (17:29)."

Similarly, Islam does not like wastage of re-

sources (7:31) but emphasises prudent living, so that every individual can achieve the goal of quality life. But what is prudent living? It means making wise decisions based on principles and managing practical affairs in an effective manner. Studies have shown that people who lead prudent, conscientious lives can also end up having a longer, healthier life. In other words, families have to look carefully at the economic context which is around them.

Pakistan's economy is currently going through severe uncertainty, facing numerous economic hardships including inflation, high cost of day-to-day needs, severe climate shocks and insufficient public funds to finance development programmes. There will be no surprise if, in the coming months, we see more difficult situations causing further instability and uncertainty in many sectors. Therefore, every family must be prudent in daily spending because it is the right way to prepare for the future.

In crisis situations, people are always left to fend for themselves; very few helping hands come forth. Therefore, families should tighten their belts, strive to live within their means, contain their expenditure, enhance their income and minimise the use of utilities such as electricity, gas and water etc. Above all, families must be disciplined in financial matters.

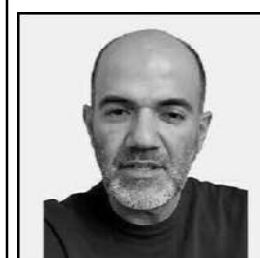
Leading a simple life is the need of the hour. However, it is difficult to define a simple life. It is subjective, for every individual has his or her own standard of simplicity. Simple life for a businessman is totally different from the one who works manually. But generally, simplicity is the habit of living frugally, wasting little, and being thoughtful with money. People who

live a frugal lifestyle do not try to 'keep up with the Joneses' and get trapped into constantly buying more. This is a time of hard work, earning more and reducing the overall cost of living and trying utmost to save money for the future.

In a nutshell, every middle-class family has to make plans for careful spending and stop buying that which is not needed. Families have to evaluate their lifestyle and be prudent while spending money on day-to-day commodities. For example, consuming more locally grown vegetables or locally manufactured goods, instead of costly imported items or processed food, can help save money while being good for one's health. In frugality, one has to avoid expenditure on fast food, drinking sugary beverages, smoking, betel nuts, paan and other harmful things.

The condition of those families who have only one breadwinner is more precarious, therefore, they have to be extra vigilant. Similarly, the middle- and working-class households should focus on their health as any health issue at the time of financial crisis can make the situation more cumbersome and unbearable. Moreover, in these difficult times, the government should improve health services at public facilities as lower middle-class people cannot afford costly private healthcare. Without health, no one can visualise a happy and prosperous life. In other words, life becomes extremely difficult if one's health deteriorates.

An unhealthy person remains dependent on others. His mind remains obsessed with his constant pain and agony. Therefore, each one of us needs to monitor and nourish our health throughout life. As the Holy Quran says: "O you who believe! Take care of your own selves" (5:105). -- Courtesy Dawn

Punjab must decide**Aasim Sajjad Akhtar**

Election season is when the bourgeois political class makes all sorts of promises and at the same time says nothing at all. Take, for example, the complete neglect by mainstream politicians of Baloch protesters in Islamabad. They are sitting in front of the National Press Club in the federal capital.

Even if the bigwigs can't make time to visit, there's no obvious reason they cannot release a statement of support. Maryam Nawaz had no problem doing photo shoots with missing persons' loved ones a couple of years ago, but being anti-establishment was in fashion back then.

The ethnic peripheries — Baloch, Pakhtun, Sindhi, Seraiki, Gilgit-Baltistani, Kashmiri — have been treated this way for as long as one can remember. The establishment and most mainstream politicians evince much interest in the lands, scenic highlands, minerals, coastlines, and freshwater lakes of the peripheries, but couldn't care less for the teeming millions that live there. In fact, the more politically conscious you are and demand access to your own resources, you are considered a threat to development, security, and the state itself.

What about the Punjab heartland? It is here that consent has been cultivated to sustain Pakistan's militarised structure of power. The PTI's rise and fall suggests that this consent has fractured to some extent at least. But our bourgeois political class, or

at least those who are now the incumbents, are not going out of their way to build on this.

For as far as the eye can see, most bourgeois politicians in Punjab offer to reproduce everyday life for the vast majority — a life mediated by state institutions like the thana, katcheri and patwari, and dictated by high-caste, moneyed classes who own land, business and peddle social influence. They all claim to be better than their competitor, while throwing in 'ideological' rhetoric about religion for good measure.

This is how elections are fought and won, especially one that is shaping up to be as rigged (primarily against the PTI) as this one. But social, economic and political life will change little after Feb 8. And the political and intellectual mainstream will acknowledge our deep, structural crises in knee-jerk fashion only when necessary.

The burning of the ethnic peripheries will represent the most acute form of these interrelated crises and will be forced into the public eye again and again, largely because of politically conscious youth that refuse to stay silent about their plight. But what can we expect from the majority of this country's young people who reside in the Punjab heartland?

It is true that to be young and from the Punjab means that one has better chances at social mobility than if one is young and hails from virtually any other ethnic-national community in Pakistan. But class war plays out in Punjab too, where millions of children are out of school, workers and peasants face dispossession and live in semi-serfdom, and all sorts of health problems play out alongside environmental despoliation.

Other than the very well-off, most Punjabi youth — many who have

been taken by the PTI and Imran Khan — continue to suffer the cumulative economic effects of the pandemic and IMF-imposed austerity, as well as the hyper-financialised and consumption-based economic model that prevails in Pakistan today.

In short, that there is simply not enough gainful and dignified employment available for the number of young people seeking jobs, let alone housing, health, education and recreation. The most coveted option is to leave the country by hook or crook, but even that is an option for a very small percentage of the population.

I believe that a growing number of young people in Punjab do understand that the establishment-centric system offers them only hateful rhetoric, and in fact, subjects many to military-led dispossession. It is also noteworthy that more are speaking about deep injustices in faraway places like Palestine as well as the ethnic peripheries in Pakistan.

The next step is to understand that political commitment is not about following a Pied Piper to the ends of the earth. It is about coming to terms with the causes (rather than the symptoms) of the predicament one faces, and then having the wisdom to make common cause with all others concerned with building a different future.

The future for Punjabi youth — especially those lower down the class ladder — is not as bleak as some others but it certainly is not great. The young Baloch women protesting peacefully in Islamabad for their loved ones have said they seek to make common cause with the ordinary people of Punjab. Our collective future will be shaped by how Punjab's increasingly politically conscious young people respond in the due course of time. -- Courtesy Dawn

Faculty members of Afghan varsities call on Governor, discuss promotion of education

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali has urged the faculty members of Afghan universities to focus on intellectual orientation of students and divert their attention towards research and modern technology.

He was talking to a delegation of faculty members of Afghan universities, which called on him at the Governor House here on Friday. The delegation was comprised of 38 faculty members of Afghan universities who are getting training in IM Sciences Hayatabad with the financial assistance of

Higher Education Commission HEC). The Governor welcomed the delegation and discussed matters relating to promotion of contemporary education and capacity building of students.

He said that capacity building of Afghan youth would further strengthen peace and led the country on course of progress and prosperity.

He also stressed upon faculty members to provide students with knowledge and education enabling them to tap potential of Afghan natural resources.

Haji Ghulam Ali said that Afghan students should be provided education and technology to remove backwardness and induce development. He also highlighted significance of higher education institutions for development of a nation.

On the occasion, governor was told that one month capacity building course is underway in IM Sciences for Afghan professors, assistant professors and lecturers. He was informed that various courses would be arranged for Afghan professionals in second phase.



LAHORE: Governor Punjab Muhammad Baligh-ur-Rehman cutting a ribbon to inaugurate 4th Education Expo Book Fair at Aiwan-e-Quaid-e-Azam.

Govt of Sindh 'first time initiative to provide 55 electric bikes' to female vaccinators

ISLAMABAD (APP): Almost 55 female vaccinators are set to benefit from the historic initiative of the Sindh government to use 'Electric bikes' which will not only align with environmental sustainability goals but also enable them to easily move during the national vaccination drives and ensure that vaccines reach their intended destinations promptly.

This strategic decision aims to overcome logistical challenges, ensuring timely and widespread vaccination coverage throughout the province, said a report aired by a private news channel.

While acknowledging the importance of empowering these vaccinator women in their roles, the government of Sindh would provide training sessions to recipients of the electric bikes, said a female vaccinator who hailed the

groundbreaking step of the government.

The provision of specific uniforms for these women will also foster a sense of identity but also contribute to a more professional and organized approach to vaccine distribution, said another lady health worker.

This distribution of electric bikes from next week will have a positive impact on the vaccination process in Sindh, said a Sindh health department official, adding that female vaccinators will be equipped to ride electric bikes safely and efficiently by providing them with riding skills and information related to riding these vehicles.

The scope of this program will further expand and this move will have a direct and beneficial effect on Sindh's vaccination program, another official added.

Punjab health minister announces crackdown on harmful beauty products

LAHORE: Caretaker Punjab Minister for Primary and Secondary Health, Dr. Jamal Nasir has announced a crackdown on harmful beauty creams and cosmetics.

Operations will be conducted against unqualified individuals administering beauty injections or performing any kind of surgery. Joint teams from the Punjab Healthcare Commission (PHC) and the Drug Control Directorate are being formed for this purpose. The Drug Control will determine the registration status of beauty creams and cosmetics, while experts from the PHC will assess clinical practices.

This information was shared by the minister in a press conference held here on Friday.

He stated that non-standard creams claiming to lighten skin are causing diseases, adding that the use of substandard beauty creams is causing severe

damage to the skin of hundreds of individuals. He said that some cosmetics contain dangerous amounts of lead, toxins, and other harmful chemicals, leading to life-threatening diseases such as liver and kidney cancer. Dr. Nasir revealed that drug testing is being conducted on 24 well-known brands in a laboratory, and strict action will be taken against them if harmful chemicals are found.

Emphasizing health preservation principles, Dr. Jamal Nasir mentioned the screening of beauty parlors to ensure compliance with health standards.

He expressed concern about the increasing use of harmful cosmetics in Pakistan and urged a zero-tolerance approach against damaging beauty creams and cosmetics.

A survey of beauty parlors will also be conducted concerning hepatitis control, with 70,000 barber shops surveyed in Punjab.



KARACHI: Residents collect their belongings from the burnt debris of their houses after fire broke out in shanties in a slum area of Teen Hatti area of the Provincial Capital.



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Haji Ghulam Ali in a group photo with delegation of faculty members of Afghanistan Universities during their visit to Peshawar.

CM inaugurates Special Initiative Police Stations of Cantt & Saddar Baroni

RAWALPINDI: Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi here on Friday inaugurated the Special Initiative Police Stations of Cantt and Saddar Baroni.

Inspector General of Police (IGP) Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar, Regional Police Officer, Rawalpindi Syed Khuram Ali, Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, Liaquat Ali Chhatta, City Police Officer, Rawalpindi Syed Khalid Hamdani and other senior officers were present on the occasion.

Talking to the media, the chief minister said that police stations across Punjab were being renovated under the Special Initiative Police Station program.

Two days ago, 36 police stations of 36 districts were inaugurated, he said adding, today, in the second phase, 36 more police stations were inaugurated.

The objective of the initiative is to provide the best service delivery in the best environment to the citizens, the CM added.

Mohsin Naqvi appreciated the RPO, CPO Rawalpindi and their team for the excellent work under Special Initiative Police Stations of Cantt and Saddar Baroni.

He directed the authorities to complete the Safe City project and CPO office in one month. The CM also announced to provide Rs 180 million for the completion of the CPO office project. He instructed to complete the Safe City Project and CPO Office Rawalpindi by January 30.

Gilani reaffirms PPP commitment to ZAB mission

MULTAN (APP): Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) is committed to the mission of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (ZAB) who steered the country out of crises through his leadership qualities, vision and forward thinking.

Former Prime Minister, Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani in a statement on ZAB's 95th birth anniversary here on Friday said that his services rendered for the country and the nation will always be remembered.

PPP Senior Vice Chairman noted that Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was a visionary, forward-thinking

leader who empathised with the people's pain and with his leadership abilities, showcased a positive identity for the country internationally.

The Senator maintained that slogan "Roti, Kapra or Makan," is the ideology of the party.

Eulogising Ex Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto service, he said that she worked for the country following in her father's footsteps. After her martyrdom, PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto and Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari effectively managed the country and the party, Gilani concluded.

Two killed in jeep-motorcycle collision in Kahota

KAHOTA (APP): Two people lost their lives when a jeep collided with a motorcycle near Kanil, Kahota on Friday here.

According to Police, the incident occurred in the jurisdiction of Kahota police station, two lives were tragically lost as a jeep and a motorcycle collided. The collision occurred in the Kanil area, sending shock waves through the community and prompting swift action from the local police. Sadly, both motorcyclists involved in the crash did not survive and their bodies were rushed to the Tehsil Headquarters Hospital for further investigation.



LAHORE: Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi cutting a ribbon of Police Station (Saddar) under Police Station up gradation project.

IGP visits police museum showcasing 1843 policing history

KARACHI (APP): Inspector General of Police (IGP) Sindh, Riffat Mukhtar Raja, toured the "Sindh Police Museum," located at the Police Headquarters District South.

This unique establishment portrays the comprehensive evolution of policing from its inception in 1843 until the present day.

During the visit, IGP Riffat Mukhtar Raja received an extensive presentation from Saud Mirza, the former Inspector General and museum curator.

The museum's focal

point is the emergence of Sindh Police in 1843 under Sir Charles Napier's model, which revolutionized policing by dissociating it from the military and influencing similar formations across British India. Initially comprising 2400 personnel and overseeing Karachi, Hyderabad, and Shikarpur districts, Sindh Police was structured into Mounted Police, Urban Police, and Rural Police divisions. The pivotal role of Captain Marston, serving as the Commandant for 21 years, solidified the force as one of the most dedicated and active in the subcontinent.

15719 liters illegal fuel recovered during crackdown in DIKhan

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): The district police have intensified crackdown against illegal fuel agencies across the district and recovered 13372 liters of Diesel and 2347 liters of petrol during last three days, Police spokesman said Friday.

According to a police spokesman, following the directions of District Police Officer (DPO) Abdul Rauf Babar Qaisrani a crackdown has been launched against illegal fuel agencies across the district.

SRSO held project closing & lesson learned workshop

SUKKUR (APP): Project closing and lesson learned workshop of the Integrated Emergency Health, Protection, and WASH Response for Vulnerable Flood-Affected Communities was organized by Sindh Rural Support Organization (SRSO) its main complex here. According to SRSO Spokesperson, Jamil Ahmed on Friday, the workshop attended by all project team members from both districts, senior management, sector heads, and district managers.

The Sindh Region

team members also shared their views, learning and faced challenges during project implementation. On the occasion, SRSO-Project Focal Person, Naimatullah Sawand presented details of the achieved targets, best learning and way forward on the basis of set targets and outcomes of the project. The Malteser International Country Coordinator, Fayyaz Shah also joined live the workshop and expressed his views and project achievements and SRSO partnership.

Punjab Governor says: Book exhibition is good effort to develop habit of reading books among people

LAHORE: Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman today inaugurated the 4th Education Expo and Book Fair organized by Idara e Nazria Pakistan at Aiwan Quaid-e-Azam, Lahore.

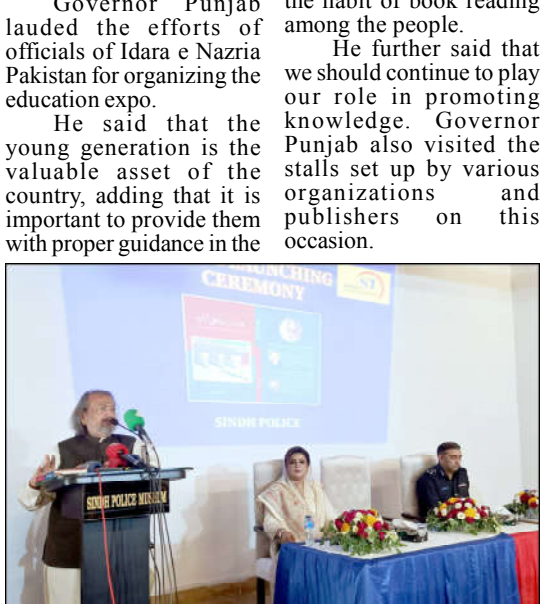
Speaking to the media after inaugurating the exhibition, Punjab Governor Muhammad Balighur Rehman said that this book exhibition is a good effort to develop the habit of reading books among people.

Governor Punjab lauded the efforts of officials of Idara e Nazria Pakistan for organizing the education expo.

He said that the young generation is the valuable asset of the country, adding that it is important to provide them with proper guidance in the

field of education. He said that the purpose of education is to impart knowledge to the youth and make them life-long learner. He said that it is very important to inculcate the habit of reading books among the students. He said that in this age of technology, e-books are also available, but there is no substitute for the satisfaction of reading books traditionally. Governor Punjab said that organizing such exhibitions play a positive role in developing the habit of book reading among the people.

He further said that we should continue to play our role in promoting knowledge. Governor Punjab also visited the stalls set up by various organizations and publishers on this occasion.



KARACHI: Caretaker Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training, Madad Ali Sindh, addressing the ceremony of Book Launching written by Dr. Afshan Malik Chairperson Sindh Social Welfare Trust at Sindh Police Museum and Headquarter.

Dr. Riaz inaugurates new year's maiden anti-polio drive

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Health, Dr. Riaz Anwar inaugurated the current year's first polio vaccination campaign by administering drops to two children at Police Services Hospital, Civil Secretariat here Friday, with a target of making 2024 as 'year of complete eradication' of the crippling disease from the country.

Officials of Health Department including Deputy Coordinator EOC, Muhammad Zeeshan, Sarfaraz Khan from WHO and Shadab Younas from UNICEF Communication were present on the occasion.

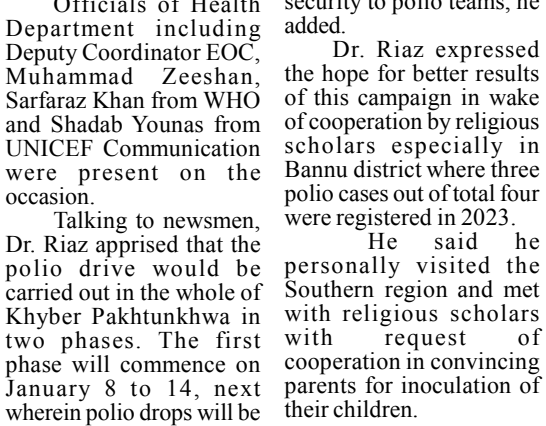
Talking to newsmen, Dr. Riaz apprised that the polio drive would be carried out in the whole of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in two phases. The first phase will commence on January 8 to 14, next wherein polio drops will be

administered in all the districts except Lakki Marwat, Upper and Lower Orakzai district. The second phase of the campaign will kick off on January 15 to 19, next for coverage of children in Lakki Marwat, Upper and Lower Orakzai district, Dr. Riaz told media persons.

In all a total of 7.4 million children will be covered in polio drive by around 32,000 teams. Around 50,000 police personnel will provide security to polio teams, he added.

Dr. Riaz expressed the hope for better results of this campaign in wake of cooperation by religious scholars especially in Bannu district where three polio cases out of total four were registered in 2023.

He said he personally visited the Southern region and met with religious scholars with request of cooperation in convincing parents for inoculation of their children.



LAHORE: Activists of Youth Forum for Kashmir holds placards and shouting slogans during protest against the Indian oppression, to mark the Self-Determination Day, in Provincial Capital.

Task Force conducts grand operation against five illegal housing schemes

RAWALPINDI (APP): On the directions of the Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, Liaquat Ali Chhatta, the DG RDA, the DC Rawalpindi and CPO Rawalpindi are supervising the operation against illegal housing societies. The DG RDA Muhammad Saif Anwar Jappa informed that on the instructions of the Commissioner Rawalpindi, grand operation against all illegal societies would continue without any discrimination.

He said that the RDA had advised the citizens not to invest in illegal housing schemes and the citizens were also requested to visit RDA website www.rda.gov.pk to check status of the housing projects. Earlier, the RDA had also issued notices to the owners and sponsors of the illegal housing schemes and they were directed to stop illegal advertisements.

The Task Force constituted against illegal housing schemes has taken action in accordance with the law against five illegal housing projects.

In the light of the directives of the Divisional Intelligence Committee, the Task Force is conducting raids and taking strict action against the rules violators.

The Task Force demolished the site offices, electric poles, billboards, roads, security rooms and other infrastructure while carrying out a grand operation against illegal housing schemes namely Green Hawks (Hartus Floare Farm), Sighu Farm House in mouza Bhal and Chak Cighu Chontra to Chak Beli Khan road, Al Khan Enclave, Aurora Housing Scheme in mouza Lab Thathoo and Wah Residencia in mouza Bhoti Pind Sir Syed Avenue in Taxila Rawalpindi.

The initiative, which officially commenced on September 17, 2023.

Federal government, KE ink agreements to ensure energy security for Karachi

From Our Correspondent ISLAMABAD : The Federal government and Karachi Electric (KE) signed various agreements on Friday, aimed at ensuring energy security for Karachi.

The agreements were signed at the Energy Division through representative bodies in the presence of Muhammad Ali, Minister of Energy, Power and Petroleum, and Dr. Shamsad Akhtar, Minister of Finance while KE was represented by CEO, Moonis Alvi and CFO, Muhammad Aamir Ghaziani.

These agreements address longstanding disputes between the government and KE, particularly in formalizing and securing a stable power supply from the National Grid to Karachi, up to the interconnection capacity. Resolving these

legacy matters is crucial for both Karachi's energy security and the sustainability of KE as a company. The agreements include the Tariff Differential Subsidy Agreement (TDA) and Power Purchase Agency Agreement (PPAA), marking a significant milestone for the power sector. The Interconnection Agreement (ICA) is expected to be signed after approval from NEPRA.

The firm supply of energy from the National Grid is anticipated to provide affordable power to KE customers. The signing of a Mediation Agreement (MA) is also essential for reconciling legacy contentions on payables and receivables between KE and government entities.

Caretaker Minister for Power and Petroleum Muhammad Ali said, "We

are tackling a Gordian knot in the power sector with a vision to bring efficiency and long-term stability. Today's signing is one facet of this, where we have addressed legacy bottlenecks. It demonstrates the willpower and commitment of our institutions towards Pakistan."

The minister said the Ministry is working hard to provide an enabling environment for the power sector to thrive because the ultimate beneficiary of our interventions is the customer. Muhammad Ali thanked the Finance Minister Dr. Shamsad Akhtar for her involvement and support.

"This is the best news to the Karachi consumers as power issues will be much more stabilized now. KE has always been treated by the government as a



ISLAMABAD : A Chinese business delegation led by Zhang Yang, Chairman, Chang Jiang Industrial Company (Pakistan) Co., Ltd, and Director Chongqing Federation of Industry and Commerce visited the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) and explored the possibilities of joint ventures and investment in Pakistan. The representatives of Li Ting International China and Yihai Culture Communication Co., Ltd of China were also in the delegation.

Business facilitation centres being set up in five big cities: Minister

Independent Report LAHORE: Caretaker Punjab Minister for Trade and Industry SM Taveer has said that business facilitation centres are being established in five big cities of Punjab after Lahore.

He was presiding over a meeting of the Punjab Small Industries Corporation here on Friday, which reviewed performance of the business facilitation centre.

Secretary for Industry and Trade Eshaan Bhutta briefed the minister about progress on business facilitation centres in Faisalabad, Sialkot, Multan, Gujranwala and Rawalpindi. The meeting was told that the business facilitation centre had changed the investment culture in Punjab and now no-objection certificates

(NOCs) were being issued in 10 to 15 days for setting up new factory. Till now, 161 NOCs had been issued from the business facilitation centre, while 86 more were in process.

SM Taveer said that during the current month, caretaker Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi would inaugurate five more business facilitation centres. He said that business facilitation centre was a revolutionary step to facilitate the business community and added that officers of 20 departments of federal and provincial governments were performing their duties at the business facilitation centre. He said 106 different NOCs were being provided in the business facilitation centre under one roof.

FTO action results in Rs 12bn refund to taxpayers

LAHORE (APP): Federal Tax Ombudsman Dr. Asif Mahmood Jah has said that over the last two years, the FTO's decisions resulted in refund of Rs. 12 billion to thousands of taxpayers and curbing of tax evasion in several sectors including steel, sugar and land development.

Addressing a meeting of the Advisory Committee (Central) here on Friday, he said just one study by the FTO helped find about 60,000 new taxpayers in the sugar sector, and stabilised the sugar prices.

He also highlighted various steps taken to raise awareness among masses about the FTO role, adding that various new offices were opened across the country and an outreach programme was initiated

for the purpose. He said that the steps resulted in increased complaints and now the number of complainants had reached 8,000. He said that any aggrieved person could approach the FTO through a simple application.

Relating various initiatives, he said that the FTO proposed simplified return forms for salaried individuals and pensioners, and it facilitated millions, adding that the FTO's interventions also attracted government and semi-government organizations, including the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA), Quetta Electric Supply Company, Punjab Rural Support Programme, Excise and Taxation Department Punjab and Rawalpindi.



LAHORE: A local vendor displaying Gas and wooden stoves to attract the customers at the roadside.

Gold rates decline by Rs1,200

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold decreased by Rs.1,200 and was sold at Rs.217,000 on Friday compared to its sale at Rs.218,200 on last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs.1,028 from Rs.186,043 to Rs.187,071 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold went down to Rs.170,539 from Rs.171,482, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola and ten gram Silver remained stagnant at Rs.2,660 and 2,280.52 respectively. The price of gold in the international market decreased by \$9 to \$2,058 from \$2,067, the Association reported.

PSX loses 124 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed a bearish trend on Friday, losing 124.26, a negative change of 0.19 percent, closing at 64,514.90 points against 64,639.16 points the previous trading day.

A total of 949,559,318 shares valuing Rs.19,355 billion were traded during the day as compared to 548,989,972 shares valuing Rs.15,395 billion the last day.

Some 362 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 161 of them recorded gains and 187 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 14 remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were K-Electric with 481,119,880 shares at Rs.6.12 per share, WorldCall Telecom with 33,379,558 shares at Rs.1.47 per share and Bank of Punjab with 28,423,802 shares at Rs.6.92 per share.



ISLAMABAD: Power Division and K-Electric ink landmark agreements, in the presence of Minister for Energy Muhammad Ali, providing energy security for Karachi at Power Division.

Ample stock of fertilizer available to meet domestic demand: Murtaza Solangi

ISLAMABAD (INP): Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs, Murtaza Solangi, Friday informed the Senate that there is an ample stock of fertilizer available in the country to meet the domestic demand.

In response to a calling attention notice moved by Zeeshan Khanzada regarding the problems being faced by the farmers due to the

shortage of urea fertilizer and its soaring rates, he expressed hope that, due to steps taken by the caretaker government in the coming days, there would be a further noticeable reduction in urea prices in the country.

The minister said that urea prices, which had previously exceeded Rs. 5,000 per bag, have now decreased to Rs. 4,451 per bag due to the government's

interventions. Emphasizing the significance of agriculture in the country, Murtaza Solangi highlighted that approximately one-fourth of Pakistan's GDP is attributed to agriculture, with 40% of the labor force linked to this vital sector.

Regarding the steps taken by the government, he informed that around 220,000 tons of urea had been recently imported by the government.

Karim urges significant cut in policy interest rate to help to revive economy

Independent Report ISLAMABAD: Mr. Karim Aziz Malik, Chairman

Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), Capital Office, Islamabad said that the record high interest rate has made it very difficult for the private sector to get credit from banks for the expansion of existing businesses and make new investments due to which the business activities are suffering badly. He further said that rising interest rates make your business debt more expensive which means more cash required to cover interest costs.

Kareem Aziz Malik urged a significant cut in the policy interest rate to help to revive the economy.

He said that current

22% interest rate has severely damaged the business environment

without achieving its intended objective of controlling inflation.

He said that the bank advances to the private sector have declined to just Rs.208 billion in the financial year 2023 compared to over Rs.1329 billion in the financial year 2022 due to which the GDP of the country has contracted significantly.

Pakistan must foster private sector-led economic growth.

Farmers told to submit wheat competition application till Jan 31

FAISALABAD (APP): The Agriculture Department would receive applications from growers till January 31, 2024 for wheat production competition 2023-24.

A spokesman for the Agriculture (Extension) Department said here on Friday that growers, who had five acres or more irrigated land were eligible to participate in wheat competition, and the position holders at district level would be awarded cash prizes of millions of rupees.

He said that tenants and contractors were also eligible to participate in the competition and they should submit their applications.



LAHORE: A large number of people selecting and purchasing second hand warm shoes and other stuff from the vendors at Landa Bazar.

Trade deficit shrinks by 34.29%, export grow by 5.17% in 1st half

ISLAMABAD (APP): The country's merchandise trade deficit contracted by 34.29 per cent during the first half of the current fiscal year compared to the corresponding period of last year, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported.

The Trade deficit from July-December (2023-24) was recorded at \$11.148 billion as against the deficit of \$16.965 billion in July-December

(2022-23), showing negative growth of 34.29 per cent. During the period under review, the exports increased by 5.17 per cent to \$14.981 billion compared to the exports of \$14.244 billion during the corresponding period of last year, according to the latest PBS data.

On the other hand, the imports narrowed by 16.28 per cent and were recorded at \$26.129 billion compared to \$31.209 billion last year.

Chinese delegation visits ICCI to explore JVs and investment prospects in Pak

ISLAMABAD (Online): Chinese business

delegation led by Zhang Yang, Chairman, Chang Jiang Industrial Company (Pakistan) Co., Ltd, and Director Chongqing Federation of Industry and Commerce visited the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) and explored the possibilities of joint ventures and investment in Pakistan. The representatives of Li Ting International China and Yihai Culture Communication Co., Ltd of China were also in the

delegation.

Addressing the delegation, Engr. Azhar ul Islam Zafar, Acting President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry briefed the Chinese delegation about the potential investment opportunities in various sectors of Pakistan's economy. He said that Pakistan offers a liberal investment regime with attractive incentives to foreign investors and emphasized that Chinese companies should bring technology and set up manufacturing units.

Emirates celebrates 25years of success serving Islamabad and Lahore

Independent Report

L A H O R E : ISLAMABAD: Emirates, the world's largest international airline, proudly commemorates its 25th anniversary of operations at Islamabad and Lahore airports. Since its inaugural flights to both cities in January 1999, Emirates has played a crucial role in connecting Islamabad and Lahore to the world via Dubai, while fostering economic growth and cultural exchange.

journeys for millions of passengers on its routes from the key points in Pakistan, with the airline operating a robust schedule of ten weekly flights from each of the two cities.

Highlights etched in Emirates' remarkable history serving Pakistan's capital city Islamabad, and its second largest city Lahore, include the transport of over 11.4 million passengers on over 34,000 flights between both cities and the airline's



Over the past quarter of a century, Emirates has been a reliable partner facilitating seamless passenger and cargo movement and significantly contributed to the development of the country and region through tourism and trade. The airline's strong presence in Islamabad and Lahore underscores its position as a leading and reliable carrier which is committed to excellence and innovation in the aviation sector.

In its pivotal role, Emirates ensured seamless hub in Dubai. Emirates' extensive network of more than 140 destinations has not only enhanced tourism and economic ties for Pakistan, but it has also fostered stronger relationships between communities worldwide.

Through Emirates' scheduled services, Islamabad and Lahore have both emerged as strategic gateways connecting passengers to top destinations in the United Kingdom, Europe, USA, and Canada.

Chinese companies increase investment in Pakistan for copper production

ISLAMABAD (Online): Chinese companies in collaboration with their local partners in Pakistan have increased investment for copper production in the recent years.

Copper and articles thereof have seen an increase in export to China from Pakistan as well. In the first eleven months of 2023 increased by 9%, crossed one billion dollars mark, sources from Commerce Ministry told China Economic Net.

Ghulam Qadir, Commercial Counsellor at the Pakistan Embassy in Beijing, told CEN that the Pakistani government is keen to boost copper and associated product exports

to China. He also mentioned that Pakistan's exports of copper to China have increased recently, and he anticipated that the value of these exports will rise as a result of refined copper products.

"Pakistan has been actively seeking foreign investments, particularly from big Chinese companies, to bring in value addition and produce more valuable products for the global market. Having Chinese companies invest in Pakistan would not only provide a boost to the country's economy but also open doors for advanced technologies and expertise.

Pak-China EV organized training session fostering sustainable energy practices

ISLAMABAD (Online): A joint venture company Pak China Huazi Green Energy (Private), organized an Electric Vehicle (EV) training session here with the cooperation of National Skills University (NSU).

Talking to Gwadar Pro, Khalid Mahmood, CEO of Huazi Green Energy said the two-day EV Repair and Maintenance Introductory Course this week, showcased the collaborative efforts between NSU and Pak-China Huazi Green Energy Pvt.Ltd. The course, led by esteemed Chinese technologists, marked a

significant stride towards fostering sustainable energy practices and knowledge exchange in electric vehicles.

The event, witnessed a convergence of industry experts, educators, and students, creating a dynamic platform for disseminating knowledge and insights into the rapidly evolving landscape of electric vehicles.

The collaborative initiative between NSU and Pak-China Huazi Green Energy Pvt.Ltd aims to bridge the knowledge gap in electric vehicle technology and promote adopting eco-friendly transportation solutions.



ISLAMABAD: Workers loading onion on delivery rikshaw at vegetable market.

Weekly inflation up by 0.81pc

ISLAMABAD (APP): The weekly inflation,

measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), witnessed an increase of 0.81 percent for the combined consumption groups during the week ended on January 4, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday.

The SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 313.66 points as compared to 311.14 points during the past week, according to the PBS

data.

As compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 42.86 percent.

The weekly SPI with the base year 2015-16 =100 covers 17 urban centers and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups. The SPI for the lowest consumption group up to Rs 17,732, increased by 0.81 percent and went up to 308.53 points from last week's 306.04 points.

Russia used missiles from North Korea to strike Ukraine: White House

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: Russia recently used short-range ballistic missiles (SRBMs) sourced from North Korea to conduct multiple strikes against Ukraine, the White House said on Thursday, citing newly declassified intelligence.

National security spokesperson John Kirby told reporters the United States will raise the development with the United Nations Security Council. Kirby called North Korea's arms transfer to Russia a "significant and concerning escalation" and said the United States would impose additional sanctions against those facilitating the arms deals.

Both Moscow and

Pyongyang have denied conducting any arms deals, but vowed last year to deepen military relations.

The use of the missiles drew condemnation from Britain, as well as South Korea, which had reported in November that North Korea may have supplied SRBMs to Russia as part of a larger arms deal that also included anti-tank and anti-air missiles, artillery and mortar shells, and rifles.

"Our information indicates that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea recently provided Russia with ballistic missile launchers and several ballistic missiles," said Kirby, using the official name of North Korea. On Dec. 30, he said,

"Russian forces launched at least one of these North Korean ballistic missiles into Ukraine," adding that it appeared to have landed in open field.

Then on Tuesday Russia launched "multiple" North Korean missiles as part of a broader wave of heavy air strikes, Kirby said. Washington was still assessing the impact of those missiles.

Russia recently has launched some of its most intense strikes on Ukraine since the war began almost two years ago. Kyiv on Tuesday said that Russia had launched well over 300 attack drones and missiles of various kinds at cities across Ukraine since Friday.



Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi speaks during a funeral ceremony in Kerman, Iran.

Red Sea attacks are not isolated incidents, UNSC told

Monitoring Desk
UNITED NATIONS: During a UN Security Council briefing on Wednesday afternoon, some member states emphasised the need to address attacks on ships in the Red Sea.

Some states also called for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, urging caution to prevent an escalation in tensions.

US ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative, Christopher Lu, however, called on member states to "speak with one voice and demand that the Houthis stop their attacks". He said the threat to

navigational rights and freedom in the Red Sea was a global challenge that necessitated "a global response".

He accused Iran of providing financial and material support to the Houthis and called it "the root of the problem".

The US diplomat called on the Council to speak with one voice and demand that the Houthis stop their attacks on ships.

"We call for a global response from this Council to this global challenge, and we are ready to discuss the situation further with other member states," he said.

Macron pays tribute to Delors

Monitoring Desk
PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron praised the late Jacques Delors at a service of national tribute on Friday for giving European Union integration some of its greatest leaps forward during his time as European Commission president.

Delors, an ardent advocate of post-war European integration, died on Dec. 27 at the age of 98. He served as president of the European Commission, the EU executive, for three terms - longer than any other holder of the office - from January 1985 until the end of 1994.

India's foreign minister signs a deal to increase imports of electricity from Nepal

Monitoring Desk
KATHMANDU: India's foreign minister concluded a two-day trip to Nepal on Friday, during which he signed an agreement to increase the amount of electricity India imports from its neighbor.

"I assure you we are committed to extending our steadfast support and work with same earnestness to further realize the potential of the relationship for the full benefit of the people of the two countries."



Members of the Yemeni Coast Guard affiliated with the Houthi group patrol the sea as demonstrators march through the Red Sea port city of Hodeida in solidarity with the people of Gaza.

Iran arrests suspects over bomb blasts, mourners demand revenge - state TV

Monitoring Desk
TEHRAN: Mourners on Friday wept over the coffins of victims of two deadly blasts in Iran, and the interior minister said a number of suspects had been arrested over the attacks claimed by Islamic State.

Crowds chanted "revenge, revenge" in state TV footage of the funerals in the city of Kerman, the scene of Wednesday's explosions, the bloodiest such attacks in Iran since the 1979 Islamic

Revolution. Nearly 100 people were killed in the blasts at a memorial service for military commander General Qassem Soleimani, who was assassinated in Iraq in 2020 by a U.S. drone.

The explosions took place amid a tense mood in the region as Israel's war against Hamas in Gaza neared the three-month mark. Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi told state TV a number of suspects had been arrested.

India sends warship after hijacking of Liberian-flagged vessel in Arabian Sea

Monitoring Desk
NEW DELHI: An Indian Navy warship was moving towards a hijacked Liberian-flagged vessel in the Arabian Sea, and aircraft were closely monitoring the situation, the Indian navy said on Friday.

At least 15 Indian crew members were on board the MV Lila Norfolk, which was hijacked near Somalia's coast and the navy received information about it on Thursday evening. Indian news agency ANI, in which Reuters has a minority stake, reported earlier, citing military officials.

The ship sent a message on the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations portal saying five to six unknown armed personnel had boarded on the evening of Jan 4, the Indian navy statement said.

An Indian warship, the INS Chennai, was diverted and deployed to assist the vessel, the statement said, adding that a naval aircraft overflew the hijacked vessel.

Iraq prepares to close down US-led coalition's mission: PM

Monitoring Desk
BAGHDAD: The Iraqi government is forming a committee to prepare the closing down of the US-led international coalition's mission in the country, Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani's office said on Friday.

Sudani's statement came a day after a US strike killed a militia leader in Baghdad, prompting anger among Iran-aligned groups which demanded the government end the presence of the coalition in Iraq.

"Government is setting the date for the start of the bilateral committee to put arrangements to end the presence of the international coalition forces in Iraq permanently," a statement from the prime minister's office said.

Sister of North Korean leader derides South Korea's president but praises his predecessor

Monitoring Desk
SEOUL: The powerful sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has derided South Korea's conservative president for being "foolishly brave" but called his liberal predecessor "very smart" - rhetoric likely meant to help stoke domestic divisions in South Korea.

Her statement Tuesday came as a response to South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol's New Year's Day address, in which he said he would bolster South Korea's military capability and enhance its alliance with the United States to

cope with North Korea's evolving nuclear threats.

Since taking office in 2022, Yoon has made such comments numerous times. Kim's sister, Kim Yo Jong, used Yoon's latest remarks as an opportunity to fire off derisive rhetoric against him.

"This person ... has persistently called for 'peace by force' and got hell-bent on the beefing up of the extended deterrence and the South Korea-U.S. joint military exercises, thus putting the destiny of (South Korea) on the last extremity."



A general view of a tent camp sheltering displaced Palestinians, who fled their homes due to Israeli strikes, amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas, in Rafah, southern Gaza Strip.

Exiled opposition leader dismisses Bangladesh elections as sham

Monitoring Desk
LONDON: Bangladesh's election on Sunday will be a "sham" designed to cement Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's rule, exiled opposition leader Tarique Rahman has said in an exclusive interview defending his party's boycott.

Rahman is heir to one of the country's two main political dynasties - the other led by Hasina - and has helmed its largest opposition party since the 2018 jailing of his mother,

two-time premier Khaleda Zia.

Six years ago he was convicted in absentia of masterminding a deadly grenade attack on a campaign rally for Hasina - a charge he insists is fabricated - and sentenced to life imprisonment.

His party staged a months-long protest campaign last year demanding the prime minister's resignation that saw at least 11 people killed and thousands of its supporters arrested.

China's 'ice city' draws record number of tourists over New Year holiday

Monitoring Desk
BEIJING: The "ice city" of Harbin, the snowy capital of northeast China's Heilongjiang province, attracted a record number of visitors over the New Year holiday, many of them drawn by the grand and intricate ice sculptures of its annual Ice and Snow Festival.

The towering ice structures, illuminated in a dazzling array of lights at night, are built from ice blocks harvested from the frozen Songhua River nearby.

This year's festival helped draw 3.05 million visitors to Harbin during the three-day New Year

holiday that ended on Monday, generating 5.91 billion yuan (\$826 million) in tourism revenue, state media agency Xinhua reported on Wednesday. Those numbers exceeded the number of pre-Covid visits in 2019.

Growth in the city's accommodation and catering sectors during the holiday period more than doubled from 2019, local newspaper Harbin Daily reported.

The city's tourism department attributed the growth to Harbin's increasing popularity on social media platforms, Xinhua said.

9 children among 14 killed in Israeli attack on Gaza camp

Monitoring Desk
BEIRUT: Israeli shelling killed 14 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip's south, packed with people who had fled attacks in other parts of the besieged enclave, on Thursday. The dead included nine children, an official said.

All the 14 Palestinians were killed in a strike at Al Mawasi camp, to the west of Khan Yunis.

Gaza residents said Israeli planes and tanks bombed three refugee camps in the centre of the shattered enclave, prompting many civilians to head south.

Israeli shells had landed near tents erected in the area by displaced people, they said.

Footage on Palestinian media showed several bod-

ies wrapped in blankets inside a hospital morgue in Khan Yunis.

The Palestinian Red Crescent said its headquarters in Khan Yunis was hit, killing one person and wounding others.

The Israeli military reported several clashes in Khan Yunis, where it has said previously that it is trying to capture "Hamas leaders hiding there".

In its daily briefing, it said Israeli warplanes killed three Hamas members who had tried to detonate explosives next to ground troops, and Israeli soldiers killed two more. Five Palestinians were killed in an Israeli air strike on a car in Al Nusseirat refugee camp on Wednesday, health officials said.

Houthis launch sea drone to attack ships hours after US, allies issue final warning

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: An armed unmanned surface vessel launched from Houthi-controlled Yemen got within a "couple of miles" of U.S. Navy and commercial vessels in the Red Sea before detonating on Thursday, just hours after the White House and a host of partner nations issued a final warning to the Iran-backed militia group to cease the attacks or face potential military action.

Vice Admiral Brad Cooper, the head of U.S. Navy operations in the Middle East, said it was the first time the Houthis had used an unmanned surface vessel, or USV, since their harassment of commercial ships in the Red Sea began after the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas war. They have, however, used them in years past.

Fabian Hinz, a missile expert and research fellow at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, said the USV's are a key part of the Houthi maritime arsenal and were used during previous battles against the Saudi coalition forces that intervened in Yemen's war. They have regularly been used as suicide drone boats that explode upon impact.

Most of the Houthis' USVs are likely assembled in Yemen but often fitted with components made in Iran, such as computerized guidance systems, Hinz said.

At the United Nations, U.S. deputy ambassador Christopher Lu said at a emergency Security Council meeting on Wednesday that Iran has supplied the Houthis with money and advanced weapons systems, including drones, land attack cruise missiles and ballistic missiles. He said Iran also has been deeply involved in planning the Houthis' attacks on commercial vessels in the Red Sea.

Armed men kidnapped 32 migrants in Mexico for extortion, president says

Monitoring Desk
MONTERREY: The armed men who kidnapped 32 migrants in northern Mexico over the weekend aimed to extort money from them and their families in the United States, Mexico's president said on Thursday, one day after the migrants were released from captivity.

He said that the migrants, who were found on Wednesday, were abandoned by their kidnapers in a parking lot in a shopping center in the northern city of Reynosa in the state of Tamaulipas.

"Because there was a strong deployment (from Mexican authorities), they decided to free them, safe and sound," President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador said in his morning press conference.

The case has highlighted the risks faced by the hundreds of thousands of migrants who cross through Mexico en route to the US border each year, who are targets of extortion and kidnapping by powerful criminal groups.

Human rights activists have been warning for months about an escalating kidnapping crisis in Reynosa, where last year Reuters documented a pattern of kidnappings - and at times sexual assault - of migrants and asylum seekers.

The 32 migrants were abducted on Saturday from a commercial bus that had departed the northern city of Monterrey for Matamoros, across from Brownsville, Texas, according to Mexican officials. They were forced off the bus while traveling through Reynosa and whisked away in cars by armed men, officials added.

In a separate case, authorities in the border state of Sonora said on Thursday they had rescued around 20 migrants, many also kidnapped off buses.

The group kidnapped in Reynosa was discovered after an anonymous caller tipped off authorities to their whereabouts, the state security agency's spokesman told Reuters.

Floods and snow hit Europe after latest Atlantic storm

Monitoring Desk
ARQUES: Parts of northwestern Europe struggled to cope with the impact of the latest in a series of Atlantic storms which dumped rain or snow on already saturated ground, while northern Scandinavia experienced extreme cold.

In northern France, rescue crews helped evacuate residents from inundated homes in the town of Arques in the Pas de Calais department, a region that had flooded for the second time in two months after heavy rainfall on Wednesday.

Another 20-40 millimetres (0.85-1.7 inches) of rain was expected within hours, and a red alert indicated that the river Aa was close to breaking its banks.

"The first time, you think it's had luck, but the second time, it starts to hit your morale and your wallet," said Arques resident Anthony Richevin as he was being evacuated. "You start wondering about the future."

There are no large-scale evacuations planned in the region for the time being, Van Cauter added.

In Norway, the southern town of Kristiansand said it had closed its schools and cancelled all public buses following heavy snowfall.

The same storm, labelled Henk on either side of the North Sea, brought gales and heavy rain to parts of England and Wales on Tuesday, causing power outages, disrupting train travel and forcing the closure of major roads because of flooding.

Trees were blown onto roads and rail tracks, killing one motorist in southwestern England.

A 59-year-old woman died in Belgium's East Flanders province on Tuesday after being hit by a blown-away fence during a period of heavy rainfall in the country, local governor Carina Van Cauwer said in a statement on Wednesday.

Gaza's child amputees face further risks without expert care

Monitoring Desk
KHAN YOUNIS: Eleven-year-old Noor's left leg was almost entirely torn off when her home in Jabalia, Gaza was hit by an explosion in October. Now her right leg, fitted with a heavy metal bar and four screws drilled into the bone, may have to be amputated.

"It hurts me a lot ... I'm afraid that they'll have to cut off my other leg," she said from her hospital bed,

staring at her clunky fixation device. "I used to run and play. I was so happy with my life, but now when I lost my leg, my life became ugly and I got sad. I hope I can get an artificial limb."

In bombed-out Gaza, a generation of child amputees is emerging as Israel's retaliatory blitz after Hamas' deadly Oct. 7 attacks has led to blast and crush injuries as explosive weapons.



A member of Japan Air Self-Defense Force pets their military dog during a search for survivors at the site of collapsed buildings, in the aftermath of an earthquake, in Wajima, Ishikawa Prefecture, Japan.

Nadeem urges society to play role in polio eradication, importance of family planning

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Health Dr Nadeem Jan Friday emphasized the necessity of raising awareness about family planning-related myths among the rural population and called upon every section of society to play its due role in the complete eradication of poliovirus.

Talking to a private news channel, he said that every government was playing its top-level commitment and thoroughly engaged in various national polio drives where it is immunizing children under five in the country against the paralyzing poliovirus.

“Every child has the right to live life free from the threat of disability caused by polio and we will not rest until all children are safe from it,” Dr Jan said.

Minister also urged that scholars, educators, media, and civil society should create more awareness for importance of family planning, adding, government needs the help of Islamic scholars to convince the public.

Replying to a query about the upcoming ‘Global Health Security Summit in Islamabad’ which will officially be inaugurated from January 10th to 11th said that moot would serve

as a great opportunity of bringing together international and national experts to share expertise and knowledge for a safer world.

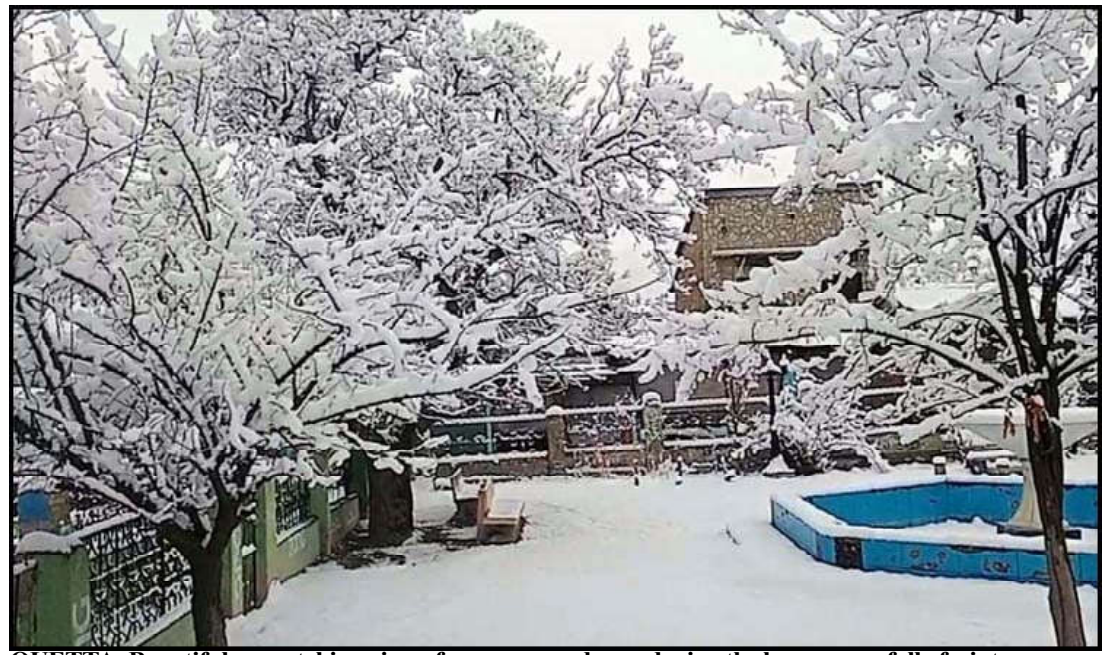
He said that around 70 countries’ experts and intellectuals will participate in the summit, adding, over fifty other ambassadors from various countries will also be part of this moot.

He said first time Pakistan is hosting an international health conference to address pandemic-related issues which would present a positive image of Pakistan and prove that the country could play a key role in the health sector.

He said national and international experts are taking part in the summit, adding, summit will discuss global pandemic planning responses and its facility for low-and middle-income countries to prevent disproportionate utilization of vaccines between the first and third world.

He said effective measures were also being taken to increase the capacity of health sector.

To another question, minister said that there is a great deal that Pakistan can contribute to the knowledge and experience of the global community in the fight against pandemics.



QUETTA: Beautiful eye catching view of snow covered area during the heavy snowfall of winter season, which more decreases the temperature below in minus degree Celsius, in Ziarat.



KARACHI: President Dr Arif Alvi chairing a meeting on Inclusive Education for Persons with Disabilities.

‘Easy come easy go’ Discos, Gencos’ employees consuming free electricity of worth Rs10b

ISLAMABAD (Online): “Easy come easy go” electricity distribution companies and employees of WAPDA received free electricity worth 10 billion rupees in the financial year 2022-23.

The users of free electricity include grades 1 to 22 and retired officers.

During the year 2022-23, the details of free electricity users have come out. According to the documents, free electricity worth more than 10 billion rupees was given to employees by electricity companies in one year.

The total value of units used for free in a year is 10 billion 48 crore 18 lakh rupees. Users of free elec-

tricity include employees from grade one to 22.

According to the document, a total of one lakh 89 thousand 985 employees are using free electricity. Retired employees are also included among those using free electricity units.

According to the document, 34488 employees of LESCO used free electricity worth 2 billion 827 lakh rupees.

20 thousand 834 employees of GAPCO were given free electricity worth 1 billion 135 lakh rupees.

28 thousand 873 employees of FESCO used free electricity worth one billion 43 crore 90 lakh rupees.

21 thousand 97 em-

ployees of IESCO used free electricity worth one billion 12 crore 36 lakh rupees.

Free electricity worth one billion 41 crore 85 lakh rupees was given to 26181 employees of MAPCO.

32 thousand 171 employees of PESCO used free electricity worth one billion 64 crore 72 lakh rupees.

9720 employees of HESCO used free electricity worth 93 crore 55 lakh 88 thousand rupees.

7872 employees of SEPCO were given free electricity worth Rs 50 crore 58 lakh in one year.

5744 employees of Quetta Electric Supply Company used free electricity worth 31 crore 60 lakh rupees.

BFA continues crackdown against outlets selling expired & prohibited products

Independent Report
QUETTA: The Balochistan Food Authority (BFA) continued crackdown against the shops and fast food centres selling the expired and prohibited products in different parts of the province.

According to the official statement issued here on Friday, the BFA teams took action against nine outlets in Quetta and seven in Panjgur.

The expired items including cold drinks, juices, Iranian packets of spices

and other confectionery products while the prohibited items seized were included pan parag, gutka.

The action was also taken against the food corners on using old and used cooking oil besides the poor hygiene condition of the workers there.

The shops and other outlets were charged fine by the BFA teams. The owners and other concerned were directed to follow the SOPs of the Authority to run the business, otherwise stern action would be taken against them.

Mainly cloudy weather forecast for Balochistan

QUETTA (APP): Mainly cloudy weather with cold conditions prevailed in most of the province during the next 24 hours, while isolated light rain/wind/thunderstorms for Kalat, Makran, Lasbella, Awaran and coastal areas including its surroundings. According to the Met Office, the minimum temperature in Quetta was recorded at 0.5 degree centigrade and -01.5 degree centigrade in Zhob on Friday. Rain falling was recorded in respective areas of Balochistan including Urmara, Kalat, Quetta Samugli, Panjgur, Pasni, Khuzdar, Jiwani, Dalbandin and Gwadar.



KILLA SAIFULLAH: Caretaker Provincial Health Minister Dr. Amir Muhammad Khan Jozgezi visiting District Health Office Killa Saifullah.

Pakistan Startup Fund to be launched on January 9: Minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication, Dr. Umar Saif, announced on Friday that the Pakistan Startup Fund is set to be launched on January 9.

In an interview with private TV channels, Dr. Saif expressed confidence in the immense potential of Pakistani youth, highlighting that Pakistan is the world’s second-largest online workforce. Discussing initiatives for IT education, Dr. Umar Saif mentioned ongoing efforts to conduct tests for IT scholarships, indicating a commitment to fostering talent and innovation in the technology sec-

tor.

Over the past four years, Pakistani startups have attracted nearly \$800 million in foreign investment, according to Dr. Saif.

He also mentioned that Pakistan ranks as the seventh-largest market for mobile phones globally, with 75 million broadband users.

Dr. Saif said social media users in Pakistan, surpass the total population of Canada.

Discussing initiatives for IT education, Dr. Umar Saif mentioned ongoing efforts to conduct tests for IT scholarships, indicating a commitment to fostering talent and innovation in the technology sector.

Grant approved for PTV Quetta’s cameraman died in road accident

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Television (PTV) Managing Director Sayeed Mubashar Tauqir Shah on Friday approved financial assistance for the families of PTV Quetta Center’s Chief Cameraman Ahmed Khan Solangi and Cameraman Zafar Ali, who died in a road crash the other day.

The decision was taken in line with the directives of Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi and Secretary Information Shahera Shahid, said a news release.

The grant of Rs 2.4 million was approved for the family of Chief Cameraman Ahmed Khan Solangi and Rs 1.5 million for the family of Cameraman Zafar Ali.

Govt taking up issue of ‘ghost article’ with The Economist: Solangi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Friday said that the government would take up the issue of a “ghost article”, published in the name of a jailed politician, with the foreign media outlet ‘The Economist’.

“Today, we are writing to the Editor of The Economist about an article purportedly written by Mr Imran Khan,” the minister said in a long thread posted on the social media platform ‘X’. He said it was “puzzling and disconcert-

ing” that such an esteemed media outlet published an article in the name of an individual who was in jail and had been convicted.

The caretaker government, he said, believed that it was critically essential to uphold ethical standards and promote responsible journalism.

“We would like to know how the editorial decision was made, and what considerations were taken into account regarding the legitimacy and credibility of the content by The Economist,” Solangi said while referring to the article.

Aneeq urges youth to help promote interfaith harmony

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed on Friday urged the young generation to play their due role in the promotion of service to humanity and brotherhood by following the teachings of Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him).

Pursuing the values of tolerance, respect and peace was imperative for religious and interfaith harmony, he said addressing a seminar on “The Importance and Necessity of Promoting Interfaith Harmony” at the Iqra University Islamabad, organized in collaboration with

the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Inter-Religious Harmony.

The minister underscored the need of taking a united and collective stance to counter anti-national forces and those fostering religious divisions.

He appreciated the Religious Ministry for organizing seminars and other events to disseminate the message of tolerance, respect and interfaith harmony for peace in the country.

“United as a nation, we are steadfast in resisting anti-national forces and those who propagate religious divisions,” Aneeq reiterated.

Education development is vital for poverty alleviation in Pakistan: Madad Ali

KARACHI (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training Madad Ali Sindh on Friday education development is vital for poverty alleviation in Pakistan that is the reason we are paying attention to education and skill development.

He was addressing as chief guest on the occasion of 20th Annual Convocation-2023 of SZABIST University - Karachi Campus held at Expo Center here. Madad Ali Sindh said that educated and skilled manpower are imperative for growth of any society.

He said that the large proportion of the population get education from the public sector education system, therefore there is a need to impart training to

teachers of the public sector schools.

The Federal Education Minister called upon the political parties to give priority to education development in the next five years. He recalled that the Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto Institute of Science and Technology (SZABIST) was founded by former prime minister, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto in 1995 and now SZABIST is established as a well-reputed education institute.

He lauded the services of SZABIST in education sector and said more educational institutes like SZABIST should be established.

Earlier, the Caretaker Federal Minister for Education and Professional

Training Madad Ali Sindh and President SZABIST University Madam Shahnaz Wazir Ali opened the Convention and degrees were conferred to 1,750 students including 21 PhD students.

As many as 33 Gold Medals and 26 Silver Medals were awarded to the deserving recipients. Five hundred and twenty students’ names have been placed on “Chancellor’s Honor List” for securing CGPA equal to or greater than 3.50.

The Convocation Ceremony was attended by large number of people comprising of SZABIST University Board of Governors, faculty, staff, graduates, parents, educationists and other dignitaries.

AG Balochistan to hold open katchery on January 10

Independent Report
QUETTA: The Accountant General Balochistan, Hasan Saqlain will hold an open katchery at 11:00 AM on January 10 at the AG office here. According to an official handout issued here on Friday, the Accountant General would hear the issues of Drawing and Disbursing Officers (DDOs), provincial government employees and pensioners. He would also issue on the spot orders for solution of their problems.



QUETTA: Central Secretary General JUI Senator Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haideri talking with central Chairman All Pakistan Mazda Association Mir Jawab Khan during road blockade at Lakpass.

Bilawal asks woman workers to propagate party manifesto, 10 promises

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal-Bhutto Zardari emphasised the role of PPP’s women workers, urging them to serve as advocates, ambassadors and voices for the party among the people. Addressing a ceremony, organised by the PPP women wing to celebrate the 96th birth anniversary of party founder Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, Bilawal highlighted awareness among Pakistani women about the country’s challenges, including inflation, poverty, healthcare, and educational opportunities.

Bilawal urged the PPP women workers to go door-to-door, sharing the party’s ideology and emphasising its commitment to representing the downtrodden. He underscored the legacy of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and Benazir Bhutto Shaheed in

championing the cause of the poor. Bilawal asserted that the PPP stands apart from other parties, alleging that the PML-N and PTI only cater to the elite.

Highlighting the 10 promises of the PPP, Bilawal called upon party workers to inform masses about the party’s vision, emphasising a departure from divisive politics. He outlined the PPP’s goals, including establishing free-of-cost healthcare and educational institutions and initiating projects to eradicate hunger.

In his address, Bilawal reiterated the importance of PPP women workers in conveying the party’s manifesto to women across the country. He expressed confidence in the PPP’s victory, emphasising the need for a rule that prioritises the people, laborers, farmers, students, and women.

ECP completes training of electoral staff

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has completed priority-based training for election supervisory staff appointed for the smooth conduct of the 2024 general elections.

According to the electoral body, the training of 579,191 people has been completed, while the remaining 406,222 people will complete training by February 1, 2024.

ECP spokesman said on Thursday that the Commission had initiated training for nearly one million election staff during the last week of November, 2023, which would conclude by February 1, 2024.

The remaining 406,222 election supervisory staff, including District Returning Officers, Returning Officers, Presiding Officers, Assistant Presiding Officers, and others would be imparted training before the deadline, he added. Strict disciplinary action was being taken against the staff who remained absent during the training programme, the ECP spokesman said.

Fire in house claims lives of 4 brothers and sister

LAHORE (Online): As many as four brothers and sisters were burnt alive after fire erupted in their house in Ichhra Lahore.

The fifth storey of a residential building caught fire near Chowk Baba Azam in Ichhra Lahore.

4 brothers and sister were scorched and they died. According to Rescue sources the deceased kids have been identified as Aman (12), Noor (8), Ibrahim (5) and Ismail (2).

Fire brigade has extinguished the fire besides completing cooling process.

Police and Forensic teams reached the scene and completed their preliminary proceedings.

Police said the investigation is underway to ascertain the causes behind fire outbreak. Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi expressed his deep sorrow and grief over the death of four children in the fire incident. He expressed his heartfelt sympathy to the bereaved family in their hour of sorrow saying that he equally shares.

Pakistan secures global recognition as premier tourist destination in 2023

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a significant milestone, the collaborative efforts of the Pakistani government and the Pakistan Association of Tour Operators have propelled the country to be hailed as the best destination for tourism by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in 2023.

A recent meeting between the delegation of tour operators and the Secretary of Interior marked a pivotal moment in advancing Pakistan’s tourism sector, said a public relations officer on Friday.

The delegation, representing the Pakistan Association of Tour Operators, engaged in a constructive dialogue with the Secretary of Interior, addressing key challenges and presenting innovative suggestions for boosting tourism.

A breakthrough emerged as both parties reached a consensus to streamline and expedite the tourist visa procedure, a move aimed at enhancing accessibility for global travellers.

During the meeting, the Home Secretary af-

Pakistan secures global recognition as premier tourist destination in 2023

firmed the government’s unwavering commitment to play a proactive role in promoting tourism.

Expressing dedication to resolving pertinent issues, the Home Secretary echoed the sentiment that the growth of tourism stands as a top priority on the national agenda.

This commitment to fostering tourism has yielded remarkable results, as evidenced by the recent announcement from the UNWTO.

The international organization’s recognition of Pakistan as the best country for tourism in 2023 underscores the nation’s newfound status as a premier global destination.

The collaborative synergy between the government and the tour operators has not only addressed existing challenges but has also paved the way for a more welcoming environment for tourists.

The streamlined visa procedures and the dedication of key stakeholders signify a collective determination to position Pakistan as a go-to location for travellers worldwide.



QUETTA: Chief Secretary Balochistan, Shakeel Qadir Khan presiding over a meeting of Secretaries Committee.