

Independent

Member APNS & CPNE

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PM Kakar, US special envoy discuss issues relating climate change

ISLAMABAD (Online): The 54th Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum has kicked off in Davos, Switzerland.

Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar is representing Pakistan at the forum.

The Prime Minister will attend three key thematic events: Preventing an Era of Global Conflicts, Restoring Faith in the Global System and Preventing Economic Fracture.

He will deliver a key note address on the theme Trade, Tax, Trillion Dollar Promise.

Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar will also hold meetings with government and business leaders on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum.

Under the theme "Rebuilding Trust", the event aims to reinforce and strengthen the fundamental principles of transparency, consistency and accountability among world leaders.

The annual meeting of the Forum will continue till Friday.

Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Tuesday met US Presidential Special Envoy on Climate John Kerry on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum.

During the meeting, they discussed the local and global impacts of climate change. The two leaders also discussed the climate change related challenges being faced by the developing countries.



DAVOS: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar meets U.S. Presidential special envoy on Climate John Kerry on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum.

Six-member JIT constituted to probe social media campaign against SC judges

ISLAMABAD (INP) — The caretaker government on Tuesday established a six-member joint investigation team (JIT) to "reveal the facts surrounding an alleged malicious social media campaign" against the Supreme Court judges.

The JIT's mandate, as outlined in the notification, is to "ascertain the facts behind a supposed malicious social media campaign aimed at damaging the reputation of the honorable judges of the Supreme Court."

The committee is responsible for identifying and prosecuting the culprits according to relevant laws, presenting charges in appropriate courts, and recommending measures to prevent similar incidents in the future.

After extensive hearings last week, a three-member bench of the Supreme Court, led by Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa, upheld the Election Commission of Pakistan's decision to invalidate the PTI's electoral symbol "bat" and declared its intra-party polls as "un-constitutional."

with additional support from the FIA headquarters during the investigation. No specific social media posts were identified as part of the alleged campaign.

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QUETTA: A delegation of BNP meeting with Governor Balochistan Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar

Govt ensuring peaceful environment for free, fair & transparent elections: CS

Shakeel Qadir directs to ensure early repair of all polling stations fall in Sibi Division; says CCTV cameras to be installed at all polling stations

Independent Report
QUETTA: The Chief Secretary Balochistan, Shakeel Qadir Khan has assured that the provincial government would extend wholehearted cooperation to Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) for conducting free, fair and transparent elections in the province.

He directed to the concerned high ups to prepare comprehensive plan for deployment of the polling staff, provision of necessary facilities, security and transport at the polling stations.

He also directed all the Deputy Commissioners to ensure immediate repair of the polling stations located

in their respective districts. The Chief Secretary was chairing a meeting about preparations of the general elections in Sibi Division on Tuesday.

Those who were present in the meeting were included Additional Chief Secretary Home, Zahid Saleem, Inspector General of Police, Abdul Khaliq Sheikh, Secretary Finance, Babar Khan, Commissioner Sibi Division, Bashir Ahmed Bangulzai, Deputy Commissioners of all districts of Sibi Division and other concerned high ups.

The Chief Secretary was briefed about the ar-

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WAH: General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff (COAS) visits Pakistan Ordnance Factories (POF) Wah.

ECP launches new policy on electoral symbols of candidates

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) stopped ROs and DROs from changing election symbols of candidates for the upcoming elections.

The ECP told ROs and DROs that at this phase stage with the elections coming near the changing of election symbols should be avoided. "If the need to change the election symbol is so important then the commission should be asked for a change," the ECP told ROs.

According to the ECP, the printing of the ballot papers has started and it may not be possible at this stage to change the election symbol.

Sheikh Rashid arrested after bail rejection

LARKANA (APP): Awami Muslim League (AML) chief Sheikh Rashid Ahmed was arrested on Tuesday after the Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) rejected his bail in a case pertaining to the May 9 incidents.

The former minister appeared before ATC Judge Malik Asif Ejaz, who dismissed his plea for bail. Talking to the media, Rashid's counsel Sardar Abdul Razzak said that his client had attained bail in 12 out of 13 cases pertaining to the May 9 incidents.

He said Sheikh Rashid was taken into custody outside the court after his bail was rejected in a case of an attack on the office of an sensitive institution on May 9.

Visa made mandatory at Pak-Afghan border

ISLAMABAD (INP): Truck drivers carrying goods from Afghanistan, who hitherto would cross over into Pakistan only by showing to the officials their passports, would now have to show their passports with visa stamps on them, says in media reports.

In this connection, an agreement was reached between the officials of the two countries at their meeting held at Pak-Afghan border crossing at Torkham yesterday. The purpose of the decision is to regulate trade between both countries, improve security and eliminate smuggling.

Both truck drivers and traders have welcomed the agreement. A truck driver has expressed the hope that the decision will not only benefit both Pakistan and Afghanistan, but also traders and drivers. Another driver, who was equally pleased with the agreement, said that not only he was happy to hear the news but all truck drivers.

COAS vows to enhance defense with self-reliance, latest technology

Says path to national progress is defined by indigenous, local industries like POF Wah

RAWALPINDI (APP): Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir on Tuesday paid a significant visit to the Pakistan Ordnance Factories (POF) in Wah, a crucial hub for the nation's defence production, the military said.

The visit aimed to gain insights into POF's production capabilities, its role in meeting the defence needs of the Pakistan Armed Forces, and its potential for export, according to a statement from the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR).

During his visit, the COAS was briefed on various aspects of POF's operations, including its contributions to the national defence through the devel-

opment and production of a wide range of military equipment. The army chief had the opportunity to witness firsthand the testing and trials of indigenously designed and manufactured weapons and ammunition, showcasing the organisation's commitment to innovation and self-reliance.

Addressing the officers and staff of POF, Gen Munir applauded their dedicated efforts in bolstering the security and economy of Pakistan, emphasising the pivotal role of POF as the primary defence industry in the country. He acknowledged the significance of indigenous and local industries in the path to national progress.

"The path to national progress is defined by indigenous and local industries like POF Wah. We will continue to work for self-reliance and the adoption of the latest technology, which is essential towards ensuring reliability and strengthening the defence of Pakistan," remarked the army chief. Gen Munir's visit highlighted the military's commitment to promoting self-sufficiency and technological advancement in the defence sector. The COAS emphasised the need for continuous efforts to enhance the capabilities of indigenous defence industries, aligning with the broader goal of ensuring Pakistan's defence is built on reliable and cutting-edge technology.

Farid Afridi posted as new PEC Balochistan

Independent Report
QUETTA: The Provincial Election Commissioner Balochistan, Aijaz Anwar Chohan has been transferred and posted as the Provincial Election Commissioner Punjab with immediate effect.

This was announced in an official notification issued here on Tuesday.

According to the notification, the Additional Director General Elections in Election Commission, Muhammad Farid Khan Afridi has been posted as the Provincial Election Commissioner Balochistan.

Pakistan, Lebanon agree to strengthen bilateral relations

DAVOS (APP): Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati Tuesday met Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum (WEF).

During the meeting, the two leaders discussed the overall situation in the region, and reiterated their resolve to strengthen the bilateral relations.

PTI founder, Bushra Bibi indicted in marriage case

ISLAMABAD (APP): The local court on Tuesday indicted the founder of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and his wife Bushra Bibi in the marriage case.

Senior Civil Judge Qudrat Ullah read the charge sheet during the case hearing at Adiala Jail, with the PTI founder in attendance.

The court expressed annoyance at the absence of Bushra Bibi and rejected the defence counsel's plea for exemption from her attendance.

Minister Information visits Passport office:

Implementation on one document regime continues in larger interest of country: Jan Achakzai

Independent Report
QUETTA: The caretaker Provincial Minister for Information, Jan Achakzai has stated that implementation on the one document regime is continued in larger interest of the country.

The across border movement can be monitored through one document regime in real manner. By doing so, the international relations can also be promoted by fulfilling the legal requirements, maintained Jan Achakzai while speaking on occasion of his visit to the Regional passport office here on Tuesday.

He said that there is a need to expand the role of NADRA and Passport office in this regard so as to resolve the public problems immediately.

The Minister Information said that the interim government stressed on effective resolution of the problems soon after taking

over the government. He said that the government has been successful in resolving the issues of masses.

Meanwhile, the Minister Information visited different sections of passport office besides hearing the issues of people there.

He also assured every possible cooperation to resolve issues of the masses. Later, Jan Achakzai also visited the office of PPHI the same day.

He appreciated the effective role of PPHI in the sector of public health.

He said that it's very important to provide healthcare facilities to the people.

However, he stressed the need to bring innovation in the health department according to the requirements of present era.

He assured his best cooperation for improving the health sector.



ISLAMABAD: US Ambassador to Pakistan Donald Blome calling on Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff Pakistan Air Force at Air Headquarters in the Federal Capital.

Air Chief, US Envoy for elevating training momentum via enhanced cooperation

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu was called on by US Ambassador to Pakistan Donald Blome here on Tuesday and discussed issues of bilateral relations.

The two dignitaries expressed their mutual desire to elevate the training momentum between the two sides through enhanced collaboration in air force to air force mutual exercises, said a Pakistan Air Force (PAF)

news release. The Air Chief and envoy also emphasized the importance of fostering a robust exchange of delegations and knowledge sharing to bolster the capabilities of both the PAF and the US Air Force.

The discussion also centered around collaboration in the recently established techno parks, with a focus on leveraging technological advancements for enhancing operational effectiveness and efficiency.



LAHORE: Chief Organizer PML (N) Maryam Nawaz warmly welcome upon arrival at PP-159.

Maryam pledges to work 'day and night' for public's welfare

LAHORE (INP): Maryam Nawaz, Chief Organizer of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), on Wednesday declared that February 8 will resound with the roar of the "lion", her party's election symbol.

Addressing a rally in Lahore's Gajju Matta, Maryam expressed gratitude for the warm reception, stating, "Gajju Matta, I thank you wholeheartedly for your overwhelming welcome. You have chosen

me, and in return, I promise to serve day and night for the welfare of the people if you help bring victory to the lion."

She highlighted the infrastructure developments in Lahore by PML-N, particularly the sight of Speedo Bus service on Ferozepur Road and the Orange Line train, attributing them as symbols of former prime minister Nawaz Sharif's dedicated service to the people of Lahore.

Razaur Rehman withdraws for Tahir on PB-42: Tahir Mehmood to support Lashkari Raisani on NA-263, Quetta-II

Independent Report
QUETTA: The independent candidate contesting election from PB-42, Tahir Mehmood Khan has announced to support the leader of Balochistan Grand Alliance (BGA) and tribal and political personality Nawabzada Lashkari Raisani on the seat of National Assembly from Quetta, NA-263.

Tahir Mehmood Khan made this announcement while addressing press conference in presence of Nawabzada Lashkari Raisani and others here at the Quetta press club on Tuesday. Also present on the occasion were the candidate of BGA for PB-42, Razaur Rehman and others.

Razaur Rehman announced withdrawal of his candidature in favour of Tahir Mehmood Khan.



QUETTA: Caretaker Provincial Minister for Information, Jan Achakzai visiting Regional passport office

Holy Prophet (PBUH)'s Seerah termed vital for establishing peace on permanent basis

ISLAMABAD (INP): The participants of national seminar on "The conduct of Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) in dealing with Non-Muslims in a Muslim society" organized by the Islamic Research Institute (IRI) of the International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI) have termed the Seerah of Holy Prophet (PBUH) for establishing peace on permanent basis by spreading his message through use of contemporary means.

The participants opined that the life of the Prophet (PBUH) teaches that there must not be any use of force for the religion, while salient features of Seerah such as respect, peaceful co-existence and avoiding coercion in matters of religion should be adopted to build a stable society. This national seminar was organized at the Faisal Masjid Campus of IIUI by Islamic Research Institute in collaboration with National Rahmatul-Lil-Aalameen Wa Khatamun Nabiyyin Authority and Jamia Muhammadiyah, Chiniot.

Addressing the seminar, Chairman Rahmatul-Lil-Aalameen Authority Khurshid Ahmad Nadeem said that today's session is related to the aspect of the Holy Prophet's life that describes the breadth of His message. He said that it is not difficult for Allah to bring people together as an Ummah, but it is a beauty that Allah has

made it clear that no one is forced in the matter of religion. He further said that in Islamic society, it was taught by Islam to run the affairs above religious discrimination.

Chairman Rahmatul-Lil-Aalameen Authority said that peace should be given a chance by establishing a society in the light of mutual respect and honor without discrimination of religion. He emphasized that there is a need to create a diverse society where righteousness and coexistence are important.

Mr. Mohiuddin Wani, Special Secretary, Federal Education and Vocational Training in his presidential address said that governance, commerce, education and other sectors should be included in the seminars related to the life of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) so that the world knows that the life of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) is a complete guide of conduct.

He also emphasized on adopting modern means to publicize Seerah. He urged that the lessons learnt through Seerah must be applied in religious and practical life as it would make our lives peaceful and easy. He further said that Seerah is actually a way of living life with honesty, truth, integrity and transparency. He hoped that all sections of the society would be invited to the Sirat-ul-Nabi (PBUH) seminars.



WAH: President and CEO of Cargill—largest private American global food corporation, Brian Sikes calls on Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on the sidelines of World Economic Forum.



SWITZERLAND: Caretaker Federal Minister for IT and Telecommunication Dr. Umar Saif visits Google House at Davos.

ECP completes all preparations to hold elections on Feb 8

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has completed all preparations to hold polling for the National and Provincial assemblies next month.

While talking to state-run TV, ECP Spokesperson Syed Nadeem Haider urged the general public to exercise their right to vote on polling day. The spokesperson mentioned that election symbols have been allocated to the contesting candidates, and the ECP is set to start the printing of ballot papers.

Syed Nadeem Haider also stated that monitoring

cells have been set up at the provincial level as well as at the ECP Secretariat in Islamabad to ensure the implementation of the election Code of Conduct. Earlier, the Election Commission has unveiled the preliminary list of candidates contending for seats reserved for minorities in the National Assembly.

According to list issued by ECP, nomination papers of 37 candidates have been approved for the 10 National Assembly seats. In light of the Supreme Court's decision, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) is excluded

Dr. Saif discusses digital collaboration with int'l organizations, global leaders

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's First Space Policy, opening up new opportunities in the country's space sector.

The delegation primarily engages in bilateral meetings with representatives from various countries on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum. Global leaders, including Pakistan's Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar and other prominent figures, are expected to attend the event.

During these meetings, Dr. Umar Saif highlighted efforts to introduce the "Digital Pakistan" brand at an international level and expressed the desire to foster collaboration between Pakistan and various international entities.

In a meeting with the Secretary-General of the Digital Cooperation Organization, Deemah Al Yahya, discussions centred on digital cooperation, emphasizing the potential benefits of such collaborations.

Bilateral talks with Qatar's IT Minister, Mohammed bin Ali bin Mohammed Al Mannai, and Rwanda's Minister of Communication, Paula

Ingabire, explored opportunities for mutual cooperation.

A significant development is the expected collaboration between Pakistan's Startups Fund and counterparts in various countries, focusing on joint initiatives in cloud services.

Dr. Umar Saif's visit included a tour of Google's headquarters, where discussions with Vice President Behshad Behzadi delved into conversations about Generation AI technology. The minister said that he visited the Google House at Davos to explore the latest advancements in Google Generative AI technology.

A mutual agreement on the dual use of artificial intelligence at both government and private levels in Pakistan was established, aiming for better utilization of AI resources.

Dr. Umar Saif mentioned that collaborative projects between Pakistan's Ministry of IT and Google are already underway, with a commitment to enhancing cooperation in information and communication technology.

Comprehensive strategy adopted to establish PAF as potent force

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Air Force (PAF) has undertaken a transformative modernization initiative to counter evolving threats in the current geostrategic threat scenario, prioritizing the induction of modern systems through smart acquisitions and indigenization.

PAF Checkmates Pakistan's enemies while strategically outplaying adversaries under the visionary leadership of Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Zabeer Ahmed Baber Sidhu.

According to a press release, Pakistan Air Force has undertaken a transformative modernization initiative to counter evolving threats in the current geostrategic threat scenario, prioritizing the induction of modern systems through smart acquisitions and indigenization. PAF has adopted a comprehensive strategy to establish PAF as a potent force and to rebalance the power dynamics in the region.

Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Zabeer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Pakistan Air Force has led the

PAF on path to becoming a Next Generation Air Force with induction of niche technologies, state-of-the-art equipment and human resource trained on modern standards with contemporary architecture for Full Spectrum Cross Domain Multi Arena warfare readiness in the fields of Aviation, Space, Cyber, Artificial Intelligence and Information Technology to address the modern aerial warfare challenges. The acquisition of J-10C fighter jets, Unmanned Aerial Systems, modern electronic warfare platforms, force multipliers, state-of-the-art integrated air defence systems, air mobility platforms, HIMADS and hypersonic missile capabilities at an unprecedented pace has bolstered the PAF's war fighting capabilities.

A key milestone in this strategic transformation has been the acquisition of Fifth Generation Stealth fighter jets, the foundation of whose induction into the PAF has already been laid which will ensure an impenetrable defence of the country.

Lawyers should not give insulting remarks about judges: PBC

ISLAMABAD (Online): Pakistan Bar Council (PBC) has said if there is some lacuna in Supreme Court (SC) decision it can be seen and the lawyer should not give such remarks which are insulting to the judges.

This was said by PBC members vice chairman Haroon ul Rashid, Hassan Raza Pasha and president SC bar Shahzad Shaukat while addressing a press conference here Tuesday.

Vice chairman Haroon ul Rashid said SC gave de-

cision against PTI on the matter of election symbol. If there is any lacuna in SC decision it can be seen. Lawyers should not give such remarks which are insulting to the judges.

He held that the application of PTI was fixed for hearing at night due to the tenure of retired chief justice of Pakistan Umar Atta Bandial. PTI was happy over the decisions which came in the tenure of Justice Umar Ata Bandial. Now decisions are coming as per law and constitution.

Google launches election search trends page in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): To help the media outlets and the general public get easy access, Google has set up a Google Trends Pakistan General Election page, a tool that exhibits the top search queries, topics, and interests in parties contesting the elections.

The page also included data on the top election-related topics searched in each part of the country, such as the economy, taxes, and wages, among others, said a news release.

All the charts from the

Google Trends page are embeddable on any site and will continue to update even after they're placed on an outlet's site.

Google clarified that the Google Trends Pakistan General Election page is not a poll or survey and does not reflect voting intentions. It merely reflects people's search interest in particular topics at a local level over a period of time. A spike in a particular search query does not reflect that a political party is somehow "more popular" or "winning".

Govt ensuring... Continued from page 1

rangements made for conducting general elections in Sibi Division.

Addressing the meeting, Chief Secretary said that the provincial government is ensuring peaceful environment for free and fair elections as per the guidelines given by the ECP.

He said that CCTV cameras would be installed at all polling stations.

He directed to the concerned to ensure timely completion of all arrangements for the elections in Sibi Division. In addition to this, the implementation on Code of Conduct should also be ensured as issued by the ECP.

He also directed to ensure availability of all facilities including water, electricity, washrooms and ramps (for the disabled persons) at all polling stations in the division.

Referring funds for transport, the Chief Secretary assured that provision of funds would be ensured to the administration for transport by January 22, 2024.

Earlier, during the briefing, it was informed that there would be elections on one seat of National Assembly and four seats of Provincial Assembly in Sibi Division.

It was also informed that the total population of Sibi Division is 11,56,000 with 4,46,000 voters there.

In all 406 polling stations would be set up in Sibi Division. The police, levies and Frontier Corps would be deployed for security at the polling stations, it was further informed.



GWADAR: Chairman GDA Tourism Committee Changez Khan presiding over a meeting

Pakistan, China getting closer through province & sister city relationships: Envoy

CHENGDU (INP): Pakistan, China are getting closer through province and sister city relationships as well, said Ambassador of Pakistan to China Khalil-ur-Rahman Hashmi during his visit to Sichuan province.

The Ambassador undertook an orientation visit to Sichuan, the economic and cultural hub of Southwest China, China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Tuesday.

During the visit, he engaged the provincial leadership, business enterprises, academia, the Pakistani community, and Chinese media during this visit.

Chinese officials, both sides expressed satisfaction over the robust nature of Pakistan-China relations.

They discussed proposals to enhance Pakistan-China (Sichuan) cooperation and collaboration, especially in the economic and cultural fields including through sister province and sister city relationships that are already in place.

The Ambassador met

President of Sichuan University, highlighting the importance of academic research and scholarship in advancing bilateral relations.

With a key focus on enhancing Pakistan's exports and attracting Chinese investment, the Ambassador interacted with diverse business enterprises in sectors like agriculture, dairy, electronics, and logistics.

He also participated in an investment round table organized by the provincial China Council for Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT) and encouraged enterprises and businesses to take advantage of a liberal taxation regime and invest in export-oriented industries in Pakistan.

Ambassador Hashmi also celebrated the arrival of the first batch of 182 tonnes of Pakistani dry chillies in China while attending the signing of a Letter of Intent for a sister city relationship between Multan, Pakistan, and Neijiang, China.

FM to attend NAM, Third South summits in Uganda

ISLAMABAD (APP): Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani is scheduled to visit Kampala, Uganda from January 16 to 22 to participate in the 19th Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and the Third South Summit.

The NAM Summit is being held from January 17-20, 2024 and the Third South Summit from January 21-22, a Foreign Office press release said.

The two summits afford an opportunity for the members to reflect on and amplify common positions on a range of global, regional, political, and socioeconomic issues.

As a longtime member, Pakistan has contributed to and shaped the agenda of NAM and is strongly committed to further strengthening NAM's role in responding to regional and global challenges relating to questions of peace and security.

TENDER NOTICE

The Director General Health Services invites bids from eligible Bidders for supply of following items. TSE-232401371191

Only electronic bid will be submitted. No physical bid is required. Note: In All Procurements of GOB Whether Through Electronic or Manual Bid Submission, It is Mandatory For All Bidders to Get Registered at Electronic Public Procurement System of BPPRA GOB. Tender Fee Rs.2000/-

S.No	Class of object	Bid Security
1	Medical Equipment and Accessories	3%
(Total Item(s) Count: 3)		

Procurements shall be made under the Balochistan Public Procurement Rules—2014. Eligibility of Bidders: 3 Assignments of Similar Nature and Complexity 20,000,000 in Previous 2 Years. Turn over of at least 20,000,000 PKR in 2 Subsequent Previous Years. Presence in Active Tax Payer List. Sales Tax Certificate. The bidding firm must not be currently blacklisted by any procuring agency of Pakistan. JV is not permissible. Submission of the required Bid Security In case Bid Security is not found as required during financial evaluation the bidding firm shall be declared as ineligible and non-responsive. Submission of the required Bidding document Fee. The Bidder must have functional corporate office in Quetta. i) Affidavit on stamp paper of Rs. 100/- duly notarized to the effect that ii. Bidder has submitted the correct and complete information along with the bid/offer. If any document / information is found forged / engineered / fake / bogus at any stage, the bidder may be declared as Blacklisted in accordance with law and the performance guarantee and payment, if any may be forfeited. iii) Bid Validity Compliance (90 Days) iv) Delivery Period Compliance (90 Days) v) Price Reasonability vi) Compliance of warranty period. vii) Agreement with all terms & conditions viii) Agreement of operations of plant during the warranty period. Authorization or Sole Agent Certificate by the Manufacturer for Balochistan / sub-dealer having sole authorization from the principal for Balochistan may also apply. Proof of such authorization signed and stamped, on Manufacturer's Letter Head for participating in this tender may be supplied. This certificate should be produced in original for verification and the same should be verifiable from the issuer; if the procuring agency needs such verification at any time. The Manufacturer or sole distributor (In case of change of sub distributor) must ensure after sales and services during post warranty period irrespective of further affiliation with the bidder. ISO Certification 9001 / 13845. Under taking for 24 hours or less response time for technical support/repair/after sale services. Technical Staff Bio Medical Engineer / Technician list along with Training Certificates. List of Calibration & Testing tools of equipment's etc. Procedure Of Procurement: Single Stage Two Envelope Bidding Procedure Bid Security: The bids must accompany Bid Security in the form of Deposit at Call of 3% specified above in the name of the under-signed from a scheduled bank. Tender Documents: The NIT & Bidding Document can be obtained electronically from www.bppra.gov.pk issuance of tender Documents: Complete Bidding Document can be viewed at www.bppra.gov.pk Last Date of bid submission: Bid can only be submitted electronically latest by 30 January, 2024 till 10:30 AM through supplier dashboard. Tender opening: All tenders will be opened on same day at 11:30 AM on EPPS System Address: DG Health Services Quetta Phone no: 0819211349 Email: dghealth@balochistan.gov.pk

DIRECTOR GENERAL HEALTH SERVICES BALOCHISTAN QUETTA

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FBR 'delays' SIMs, connection suspension of non-filers

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has "delayed" nationwide crackdown against non-filers.

The FBR was set to suspend SIMs and utility connections of the non-filers on the International Monetary Fund's demand, but now the decision has been "delayed" due to "legal issues".

Sources privy to the development said the action is being "delayed" over non-completion of the Income Tax General Order because FBR may have to face courts on legal grounds.

The action against non-filers can be initiated by March 1 after releasing the active taxpayers list, the source said. After addressing the legal issues,

the tax collection body will suspend SIMs and utility connections of the non-filers.

The IMF's move to issue notices to hundreds of thousands of non-filers is part of a broader strategy to boost tax compliance in Pakistan.

Last week, the Executive Board of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) completed the first review of Pakistan's economic reform programme supported by its Stand-By Arrangement (SBA).

"The Board's approval allows for an immediate disbursement of SDR 528 million (around US\$ 700 million), bringing the total disbursements under the SBA to US\$ 1.9 billion," a Finance Ministry news release said.



QUETTA: Rescue officials and local people busy in rescue operation to save the lives of child, which fell down into sewer into a well, located on Bostan area in Quetta.

Hockey Olympic qualifiers: Pakistan concede huge defeat against England

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's hopes to launch their Olympic qualifying campaign on a winning note suffered a blow as England handed them a 6-1 defeat in their Group A opener in Oman on late Monday.

England's Jack Waller scored the first goal for them in the 10th minute on a penalty corner before Sam Ward netted twice to make it 3-0.

Will Calnan scored fourth goal for his team. However, Pakistan's Hannan Shahid netted a brilliant goal to reduce the lead.

England's Zach Wallace fifth goal for them on a penalty stroke, while Nick Bandurak scored one more to award England an unsailable 6-1 lead.

In Group A, Pakistan are placed with England, China, and Malaysia.

They will next face China later today, while they will lock horns with Malaysia on January 18.

Pakistan will have to finish in the top three in Oman to secure a place at Paris this summer.

Abbas Afridi ruled out of 3rd T20I against New Zealand

ISLAMABAD (APP): Abbas Afridi has been ruled out of the 3rd T20I against New Zealand due to discomform from a low grade abdominal wall muscle strain.

His scan has shown no sign of significant injury, and he will be managed symptomatically, Pakistan Cricket Board said in a press release on Tuesday.

The decision about his availability for the last two games will be made later on.

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NA Speaker inaugurates office of Pakistan Parliamentary Reporters Association

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Speaker of the National Assembly, Raja Pervez Ashraf on Tuesday inaugurated the office of the Pakistan Parliamentary Reporters Association (PRA) in green surroundings of the Parliament House.

In the opening ceremony attended by PRA representatives, members, and senior journalists from the National Assembly, the Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervez Ashraf congratulated on the establishment of the Parliamentary Reporters Association and the PRA office at the National Assembly Secretariat.

Highlighting the Press Gallery's pivotal role, the Speaker emphasized its indispensability, stating that without it, the Parliament remains incomplete.

Addressing the deep connection between the media and the Parliament, Speaker Raja Pervez Ashraf underscored the role of the media in bridging the gap between the public and the Parliament, acknowledging the crucial function of parliamentary reporters in keeping the public informed about legislative activities.

Expressing his commitment to providing a conducive environment and excellent facilities for parliamentary reporters, the Speaker declared it a top priority. The journalists in the press gallery have consistently played a crucial role in bringing public concerns to the attention of the highest echelons of power, stated the Speaker. Declaring the Parliament as an institution representing 25 crore people (250 million

people), the Speaker asserted its status as the source of power and the focal point of all institutions. In a call for national unity, Speaker Raja Pervez Ashraf stressed the necessity for all institutions to work collaboratively for the country's development and progress. Urging the overcoming of mutual differences, the Speaker asserted that democracy and the strength of the Parliament are indispensable for the nation's progress. Emphasizing respect for all institutions belonging to Pakistan, the Speaker urged collective efforts to address and solve the challenges being faced by the country.

In a call for political unity, Speaker Raja Pervez Ashraf urged all political parties to come together to address the country's issues.

Training workshop held for police investigation officers

Independent Report

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Police have organized a training workshop dedicated to enhancing the skills of Police Investigation officers and fostering a more professional approach to handling investigation cases.

The initiative, driven by the directives of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, aimed to implement capacity-building programs for the force's investigation officers, emphasizing the need for a professional approach in dealing with various cases.

The training workshop took place at the Police Lines Headquarters in Islamabad, attracting participation from investigation officers of the Islamabad Capital Police.

SC dismisses appeal in family dispute on gold

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Supreme Court of Pakistan on Tuesday dismissed an appeal of a woman challenging the verdict of high court pertaining to a family dispute on ten tola gold.

A three-member bench headed by Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa heard the case filed by a woman against the provision of gold to her ex-daughter in law.

The lawyer informed the court that the conflict was between a mother in law and daughter in law on custody of the gold. On the query of the bench, the lawyer said that woman has been divorced and she has three children.

The court asked that what the problem was in giving ten tola gold to a mother of three kids. The court, subsequently, dismissed the appeal of woman Sabeeha Khanam.

Journalist, author Babar Ayaz passes away at 68

ISLAMABAD (APP): Senior journalist and author Babar Ayaz, breathed his last on Tuesday after a prolonged battle with Parkinson's disease, as confirmed by his grieving family.

At the age of 68, Ayaz succumbed to the effects of Parkinson's disease, a condition he valiantly fought against for an extended period, according to private news channels.

Throughout his illustrious 41-year professional career, Ayaz left an indelible mark on the field of journalism, contributing significantly to various publications and earning respect for his insightful commentary.

The committee requested a comprehensive five-year data breakdown by country and skill for trend analysis and strategic planning, including insights into Government-to-Government (G2G) agreements within Letters of Intent (LOIs). Information on government initiatives addressing non-issuance of UAE work visas to Pakistanis and a brief understanding of the G2G approval process for international labor agreements were sought for transparency. The committee also formulated recommendations, including the proposal to discontinue the term "export" when referring to overseas Pakistani workers and to replace "Yaran-e-Watan" with "Government documentation".

The evening session featured briefings from the Ministry of Communication, shedding light on its affiliated Departments.



ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervez Ashraf inaugurating the office of the Parliamentary Reporters Association at Parliament House.

Dr Suleri says: Blockade of waterways due to illegal construction in hill torrent prone areas inflicting heavy losses

ISLAMABAD (APP): Executive Director of Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Dr. Abid Qaiyum Suleri on Tuesday said that the blockade of waterways due to illegal construction after flooding in hill torrent prone areas was inflicting heavy losses to infrastructure, livelihoods and human lives.

He was speaking at a one-day roundtable titled: "Climate Resilient Water Governance Approaches for Hill Torrent Management in Pakistan", organized by Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) in collaboration with Pakistan Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN), and DAI.

The roundtable aimed to stir result-oriented dialogue among the public, private sector, and civil society stakeholders to mull over hill torrents' floodwa-

ter governance issue. It incorporated community perspectives from representatives, who joined from hill torrent affected areas from D.I. Khan, Rajanpur, Swat apart from Sindh and Balochistan. Dr Suleri said that population explosion, deforestation, and urbanisation are the major causes of fading away of water management systems and infrastructure. The temperature systems of La Nina and El Nino effects and weather change had already increased precipitation to an erratic level, he added.

"SDPI's climate change and water management teams are closely working on these areas, and it's impacts that were above normal on girls, women, children and others," he said.

Mr Ahmed Kamal, Chairman of Federal Flood

Commission (FFC), said Pakistan has been facing the worst flooding due to reverse monsoon activity as monsoon used to start from Tarbella, but in 2022 the low pressure was built up in Sindh province that caused abnormal rains in Sindh and Balochistan.

The sporadic flooding in September 2022 in Swat and Kabul river also caused flooding in the areas, he said, adding that in Koh-e-Suleiman Range, Rajanpur and Dera Ghazi Khan areas hosted 11 hill torrents that caused havoc.

He noted that the total water storage capacity of the country was 3.43 million acres feet that comprised three dams, i.e. Tarbella, Chashma, and Mangla. He underlined that the country's priority was low towards mitigating natural disasters that needs to be addressed.

Ashrafi greets South Africa for initiating ICJ case on Palestine

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Prime Minister's Special Representative for Religious Harmony and Pakistani Diaspora in the Middle East and Muslim Countries, Hafiz Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi on Tuesday congratulated the people and the Government of South Africa for filing a case in the International Court of Justice (ICJ) concerning the Palestine issue.

He was talking to South Africa's High Commissioner to Pakistan, Mthuzeli Madikiza during a meeting at the latter's office, a news release said. Ashrafi said both the people and the Government of Pakistan appreciated the initiative taken by South Africa. South Africa's High Mthuzeli Madikiza affirmed his country's solidarity with the Palestinian people in the face of oppression. South Africa was fully committed to actively oppose the oppression experienced by the Palestinian people, he added.

PPP believes in transparent elections, sanctity of vote: Marri

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leader Shazia Marri Tuesday said that elections are part of democracy and PPP truly believed in the transparency of elections and the sanctity of public votes for the betterment of the country. Talking to a Private news channel, she said that equal opportunities to all political parties and every party had full right to participate in the elections, adding, polls would have no credibility if one party was

Healthcare activists urge immediate implementation of Tobacco Health Levy in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Healthcare activists urge immediate implementation of Tobacco Health Levy in Pakistan. Dr. Khalil Ahmad Dogar, Program Manager at SPARC, said that the Tobacco Health Levy, pending since 2019, presents a crucial opportunity for Pakistan to bolster its healthcare infrastructure and fortify the ongoing efforts in tobacco control.

Dr. Khalil Ahmad Dogar, Program Manager at SPARC, said that the Tobacco Health Levy, pending since 2019, presents a crucial opportunity for Pakistan to bolster its healthcare infrastructure and fortify the ongoing efforts in tobacco control. The potential additional revenue of 250 billion Rupees could significantly contribute to the betterment of public health, particularly for our children.

It is imperative that the caretaker government takes swift action and moves towards the immediate implementation of this bill. Malik Imran Ahmed, Country Director at Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids, stated that the delay in implementing the

Senate delegation explores collaborative opportunities during UK visit

ISLAMABAD (APP): A delegation from the Pakistan Senate, led by Senators Khalida Ateeb, Keshoo Bai, Abida Azeem and Additional Secretary Hafeez Sheikh, is undertaking a study tour to the United Kingdom Parliament.

During their visit to Westminster, the delegation received a warm welcome and an in-depth tour of the British Parliament, coupled with a comprehensive briefing on the workings and composition of the UK's parliamentary democracy, said a press release issued here on Tuesday.

In a subsequent meeting at the CPA Headquarters in London, the delegation engaged in fruitful discussions with CPA Secretary-General Stephen Twigg.

Matters of mutual in-

terest were deliberated, with a focus on strengthening collaboration and synergy for parliamentary and democratic enhancement.

The forthcoming General and Senate elections in Pakistan were highlighted, presenting an opportune moment for the CPA to resume its prior initiatives, including post-election seminars and workshops for newly-elected parliamentarians.

The Pakistan Senate delegation underscored the potential for increased co-operation by urging the CPA to establish a regional office in Pakistan. This move is seen as pivotal in expanding collaborative initiatives with both federal and provincial parliaments, aiming to bolster the capacities of elected members, staffers, and officials.



ISLAMABAD: Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan, Haji Gulbar Khan calls on Governor Gilgit-Baltistan, Syed Mehdi Shah.

SC issues written order regarding rejection of Justice Naqvi's plea

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Supreme Court on Tuesday issued a written order regarding rejection of the request of Justice Mazhar Ali Akbar Naqvi to stay the proceedings of Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) against him. The six-page order regarding the hearing dated January 9, was authored by Justice Amin ul Din Khan.

The order said, "We note that the instant CP was fixed for hearing on 15.12.2023 when learned counsel raised the objection with regard to constitution of the bench and prayed that he wants to file an application to raise this objection so that this bench may consider the same and prayed for fixation of the petitions for 8.1.2024 and on his request the case was

adjourned for the said date. "When the case was fixed for 8.1.2024, no written application was filed and during the hearing learned counsel stated that he wants to withdraw the objection noted on the last date of hearing. "As the petitioner's counsel was not willing to plead the complainants as respondent in these petitions, then a question was posed to the learned counsel whether without impleading the complainants/informers we can proceed with the matter and on this point some of the arguments were advanced on 8.1.2024 and further Constitution Petition No.43/2023, etc 6 arguments we heard today and passed the order of impleadment as respondent in these petitions.



ISLAMABAD: A worker is busy in the maintenance work of CCTV cameras installed in Federal Capital.

Musadik Malik says: PMLN optimistic for election victory

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PMLN) leader Dr. Musadik Malik on Monday expressed firm confidence in the party's strong position for the upcoming general elections.

Talking to a private news channel, he emphasized that the anticipated victory would be anchored in the exemplary performance of PML-N in the last

four years of government. Dr. Musadik highlighted the key achievements of PML-N government were the installation of 12,000 to 14,000 Megawatt (MW) of electricity in the system. The establishment of 1.2 billion cubic feet of gas plants, construction of 8 to 9 thousand miles of roads and elevating the GDP to 6 per cent were the key project on PML-N's credit, he said.

Islamabad Police Fire at store of police headquarters timely extinguished

ISLAMABAD (APP): The fire that occurred at the miscellaneous store in the Islamabad Police Line Headquarters on the previous night was successfully extinguished with no significant losses.

According to police, the cooling process was also conducted and teams of Islamabad Police, and district administration participated in the operation. The fire was brought under control by a very tactical approach.

ICCPD Dr Akbar Nasir Khan and Deputy Commissioner Islamabad supervised the entire process while other officials of Islamabad Police and District Administration remained present at the spot,

police said. Meanwhile, the police sources said that the blaze, which started near the anti-riot equipment and uniform warehouses, spread quickly to other parts of Police Lines Headquarters, prompting the evacuation of nearby residential barracks of police personnel.

At least six fire brigade vehicles, one police water cannon and rescue teams reached the spot after being informed and brought the fire under control after a hectic effort.

According to rescue sources, the cause of the fire is not yet known. Rescue sources also informed that no casualty was reported in the incident.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture, Jamal Shah presenting shield to Ambassador of Kazakhstan, Yerzhan Kistafin at National Heritage & Culture Division.

Kazakhstan Ambassador, Jamal forge cultural ties

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a significant diplomatic rendezvous, Ambassador Yerzhan Kistafin of Kazakhstan met with Caretaker Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture, Syed Jamal Shah, at the National Heritage and Culture Division in Islamabad on Tuesday.

The discussions centred on bolstering cultural exchanges and fostering people-to-people connections between Kazakhstan and Pakistan, particularly in the realms of art, culture, heritage, and cinema.

The meeting reflects the shared commitment of both nations to deepen understanding and strengthen their already friendly and brotherly relationship.

The Minister emphasized the paramount importance of cultural ties, acknowledging the rich cultural heritage and picturesque landscapes of the region.

Both parties ex-

pressed a keen interest in enhancing collaboration in film and cinema to further fortify bilateral cultural relations.

Pakistan plans to organize the second phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) cultural caravan, inviting artists from Central Asian states, including Kazakhstan, to showcase the region's cultural diversity. The Ambassador commended the warm reception and affirmed future collaboration in various sectors, including cultural exchanges, art, heritage, museums, and film.

Kazakhstan announced plans to organize a film screening at the Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA), further promoting cultural ties between the two countries.

This diplomatic engagement marks a pivotal moment in the ongoing efforts to strengthen the cultural bonds between Kazakhstan and Pakistan.



ISLAMABAD: Secretary Senate, Mohammad Qasim Samad Khan presenting a shield to Director General (Translation) Senate Secretariat, Muhammad Usman on his retirement from Senate Secretariat at Parliament House.

Senate body addresses challenges faced by workers abroad

Independent Report

ISLAMABAD: The sub-committee of the Senate Standing Committee on Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development convened at the Parliament House under the leadership of Senator Engr Rukhsana Zuberi accompanied by Senator Shaheen Khalid Butt and Senator Zeeshan Khanzada. The primary focus of the meeting centered on a comprehensive discussion of the challenges encountered by Overseas Pakistani workers across various countries.

During the morning session, an overview of initiatives by the Overseas Pakistanis Foundation (OPF) was presented, highlighting efforts such as the establishment of schools and the provision of preferential admission and scholarships for the children of overseas Pakistanis. The Bureau of Immigration shared insights into the recruitment pipeline, emphasizing strict adherence to

immigration rules.

The committee requested a comprehensive five-year data breakdown by country and skill for trend analysis and strategic planning, including insights into Government-to-Government (G2G) agreements within Letters of Intent (LOIs). Information on government initiatives addressing non-issuance of UAE work visas to Pakistanis and a brief understanding of the G2G approval process for international labor agreements were sought for transparency. The committee also formulated recommendations, including the proposal to discontinue the term "export" when referring to overseas Pakistani workers and to replace "Yaran-e-Watan" with "Government documentation".

The evening session featured briefings from the Ministry of Communication, shedding light on its affiliated Departments.



ISLAMABAD: Senator Engr. Rukhsana Zuberi, Convener Sub-Committee of the Senate Standing Committee on Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development presiding over a meeting of the committee at Parliament House.

Daily Voice of Masses
Independent

Wednesday January 17, 2024

On your mark

After the Supreme Court's shock verdict depriving the PTI of its election symbol late Saturday, many observers have wryly questioned the need for having elections at all, given how neatly the field now appears to be set up. However, the show must go on.

By now, most of the parties, including the PTI, have issued lists of candidates to whom tickets have been awarded, and these hopefuls have very little time to canvass for votes. They must get going with their campaigns forthwith. The PML-N still seems considerably behind compared to the PPP, which has taken a head start as far as holding workers' meetings and jalsas is concerned.

The PTI, unfortunately, faces new, serious existential challenges after losing the bat. However, the party has displayed grit and determination thus far, and it is hoped, for the sake of Pakistani democracy, that it will manage to make the best of the hand it has been dealt.

The lesson that ought to have been learned in 2018 was that engineering results by interfering in the electoral process invariably has disastrous consequences. Those benefiting from such 'interventions' may reap short-term benefits, but without meaningful public support and the legitimacy conferred by a fair election to strengthen their hand, they cannot expect to survive the pressures that come with executive power.

With this in mind, all political parties should collectively ask non-democratic forces to step away from the ring immediately.

It is well past time for them to assert their space in the country's power configuration and keep dominion over the political sphere — unless they wish to remain at the mercy of non-democratic forces in the years to come as well. The parties seem eager to out-compete each other; it would be a shame if they are not given a fair chance to do so on an equal footing from here on.

Meanwhile, it is deeply concerning that two fresh resolutions have been forwarded to the Senate to seek a delay in elections over weather and security concerns.

The caretaker government and the ECP must ensure that the commitment to holding general elections on Feb 8 is not derailed. These elections are key to restoring the political stability that Pakistan desperately needs.

Unfortunately, major controversies have dogged the polls from the very beginning, and there is now a dark pall over the entire exercise. The institutions responsible, especially the ECP, owe it to the nation to salvage what respectability they can for the exercise by ensuring, from now on, fool-proof security and the freedom to campaign for all candidates cleared to participate in the polls.

No candidate should fear appearing in public and putting their agenda before the people. Much damage has already been done. No more should be allowed.



Arifa Noor

The Supreme Court maintained its time-honoured tradition of doing out justice on the eve of an election, which will eventually affect the entire exercise.

On Saturday night, the court decided the PTI had not held proper intra-party elections and could, therefore, no longer take part in the general election as a party. This is not the first time our judges have yielded such influence, and neither will it be the last.

The PTI will now be taking part in the next election with far more disadvantages than just the absence of a common symbol. Consider: in each constituency, the voters will have to remember the correct symbols for the PTI National Assembly candidate and the provincial as-

sembly candidate — both will be different.

This will not be easy, especially in the rural constituencies, where literacy rates are low. As a result, the room for mistakes and rejected votes will increase.

Once these candidates get to parliament — if they survive the ongoing harassment, in addition to the absence of the balla — they will not be bound by any party discipline if they choose to stay independent (though there is little guarantee they will be allowed to form a group once elected).

Their voting, too, will not be controlled by a party leadership, and they can choose any candidate for chief minister or prime minister, and from any party. As journalist Maria Memon tweeted on Sunday, "Yesterday's 'historic' judgement by the SC might have unintended consequences beyond its effect on PTI. Is the door now open for a non-PML-N chief minister in Punjab?"

The party will also not be able to get its quota of indirectly elected seats after the election. The

battle is thus more than uphill for the party.

Indeed, that this coming election will be unfair and unfree has been lent more credence after Saturday's decision. Along with the arrests, disappearances and general harassment, only the parties in power after Feb 8 will now consider this a legitimate exercise.

And while there are many who point to past injustices under martial laws, what they tend to forget is that for the young population of Pakistan, which can at best remember Musharraf, the current times present a turning point. Other than those who study it, history can perhaps be no match for lived experience; and this is why, for many younger Pakistanis in some parts of the country, the heavy-handedness is new and the PTI its first victim. This perception will be hard to dislodge.

To return to the PTI, these heavy-handed tactics have done a greater disservice to more than just the party and its supporters. The crackdown, which culminated with the decision on the party

symbol, has left a sense that the PTI's popularity was so unprecedented that it required a dismantling, which, too, was excessive. If in 2018 it was sufficient to disqualify and imprison the party leadership, this time around individuals were picked up and forced to renounce the party, campaigning was disallowed and its symbol taken away.

This aggression has simply established the PTI's popularity as unmatched, even before an election result could 'prove' it. Consider what this means for other parties in the running.

More than tarnishing the election, this has also tarred the PML-N and its possible victory (or of the PPP, if it wins any significant seats in Punjab). Whatever the result of the election, the winning party will be seen to be the one cruising to victory only because the god of winds was puffing hard at their sails. Those behind the helm will get little credit.

To repeat for the umpteenth time, such a government will hardly be able to govern and deliver.

Power will lie with those who did the huffing and puffing. This is all the more certain given the lawmaking the PDM government had done during its last days in power. With the SIFC seen as the decision-making centre, the next prime minister, like all previous interior ministers, will have to spend much time worrying about Islamabad and ordering CDA around.

More than that, though, it is intriguing what impact this will have on the party and its voter base beyond the short term.

Will the party need to pick a fight with the establishment to regain its popular base again? Or will its time in power allow it to strengthen its patronage links in Punjab? The future of the PML-N remains as unclear as the winter sky in Lahore.

But unlike the PML-N, the fate of the Supreme Court is perhaps more evident. The decision that came on Saturday will be remembered for long for the role it played in weakening democracy, while the current chief justice will be remembered more

for this decision than any of the ones that have come from the court since his ascension.

If in the recent past, constitutional provisions introduced by dictators were used to disqualify politicians, this decision, arguably, didn't just take a small step, but a giant leap to disenfranchise the voters of a political party. And I wouldn't even believe a soothsayer if he or she said on national television that this judicial precedent will not be used again. After all, Jehangir Tarin was disqualified merely months after Nawaz Sharif.

We have just been delivered our latest version of 58 (2)(b).

Postscript: It is interesting to note that there are growing whispers that this election will lead to an unstable regime which will not last very long.

While some are predicting a few months, the more optimistic accounts tend to speak of a year or two. It is hard to remember the last time such rumours began even before the election took place. -- Courtesy Dawn

Saturday night fever

Where is our middle class?

Rs600,000 and Rs1,500,000 annually. But now the middle class is shrinking or virtually disappearing in Pakistan, as earning opportunities for this group are decreasing. This is a bad sign.

The middle class in economic terms is a progressive class, as it ensures and contributes more to economic growth through their sheer hard work for the uplift of the economy. They are industrious in nature and strive to earn more to be part of the higher class, as their ultimate goal or dream is to be part of the higher echelon of society.

The important question is: what constitutes the middle class in Pakistan? Five indicators provide the basis for the estimation of the middle class including but not limited to its access to education, occupation, income, lifestyle and housing. The middle class in Pakistan is badly suffering from high inflation, unemployment, joblessness, and a debt-ridden and shrinking economy.

Some estimates suggest that the vibrant middle class of Pakistan — traditionally consisting of about 35 per cent of Pakistani society — has been wiped

out in the last four years marred by multiple factors, especially the effects and after-effects of Covid-19 in the form of high inflation, which has slowed down the economy.

The investment atmosphere is also badly affected due to myriad reasons with almost zero investment coming to the country. This is due to multiple factors including but not limited to high interest rates, deteriorating law-and-order situation, security issues, and political instability.

There is every reason to believe that the famous 'economic hit man theory' is applicable here, which is adversely affecting the people of Pakistan. All the loan programmes from international financial institutions are burdening the economy with ever-increasing tariffs, fuelling inflation in the economy.

We are getting loans to pay back previous debts and the interest incurred on them. We are trapped and bundled into a vicious cycle of debt. The stringent conditions attached to such loan programmes are badly affecting the middle class. The funding of social safety net programmes through

loans is a faux pas, as the sustainable economic growth model ensuring enablement is badly affected due to such programmes.

External loans should have been utilized for the self-sustainable model of economic growth, generating employment through industrialization and investment and enhancing exports and production capacity.

The ever-increasing energy tariffs with inflated electricity and gas bills have made the lives of ordinary people of Pakistan miserable. The overall inflation, especially food inflation as evident from the Consumer Price Index (CPI) is at its peak, touching around 40 to 50 per cent, pushing middle-income people below the poverty line.

The means of earning are diminishing due to the shrinking economy as finding jobs has become a rare commodity in this high-tech world of economic transformation. Unemployment is again at its peak. Only a small strata of the urban class consisting of people possessing computer or internet-based knowledge have access to new means of earning in the form of e-commerce.

This is a new phenomenon as we are observing the emergence of a new small middle class of individuals using AI-backed apps and platforms to earn money, and frankly they are, in fact, a hope for the economy.

High-interest rates as a policy to control inflation in Pakistan are further pushing people below the poverty line due to a simple reason that investment in such policy rate is not possible. And this lack of investment in the country triggered by such bad policy decisions slowly diminishes the middle class.

Inflation in Pakistan is mainly cost-push and imported inflation, as a major portion of our imports consists of oil and gas from abroad. There is a misconception among policymakers about controlling inflation through the exchange rate and policy rate mechanisms, as international oil and gas prices cannot be regulated through the policy rate mechanism.

Exports from Pakistan are almost inelastic as they cannot be increased or enhanced through the massive depreciation or devaluation of the currency. That is again a bad policy decision. A World Bank report

has valued the informal economy of Pakistan at about \$457 billion in 2022 as against the total outlay of Pakistan's GDP of almost \$300 billion in the formal sector of the economy. The middle class thrives in the informal sector, as almost 75 per cent of employment and business is in this sector, which consists of retailers, street vendors, small-scale agriculturists and middle-level entrepreneurs.

The most important step is to control inflation to save the middle class from the brunt of price hikes. The policy rate needs to be brought down to a single digit, ideally to around 5.0 to 6.0 per cent, to help support and generate an investment-friendly atmosphere.

The informal sector is the backbone of both the economy and the middle class of the country. It needs to be brought into the tax net after a well-thought-out process. The outclass theme of the current discourse is to save the shrinking middle class from extinction for the larger interest of economic growth and the well-being of the people. -- Courtesy TheNews

The missing link



Neda Mulji

Passing the parcel was a favourite game among kids at birthday parties in the bygone days. These days, passing the buck seems to be a running trend among those who like to shy away from accountability. One school owner I met seemed to have a litany of complaints against the teachers employed at her school: excessive absences, lack of classroom management skills and an unprofessional attitude were cited as reasons that land a school into ill-repute.

Meanwhile, teachers point fingers at the school management's inability to provide the necessary resources, training and development, reward and recognition. Whilst these may indeed affect the teachers' motivation, they are not the drivers of performance or the lack thereof. Those who are experts in their subject and professionally astute don't usually rely on external factors to motivate them.

There might be a missing link in this equation — a gap between how the teachers perform and the school management's perception of them. When this gap grows, it becomes a gaping wound, leading to teacher absences, high turnover, lower student retention rates, mediocre academic results and complaints by parents — all resulting in disgruntled school leaders which, in turn, clouds the entire school culture.

Communication and collaboration may help address this missing link between teachers and man-

agement. Often, teachers have little agency in contributing to the transformation processes at school. From timetabling and scheduling of classes to the choice of books for their subjects, most decision-making rests with those at the top. When parents complain, teachers get only a filtered version of it. When the teachers underperform, the management cannot necessarily put their finger on the reason for it, and the blame game continues.

Part of the transformational growth at schools requires an inquiry mindset where the management collaborates with teachers and seeks their insight on growth, obstacles and opportunities. Most teachers would welcome more open and frequent communication, as would parents, who desperately want answers regarding their children's experiences at school.

Planning and implementing processes, such as rosters for substitution, assessment schedules and parent-teacher conferences, in advance can help teachers manage their workload more efficiently. Often, teachers are overloaded with unplanned substitution duty for absent teachers, or tend to find out at the eleventh hour that a working Saturday is coming up due to parent-teacher meetings. Planning events much in advance establishes expectations and minimises nasty surprises that can dampen motivation.

Social interaction amongst the teachers also has a huge bearing on teacher motivation and well-being. Yet, in most schools, the aim is to minimise social interaction or reserve it for end-of-term school dinners. Work relationships among colleagues evolve continually, and it would help to provide regular opportunities for teachers to engage with

each other during frequent breaks, collaborate on lesson plans and teaching strategies and plan their modules together.

In most schools, only the heads conduct supervision rounds, although it could be very useful for junior teachers to shadow the more experienced ones and give constructive feedback as well as learn from seniors. There can be massive professional growth in watching and learning across the board. Besides, the supervision isn't always followed up with feedback, so teachers may not be explicitly aware of the aspects of their teaching that need improvement. Similarly, many school or subject heads ask for weekly or monthly lesson plans but do not address the disparity between the plan and what is actually being taught in class. Reflection sheets that can steer teachers towards pinpointing what they do well and where they need support are greatly beneficial for continuous learning.

School management may want to leverage available technology for digital reminders, discussion boards and tracking content taught in class by having teachers enter records each week. Sustainable systems in place can streamline much of the work being done, besides providing opportunities for collaborative work online vis-à-vis shared lesson plans.

Most teachers want to be inspired, as opposed to being managed, and inspiration can lead to dramatic positive change. When the work is shared across the board, the management would be less fearful of lack of productivity and teachers would get a chance to showcase their work and receive timely feedback. The ultimate beneficiaries — students and parents — walk away with greater satisfaction. -- Courtesy Dawn

Corporate purpose



Waleed Ahmed

Who am I? Why are we here? What happens to us when we die? Complex questions which every individual seeks to answer in a lifetime.

According to Colin Mayer's Prosperity, the purpose of the existence of a corporation is rather simple: "producing profitable solutions to problems of people and planet". The current socioeconomic business model creates an overabundance of wealth for businessmen, shareholders and CEOs. The scarcity of natural resources necessitates that the role of corporations goes beyond the stakeholder capitalism prevalent in the environment, social and governance (ESG) policy today.

The reasons behind social disorder, energy crises and corporate bank failures are "as clear as day", yet perpetually unseen by a few. The world yearns for real, sustainable and permanent change — a change in the way we conduct business, treat the environment and build a better future for coming generations.

Governance can help the corporation become a source of benefit to society and diminish the likelihood of harm caused to citizens. Orthodox shareholder primacy has been rejected across the Atlantic, but the alternatives to solving issues related to prosperity and consumer welfare need further examination. The citizen has become merely a consumer, with no active participation in the decision-making process. The consumer is deprived due

to profit maximisation at each stage of interaction between the individual, state and corporation. Prescriptive mandatory rules and best practices to redefine the corporate purpose of companies in both the Global North and South are required immediately.

Do ESG reporting standards and frameworks solve the problem? ESG addresses a company's performance and risk exposure based on its environmental impact, social responsibility, and how it is governed. The idea is to integrate a broad corporate strategy, addressing stakeholder and regulatory demands. ESG programmes are driven by investor demand, workforce pressure, enterprise management, and competitive advantage. Institutional investors employ 'sustainability-linked' loan-lending strategies to gain a better understanding of risks of an investee firm.

According to the UN Principle of Responsible Investment estimates, global sustainable lending activity grew from \$6 billion in January 2016 to \$322bn in September 2021. However, sustainable investing approaches differ widely by strategy and products, making it difficult to measure ESG performance. The greatest challenge faced by institutional investors is 'greenwashing' — funds which have branded themselves as 'sustainable' but are not fundamentally different from traditional funds. The UN Financing for Sustainable Development Report 2023 states: "Growing awareness of misleading practices is creating disillusion, threatening the entire market's credibility and leading to an increase in regulatory measures to enhance transparency and accountability."

Realignment of the profit motive and embedding purpose in the corporate legal framework lies at the heart of the issue. How is a buzzword of any use

to a shareholder if it carries no instant return or promotes stakeholder interests at the cost of financial capital? The answer is not straightforward. ESG guidelines nudge private actors at the corporate level. Alternatively, SDG goals and the Paris Agreement's Nationally Determined Contributions prod public actors at the state level. A truly sustainable society is visible through the lens of shareholder governance, but can only be manifested through a paradigm shift towards stakeholder governance.

Pakistan has an ambitious climate change action plan, exhibited recently at the pavilion of COP28 in the UAE. Two things seem quite obvious, first, despite its low greenhouse gas emissions (490 million tons of CO2 equivalent in 2017-18) Pakistan's frequent exposure to natural hazards and significant dependence on monsoon rain and the glacier-fed Indus Basin make it vulnerable to climate change. Second, public-private partnerships are integral to achieving the transformation of 60 per cent of the country's energy production through 'clean and renewable' resources by 2030. It is an inflection point for the Global South, which can either embrace economic growth in a measured sustainable method or follow the path of the Global North's industrial expansion, which is irreversible. Various regulators in the country, such as the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan, the Pakistan Stock Exchange and the State Bank have issued ESG and sustainability-focused regulations, policies and guidelines. However, time is of the essence; the quick remedy lies in embedding corporate purpose in a company's constitutional documents — which is variable on a self-regulatory basis but loosely monitored by the SECP. -- Courtesy Dawn

Naqvi inspects upgradation of LGH, Ganga Ram hospital

Independent Report
LAHORE: Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi inspected the upgradation work of Ganga Ram Hospital and Lahore General Hospital (LGH) at late night for 3 hours.

Upon noticing the sewerage line running through the hospital's verandah, the CM called the MD WASA, directing the immediate relocation of the line to an alternative site, said a handout issued here on Tuesday.

Emphasising the importance of fostering a green environment, he insisted on the plantation of samplings and landscaping in the vacant hospital space.

CM Naqvi issued a firm directive to ensure the completion of the upgradation work by Jan 31, without any compromise.

Recognizing the urgency of the situation, particularly in the case of LGH emergency services, he stressed that every moment is crucial, and the deadline must be strictly adhered to.

Providing an overview of the ongoing efforts, CM Naqvi highlighted that the upgradation work spans an impressive six lakh square feet. He acknowledged the simultaneous commencement of various projects aimed at enhancing the overall condition of the hospitals.

Expressing dedication to completing the projects before the stipulated deadline, he underscored the commitment to ensuring public convenience.

The CM affirmed his involvement in monitoring the progress of the undertaken tasks, reinforcing his commitment to the successful completion of the hospital upgradation projects.

Provincial Ministers Dr Javed Akram, Amir Mir, secretary health, secretary C&W, secretary tourism, commissioner and others were present.



KARACHI: Police commandos march during the passing-out ceremony at Saeedabad Police Training Centre, in Provincial Capital.

KP becomes first province imposing ban on sale of e-cigarettes to minors

Independent Report
PESHAWAR: In a landmark development, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has imposed section 144 to ban the storage, sale and use of e-cigarettes and vapes to minors and within the vicinity of educational institutions in the province.

"The decision has been taken in wake of the alarming increase in the use of electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) and vaping devices particularly among children and youth in the province," reads an official notification issued here on Tuesday by the Home and Tribal Affairs Department of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The concern over increasing use of e-cigarettes and vapes is heightened due to the presence of nicotine in these products which is a highly addictive substance, reads the order.

The use of e-cigarettes and vapes poses significant health risks, especially to children, youth and women (pregnant) as it can lead to addiction and other serious health issues.

In response to these concerns and to safeguard the health and well-being of our citizens, especially the younger generation, Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure 1898 be imposed for 60 days, the document continued.

The order imposed a complete ban on the sale of e-cigarettes and vapes to individuals below the age of 21 years throughout the KP.

IGP review up-gradation work of Special Initiative Police Station Civil Lines

RAWALPINDI (APP): Inspector General of Police (IGP) Punjab Dr Usman Anwar here on Tuesday visited Special Initiative Police Station Civil Lines and reviewed its up-gradation work.

He directed the officers concerned to complete all the projects within the stipulated time frame.

Regional Police Officer Rawalpindi Syed Khuram Ali, City Police Officer, Rawalpindi Syed Khalid Hamdani and other senior officers were present on the occasion.

The IGP inspected different parts of the police station and appreciated its up-gradation work in a short span of time. Rawalpindi police officers briefed the IGP regarding ongoing projects. All projects should be completed as soon as possible, the IGP directed the authorities.



HYDERABAD: People warm their hands on bonfire to save themselves from cold waves during the winter season, in Hyderabad.

10 developmental schemes worth Rs 11.941b approved

LAHORE (APP): Provincial Development Working Party, Punjab, (PDWP) has approved ten developmental schemes of the SHC&ME, RP and literacy sectors with an estimated cost of Rs 11941.6 million.

The schemes were approved in the 42nd PDWP meeting of current financial year, chaired by Planning and Development Board (P&D Board) Chairman Iftekhar Ali Sahoo here Tuesday. The Board Secretary Muzaffar Khan Sial, all the P&D Board members, Provincial secretaries of departments concerned and other senior representatives attended the meeting. Approved schemes are as follows:

Program for Strategic Transformation / Revamping of old Blocks of Aziz Bhatti Shaheed Hospital Gurjat at the cost of Rs 769.998 million; Program for Strategic Transformation / Revamping of old blocks of ex-DHQs (DHQ Hospital, Sargodha) at the cost of Rs 827.045 million; Program for Strategic Transformation / Revamping of old blocks 351 of ex-DHQs (Rahim Yar Khan, Gujranwala,

Pakistan Army, FC organizes medical camps

PESHAWAR (APP): In response to the onset of winter, the Pakistan Army and Frontier Corps North organized free medical camps in various areas including Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Swat, Dir, Buner, and Chitral.

At these free medical camps, doctors and nursing staff conducted over seven thousand free medical examinations, providing essential medications to the patients, said officials here on Tuesday.

Some cases requiring further treatment were referred to relevant district hospitals.

In addition to medical care, healthcare professionals at the camps raised awareness among the residents about seasonal illnesses. The initiative, led by the Pakistan Army and Frontier Corps, aims to continue providing health facilities to remote areas through free medical camps.

LHC reserves verdict on bail plea of Wazirabad attack accused

LAHORE (APP): A Lahore High Court (LHC) division bench on Tuesday reserved verdict on a post-arrest bail petition of Waqas Ali, one of the accused involved in the Wazirabad attack on the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder.

The bench, headed by Justice Aalia Neelum, heard the post-arrest bail petition and reserved the verdict on conclusion of arguments by the parties.

The accused had approached the LHC for the relief of post-arrest bail, adding that the prosecution did not have any evidence to connect him with the matter.

It is pertinent to mention here that an anti-terrorism court of Gujranwala had dismissed post-arrest bail petition of accused Waqas Ali in February 2023.

CTD arrests SRA associated suspect

HYDERABAD (APP): The Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) has arrested an alleged terrorist associated with the Sindh Revolutionary Army (SRA) in a raid that was conducted in Tando Allahyar district. The CTD's spokesman informed here on Tuesday that the suspect Arbab Bheel was later booked at CTD Hyderabad police station on the state's complaint under sections 11 F (6) of Anti Terrorism Act and 23 (I) A of Sindh Arms Act, 2013. The spokesman claimed that Bheel used to provide financial assistance and generated funds.



MULTAN: Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi unveiling the plaque to inaugurate the Revamping of Children Hospital Emergency, OPD & Pathology blocks during his visit.

Sindh CM 'distressed' over surge in crimes

KARACHI (APP): Caretaker Sindh Chief Minister Justice (retd) Maqbool Baqar on Tuesday expressed his distress over the surge in crimes in both urban and rural areas of the province, with "the law enforcement apparatus continues to be complacent".

The chief minister, in a letter to the Inspector General of Police and Director General of Rangers, said he was distressed over "the surge in crimes in the major cities and rural areas which include robbery, murder, rape, kidnapping, drug trafficking, impersonation, mobile snatching, targeted killing, and extortion among other serious crimes. The newspapers and electronic media abound with reports of incidents of the above crimes."

Baqar said that in the wake of upcoming general elections, there had been multiple reports of attacks on the candidates, "who in a few cases have even been kidnapped in broad daylight".

"The most vulnerable segments of our society, that is, women, children, and the elderly have borne a disproportionate brunt of these crimes. Journalists, lawyers, doctors, businessmen, and other professionals face a bigger threat to their lives and property, but the law enforcement apparatus continues to be complacent."

The chief minister directed the IGP and the DG Rangers to take immediate measures for stemming the rising tide of crime in the cities and rural areas to protect and safeguard the fundamental rights of the citizens as enshrined in the Constitution.

Meeting discusses matters relating to PHA Mega city

PESHAWAR (APP): Provincial Caretaker Minister for Relief and Rehabilitation, Justice @ Irshad Qaisar chaired a meeting and discussed matters relating to Pakhtunkhwa Housing Authority (PHA) Mega City.

The meeting was also attended by Caretaker Minister, Dr. Amir Abdullah, CM's advisor, Ashfaq Khan, Secretary Housing and concerned officials.

The meeting discussed observations being made during the site visit of PHA Mega City. The meeting was informed that concerned land could be used for housing purposes according to the land revenue laws of KP province.

It was said that 1750 kanal land has been acquired for phase I and allotment of 3434 plots has been done. The meeting was informed that appropriate measures have been taken to prevent flooding and private sector has been involved for investment in the mega housing scheme.



SUKKUR: Laborers are working at a printing press busy in printing posters for publicity party candidate in connection of Election Campaigns of the General Election 2024, in Sukkur.

Sindh to partner with UNICEF to develop Dashboard for tracking out-of-school children

KARACHI (APP): In a landmark decision, the School Education Department Sindh, in collaboration with UNICEF, has decided to establish a Dashboard to streamline the collection of information regarding out-of-school children from various sources.

During a meeting with the Deputy Country Representative of UNICEF, Dr. Inoussa Kabore, led the delegation, Provincial Minister for Education and Women's Rights, Rana Hussein, reached a consensus on integrating data from three key sources within the department.

The Data Board will incorporate the School Education Management Information System (SEMIS), Monitoring and Evaluation (DG M&E), and Human Resource Management Information System (HRMIS) data to create a comprehensive platform. Speaking on the occasion caretaker Minister Education Rana Hussein said that this initiative aims to facilitate informed and data driven decision-making and actions based on accurate statistics.

Secretary School Education Sindh, Shereen Mustafa Narejo, and other officials were present at the meeting.

Minister Rana Hussein emphasized that the integration of data sources onto a single platform would simplify access to accurate information for students, teachers, schools, and other resources. She further highlighted its potential to address issues related to book printing and distribution, furniture, and maintaining an appropriate student-teacher ratio.



MUZAFFRABAD: Police personals searching body of devotees of entry gate of shrine of Hazrat sain Sahki Saheli Sarkar during annual Mela, in the city.

SHC says: Citizens whose enforced disappearance proved be presented at every cost

KARACHI (Online): Sindh High Court (SHC) has ordered interior secretary that the citizens whose enforced disappearance has been proved be presented in the court at every cost.

A single bench of SHC led by Justice Naimatullah Phulpoto took up petitions regarding recovery of missing persons for hearing Tuesday.

State counsel and Attorney General (AG) appeared in the court.

During the hearing of the case the state counsel told the court enforced disappearance of both the citizens has been proved in JITs meeting and investigations.

The court questioned the citizens are missing since so long period. Do something for them. What surfaced during investigation.

The investigation officer told the court Hafiz Farhan Qadri had gone missing earlier too. He went missing again in 2020. Two cases are registered in police station Madina colony in this regard. The court has declared him absconding.

Justice Naimat Ullah Phulpoto remarked come what may the missing citizens will have to be produced in the court now.

The court ordered interior secretary to present the missing citizens otherwise he should himself appear in the court. The citizens whose enforced disappearance has proved they be presented in the court at every cost.



MOHENJO DARO: A female tourist Naseem from Iran is visiting and expressed keen interest in the historical ruins of the World Heritage Monuments of Mohenjo Daro.

Sindh govt implements 45-day weapon ban ahead of election

KARACHI (APP): In preparation for the upcoming General Election 2024, the Sindh government has enacted a 45-day prohibition on carrying and displaying weapons throughout the province.

This decision, made under section 144, comes in response to a request from Inspector General of Police (IGP) Sindh.

While the ban encompasses the general public, exceptions have been granted for the police, Pakistan Rangers Sindh, and law enforcement agencies.

Registered security guards are permitted to carry arms during duty, with the stipulation that weapons must remain inside vehicles during transportation in open surface vehicles, and their display is prohibited.

Station House Officers (SHOs) have been granted authority to register cases of violation.

The ban, recommended by the police, aims to prevent any potential untoward incidents during the election period, as highlighted in the official notification.

IGP inspires new police recruits at passing out parade

KARACHI (APP): Inspector General of Police (IGP) Sindh Riffat Mukhtar Raja graced the 116th Passing out Parade of Probationary Inspectors (Law) and the 120th Passing out Parade of Recruits at Shahid Hayat Police Training College Saeedabad.

The event celebrated the achievements of 845 police personnel, with 28 probationary inspectors (law) and 817 recruits, including 389 female recruits. As the chief guest, IGP Sindh, announced by bugle, meticulously inspected the parade, acknowledging the dedication of the officers. During his address, he congratulated the passing-out officers.



LAHORE: Labourers are busy in construction work of Sagian Road with the help of heavy machinery in the Provincial Capital.

Muslim Hands, AIOU Mirpur hosts capacity building workshop

MIRPUR (AJK) (APP): Regional Campus of Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) Mirpur here on Tuesday hosted a day-long capacity building workshop, in collaboration with Muslim Hands International (MHI).

According to AIOU official details, MHI UK-based distinguished NGO with established roots in Pakistan and AJK raising awareness among the masses about the significance of plantation for earning and livelihood in this era of rising dearness and price hikes.

The workshop, led by renowned resource person Dr. Tayyaba Kanwal, provided participants with insights into the cultivation process, including soil preparation, nurturing, caring, and growth of plants aimed at generating income.

Dr. Tayyaba Kanwal actively engaged participants in hands-on activities, emphasizing the practical aspects of the successful plantation. Discussions included techniques for cultivating Seeds, soil preparation, and the nurturing process crucial for plant growth, aligning with AIOU's commitment to sustainable income sources.

The Chief Guest, Imran Sadiq Malik, commended AIOU Mirpur for its efforts in promoting plantation initiatives in AJK. Malik also suggested exploring Mushroom and Olive production in the region as potential avenues for economic development.

IPO-Pakistan sensitizes SMEs about importance of IPRs to flourish

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Chairman of the Intellectual Property Organization (IPO) of Pakistan, Farukh Amil on Tuesday said that SMEs should get better awareness about the protection and enforcement of patents, copyrights, and trademarks to avoid counterfeiting and piracy of their products and flourish their business at the national and international level.

He said this while addressing an awareness session on Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) organized by the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry in collaboration with IPO-

Pakistan for the business community, said a press release issued here by ICICI. Farukh Amil briefed the business community about the role of IPO-Pakistan in nurturing an enabling IP environment through its initiative to promote businesses, creativity, and innovation. He said that the lack of an IP culture and weak IP enforcement are major challenges that need to be overcome and added that IPO-Pakistan is working to place Pakistan on the global IP map as a compliance and responsible country through increased public awareness, practice, and enforcement. He said that

adherence to global standards on IP, through international treaties and societal practices will enhance Pakistan's reputation as a business and investment-friendly country. He said that SMEs should benefit from the services of IPO-Pakistan for better protection of their patents, copyrights, and trademarks. Speaking on the occasion, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said that SMEs are the backbone of the economy and IPO-Pakistan should further simplify the IP registration

processes and procedures and introduce mobile apps to facilitate SMEs in online registration of their products and services for copyrights and trademarks. He said that in the global competitive business environment, the role of IPO-Pakistan is very important in promoting innovations and startups and ensuring better economic growth of the country through strict enforcement of IPRs.

He assured that ICICI would work with IPO-Pakistan to raise more awareness in the business community about the importance of IPRs for better growth of their businesses.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman IPO-Pakistan Farukh Amil addressing the Seminar regarding awareness of IP rights at Islamabad Chamber of Commerce.



RAWALPINDI: An employee of a petrol station updates the latest fuel prices on a board, alongside Murree road in the city, as petrol and diesel prices come down for the second half of January 2024 amid changes in global crude prices.

Pakistan needs 5pc consistent growth in agriculture sector: PBF

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Business Forum (PBF) Vice President Jahan Ara Wattoo said on Tuesday that Pakistan needs around five percent consistent annual growth in the agriculture sector to feed the growing population.

In a media statement issued here, she suggested a two-prong approach i.e. vertical growth by increasing per acre yield of crops and horizontal growth by bringing more area under cultivation through corporate farming

to overcome the challenge of achieving national food security and economic prosperity.

Jahan Ara said Pakistan has the potential to bring around 22 million acres under cultivation by combining both vertical and horizontal approaches. Currently, she mentioned, the country's per acre yield is far less than the global average due to limited access of farmers to modern machinery and digital support services.

In this regard PBF has

a strong view that Artificial Intelligence (AI), can revolutionize and revitalize the agriculture sector, especially horticulture, while addressing the challenges of climate change, adapting modern crop patterns, attracting talent and envisioning a positive impact on this sector. She called for executing AI promptly as the most significant step in the agriculture sector which needs to be incorporated in the Green Pakistan Initiative.



ISLAMABAD: Vendors displaying flower bouquets to attract customers at F-6 Flower Market in Federal Capital.

SECP, UN Women Pakistan to host ESG symposium

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Securities and Exchange of Pakistan (SECP), in partnership with UN Women Pakistan, is all set to host a symposium on "Driving Progress on Sustainability and Climate Change Considerations." The Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Dr. Shamshad Akhtar, will be the chief guest of the symposium, said a press release issued here on Tuesday.

Council, Pakistan Institute of Corporate Governance, Mutual Fund Association of Pakistan, Asian Development Bank, International Finance Corporation, InfraZamin, Institute of Chartered Accountants of Pakistan, CFA-Pakistan, ACCA-Pakistan, corporate leaders, and academia will be participating in the event, scheduled for January 23, 2024, in Karachi. The symposium will focus on policy discussions on ESG-based investing and climate change, and facilitate consultations on draft ESG disclosure guidelines.

Large industry grows 1.59% in November

ISLAMABAD (APP): The production of Large Scale Manufacturing Industries (LSMI) increased by 1.59 percent on Year-on-Year (YoY) basis during the month of November 2024 compared to the output of the same month of last year, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported.

On Month-on-Month (MoM) basis, the large industry grew by 3.63 percent in November 2024 compared to October 2024, PBS reported.

However, the industry witnessed negative growth of 0.80 percent during the first five months (July-November)

of the current fiscal year as compared to the corresponding period of last year.

The provisional quantum indices of Large Scale Manufacturing Industries (LSMI) for October 2023 with the base year 2015-16 have been developed based on the latest data supplied by the source agencies.

The main contributors towards overall negative growth of 0.80% from July-November (2023-24) included, food (0.53), tobacco (-0.80), textile (-2.48) garments (3.18), paper & board (-0.11), petroleum products (0.43).

Senate body on Power convenes

ISLAMABAD: A meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on Power was held today at the Parliament House, chaired by Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar. The Chairman Committee, aiming to prevent malpractice in the awarding of contracts, suggested that the Ministry of Energy (Power Division) may form an internal inquiry committee headed by the secretary power division to address issues related to pending projects, specifically the construction of a 765kV double circuit transmission line from Dasu Hydro Power Station to Islamabad and ADB project ACSR Bunting Conductor LoT-II

A. He advised the Secretary, Power Division to review previous reports and the tendering process in awarding of contracts in both projects and recommended submitting a comprehensive report within three weeks. Moreover, the committee members also discussed in detail the petitioner's complaint regarding the restoration of electricity in Mirani Dam Feeder, Dasht, District Kech. The petitioner expressed that for the past four years, more than 50 percent of consumers have been affected by the lack of electricity. In addition to this, there is no check and balance regarding meters and electricity bills.



ISLAMABAD: Ahsan Bakhtawari, President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce exchanging views with Farukh Amil, Chairman, IPO Pakistan about creating better awareness in the business community about the importance of intellectual property rights during his visit to ICICI.

Tanveer chairs 3rd consultative session on Punjab Agriculture Strategic Plan 2024-34

LAHORE: Caretaker Punjab Minister for Agriculture, Industry and Energy SM Tanveer chaired via video link the 3rd consultative session on Punjab Agriculture Strategic Plan 2024-34 here at Agriculture House on Tuesday.

With consultation of all stakeholders these recommendations will be sent to the Provincial Cabinet for approval.

SM Tanveer congratulated the Provincial Secretary Agriculture Secretary Nadir Chattha and his team for preparing a comprehensive plan for agricultural development.

On this occasion, he said that Punjab Agriculture Strategic Plan will prove to be a complete game changer for the agricultural development of the province. This plan has been prepared on the instructions of Caretaker Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi, which includes proposals for improvement of water resources, reforms for agricultural research and innovation in the market and industry system related to the agricultural sector.

On this occasion, Nadir Chattha said that improvements can be made in the agricultural sector only through investment. The aim of making the plan is to make the best use of land and water resources so as to substantially increase per acre yield of crops. The implementation of this plan will lead to innovation in research activities under Research Reforms. Besides, Agro-ecological Zones agricultural activities will be promoted as per the plan.

Minister invites Qatari investors to invest in Karachi

KARACHI (INP): Sindh Caretaker Minister for Information, Minority Affairs and Social Security Muhammad Ahmad Shah, on Tuesday, invited investors of the state of Qatar to come forward and take benefit of investment opportunities available in the province. He extended the invitation to the Consul General of the State of Qatar in Karachi, Nayef Shahein R. Al-Sulaiti, who called on the caretaker minister here at Karachi, said a statement issued here. Bilateral relations of Pakistan and Qatar, cooperation in various fields, measures to further

extend the bilateral relations and cooperation, investment opportunities in the province and other matters of mutual interest came under discussion in the meeting. Ahmad Shah said that Pakistan-Qatar brotherly relations span over many decades and Qatar actively participated in relief and rehabilitation activities in Sindh on the occasion of natural disasters and the most recently in floods. The minister said that Karachi, as the economic hub of the country, has a very favorable environment for investment and Qatari investors could benefit.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Standing Committee on Power, Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar presiding over a meeting of the committee at Parliament House.

Ambassador says: Exploring new avenues for trade cooperation vital to augment Pak-German ties

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador of Pakistan in Germany Saqlain Syedah has said that exploring new avenues of cooperation in trade and investment between Pakistan and Germany would further augment the friendly bilateral relations.

She was addressing as special guest at an event titled "Business Opportunities Pakistan" organised by the Frankfurt Chamber of Commerce (IHK Frankfurt) in collaboration with Commercial Section of Consulate General of Pakistan, Frankfurt and

the German Emirati joint Council for Industry and Commerce, UAE (AHK, UAE), according to a press release.

In her keynote address, the ambassador highlighted business opportunities in Pakistan with special reference to Pak-German relations.

She noted that Germany was a significant trading partner for Pakistan for being the fifth largest destination of Pakistani exports.

She said that Pakistan also benefited from German imports like machinery,

chemicals, electric goods etc.

The ambassador emphasised that Pakistan was keen to invite investors especially from the world through the newly formed platform of Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC).

Johannes Richter, Director Asia Pacific, IHK Frankfurt, welcomed the ambassador and the participants and noted that the event was aimed at exchanging ideas with market experts, diplomatic representatives and textile entrepreneurs.

Rupee sheds 01 paisa against dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistani Rupee on Tuesday weakened by 01 paisa against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs280.24 against the previous day's closing of Rs280.23.

OEC to export workforce to Romania

ISLAMABAD (APP): Overseas Employment Corporation (OEC), an attached department of the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development (OP&HD) is set to export workforce to Romania in the different fields.

An official source told APP here on Tuesday, that Pakistan and Romania have strong ties in the different fields and working for mutual prosperity and development.

Acknowledging Romania's dynamic sectors and welcoming environment, he underlined the positive impact of the collaboration, providing not only employment opportunities but also fostering cultural exchange and understanding of each other.

Highlighting the achievements in this regard, he mentioned that 8,912 Pakistani workers have been employed in various sectors in Romania over the last five years.

To a question, he highlighted the proactive role of the Bureau of Emigration & Overseas Employment in exploring job opportunities for Pakistani workers in Romania. He reaffirmed the Government of Pakistan's commitment to enhance cooperation and stated that the government aims to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on labor migration with Romania. This MoU will create a structured framework to facilitate safe, orderly,



KARACHI: Workers using screen printing method print election banners for the PML N Political party at a workshop in Provincial Capital, ahead of the upcoming general elections.

FESCO staff ordered to prevent theft of transformers

FAISALABAD (APP): Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (FESCO) Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Engr. Muhammad Amir has issued orders to the staff to be on alert at the company's installations in the region, especially for transformers.

He said that transformer thieves could take advantage of the darkness at night and heavy fog to steal transformers and other FESCO installations.

He appealed to the public to cooperate with FESCO staff for the prevention of transformer theft.

HCCI VP met Incharge anti-encroachment, urges to remove illegal encroachment

HYDERABAD (INP): The vice president of the Hyderabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (HCCI) Ovais Khan met with the Incharge of anti-encroachment department of Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (HMC) Rasheeda Bano and emphasized the need to address the growing issue of illegal encroachments.

During the meeting, Incharge anti-encroachment department Rasheeda Bano said that Mayor Kashif Shoro was actively working on the beautification and improvement plan of the city.

She stated that the increasing encroachments not only disrupt traffic flow but also directly affect the public.

The Mayor is keen on developing a plan in collaboration with the business community to eradicate illegal

encroachments in markets and commercial centers. The flow of traffic is hindered by encroachments in markets and commercial areas, causing difficulties in the movement of school students and also affecting business activities in markets.

She mentioned we all have to prepare a plan of action for the convenience of the citizens, adding that regarding the removal of encroachments in the encroached areas of Latifabad unit no. 8, 11, 12, nai Pul and city areas, an advance notice has been given to remove the illegal encroachments.

Ovais Khan highlighted that illegal parking in markets and encroachments on roads, especially in busy areas, affect business activities, and emergency services like ambulances and fire brigade vehicles cannot reach required locations in crowded areas.

UK announces biggest deployment to Nato exercises in decades

Monitoring Desk

LONDON: Britain will send 20,000 armed forces personnel to one of Nato's largest exercises since the Cold War, Defence Secretary Grant Shapps announced on Monday, warning of increasing threats to the Western-led alliance.

The deployment, which Shapps characterised as the UK's biggest to Nato in four decades, is aimed at "providing vital reassurance" over the "menace" posed by Russian President Vladimir Putin following his invasion of Ukraine, Shapps said.

The British personnel — from the Royal Air Force, Royal Navy and

Army — will be deployed across Europe and beyond for the military alliance's latest "Exercise Steadfast Defender", alongside personnel from 31 other member countries and Sweden, which is a candidate to join the transatlantic alliance.

"Today's Nato is bigger than ever but the challenges are bigger too," Shapps said in a wide-ranging speech in London, in which he warned "the international rules-based order" was facing rising dangers.

"And that's why the UK has committed... the totality of our air, land and maritime assets to NATO", he went on.

"In 2024 I am deter-

mined to do even more and that's why I can announce today the UK will send in some 20,000 personnel to lead one of Nato's largest deployments since the end of the Cold War."

The UK contingent will include fighter jets and surveillance aircraft, the navy's most advanced warships and submarines, and a full range of army capabilities, including special operations forces.

London will send a so-called Carrier Strike Group — which features its flagship aircraft carrier and F-35B fighter jets and helicopters — to the exercises in the North Atlantic, Norwegian Sea and Baltic Sea.



Britain's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak delivers a ministerial statement in the House of Commons, in London, Britain.

Yemen's Houthis say they will target US ships

Monitoring Desk

CAIRO (Internews): The Yemeni Houthi movement will expand its targets to include U.S. ships, an official from the Iran-allied group said on Monday.

"The ship doesn't necessarily have to be heading to Israel for us to target it; it is enough for it to be American," Nasruddeen Amer, a spokesperson for the Houthis, told Al Jazeera.

"The United States is on the verge of losing its maritime security," Amer also said. British and American ships had become "legitimate targets" due to the strikes launched

by the two countries on Yemen last week.

Attacks on ships since October by the Houthis, who say they are acting in solidarity with Palestinians, have hit commerce and alarmed major powers in a regional escalation of Israel's more than three-month war with Hamas militants in Gaza.

In the latest apparent attack, a U.S.-owned bulk carrier was reportedly struck by a missile near Yemen's port of Aden, causing a fire in a hold but no injuries on board, according to British Maritime Security firm Ambrey.

One dead, 12 injured in rammings; Israel arrests students in West Bank

Monitoring Desk

NABLUS: Apparently coordinated car-rammings in central Israel on Monday, claimed the life of a woman and injured 12 other people, police and medical officials said, as tensions soared over the more than three-month-old Israeli bombing of the Gaza Strip.

Police described the incident in Raanana, north of Tel Aviv, as a terrorist attack and said two suspects were under arrest.

Saudi Arabia could recognise Israel if Palestinian issue resolved: foreign minister

Monitoring Desk

DAVOS: Saudi Arabia's foreign minister said on Tuesday the kingdom could recognise Israel if a comprehensive agreement were reached that included statehood for the Palestinians.

"We agree that regional peace includes peace for Israel, but that could only happen through peace for the Palestinians through a Palestinian state," Prince Faisal bin Farhan told a panel at the World Economic Forum in Davos.

Asked if Saudi Arabia would then recognise Israel as part of a wider political agreement, he said: "Certainly." Prince Faisal said securing regional peace through the creation of a Palestinian state was "something we have been

indeed working on with the US administration, and it is more relevant in the context of Gaza."

Securing a normalisation deal with Saudi Arabia would be the grand prize for Israel after it established diplomatic ties with the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Morocco, and could transform the geopolitics of the Middle East.

The kingdom, the most powerful country in the Arab world and home to the most sacred sites in Islam, wields considerable religious clout across the globe.

After the eruption of conflict last October between Israel and the Palestinian group Hamas that rules Gaza.



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un attends the 10th Session of the 14th Supreme People's Assembly of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, at the Mansudae Assembly Hall, in Pyongyang, North Korea.

Russia welcomes North Korean foreign minister for talks on deepening ties

Monitoring Desk

SEOUL: North Korean Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui is due in Russia on Monday for talks with her counterpart, Sergei Lavrov, as the two countries deepen economic, political, and military ties.

As Russia's international isolation has grown over its war in Ukraine, analysts say Moscow has seen increasing value in its ties with North Korea.

For North Korea's part, relations with Russia have not always been

as warm as they were at the height of the Soviet Union, but the country is reaping benefits from Moscow's need for friends.

North Korea on Sunday tested a new solid-fuel hypersonic missile with intermediate range, state news agency KCNA reported, in a move that was condemned by the United States, South Korea and Japan.

Choe and her delegation departed Pyongyang for Russia the same day, KCNA said.

Major storm hits French territory in Indian Ocean

Monitoring Desk

SAINT REUNION: Hundreds of thousands of people on France's Reunion Island were confined to their homes on Monday, as authorities issued the highest alert for a potentially devastating storm.

Cyclone Belal hit the French Indian Ocean island on Monday, moving in from the northwest packing "extreme winds", according to Meteo-France.

"The eye of the storm is passing over the northern part."

Iran's Revolutionary Guards attack Israel's 'spy HQ' in Iraq

Monitoring Desk

DUBAI/BAGHDAD (Internews): Iran's Revolutionary Guards said they attacked the spy headquarters of Israel in Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdistan region, state media reported late on Monday, while the elite force said they also struck in Syria against the Islamic State.

The strikes come amid concerns about the escalation of a conflict that has spread through the Middle East since the war between Israel and Palestinian Islamist group Hamas began on Oct. 7, with Iran's allies also entering the fray from Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Yemen.

"In response to the recent atrocities of the Zionist regime, causing the killing of commanders of the Guards and the Axis of Resistance... one of the main Mossad espionage headquarters in Iraq's Kurdistan region was destroyed with ballistic mis-

siles," the Guards said in a statement.

Israeli government officials could not immediately be reached for comment.

In addition to the strikes at northeast of Kurdistan's capital Erbil in a residential area near the U.S. consulate, the Guards said they "fired a number of ballistic missiles in Syria and destroyed the perpetrators of terrorist operations" in Iran, including the Islamic State.

Islamic State claimed responsibility for two explosions in Iran this month that killed nearly 100 people and wounded scores at a memorial for top commander Qassem Soleimani.

"We assure our nation that the Guards' offensive operations will continue until avenging the last drops of martyrs' blood," the Guards' statement said.

Palestinian ambassador to UN calls on Non-Aligned Movement to pressure Israel to enforce ceasefire

Monitoring Desk

KAMPALA, Uganda, January 16 (Internews): The Palestinian ambassador to the UN called on the members of the Non-Aligned Movement in Kampala, Uganda, to put pressure on Israel to implement a ceasefire in Gaza after 100 days of war with militant Palestinian group Hamas.

Rayid Mansour addressed in his opening speech the 120 members,

convening throughout this week, that despite the UN General Assembly and the Security Council's resolutions, a ceasefire remained elusive.

The Non-Aligned Movement, formed during the collapse of the colonial systems and at the height of the Cold War, has played a key part in decolonization processes, according to its website.

Big win in Iowa moves Donald Trump closer to Biden re-match

Monitoring Desk

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump romped to a landslide victory on Monday in Iowa's caucuses — the first vote in the US presidential race — cementing his status as the presumptive Republican standard-bearer to challenge US President Joe Biden in November's election.

The former president has led polling for more than a year, but the contest offered the clearest insight yet into his ability to convert that advantage into a stunning White House return.

Major US networks took just half an hour to call the race, with Trump taking 51 per cent of the vote and opening an unprecedented 30-point gap over Ron DeSantis — the biggest victory for an Iowa challenger in modern history.

The Florida governor and Trump's other main rival — former UN ambassador Nikki Haley — were locked at 21 and 19pc respectively.

Turkish court fines Somali leader's son over fatal car crash

Monitoring Desk

ISTANBUL (Internews): The son of Somalia's president was sentenced by a Turkish court on Tuesday to 2-1/2 years in prison for causing death by negligence, which was converted into a fine of 27,300 Turkish lira (\$900), state media reported.

Mohamed Hassan Sheikh Mahmoud was driving a car carrying a diplomatic licence plate on Nov. 30 when he hit a motorcycle courier in central Istanbul, seriously injuring him.

He had left the country on Dec. 2, following a police interrogation. An arrest warrant was issued for him after the courier died in hospital on Dec. 6.

China-Swiss talks touch on visa-free travel, trade

Monitoring Desk

GENEVA: China and Switzerland agreed on Monday to speed up talks to upgrade their free trade agreement and to simplify visa procedures for travel between the two countries, Chinese state media reported.

Bern and Beijing agreed to an early launch of formal negotiations to expand a free trade agreement in place since 2013, state news agency Xinhua reported.

China also agreed to provide visa-free entry for Swiss citizens, it said.

The agreements were reached during the first high-level meeting between the two countries since the Covid-19 pandemic.

Heading the Chinese delegation was Prime Minister Li Qiang, who was met by Swiss President and Defence Minister Viola Amherd when he arrived at Zurich airport on Sunday.

And he was granted military honours as Monday's meeting kicked off at the Lohr Estate near Bern — a rare, high-level welcome rolled out for the highest-ranking Chinese representative.

La Reunion declares highest weather emergency as cyclone Belal approaches

Monitoring Desk

PARIS: The French island of La Reunion was placed under a maximum-level cyclone alert on Monday morning and citizens were urged to stay inside, cut power, stop using tap water and stay in the safest room of their homes due to a cyclone named Belal.

"Take refuge in the safest room of your homes", the local prefect's office said on social media, adding: "Do not go out on whatever pretext, even if the weather is calm. This is probably the eye of the cyclone."

Commerzbank merger talk resurfaces as Germany mulls company sales, sources say

Monitoring Desk

LONDON: Five years after Deutsche Bank (DBK.Gn.DE) and Commerzbank (CBKG.DE) aborted an attempt to merge, an uncertain outlook for bank profitability and Germany's need to plug a hole in its budget have rekindled speculation about a potential deal.

Germany has said it is looking at all options to raise funds by selling stakes in some of the 100 or more companies it owns.

Though a sale of its remaining 15% holding in Commerzbank is not imminent, Finance Minister Christian Lindner is open to a disposal and ultimately would prefer the government exiting the stake, according to a person familiar with his thinking.

A merger with Commerzbank would allow Deutsche Bank to further diversify away from volatile investment banking earnings, bolstering its longer-term stability, another factor that could sway the German government, said the person,

speaking on condition of anonymity.

Deutsche Bank, which has completed the bulk of a multi-year restructuring plan, has recently stepped up internal discussions on deals, including possible purchases of banks such as Commerzbank and ABN Amro, Bloomberg News reported on Friday, without naming sources.

Deutsche Bank in recent months has come closer to reopening the idea of a merger with Commerzbank, even if there are no live discussions, a second person with knowledge of the situation has told Reuters.

Germany's stake in Commerzbank dates back to the global financial crisis of 2008 and is still loss-making for the government.

In an emailed statement on Monday, a German finance ministry spokesman said no decision had been made on the government exiting its Commerzbank stake, and if it did the proceeds from such a sale would not flow into the federal budget.

Myanmar's ethnic minority fighters claim capturing town near B'desh border

Monitoring Desk

YANGON: An armed ethnic minority group in Myanmar has claimed capturing a town and several junta outposts near the border with Bangladesh and India, in the latest setback for the embattled military.

Clashes have rocked Myanmar's western Rakhine and Chin states since the Arakan Army (AA) attacked security forces in November, ending a ceasefire that had largely held since the junta's 2021 coup.

The AA is one of a dozen armed ethnic minority groups in Myanmar's border regions, many of whom have battled the military since independence from Britain in 1948 over

autonomy and control of lucrative resources. The group said late Sunday that AA fighters had seized the town of Paletwa in Chin state, around 20 kilometres (12 miles) from the Bangladesh border.

Paletwa sits on the Kaladan river, which a New Delhi-backed infrastructure initiative hopes to use to link India's landlocked northeast to the Bay of Bengal.

The AA posted pictures showing its fighters outside the town's police station and general administration office. It said it was now in control of all of Paletwa township, which had a population of over 64,000 people according to the 2014 census.

Ukraine's President Zelenskyy and Head of the Ukrainian President's Office Andriy Yermak arrive for the meeting with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken (not pictured) during the 54th annual meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.



Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Head of the Ukrainian President's Office Andriy Yermak arrive for the meeting with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken (not pictured) during the 54th annual meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

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Millions of Americans face below zero temperatures as storms bring blast of Arctic air, snow and ice

Monitoring Desk

PORTLAND: Subfreezing temperatures across much of the US left millions of Americans facing dangerous cold as Arctic storms left four dead and knocked out electricity to tens of thousands in the Northwest, brought snow to the South, and walloped the Northeast with blizzard conditions that forced the postponement of an NFL game.

An estimated 95 million people nationwide faced weather warnings or advisories on Sunday for wind chills below zero Fahrenheit (minus 17 Celsius). Forecasters said the severe cold was expected to push as far south as northern Texas while the bitter blast sends wind chill readings as low as minus 70 degrees (minus 56 Celsius) in Montana and the Dakotas.

"It takes a matter of minutes for frostbite to set in," the South Dakota Department of Public Safety said in a statement Sunday urging people to stay indoors. In Buffalo, New York, where snowfall of 1

to 2 feet (30 to 60 centimeters) was forecast, severe conditions led officials to postpone the Buffalo Bills-Pittsburgh Steelers NFL playoff game from Sunday to Monday.

Winds whipped at 30 mph (48 kph), and snow was falling at a rate of 2 inches (5 centimeters) per hour.

Workers with shovels and trucks worked to clear snow from the field at Buffalo's Highmark Stadium as the Bills warned volunteers eager to help with the shoveling to stay at home and not defy a travel ban on area roads.

"Looks like a pretty good day to not have a football game," New York Gov. Kathy Hochul, a Buffalo native, posted on X with a video clip of whitout conditions in the western New York city. At least one Bills player was out in the bad weather Sunday putting his newfound free time to good use. Offensive tackle Ryan Van Demark shared a video on Instagram showing fellow lineman Alec Anderson helping a motorist struggling.

OpenAI to launch anti-disinformation tools for 2024 elections

Monitoring Desk

WASHINGTON: ChatGPT maker OpenAI has said it will introduce tools to combat disinformation ahead of the dozens of elections this year in countries that are home to half the world's population.

The explosive success of text generator ChatGPT spurred a global artificial intelligence revolution but

also triggered warnings that such tools could flood the internet with disinformation and sway voters. With elections due this year in countries including the United States, India and Britain, OpenAI said on Monday it will not allow its tech — including ChatGPT and the image generator DALL-E 3 — to be used for political campaigns.

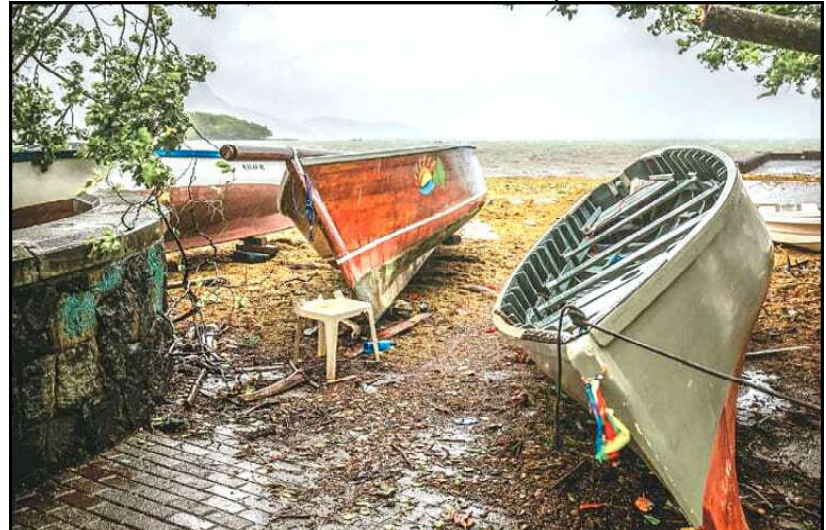
YouTube making money off new breed of climate denial, monitoring group says

Monitoring Desk

LONDON (Internews): YouTube is making millions of dollars a year from advertising on channels that make false claims about climate change because content creators are using new tactics that evade the social media platform's policies to combat misinformation, according to a report published on Tuesday.

The Center for Countering Digital Hate (CCDH) used artificial intelligence to review transcripts from 12,058 videos from the past six years on 96 of Alphabet Inc's (GOOGL) YouTube channels. The channels promoted content that undermined the scientific consensus on climate change that human behavior is contributing to long-term shifts in temperature and weather patterns, the report said.

CCDH, a nonprofit that monitors online hate speech, said its analysis found that climate denial content has shifted away from false claims that global warming is not happening or that it is not caused by greenhouse gases produced from burning fossil fuels. Videos espousing such claims are explicitly banned from generating ad revenue on YouTube, according to Google's policy.



MAHEBOURG: Fishing boats are moored on the shore flooded with debris brought by high tides during Cyclone Belal in Mauritius, on Monday. Heavy flooding hit the Indian Ocean island nation as a tropical cyclone approached it after battering the French overseas territory of Reunion.



ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi cutting cake to mark the 29th anniversary celebration of the Commission on Science and Technology for Sustainable Development in the South (COMSATS), at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

President for scientific based knowledge sharing tendency to benefit entire humanity

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Tuesday while alluding to the significance of the technological advancement and innovations in diverse fields and availability of abundance of knowledge, stressed the need to share the latest breakthroughs, experiences and achievements for the greater benefit of the entire humanity.

The president said that the availability of knowledge should not be contained under the mere tag of 'copyrights' as greater accessibility could help humanity to move through the current economic, social and global challenges.

The president was speaking as a chief guest at a ceremony to mark the 29th-anniversary celebration of the Commission on Science and Technology for Sustainable Development in the South (COMSATS) at the Aiwan e Sadr.

The event was attended by members of the diplomatic corps, former diplomats, members of academia and the media.

The president said there was a need that the profuse availability of

knowledge should be shared among the nations without any hindrance by resetting the priorities which were focused somewhat elsewhere.

"Open learning knowledge resources should be utilized and priorities of the world should be changed towards mutual transfer of knowledge. The injustices should be addressed," he emphasized.

The president further said that transformation in the world could take place in the presence of 'ethics or humanity-based order', adding the new world would be dependent upon these shifts.

While the rules-based world order was dominated by material-driven priorities, he opined.

He regretted that contrary to the requirements of the world, the prevalent tendency was towards the ultra-rich who had been becoming rich while the poor of the world were mired in squalor and deprivation.

He stressed that just and equitable distribution of wealth in the world could make penance for the sufferings of humanity.

Countries touch zenith of development by empowering LG system: Murtaza Solangi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Caretaker Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi said on Tuesday that all those countries which had touched the zenith of development had done so by empowering local government.

"Throughout my own experiences and understandings there is no democracy without local government", he said while delivering his speech at a two-day Conference for the Civic Hackathon "Problem

ably one of the major problems in Pakistan's political history. Terming the conference for the civic hackathon problem identification as a very interesting initiative, he said it aimed to bring together experts from the public, private sector and civil society to collectively identify the most pressing civic issues in the country - in order attempt to later develop a digital solution for it.

He said that in Pakistan, there was a lot of potential to focus on develop-



Identification". The minister opined that probably lack of a strong local government system was prob-

ing innovative local solutions. However, he said that the problems were often identified in isolation by

Pak-Iran JBTC calls for promoting mutual trade between two countries

Independent Report
QUETTA: The Pakistan-Iran Joint Border Trade Committee has agreed upon taking concrete measures for promotion of bilateral trade between the two countries.

The Joint Border Trade Committee also stressed the need to take effective steps for prevention of smuggling at the border.

The Committee met in Chah Bahar city of Sistan-Balochistan province of Iran on Tuesday.

It was the 11th meeting of the Pak-Iran Joint Border Trade Committee that met in Chah Bahar.

The Chief Collector Customs Balochistan, Deputy Commissioner

Gwadar as well as other concerned senior officials and representatives of Quetta Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Gwadar Chamber of Commerce and Industry represented the Pakistan side while the concerned high ups from Iran also participated in the meeting.

The participants discussed related matters about promotion of business and trade between the two countries.

They were agreed on that there is a dire need to take more steps for promotion of bilateral trade between the two countries.

Moreover, there is also need to take concrete measures for prevention of smuggling, they stressed.

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Doctor examining the patients at free medical camp established by Pakistan Navy at Kappar village

Patients provided free treatment, consultation in PN's medical camp

Independent Report
KARACHI: In continuation to efforts for uplifting to provide standard health facilities along the Coastal areas of country, Pakistan Navy established free medical camp at Coastal village Kappar, Balochistan.

Free medical camp was established by Pakistan Navy doctors, paramedic staff in collaboration with Sahil Welfare Association. In this medical camp hundreds of patients including women and children were provided free medical treatment. A dedicated team of doctors and paramedic staff comprising of Medical,

ENT, General Surgeon, Gynecologist, Skin Specialist and GDMO examined the patients and provided them with free consultation and medicines. The local populace of the area was also provided information about maternal health and nutritional requirements of mother and children. The patients were enlightened about common infections, personal health, hygiene, child healthcare and prevention of diseases and sanitation of living areas. Pakistan Navy is committed to provide continued quality medical facility for the people settled along the Coastal belt.

PM Kakar emphasizes unleashing full potential of Pakistan's agri sector

DAVOS (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar on Tuesday emphasized the immediate need to realize the true potential of Pakistan's agricultural sector by scaling up investments in its modernization and mechanization for achieving food security.

He was talking to Brian Sikes, Chief Executive Officer of Cargill Inc - the largest private American global food corporation, who called on him here on the sidelines of the 54th Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF).

The prime minister appreciated Cargill's role in

strengthening Pakistan-US trade relations and cooperation in the agricultural sector.

He also highlighted the government's initiatives for food security, especially the innovative initiatives in the agricultural sector under the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC).

Highlighting the government's measures to promote business and investment, the prime minister talked about the establishment of the SIFC, its measures to promote foreign investment in various sectors in a short period of time, and its positive effects.

PPP demands ROs' removal for 'denying' Arrow symbol

KARACHI (INP): Pakistan People's Party (PPP) demanded the Chief Election Commissioner to remove those Returning Officers (ROs) who have 'not' allotted "Arrow" symbols to seven candidates of the party from Punjab for the General Elections 2024.

PPP's In-Charge Election Cell Taj Haider said that 'injustice is being done with their party in Punjab. "A pattern is emerged during the election schedule

which is against the PPP," he added. Taj Haider said that the PPP has also written a letter to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) and demanded the removal of the concerned ROs. The PPP In-Charge Election Cell said their candidates from two national and five provincial constituencies of Punjab were declared independents and have been issued different symbols instead of the party's traditional "Arrow".

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QUETTA: Vice Chancellor Lasbella University Dr. Dost Muhammad Baloch meeting with Governor Balochistan Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar

Open katchehry organized to address issues of Quetta

Independent Report
QUETTA: An open katchehry was held under the auspices of Quetta administration to address the issues of Quetta city on Tuesday.

The Deputy Commissioner Quetta, Ft. Lt (Retd) Saad bin Asad, SSP Operations, Jawad Tariq, senior officials of the local administration as well as officers of the line departments including Tehsil office, WASA, PHE, QESCO, Municipal Corporation, Irrigation, Forests, Education, Health and others participated in the open court.

The Assistant Commissioners and Tehsildar of Quetta were also present on the occasion.

A large number of people participated in the open court and apprised their problems.

The officers present on the occasion gave patient hearing to the issues raised by the general public, and issued on the spot directives to address them.

Speaking on the occasion, Deputy Commissioner said that it is included in our priorities to resolve the issues of people of Quetta.

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Siraj denounces Senate resolutions about delay in elections

LAHORE (INP): Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), Sirajul Haq denouncing the Senate resolutions calling for a delay in elections, asserting that they are unconstitutional and only serve to cast controversy over the sanctity of the parliament without any real impact.

Addressing a press conference at Mansoorah on Tuesday, he emphasized the importance of fair elections in accordance with the date specified by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP).

Sirajul Haq warned

that the JI would resist any tactics aimed at depriving the masses of their fundamental right to choose their representatives.

Reiterating the JI's consistent demand for a level playing field for all political parties in the elections, he emphasized that polls were crucial for ensuring stability and peace in the country.

The JI chief expressed confidence that the politics of dynasties would no longer thrive in Pakistan, as awareness among people about their rights has increased. He said February 8, would guarantee the rule of the people.

He said those who remained in power during past five years failed to deliver. He criticized family-based political parties, likening their functioning to a property business. He pointed out that these parties distributed tickets among relatives, sidelining party workers.

Siraj called on those seeking the position of prime minister for the fourth time to present their past performance.



ISLAMABAD: The Caretaker Minister for Planning Development & Special Initiatives, Muhammad Sami Saeed chairing a National Price Monitoring Committee (NPMC) meeting.

Minister seeks DSSI report to ensure prevention of edibles' profiteering, hoarding

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Muhammad Sami Saeed on Tuesday sought a detailed report from the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) on the active usage of the Decision Support System on Inflation (DSSI) for price monitoring of edibles, checking profiteering and hoarding.

He passed these directives while chairing a meeting of the National Price Monitoring Committee (NPMC) to review the prices of essential commodities, a news release said.

One of the salient features of DSSI, which provides market-level informa-

tion, city-wise comparison of prices, and time series data at the commodity level, is the comparison of rates issued by Deputy Commissioners and those collected by the PBS every week.

The minister also directed the Ministry of National Food Security and Research to engage with the Pakistan Poultry Association to identify and resolve the supply issues of poultry products.

Besides, he asked provincial governments and the administration of Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) to vigorously pursue smooth availability of essential items, especially in the pre-view of the upcoming holy month of Ramazan, seek-

ing report demand and supply situation of specific commodities used in the fasting month.

Among others, the meeting was attended by the representatives of the Ministries of Food Security and Research; Commerce; Finance; Industries and Production; and Climate Change, besides provincial governments, PBS, Trading Corporation of Pakistan, Utility Stores Corporation, Pakistan Agricultural Storage & Services Corporation Limited (PASSCO) and ICT administration.

During the meeting, the PBS Chief Statistician presented an overview of the price situation in the country for the week ended on January 11, 2024, and

ECP suspends membership of 4 senators for asset details failure

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Tuesday suspended the membership of four senators for not submitting details of their assets and liabilities.

The senators suspended by the ECP include Dr Musadik Masood Malik, Aon Abbas, Syed Muhammad Sabir Shah and Samina Mumtaz.

Lawmakers are required to file these statements by December 31 each year. The ECP had instructed them to submit their financial statements up to June 30, 2023, by January 16, 2024, or face suspension of their respective memberships.

Tourism places to be improved in Gwadar, decides GDA's committee

Independent Report
QUETTA: The Gwadar Development Authority (GDA) Tourism Committee has decided to take steps for improvement of tourism places in Gwadar and make their publicity at large scale. The decision to this effect was made during the first meeting of the GDA Tourism Committee held under the chair of Director Administration, GDA, Changez Khan in Gwadar on Tuesday.

The meeting reviewed the prospects of the promotion of tourism in the port city.

It was decided to ensure participation of all stakeholders including the private sector for promotion of the tourism in

Gwadar.

The participants expressed the resolve to make wholehearted efforts for making Gwadar attractive and peaceful tourism hub in time to come.

In this regard, the government and private organizations would be taken on board, it was decided further. The committee noted with pleasure that work is already in progress on a comprehensive plan for development and preservation of the historic culture of Gwadar.

In addition to this, sea food street, water sports, GDA club and amusement park are also part of the future projects in Gwadar, it was informed to the committee.



QUETTA: UNICEF Health Specialist Dr. Amir meeting with caretaker Provincial Health Minister Dr. Amir Muhammad Khan Jogezeai

Closure of Torkham border causing losses to traders: Aftab

PESHAWAR (Online): Qaumi Watan Party (QWP) Chairman Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao on Tuesday said that the closure of the Torkham border was causing losses to the traders on both sides of the border, therefore, the government should reopen the border crossing. Addressing a gathering of party workers at Sherpao village in Charsadda district, he said that both the sides should hold talks to sort out bilateral issues. Aftab Sherpao said the border closure would sow discord between the two countries, urging the government to solve all the issues through diplomatic channels. He added that the closure of the Pak-Afghan border at Torkham would create problems for the business community.

Asghar Achakzai vows to wage struggle for achieving goals set by our elders

Independent Report
QUETTA: The Provincial President of Awami National Party (ANP) Asghar Khan Achakzai has vowed to wage struggle for achieving the goals set by the elders. He announced to set up universities in all districts if the people voted to power.

He urged the general public to use their right of franchise on the basis of performance.

The provincial president of ANP and candidate for PB-51 and NA-263, Asghar Khan Achakzai, candidate for PB-50, Zamarak Khan Achakzai, candidate for PB-38, Malik Naeem Bazzi and others were addressing the public gatherings and workers convention election cell in different constituencies on

Tuesday.

The provincial General Secretary of ANF Mabat Kaka, central Vice President, Malik Usman Achakzai and member central committee, Dr Akbar Khan Kakar also addressed the gatherings.

The district presidents, general secretaries and other office bearers were also present.

A large number of people belonging to different political parties announced to join the ANP after resigning from the respective parties.

The ANP leaders welcomed those who joined the party and pledged that special attention would be given on education and health sectors if the people reposed confidence in next elections.



QUETTA: Deputy Commissioner Quetta Lt. (retd) Saad bin Asad presiding over a meeting regarding general elections