

Independent

Member APNS & CPNE

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www.dailyindependent.com.pk Quetta

Ph: 2841470/2841473 REG: No. BC-116 B/ID-445 Vt XXV No 150, Rajab 07, 1445 AH Friday January 19, 2024 Pages 08, Price Rs.15

Operation Marg Bar Sarmachar:

Pakistan carried out effective strikes against terrorists' hideouts inside Iran: ISPR

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

Bureau Report
RAWALPINDI: Pakistan Armed Forces, in the early hours on Thursday, carried out effective strikes against hideouts during an intelligence-based operation inside Iran, used by terrorists, responsible for recent attacks in Pakistan.

The precision strikes were carried out using killer drones, rockets, loitering munitions and stand-off weapons whereas maximum care was taken to avoid collateral damage, an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release said.

The hideouts used by terrorist organisations, namely Balochistan Liberation Army and Balochistan Liberation Front, were successfully struck in an intelligence based operation, code name 'Marg Bar Sarmachar'.

The targeted hideouts

were being used by notorious terrorists including Dosta alias Chairman, Bajjar alias Soghat, Sahil alias Shafaq, Asghar alias Basham and Wazir alias Wazi, amongst others.

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

"Our resolve to ensure that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Pakistan is respected and safeguarded against any misadventure, remains unwavering. We reaffirm our determination to defeat all enemies of Pakistan with the support of the people of Pakistan," the ISPR said.

It added that going forward, dialogue and cooperation were deemed prudent in resolving bilateral issues between the two neighbouring brotherly countries.

Meanwhile Pakistan on Thursday morning carried out a series of "highly coordinated" and "specifically targeted precision" military strikes against terrorist hideouts in Sistan-o-Baluchistan province of Iran, killing a number of terrorists.

"This morning Pakistan undertook a series of highly coordinated and specifically targeted precision

Continued on page 2



RAWALPINDI: View of missiles fired by Pakistan Armed Forces to target terrorist hideouts inside the Iranian border after Iran violated the country's sovereignty and launched a strike in Balochistan.



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

Pakistan desires to deepen bilateral engagement with Saudi Arabia: PM

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

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

The two sides also reviewed regional develop-

ments. Prime Minister Kakar noted that close brotherly relations between the two countries were a factor in regional stability.

He said Pakistan desires to deepen bilateral engagement including through trade, investment and people-to-people exchanges. The prime minister appreciated the leadership of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques and underlined the highest esteem the people of Pakistan held for the leadership and the people of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

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

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

said and added that the needy people will also get free electricity up to 300 units in the "Jiyala's government".

The PPP chairman said that now only two parties



Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP).

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

"We will also build three million new houses for the poor and give them ownership rights," Bilawal

are vying the General Elections 2024, reiterating the real contest would be between "Arrow" and "Lion".

Bilawal said that he once again came to Naushahro Feroze with a request to vote for the PPP.

"The people of Naushahro Feroze also voted for the PPP candidates during the 2018 elections. You people also welcomed me on my way to long march," he added.

Bilawal said that his party has a special plan for Naushahro Feroze which has suffered the most damage during the floods.

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

WASHINGTON (INP): The United States has condemned Iran's recent attacks in Pakistan, Iraq and Syria, which Tehran said were carried out against "anti-Iranian terrorist groups".

"So we do condemn those strikes. We've seen Iran violate the sovereign borders of three of its neighbors in just the past couple of days," State Department spokesman Matthew Miller told reporters during a briefing.

He further said, in response to a question, that the US always wanted to see peace and stability, "es-

pecially in this region, where it's been the focus of our diplomatic efforts since October 7".

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

Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said the attack near the two countries' shared border was "unprovoked" and a violation of Pakistan's sovereignty.

NSC meeting likely on Pakistan-Iran tension

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

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

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

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

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

Pakistan envoy to Iran Mudassar Tipu arrives back in Islamabad

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

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

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

JIT decides to take stern action against responsible for launching anti judiciary campaign

ISLAMABAD (Online): First meeting of JIT was held in FIA headquarters Islamabad on the matter of prevention of anti judiciary material.

The meeting was presided over by Additional Director General (ADG) FIA.

It has been decided in the meeting to take stern action against those involved in maligning judiciary on social media.

As per sources officers of sensitive institutions presented report on plan of action in the meeting.

The meeting directed PTA to collect and present the details of those involved in fomenting, uploading, sharing and commenting hate material.

Sources said the arrest of those responsible for spreading anti judiciary material is likely in next phase.

President says: Pak will not compromise on its national security, territorial integrity

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Thursday said that Pakistan would not compromise on its national security and territorial integrity and would take all necessary measures to defend its soil.

In a statement issued by the President House Press Wing, he lauded the professionalism of the Armed Forces of Pakistan that targeted the terrorist hideouts in the Sistan-o-Baluchistan province of Iran, while avoiding civilian casualties.

Nawaz Sharif vows to make Pakistan stand on its feet

HAFIZABAD (INP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supremo and former prime minister Nawaz Sharif vowed to make Pakistan stand on its own feet again.

Addressing his maiden public gathering of election 2024 campaign, Nawaz Shari said that he was ousted



from power by the five Supreme Court judges just because he refused to take a salary from his son.

Nawaz claimed if he had not been removed from power there would have been no gas loadshedding, inflation and unemployment in the country.

The former prime minister further said that before he came to power, terrorism had brought Pakistan to standstill but he took Pakistan out of the crisis.

Moreover, Nawaz Sharif promised that he would bring back Pakistan on the road of development after coming to power.

Central Secretary Information claims: BNP to emerge major political party in elections if free & fair elections conducted

ISLAMABAD (INP): The central Secretary Information of Balochistan National Party (BNP), Agha Hasan Baloch has claimed that the BNP would emerge as major political party in upcoming general elections in the province, if the same (elections) were conducted free, fair and in transparent manner.

He said that the election campaign is being run by the party all over the province, and it is gaining acceptability following the campaign.

Agha Hasan Baloch was addressing press conference here at Quetta Press club on Thursday.

Other party leaders were also present on the occasion.

Agha Hasan Baloch said that if the elections were conducted in transparent

manner, then BNP would emerge as the major political party in the province.

He said that BNP has always spoken about the rights of all nationalities including Baloch, Pashtoons, Hazara and others.

He urged the Election Commission of Pakistan to take steps for free and fair elections in the country including Balochistan. He said that if the issues are really to be resolved then the seriousness would have to be demonstrated.

He said that the caretaker government has crossed its limits, it would have to work in the same.

Referring the tension between Iran and Pakistan, the BNP leader said that Balochs are settled at both sides of the Pak-Iran border and they would suffer due to the situation.

QUETTA: Balochistan National Party (BNP) Central Leader, Agha Hassan Baloch addresses to media persons during press conference, at Quetta press club.

Govt. & security institutions fully alert to establish peace: Effective administrative strategy prepared to tackle any untoward law & order situation in Balochistan: CM



Independent Report

QUETTA: The caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki has stated that the government and security institutions are fully alert for establishing peace in all districts of the province including border areas, and an effective administrative strategy has been prepared to tackle any situation of law and order in the province.

Terrorists to be swiftly & decisively crushed: Entire nation stands united with Pak Army, maintains CT Minister Information

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

While speaking in a private television talk show, Murtaza Solangi said Pakistan would take appropriate measures while keeping the relevant international laws in the view especially regarding the sovereignty of the state.

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

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

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

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

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

"The CAA has received instructions with regard to extra alert for the incoming flights from western direction," sources said.

The Chief Minister was presiding over a high level meeting held to review the measures for the general elections and for maintaining law & order in the province including the border areas, here at the Chief Minister secretariat on Thursday.

Those who were present in the meeting were included Chief Secretary Shakeel Qadir Khan, Additional

tional Chief Secretary Home, Zahid Saleem, Additional Inspector General of police, Jawad Dogar and other concerned high officials.

The Additional Chief Secretary Home briefed the meeting about the overall situation of law and order in the province including border areas besides the steps taken for general elec-

tion. The Chief Minister was presiding over a high level meeting held to review the measures for the general elections and for maintaining law & order in the province including the border areas, here at the Chief Minister secretariat on Thursday.

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Continued on page 2

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Continued on page 2

Pakistan assumes Regional Leadership of INSARAG for Asia Pacific in 2024

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan took the helm of INSARAG (International Search and Rescue Advisory Group) as the Regional Chair of Asia Pacific for 2024, marking a significant stride in global disaster response coordination. The official handover ceremony occurred during a pivotal global meeting via video link, where New Zealand gracefully transferred the regional chairmanship to the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), Pakistan, according to a news release issued here. As the newly appointed Regional Chair, Chairman NDMA was represented by Raza Iqbal, Executive Director Plans, NDMA, who, on behalf of the Chair,

pledged to foster international collaboration and enhance disaster response capabilities across the Asia-Pacific region. Under Pakistan's leadership, NDMA outlined key activities to fortify disaster response capabilities, i.e., the 1st International Rescue Challenge (Lahore), the Asia-Pacific Earthquake Response Exercise (Lahore), where NDMA, with the support of Punjab Emergency Services, Rescue 1122, will host an earthquake response exercise, simulating a seismic event to enhance preparedness and coordination in earthquake-prone regions, and the Asia-Pacific Regional Meeting (Islamabad), bringing together member states to

strategize and collaborate on disaster response initiatives. Ambassador Dominik Stillhart from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the incoming Global Chair, assumed a pivotal role in steering INSARAG's global initiatives. Joining the league of regional chairs were Marius Dogeanu, from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Romania (AEME Regional Chair); Jorge Carrillo, Risk Management Secretary, Ecuador (Americas Regional Chair); and NDMA Pakistan, representing the Asia-Pacific region. Sebastian Rhodes Stampa, Chief Emergency Response Section (ERS), and INSARAG Secretary from the

INSARAG Secretariat participated. As the regional chair, Pakistan envisioned a proactive and collaborative approach to address the dynamic challenges of disaster response. NDMA, Pakistan, looked forward to a fruitful year marked by resilience, cooperation, and shared expertise within the INSARAG community. INSARAG, a global network under the United Nations, is dedicated to enhancing international coordination in urban search and rescue operations during disasters, especially structural collapse primarily due to earthquakes. It endeavors to establish standardized procedures, promote best practices, and facilitate effective collaboration among member countries.



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



QUETTA: Principal Science College Quetta Prof. Azmat Kakar meeting with Governor Balochistan Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar

PTI issues final list of MNA candidates from Lahore

LAHORE (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf has issued its final list of the party's MNA candidates from Lahore. The PTI has announced to support Ali Ijaz Buttar from Lahore's NA-117 constituency, Alia Hamza from NA-118 and Shahzad Farooq from NA-119. The party will back Usman Hamza in NA-120 and Wassem Qadir in NA-121. Barrister Latif Khosa will be PTI-backed candidate in NA-122 and Afzal Karim in NA-123 constituency. The party will back Zameer Jhedo Advocate in NA-124 and Rana Javed Umar in the National As-

sembly constituency NA-125. The PTI's other NA candidates from Lahore will be Malik Tauqeer Khokhar from NA-126, Zaeer Khokhar from NA-127, Salman Akram Raja from NA-128, Mian Muhammad Azhar from NA-129 and Dr. Yasmeen Rashid from NA-130. It is to be mentioned here that several PML-N top leaders including Mian Nawaz Sharif also contesting on National Assembly seats from Lahore. Former PM Nawaz Sharif has filed nomination papers for NA-130, while People's Party chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari competing from Lahore's NA-127 constituency.

Elections 2024: ECP takes notice against PML-N candidate

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has taken notice against Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's (PML-N) candidate for Islamabad for 'violating' code of conduct. District Monitoring Officer (DMO) directed Anjum Aqel Khan, the PML-N's candidate from NA-46 (Islamabad) to appear in person or through his counsel on 21st January. As per sources, the ECP took notice of the PML-N candidate for holding a rally in Islamabad's sectors G-11, G-13 and H-13 without getting permission from the administration.

KP's all-rounder Khubaib dedicated to help Pakistan win ICC U19 World Cup

ISLAMABAD (INP): Bowling all-rounder Khubaib Khalil hailing from district Karak of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa dedicated to help Pakistan win the ICC Men's U19 World Cup 2024 in South Africa. Against Afghanistan U19, Khubaib made his One-Day debut for Pakistan U19 in the ACC Men's Asia Cup 2023-24 and bagged two wickets in a promising spell. It should be mentioned here that father of Khubaib was not in favour of enrolling him in a proper cricket facility due to financial constraints. His first coach, Matuallah, earmarked him as a future star and helped him get admission to the Islamia Cricket Academy in Kohat, some 70 kilometers from his hometown. At the academy, young Khubaib was allowed to use the equipment and train every other day, resulting in his selection for FATA Region U13 in the PCB U13 Inter-Regional T20 Tournament 2017 and the subsequent edition in 2018. He shed light on his struggles in the early days in a chat with Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Digital, "I have played cricket in very tough circumstances. I had to work odd

jobs to make ends meet, even working as a labourer. My father was struggling with financial issues. I got some money from PCB after playing in the National U19 competitions which helped me sort out a lot of issues. That was the first time I bought my kit bag whereas before that I was using Matuallah's equipment." Khubaib picked up pace bowling after being inspired by South Africa great Dale Steyn. Possessing a smooth action with a steady approach to the crease, he has showcased his ability to hit probing lengths regularly and frustrate batters with his line and length. Khubaib has shown promise with the bat too, demonstrating good defence and power-hitting skills. His reliability as a lower-order batter was evident in the net sessions where coaches put their trust in his batting ability. "I'm glad to have represented Pakistan at the recent U19 Asia Cup which was a great exposure for me," Khubaib said. "I've done well in the domestic U19 competitions with both bat and ball which gives me confidence to do well in the World Cup.

Senate body informs transit agreement reached with Uzbekistan, Tajikistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Senate Standing Committee on Commerce was informed that the transit agreement has been reached with Uzbekistan and Tajikistan on Thursday. The committee updated that Afghanistan has not signed an agreement. The meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on Commerce was held in Parliament House under the chairmanship of Senator Zeeshan Khanzada. Pakistan's position is that Afghanistan should not charge a fee for transit trade. In the meeting of the Standing Committee, serious concern was expressed over the increasing price of onion in the country. When the members of the committee recommended a ban on onion export, the Federal Secretary for Commerce Muhammad Saleh Ahmad Faruqi said that they cannot impose a ban immediately in the context of price fluctuations. "We have increased the minimum export price of onion to \$1200.

He said that the price of onion has not increased due to exports. In the meeting of the Standing Committee, review of the implementation of the recommendations of the Standing Committee during the last three years, Senator Zeeshan Khanzada, Senator Faisal Saleem Rehman, and Senator Muhammad Abdul Qadir introduced in the Senate meeting held on November 6, 2023, the amendment bill of imports and exports, 2023. In the committee meeting held on October 9, 2023, the UAE ban on meat imports from Pakistan was reviewed in detail. In the meeting of the standing committee, the implementation of the recommendations given by the standing committee during the last three years was reviewed in detail. Secretary Commerce told the committee that on the recommendation of the standing committee, minerals, marble and fisheries sector have been included in the priority sectors. He also informed the standing committee about the assistance provided in various ways for these sectors including the co-sector, sub-sector, and road map. The commerce secretary said that going towards value addition, which will lead to significant improvement, a plan will be drawn up along with the stalled industry in the next two to three weeks. A study is also being done to increase exports. In the meeting of the Standing Committee, the ban on the export of fresh chilled meat from Pakistan by the United Arab Emirates, which was imposed due to fungus-infected meat in a container, was examined in detail. Senator Dinesh Kumar said that the United Arab Emirates has banned the import of meat from Pakistan. This has given the country a lot of disrepute.

Political hustle bustle everywhere: Social media shaping various political party campaigns. ISLAMABAD (APP): As February 8 upcoming poll season approaches fast in the country, political hustle and bustle is seen in every nook and cranny of the country, including twin cities, where almost every constituency is being festooned with colorful party flags and posters displaying according to code of conduct. Social media during the current election atmosphere in the country was playing an important role in enabling the country's politicians to reach out to the voters and provide them with a platform to connect easily, according to a report aired by a private news channel. "The printing and selling of election-related items has also picked momentum, and wholesalers and vendors have expressed happiness over the increasing demand and sales of party posters," said a citizen. "As time passes and the general elections are drawing near, the political parties will continue their political wars on social media grounds," said a youngster while favoring a party and posting a picture of his favorite politician. "In Islamabad and other cities, various corner meetings, political camps, and rallies have become routine matters, said a politician while commenting on the election drive." "Portraits and stickers of different political leaders could easily be noticed on rickshaws, wagons, Suzuki pickups, cars, and private buses," said a student.

ADC Kalat for working together to improve education quality

QUETTA (APP): Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Kalat Siraj Karim Baloch on Thursday said that special attention must be paid to the education sector and in this regard, we all have to work together to improve the quality of education. He expressed these views while chairing a meeting of the District Education Group to address issues of educational institutions in the area. The meeting was attended by DOE Nisar Ahmad Noorzai, DDEO Abdul Rasheed Longo DDOE, Manguchar Gulam Farooq,

DMARTSM Ghulam Feroq Lecturer Government Degree College Kalat Dilmurad Principal Girls Degree College Saqiba Imam District Accounts Officer Ali Asghar Lehri Ehsanullah and others. The participants of the meeting discussed the facilities available in the schools of Kalat district and the problems faced by them. Whatever decisions will be taken in the meeting of the District Education Group will be implemented in all cases, he said adding that all resources would be utilized to solve the problems faced by the Education Department.



KARACHI: Vice Chief of Naval Staff Ovais Ahmed Bilgrami the concluding ceremony of the inaugural Maritime Security Exercise SEA GUARD-24

Pakistan carried out effective strikes against....

Continued from page 1 military strikes against terrorist hideouts in Sistan-o-Baluchistan province of Iran. A number of terrorists were killed during the Intelligence-based operation - codenamed 'Marg Bar Sarmachar', Foreign Office spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said in a statement. She said that over the last several years, in bilateral engagements with Iran, Pakistan had consistently shared its serious concerns about the safe havens and sanctuaries enjoyed by Pakistani-origin terrorists calling themselves Sarmachars on the ungoverned spaces inside Iran. Pakistan also shared multiple dossiers with concrete evidence of the presence and activities of these terrorists, she added. "However, because of a lack of action on our serious concerns, these so-called Sarmachars continued to spill the blood of innocent Pakistanis with impunity. This morning's action was taken in light of credible intelligence of impending large-scale terrorist activities by these so-called Sarmachars," the spokesperson remarked. She said the action was a manifestation of Pakistan's unflinching resolve to protect and defend its national security against all threats. Spokesperson Baloch said that the successful execution of the said "highly complex operation" was also a testimony to the professionalism of the Pakistan Armed Forces. Pakistan will continue to take all necessary steps to pre-

serve the safety and security of its people which is sacrosanct, inviolable and sacred. She reiterated that Pakistan fully respected the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The sole objective of today's act was in pursuit of Pakistan's own security and national interest which is paramount and cannot be compromised, she added. She said that as a responsible member of the international community, Pakistan upheld the principles and purposes of the UN Charter including territorial integrity and sovereignty of member states. The spokesperson said that guided by the said principles, and in exercise of the legitimate rights within international law, Pakistan would never allow its sovereignty and territorial integrity to be challenged, under any pretext or circumstances. "Iran is a brotherly country and the people of Pakistan have great respect and affection for the Iranian people. We have always emphasized dialogue and cooperation in confronting common challenges including the menace of terrorism and will continue to endeavour to find joint solutions," the spokesperson added. Foreign Office spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said that Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar and Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani had cut short their foreign visits in light of the developments, hours after Pakistan carried out a strike

targeting the terrorists' hideouts in Iran. The spokesperson, in her weekly briefing, told the media that Pakistan's action was against the terrorist outfits, not Iran as it desired peaceful relations with the neighboring country and always sought to address the challenges through dialogue. "Pakistan fully respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The sole objective of today's act was in pursuit of Pakistan's own security and national interest which is paramount and cannot be compromised," she reiterated her remarks already issued a short after Pakistan carried out a series of "highly coordinated" and "specifically targeted" precision military strikes in Sistan-o-Baluchistan province of Iran. She said the prime minister who was currently in Davos to attend the World Economic Forum and the foreign minister attending the NAM Summit and Third South Summit in Uganda, have cut their visits short "in view of the ongoing developments." Asked about any third-party mediation to de-escalate the situation, she said that she was not aware of any such development. Meanwhile China is ready to play a constructive role in easing the current situation between Pakistan and Iran, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said Thursday. "We hope both parties can exercise restraint and

calmness and avoid escalation. If they need, we are ready to play a constructive role in easing the situation," spokesperson Mao Ning said during her regular briefing. Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson hoped that both parties would resolve their disputes through consultations and dialogue. In response to some reports that China was mediating between Iran and Pakistan, she said, "We hope both parties can exercise restraint and calmness and avoid escalation. If they need, we are ready to play a constructive role in easing the situation." Mao Ning said that the Chinese side always believed that relations between countries should be handled based on the purposes and principles of the United Nations (UN) Charter and international law. "And, we think all parties should respect the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of other countries," she added. Responding to a question about the current situation between Pakistan and Iran, she said, "We are paying great attention to this. China always believes that relations between countries should be handled based on the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and international law." "Sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of all countries should be respected and protected," she added. Mao Ning remarked that Iran and Pakistan were close neighbours and countries with influence.



RAWALPINDI: Ambassador of Egypt H.E. Dr. Ihab Abdel Hamid Hasan called on Minister for Defence, Lt. Gen. (Retd) Anwar Ali Hyder at Ministry of Defence

DP World ILT20: Teams exude confidence on producing top performances

DUBAI (INP): The DP World ILT20 season 2, with a galaxy of star-studded teams, takes off from January 19 (Friday). This one-month long contest consisting of six teams, is an Emirates Cricket Board's event, and has a List A status granted by the International Cricket Council (ICC). On Thursday, team captains and vice captains who assembled at the Dubai International Stadium for a photo shoot with the trophy, and a press conference that followed, were upbeat about their respective team's performances. Legendary pacer Shoaib Akhtar, Brand Ambassador for the DP World ILT20 season 2, set the tempo for the action to follow by stating: "They are all superstars. I am glad I

was not born in this era. Players like Chris Lynn would have smacked me all over. Sumil Narine would have always got me out. Good luck to you all. I am sure you will be all rooting for your teams. This is the trophy to be won." Akhtar then lauded UAE for creating such a platform through this tournament saying, "We saw UAE Under-19 team beating Pakistan Under-19 and this tournament has played a big role in showcasing young talent here." Chris Lynn of Gulf Giants, who etched his name in the history of the tournament by winning the inaugural edition of the tournament, said: "We obviously did great work last year. T20 is all about reinvigorating and adapting to the conditions.



RAWALPINDI: President of the Pakistan Ex-Servicemen Society (PESS) Retired Lt Gen Abdul Qayyum addressing a press conference in Pindi Press Club

Senate body discusses certificate verification of overseas employees

Independent Report ISLAMABAD: The sub-committee of the Senate Standing Committee on Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development on Thursday briefly discussed the training and certificates verification of overseas employees revealed as challenges faced by them. The committee was chaired by Senator Engr Rukhsana Zuberi for the third consecutive day at the Parliament House. The meeting was attended by Senator Shaheen Khalid Butt and senior officials from the Ministry of Industries and Production (MOIP), Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training (MOFEPT), National University of Technology (NUTECH), National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTTC), Pakistan Industrial Technical Assis-



ISLAMABAD: Brig. (Retd.) Muzaffar Ali Ranjha, Chairman, PMIC is chairing the meeting at PMIC, PM Office, Islamabad on PSDP project titled "Construction of Rathoua Haryam Bridge Across Reservoir Channel on Mirpur, Islamgarh Road".

NADRA Chairman asks business community to coop. in tax broadening

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman National Registration and Database Authority (NADRA) Lt. Gen. Muhammad Munir Afsar here on Monday said that his organization and FBR are in collaboration to expand the tax base and register new taxpayers to improve the tax revenue of the country. Talking to a delegation of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), he called upon the business community to cooperate in such efforts. Munir Afsar briefed the business community about the key initiatives of NADRA to facilitate the citizens. He said that NADRA e-Sahulat is a low-cost e-services platform, which provides a secure payment and collection facility to the



ISLAMABAD: Police personals stands alert in red zone due to security high alert in Federal Capital after the Iran attack on Pakistan.

Study finds huge gaps in enfranchising flood-hit population

ISLAMABAD (APP): A recent research published by the Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives (CPDI) has revealed huge gaps in enabling the population of the flood-hit areas of Sindh and Balochistan to use their fundamental right to vote. The CPDI on Thursday held a stakeholders' dialogue on the study made by Naseer Memon, a development professional expert on climate change, disaster management and livelihoods. The author told the participants that he compiled the study after having detailed group discussions with the people of flood affected areas of Sindh and Balochistan, including women and youth, besides stakeholders engagements and inclusive surveys to gauge the prevailing ground pulse in the wake of general elections 2024, scheduled for February 8. Chairperson of Senate's Standing Committee on Climate Change Seema Ezdi, speaking dur-

ance Center (PITAC), Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication (MOITT), Pakistan Institute of Management (PIM), and Higher Education Commission (HEC). The meeting commenced with the Convenor Engr Rukhsana Zuberi, reflecting on GCC countries and the facilitation of overseas Pakistani workers. The committee members discussed in detail the training and certifications of overseas employees, emphasizing international recognition and compliance with global standards. In addressing the 650,000 employees who returned from abroad, officials from the ministries said that they have prioritized their needs and committed to enhancing their skill sets. Moreover, Senator Shaheen Khalid Butt inquired from the institutes about data for policy-making regarding short and long courses.

PITAC officials explained that, through case studies, they found that 34 percent of overseas employees were jobless. They also noted the challenges in approaching overseas students outside of GCC countries. Education Ministry officials collectively agreed to regularize conducting thorough research to determine the accurate turnover of overseas employees. The Convenor of the committee suggested merging different databases to make employee data easily retrievable. Officials from HEC apprised the committee members about their initiatives to introduce a portal for worldwide certificate verification. Furthermore, officials from the Pakistan Institute of Management requested that HEC provide certification to laborers working abroad to mitigate potential issues.



ISLAMABAD: Secretary Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Ms. Shahera Shahid addressing during a seminar on "Changing Landscape of Pakistani Electorate & Role of Political Parties in Fair Representation" organized by Press Information Department.

Seminar urges comprehensive reforms to address electoral system flaws

ISLAMABAD (APP): Participants of the Thursday seminar highlighted flaws in the electoral process, calling for genuine change emphasizing intra-party elections and increasing women's participation in the electoral process. Speaking at a seminar titled "Changing Landscape of Pakistani Electorate and Role of Political Parties in Fair Representation," organized by the Press Information Department (PID), they said the Constitution entrusts the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) with free and fair elections in the country. The Election Act 2017 enhanced the authority of the Election Commission of Pakistan. The Constitution empowers political parties to participate in elections and establish a government. Muhammad Asghar, Deputy Secretary General of Jamat-e-Islami (JI), stated that a significant majority of people refrained from voting, and many governments failed to truly represent the major-

Different sections of motorway temporarily closed due to dense fog

ISLAMABAD (Online): Different sections of motorway have been temporarily closed due to dense fog. According to National Highways and Motorway Police, the closed sections include: M-1 from Burhan to Swabi, from Swabi to Rashakai and Rashakai to Peshawar toll plaza. M-2 from Thokar Niaz Baig to Farooq Abad. M-3 from Faizpur interchange to Darkhana. M-4 Faisalabad Interchange to Pindi Bhattian and from Faisalabad to Sher Shah. M-5 from Rahim Yaar Khan to Rohri and from Zahir Peer to Uch Sharif. M-11 from Kala Shah Kaku Toll Plaza to Sambrial toll plaza. Commuters have been advised to make their travel plans after getting latest updates from National Highway and Motorway helpline 130 and its social media platforms.



ISLAMABAD: Activists of Muslim Talba Mahaz Pakistan shouting slogans during protest against Iran attack on Pakistan, outside National Press Club in Federal Capital.

4-day training workshop for digitization of community teacher courses

ISLAMABAD (APP): Four-day training workshop for the digitization of community teacher courses concluded at Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) on Thursday. Speaking during the ceremony, UNESCO representative, Aleema Bibi termed AIOU as the most effective platform for bringing out-of-school children into the educational network. "Collaboration with this university will be a focal point for special attention because addressing issues of children outside school is crucial for Pakistan's prosperity," she said. She mentioned that digitizing educational courses for the professional development of community teachers. He mentioned that digitizing educational courses will result in the professional development of community teachers.



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

Sanjrani says: 'Marg Bar Sarmachar' operation shows Pak Forces' exemplary operational capability

ISLAMABAD (APP): Senate Chairman Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani on Thursday congratulated the Pakistan Armed Forces for the precise execution of 'Marg Bar Sarmachar' operation against terrorist hideouts within Iran. "This operation stands as a testament to the exemplary operational capability and professionalism of the Pakistan Armed Forces," he said in a statement. Sanjrani said, "Pakistan is a nation that values peace, but this commitment should not be misconstrued as a sign of weakness." The success of the operation "Marg Bar



ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to Prime Minister for Human Rights and Women Empowerment Mushaal Hussein Mullick addressing during a conference on the promotion of Interfaith Harmony, in the Federal Capital.

Secretary information commends PID's efforts in election awareness seminars

ISLAMABAD (APP): Secretary of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Shahera Shahid on Thursday commended the Press Information Department (PID) for providing stakeholders an opportunity to organize a series of seminars on general elections. Addressing a seminar titled "Changing Landscape of Pakistani Electorate and Role of Political Parties in Fair Representation," she said the primary objective of these seminars is not just to inform but also to provide a platform for individuals to speak with confidence. She emphasized the inclusion of media in discussing economic matters and urged them to contribute ideas for steering the country out of challenges. She highlighted the commencement of a debate to discover ways to improve the country's situation by overcoming challenges. Despite facing challenges, she said the PID was conducting seminars with the goal of overcoming difficulties.

PIO highlights Pakistan's role in the evolving landscape of digitization

ISLAMABAD (APP): Principal Information Officer (PIO) Dr. Tariq Mehmood Thursday highlighted that the Internet revolution has completely transformed the world, leading to a shift from globalization to digitization, which has also significantly influenced Pakistan. Addressing a seminar titled "Changing Landscape of Pakistani Electorate and the Role of Political Parties in Ensuring Fair Representation," he noted that the dominance of the world is currently in the hands of large IT-based companies. Their behavior does not consistently align with this awareness. Emphasizing the need for alignment, he suggested that political parties should adapt themselves to the changing world. Commending the participants of the seminar, he acknowledged Asghar, representative of Jamat-e-Islami, for emphasizing the need for proportional representation in the country. PIO said another participant Dr. Muejeb expressed the view that there has been a lack of significant movements by farmers and



He expressed that while political parties possess an understanding of the evolving global landscape, laborers in the past few decades, emphasizing that without their vocal involvement, their destiny cannot be altered.

Construction work on National Police hospital in full swing

ISLAMABAD (APP): The construction work of Pakistan's first National Police Hospital is in full swing that will cater the health needs of 12,000 officers and officials of Islamabad Capital City Police as well as benefit the residents of Islamabad city. According to a public relations office of the Islamabad Police, the construction work is rapidly going on directives of Prime Minister Anwar ul Haq Kakar. He said that, the Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCPPO) Dr Akbar Nasir Khan and his dedicated team's efforts have led to the establishing of a groundbreaking hospital comprising 100 beds. Under the vigilant oversight of ICCPO, the hospital's developmental work is swiftly advancing, with concrete laid on the ground floor. He said that aligning with the current energy conservation trends, the hospital in Islamabad will utilize solar energy to reduce energy expenditures. The establishment of the National Police Hospital in Islamabad is of utmost importance, marking Pakistan's first-of-its-kind police medical facility. Initially offering specialized medical services in fields such as emergency, surgical, orthopaedic, general medicine, cardiology, neurology, surgical ICU, medical ICU, cardiac ICU.

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

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

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

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

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

On this occasion, Punjab Governor Muhammad Balighur Rehman and the Saudi Ambassador also discussed the situation in Palestine. The Governor said that the destruction caused by the bombing of residential areas, refugee camps, hospitals, schools in the Palestinian Gaza Strip is painful, adding that plight of Palestinians especially women and children is heart wrenching.

Saudi Ambassador Nawaf Bin Saeed Ahmad Al-Malki said Pakistan is like his second home, adding that he was greatly touched by the love and respect given by the Pakistanis.

He said Saudi Arabia is giving scholarships to Pakistani students, adding that the student exchange program will be further expanded.

The Ambassador said quality of Pakistani products like the textiles is very good and need to be marketed better.



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

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

PESHAWAR (APP): Commerce and Industry (SCCI), Faud Ishaq, Director PAJCCI, Imtiaz Ahmad Ali, Vice Chairman All Pakistan Customs Agents Association, Farooq Ahmad and Ex. Presidents SCCI, Zahid Shinwari and Faiz Muhammad Faizi.

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

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

Speaking on the occasion, Coordinator PAJCCI, Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi thanked the chief minister for listening to the issue of Pak-Afghan trade.

Zia Sarhadi also briefed the CM about the working of PAJCCI for the promotion of trade in the region through coordination and arranging meetings of businessmen of both countries for discussion over issues and removal of hurdles.

The chief minister said the KP government fully realizes the problems faced by the business communities and any decision in this regard will be taken in accordance with the government's policy.

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

Caretaker Minister for Industries, Commerce & Technical Education, Dr Amer Abdullah, Secretary Industries and other relevant officials were present on the occasion.

The delegation members included Coordinator PAJCCI, Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi, President Sarhad Chamber of

Aseefa Champions Progressive Change in Province-wide Campaign

KARACHI (Online): Aseefa Bhutto Zardari has been vigorously campaigning across Sindh in preparation for the upcoming general elections.

Her recent rally in Tando Mohammad Khan, accompanied by local candidates Syed Naveed Qamar, Syed Aijaz Hussain Shah Bukhari, and Khuram Karim Soomro, marks a significant highlight in her provincial tour, which so far has included stops in Tando Allahyar, Tando Jam, Nawabshah, Sanghar, and Malir.

During her impassioned speech in Tando Mohammad Khan, Aseefa Bhutto Zardari emphasized the PPP's commitment to addressing key issues such as inflation, unemployment, and poverty. She highlighted the party's dedication to understanding and alleviating the struggles of the poor, a cornerstone of the PPP's ethos under the leadership of the Bhutto family.

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

A significant point of pride for the PPP, as mentioned by Aseefa, is the reconstruction



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

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

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

Speaking as a chief guest at a consultation workshop in a local hotel regarding possible reforms in the rules and regulations for the business and investment sector here on Thursday, the Caretaker Minister said that he wants to improve the rules and regulations while keeping the public interest and rights in mind.

The workshop was jointly organized by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Board of Investment and Trade (KP-BoIT) and the Federal Board of Investment (BoI) (Prime Minister's Office). Besides, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Secretary Industries Syed Zulfiqar Ali Shah, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Oil and Gas Company Limited, Nasir Khan, officials of the Board of Investment (BoI), Muhammad Ali, Ali Waheed and Mahmood Tufail, focal persons from various provincial government departments participated in the workshop.

He said that in bringing reforms, it is important to pay special attention to the principle of balance between the needs of the economy and the public interest, because the imbalance in this regard may lead to the neglect of the rights of the people.

The caretaker minister added that for the promotion of business activities and investment, the world has gone a long way in providing a friendly environment for work and bringing rules and regulations. Therefore, he said that we should also have to take effective steps in this regard and try to reach global standards.

In the workshop,



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

DC distributes gifts among children at Zamung Kor

PESHAWAR (APP): Deputy Commissioner Peshawar, Afaq Wazir, visited "Zamung Kor" on Thursday and distributed toys and gifts among street children residing in these shelter houses established by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government.

During the visit, Additional Assistant Commissioner Syeda Zainab Naqvi, Director Zamaung Kor Najam Sehar, Principal Afshan Banu, Communication Officer Faisal Khan, Tehsildar Inamur Shahzad, Jamil Khan, Khalid Khan, along with Zamaung Kor staff, polio staff, and regional staff were present. Deputy Commissioner Peshawar interacted with the children, and distributed toys, and gifts.

He also visited classes in Zamung Kor, met with students, and gained awareness about education facilities. DC Peshawar distributed certificates to the staff for their excellent performance in polio eradication campaigns.

Underprivileged children in Zamung Kor were delighted to see the Deputy Commissioner among them, expressing joy.

He directed the Kor administration to provide the best facilities for underprivileged children's education and emphasized special attention to their education and upbringing so that these future architects could achieve high positions in society.

Zamung Kor Director briefed the DC on the agency's functioning, stating that there are five centers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, with over a thousand street children receiving education, including 120 female students.

DC Afaq Wazir stated that street children are also part of society, and every class should be provided with essential facilities that are their right. On this occasion, DC Peshawar provided awareness about polio, emphasizing the need to plan polio drops.



SARGODHA: Caretaker Federal Minister for Culture Syed Jamal Shah visits different stalls during opening ceremony of the two-day Orange Mela organized by Lock versa At Sargodha Arts Council.

Caretaker KP Minister chairs meeting of reforms committees

Independent Report
PESHAWAR: Caretaker Provincial Minister for Local Government and rural development, Amir Nadeem Durrani said that the caretaker government's mandate is limited but our effort is to give a better roadmap to the next elected government.

He said I desire to work for the betterment of the people adding that reforms in local government are the need of the hour.

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

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

At the meeting, Nadeem Durrani was brief about the establishment of the reforms committees and was told that Urban Area Development Authorities, TMA's, WSSCs and Peshawar Development Authority are facing various issues.

The Reforms Committees were formed on November 29, 2023 to find a long-term and short-term solution of issues and challenges.

TORS of reform committees were to bring forward the problems, and challenges and make suggestions for their solutions.



PESHAWAR: Ombudsperson KP Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Ms. Rakshanda Naaz addressing during Election Manifesto Suggestions on Women Empowerment organized by Aurat Foundation.

Youth Alliance protest against black marketing, artificial scarcity of urea

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

According to the details, due to the nexus of the dealers of urea fertilizer in Mirpur Mathelo, the series of black marketing of artificial shortage of urea fertilizer has not ended. The leaders staged a protest outside the office of Deputy Commissioner Ghotki in Mirpur Mathelo and locked the main gate of Deputy Commissioner Ghotki's office. Ayaz Khahawar, Waqar Bozdar and others while talking to the media, said that they have been protesting against the black marketing of urea fertilizer for the past two months, but no action has been taken against the dealers who sold urea fertilizer worth Rs. 35 hundred for Rs. 6,000. Fertilizer has exceeded six thousand rupees which is cruelty and abuse to the farmers. He further said that our crops are being destroyed due to not getting fertilizer on time but the officers are silent spectators. They demanded that urea fertilizer should be used. Black marketing should be eradicated by taking action against the dealers who create artificial scarcity.

Dr Jamal directs BBH renovation by Jan. 31

RAWALPINDI (APP): Caretaker Provincial Minister for Primary and Secondary Healthcare and Population Welfare Dr Jamal Nasir on Thursday directed the officials concerned to complete the reconstruction and renovation work of the Benazir Bhutto Hospital (BBH) Outdoor Patient Department by January 31.

During a visit to review the ongoing BBH's renovation work, he said that the OPD including pathology, eye ward, ENT, dentistry, skin and blood bank departments would be made functional by the end of this month.

The minister said that available funds would be provided to nursing hostel and college that would be fully functional in February. He also inspected the hospital's basement and said that work was being carried out to lay a new water supply and sewage system to resolve the issue of water seepage. Dr Jamal Nasir said that the repair and reconstruction work of the three blocks of Doctors Hostel was being started for Rs 140 million. He said that the Punjab government was committed to providing the best kind of health facilities to the residents of Rawalpindi and more than three billion rupees had been provided for the reconstruction.



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In 8th operation, 91 kg hashish was recovered from two suspects netted near RCD Road Hub.

The spokesman informed that 29 kg hashish and 7 kg opium were recovered from an accused rounded up near Kot Abdul Malik Interchange Sheikhupura.

18 kg Ice was recovered from an accused arrested near Sona Khan Chowk.



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

US political officer meets PPP leader

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

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

New PEC Punjab takes charge

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

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

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

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

Courts summons police along with record on bail plea of Sheikh Rashid

RAWALPINDI (Online): Former interior minister Sheikh Rashid has filed bail plea in the cases related to May 9 incidents.

He has filed the bail plea in Anti Terrorism Court (ATC) Rawalpindi. Bail plea has been filed by Sheikh Rashid through his counsel.

Sheikh Rashid has taken plea in the petition that he is not nominated in the case. He is being subjected to political vengeance after May 9.

The court has summoned police along with the record on January 20.

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

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

The agreement was signed at the World Economic Forum in Davos by Minister of Communication, Railways and Maritime Affairs Shahid Ashraf Tarar and Chairman of Ports, Customs and Free Zone Corporation (PCFC) Sultan Ahmed bin Sulayem.

According to the Ministry of Railways, the cooperation covers the development of a dedicated freight corridor, multi-modal logistics park, and freight terminals.

The Dubai Port (DP) World will work on infrastructure development at Qasim International Container Terminal which is Pakistan's leading trade gateway and plans to develop an economic zone near the terminal.

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

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

The rail-based Dedicated Freight Corridor is planned to run from Karachi Port on the Arabian Sea, passing through Karachi, Pakistan's most populous city, to the Pipri Marshalling Yard, approximately 50 km away.

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

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



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

Minister says: Govt initiative in exploration sector to attract investment

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

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

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

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

Govt releases Rs3,097.50 mln for agriculture sector uplift projects

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

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

Talking to APP here on Monday, he said that out of the total released funds, an amount of Rs429.97 million had



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

IT exports witnesses remarkable surge in December 2023, Saif

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

Talking to PTV news channel, he explained that Pakistan has recently undertaken historic steps to facilitate the country's burgeoning workforce of freelancers and to promote the IT industry.

The government had launched an initiative to build 10,000 co-working spaces across Pakistan for



DAVOS: Caretaker Federal Minister for IT and Telecommunication Dr. Umar Saif visits Salesforce Pavilion.

Shamshad stresses to lower revenue expenditure gap

ISLAMABAD (Online): Dr Shamshad Akhtar, Caretaker Federal Minister for Finance, Revenue and Economic Affairs on Thursday said that a comprehensive overhaul of the government's fiscal apparatus is vital to lower the revenue-expenditure gap. Bold reforms would lead to a new era of development and prosperity in the country, the minister said.

Effective implementation of ambitious reforms will depend on addressing critical underlying institutional, governance, and structural constraints, said Dr Shamshad Akhtar, Caretaker Federal Minister for Finance, Revenue and Economic Affairs, during the keynote address on Pakistan's economic challenges and the way forward, said a press

release issued here.

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

The third, climate shocks as the global warming model predicts that Pakistan's weather patterns will become even more volatile and extreme in the decades ahead, with an average increase in temperatures by 1.3% to 4.9% by 2090; fourth, the lack of innovation and diversity in the structure of the economy; and fifth, the failure to integrate Pakistan's economy with the rest of the world.

Pak, Estonia envoys in UK discuss trade, public diplomacy

LONDON (APP): Pakistan's High Commission in London Dr Mohammad Faisal on Thursday held a meeting with his Estonian counterpart Viljar Lubi.

Their "fruitful" discussion encompassed a host of issues including trade, public diplomacy, and the International Maritime Organization (IMO), according to the high commission's post on X.

The high commissioner shared details of Pakistan's candidature for the IMO.

Dr Faisal also expressed best wishes to Viljar Lubi for his upcoming visit to Pakistan.

PSX stays bearish, loses 364 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bearish trend on Thursday, losing 364.93 points, a negative change of 0.57 percent, closing at 63,202.40 points against 63,567.34 points the previous trading day.

A total of 445,797,697 shares valuing Rs.14,236 billion were traded during the day as compared to 421,331,988 shares valuing Rs.18,579 billion the last day.

Some 345 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 96 of them recorded gains and 227 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 22 remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were K-Electric Limited with 59,720,141 shares at Rs.5.47 per share, PIAC(A) with 40,427,500 shares at Rs.11.56 per share and WorldCall Telecom with 35,387,750 shares at Rs.1.30 per share.

Rifhan Maize Products Company Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs.149.00 per share price, closing at Rs.8,950.00, whereas the runner-up Philip Morris (Pakistan) Limited with a Rs.55.09 rise in its per share price to Rs.789.59.

Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs.397.00 per share closing at Rs.21,900.00, followed by Pakistan Tobacco Company.

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

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

In a remarkable turn of events, Pakistan has transitioned from facing potential default to achieving a record-breaking surplus in its current account, showcasing the nation's resilience and commitment to economic stability, said a press release issued here.

In December 2023, Pakistan achieved an impressive current account surplus of \$397 million.

This surplus contributed to the overall surplus of \$198 million in

the second quarter of Financial Year 2024.

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

The December 2023 surplus is particularly noteworthy when compared to the deficit of \$365 million recorded in December 2022. This significant improvement has led to a remarkable 77% reduction in the Current Account Deficit (CAD), which now stands at \$2.8 billion. Highlighting the commitment to economic recovery, Minister of Commerce, Dr. Gohar Ejaz, noted that when the caretaker government assumed charge in July 2023,

Pak total liquid foreign reserves reach \$13.145 billion

KARACHI (APP): The total liquid foreign reserves of Pakistan stood at US\$ 13,145.1 million while reserves held by State Bank reached \$ 8,027.4 million in the week ended on January 12, 2023. The State Bank of Pakistan, in a statement issued here on Thursday, informed that SBP's reserves decreased by \$127 million to \$8,027.4 million due to debt repayments during the week under review. Meanwhile, net foreign reserves held by commercial banks stood at \$5,117.7 million, it added.

Total liquid foreign reserves held by the country, in the previous week ended on January 05, 2023, were \$13,256.6 million. Among them foreign reserves held by the central bank.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Minister for Energy, Muhammad Ali attended a seminar in National University of Sciences and Technology, Islamabad and delivered a lecture on Energy Sector Crisis and Reforms.

Jazz, Pathfinder Group hosted Digital Pakistan Breakfast

ISLAMABAD (APP): Jazz, a leading digital operator of the country, in collaboration with the Pathfinder Group, hosted the "Digital Pakistan Breakfast".

The event was organised on the sidelines of World Economic Forum Annual Meeting taking place in Davos.

A press release received here on Monday said the event highlighted Pakistan's journey of digital transformation, underscoring its potential and resilience in a rapidly evolving digital world.

Addressing the event Aamir Ibrahim, CEO of Jazz and Chairman of Mobilink Microfinance Bank identified the challenges faced by the country and emphasized the critical role of technology in addressing them.

As Pakistan's leading digital operator, we are fully committed to leveraging technology to empower our citizens, he added.

In line with this year's World Economic Forum theme 'Rebuilding Trust,' by adopting a strategic 3T Approach—Technology, Trust and Transparency, we can advance the digital agenda of Pakistan, he said adding that the 3T approach can be crucial for charting a path towards an inclusive and equitable Pakistan, he remarked.

He also highlighted the impact of JazzCash in the fintech sector.

Aamir Ibrahim said that serving approximately 45 million Pakistanis, of whom 30% are women, JazzCash is at the forefront of financial empowerment in Pakistan.

Peanuts sale rises in chilly condition

HYDERABAD (APP): The sale of dry fruits, particularly peanuts, is at its peak as the weather has turned chilly due to cold winds. Vendors are seen selling crispy peanuts at every nook and corner.

The poor cannot afford most dry fruits because their prices are beyond their reach, but peanuts are the most popular item among them as their rates are comparatively low and affordable for them.

Talking to this scribe here today a consumer of peanut Shams said that among the dry fruits, peanuts are comparatively cheaper and are, therefore, in the access of common people. "Now buying dry fruits is not possible for the common man, except peanuts because of their reasonable price."

Ahmad, a roadside vendor of peanuts in Qasimabad, told this scribe that peanuts were mostly used in the winter season to get relief from cold and argued that due to the normal rates and no price hike why sale of peanuts is in high demand.

According to health experts, peanuts are nutritious and provide necessary energy to the body.

NCHR, Bank Al Habib join hands to empower women

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) and Bank Al Habib have signed a Letter of Interest (LOI) committing to work together and empower women and girls through sport-based human development interventions.

"The NCHR is currently engaged in a project around this theme through the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI), supported by the High Commission of Canada in Pakistan. However, the NCHR has identified the need to support the most

vulnerable and marginalized group within this project - the Women United Football Academy in Quetta.

"The LOI serves as a comprehensive framework outlining the terms of the agreement for Bank Al Habib's sponsorship of the Hazara Women United Football Academy in Quetta," an NCHR press release said.

The strategic partnership, the NCHR said, aimed to bolster the Academy's capacity to train and equip more girls, thereby extending the impact of the ongoing CFLI project.



PESHAWAR: Worker busy in printing different political parties posters at his workplace in Mohallah Jhangi in connection with upcoming general elections.



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

TDAP CEO opens 3rd Engineering & Healthcare Show

LAHORE (APP): Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) Chief Executive Officer Muhammad Zubair Motiwala inaugurated on Thursday the 3rd Annual Engineering and Healthcare Show here at Expo Centre.

Talking to the media, he said international experts and guests were arriving in Lahore to participate in the event.

He said that country was doing exports of \$30 billion and all-out efforts were being made to increase the export figure up to \$60 billion.

He said there was business-friendly atmosphere in the country, adding that the purpose of

organising the show was to provide one platform to national and international traders so that they could come here and witness for themselves the quality of Pakistani products.

He said that such events always help project country's soft image at global level besides boosting its exports. He said that elements which were involved in carrying out negative propaganda against Pakistan should see that peaceful economic activities were ongoing in the country.

Muhammad Zubair said, "People of Pakistan are hard working and country has huge potential for business."



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Standing Committee on Commerce, Senator Zeeshan Khazada presiding over a meeting of the committee at Parliament House.

Houthi strike another US vessel

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

Jordan accuses Israel of damaging hospital in Khan Yunis

Monitoring Desk
GAZA: Israel stepped up its assault on Khan Yunis in southern Gaza on Wednesday, pushing tanks westwards and prompting accusations from Jordan that its field hospital in the city had been badly damaged by nearby shelling.

The Jordanian army said it held Israel responsible for a "flagrant breach of international law" in what it said was the dam-

age to the facility as a result of Israeli shelling in the vicinity. The Israeli military had no immediate comment. People in and around another hospital, Nasser, fled as tanks approached the district overnight following an Israeli army statement that it had come under fire from the area. Palestinian health officials said seven people were killed by Israeli air strikes that damaged homes near the hospital.

China's population drops for second year after record low birth rate

Monitoring Desk
HONG KONG: China's population fell for a second consecutive year in 2023, as a record low birth rate and a wave of Covid-19 deaths when strict lockdowns ended accelerated a downturn that will have profound long-term effects on the economy's growth potential.

The National Bureau of Statistics said the total number of people in China dropped by 2.08 million, or 0.15 per cent, to 1.409 billion in 2023. That was well above the population decline of 850,000 in 2022, which had been the first since 1961 during the Great Famine of the Mao Zedong era. China experienced a dramatic na-

tionwide Covid surge early last year after three years of tight screening and quarantine measures kept the virus largely contained until authorities abruptly lifted curbs in December 2022. Total deaths last year rose 6.6pc to 11.1 million, with the death rate reaching the highest level since 1974 during the Cultural Revolution.

New births fell 5.7pc to 9.02 million and the birth rate was a record low 6.39 births per 1,000 people, down from a rate of 6.77 births in 2022. Births in the country have been plummeting for decades as a result of the one-child policy implemented from 1980 to 2015 and its rapid urbanisation during that period.

A day in Trump's world: morning in courtroom, evening on campaign trail

ATKINSON (Internews): Donald Trump's schedule on Wednesday summed up the unprecedented nature of this year's election: spend the day in court fighting a defamation case and the evening rallying supporters in his bid to become the next U.S. president.

That is how the former president, the frontrunner for the 2024 Republican nomination and the world's most famous defendant, has chosen to divide his time this

week as he pursues his political comeback. Trump was not obliged to be in the federal courtroom in Manhattan, where a judge warned him he could be kicked out if he was disruptive. His appearances for the civil court case are entirely voluntary.

From there, he planned to spend Wednesday evening on the campaign trail in New Hampshire ahead of the state's Republican presidential primary next week.



Workers reconstruct a street, which was damaged on the first months of Russia's attack on Ukraine in the town of Trostianets, Sumy region, Ukraine.



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

Tel Aviv steps up Gaza strikes after medicine-aid deal

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

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

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

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

Plight of Palestinians echoes in US Senate

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

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

The Senate voted 72 to 11 against the resolution, with nine Democrats, and one Republican, Rand Paul, supporting Sanders.

The Hill, a Washington newspaper focusing on

Congressional activities, observed that "the number of Democrats who supported the measure reflects rising dissatisfaction among progressives over the civilian casualties in Gaza, which are now said to exceed 24,000."

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

By pushing the resolution, Sanders drew attention to the urgent need for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. Even those opposing the resolution acknowledged the pressing need for a cessation of hostilities in the region.

23 killed in Thai fireworks factory blast

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

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

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

Winter weather upends travel in Germany for a second day

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

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

Trains to and from Paris were again cancelled, German rail operator Deutsche Bahn said, and for other train journeys, occasional disruption could still occur due to the weather.



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

King Charles, Kate postpone appearances over health woes

Monitoring Desk
LONDON: British head of state King Charles III has been treated for an enlarged prostate and will undergo a procedure in hospital next week, Buckingham Palace said on Wednesday.

The rare announcement about the monarch's health comes after Kensington Palace said his daughter-in-law Catherine, Princess of Wales, had undergone successful abdominal surgery.

Catherine, often known as Kate, is facing up to two weeks in hospital

and several months' recuperation after the operation, which palace officials said was non-cancerous, without specifying further. Charles, 75, became king on the death of his mother, Queen Elizabeth II, in September 2022 after spending most of his life as her heir.

He is head of state of 14 other countries outside the United Kingdom, including Australia, Canada and New Zealand, and is head of the 56-member Commonwealth, which comprises 2.4 billion people.

More skirmishes along LAC in Ladakh come to light

NEW DELHI (INP): At least two previously unknown incidents of skirmishes between the Indian and Chinese troops along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh have come to light after the Indian Army attempted to boost the otherwise very low morale of its troops.

The Indian Army conferred gallantry awards on its personnel mentioning these clashes. The citations read out at a ceremony by the Army's Western Command last week, provided brief details of how the Indian troops responded firmly to the aggressive behaviour by China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) soldiers.

Ecuador prosecutor probing TV studio attack killed: AG

QUITO (AFP/APP): A prosecutor investigating the dramatic live-broadcast armed assault last week on an Ecuadorian television station was shot dead Wednesday, the country's attorney general said.

"In the face of the murder of our colleague Cesar Suarez... I am going to be emphatic: organized crime groups, criminals, terrorists will not stop our commitment to Ecuadorian society," said Attorney General Diana Salazar in a statement on X.

Biden aims for North Carolina as 2024 election comes into focus

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

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

The trip, tied to the rollout of new funds for broadband internet, is Biden's fourth this month

to an anticipated battleground state in the 2024 presidential election.

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

The incumbent president will need liberals like those concentrated in urban, highly educated Raleigh to turn out in high numbers to win a state whose vast rural regions favor Trump.

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

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

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

Attacks by Yemen's Houthi militia on merchant ships in the Red Sea and retaliatory U.S. strikes have ratcheted-up tensions in the Middle East as the Gaza war rages on.

The attacks by the Iran-allied Houthis, which they say are in support of

Palestinians, target a route that accounts for about 15% of the world's shipping traffic and acts as a vital conduit between Europe and Asia.

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

"Ships are diverting away from the Red Sea and re-routing around the coast of South and West Africa — this increased traffic has created huge congestion in bunkering ports around Africa and placed significant pressure on port infrastructure," John A. Bassadone, founder and CEO of independent bunker supplier Peninsula, told Reuters.

Bunker fuel demand has risen at ports including Mauritius' Port Louis, Gibraltar and ports in the Canary Islands and South Africa, said traders and industry sources.

Japan counts down to precision 'moon sniper' landing mission

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

Dubbed the "moon sniper", the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) probe will start a 20-minute touchdown phase on its one-way mission from midnight on Saturday (1500 GMT Friday), trying to land on a target site roughly the size of two athletic tracks on the slope of a crater just south of the lunar equator.

"No other nation has achieved this. Proving Japan has this technology would bring us a huge advantage in upcoming international missions like Artemis," said Shinichiro Sakai, JAXA's SLIM project manager. India's Chandrayaan-3 in August made a historic touchdown on the moon's south pole, a major technological feat given the rough terrain, highlighting India's rise as a major player in space. JAXA stresses its high-precision technology will become a powerful tool in future exploration of hilly moon poles, seen as a potential source of oxygen, fuel and water.

Brazil's Indigenous Yanomami again face illegal mining-linked crisis

BOA VISTA (AFP/APP): The Yanomami Indigenous group are again facing a severe humanitarian crisis blamed on illegal gold miners, despite Brazil's president deploying the military to wrest back control of their territory.

A year after Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva declared a state of emergency over the isolated group's plight, images emerging from their Amazon rainforest reservation remain desolate: severely malnourished children being fed through IV tubes in hospital and their staple food source, fish, decimated by the toxic mercury used in the mines.

At least 308 Yanomami died from January to November 2023, half of them children under five, according to health officials.

That is little better than the 343 deaths recorded in 2022.

Cases of malaria among the Yanomami increased by 61 percent last year, and influenza by 640 percent compared to 2022. Those bleak figures

are a problem for Lula, who came to office in January 2023 vowing to do a far better job protecting Brazil's Indigenous peoples than far-right predecessor Jair Bolsonaro.

One of the veteran leftist's first actions in office was to deploy the military to expel an estimated 20,000 illegal miners from the Yanomami reservation, a sprawling northern territory bigger than Portugal.

Indigenous leaders and rights activists accuse miners of raping and killing Yanomami inhabitants, poisoning their water with mercury, spreading disease, tearing down virgin rainforest and triggering a food crisis. Lula ordered the air force to impose a no-fly zone to cut off supplies to the mines, and sent hundreds of police and soldiers to evict the invaders. Thousands of miners fled as the authorities carried out a total of 400 operations last year, seizing 600 million reais (\$120 million) from criminal groups involved with the mines, according to official figures.

President says: Use of technology vital to increase literacy rate

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

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

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

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

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

President Alvi maintained that around 28 million children in Pakistan do not go to school while thousands of new schools would be needed to educate those children.

He said mosques could also be used as educational centers for this purpose.

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

Azad Jammu and

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The FC-31 will allow the PAF to enjoy a generational gap over its rivals with fast delivery, while Pakistan's main rival will

not likely get stealth fighter jets anytime soon, Wei said.

The purchase deal will also benefit China, Wei said, noting that if Pakistan finalizes the deal, other countries, particularly those from the Middle East, could also follow.

In potential joint exercises with other countries, the Pakistan Air Force could display the capabilities of the FC-31, and more potential customers will get to know how competitive the Chinese aircraft is, Wei said.

Independently developed by the state-owned Aviation Industry Corporation of China (AVIC), the FC-31 is a single-seat, twin-engine, medium stealth fighter jet that analysts said is comparable with, if not superior to, the US' F-35.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate, Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani exchanging views with Mohamed Eboo, Resident Representative of Canada during meeting held at Parliament House in Islamabad.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Aneeq Ahmed said that the ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony was organizing a series of awareness events on interfaith harmony in cities, particularly in higher education institutions.

Pak Navy vows concrete action to enhance maritime security

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

He stressed that Islamabad has "responded appropriately" by recalling its ambassador and blocking Tehran's envoy.

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

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

Egypt envoy of calls on Minister for Defense, security issues discuss

RAWALPINDI (Online): Ambassador of Egypt Dr Ihab Abdel Hamid Hasan has called on Minister for Defense Lieutenant General (retired) Anwar Ali Haider in his office Defense Ministry Rawalpindi on Thursday.

Defense Minister said that Pakistan and Egypt have cordial historical and traditional relations.

Defense Minister said that both countries can work for collaborative projects and cooperation in defense industry by gathering their military strength.

Egypt and Pakistan have immense potential to develop in all sectors because both countries are facing common challenges and have common strategic interests. We hold the same desires for peace and development. The guest thanked the Defense Minister and expressed his government's commitment to work with Pakistan in all matters of mutual interest, including defense.



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

UNICEF assures full cooperation to work on better healthcare of mother & infants in Balochistan

QUETTA: The country Director UNICEF, Abdullah A. Fadil has assured that the UNICEF would extend full cooperation to work on the better healthcare of the mothers and infants in the province.

He also assured to work on the roadmap and work plan of the provincial government in this regard.

The country Director of UNICEF was in meeting with the caretaker Minister Health, Dr. Amir Muhammad Khan Jogezeai here on Thursday.

Also present in the meeting were included the provincial representative of the UNICEF, Ms. Mariyam, Dr. Aamir Alizai, field security officer, Naseeb Kakar and Dr. Amin Khan Mandokhail.

The Country Director and Provincial representative of UNICEF appreciated the roadmap as discussed with them by the interim Health Minister during the course of meeting.

The UNICEF representatives also briefed the overall functioning and contribution of the Fund in health sector of Balochistan.

Earlier, the Minister Health Dr. Jogezeai appreciated the services being rendered by UNICEF in the health sector of the province.

He told that the government is ensuring effective steps for saving the people from diseases.

Commissioner Quetta inspects solid waste management plant

QUETTA: The Commissioner Quetta Division, Muhammad Hamza Shafiqat visited the solid waste management plant at eastern bypass, Quetta on Thursday.

The Commissioner was briefed about different parts of the solid waste management plant, issues and its operation.

The Commissioner directed to rehabilitate the solid waste management plant within a week.

He said that the long-standing issue of solid waste would be resolved after making the plant operational.

So, every possible steps would be taken to keep functioning the plant, adding he assured.

He said that solid waste management plant would resolve the issues of solid waste in Quetta city.

The Commissioner stressed the need to properly dispose the solid waste by the people.



QUETTA: Commissioner Quetta Division Hamza Shafiqat inspecting Solid Waste Plant

Finance Minister appreciates digital transformation efforts

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Finance, Revenue and Economic Affairs, Dr. Shamsah Akhtar, here on Thursday commended the initiatives undertaken by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Karandaz for the digital transformation of Pakistan. Speaking at the 'Pakistan Digital Stake' Workshop here, the Minister said the creation of Digital Stake by these organizations was in line with the government's policy of digitization. She said digital transactions play a vital role in empowering both urban residents and business individuals, offering them the flexibility to complete financial transactions promptly and with ease.

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

These entities are contributing significantly to the implementation of the 'Pakistan Digital Stake', reinforcing the government's commitment to the digitization agenda, she added.

Dr. Shamsah Akhtar underscored the importance of the project for Pakistan's progress, asserting, this initiative was of utmost importance for the development of the country adding the government would use all available resources to ensure its success.

The minister reiterated the government's commitment to financial inclusion, economic self-sufficiency, poverty reduction, and transparency in governance. Drawing inspiration from the positive impacts of digital transformation in the United Arab Emirates, Estonia, and Singapore, Dr. Shamsah Akhtar expressed confidence in the potential of 'Digital Stake' to bring similar improvements to Pakistan. The 'Pakistan Digital Stake' aims to establish the country on digital lines, creating opportunities for millions of Pakistanis to engage in daily financial transactions seamlessly.

Jan Achakzai visits SSP Traffic office; praises control mechanism

QUETTA: The caretaker Provincial Minister for Information, Jan Achakzai visited the Office of Senior Superintendent of Police (Traffic) here on Thursday.

The caretaker Minister Information met the SSP Traffic Behram Khan Mandokhail who briefed him about the functioning of the Traffic Police and the traffic management system in Quetta city.

Jan Achakzai appreciated the traffic control and management mechanism of traffic police in Quetta.

He said that the traffic of Quetta city is being managed well by the traffic police despite the resources constraints.

He stressed the need to create awareness among the citizens about the traffic laws.

He urged the citizens to follow the traffic laws.

Seminar on role of women in peace, nation building organized in Turbat

TURBAT (APP): A seminar was organized here on Thursday on the role of women in peace and nation building.

About 400 girl students and faculty participated in the seminar held at Sheikh Fatima bin Mubarak Cadet College Turbat through Voice of Balochistan (VoB).

The students came from University of Turbat, Government Girls College Turbat, University Makran, Panjgur and University of Gwadar.

Prominent politician Zubaida Jalal was the chief guest while the panelists were journalist and anchor SAMAA news Kiran Naz, Minister for Women Development Shania Khan, Principal Mand Girls High School Rahima Jalal, social activist and politician Meena Majeed Baloch, Prof Dr Gul Hassan of University of Turbat and researcher BBTN Dr Siraj Bashir.



QUETTA: Caretaker Provincial Information Minister Jan Achakzai visiting office of SSP Traffic



QUETTA: Country Director UNICEF Abdullah A Fadel and Ms. Maryam meeting with caretaker Provincial Health Minister Dr. Amir Muhammad Jogezeai

IHC accepts petitions against jail trial of Toshakhana, £190 million reference

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Thursday accepted the petitions of PTI founder against the trial of Toshakhana case and the £190 million reference in jail, for hearing. IHC bench comprising Justice Gul Hassan Aurangzeb and Justice Arbab Tahir heard the PTI founder's plea against the jail trial for the two cases. The court issued directives to the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) and the Interior Ministry to submit their replies on Monday. It also issued directives to schedule the case to be heard by any available bench on Monday.

PTA hosts workshop on IPv6 Transition & Routing Security

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) organized a two-day workshop on 'IPv6 Transition' and 'Routing Security' in collaboration with the Asia-Pacific Network Information Centre (APNIC), the Internet Society (ISOC), and the Pakistan Network Operators Group (PKNOG). The workshop featured esteemed foreign speakers and witnessed active participation from professionals in the telecom industry, underscoring the collective commitment to staying abreast of technological advancements, said a news release issued here on Thursday. Speaking on the occasion, Chairman PTA, Major General @ Hafeez Ur Rehman said that PTA is well aware of the importance of capacity building therefore it is working closely with international stakeholders.

Efforts should be made to avoid complication with Iran, Khawaja Asif

ISLAMABAD (Online): Former Defense Minister Khawaja Asif said that we should try to avoid complication with Iran.

While talking to Private TV channel, Khawaja Asif said that during our tenure, we had very good relations with Iran. Pakistan had played an active role in resolving Saudi Arabia-Iran conflict.

PML-N leader said that Pakistan and Iran should make a joint strategy to deal with terrorism. Baloch separatist movements are going on in Pakistan and Iran.

Khawaja Asif said that Pakistan and Iran need to jointly deal with these movements.

It is pertinent to say that according to foreign office, Pakistan has targeted specific hideouts of terrorist in Sistan province of Iran this morning.