

Independent

Member APNS & CPNE

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www.dailyindependent.com.pk Quetta

Ph: 2841470/2841473 REG: No. BC-116 B/ID-445 Vd XXV No 156, Rajab 13, 1445 AH Thursday January 25, 2024 Pages 08, Price Rs.15

PM for rejecting, collectively fighting enemies' propaganda against Pakistan

Pakistan's successes in the war against terrorism would not have been possible without the participation and support of the youth

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Wednesday affirmed that as responsible citizens, the people of Pakistan must reject and collectively fight the vicious propaganda onslaught unleashed by the enemies against Pakistan in the recent past.

The prime minister, addressing the Pakistan National Youth Convention 2024 as the chief guest, said the youth could play a constructive role in dealing with this emerging national security

challenge provided they remained focused, and fact checked all details through authentic information from the state institutions rather than falling prey to the propaganda.

Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir, NI (M), was the guest of honour. "We, as a nation, have fought the menace of terrorism most valiantly, offering unparalleled sacrifices," he said.

Prime Minister Kakar appreciated the role of armed forces in the fight

against the menace of terrorism with full commitment and professional excellence.

"Pakistan's successes in the war against terrorism would not have been possible without the participation and support of the youth who make 65% of our population," he added.

Addressing the conference, the COAS underscored that the youth were Pakistan's biggest asset, and all optimism of a brighter future was associated with them. Conveying the mes-

sage of hope, the COAS asked the youth to shun dependency. He referred to the historic role played by the youth in creation and development of Pakistan and exhorted them to partake in building the nation through discipline, honest toil and a genuine quest for knowledge. He highlighted the power potential of Pakistan, the demographic dividend, immense mineral wealth, a creative corpus of IT literate workforce, and great prospects in agriculture.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar and Chief of the Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir addressing the participants of Pakistan National Youth Conference.



TURBAT: Caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki talking with mediemen regarding preparation of general elections

Solangi for improving fact check mechanism to counter misinformation

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi Wednesday said that the mechanism for fact-checking will have to be improved in the arena of digital media to counter fake news and misinformation.

Delivering his speech at the 2nd International Media and Communication Conference here, he said that the year 2024 was the year of elections in different countries including Pakistan, India, Indonesia, United States of America.

He urged the media industry to play a responsible role as its responsibility was to protect the public interest. "Journalism is primarily about defending the public's right to know," Murtaza Solangi main-

ained.

The minister said the challenges of the digital age were also great as artificial intelligence, deep fake, voice cloning and misinformation factories have made it difficult to sift fact from fiction.

He said that besides the benefits of modern technology in media, there were many risks also involved.

He said that many tasks are being done by using artificial intelligence and voice cloning.

The fundamental principle of journalism was the gatekeeper system to verify the facts but the new media had ignored "the gatekeeper".

In the era of artificial intelligence, deep fake, cyber cloning, he said it had become difficult to bring the truth to people, Murtaza Solangi opined.



LAHORE: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Murtaza Solangi addressing the Second International Media and Communication Conference at University of Management and Technology.

Election preparations reviewed in Rakhshan: Govt. machinery being mobilized for general elections, says CS

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Chief Secretary Balochistan, Shakeel Qadir Khan has stated that the government machinery is being mobilized for conducting free and fair elections in the province.

He said that every possible measures would be taken so as to conduct the elections in peaceful manner.

The Chief Secretary was presiding over a meeting held to review the arrangements for elections in Rakhshan Division, in Kharan on Wednesday.

Those who were in present at the meeting were the caretaker Provincial Minister for Home, Mir Zubair Jamali, Additional Chief Secretary Home, Zahid Saleem, Inspector General of Police, Abdul Khaliq Sheikh, Secretary Local Government, Noor Ahmed Pirani, Commissioner Rakhshan, Shah Irfan Gharshen, besides other concerned high ups.

Addressing the meeting, the Chief Secretary said that all preparations have been finalized for the elections in light of directives of the Election Commission of Pakistan.

He said that his visit is aimed at reviewing the arrangements for elections and mobilizing the government machinery for the same.

He assured that every possible effort would be made to ensure peaceful and transparent elections in the province.

He directed to the concerned officials to ensure availability of the basic facilities including water, electricity at the polling stations. The ramps should also be constructed at the polling stations to ensure that disabled persons may also cast their votes, adding he stressed.

Earlier, during the briefing, it was informed that the preparations are complete for February 8 elections in Rakhshan Division.

66 kids die of pneumonia across Punjab in current month

MULTAN (APP): A total of 66 kids died of pneumonia in public hospitals across South Punjab in the current month while 2,847 patients reported to health facilities.

Health Department South Punjab Spokesperson Assad Ullah Shahzad told APP on Wednesday that 41 deaths were reported from Children Complex Multan, nine from Bahawal Victoria Hospital Bahawalpur, 14 from Allama Iqbal Teaching Hospital D G Khan, and one each from Sheikh Zayed Hospital Rahim Yar Khan and Sir Sadiq Abbasi Hospital Bahawalpur while no death was reported from Nishtar Hospital Multan by January 23.

He stated that as many as 556 pneumonia patients visited out patient departments and 2,291 admitted to Accident & Emergency wards, with 2,207 of them recovered.

It may be mentioned that pneumonia is an infection that inflames the air sacs in one or both lungs. The air sacs may fill with fluid or pus (purulent material), causing cough with phlegm or pus, fever, chills, and difficulty breathing. A variety of organisms, including bacteria, viruses and fungi, can cause pneumonia.

IMF to 'send' review mission to Pakistan after elections 2024

ISLAMABAD (INP): Following Pakistan's assurance to impose new taxes, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on Wednesday 'decided' to send its review mission to Pakistan after election 2024, sources said.

IMF will continue further talks on the Standby Arrangement (SBA) programme with the newly elected government of Pakistan after highly anticipated general elections.

However, the "IMF has not confirmed the schedule for conducting the second review". The last confirmation was made by the monetary fund in July 2023 which stated that the talks on the 2nd review will be held with the new government.

The International Monetary Fund has already made a \$1.9 billion disbursement out of the total \$3 billion under the nine-month Stand-By Arrangement (SBA).

Sources said that newly elected government in Pakistan is expected to take full charge till the end of February 2024 after the general election.

COAS says Purpose of social media, propaganda is to spread uncertainty, chaos, despair

Pakistan's forces always ready to tackle any kind of threat and conspiracy; Youth, guardians of the bright and sublime traditions of the nation and country

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General Syed Asim Munir on Wednesday said youth were the guardians of the bright and sublime traditions of the nation and country, the epitome of Allama Iqbal and Quaid-e-Azam's visionary leadership.

Addressing 'Pakistan National Youth Conference' at Jinnah Convention Center, he said: "It gives me great pleasure to address the future builders of Pakistan

and Shaheen of Iqbal." The Army Chief said the establishment of Pakistan highlighted the core issue that Islamic culture and civilization were different from Hindus in all respects and Muslims might not adopt Western civilization and culture.

The youth, he said should have immense confidence in their country, nation, culture, civilization and themselves. "The

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PMLN will generate employment opportunities for youth after coming into power: Nawaz



NANKANA SAHIB (INP): PML-N Quaid, Muhammad Nawaz Sharif has assured to generate employment opportunities for youth after coming into power.

Addressing at a public gathering in Nankana Sahib today, he said PML-N aims at undertaking historical development work with a

commitment to rebuild the country.

Nawaz Sharif said serving the public is the manifesto of PML-N.

Nawaz Sharif on Wednesday asserted that Pakistan plunged into crises after he was unjustly removed as the prime minister on false charges.

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Dr. Gohar Ejaz assumes charge of caretaker Interior Minister



ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Industries and Production Division Dr. Gohar Ejaz HI, SI on Wednesday assumed the charge of caretaker Interior Minister for Interior.

Senior officials of the Ministry welcomed Dr.

Gohar Ejaz on this arrival in the Ministry of Interior.

The Interior Minister was given a detailed briefing regarding the Ministry of Interior and its subsidiaries in the Introductory meeting with senior officers of the ministry.

The important portfolio was vacated after the resignation of Sarfraz Bugti as caretaker minister for interior.

Sarfraz Bugti had resigned from the portfolio for taking part in the general elections of 2024.



ISLAMABAD: Relatives of Baluchistan missing persons stands in a queue waiting for boarding in a bus after the finish sitting protest (Dharna) in front of National Press Club in Federal Capital.

Domki reaches Kech, reviews election arrangements Caretaker Chief Minister pledges to conduct free & fair general elections in peaceful manner

Preparations made for general elections 2024 satisfactory; security arrangements being improved further in Balochistan

INDEPENDENT REPORT QUETTA: The caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Ali Mardan Khan has reiterated the government's resolve to conduct free and fair elections in peaceful environment.

He said that all the resources are being mobilized for the general elections in Balochistan, and it would be ensured that the elections are conducted peacefully.

The Chief Minister was chairing a high level meeting held to review the election arrangements in Makran Division, at the Commissioner's office, Turbat on Wednesday.

The caretaker Provincial Minister for Home and Tribal Affairs, Captain (Retd) Mir Muhammad

Zubair Jamali, Inspector General of Police, Abdul Khaliq Sheikh, Additional Chief Secretary Home, Zahid Saleem, besides other concerned high ups.

The Chief Minister was briefed about the preparations made for general elections to be held in Makran Division as elsewhere in the province and country on February 8, 2024.

It was informed that all the necessary preparations have been finalized for conducting the elections in Makran Division.

The Chief Minister on the occasion directed to the concerned to make it sure that free and fair elections are conducted in the Division peacefully.

He said that we are firm to conduct the general elections in the province in peaceful and transparent manner.

He said that the security of all election contesting candidates is being ensured in the province.

He also said that the law and order situation is better than past in the province. However, the security arrangements are being improved further, he added.

Meanwhile, while talking to media in Turbat, the Chief Minister said that all preparations are complete regarding elections in the province.

He also expressed satisfaction over the arrangements made for elections.

124 candidates in run for 17 seats: Final list of candidates contesting election on reserve seats issued

INDEPENDENT REPORT QUETTA: The final list of candidates contesting elections on the reserve seats of women and minorities in the national and Balochistan assemblies has been issued on Wednesday.

According to the Provincial Election Commissioner (PEC) Balochistan, Muhammad Farid Afridi, in all 28 candidates have been finalized for three seats reserved for women in the National Assembly from Balochistan.

Similarly, 63 candidates have been declared eligible for 11 seats reserved for women in Balochistan's provincial assembly while 33 candidates' papers finalized for three seats reserved for non-Muslims in the provincial assembly.

HC reserves verdict on PTI founder's plea against jail trial

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday reserved its verdict on Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder's plea challenging his jail trial in the Toshakhana and Al-Qadir Trust cases, following the completion of arguments.

Would prefer to form govt with independent candidates if elected: Bilawal

LAHORE (INP): In an interview with Reuters in Larkana, Bilawal said, "You know, lots of independent politicians, probably the highest (number) in our history, are taking part in the coming elections."



It should be noted that after the PTI was stripped of its iconic 'bat' symbol, most of the independents would comprise PTI leaders who are contesting the upcoming elections as independent candidates. Party leader Gohar Khan has also expressed fears of horse-trading and floor crossing.

Positioning himself as an alternate to the PML-N and PTI, Bilawal had recently called on supporters of ex-PM Imran Khan to vote for him while their leader is in jail. In the 2013 elections, the PPP came second after PML-N, garnering 42 of the 342 seats up for grabs. In 2018, with 54 seats, it was runner-up to the parties of both Nawaz and Imran.

However, Bilawal ruled out joining hands with either contender saying he preferred to form a government with independent candidates. The PPP chairman spoke to Reuters in an interview during a gruelling four-week campaign that took him to more than 33 towns, while other parties began canvassing just last week.

SC stops JUI's candidate from contesting election from NA-252

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Supreme Court of Pakistan on Wednesday dismissed the appeal of JUI's candidate Abdul Hafiz Loni and upheld the verdict of election tribunal for rejecting his nomination papers from NA-252.

A three-member bench of the top court headed by Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa heard the appeal of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI)'s candidate Abdul Hafiz Loni.

The top court rejected the appeal of JUI candidate Abdul Hafiz and upheld the decision of the Election Tribunal and the Balochistan High Court.

During the course of proceeding, the petitioner lawyer adopted the stance that his client has completed his sentence announced in a graft refer-

ence. He prayed the court to allow Abdul Hafiz Loni to contest the elections. Chief Justice Qazi Faiz Isa noted that the petitioner has spent only 2 years and 2 months in jail while the NAB court had sentenced him to 10 years jail term along fine worth Rs 50 million. The chief justice remarked that the petitioner said that the accused has been out of jail for 8 years your client on payroll and didn't even pay the amount of fine.

The CJP further remarked that such people should not represent the people of Balochistan instead they should sit at home. Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar said that the property of the petitioner should be confiscated if he does not pay the fine.

Minister Aneeq promises more measures to facilitate Hajis this year

FAISALABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Religious Affairs & Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmad said on Wednesday that a comprehensive mechanism would be adopted to facilitate Hajis during the upcoming Hajj season.

Talking to the media during his visit to Jamia Salfia Hajiabad here, he said that Hajj 2024 was expected on June 24 or 25, and no compromise would be made on quality of Hajj arrangements and facilities for the intending pilgrims.

He said the government had planned provision of mobile-phone SIMs to the intending pilgrims with 180 minutes of free international calls, in addition to facilitating them with a

30-kg suitcase free of cost. This suitcase would bear QR Code, which would help in protection of the intending pilgrims and their luggage.

He said that Road-to-Makkah facility was already available at Islamabad Airport, but this year Karachi airport was also included in it. In a later phase, the facility would also be available at other airports of the country, he added.

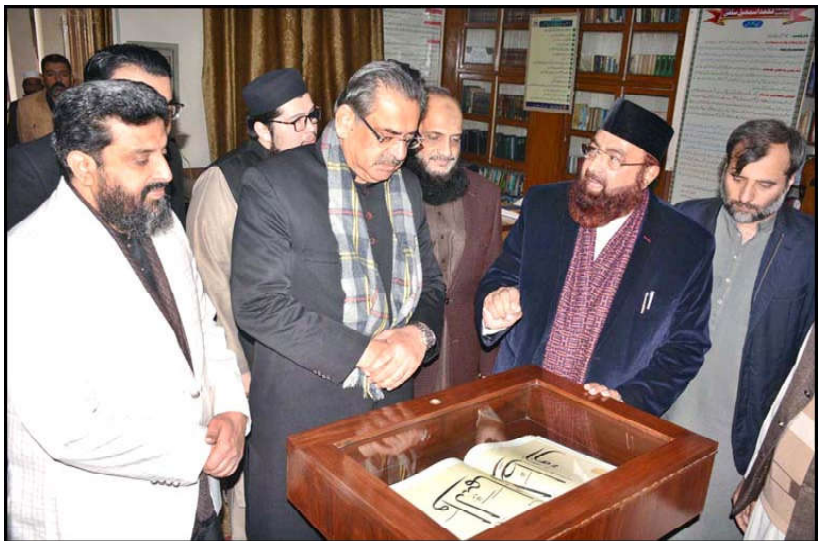
He said that a mobile app would also be provided to the intending pilgrims, which would help them know the correct time and schedule of their flights. This app would also help the pilgrims to easily search their groups and camps at the holy

land, he added.

Aneeq Ahmad said that the Hajj expenses during 2024 would be Rs.100,000 less than the previous year. Last year, the pilgrim had to deposit Rs.1.175 million for Hajj, whereas this year the amount would be Rs.1.075 million, he added.

He said that the government had also planned to provide Rs. 50,000 to each pilgrim in his account this year in addition to providing the Abaya to Pakistani women, like women pilgrims from Syria, Iran and Malaysia.

This decent dress would increase dignity of Pakistan females while performing Hajj ritual at the holy land, he added.



FAISALABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Religious Affairs & Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmad visiting library of Jamia Salfia Hajiabad after addressing the annual ceremony.

Marriyum advises Bilawal to be civilised, stick to performance

LAHORE (Online): PML-N Leader Marriyum Aurangzeb said that Bilawal Bhutto should stay civilised and talk about his performance.

She said that no one wants to listen to your personal politics.

PML-N Leader Marriyum Aurangzeb appeared before Anti-terrorism court, Lahore in the case of provocative speech.

While talking to media, Marriyum Aurangzeb said that Pakistan had buried the politics of gossips in 1990. Founder of PTI has started the culture of gossip.

While criticizing the Chairman of PPP she said that Bilawal Bhutto has recently come to Punjab. Perhaps he has not seen PKLI, Danish schools and other projects.

She said that Sindh also has the right to have the same facilities as Punjab. The Ministers of PPP were

also equal participants in PDM's decisions. PPP and other parties were present in consultation of PDM. If Bilawal Bhutto's conversation remains civilised then the culture that Nawaz Sharif wants to bring will be established.

PML-N leader said that he has written in Bloomberg report that best economic performance was under the leadership of Nawaz Sharif. We are the party that has always followed the law and appeared in front.

She said that the competition of PML-N is with all the political parties that have taken the election symbols and which are holding rallies. Marriyum Aurangzeb said that our competition is with inflation and unemployment. We have to manage the economy, provide employment. We have prepared relief plan and it will come before the people soon.

Shah Khawar takes over as PCB chairman

LAHORE (APP): Shah Khawar, Advocate of the Supreme Court of Pakistan, and the Election Commissioner of PCB, has assumed the powers as the PCB chairman.

According to the notification, issued on January 23, 2024 from the Inter-Provincial Coordination (IPC) Ministry, and by virtue of Article 7(2) of the PCB Constitution, the Election Commissioner is vested with the powers of Chairman PCB.

Shah Khawar said: "I would like to thank the Patron of the PCB, Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar, for reposing trust in me. My primary responsibility will be to hold the election of Chairman PCB in a free and transparent manner at the earliest."

May 9 incident case against Sheikh Court issues contempt of court notice to Supdt Adiala jail

RAWALPINDI (Online): Anti Terrorism Court (ATC) has issued contempt of court notice to Superintendent Adiala jail during the hearing of May 9 case against former interior minister Sheikh Rashid.

May 9 incident case came up for hearing before Judge Malik Ijaz Asif of ATC Rawalpindi Wednesday.

The court directed superintendent Adiala jail to appear in person on January 26.

The lawyers had filed contempt of court petition against jail administration for not arranging their meeting with Sheikh Rashid.

Through the petition, the court was informed about indisposition of Sheikh Rashid.

Upon it the court directed jail administration for medical check up of Sheikh Rashid and submission of report thereof.

Pakistan's Olympic bid derails amidst goalkeeper management blunder

LAHORE (INP): A shocking tale of mismanagement has surfaced regarding the Pakistan hockey team's failed bid to qualify for the Olympics. Sources reveal that a goalkeeper remained confined to the hotel, watching the entire tournament on TV, while the team grappled with playing all matches with only one goalkeeper.

The root cause of the team's defeat is attributed to a series of lapses in team management. Goalkeeper Waqar, deemed unfit in the warm-up match against Chile, was sent to Lahore, Coach Shakeel Abbasi stepped in to play the match due to a shortage of players. Surprisingly, the team management forgot to notify the tournament officials about the replacement goalkeeper, Muneeb Rahman.

In a critical pre-tournament meeting, neither the team manager nor the head coach attended, instead sending player Murtaza Yaqoob, who failed to communicate the change in goalkeepers. Consequently, other goalkeepers who had left Pakistan on standby were left stranded in the hotel, a victim of the team management's incompetence.

Throughout the tournament, the Pakistani team faced the challenge of relying on a single goalkeeper, exacerbating their troubles due to the absence of a player on the bench.

Notably, in the third-place match against New Zealand, the Pakistani team squandered a lead in the last eight minutes. The opposing team scored two goals, securing a three to two victory.



FAISALABAD: Leader of Pakistan Muslim League (N) Rana Sannaullah Khan addressing a press conference at former MPA Sheikh Ijaz residence in the city.



TURBAT: Caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki presiding over a meeting to review preparation of general elections

Quality education to youth PML-N's priority: Shehbaz Sharif

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President Shehbaz Sharif said on Wednesday that quality education to the youth had always been top priority of his party.

In an interactive session "Country's challenges and the future" with the youth here, he stressed the need for promoting the IT sector as well as enhancing its exports, as the world was in dire need of IT experts. He also called for comprehensive measures to bring forth the youth potential and vowed to uplift the country's youth by initiating various development projects after coming into government again. He said that whoever come to power would have to work for the empowerment of the youth lot comprising 60 percent of the country's population. "Pakistan is not an oil or gas rich country but has brilliant and talented youths, which have the ability to ensure speedy

development and steer the country out of prevailing challenges, if provided with adequate resources," he remarked.

Responding to a question about e-libraries in the country, the PML-N President said that there should be e-libraries at every park. The government should also come up with such a policy under which the graduates could get jobs soon after completing their respective degrees. Acknowledging the youth's talent in sports, he said that sports activities guaranteed healthy youth and society, asserting that the PML-N during its last tenure had initiated a number of sports projects, besides retrieving the cricket and other sports grounds from land grabbers. Those grounds were renovated and equipped with advanced sports facilities. He promised that if the PML-N comes again into power, it would restart its "Talent Hunt" programme and also constitute sports councils.

Solangi stresses collective efforts to control thalassemia

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Murtaza Solangi has stressed the need for making collective efforts to control the fatal disease of thalassemia and hemophilia.

He stated this at a ceremony held on the 6th death anniversary of Munnu Bhai, here at Sundas Foundation (SF) on Wednesday.

The minister also visited the children suffering from thalassemia and hemophilia, and distributed gifts among them. He reviewed the blood exchange facilities, labs and donation delivery mechanism. He said that precautionary measure would have to be adopted in a better way, beside improving the relevant laws and ensuring their effective implementation.

Solangi said that the Sundas Foundation was a great effort of Munnu Bhai and his service for the suffering humanity would always be remembered. He said that Munnu Bhai was primarily a philanthropist, who devoted his entire life to ailing children.

President Sundas Foundation Yasin Khan said that the Foundation had been engaged in the service of suffering humanity for the past 26 years, and was holding the flag of Munnu Bhai as an excellent team work.

EC adjourns hearing of contempt of EC, CEC case against Imran till Feb 20

ISLAMABAD (Online): Election Commission (EC) has adjourned hearing of contempt of EC and Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) case against PTI founder Imran Khan till February 20.

Hearing of contempt of EC case against Fawad Chaudhry was adjourned till February 21.

A 4-member bench of EC presided over by member Sindh Nisar Durani took up contempt of EC and CEC case for hearing Wednesday.

Shoaib Shaheen counsel for PTI founder appeared before EC.

He said he has come here under the orders of EC. "I am not having case file and I am contesting election this time. I have sought adjournment in connection with my cases from Supreme Court as I am contesting election. The hearing of this case is also adjourned after election. The elections are imminent and if action is taken against one party then the impression would go one party is being targeted. The real responsibility of EC is to hold fair and transparent election in the country."

He said section 144 has been imposed in Punjab and KP. We are not being allowed to hold corner meetings what to speak of public meetings.

KP member said the administration has to take such steps if the candidate

or one among those with him waves arms.

Counsel Shoaib Shaheen said we are peaceful people. Election symbol of bat was snatched from us. Level playing field should be given to all in election. But injustice is being done to us here.

KP member said the symbol of bat makes no difference to you. The election can be contested without it. Picture of party chairman is pasted on election related banners. And all know him.

Member Sindh said you people have done this with bat on your own.

Counsel Shoaib Shaheen said we have been banned for five years by snatching bat from us. The party stood abolished due to it.

KP member said have you read order that your party has been dissolved.

Counsel for PEMRA told the EC that witnesses of PEMRA and EC are there in contempt case.

He said hearing of any contempt case is not adjourned so much.

Counsel Shoaib Shaheen said cases have been running. At present it is essential to focus on election.

Upon it the commission adjourned hearing of case till February 20.

Faisal Chaudhry advocate appeared in contempt of EC and CEC case against Fawad Chaudhry.

AJK PM prioritizes constitutional supremacy and rule of law

MIRPUR-AJK (APP): Azad Jammu and Kashmir Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwar ul Haq said on Wednesday that ensuring constitutional supremacy and the rule of law were top priorities of the government.

He emphasized that the government will leave no stone unturned to ensure and promote good governance, establish merit, and uphold the supremacy of the constitution and the rule of law in letter and spirit within the state.

These remarks were made during a meeting with a delegation led by Chaudhry Muhammad Ismail, a member of the AJK Legislative Assembly affiliated with PML (Nawaz) AKJ Chapter, at Jammu Kashmir House in the federal metropolis, said a press release.

The prime minister congratulated Chaudhry Muhammad Ismail for being declared successful as a member of the Legislative Assembly as a result of the recount of votes.

Speaking on the occasion,

the PM said that the government, in collaboration with the coalition partners, has taken several initiatives to raise the standard of living of the people and ensure uniform development in the region. He said that people's tax money would be spent only on the welfare of the people.

Unemployed youth would be given interest-free loans under the Akhawat scheme so that they could be able to start their own business, he added.

The PM said that biometric systems have been introduced in all government institutions to ensure timely and full attendance of employees in offices. He said that the government was utilizing all available resources to provide quality education, health facilities and all other amenities of life for the people. AJK Assembly member Chaudhry Muhammad Ismail, while congratulating the PM, assured him of his full cooperation and support. He also appreciated the PM for his pro-people policies.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Inter-Provincial Coordination Fawad Hasan Fawad as a Chief Guest at NCHR Empower Futsal Tournament at Pakistan Sports Complex.

Purpose of social...

Continued from page 1

youth should be sure that they are scion of a great homeland and nation," he added.

He said Pakistan Army could fight against terrorists, but the cooperation of the entire nation was imperative in that regard.

The COAS said that the main objective of social media and propaganda was to spread uncertainty, chaos and despair, whereas social media news verification was critical as without research and positive thinking, society remained chaotic.

Citing verses of the Holy Quran on disinformation, he said news: "Allah Almighty says: 'O believers! If a transgressor brings news, you should firstly confirm it.'"

The establishment of Pakistan was just like the Tayyaba state (referring to Islamic State of Medina), that were founded under the sublime banner of Kalima-e-Tayyaba, the Army Chief said. "Allah Almighty has blessed Pakistan with abundant natural resources, agriculture and young manpower," he added.

He said that a Muslim always offered gratitude to Allah Almighty for patience in turbulent and good times adding, "Our forces are always ready against any kind of threat and conspiracy. If Pakistan exists, so we do, if there is no Pakistan then we are nothing."

He said that Pakistan would not compromise on its sovereignty. He urged the youth for having full faith in the bright future and maintaining the legacy of the ancestors.

PMLN will generate employment...

Continued from page 1

The former prime minister questioned why he was ousted on false charges when he had no enmity with anyone. "I was not an imported prime minister."

Nawaz further questioned why a prime minister, who played a key role in making Pakistan a nuclear power, found himself handcuffed, jailed and convicted. He deplored that five judges had deposed him from the PM's Office for

not taking a salary from his son.

The former premier wondered why the people of Pakistan faced distress after his removal, expressing his deep concern for their plight.

Nawaz stated that his heart would be at peace only if the people of Pakistan found relief from the prevailing crises of inflation, unemployment, energy shortfall and terrorism.

TENDER NOTICE

TSE-232401373183 Note: In All Procurements of GOB Whether Through Electronic or Manual Bid Submission, It is Mandatory For All Bidders to Get Registered At Electronic Public Procurement System of BPPRA GOB. The EXECUTIVE ENGINEER MAINTENANCE I DIVISION QUETTA invites bids from Eligible Bidders for execution of following works for the Year 2024 based on Composite schedule rates 2018 on Percentage Rates

Tender Fee Rs. 1000/- and bid Security 2%

S.No	Name of Work/s	E/CoSt
1	REPAIR AND REHABILITATION OF BOUNDARY WALL AT BOLAN OFFICERS FLAT, HANNA ROAD, G-8/4 ISLAMABAD	8,739,000/-

Procurements shall be made under the Balochistan Public Procurement Rules - 2014. **Eligibility of Bidders:** Presence in Active Tax Payer List. The bidding firm must not be blacklisted by any procuring agency of Pakistan. Balochistan Revenue Authority Registration is required. The bidder must have completed 3 Assignment of similar nature of work. Turn over of at least 6,117,300 PKR Amount in 3 subsequent previous years showing financial capacity of the firm. Registration with Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) C-6 and above (Upto 25 million) in Relevant Category And Specialized Code is C6 (11), CE09(i) (Water Supply). **Procedure Of Procurement:** Single Stage One Envelope Bidding Procedure Bid Security: The bids must accompany Bid Security in the form of Bank Guarantee Deposit at Call of 2% specified above in the name of the under-signer from a scheduled bank. **Tender Documents:** The bidding documents can be obtained from the office of the under-signed 1,000 PKR Issuance of tender Documents: From the date of publication of NIT to 07 February, 2024 during office hours on working days **Last Date of bid submission:** The Tenders must be submitted latest by 07 February, 2024 till 11:00 AM. **Tender opening:** All tenders will be opened on same day at the office of the under-signed at 12:00 PM Address: EXECUTIVE ENGINEER MAINTENANCE I DIVISION QUETTA C&W COMPLEX NEAR CHAMMAN PATAK MIR JAFAR KHAN JAMALI ROAD QUETTA Phone no: 0812920243 Email: maintainancenoxen@gmail.com

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Special Assistant to Prime Minister for Human Rights and Women Empowerment Mushaah Hussain Mullick in a group photo with the organizers and distinguished guests at launching ceremony of National Commission on the Rights of Child NCRC's strategic plan 2023-2026 and policy brief on Child Trafficking in Islamabad.

Minister stresses for quality education in shaping bright future of country

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training, Mr. Madad Ali Sindhi on 'World Education Day' stressed the pivotal role of quality skilled-based education in shaping the bright future of the country and encouraged youth to prepare themselves to confront future challenges.

Talking to a private news channel, he said that bringing children outside of schools into the educational system is need of hour to address poverty, health, social, and societal issues.

He said that Pakistan is moving at a fast pace to develop the education infrastructure and policies at every level, adding, that BISP-like programs should

introduce more to enrol more students in schools. He said that there is also a need for more trained and skilled teachers and the caretaker government was taking steps practically, adding, that skill-based education will only meet market requirements.

"We must transform our education system following the modern trends," said the minister.

"A human resource equipped with skills is the prerequisite to deal with the needs and requirements of the modern age driven by unprecedented technological advancements", the minister mentioned.

He said that the caretaker government was working on comprehensive policies which would be

adopted keeping in view the human resource demand of the country, region and other world nations.

He said that the ministry with the coordination of relevant departments will utilize all existing infrastructure and enhancement of teachers' capacity building, besides increasing the outreach of education.

He also expressed the hope that the upcoming government would focus on improving the skill development capacity of the people by taking different steps.

Religious Ministry appeals for Namaz-e-Istisqa

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony has urged the public to perform Namaz-e-Istisqa (Prayer for rain) due to the ongoing drought, which is causing health issues and smog problems throughout the country.

A spokesperson of the ministry appealed to the Ulema and Khatibs in villages, towns, and cities nationwide to actively participate in a special prayer, seeking divine mercy in the form of rainfall, considering the prolonged dry spell lasting for many months.

Raja Pervaiz confident of surprising victory in Punjab ahead polls

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) senior leader Raja Pervaiz Ashraf expressed confidence on Wednesday that his party was ready to give a surprise in Punjab during the upcoming general elections scheduled for February 8.

Talking to a private news channel, Ashraf highlighted the possibility of forming alliances with other political parties after general elections.

He emphasized, "In politics, there is no permanent opposition that re-

stricts politicians from engaging in negotiations with each other." Ashraf said, "Every party and candidate try their level best to clinch victory in the elections."

Discussing the PPP's election campaign, Ashraf commended the party's efforts, stating, "The PPP is running an excellent electoral campaign."

Praising PPP co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari for his leadership, Ashraf noted, "Asif Ali Zardari is a seasoned politician and he has taken correct decisions during difficult times."

Pervaiz challenges rejection of nomination papers in Apex Court

ISLAMABAD (Online): Former Chief Minister (CM) Punjab Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi has challenged decision of rejection of his nomination papers in Supreme Court (SC). Pervaiz Elahi has made Election Commission (EC) and Election Tribunal (ET) as respondents in the appeal plea filed by him. He has requested the court to annul Lahore High Court (LHC) January 13, 2024 decision.

He has taken plea in his petition that his nomination papers were rejected on the basis of objections of his rival candidate

Muhammad Salim. Objection was raised on me that I have shares in Lahore Modern Atta Mills. The flour mills wherein I was accused to have shares is not only dysfunctional but also no bank account has been opened in its name. I have never purchased shares of this flour mill. The dysfunction of flour mills is not asset. I cannot be prevented from contesting election on the basis of this flour mills.

It has been said in Pervaiz Elahi petition that it is necessary to check the intent for not showing the assets.



ISLAMABAD: Inspector General Communication and Information Technology Lt Gen Muhammad Aqeel, Defence and Military Attache of Royal Thai Colonel Thanai Permpul, and others cutting the cake during Armed Forces Day of Royal Thai, at a local hotel in the Federal Capital.

'BISP Mobile Registration Vehicle', latest call centers to be operational soon: DG

ISLAMABAD (APP): Director General (DG) of National Socio-Economic Registry in Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) Naveed Akbar Wednesday disclosed that BISP will soon launch a hassle free project 'Mobile Registration Vehicles' for remote districts of Sindh and Balochistan for their financial assistance.

Talking to PTV news channel, he said that many remote areas were still lack established registration centers where BISP will eligible families to enroll in the BISP through mobile vans, adding, the registration process would further streamlined through these mobile

vehicles which will ensure that every deserving family can participate easily.

These mobile vans with routine scheduled to visit every district of provinces, he said, adding, first these vehicles will announced and give awareness about the registration for BISP programs.

Latest call centers would also be operational soon at every district level which would resolve the complaints of the citizens under BISP program in orders for immediate redressal, he added.

"The call center will provide customers with information and also address the cut in payment while

transferring BISP cash," he added.

Replying a question, he said, "BISP Union council surveys are also being conducted at every district level," he said.

"This innovative approach will stand as a testament to the program's commitment to leaving no deserving family behind."

Replying a question, he mentioned that differently able persons and transgender persons were also included in this programme after the approval of a policy by the BISP Board.

"The main objective of survey system is to register more eligible families and conduct future surveys in country," he added.

To another question, he said, "We are also streamlining our banking system in which more six to seven banks would part of this payment system."

"The government has also announced a saving scheme (Bachat Scheme) under the BISP for daily wagers and other deserving people."

"A person who wants to apply for the Bachat scheme program must first complete the NSER survey in the Benazir Income Support Program and then apply for the programme," he added.



ISLAMABAD: Inspector General Communication and Information Technology Lt Gen Muhammad Aqeel, Defence and Military Attache of Royal Thai Colonel Thanai Permpul, and others cutting the cake during Armed Forces Day of Royal Thai, at a local hotel in the Federal Capital.

Govt. awards 8 new blocks to step up E&P activities

ISLAMABAD (APP): The government on Wednesday awarded eight new Exploration and Production (E&P) blocks to accelerate oil and gas exploration activities in potential areas and meet the ever-growing needs of the country. With the award of exploration licenses to local and international companies, there would be over \$33.3 million in investment over three years.

According to a news release the Ministry of Petroleum executed Petroleum Concession Agreements (PCAs) and Exploration Licences (ELs) over block no. Kotra East (2867-

8), Murradi (2767-7), Sehwan (2667-19) and Zindan-II (3271-9) with Oil & Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL), Multanai (3168-3) with Pakistan Oilfields Limited (POL), Sawan South (2668-26) with United Energy Pakistan Limited (UEP) - a Chinese Exploration & Production Company, Gambat-II (2668-25) with Joint Venture of Pakistan Petroleum Limited (Operator) and OGDCL and Saruna West (2666-1) with Joint Venture of POL (Operator), PPL and OGDCL.

The award-signing ceremony was attended by

Muhammad Ali, Minister for Power and Petroleum, Dr. Muhammad Jahanzaib Khan, Special Assistant to Prime Minister (Government Effectiveness), DG SIFC, Major General Tabassum Habib National Coordinator SIFC, Lieutenant General Muhammad Saeed. The Exploration Licence and PCA were signed by Momin Agha, Secretary Petroleum Division, Kashif Ali, Director General Petroleum Concessions on behalf of the Government of Pakistan, Ahmed Hayat Lak, Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer (CEO), OGDCL, Shaub Ali, Malik, Chairman/CEO, POL, Sikandar Ali Memon.

Hong Kong exam body approves Urdu as a subject for secondary education

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) and the Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (FBISE) of Pakistan have reached an agreement for the inclusion of Urdu as a Category C subject for the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination (HKDSE) from 2026 onwards.

Under the agreement, the Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education would administer the Urdu examinations in Hong Kong including framing question papers, assisting in the registration process, grading, marking, and dissemination of results to HKEAA, said a press release from Pakistan's Consulate General of Pakistan in Hong Kong on Wednesday.

The results will then be recognized by the HKEAA for the assess-

ment of the HKDSE category C Urdu subject. The agreement marks a significant development that led to the inclusion of Urdu as a Category C subject in the HKDSE.

With the agreement in place, Urdu language proficiency will be formally recognized contributing to the comprehensive evaluation of candidates' language skills in the HKDSE. This will also help students with a background in Urdu, enhance their opportunities for higher education and future pathways.

The Consulate General of Pakistan in Hong Kong played a key role in facilitating communication and cooperation between the FBISE and HKEAA, acting as a bridge that helped streamline the negotiations and ensured smooth collaboration between the two organisations.



Mir Shai Mazar Baloch, Director General (Coord/Pdu), Senate in a meeting with the Team of Climate Change Center, Giz, at Parliament House Islamabad.

IHC orders for re-elections in PCATP

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday issued directives for holding re-election in Pakistan Council of Architects and Town Planners (PCATP) on allegation of rigging.

The court also instructed the chairman PCATP to address the matter itself.

Justice Babar Sattar heard the case against the elections in PCATP filed through Barrister Umar Ijaz Gilani. During the course of proceeding, the court observed that it was clear that the elections of PCATP were rigged.

The PCATP's lawyer adopted the stance that it has been decided to re-conciliate the matter between two parties.

Contempt of court related to arrest of Afridi: IHC directs to present record of MPO orders issued from May to Sep

ISLAMABAD (Online): During the hearing of contempt of court case related to arrest of PTI leader Shehryar Afridi, Islamabad High Court (IHC) has directed to file record of MPO orders issued from May to September in court.

The contempt of court case against Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad and SSP Jamil Zafar came up for hearing before single bench of IHC led by Justice Babar Sattar Wednesday.

The record of three police stations was presented in the court during the hearing of the case.

Bushra Qamar counsel for SP Farooq Buttari requested the court she wants to cross question RK.

The court observed these orders have not been issued by RK.

You cannot cross question him. DC issued these orders. You can cross question him. If he does not want to give reply then it is his will.

It will be provided to you too.

Prosecutor Qaisar Imam requested the court to give him 10 minutes so that he may see record once.

The court while accepting plea announced 10 minutes interval in the hearing.

Ali Muhammad Record Keeper (RK) of Deputy Commissioner (DC) office told the court he has come up with MPO orders record.

The court directed RK Ali Muhammad to file his affidavit.

Bushra Qamar counsel for SP Farooq Buttari requested the court she wants to cross question RK.

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Two-day PAECO workshop begins at NA

ISLAMABAD (APP): The two-day workshop of officials of the Parliamentary Assembly of Economic Cooperation Organization (PAECO) began at the National Assembly on Wednesday.

The officials from Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Iran, and Pakistan, along with the PAECO Secretariat, attended the workshop.

During the inaugural session, the participants delved into the crucial theme of 'Understanding the Role of Parliamentary Services.'

CDA taking concrete measures to protect capital natural beauty

ISLAMABAD (APP): Under the directions of Chief Commissioner Islamabad and Chairman CDA Capt. @ Anwar ul Haq, concrete and effective measures have been taken to protect the natural beauty of Islamabad from environmental pollution and smog. In this regard, the Enforcement Wing has conducted a mega operation against the owners of the plastic factory in Islamabad's Sector I-13, Shams Colony, whose smoke was causing environmental pollution in the

area. The owners were summoned and presented before the court of Senior Special Magistrate CDA.

The Senior Special Magistrate ordered that the factories of the accused be sealed immediately and sentenced the accused to imprisonment and fine and remanded in custody.

According to the details, Chief Commissioner Islamabad and Chairman CDA issued strict instructions to the Enforcement, Environment and Sanitation Wing a few days ago.



ISLAMABAD: Two motorcyclists on the way at Islamabad Expressway loaded with dry branches of tree for domestic use in Federal Capital.

PMIC chairman directs for timely completion of Model Prison Islamabad project

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Planning, Development & Special Initiatives, Ministry of Housing & Works, Pakistan Public Works Department (Pak PWD), National Highway Authority (NHA), Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT), Capital Development Authority (CDA), Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA), Rawalpindi Cantonment Board (RCB) and Punjab Board Department.

The chair advised Dr. Qadeer Alam AIG, Punjab Prisons to present the progress report on the site visit conducted on 23rd January.

While concluding the meeting, the PMIC chairman again emphasized on the completion of the project as per plan on which the progress report would be submitted to the prime minister.

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister's Inspection Commission (PMIC) Chairman Brigadier @ Muzaffar Ali Ranjha on Wednesday directed for timely completion of the Model Prison Islamabad project at H-16.

He was chairing a meeting, held on the prime minister's directive, to review the model prison construction project.

The PMIC chairman while taking the cognizance of unwarranted delay in the completion of the model prison, instructed the respective departments for its timely completion, a news release said.

The meeting was in continuation of earlier ones held on 20.12.2023 and 02-01-2024 and attended by PMIC Officers Engr. Aamir Hasan, Member, Muhammad Saleh Narejo, Director and the officers of

Capital police finalizes security plan for elections

Independent Report
ISLAMABAD: A high-level meeting was held on Wednesday under the Chairmanship of ICCPO Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan with regard to security arrangement and preparation of elections 2024.

According to Pakistan Television News, all Capital Police Officers, SSP Operations, AIG Operations along with DPOs participated in the meeting. During the meeting, security plan regarding the election has been finalized.

The elections will be administratively divided into Eastern and Western Divisions under the supervision of DIG level officers. All police personnel's vacations have been canceled and vacations have been banned until further notice.

The meeting decided that volunteers and retired police officers would be hired for additional and dis-

ciplinary duties. 500 women volunteers have been requested from the District Administration for women polling stations. Violation of the election code of conduct will not be tolerated. No exception will be taken for display of arms, protest, air firing or disturbance of public order before, during and after the election, it decided.

The meeting decided that cameras would be installed at all sensitive polling stations besides establishing a central control room in Safe City Islamabad. 10000 personnel of Islamabad Police and other Law Enforcement Agencies will perform their duties. The first priority of the Islamabad Capital Police is to hold peaceful elections, the meeting decided.

Islamabad police has asked the citizens to report any unusual activity on call 15 or ICT 15 App.

NIH issues advisory on Diphtheria

ISLAMABAD (APP): On the direction of Caretaker Federal Minister for Health, the National Institute of Health (NIH) has issued an advisory for the prevention of Diphtheria.

In a statement, Minister for Health Dr Nadeem Jan said that the risk of Diphtheria spread increases slightly in winter. The possibility of widespread spread of this disease in Pakistan is low. He said that the purpose of the advisory is to inform health institutions about preventive and control measures. He said that the health department and concerned authorities should take preventive measures against Diphtheria.



Brig. (Retd.) Muzaffar Ali Ranjha, Chairman, PMIC is chairing the meeting at PMIC, PM Office, Islamabad on PSDP project titled "Construction of Model Prison at H-16, Islamabad".

Daily Voice of Masses Independent

Thursday January 25, 2024

Political hustle bustle ahead of elections

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 Quetta and different other parts of Balochistan, where almost every constituency is being festooned with colorful party flags and posters displaying according to code of conduct.

What's important regarding the elections is that the interim government is firm to conduct the vital exercise on the given schedule despite some quarters had raised concerns about security matters, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan.

The caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar has already formed a high-level committee to ensure smooth conduct of general elections in the country.

The seven-member committee, notified last week, will be led by the caretaker minister for maritime affairs and will include chief secretaries from all four provinces as well as the federal interior secretary.

The primary objective of the committee is to ensure the conduct of the 2024 general elections in a secure and peaceful environment.

While nomination papers of candidates have already been filed and symbols allotted, the final lists of the candidates contesting elections on the national and provincial assemblies' seats have also been issued with the list of candidates in the election run on different seats reserved for women and non-Muslims in the assemblies.

In this regard, all the necessary arrangements have been made especially to ensure the free, fair and transparent elections in peaceful and conducive environment, all over the country and so in Balochistan.

An Election Cell has also been established within the Federal Interior Ministry for monitoring of security arrangements and law and order situation during the general election 2024 with representation from all law enforcement agencies.

While on the other hand, 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.

With passage of time, 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.

As time passes and the general elections are drawing near, the political parties will continue their political wars on social media grounds.

As per the election drive, various corner meetings, political camps, and rallies have become routine matters in Quetta and different other parts of the province as elsewhere in the country.

One can easily notice the portraits and stickers of different political leaders on rickshaws, wagons, Suzuki pickups, cars, and private buses.

These electioneering processes have seen widespread use among social media users, where enthusiastic youth are also campaigning for their preferred candidates.

According to the political analysts, the upcoming general elections would be unique due to the increased number of young and female voters in the electoral list. The total registered voters in Pakistan are: 128,585,760. They are included: 73,207,896 voters in Punjab, 26,994,769 voters in Sindh, 21,928,119 voters in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 5,371,947 voters in Balochistan.

While everything is in place, what's most important now is that the voters may come out in large number from their homes and vote for the country on February 8, 2024.

It is significant to adhering to the directives of the ECP for ensuring free, fair and transparent polls in a secure and organized manner.

Zahid Hussain

Listening to the speeches at the hustings, one wonders whether the political leaders vying for power have anything new to offer the electorate.

With less than three weeks left to the polls, and ostensibly assured of a fourth term as prime minister in an election widely perceived as 'managed', Nawaz Sharif is finally out on the campaign trail — with a victimhood narrative. He seems to be stuck in a time warp, lamenting his past ouster from power.

Sharif's public speeches are all about the illusory golden period under his rule. There seems to be hardly any understanding about the dire challenges that lie ahead. An element of confidence appears to stem from the forced sidelining of his main competitor. The electoral battle is deemed to have already been won without a fight.

Hence there seems to be no need for the PML-N leadership to present an election manifesto or a concrete plan of action for the future. Populist rhetoric and personalised polemics

continue to mark a listless election campaign. It's all about wheeling and dealing under the shadow of the powers that be, rendering the entire electoral exercise a virtual selection process. There is not even a semblance of fair play, with the odds heavily in favour of the chosen ones.

With one of the largest political parties having been virtually demolished, the coming elections have become a tame affair. This is certainly not a very reassuring prospect for a troubled nation looking for a change in status quo and the strengthening of the democratic process. It marks a great leap backward. The hope of a democratic transition has been all but dashed. What we are witnessing is the new season of the game of thrones, with the roles reversed.

There is an ironic twist in the events prior to the 2018 elections and what is happening in the run-up to the 2024 polls. In the former case, it was Nawaz Sharif who was imprisoned and barred from standing in the elections after being ousted from power and Imran Khan was the new kid on the block favoured

by the establishment.

The former cricket captain, who had earlier led Pakistan to victory in the World Cup, was projected as the new hope for the country and was propelled to the top political office. But the protégé turned into the villain and had to be politically culled. So, a deal was struck with the erstwhile rival and the rapprochement allowed Nawaz Sharif to return from self-exile. His conviction was dropped by the courts in record time. The apex court's ruling striking down lifetime disqualification has cleared the way for him to run for elections.

It is the third time that Nawaz Sharif has been lifted out of disgrace to become the main contender for the coveted office. Meanwhile, it is the former blue-eyed boy of the security establishment who now finds himself behind bars, implicated in multiple cases on a range of charges. Not only him but many other top leaders of his party, too, are barred from contesting the elections.

Khan's party was dealt its most serious blow when the Supreme Court

upheld the decision of the Election Commission of Pakistan to strip the PTI of its election symbol — the cricket bat. That has left party candidates with no common symbol. They will stand in the elections as independents. The retribution of the establishment has been severe, leaving the party in tatters.

It may not be the first time we are witnessing repressive action by the state against a political party but the severity of the crackdown on the PTI is unprecedented. Yet the party refuses to die. It is evident from opinion polls that repression and dismantling of its structure have not diminished its support base. Behind bars, the former prime minister remains the most potent political force.

Given the volatility of the situation, it will still be hard for the security establishment to fully manipulate the outcome. Imran Khan, with his undiminished popularity, has proved to be a most formidable challenge for the powerful security establishment. Notwithstanding his idiosyncrasies and convoluted political views, he

has become a symbol of resistance. His popularity may be much higher among the youth who comprise the majority of voters, but he also commands strong support among the elite.

He may have a cultish following but it is the growing rejection of dynastic politics that seems to have boosted Imran Khan's support base. His slogan for change, though it doesn't go beyond rhetoric, has galvanised the young generation and educated sections of society.

More importantly, growing anti-establishment sentiments have given impetus to the PTI. Not surprisingly, the ongoing repression and the military's looming shadow over politics has pushed even staunch critics to stand up in PTI's support. As a survey in this paper's online edition indicates, a large number of people will vote despite their scepticism for the electoral process.

Meanwhile, the PML-N and other mainstream political parties have failed to alter their ways in a fast-changing sociopolitical environment. In fact, dynastic politics has strengthened in the PML-N, with the party leadership being fully dominated by members of the Sharif family. There is no induction of outside or young blood in the ranks of the party leadership.

What has been most damaging for the party is the growing perception of it being backed by the military establishment. This view has gained further currency, with the swift dropping of Nawaz Sharif's conviction and his eligibility to stand in the elections. His tenor has also softened against the generals whom he had earlier blamed for his ouster.

Once the victim, the PML-N leadership seems to have now become the main partner in the game plan of the powers that be. It may help Nawaz Sharif fulfil his ambition of becoming prime minister for the fourth time. But returning to power through tainted elections and with the backing of the establishment can never confer political stability. And who should know this better than Nawaz Sharif himself? -- Courtesy Dawn

Learning for lasting peace

Raza Hussain Qazi

The United Nations General Assembly has designated January 24 as the International Day of Education to celebrate the importance of education in advancing peace and development.

The theme for this year's celebrations is 'Learning for lasting peace', following the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in September 2015. Sustainable Development Goal 4 aims to attain 'inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all' by the year 2030. The objective is intrinsically intertwined and plays a pivotal role in achieving all 17 goals delineated in the agenda, particularly encompassing goal 16, which relates to peace, justice, and strong institutions.

According to Unicef, currently, Pakistan has the world's second-highest number of out-of-school children (OOSC) with an estimated 22.8 million children aged 5-16 not attending school, representing 44 per cent of the total popu-

lation in this age group. The disparities exist based on gender, socio-economic status, and geography are significant; in Sindh, 52 per cent of the poorest children (58 per cent girls) are out of school, while in Balochistan, 78 per cent of girls are out of school.

Likewise, the World Bank outlined the educational challenges in Pakistan in a recently published report. This report is of great significance as it offers insights into the obstacles confronting Pakistan's education system and proposes potential pathways for enhancement. The current situation reflects a persistent learning crisis, with over three-quarters (78 per cent) of ten-year-old children in Pakistan unable to read and comprehend basic text by the age of 10, a phenomenon referred to as 'learning poverty'.

In this context, the World Bank has produced a significant policy document (The Improving Learning Outcomes Policy Note 2) to offer policy guidance on sustainable and resilient solutions to address Pakistan's learning crisis. The paper also effectively demonstrates the

compounding effects of stunting by a weak education system. It reveals that 78 per cent of 10-year-olds lack the ability to read age-appropriate text.

A significant proportion of children in Pakistan struggle to understand a paragraph that is appropriate for their age, a situation that has been termed 'learning poverty'. The statement points towards the low investment in education, despite a growing population. Even the limited investment in education has not been effectively utilized because of inefficiency and a lack of prioritization.

Both credible documents presented an optimistic approach to addressing the challenges and offering a practical pathway for progressing towards a more promising future. The Unicef report reflects promising trends that indicate concerted efforts by various stakeholders to improve the dismal educational landscape of the country, including the rise in school enrollment rates. The uptick has been particularly evident in primary education, showcasing effective government campaigns and community

awareness programmes aimed at promoting the importance of education. Special emphasis on enrolling girls has led to a gradual closing of the gender gap in primary education, a significant step forward in a traditionally male-dominated educational sphere.

Similarly, the World Bank made concrete but quite workable recommendations to policymakers, acknowledging that the country has the knowledge and capability to address the learning crisis, even if the scale of this problem is large. It outlines eight short-term key priorities to be addressed in the first year. In the first year, our priorities include increasing access to school, especially for girls, prioritizing mandatory reading lessons in all schools, providing instructional support for multi-grading, and adopting data driven decisions, especially to closely monitor learning outcomes. The four priorities to be addressed within five years are: supporting teachers to have the right skills, investing in early childhood education, teaching children in a language they understand, and increasing the amount

and efficiency of the education budget.

All the mentioned points are crucial; however, their achievement will remain a far cry without infusing resilience into the process. It is essential to incorporate resilience into the strategic planning of vital public health and education services, cemented by sufficient financial resources. It is evident that the effects of extraordinary occurrences, such as the closure of schools due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the 2022 floods, have exacerbated the learning crisis, underscoring the susceptibility of the education system to potential future disruptions. The education sector experienced a direct impact with over 2,000 schools sustaining damage or being destroyed, leaving students being left without classrooms. The unaccounted loss extended beyond physical infrastructure and led to profound psychological trauma experienced by all demographics of the affected population, especially children and youth. Students already traumatized by the loss of their homes and communities experienced additional

stress due to education disruptions.

We lag far behind — confused and scuffling — while the world has made substantial progress. It is crucial for us to recognize the cul-de-sac. Beyond its commonly assumed advantages, peace is an essential outcome of high-quality education, as individuals internalize values, attitudes, and behaviours. This phenomenon functions as a set of catalysts that promote peace and kill belligerence within societies. It is undeniable that the establishment of more peaceful, just, and sustainable societies.

In view of formidable and enduring challenges such as climate change, pandemics, and escalating global conflicts, it is incumbent upon governments to prioritize the education of our children and youth. This will equip our young with the essential skills to effectively tackle and prevent these challenges in the future. An unwavering dedication to promoting peace is becoming increasingly imperative in the present day, with education assuming a pivotal role in this pursuit. -- Courtesy TheNews

Human smuggling

Azwar Shakeel

Though rampant, human smuggling in Pakistan remains poorly documented. Only when a tragedy occurs does the issue take centre stage. A nationwide crackdown was announced after a fishing boat carrying hundreds of Pakistani migrants capsized off the southern coast of Greece last June. Yet, interest in the issue and sympathy with the victims waned just as fast as it rose.

Lack of sympathy stems from lack of awareness, particularly of the human rights violations that take place during a migrant's journey. Human smuggling is considered consensual, as opposed to human trafficking, which features coercive practices such as bonded labour and sexual exploitation. Here, we endeavour to explain the factors driving irregular migration, the annual number of migrants, popular routes, operations of smuggling networks, and the Federal Investigation Agency's (FIA) role. We also identify human rights violations, and the reforms required to address them.

According to estimates, over one million irregular migrants cross international borders annually. In Pakistan, the figure varies between 80,000 to 100,000. Most migrants are from Punjab. Cities such as Gujrat, Gujranwala, Phalia, Mandi Bahauddin, Kharian, Jhelum, Mirpur, and Sialkot serve as major catchment areas. Due to its low cost and ease of movement, the Balochistan-Iran-Turkey route, with onwards travel to Europe via the Mediterranean Sea, is the most popular. Other routes include sea travel from Gwadar to Iran through the Arabian Sea, and onwards to Turkey and Eu-

rope. On the pricier side, there's legal air travel from Karachi to Dubai, followed by irregular migration to Turkey or Libya, and onwards to Italy or Greece.

Unemployment, lack of opportunity, poverty, and insecurity remain the primary drivers pushing people out. Pressures of traditional masculinity is another prominent push factor. Many young men leave to be able to earn more and support their families. It is established that factors driving irregular migration are not just absolute deprivation, but also relative deprivation. The sense that one would be better off in some other country serves as a pull factor. Migrants also leave because they see countries like Turkey or Libya as stepping stones to Europe.

Smugglers operate on the basis of an organised network model. Each smuggling ring comprises a series of sub-networks; each sub-network consists of agents and sub-agents. The sub-networks are co-dependent. A typical smuggling network operates as follows: sub-agents in Gujrat recruit migrants, and bring them to the agent, who will stipulate the conditions of travel and the costs involved. The agent from Gujrat contacts an agent from Multan and shares the names of the migrants via a text message. All agents operate under an alias. The Multan agent receives the migrants at a designated spot and facilitates onwards movement to Quetta, from where they are sent to Iran, Turkey, and Europe by other agents along the way. The operations remain seamless, with each agent responsible for the operations of the smuggling ring within their own territory.

The journey can cost anywhere from Rs100,000 to Rs1,500,000 per migrant

depending on the terms of the deal, ie, mode of travel, comfort of travel (front seat or trunk of the car, below or above the deck on a ship, etc), number of attempts, and documentation.

The FIA is the law-enforcement agency tasked by law to crack down on smugglers and safeguard the rights of migrants. But it is seen as complicit in the entire process. Officials ignore the actions of smugglers in return for kickbacks. Considering the complexities involved, transnational operations of this magnitude would not be possible without the knowledge of the FIA. Corruption among law-enforcement officials is common to all countries where human smuggling rackets thrive. Smuggled Somalis, Ethiopians, and Kenyans, have all recounted witnessing public officials accepting bribes from smugglers.

Smugglers exploit desperate and vulnerable individuals. The migrants are misinformed and deceived about the dangers and actual costs involved. They are also abused, beaten, and robbed along the way. Those who are unable to pay are tortured. The houses in which they are kept along the way are overcrowded and unhygienic. Law-enforcement agencies do not protect them and the states through which they pass shirk their responsibilities, disregarding international humanitarian laws.

To address these rights violations, we must first reframe the narrative. Migrants must be treated as victims, and not in a manner that implies criminality. International and domestic anti-smuggling laws must be made human rights-centric. But most importantly, we must address the state's failure to protect and provide for its citizens, compelling migrants to leave. -- Courtesy Dawn

Genocidal collusion

Mahir Ali

Whether he's trying to crack a joke or pretending to be serious, Joe Biden's octogenarian visage is permanently contorted into a grimace. That may have something to do with all the lies he has felt obliged to spout since Oct 7: from the nonsense about having seen pictures of beheaded babies to the recent assurance that the Israeli prime minister does not reject every variant of a two-state solution.

Benjamin Netanyahu has clearly telegraphed the opposite, knowing full well that the deviation from the official narrative of his neo-fascist state's Western supporters will not interrupt the steady supply of lethal weaponry and blood money. The US has lately sought to give the impression that it is advising restraint, but that alleged advice goes unheeded.

Biden has stood out as an unequivocal pro-Zionist since he entered the US Congress more than 50 years ago, and serving as an accessory to genocide won't shift his dial. It's equally clear that this stance is steadily diminishing his chances of reelection in November. Donald Trump, arguably an even bigger fan of Israel, holds a personal grudge against Netanyahu. He may not get many votes from disenfranchised Democrats, but his opponents may well opt for third-party candidates.

The liberal American intelligentsia deems a second Trump presidency to be detrimental to the prospects of the American empire. Since the Korean War in the 1950s and Vietnam in the next decade, the US has stood out as what Martin Luther King described as the paramount perpetrator of violence in the

world.

That verdict is reflected in Gaza, where the extermination campaign would be virtually impossible for Israel to continue without the steady supply of US weaponry and largesse. America could halt the genocide at a stroke. But neither the White House nor much of the Congress seems to have any interest in pushing for peace.

The mealy-mouthed rhetoric from the US and its acolytes about a two-state solution conveys a whiff of absurdity after decades of sponsoring Zionist designs on Palestinian territories. The 'antisemitism' slogan that greets any suggestion that anyone other than a Zionist is also a human being worthy of the same rights and protections is beginning to lose its sting.

This phenomenon stretches back decades, and it should have been laughed out of existence when the Israeli embassy and its devotees successfully strove to demolish the socialist leadership of the British Labour Party under Jeremy Corbyn. His wretched successor, likely to be the next prime minister of Britain, hasn't uttered a word that could conceivably be construed as critical of Israel.

The relentless destruction of Gaza and the mass murder of its inhabitants has expanded to the Red Sea and beyond. Biden says the attacks on Yemen will carry on, even though they aren't deterring Houthi efforts to halt Israeli-aligned shipping in solidarity with Gaza. Iran, meanwhile, has lashed out militarily at targets in Iraq, Syria and Pakistan, ostensibly to demonstrate its challenged regional clout.

Disinclined to hold back, Israel has carried out assassinations against Hamas and Hezbollah targets in Lebanon, and

murdered a bunch of Iranian Revolutionary Guard advisers in Damascus. Iran has vowed to retaliate against the outrage in Syria, but is disinclined to directly take on Israel or the US — there have been reports of back-channel contacts with the latter.

Hopefully, the de-escalation following the Balochistan stoush will avert future belligerence. Tehran purportedly attacked a 'takfiri' outfit that had claimed credit for terrorist activity in Iran; Islamabad hit back. But even a limited exchange of fire serves as an unfortunate distraction from the genocide unfolding in real time in the Gaza Strip, announced in advance by the Israeli leadership and telegraphed by the victims, which is being resisted in international forums by South Africa, Chile and Mexico rather than any Arab or Muslim states.

Israel can be guaranteed to ignore any interim advice on a cessation of its brutality from the International Court of Justice, and it could take years for the ICJ to pronounce a verdict on Johannesburg's charge.

There have been other genocides since the UN convention against them was established in 1948, the same year that Israel came into existence and apartheid was formalised in South Africa.

But perhaps the worse aspect of the current outrage is the blind refusal of the perpetrators to recognise that, for more than 70 years, they have sought to recreate for the Palestinians, in superficially different ways, the experience of the European Jews in the 1930s-40; from the ubermensch mentality to lebensraum. The pattern of humanity's reluctance to acknowledge remains rich in barely challenged reprobates. -- Courtesy Dawn

CM launches much-awaited e-Pay Sindh initiative for digital payment

KARACHI (APP): Caretaker Sindh Chief Minister Justice (Retd) Maqbool Baqar on Wednesday said that the provincial government initiated a Single Digital Platform for all citizens of the province to minimize human interaction, to ensure transparency, accountability and the disposal of all cases within seven working days as a step for transformation from manual mode to e-governance in the form of e-Service Sindh and e-Pay Sindh.

This he said while speaking at the launching ceremony of five transformative e-services - e-registration, e-Mutation, e-Pay Sindh and Industrial Estate Management System (IEMS) that would make it easier, faster and more convenient for people

to access government services.

Justice @ Baqar said that the Sindh initiative includes a digital payment feature in the name of e-Pay Sindh. This feature allows citizens to make payments for government services securely and conveniently through their mobile devices. Easy Paisa, Credit Card, Debit Card, ATM Machines and Banks. The launching ceremony of e-Service Sindh was held at a local hotel where the chief minister launched it by pressing a key of the computer. The CM said this groundbreaking initiative will revolutionize the way citizens interact with the Sindh government.

The Board of Revenue introduced five transformative e-services that would make it easier, faster and more convenient

for people to access government services. They include the E-Service Sindh Mobile App which is available at Google Playstore and App Store for Apple users. Currently, two departments have launched it but slowly all the departments will adopt it one by one.

The Sindh Cabinet approved to inclusion of its legal framework into Rules of Business as e-Service Sindh and e-Pay Sindh by amendment in Secretariat Instructions 2014 last Monday. Secondly, there would be e-registration for Registered Sale Deeds, a service that would allow citizens to register their sale deeds through online applications, payments and appointments for biometric verification and registration before the Sub-Registrars.



LAHORE: Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman/Chancellor in a group photo with participants during the opening ceremony of 1st Automotive Engineering Conference at University of Engineering and Technology.

Governor KP for ensuring compliance of 2% admission quota for minorities in varsities

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali has said that compliance over two percent minority quota for minorities in public sector universities of the province will be ensured.

He expressed these views during a meeting recently held at Governor House with a delegation of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) representatives under the chairmanship of Qamar Naseem, Programme Manager of Blue Veins organization.

Other members of the delegation included Muhammad Rizwan, Provincial Coordinator National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) and Sana Ahmad, Programme Coordinator, Blue Veins.

During the meeting, Governor Haji Ghulam Ali was informed that in

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa there are 27 public sector universities whose administration is bound to abide by the decision taken by the government of providing two percent quota to minorities in admission for different courses and degrees.

Similarly, all the government colleges offering Associate Degree Programme are bound to provide one per cent quota for minorities in all these courses.

However, compliance with minority quotas in public sector universities and colleges is a big challenge, depriving a large number of youngsters from the minority community in availing this opportunity offered by the government.

Even in the online portals of different universities of KP, the offer of two per cent quota for minorities is missing, they added.



KARACHI: Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori meeting a delegation of Ministers from Gilgit-Baltistan at the Governor House.

Abid Sher Ali says: Nawaz Sharif a symbol of national development

FAISALABAD (APP): Former state minister and central leader of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Chaudhry Abid Sher Ali said on Wednesday that Mian Nawaz Sharif is a symbol of national development, as he has not only steered the country out of multifaceted crises during his previous tenures but also put it on the road to progress and prosperity.

Addressing a press conference in Jamia Ubaidia Allama Iqbal Colony here, he said Pakistan is passing through a critical stage as the ill-conceived policies of former rulers have pushed it towards an economic quagmire.

He said that the PMLN always preferred national interests over personal gains. Now it would also overcome the prevailing issues after coming to power with heavy public mandate.

He said that Maulana Fazl-ur-Rehman and his party posed confidence in

the leadership of Mian Nawaz Sharif and now both parties would struggle jointly to eliminate poverty, unemployment and inflation after winning upcoming general election.

He said that Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-F had withdrawn his candidature from PP-115 and now its candidate Syed Zakaria Shah would support the PML-N candidate Mian Tahir Jameel from the constituency.

Responding to a question, Abid Sher Ali said that the PML-N did not victimise anyone over political differences; however, those elements, who humiliated the monuments of national heroes and vandalized the sensitive military installations on May 9, did not deserve any concession. Everything is going well other than the punishment to those people who were involved in May 9 mayhem, he added.



LAHORE: Murtaza Solangi, Caretaker Federal Minister for Information & Broadcasting addressing on the Death Anniversary of Legend Munnoo Bhai at Sundas foundation at Shadman.

Punjab Governor says: Automotive industry long been important part of the global economy

LAHORE: Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman/Chancellor attended the opening ceremony of 1st Automotive Engineering Conference at University of Engineering and Technology Lahore today as Chief Guest.

Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman, while addressing the ceremony, stated that it is very important to embrace technology in the modern era. He said that he truly appreciates Vice Chancellor UET Lahore, Professor Dr. Nasir Hayat, Professor Dr. Naveed

Ramzan, Dean Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, Dr. Ali Hussain Kazim, Director of Automotive Engineering Center, and organizers whose tireless efforts have brought together experts and researchers in the field of automotive engineering.

"I hope that thoughts and research shared in this conference will have a positive impact on the future of the automotive industry," he said. Governor Punjab said that the automotive industry has long been an important part of the global economy, and is also a symbol of modern lifestyle.

He said that automotive industry is a flourishing industry in the world, which is providing employment opportunities to millions of people. Governor Punjab further said that electric vehicles are one of the important elements in shaping the future of the automotive sector. He said that in view of the challenges of climate change, the world is moving towards eco-friendly transport, and Pakistan is not an exception. Governor Punjab expressed hope that the researchers and experts involved in this conference will find different ways.

World Bank country director calls on CM KP

PESHAWAR (APP): A delegation headed by Country Director World Bank Najay Benhassaine called on caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Justice @ Syed Arshad Hussain Shah here at Chief Minister's House on Wednesday and discussed with him matters of mutual interest with special focus on development projects being executed in the province with the financial assistance of the World Bank. Caretaker cabinet members Barrister Feroz Jamal Shah Kakakhel, Syed Masood Shah, Engineer Ahmed Jan, Engineer Amir Nadeem Durrani, Dr. Najeeb Ullah, Dr. Syed Sarfaraz Ali Shah, spokesperson to Chief

Minister Brigadier @ Syed Mujtaba Tirmizi and Additional Chief Secretary P&D Syed Imtiaz Hussain Shah were also present on the occasion. The meeting discussed the matters related to timely completion of ongoing development projects being implemented with the assistance of World Bank. Prospects of mutual cooperation in the near future especially development projects for merged districts were also discussed on the occasion. Speaking on this occasion, the chief minister said that World Bank is playing an important role in the development of backward areas; the bank is currently assisting various projects of public

Training session held to combat dengue

RAWALPINDI (APP): Chief Executive Officer of the District Health Authority Dr Ijaz Ahmed Khan Wednesday said that the best anti-dengue measures were taken by the administration last year to control the spread of the fatal virus.

He expressed these views while addressing the pre-dengue season refresher training session of the field staff of the Metropolitan Corporation Rawalpindi area. The CEO said that the purpose of conducting pre-dengue season refresher training was to prepare oneself for anti-dengue measures. He added that refresher training sessions will help in making the anti-dengue campaign operationally successful.



KARACHI: Caretaker Sindh Chief Minister Justice (Retd) Maqbool Baqar addressing inaugural session of 2-day International Conference at Dawood University.

Punjab govt pledges full support to GCT trust expansion to deprived areas

LAHORE: Punjab Health Minister Professor Dr Javed Akram Wednesday announced unwavering support for the renowned Sindh-based non-profit Green Crescent Trust (GCT) to extend its educational services to Punjab.

Speaking at an event on the International Day of Education here, he emphasised the government's commitment to providing land, funding, and trained teachers for GCT's schools in rural and deprived areas.

The ceremony saw Lahore-based businessmen and industrialists endorsing GCT's initiative to enroll 100,000 out-of-

school children in Sindh by constructing 250 schools in remote regions.

Dr Akram praised GCT's 29-year journey, acknowledging the establishment of 166 charitable schools in underprivileged areas of Sindh with an enrollment of over 31,000 children.

Highlighting GCT's recent expansion to Balochistan, Dr Akram urged the organization to extend its charitable work to Punjab. He emphasized the pivotal role of educating underprivileged children in breaking the cycle of poverty, and he welcomed GCT to collaborate with the Punjab School Education Department.

Wife's murderer gets death sentence

RAWALPINDI (APP): A district and sessions court on Wednesday gave death sentence to a murderer for killing his wife.

According to Airport Police Station, accused Iftikhar had killed his wife over a family dispute.

After recording witnesses from both sides, the court also imposed a fine of Rs 500,000 on the convict. Meanwhile, another district and sessions court sentenced accused Amir Arif for nine years' imprisonment in a drug smuggling case.

The convict was arrested by the Race Course Police with 1,400 grams of hashish.

The court also imposed a fine of Rs 80,000 on the convict.

CM Punjab chairs 37th cabinet meeting

LAHORE: The 37th Punjab cabinet meeting, which was held under the chairmanship of Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi on Wednesday, approved special allowance for doctors of Dera Ghazi Khan Institute of Cardiology and dissolution of board of directors of the Bank of Punjab.

It sanctioned release of funds to widen the road leading to Bibi Pak Daman shrine and decided that widow of former Punjab chief secretary Abdullah Sumbal should be given possession of allotted house at GOR-1 immediately.

Re-issuance of Punjab Healthcare Commission (Amended) Ordinance, 2023 and approval of appointment to the posts

of presiding officers in Punjab Labour Courts in Sahiwal and Faisalabad were granted along with nomination of presiding officer for District Consumer Court Lahore and constitution of Punjab Wildlife Management Committee. Amendments to Punjab Delegation of Financial Powers Rules, 2016 were approved as well. Provincial ministers, advisers, chief secretary, IGP, Advocate General Punjab and administrative secretaries attended the meeting.

Meanwhile, Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi visited the head office of Punjab Safe Cities Authority (PSCA) at Qurban Lines late at Tuesday night where he chaired an important meeting regarding law and order situation.



LAHORE: Inspector General Police Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar presenting keys of home to relatives of police martyred.

KP govt for special focus on merged districts in five year plan

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has urged the federation to give special attention to the newly merged districts (NMDs) of the province in the upcoming 13th national five-year plan (2024-29).

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister for Newly Merged Districts Affairs, Industries, Commerce and Technical Education, Dr. Aamer Abdullah in this regard, has forwarded suggested projects to the Planning Commission Islamabad pertaining to communication and works, trade and IT sector, industrial development, energy, agriculture, irrigation, health, education and other sectors in NMDs that will be included in PSDP under five years new plan, says a handout.

In proposed communication projects construction of Peshawar, Mohmand, Bajaur and Timergara's four-line Motorway has been included. Similarly, maintenance and rehabilitation of existing trade corridors in NMDs, at a cost of 10 billion rupees is also included in these proposals.

The provincial minister has proposed the establishment of Axle Load Control Regime on the provincial highways to protect the roads from overloading in five places of the merged districts at a cost of 500 million rupees, while at a cost of one billion rupees on important national and provincial highways Service/Rest areas will be developed. Furthermore,

CS assures financial support to affectees of fire ravaged plaza

PESHAWAR: Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry on Wednesday visited the fire-ravaged "Time Centre Plaza" here in Sadar area and assured financial support to the affected shopkeepers. The CS said that a team of engineers had been engaged to conduct a survey of the building and evaluate the losses adding that as per the report of the team, the shopkeepers would be compensated accordingly.

He expressed grief over the loss of the shopkeepers and said that it was a sad incident. The CS said that around 100 shops and stalls turned to ash in the incident but luckily there was no loss of humans due to fire. He said that the prompt response by the firefighters saved the nearby buildings from any damage or loss.

He said that instructions have been given to all the concerned to ensure the emergency exits and installation of fire extinguishers in all the commercial buildings.



KARACHI: Caretaker Interior Minister Sindh Brigadier Retired Harris Nawaz addressing a press conference at press club in Provincial Capital.

DG Health Services raises concern over pneumonia cases

PESHAWAR: Director General Health Services, Dr. Shaukat Ali, on Wednesday expressed concern over rising pneumonia cases that reported in different areas due to the intensity of cold weather. According to the spokesperson of the DG Health Services and Director Public Health, Dr. Arshad Roghani, in October last year, some 6,219 cases of pneumonia were reported in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, while in December, the number of children under the age of

five affected by pneumonia and the cases were risen to 11,551. Dr. Roghani said that in the last three months, as many as 8,068 cases were reported in males, while 4,000 cases were reported in Haripur, 3,200 in Dera Ismail Khan, and 2,800 cases in Peshawar areas. During the same period, he said some 2,700 cases were reported in Swabi, 1,000 in Charsadda, and 900 in Lakki Marwat respectively. He appealed to parents to take special care of their children to avoid pneumonia cases in harsh cold weather.

Effective implementation of bold reforms imperative to usher new era of development: Dr. Shamshad

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Finance, Revenue and Economic Affairs, Dr. Shamshad Akhtar Wednesday said that effective implementation of bold and ambitious reforms was imperative to usher in a new era of development and prosperity in the country. The accomplishment of this goal, however, is contingent upon addressing critical underlying

institutional, governance, and structural constraints, he said during a seminar on "Pakistan's Economic Crisis: Challenges and the Way Forward," organized by NUST Institute of Policy Studies (NIPS) at the University's main campus here. Dr. Shamshad Akhtar highlighted five key areas that have increased the vulnerability of Pakistan's economy to domestic and global shocks.

The first area, he mentioned is unsustainable fiscal policy due to revenue gaps and unproductive expenditure; second, fiscal non-sustainability has enhanced government recourse to public debt which has increased; third, climate shocks as the global warming model predicts that Pakistan's weather patterns would become even more volatile and extreme in the decades ahead, with an average

increase in temperatures by 1.3 to 4.9 percent 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. Dr. Shamshad further stressed five critical areas of reforms essential to reducing Pakistan's vulnerabilities and fostering sustainable growth that included.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar chairs a review meeting on reduction of the energy sector's circular debt.



Federal Minister MNFS&R Dr. Kausar Abdullah Malik along with Ms. Jessica Mudjitaba-Fernandez, Program Manager USDA, Mr. Keith Metzner, USAID, Chairman PARC, Dr. Ghulam Muhammad Ali & Mr. Babar Ehsan Bajwa, CABI's Senior Regional Director, Asia, presiding a dialogue on regulatory harmonization in Pakistan for Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) and Bio-pesticides.

SBP Multan chief says: SBP software application prepared to receive account holders complaints

Independent Report
MULTAN: Chief Manager State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), Multan, Javed Iqbal Marth has said that the central bank has prepared a software application to enable account holders to file complaints against banks.

He was speaking at a ceremony organized by the Multan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) with industrialists notably MCCI president Mian Rashid Iqbal, former president Khawaja Muhammad Hussain, Naveed Ahmad Chughtai, Saleha Hassan, and others were present, according to a release issued by MCCI on Wednesday. The SBP Multan chief said that account holders mostly do not speak against banks despite having complaints, however, added that the new software application would facilitate them to do so whenever they have any problem relating to the bank and it would trigger a process to resolve their grievances.

He said, no bank has ever usurped account holders' money, even in

case of default, due to stricter policies and monitoring by the State Bank of Pakistan.

He said that ongoing political activity and subsequent take-over by an elected government in the wake of the February 8 general elections would hopefully further improve economic conditions in the country substantially.

He said that SBP fixed the ceiling of auto financing to Rs 3 million adding that the earlier liberal financing had turned banks into showrooms and supermarkets and resulted in increasing national oil import bill and burdened highways and city roads with unbearable loads of vehicles.

Marth said that SBP facilitated a number of ordinary people particularly women and extended small loans to them at their doorstep during the last few years. Moreover, disabled persons also received small loans to begin their businesses and earn livelihood in a dignified manner.

MCCI president Mian Rashid Iqbal.

Growers advised to protect crops from frost

MUZAFFARGARH (APP): Growers could augment per-acre crop production at least by protecting it from cold and frost.

Expert and Assistant Director Horticulture Kot Addu, Talha Sheikh stated this while reviewing multiple fields of nurseries and gardens here Wednesday.

He extended fruitful advice to farmers hailing from different places across the region.

He advised the farmers to register their nurseries with the Seed Certificate & Registration Department.

It's vital to plant flowers of good genes in the fields to multiply the production.

He said Pakistan is the seventh-largest country in mango production.

The production has touched 1.3 million in Punjab solely, he said.

The fruit (mango) is a very important cultivation of the country that attracts huge revenue from abroad. He asked the farmers to cover mangoes' saplings by making whitewash on the trunks of the trees to protect them from environmental hazards.

DG Industries visits BFC Rwp

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Director General (DG) Industries, Prices, Weights & Measures (IPWM), Asif Ali Farrukh here on Wednesday visited the Business Facilitation Center (BFC), established in Rawalpindi Development Authority, (RDA).

On this occasion, the Manager BFC, Shabana Nazir, Assistant Commissioner HR Rawalpindi and other officers concerned were present.

According to RDA spokesman, Chief Engineer RDA, Muhammad Anwar Baran briefed the DG Industries regarding BFC.

The DG also reviewed the working of the BFC in detail and monitored the operations of the center. Asif Ali Farrukh appreciated the work of the RDA and BFC.

PM for effective, durable strategy to do away with circular debt energy sector

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Wednesday directed the Ministry of Energy to formulate an effective and durable strategy to do away with the circular debt of the energy sector.

The prime minister, chairing a meeting to discuss the strategy to reduce circular debt of the energy sector, said all the stakeholders would have to put in collective efforts for reduction in the circular debt.

He told the participants of the meeting that soon after coming to the power, the caretaker

government took measures for economic revival and was taking all-out steps to reduce the circular debt.

He said the anti-power theft operation had led to an enhanced recovery of the electricity dues of the power distribution companies.

The meeting were briefed about the current situation of circular debt of the petroleum and energy sectors, and different proposals were also put forward in this regard.

Federal ministers Dr. Shamshad Akhtar and Muhammad Ali, and relevant senior officers attended the meeting.



ISLAMABAD: Vendors displaying bananas for auction at Fruit and Vegetable market Pirwahai in Federal Capital.

Pakistan exports seafood worth \$199m in first half of current fiscal year

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan earned \$199.023 million by exporting 92,621 metric tonnes of fish and fish preparations during the first half of the current fiscal year, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Wednesday.

As compared to the exports of \$225.217 million during July-December (2022-23), the fish exports during the July-December 2023 witnessed decline of 11.63 percent, according to PBS data.

In terms of quantity, the exports of fish and fish preparations however increased by 5.12 percent during the first six months when compared to exports of 88,110 metric tonnes during the last fiscal year.

On a year-on-year basis, the seafood exports decreased by 5.94 percent

to \$37.075 million in December 2023 as compared to the exports of \$39.415 million in December 2022.

In terms of quantity, the exports witnessed a 20.29 percent increase by going up from 16,694 metric tonnes last year to 20,081 metric tonnes this year. On a month-on-month basis, the seafood exports declined by 2.52 percent when compared to the exports of \$38.035 million in November, according to the PBS data.

In terms of quantity, fish exports increased by 11.17 percent in December compared to the exports of 18,064 metric tonnes in November. The overall food group exports from Pakistan increased by 49.84 percent during the first six months.



PESHAWAR: Worker busy in printing different political parties posters at his workplace in Mohallah Jangi in connection with upcoming General Elections-2024.

APTMA chairman briefs US consul general on Pakistan's textile sector

LAHORE (APP): All Pakistan Textile Mills Association (APTMA) Chairman (Northern Zone) Kamran Arshad briefed Ms. Kristin K. Hawkins, United States consul general in Lahore, on the prospects and needs of Pakistan's textile sector so as to find more ways and means to foster bilateral trade and economic relations between the two countries.

APTMA Vice Chairman Ahmad Shafi, former chairman Adil Bashir and Hamid Zaman, and Secretary General Raza Baqir, along with senior members of APTMA representing leading textile groups, were

also present. They discussed the enormous potential to work together in the field of cotton and textile, besides expanding trade and investment relations in other focused areas.

Both sides were of the view that Pakistan has strong potential to grow in textile and other sectors.

Giving a detailed presentation on textile industry of the country, the APTMA chairman pointed out that Pakistan's domestic cotton production had declined over the years and even this year more than three million bales might be required to be imported.

Draft regulations of bio-pesticide policy to be submitted before cabinet

Independent Report
ISLAMABAD: Minister for National Food Security and Research, Dr. Kausar Abdullah Malik on Wednesday said that draft regulations of bio-pesticides policy had been finalized and would be submitted before the federal cabinet for approval to promote the use of bio-pesticides in the country.

Addressing a high-level "dialogue on regulatory harmonization in Pakistan for MRLs and bio-pesticides", the minister said that the use of bio-pesticides would help mitigate the issues

related to aflatoxin and make the local agriculture commodities more resilient to capture the international market.

The event was organized by the Pakistan Agriculture Research Council (PARC) in collaboration with USID, USDA and CABI to share the outcome of joint collaboration to mitigate the adverse impact of aflatoxin in local agriculture products, besides measures taken to mitigate its negative impact on exports of rice, maize, wheat and fruits.

The minister said that due to the presence of

micro-toxin elements, the exports from the country remained under regulatory pressure and expressed the hope that the promotion of bio-pesticides would help to overcome such challenges besides reducing reliance on costly fertilizers, which consume costly inputs like electricity and gas.

Kausar Abdullah Malik said that organic agriculture products were high in demand across the world and the adoption of this technology would help to enhance the output of organic agriculture products, besides overcoming the threats

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Shipping activity reported at the Port Qasim where four ships namely, MSC Vilda-X, Sea Runner, Limra and Marangas Asclepius carrying containers, Mogas, LPG and LNG, berthed at Containers Terminal, Oil Terminal, Sui Southern Terminal and Gas Terminal respectively during last 24 hours.

Meanwhile a gas carrier "Lusail" also arrived at outer-anchorage of the Port Qasim during the same period. A total of eight ships were engaged at 24 berths during the last 24 hours.

Blome promotes trade, economic ties during Karachi Visit

KARACHI (Online): U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan Donald Blome underscored the United States' unwavering commitment to Pakistan as a trade and economic partner during his visit to Karachi January 21-23. "We are committed to broadening and deepening our trade and economic partnership with Pakistan, and to empowering the next generation of Pakistani business leaders," the Ambassador said.

In his meeting with

the American Business Council (ABC), Ambassador Blome emphasized the benefits of private sector-led, equitable, sustainable economic growth, and the potential for increasing two-way trade and investment between our countries.

He also expressed appreciation for U.S. companies' corporate social responsibility and heard from private industry leaders on the business climate in Pakistan.



Mr. Saquib Fayyaz Magoon, Acting President FPCCI, is presenting the commemorative shield to Malik Tahir Javed, President of Employers' Federation of Pakistan (EFP). Mr. Majyd Aziz, former President, EFP; Mr. Ravi Peiris, Senior Specialist on Employers' Activities, ILO and Syed Nazir Ali, Secretary General of EFP, were also present among others.

Rupee gains 12 paise against dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistani Rupee on Wednesday witnessed an appreciation of 12 paise against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs279.67 against the previous day's closing of Rs279.79.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market stood at Rs278.9 and Rs280.9 respectively.

The price of the Euro decreased by 83 paise to close at Rs304.20 against the last day's closing of Rs305.03, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

CG COMSTECH emphasizes increase in pharmaceutical exports

ISLAMABAD (APP): Coordinator General COMSTECH, Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary Wednesday emphasized increasing pharmaceutical exports of the country which are very low.

Speaking at an International Seminar on Pharmaceutical Manufacturing in OIC Member States: Status and Future, he pointed out that Pakistan was producing very high-quality medicines but unfortunately, its exports were very low which needs to be

enhanced. He said that Pakistan needed hydrocracking facility, biomass fermentation base, medicinal plant and salt and mineral based pharmaceutical manufacturing.

Prof. Choudhary assured that COMSTECH can bring expertise in pharmaceutical manufacturing from different OIC member states which are doing excellently well in this area, like Iran, Indonesia, Bangladesh, and Turkey.

USC sole entity with largest digital network in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Utility Stores Corporation (USC) is the sole corporation with the best database that efficiently records online transactions from over 4000 stores and 130 warehouses simultaneously.

The corporation has the Best Point of Sales System, Human Resource Management, Supply Chain Management, and Financial Management

Masterpiece System, said a news release here on Wednesday.

USC has the only digital system for providing government-targeted subsidies on foodstuffs to Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) customers with National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) records.

The discussion of this new system is now happening in the world.

FPCCI & EFP meet GSP+ compliance and SDGs discussed: Saquib

Independent Report
KARACHI: Mr. Saquib Fayyaz Magoon, Acting President FPCCI, has said that the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI) and Employers' Federation of Pakistan (EFP) have agreed, in principle, to converge their policy advocacy; skills development & awareness and research & development resources to enable Pakistan to continue to capitalize on its GSP+ status with the European Union (EU) as new EU parliament and EU Commission will be in place by June 2024; and, there might be some review or policy changes in rules framework for Pakistan's GSP+ status.

Magoon, Acting President FPCCI, explained that Pakistan should remain on course on EU requirements on human rights; labor rights; environmental standards and good governance. These are principally the four areas where Pakistan's performance comes under review. The next monitoring report on Pakistan vis-à-vis GSP+ compliance will be issued in November 2024.

Malik Tahir Javed, President of EFP, highlighted that the Employers' Federation is focused on industrial relations; skills development and labor laws under the guiding principles and conventions of International Labour Organization (ILO).



President Karachi Chamber of Commerce & Industry Iftikhar Ahmed Sheikh presenting crest to President All Pakistan Memon Federation M. Shabbir Haroon during the visit of APMF delegation to KCCL. Senior Vice President Altaf A. Ghaffar, Vice President Tanveer Ahmed Barry, Former President APMF Hanif Motlani and others are also seen in the picture.

Russia accuses Ukraine of killing 65 of its own POWs by shooting down plane

Monitoring Desk
MOSCOW: Russia accused Ukraine on Wednesday of deliberately shooting down a Russian military transport plane carrying 65 captured Ukrainian soldiers to a prisoner exchange in what it called a barbaric act of terrorism that had killed a total of 74 people. The Russian defence ministry said six Russian crew members and three Russian soldiers had been on the Ilyushin Il-76 military transport plane shot down near the Russian city of Belgorod near the Ukrainian border.

"The Ukrainian leadership was well aware that, in accordance with established practice, Ukrainian servicemen would be transported by military transport aircraft to the Belgorod airfield today to be exchanged," a ministry statement said.

"According to an earlier agreement, this event was to take place in the afternoon at the Kolotilovka checkpoint on the Russian-Ukrainian border," it said.

"By committing this terrorist act, the Ukrainian leadership has showed its true face. It disregarded the lives of its own citizens." Russia's foreign ministry called the shooting down "a barbaric act".

Mykhailo Podolyak, a Ukrainian presidential ad-

viser, told Reuters: "Comments will come a little later. Time is needed to clarify all the data."

Video posted on the Telegram messaging app by Baza, a channel linked to Russian security services, and verified by Reuters, showed a large aircraft falling towards the ground near the village of Yablonoovo in the Belgorod region and exploding in a vast fireball.

Ukraine's GUR military intelligence spokesperson Andriy Yusov told the Radio Svoboda outlet that a prisoner exchange had been planned for Wednesday, adding: "It's not taking place at the moment."



Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Nauru Lionel Aingimea shake hands after signing a Joint Communiqué on the Resumption of Diplomatic Relations between China and Nauru, at Diaoyutai State Guesthouse, in Beijing, China.

Iraq condemns latest U.S. strikes as 'irresponsible escalation'

Monitoring Desk
BAGHDAD: Overnight US strikes on Iraqi militant groups that are part of the country's formal security forces showed "clear determination to harm security and stability in Iraq," a spokesperson for Iraq's Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani said on Wednesday.

responsible escalation," the spokesperson said, in some of the harshest criticism yet of the US by Iraq's prime minister.

Syria has been attacked about 150 times by Iran-aligned militants since the Israel-Gaza war started in October, creating pressure on President Joe Biden to respond militarily, despite political sensitivities in Baghdad. The US has responded with several strikes, including one that killed a senior militia commander in Baghdad, in moves that have led Baghdad to call for an expedited, though negotiated, exit of US-led coalition forces.

Iraq, a rare ally of both Tehran and Washington which hosts 2,500 US troops and has Iran-backed militias linked to its security forces, has witnessed escalating tit-for-tat attacks since the Israel-Hamas war erupted in October.

The Pentagon said the US had carried out strikes on three facilities linked to Iran-backed militias including Kataib Hezbollah after a weekend attack on an Iraqi air base that wounded US forces. "This unacceptable act undermines years of cooperation, blatantly violates Iraq's sovereignty, and contributes to an irre-

Some of the Iran-backed militant groups that have been launching attacks at US forces are part of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), a state-sanctioned security force that began as a group of militias in 2014 to fight Islamic State.

Donald Trump closes in on Biden rematch after New Hampshire win

Monitoring Desk
NASHUA: Donald Trump won the key New Hampshire primary on Tuesday, moving him ever closer to locking in the Republican presidential nomination and securing an extraordinary White House rematch with US President Joe Biden.

With around 80 per cent of votes counted, Trump's winning margin hovered at about 11 percentage points, but his sole remaining challenger Nikki Haley vowed to fight on.

Trump, 77, attacked Haley in a rambling victory speech and said that when the primary contest reaches her home state of South Carolina, "we're going to win easily."

Trump's address was loaded with his trademark ominous warnings about immigration as he continued to lie about winning the 2020 election. In her speech, Haley insisted the race was "far from over" and told supporters that Democrats actually want to run against her former boss.

Six killed in gas truck explosion in Mongolia

Monitoring Desk
MANGOLIA: At least six people, including three firefighters, were killed when a truck carrying 60 tons of liquefied natural gas crashed and exploded in the Mongolian capital of Ulaanbaatar on Wednesday, according to Mongolia's officials.

were killed while performing their duty," the Emergency Management said in the post on Facebook.

Preliminary assessment showed that the truck crashed into a small car causing an immediate explosion, then a second blast occurred that ripped off a part of the truck with great force and killed the firefighters at the scene, Mongolia's Deputy Prime Minister S. Amarsaikhan told TenGer TV.

At least 11 people were injured in the fire near the Dunjingarav market, Mongolia's Emergency Management Office said in a post on Facebook.

Its chief G. Ariunbuyan told local media that the agency received a call about the incident at 1:04 a.m. (1704 GMT Tuesday).

According to local online news outlets, the fire quickly engulfed several nearby buildings, including a residential building. Scores of cars were burnt.

Russia's TASS news agency reported that residents of nearby houses were advised to evacuate.

More than 600 firefighters in 100 vehicles were involved in putting the fire out, which was eventually extinguished.

"Unfortunately, as a result of the accident, three officers of the 63rd Fire Fighting and Rescue Unit of the National Fire Service

of the impact of the first blast.



Burnt vehicles stand near the site where a truck carrying liquefied natural gas exploded, in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.



Russia's President Vladimir Putin and Chad's interim President Mahamat Idriss Deby attend a meeting at the Kremlin in Moscow, Russia.

Former Taiwan ally Nauru re-establishes diplomatic ties with China

Monitoring Desk
BEIJING: China and Nauru re-established diplomatic ties on Wednesday, after the tiny Pacific island nation unexpectedly severed relations with its now formally Taiwan in a move the United States described as "unfortunate". The Pacific has become a source of intense competition for influence between Washington which has traditionally viewed it as its backyard, and Beijing, which has targeted Taiwanese diplomatic allies there.

During a ceremony in Beijing, China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi and his Nauru counterpart Lionel Aingimea formally signed a document to restore bilateral relations, with ties at the ambassadorial level resuming with immediate effect.

According to the document Nauru recognises that there is "only one China in the world" governed by the People's Republic of China and that Taiwan is an inalienable part of China.

Fire in China's Jiangxi province kills 39

Monitoring Desk
BEIJING: A fire at a street shop in Xinyu City of Jiangxi Province has killed 39 people and injured nine, Chinese state media and the local government said on Wednesday, adding that some people were still trapped.

The fire broke out in the afternoon on an underground floor of the shop on Tiangongnan Avenue in the Yushui district, said the local fire response emergency headquarters, according to the China Daily media outlet.

The injured were taken to hospital, a government statement said, without disclosing how many.

Thick, black smoke could be seen spewing from shops on the street level and engulfing surrounding buildings in video footage on the social media platform Weibo.

According to state broadcaster CCTV News, there was an Internet cafe located below ground level and a training institution upstairs in the building where the fire broke out.

After the latest deadly fire in the country, China's President Xi Jinping demanded that all efforts be made to curb accidents and ensure people's safety, according to Xinhua News.

China has had several fires over the past year and just last week, a school dormitory fire killed 13 students in Central China's Henan province.

Mourners preform prayers in front of coffins of Houthi fighters killed in recent U.S.-led strikes on Houthi targets, during their funeral in Sanaa, Yemen.

Egypt set to unveil overhaul of downtown Cairo

Monitoring Desk
CAIRO: Egypt's sovereign wealth fund is finalising a master plan to revamp Cairo's historic centre now that government ministries have largely moved to a new capital to the east, and hopes to break ground on the project within months, its chief executive said.

The area, modelled on Paris in the 1860s, is filled with elegant but crumbling buildings constructed over the subsequent seven decades. Many were nationalised in the 1950s and 1960s and left in disrepair.

The Sovereign Fund has already taken control of three prime properties in central Cairo and received ownership of 11 former ministry buildings in a decree published this week in the official gazette.

It is also overseeing the real estate portfolio of Misr Insurance Holding, which includes nearly a hundred buildings, most built before World War Two.

Saudi Arabia to introduce new regulations on alcohol imports for diplomats

Monitoring Desk
RIYADH: The Saudi government on Wednesday confirmed reports in state-controlled media that it was imposing new restrictions on alcohol imports within diplomatic consignments.

The kingdom's Centre of International Communication (CIC) said the new regulations were being introduced to counter the illicit trade of alcohol goods and products received by diplomatic missions.

"This new process will continue to grant and ensure that all diplomats of non-Muslim embassies have access to these products in specified quotas," the CIC said in a statement to Reuters.

The statement further said that the new framework respected international diplomatic conventions.

"The new process will focus on allocating specific quantities of alcohol goods when entering the kingdom to put an end to the previous unregulated process that caused an uncontrolled exchange of such goods in the kingdom," it added.

The statement indicated that not much would change immediately for the vast majority of Saudi Arabia's 32 million people, who have few ways to imbibe unless they are willing to travel abroad.

US Navy says USS John Finn conducted transit in Taiwan Strait

Monitoring Desk
BEIJING: The United States Navy said its USS John Finn destroyer transited through a corridor in the Taiwan Strait on Wednesday that was "beyond the territorial sea of any coastal state," according to a statement.

"John Finn's transit through the Taiwan Strait demonstrates the United States' commitment to upholding freedom of navigation for all nations as a principle," the U.S. Navy said in its statement.

Russian missile barrage kills eight, sows panic in Ukraine

Monitoring Desk
KYIV: A wave of Russian missiles hit Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities on Tuesday, killing eight people and wounding dozens as new panic spread among exhausted residents.

Rescue workers in Khar-kiv — Ukraine's second city that is near Russia's border — hauled survivors from smouldering piles of rubble as apartment blocks were set ablaze and toppled by the strikes, journalists reported. Authorities said seven people were killed in the northeastern city of Khar-kiv in the overnight barrage that also wounded more than 50 people.

UN chief warns that Israel's rejection of a two-state solution threatens global peace

Monitoring Desk
UNITED NATIONS: The United Nations chief warned Israel on Tuesday that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's rejection of a two-state solution will indefinitely prolong a conflict that is threatening global peace and emboldening extremists everywhere.

such a large number of Palestinians inside without any real sense of freedom, rights and dignity ... will be inconceivable," he said. Guterres also warned that the risks of regional escalation of the conflict "are now becoming a reality," pointing to Lebanon, Yemen, Syria, Iraq and Pakistan. He urged all parties "to step back from the brink and to consider the horrendous costs" of a wider war. Netanyahu's rejection of a Palestinian state in any postwar scenario opened a wide rift with Israel's closest ally, the United States, which says the war must lead to negotiations for a two-state solution where Israel and the Palestinians can live side-by-side in peace.

In his toughest language yet on the Israeli-Hamas war, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told a ministerial meeting of the U.N. Security Council that "the right of the Palestinian people to build their own fully independent state must be recognized by all, and a refusal to accept the two-state solution by any party must be firmly rejected."

The alternative of a one-state solution "with

North Korea fires cruise missiles off west coast, Seoul says

Monitoring Desk
SEOUL: North Korea fired multiple cruise missiles towards the sea off its west coast on Wednesday, South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said, in the latest sign of heightened tensions on the Korean peninsula.

Pyeonggiang said it tested a solid-fuel hypersonic missile with intermediate-range earlier this month in a move that was condemned by the United States, South Korea and Japan.

The isolated North has also demolished a major monument in its capital that symbolized the goal of reconciliation with South Korea on the orders of leader Kim Jong Un, who last week called the rival a "primary foe" and said unification was no longer possible.

The missiles were fired at around 7 am (2200 GMT on Tuesday) and the launches were being analysed by South Korean and US intelligence, the JCS said in a statement.

Further activities by the North were being monitored, the JCS said.

Satellite imagery of Pyongyang on Tuesday showed that the monument, an arch symbolizing hopes for Korean reunification which was completed after a landmark inter-Korea summit in 2000, was no longer there, according to a report by NK News, an online outlet that monitors North Korea.

The latest firing of missiles by Pyongyang comes as the South Korean Navy's special warfare unit was taking part in training along the east coast in Gangwon Province bordering the North for 10 days.

The training was aimed at strengthening operational readiness following North Korea's recent artillery firing near a disputed maritime border and weapons tests, the JCS said.

Reuters could not independently confirm that the monument, known informally as the Arch of Reunification, had been demolished.

US military strikes two Houthi anti-ship missiles in Yemen

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: The US military carried out more strikes in Yemen early on Wednesday, destroying two Houthi anti-ship missiles that were aimed at the Red Sea and were preparing to launch, the US military said in a statement.

presented an imminent threat to merchant vessels and the US Navy ships in the region," the US military's Central Command said in a statement.

The US strikes, which took place at roughly 2:30 am (2330 GMT), are the latest against the Iran-backed group over its targeting of Red Sea shipping, and followed a larger round of strikes a day earlier.

"US forces subsequently struck and destroyed the missiles in self-defense."

The Houthis, who control the most populous parts of Yemen, have said their attacks are in solidarity with Palestinians as Israel strikes Gaza. The attacks have disrupted global shipping and deepened concern that fallout from the Israel-Hamas war could destabilize the Middle East.

Since the United States started striking Houthi military sites in Yemen on Jan. 11, the Pentagon says it has destroyed or degraded over 25 missile launch and deployment facilities and more than 20 missiles. It says it has also struck drones, coastal radar and Houthi air surveillance capabilities as well as weapon storage areas.

"US forces identified the missiles in Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen and

focused on targeting the kinds of things that they've been employing or using to conduct attacks against international shipping and mariners, and that will continue to be our focus."

French farmers block roads, appeal to government for help

Monitoring Desk
CASTELNAUDARY: Protesting farmers blocked roads across France on Wednesday to press the government to ease its drive for lower consumer prices and reduce environmental regulations. Many farmers struggle financially and say their livelihoods are threatened as food retailers are increasing pressure to bring down prices after a phase of high inflation.

producer, with thousands of independent producers of wine, meat and dairy. Farmers have a track record of disruptive protests.

Fearing a spillover from farmer protests in Germany, Poland and Romania, the government has already withdrawn a contested draft farming law.

"There are too many regulations," Thomas Bonnet, the head of a youth farmers' union in the south-western France's Castelnau area told Reuters at a blockade.

President Emmanuel Macron is also wary of farmers' growing support for the far-right ahead of the European Parliament elections in June. The unrest is the first major challenge for new Prime Minister Gabriel Attal and also resonates across Europe.

"We'd like to be able to work like in some of the neighbouring countries, to produce, cultivate, do our job," Arnaud Rousseau, the head of the powerful FNSEA farming union, told France 2 TV that he could not rule out that protests could disrupt the Paris region. Farming policy has always been a sensitive issue in France, the European Union's biggest agricultural

most of the farmers cannot make their living off the products they are producing," Thomas Waitz, a Green EU lawmaker from Austria, who is also a farmer and beekeeper, told Reuters.

As the EU's Green Deal of environmental policies is rolled out, farmers' increased work and costs need to be reflected in product prices, he said.



ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi addressing a ceremony to commemorate the International Day of Education.

Pakistan benefiting from first CPEC phase; engaged with China for next one: PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Wednesday said that having achieved the first phase of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Pakistan was benefiting from its early harvest projects while remaining engaged with China to execute the next phase. "We have already achieved the CPEC's first phase and we are benefiting from its early harvest projects. We are entering the second phase. We do need more deliberations when it comes to the second phase," he said in an interview with China Global Television Network (CGTN) during his visit to Davos to attend the World Economic Forum.

He said CPEC's second phase required road and air connectivity around

the industrialisation projects.

"Both sides are engaged and we have developed a lot of connectivity - road, air and rest of connectivity corridor. We are benefiting from the ecosystem of doing trade with one another," he remarked.

Asked how he articulated the Chinese economy, Prime Minister Kakar said, "I am always sanguine about it. There are 1.5 billion consumers and 1.5 billion producers... How can you divorce 1.5 billion people from 8 billion people? It has to remain connected."

He said being a huge marketplace, both China and the world were interested in each other.

Questioned about his government's priorities, the prime minister highlighted

the economic revival, the transformation of technology and taxation reforms.

He said Pakistan was on the middle ground amidst the discourse between Global North and South, and other conflicts in the region.

Domestically, he said, the government needed to earn more and spend less.

The prime minister said that Pakistan should remain focused on taking the advantage of opportunities in the region, including the Belt and Road Initiative and the relocation of Chinese industry.

He advocated the policy envisaging to encourage business and provide them electricity on competitive price to help the businesses produce competitive goods for export to the international market.

Pak urges 'concrete' UN steps to end Israeli Gaza slaughter; pushes for 2-state solution

UNITED NATIONS (APP): A senior Pakistani diplomat has called for "concrete steps" by the United Nations to stop the Israeli slaughter of the people in Gaza, as he underscored that a lasting end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can only come through a two-state solution.

"It is now time for the Security Council, for the entire membership of the United Nations, to consider measures by which to reverse this wanton rejection of peace," Ambassador Munir Akram told the 15-member body on Tuesday, referring to the repudiation of the two-state formula by Israel.

"We hope the Council will be able, finally, to adopt a resolution demanding a

complete cessation of hostilities, full access to humanitarian assistance for the besieged population of Gaza, and international protection for the Palestinian people," he said in a high-level Council debate on the Middle East crisis.

Tuesday's meeting featured more than 60 speakers, including many ministers, who discussed the need for a humanitarian ceasefire, the urgency with which to scale up aid, the importance of pursuing a two-State solution and the imperative to avoid further regional escalation.

Deploing Israel's defiance of world opinion, Ambassador Akram said, "If the Israeli leadership persists in refusing peace, the Security Council, the General Assembly.

Baseless things are threat for freedom of expression, journalism: Solangi

ISLAMABAD (Online): Caretaker federal information minister Murtaza Solangi has said baseless things are threat for freedom of expression and journalism.

He said this while talking to media men here Wednesday.

He indicated that 2024 is year of election in different countries. The elections are taking place in Pakistan, India, US and Indonesia.

General election is going to be held on February 8 in Pakistan while elections are taking place in Indonesia after one week. Election in US will be held in November.

He held the threat of evening vloggers has come fore due to different reason in Pakistan. Millions of views come on their baseless things. This is serious threat to freedom of expression and freedom of media.

we talked of propaganda of Hitler era and today we are talking of this as well.

News room will have to make fact check departments.

Mobile are in the hands of 150 million people in our country. It has become hard to bring truth before the people.



QUETTA: Accountant General Balochistan Nasrullah Jan meeting with Governor Balochistan Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar.

Farooq urges people to make successful to NP on Feb, 8 by votes

QUETTA (APP): National Party (NP)'s candidate from PB-46 Haji Farooq Shahwani on Wednesday said that people should make successful the National Party on February 8 through their votes for wider interest of Balochistan. He expressed these views while addressing at corner meeting at Hazargnaji area. A large number of people including party workers attended the meeting. A member of Provincial Working Committee of National Party and a nominated candidate from PB-46 Haji Farooq Shahwani said that the National Party was a party that was politically serious

and upholds Balochi traditions. The vision of the National Party is an educated Balochistan. During the last five years, the members of the Nationalist Political Party elected from the areas received development funds worth billions of rupees, which instead of being spent for the development and prosperity of the people of the respective areas were used for their interest, he claimed.

He said that the people of Saryab today were deprived of all basic facilities, people should make Dr. Abdul Malik Baloch and National Party successful to end the deprivations of Balochistan.

Pak, Russia sign MoU on cooperation in sports, physical culture

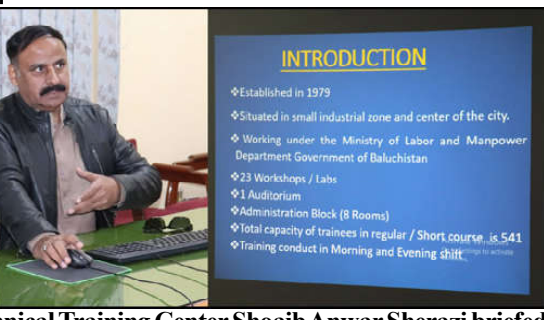
ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and Russia on Wednesday signed a Memorandum of Understanding aimed at enhancing bilateral cooperation in the fields of sports and physical culture.

The MoU was signed between Pakistan's Ministry of Inter-Provincial Coordination and Sports Ministry of Russia, Pakistan's Embassy in Moscow said on its X account.

He said this while talking to media men here Wednesday.

He indicated that 2024 is year of election in different countries. The elections are taking place in Pakistan, India, US and Indonesia.

General election is going to be held on February 8 in Pakistan while elections are taking place in Indonesia after one week. Election in US will be held in November.



QUETTA: Principal Technical Training Center Shoaib Anwar Sherazi briefed caretaker Provincial Finance Minister Amjad Rasheed during his visit of center

Afridi gets protective bail in 2 cases

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday granted protective bail to PFI leader Shehryar Khan Afridi in two cases and stopped the police from arresting him till February 6. Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani heard the case of Afridi seeking protective bail in two FIR registered in Kohat against him. The court accepted the bail against surety bonds worth Rs 20,000 and stopped the police from arresting the petitioner. The court also instructed the petitioner to approach the relevant court for relief during the period.

Health Secretary directs to take action against unregistered & substandard private hospitals

QUETTA (APP): Balochistan Health Secretary Abdullah Khan on Wednesday directed the Healthcare Commission to take strict action against unregistered hospitals and substandard private hospitals to improve and regulate services of private hospitals.

The Secretary instructed the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Healthcare Commission to take steps to meet the standards of the hospital for the interest of patients, said a press release issued here.

He said that measures were being taken to improve treatment quality in hospitals of the province saying that no compromise would be made on the standard of the hospitals. The secretary said that the Health Department was taking steps to regularize the sale of medicines which would be regularly monitored by drug inspectors.

Crackdown against defaulters & electricity pilferers continues

QUETTA (APP): The Quetta Electric Supply Company (QESCO) continued its crackdown against the defaulters of electricity utility bills and those involved in the pilferage of electricity all over the province.

According to the spokesman of QESCO, at least 321 power connections of the defaulters were disconnected on non-payment in different circles of Quetta, Pishin, Loralai, Sibi, Khuzdar and Makran.

Moreover, 59 shunt and tempered meters were also removed and replaced with the new ones in Quetta city.

The spokesman of QESCO informed that Rs. 2.656 billion have so far been recovered from the defaulters of utility bills in the province.

The hefty amount has been recovered from over 161,319 defaulting consumers during the special ongoing campaign of QESCO.

In addition to this, a total of 556 FIRs have so far been registered against the power pilferers in the province.

It may be mentioned here that 1178 written applications have been submitted in different police stations of the province.

President calls for education emergency to enroll 26m out-of-school children

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Wednesday called for the enrollment of around 26 million out-of-school children in the country through drastic measures including education emergency, double shifts in educational institutes and utilizing the mosque for teaching purposes.

The president, addressing an event in connection with the World Education Day, also suggested a mechanism to engage the newly graduated and intermediate students for teaching the out-of-school children, offering them a stipend.

Additionally, he also advocated the promotion of online education, besides extending the facilities to doctors, engineers, and trained workforce in the country to discourage the trend of moving abroad.

He said the alarming figure of 26 million out-of-school children was worri-

some for the country and exemplified other countries including Sri Lanka and Bangladesh where children enrollment was around 98 to 100 percent.

He said the educating the children was of paramount importance to produce a skilled and qualified workforce, not merely the laborers. Lauding the contribution of the partner organisations, the president said the country should take advantage of their services for benefit of the future generations.

He informed the gathering that since Pakistan's inception, around 55,000 schools were built and the enrolment of out-of-school children required another 50,000 schools which was extremely difficult, considering educational budget of the provinces. In such a scenario, the out-of-box solutions were a must to cope with the challenge, he added.

Reiterating his sugges-

tion to use the mosque platform as a centre of learning, he said the worship places were equipped with all basic facilities including electricity and clean drinking water. The platform can be used to teach out-of-school children in alternative timings including both boys and girls at separate mosques, he added.

President Alvi lauded the Benazir Income Support Program for its contributions to child and mother's health and suggested to link financial assistance with the enrollment of out-of-school children.

Highlighting the ratio of 15-20 percent of Dyslexia disease in the country, he appreciated the measures taken for the suffering children.

The president also said the enrollment in higher education after intermediate was around 10-12 percent in Pakistan as compared to 24 percent in neighboring countries.



LAHORE: Caretaker Federal Minister of Communications, Shahid Ashraf Chauring the meeting at Chief Secretary Office.

DG PDMA calls on Chinese CG in Karachi

QUETTA: The Director General Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Jahanzaib Khan called on the Chinese Consul General, Mr Yang Yungdang in Chinese Consulate, Karachi on Wednesday.

During the course of meeting, DG PDMA briefed the Chinese diplomat about the overall functioning of the Authority in detail.

Speaking to the DG PDMA assured every possible cooperation to DG PDMA for enhancing capacity of the Authority besides putting it on modern lines.

China ready to work with Pak to upgrade CPEC: Wang

BEIJING (APP): China on Wednesday said it was ready to work with Pakistan to upgrade the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and accelerate the building of an even closer China-Pakistan community with a shared future in the new era.

"China stands ready to work with Pakistan to deliver on the important common understandings between the leaders of the two countries, deepen political mutual trust, and expand practical cooperation," Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Wang Wenbin said during his regular briefing on a question by APP correspondent.

ECP unveils final list of ten minority seats in NA

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has unveiled the ultimate compilation of ten minority seats within the National Assembly.

The final list consists of candidates from different parties, with 10 representing Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), 5 from Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F), 2 from Threek-e-Labbaik (TLP), 7 from Pakistan People's Party (PPP), 4 from Jamaat-e-Islami, and 3 from Mutahidda Quomi Movement (MQM).

Caretaker Minister for Finance says: Govt taking measures for promotion of technical education in Balochistan

QUETTA: The caretaker Provincial Minister for Finance and Revenue, Amjad Rasheed has stated that the interim provincial government is taking measures for promotion of technical education in the province.

He exhorted the youngsters to learn skills along with education.

He hailed the establishment of sub office of the Overseas Employment Corporation and believed that it would have far reaching results in time to come.

Amjad Rasheed was speaking on occasion of the visit of Technical Training Center here on Wednesday.

The Principal TTC Shoaib Anwar Sherazi briefed the visiting Minister about overall functioning of the Center.

Meanwhile, he also visited different sections of the Center and reviewed its functioning.

Expressing satisfaction over the performance of TTC, the Minister said that technical education happens to be surety of educational and economic stability of any society.

He said that the pace of development is faster in the countries which paid attention towards the technical education by making it part of its routine and generalized education.

He strongly believed that not only the issue of unemployment can be overcome but the country can also be put on path of development and prosperity by decorating the younger generation with the technical education.

He pledged to utilize all available resources for promotion of technical education in the province.

He said that there is need of skilled human resource in different countries of the world.



QUETTA: Needy people are taking warm clothes from Wall of Kindness (Divar-e-Meharbari), near Commissioner office in Quetta.

BBISE finalize arrangements for annual matric exams on Feb 20

QUETTA (APP): Balochistan Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BBISE) Controller, Abida Kakar on Wednesday said that matric exams would start from February 20 and in this regard, all necessary preparation has been made to conduct the exam in a peaceful environment.

Talking to media here, she said that during the examination, if any supervisory staff tried to sabotage the examination process, strict action would be taken against him.

During the exams, she said that all the photostat shops will remain closed and mobile phones would not be allowed in and around the exams centers. She said, if any student is found cheating, his result would be cancelled.

If any class IV staff is found assisting the student during exams, the disciplinary action would be taken against him, she warned.

Abida Kakar said that BBISE has gradually shifted from a manual system to digitalization and the people would get better facilities in future. Balochistan government was leaving no stone unturned to end menace of cheating being reported during exams, she said.

"We will have to fight together to discourage copying system for the bright future of the students," she said.

FDI ED meeting with Commissioner: Special measures stressed for making easy access of female voters to polling stations

Commissioner office, FDI ink MoU to conduct awareness session in educational institutions

QUETTA: The Executive Director of Forum for Dignity Initiative (FDI) Ms Uzma Yaqoob along with Ms Shayan Imran had meeting with the Commissioner Quetta, Muhammad Hamza Shafiqat here on Wednesday.

During the course of meeting, the matters about preparations of the upcoming general elections, women representation in the voting process were discussed.

They also discussed the accessibility of women, disabled persons and transgenders to the polling stations.

The meeting stressed maximum participation of

women voters in the polling stations.

For the purpose, easy access of women should be ensured, it was further stressed.

APP adds: The Office of Commissioner Quetta Division has inked a Memorandum of Understanding with Forum for Dignity Initiatives to conduct awareness sessions in educational institutions of Quetta Division regarding the kind treatment and attitudes towards persons with disabilities, transgender and women.

Commissioner Quetta Division Muhammad Hamza Shafiqat and Executive Director Forum for Dignity Initiatives (FDI)

Uzma Yaqoob signed the agreement.

The Commissioner's Office and FDI will collaborate to engage the youth of Quetta Division in climate education, innovation, policy and leadership.

According to the plan, educational institutions in the provincial capital will be selected to hold sessions on climate action.

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KHARAN: Chief Secretary Balochistan Shakeel Qadir Khan and Caretaker Home Minister Captain (retd) Mir Muhammad Zubair Khan Jamali presiding over a meeting regarding preparation for upcoming general elections