

Independent

Member APNS & CPNE

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Islamabad demands New Delhi's accountability on int'l level Horrorifying Indian plot of terrorism in Pakistan exposed thanks to vigilant security agencies

Foreign Office says credible evidence of links between Indian agents and assassination of 2 Pakistanis; Calls Indian campaign "sophisticated and sinister"

Independent Report
ISLAMABAD: The Pakistani security institutions have successfully exposed the terrorist group as well as Indian handlers and facilitators involved in the terrorism acts and target killings.

The security institutions exposed the plot on basis of evidences that two Indian citizens namely Ashok Kumar and Yugaish Kumar were directly involved in the killing of Muhammad Riaz and Shahid Latif.



undeniable evidences. The target killers involved in the cold blooded killings were arrested when they were attempting to flee from Pakistan.

Both the deceased were peaceful citizens and their only fault was to expose the ongoing cruelty, barbarism and heinous face of India in Kashmir.

The investigating agencies have the authentic proofs that the Indian citizens present in third country were involved in the whole targeted killing campaign, who were not

only giving directives along with its funding, but were also controlling the drive. Matter of fact also remains that India assassinated the innocent people in terrorism acts in different countries including Pakistan, but no concrete evidences were provided about their evidences.



GWADAR: Caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki presiding over a meeting regarding provision of water to Gwadar and surroundings

Provision of clean drinking water to be ensured in Gwadar, assures CM

Mir Ali Mardan Domki directs concerned authorities to start work on all pending projects of water sector in port city without any further delay

Independent Report

QUETTA: The caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki has directed to the concerned authorities to ensure provision of clean drinking water in Gwadar district, and for the purpose, the work must be started on the pending schemes of water sector without any further delay.

The Chief Minister was chairing a high level meeting held to review the issue of potable water and other related issues in Gwadar on Thursday.

Mr. Domki reached Gwadar to review law and order situation and preparations of the general elections in Gwadar the same morning.



ISLAMABAD: Head of Al-Jomaih Group alongwith a delegation called on Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.

Unless education made centre of policies Dream of literate Balochistan can't be materialized: Kakar

Independent Report
QUETTA: The Governor Balochistan, Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar has stated that education is base of every kind of development, and as such we can't materialize dream of literate province until and unless we make education Centre of policies and projects at the national level.

should realize that the secret of ending issue of unemployment, overcoming different crimes and promoting economic activities lies in generalizing technical and vocational education.

However, it is unfortunate that thousands of children of Balochistan are deprived of the ornament of education in the present era science and technology even, adding he regretfully pointed out.

The Governor emphasized upon spreading education in the areas where there is still darkness of ignorance and thus educate those who are deprived of the education.

He also underlined the need to highlight the high character and honor of the teachers just because they are the soul of educational system.

The Governor stated so in a message issued marking the international Education Day observed on Wednesday.

The Governor said that the objective behind observance of the International Education Day this year is to ensure sustainable peace and harmony by getting education.

He stressed that we

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KALAT: President Balochistan National Party Sardar Akhtar Jan Mengal and Prince Agha Musa Jan Ahmedzai addressing a public gathering

Caretaker CM condemns Turbat firing incident, seeks report from Home Department

Independent Report
QUETTA: The caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki has condemned the incident of firing took place at the Regional Election Commissioner office, Turbat on Thursday.

He directed the concerned authorities to mobilize all resources for arrest of the culprits involved in the incident.

He expressed grief and sorrow over martyrdom of a police cop in the firing.

He asserted that the sacrifices of all security forces and police would not go wasted at all. He also paid homage to the brave soldiers who rendered sacrifice of their lives while performing their duties.

The Chief Minister assured that peaceful and con-

Maryam Nawaz says: PML-N does not believe in politics of allegations

LAHORE (Online): PML-N vice president Maryam Nawaz has said PML-N does not believe in the politics of allegations.

"PML-N got done development work where it was not given mandate. Nawaz Sharif will soon present manifesto before the people. Vote will decide about your and your children future. On February 8 you have to come out of homes and cast vote, she said this while addressing a public meeting here Thursday.

I accepted to go to jail but I stood with my father. Today I am among you. This constituency is my home. Ballot paper is not only a ballot paper but it is decision about your and your children future.

Nawaz Sharif had eliminated darkness and terrorism from the country till 2017, she added.

Senior Govt officer, cop shot dead

PESHAWAR (APP): Unidentified armed men on Thursday shot dead a Senior Planning Officer of the Social Welfare department here in the jurisdiction of Police Station Gul Bahar and a police constable in the jurisdiction of Police Station Daudzai.

According to police, armed motorcyclists targeted the senior planning officer when he was going to the office in his official vehicle. The attackers managed to escape from the scene.

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QUETTA: Members of Baloch Solidarity Committee are gathered to welcome Dr. Mahrang Baloch after reaching Quetta from Islamabad, in Quetta.

PM urges Saudi Arabia's Jomaih Group to invest in Pak alternative energy sector

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Thursday urged the Al-Jomaih Group of Saudi Arabia to invest in the alternative energy sector of Pakistan.

The prime minister, in a meeting with a four-member delegation, led by the Al-Jomaih Group head Sheikh Abdulaziz Hammad, said Pakistan and Saudi Arabia had brotherly ties which were getting further stronger.

Democratic system meant to serve people, not vice versa: Solangi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi addressing seminar on "Electoral Code of Conduct: Ethical Practices of Stakeholders including Media", organized by the Press Information Department.

Constitution, Pakistan was a federal parliamentary democratic country and the people's elected representatives must do legislation to strengthen the system.

The minister said that the concept of "recalling elections" was first introduced in Greece and the practice was now being followed by other countries, including Canada, the United States of America and Germany.

Bilawal proposes to make Zardari president of Pakistan

LAHORE (Online): PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has proposed to make Asif Ali Zardari president of Pakistan.

Bilawal Bhutto has placed the proposal in this regard before party.

Bilawal Bhutto said we should learn from experience of Asif Ali Zardari. It is my desire Asif Ali Zardari becomes president of Pakistan once again.

Senior politician Illahi Bux Soomro 'passes away'

KARACHI (INP): Senior politician and former National Assembly speaker Illahi Bux Soomro passed away on Thursday.

According to family sources, politician Illahi Bux Soomro breathed his last at a private hospital in Karachi due to cardiac arrest.

Soomro was the 16th Speaker of the National Assembly of Pakistan. He belonged to an influential political family of Sindh.

Nawaz, Zardari's cases should be heard on daily basis; Imran demands

Monitoring Desk
ISLAMABAD: Amid back-to-back hearings of his corruption cases, the incarcerated Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan on Thursday asked an accountability court judge to also continue proceedings against his rivals, Nawaz Sharif and Asif Ali Zardari.

The discussion between the former prime minister and the judge, Muhammad Bashir, was held during the hearing of the £190 million National Crime Agency (NCA) scandal case.

"Nawaz Sharif [Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N)] — and Asif Ali Zardari [Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) co-chairman] have been given February 13 date for hearings of the Toshakhana cases. Every day, I hear about the filing of back-to-back cases against me," Khan said at the outset of today's hearing. The disqualified premier, who rose to power in 2018 and was ousted from the PM's office after losing a confidence vote from parliament in 2022, asked the judge to conduct daily hearings of his rivals' cases.

Democratic process can't be affected owing to terrorists'

Caretaker Provincial Minister Information lashes out at Amnesty International report, terms it biased and partial, urges AI not to become instrument of propaganda of separatist groups

Independent Report
QUETTA: The caretaker Provincial Minister for Information, Jan Achakzai has categorically stated that there are challenges of law and order and security threats exist in different parts of the country including Balochistan, however, these threats and subversive acts can't affect the democratic process and as such the general elections would be conducted on the given time.

He noted that the incidents of terrorists may occur in Balochistan, Islamabad and different other parts of the country as the security threats have been received, still the democratic process can't be affected due to these threats or terrorists' attacks.

General Elections 2024 to be held on scheduled time: Democratic process can't be affected owing to terrorists'

The Information Minister was addressing a hurriedly called press conference at the Civil Secretariat on Thursday.

Jan Achakzai on the occasion particularly criticized the negative propaganda campaign run by

He directed to frame comprehensive mechanism for resolving the public complaints.

Democratic process can't be affected owing to terrorists'

General Elections 2024 to be held on scheduled time: Democratic process can't be affected owing to terrorists'

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SC issues written judgment regarding PTI's intra party elections, symbol

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Supreme Court on Thursday issued a detailed written judgment regarding the intra party elections of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and its election symbol 'cricket bat'.

The 38-page judgment, authored by Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa, read: "The petition of Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) is converted into an appeal and allowed by setting aside the impugned order and judgment of the PHC (Peshawar High Court); resultantly, the order of the ECP dated 22 December 2023 is upheld.

"The ECP had issued a notice on 24 May 2021 to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) to hold intra party elections, which was followed by a show cause notice stating that section 208 of Elections Act, 2017 ('the Act') mandates that intra party elections in PTI must be held and it had been five

years since the last one was held, and ECP stipulated the consequences, mentioned in the Act, which would follow if elections were not held. PTI did not dispute that elections had not been held but submitted that because of Covid-19 the time for holding its intra party elections may be extended by one year. Time was granted and PTI was directed to hold intra party elections no later than 13 June 2022 and told that 'no further extension will be granted'.

"The ECP vide its order dated 13 September 2023 held that 'a lenient view has been taken with direction to the PTI to hold its intra party elections strictly in accordance with the prevailing party constitution, within twenty days positively' failing which it 'would be ineligible to obtain an election symbol for elections.

"ECP has been calling

upon PTI to hold its intra party elections since 24 May 2021; at that time the PTI was in the Federal Government and in some provinces. Therefore, it cannot be stated that ECP was victimizing PTI. Nonetheless, we wanted to satisfy ourselves that the ECP had not acted mala fide or for ulterior reasons or that PTI was discriminated against.

"It transpired that ECP had passed orders against thirteen other registered political parties which were far more severe than the order passed against PTI.

"ECP wanted to ensure that PTI holds intra party elections. The mere production of a certificate stating that such elections were held would not suffice to establish that intra party elections had been held when a challenge was thrown to such an assertion. Nor, in our opinion, should ECP concern itself with minor irregularities in the



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Interior Minister Dr. Gohar Ejaz in a meeting with Secretary Interior, Chief Commissioner and IG Islamabad.



ISLAMABAD: Principal Information Officer Dr. Tariq Mehmood Khan addresses participants of seminar titled 'Electoral Code of Conduct: Ethical Practices of Stakeholders including Media' organized by the Press Information Department.

Democratic system....

Solangi said that the caretaker government was taking all possible steps to facilitate the ECP to hold free, fair and transparent elections on February 8 so that the people could elect candidates and parties of their choice in a peaceful environment.

He said that the Election Commission had issued a code of conduct, and the

media houses management and media persons should be fully mindful of it.

He said that some elements were involved in baseless propaganda and spreading rumours regarding the February elections.

It was being claimed that the elections would be postponed due to severe cold or security grounds, but that propaganda had now died down, he added.

Democratic process can't be...

Mah Rang Baloch against Pakistan and said that the people of Pakistan including Balochistan would never accept the disgusting campaign.

He said that the people of Islamabad totally rejected the protest sit-in staged by Baloch Yakjehti Committee under leadership of Mah Rang Baloch.

Jan Achakzai also lashed out at the Amnesty International's report about the BYC protest. He noted with concern that on one hand, AI expresses such grave concern over the state of Mah Rang-led long march, while on the other hand, it has shut its eyes from the gross human rights violation being done by the Indian armed forces in the Occupied Kashmir.

He said that this hypocritical and prejudiced attitude of AI also negates the association considered about the human rights violation.

The demand of withdrawing legal action against those involved in the illegal

activities also sets a dangerous example, the Minister Information regretfully pointed out, and adding demanded of the AI to maintain its impartiality and avoid to become instrument of propaganda by the separatist groups.

He said that the AI seems concerned to appease the separatist groups instead of making impartial reporting.

He said that the terrorist organizations are responsible for cruelties against the innocent people through terrorism attacks.

He said that mischievous propaganda was made against Pakistan by them, which is condemnable.

Referring the message of Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir for youth, the Minister Information maintained that they (youth) should have confidence on their homeland, nation, culture, civilization and above all on themselves. They (youngsters) are the custodians of bright traditions of the nation and country, he added.

Business linkages hackathon organizes in six districts of Balochistan



QUETTA: EU funded Growth for Rural Advancement and Sustainable Progress (GRASP) is implemented by ITC and its core partner Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF), along with its partner organization Taraqee Foundation, to support poverty reduction and sustainable, inclusive growth in rural Sindh and Balochistan.

Business linkages hackathon was organized in six districts of Balochistan, Quetta, Pishin, Kharan, Nushki, Musa Khel and Zhob to promote better coordination between entrepreneurs.

The Hackathon organized for Farmers, FAO, BRSP, Banks, Livestock Department, Agriculture Department, Agriculture Council Balochistan, Commission Agents, Input Suppliers, Aggregators, Zamindar action committee and PPAF. The focus was on increasing connectivity and facilitation between these stakeholders.

The event successfully brought together all stakeholders to achieve better and more efficient results from the Hackathon. The public and social circles of the concerned six districts have termed the event organized by Taraqee Foundation as a good initiative and expressed hope that it will start a new journey towards development and prosperity in the area.

CPEC emerges as a symbol of exemplary friendship: Chinese Consul General

LAHORE (INP): The Consul General of the People's Republic of China in Lahore Mr. Zhao Shiren has said that China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is the glowing example and hallmark of deepening China-Pakistan friendship and partnership.

He expressed these views while talking to journalists in Meet the Press Program of Lahore Press Club on Thursday.

While addressing the media, Consul General Mr. Zhao Shiren further said that CPEC is the joint venture of China and Pakistan which has completed 10 years and will be completed in any case. Under CPEC, 26 billion dollars have been invested so far, while construction is still going on. About electric transmission line, he said it is being upgraded. We want to bring prosperity to our old friend Pakistan. Pakistan is an agricultural country and Punjab government has formulated a ten year plan regarding agricultural development. The Consulate General stands ready to work with the Punjab to enhance agricultural cooperation. He said that China, Pakistan and Iran are three friendly countries and together they will move jointly ahead in the region. There should not be any conflict between Pakistan

and Iran, the situation will return to the previous position soon. Friendship between brothers and friends is in China's interest.

He thanked the journalist community for the excellent coverage of Pak-China friendship and CPEC. He said China will further strengthen the mutual relations with the journalists' community. The Chinese Consul General said that Pakistan and India have disputes over Kashmir, which is related to sovereignty and territorial integrity. He calls for both sides to resolve this issue in accordance with the UN Charter and the relevant UNSC resolutions.

He said that ML-1 is a big project, and it was proposed by Pakistan, which we are ready to build and the people of Pakistan will be hopefully get good news soon. In this regard, the Chinese railway engineering delegation has also visited Pakistan last month.

About the ML1 project, he said it will be completed in two phases, first from Peshawar to Lahore and then from Lahore to Karachi.

Various suggestions were given to the Chinese Consul General by the Lahore Press Club, on which he said that he would take every possible measures in this regard.

Alfred Grannas added distinction to a special meeting with German alumni at CUI

ISLAMABAD: H.E. Mr. Alfred Grannas, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Islamabad added distinction to a special meeting with German alumni here at COMSATS University Islamabad (CUI). The event was also graced with the presence of Ms. Yasmin Paracha, Interim Director of the DAAD Information Centre, Islamabad.

Prof. Dr. Sajid Qamar, Rector CUI, extended a warm welcome to the distinguished guests and highlighted the significant contributions of German alumni of the university, illustrating the lasting bonds between the two nations. The university forged academic, cultural, research and scientific connections with Germany in 2005 under the leadership of the founding Rector, Dr. S. M. Junaid Zaidi, H.I., S.I., who was also present during the event. "The university features one of the longest and most extensive partnerships with Germany", Dr. Qamar revealed.

The Head of the International Office of CUI, Dr. Hammad Omer, T.I., presented a detailed briefing to the envoy on CUI's achievements and 25-year milestones, showcasing its extensive engagement with Germany. Currently, operating in seven campuses

in Pakistan having over 1,100 PhD faculty members, the university offers more than 100 degree programs, with a student population exceeding 34,500, including 360 international students. Over 93,000 students, including 846 PhDs, have graduated from the university. CUI is ranked by THE World University Rankings 2024 holding a position in the band of 601-800 globally, securing the 6th position in Pakistan. Prof. Dr. Jamshed Iqbal, T.I., Head of CUI's Centre for Advanced Drug Research, serving as a focal person for CUI German Alumni, detailing the university's collaborations with Germany, presented current and past collaborations. He acknowledged Ms. Yasmin for providing tenacious support of the DAAD.

During the gathering, the Ambassador witnessed a transformative impact of quality education on the lives of German alumni. The university sought valuable guidance and support from the Embassy in various areas, including establishing further connections with top German universities, hosting cultural activities, offering German classes, facilitating research collaborations particularly facilitating the German alumni to secure funding from DAAD and participating in faculty exchange programs.



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Pakistani, Iranian envoys discuss

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's Ambassador to Belarus Sajjad Haider Khan held a meeting with Ambassador of Iran to Belarus Afireza Saneji in Minsk, Belarus on Thursday and discussed matters of mutual interest.

PPP's Tufail Khan joins ANP

By Atiq Ur Rahman Khaksar

RUSTAM, Mardan: Awami National Party leader and city mayor Mardan Hemayatullah Mayar, along with ANP NA-21 candidate Ahmed Ali Khan and PK-55 candidate Sohail Bacha, held a crowded press conference at Rustam Press Club and welcomed People's Party thesist Rustam's general secretary Tufail Khan, along with his family and friends, to ANP membership and put a cap on him.

He said that Maulana Fazlur Rehman is trying to postpone the elections by making excuses of cold and security threats. Maulana Sahib, I want to remind you that the ANP and Pakistan security forces have faced the terrorists bravely but did not demand to postpone the elections in 2008. Maulana Sahib left the tickets to the capitalists and landlords, disappointing his own party workers. The city mayor also criticized PTI and said that ANP had left a huge amount in the provincial treasury, but PTI's incompetent rulers emptied the treasury and made the country and province indebted by billions of rupees.



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Horrifying Indian plot of terrorism in Pakistan...

Continued from page 1

world level.

India had made plot to assassinate all the Sikh leaders who used to raise voice against the Indian cruel acts.

After killing of Sikh leader in Canada, it was also conspired to kill another Sikh leader settled in USA, however, it was exposed because of the timely intervention of the US secret agencies.

The accused of the conspiracy is facing the judicial proceedings in US these days.

India has made a group of the paid target killers through RAW all over the world.

Undoubtedly it is major achievement of Pakistani security institutions to apprehend the group and made the evidences public.

What's needed is that the world community should take notice of the open terrorism and violation of international laws by India.

Pakistani security and law enforcement agencies are determined to respond to the Indian terrorism and make their citizens safer.

APP adds: Foreign Secretary Muhammad Syrus Sajjad Qazi on Thursday said Pakistani authorities apprehended a group of India backed assassins involved in the killing of two Pakistani nationals in Sialkot and Rawalakot.

At a press briefing here, he said the Indian agents masterminded deaths of two Pakistanis Shahid Latif and Muhammad Riaz in 2023.

The foreign secretary said India was running a sophisticated and sinister campaign of extra-territorial

and extra-judicial killings inside Pakistan.

"Indian agents used technology and safe havens on foreign soil to commit assassinations in Pakistan. They recruited, financed and supported criminals, terrorists and unsuspecting civilians to play defined roles in these assassinations," he revealed.

He stated that these were killing-for-hire cases and involved a sophisticated international set-up spread over multiple jurisdictions.

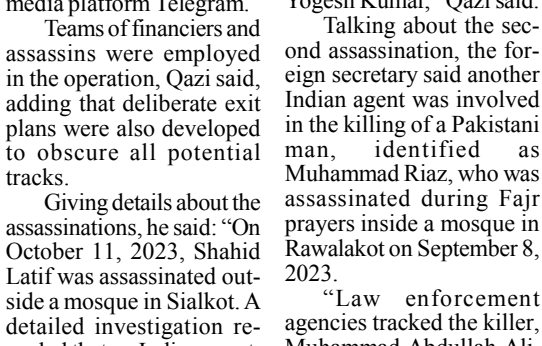
He said the assassins were recruited using social media platform Telegram.

Teams of financiers and assassins were employed in the operation, Qazi said, adding that deliberate exit plans were also developed to obscure all potential tracks.

Giving details about the assassinations, he said: "On October 11, 2023, Shahid Latif was assassinated outside a mosque in Sialkot. A detailed investigation revealed that an Indian agent, Yogesh Kumar, based in a third country orchestrated the assassination."

Qazi said Kumar recruited Muhammad Umair, a labourer in the third country, to act as a contact with local criminals in Pakistan to trace and assassinate Shahid Latif. "They recruited local criminals who were able to locate Shahid Latif, however, they were unable to carry out the execution."

"After some of the failed attempts, Umair himself was personally sent to Pakistan to carry out the assassination," the foreign secretary said, adding that Umair organised a team of



WASHINGTON: Ambassador Masood Khan in a virtual meeting with President Pakistan Chamber of Commerce USA, Amir Piprani, Pak Consul General in Houston, Aftab Ahmed Chaudhry and Trade & Investment Attaché Ms. Shaista Bunyad also present during the meeting.

gators identified Ali's facilitators on the basis of confessional statements and technical evidence.

"We have documentary, financial and forensic evidence of the involvement of the two Indian agents who masterminded these assassinations," he said, adding that the Pakistan government was releasing the passport details of these agents.

Qazi further said that Islamabad had also reached out to the governments of relevant third countries. "There are a few other cases of similar gravity at various stages of investigation," he added.

He stated that these cases revealed a "growing sophistication and brazenness of Indian-sponsored terrorist acts in Pakistan", highlighting that such incidents were also reported in Canada and the US. "The Indian network of extra-judicial and extra-territorial killings has become a global phenomenon," the foreign secretary noted.

Qazi said it was critical to bring the killers, their facilitators and financiers to justice. "India must be held accountable internationally for its blatant violation of international law. India's assassination of Pakistani nationals on Pakistani soil is a violation of its sovereignty and a breach of the UN charter," he added.

Qazi said Pakistan remained committed to protecting its people and securing its sovereignty, adding that the protection of Pakistan and any foreign national on Pakistani soil was priority for the government.

TENDER NOTICE

The Balochistan Institute Child Health Services Quetta invites bids from eligible Bidders for supply of following items. TSE-232401373822 Note: In All Procurements of GOB Whether Through Electronic or Manual Bid Submission, it is Mandatory For All Bidders to Get Registered At Electronic Public Procurement System of BPPRA GOB. Tender Fee Not required.

S.No	Class of Object	Bid Security
1	OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE (Total Item(s) Count: 1)	2%

Procurements shall be made under the Balochistan Public Procurement Rules - 2014. Eligibility of Bidders: 3 Assignments of Similar Nature and Complexity Worth PKR. 1,500,000 Million each in Previous 3 Years. Accumulated Turn over of at least PKR 3,000,000 Million in 3 Subsequent Previous Years. Presence in Active Tax Payer List BRA Registration Certificate. The bidding firm must not be currently blacklisted by any procuring agency of Pakistan. Must be Authorized Agent / distributor from the principle/ Manufacturer of existing Oxygen Plant and having ability to provide original spare parts and technical support. **Procedure of Procurement:** Single Stage Two 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 undersigned from a scheduled bank. **Tender Documents:** The NIT & Bidding Document can be obtained electronically from www.bppra.gov.pk Issuance of tender Documents: Complete Bidding Document can be viewed at www.bppra.gov.pk. **Last Date of bid submission:** Bid can only be submitted electronically latest by 07 February, 2024 till 09:00 AM through supplier dashboard. **Tender opening:** All tenders will be opened on same day at 10:00 AM on EPPS System Address: Quary road Quetta Phone no: 3337666375 Fax no: 0812823712 Email: habibullahbabar00@gmail.com

Chief Executive Officer
Balochistan Institute Child Health Services Quetta

AB No. 286/25-1-2024
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ISLAMABAD: A delegation of elected members of Gilgit-Baltistan Council called on President Dr. Arif Alvi at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Dr Nadeem bans sugary products in health ministry

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Health Dr. Nadeem Jan on Thursday announced to ban serving of sugary products in his ministry, asking other ministries to follow this after the advisory to be issued soon.

He was addressing a seminar jointly organized by the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations, PANAH and other civil society organizations to address the issues of excessive use of sugary drinks and their fatal impact on human health.

He said, "We committed to strengthen all initiatives to address health hazards associated with sweetened beverages."

The minister said that our commitment to addressing Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) was deeply embedded in our National Health Vision, which led to the development of the NCDs Action Framework. Aligned with global targets, this framework outlines our strategic actions to tackle current challenges.

He said recognizing the impact of sweetened beverages on public health, the ministry was working diligently to regulate trans fats and fatty acids to no more than two percent of the total fats

in all foods. Dr. Nadeem Jan added that through collaboration with the Pakistan Standards and Quality Control Authority, we aim to enforce front-of-pack nutrition labeling and warning signs on foods high in sugar, salt, and unhealthy fats. He said that the ministry's partnership with the Federal Board of Revenue involves increasing excise taxes on ultra-processed foods, particularly sugary drinks.

He added this fiscal measure was a vital step to discourage the consumption of unhealthy products and promote better dietary choices.

The minister said, "We are committed to ensuring a healthy diet in public procurements and official meetings, setting an example for the entire nation."

Pakistan National Heart Association (PANAH), President, Major General (Retd) Masud ur Rehman Kiani said that focus should be on preventive health which was the most effective way to combat NCDs.

He said that unhealthy diet was among the major risk factors to many NCDs like heart diseases, diabetes, stroke, liver and kidney diseases.

Election seminars help enhance PID's election awareness efforts: PIO

ISLAMABAD (APP): ways to improve the country's economy.

He said PID's success was achieved when election seminars prompt a debate on election rule implementation and raise public awareness.

The PIO mentioned that the Press Information Department (PID) had arranged a series of seminars covering various topics, with a focus on the upcoming general elections.

PID is set to organise two additional seminars in Karachi and Lahore, aiming to deliberate on the rules governing elections and the significance of the electoral process.

In his welcome address, at the seminar titled Electoral Code of Conduct: "Ethical Practices of Stakeholders including Media," he said PID's success relied on its dedication to kickstarting a discussion on implementing the rules of the game and exploring

PML-N to issues manifesto on Jan 27: Irfan Siddique

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) Senator Irfan ul Haque Siddiqui on Thursday said that his party will issue the manifesto on January 27, to bring the country back on track.

Talking to a private news channel, he said that economic, legal and judicial reforms would put the country on path of speedy progress. He said that in 2013, economic challenges had been a difficult task but Nawaz Sharif made sincere efforts and implemented the reforms to achieve the highest economic growth rate for this country.

If PML-N returns to power, the focus would be given to steer the country out of the present challenges, he assured.

In reply to a question about the coalition government, he said that the PML-N is hopeful to establish next government with simple majority.

Interior Minister directs ICT administration to setup cheap markets

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for interior Dr. Gohar Ejaz on Thursday directed district administration of Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) to establish cheap markets for general public in the federal capital.

He gave the directions during a meeting with Interior Secretary Aftab Akbar Durrani, Chief Commissioner Islamabad, Anwar Haq and Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan.

The minister said that Islamabad police and district administration should play a role for better and peaceful quality of life for citizens in the federal capital.

He said that all grocery items available at the utility stores would be ensured in the Sunday Bazaar and the manufacturers would provide items at the original cost. He also directed to set up 5-day of cheap bazaars in the federal capital while the plans were underway to improve health facilities in the hospitals as soon as possible.

The minister directed to complete construction and renovation of all police stations soon so that citizen's could be provided with a better environment and justice.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Secretary Information & Broadcasting Ms. Shahera Shahid addresses participants of seminar titled 'Electoral Code of Conduct: Ethical Practices of Stakeholders including Media,' organized by the Press Information Department.

4 including Ex-MPA injured in car accident

ISLAMABAD (APP): Former Member of the Provincial Assembly (MPA) Shafiq Sher Afridi and four others were injured when their car met with an accident in Landi Kotal on Thursday.

According to a private news channel, the accident took place on the Pak-Afghan highway when they were returning from an election campaign in their car.

As soon as the incident was reported, Rescue 1122 teams reached the site and shifted the injured to the hospital.

According to hospital sources, the injured have been discharged from the hospital after receiving medical aid.

Seminars to stimulate vibrant discussions on election guidelines: Secretary Info

ISLAMABAD (APP): Secretary of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Shahera Shahid on Thursday said that the election seminar series intends to stimulate a lively debate on election rules and the restrictions imposed to enhance transparency in the electoral process.

Speaking at the seminar on Pakistan's general elections, themed "Electoral Code of Conduct: Ethical Practices of Stakeholders including Media," organised by Press Information Department (PID), she said that the election seminar series aims to convey the code of conduct, rules, and restrictions, sparking lively discussions about their underlying reasons.

She said PID has already conducted two seminars on various election-related topics, sparking significant discussions in media. She highlighted the upcoming seminars in Karachi and Lahore, designed to engage local journalists in conversations and gather their input.



ISLAMABAD: A man is distributing free among the devotees at Shrine of Hazrat Bari Imam in the Federal Capital.

No compromise on quality hajj arrangements: Aneeq

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister of Religious Affairs Aneeq Ahmed Thursday said that his government had taken multiple initiatives to ensure easy and quality hajj arrangements and no compromise would be made on it to provide maximum facilitation to the intending pilgrims.

Talking to PTV news channel, he said accommodation, meals and transportation for pilgrims would be improved with a more comfortable and convenient experience, adding, all arrangements have been finalized under the government Hajj scheme in Saudi Arabia for the forthcoming Hajj.

He said that the main objective of the Ministry

CDA to install pedestrian bridges at 3 different places

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Capital Development Authority (CDA) is taking several steps to provide best possible facilities to the citizens including the installation of pedestrian bridges at three different places.

The civic body is going to install the bridges to facilitate pedestrians cross the Srinagar Highway, which are in the final stages so that road accidents can be reduced.

According to a press release, due to the installation of one of these three pedestrian bridges, on 28 January 2024 at 10pm Street G-7/4 Opposite Chairman Office CDA, Metro Bus Station, Srinagar Highway will be completely closed for all types of traffic.

Moreover, the authority has also appealed to the Islamabad Traffic Police to arrange timely alternative routes to facilitate the public so that the citizens do not face any kind of difficulties.

Likewise, the CDA administration has also appealed to the public to fully cooperate with the Islamabad Traffic Police to avoid any kind of untoward incident.

EC takes notice of hundreds of recruitments and promotions in PA

ISLAMABAD (Online): Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has sought an explanation from Punjab Assembly on the matter of new recruitments and promotions in the Punjab Assembly Secretariat during the caretaker government.

According to details, EC has taken notice of more than 300 recruitments and promotions. According to sources, 35 new recruitments have been decided in the Punjab Assembly Secretariat.

The promotion of 4 Deputy Superintendents was made against the rules in the caretaker government. 4 superintendents were promoted assistant secretary and then deputy secretary in 4 days. According to sources, promotion on the post of staff officer to speaker was also given. Assistant controller and private secretary were also promoted. Urdu, English reporters, Assistant Security officers and telephone operators have also been promoted.

EC takes notice of hundreds of recruitments and promotions in PA

ISLAMABAD (APP): Book writer Mahnaz Benjamin presenting her book to famous Urdu poet Ifthikhar Hussain Arif during her book launching ceremony titled "Khamshi Hum Kalam Hoti Hey" at Academy of latter in the Federal Capital.



ISLAMABAD: Book writer Mahnaz Benjamin presenting her book to famous Urdu poet Ifthikhar Hussain Arif during her book launching ceremony titled "Khamshi Hum Kalam Hoti Hey" at Academy of latter in the Federal Capital.

E-Khuli Kachehris best way to be in touch with public: IG NHMP

ISLAMABAD (APP): Inspector General National Highways and Motorways Police (NHMP) Salman Chaudhry said that the "E-Khuli Kachehris" were the best way to remain in direct contact with the general public and resolving their problems. He said as per the directive of the Government of Pakistan and the Ministry of Communications, the NHMP is holding "E-Khuli Kachehri", on regular grounds, he said while participating in the "E-Khuli Kachehri" here Thursday. He also talked on FM-95 Radio and NHMP official Facebook and answered to frequently asked questions from across the country and from abroad as well. The IG said that the E-Khuli Kachehris were the best way to remain in direct contact with the general public and with the employees as well for the solution of their problems.

The IG issued immediate directions to resolve the problems of the general public and employees of National Highways and Motorway Police.

To ensure equal enforcement of traffic laws and transparency in the ticketing system, an SMS service was being introduced. Ensuring commuters' journeys smooth and safer is our top priority, he said. National highways and Motorways were the lifelines of Pakistan, playing a crucial role in the country's progress. The Inspector General also acknowledged that roads infrastructure issues were long-standing problems. Efforts are being made through collaboration with relevant authorities to ensure a definite resolution, he said. Salman Chaudhry emphasized the importance of human lives and mentioned that every possible measure was being taken to secure precious human lives.

NDMA's Gender & Child Cell joins Steering Committee of IAWG

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)'s Gender and Child Cell has joined Steering Committee of Inter-Agency Working (IAWG).

The NDMA in a post on its official handle on X shared the update on Thursday that the Authority's Cell had joined the international platform on January 24. The IAWG is a global coalition of organizations that work together to promote Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in Humanitarian Settings.

"This is a great opportunity for NDMA's Gender & Child Cell to collaborate with other members of IAWG share best practices & contribute to global efforts to improve health issues. We look forward to working with our partners & stakeholders to achieve our common goals."



ISLAMABAD: Workers are busy in installing electric fence around diplomatic enclave in Federal Capital.

SC nullifies LHC decision, allows Sana to contest election

ISLAMABAD (Online): Supreme Court (SC) declaring null and void Lahore High Court (LHC) decision against independent candidate Sana Ullah Masti Khel from NA 91 Bhakkar has restored Election Tribunal (ET) decision and has allowed him to contest election.

The court has maintained that how LHC has restored the application which was dismissed under legal process and how it has given the decision on the same day.

A 3-member bench of SC presided over by the Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa took up for hearing appeal plea filed by independent candidate Sana Ullah Mastikhel from Bhakkar against rejection of his nomination papers.

CJP Qazi Faez Isa inquired during the hearing of the case why the nomination papers have been rejected.

The counsel for petitioner said ET accepted nomination papers but high court rejected them. High court neither issued notice nor it heard the stance. One sided decision took place.

Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar inquired Sana Ullah Mastikhel is proclaimed offender. Why does he not appear.

The counsel for petitioner said Sana Ullah Mastikhel has surrendered and he is on bail. Sana Ullah Mastikhel is charged with violating section 144.

The CJP inquired from counsel of rival candidate it is correct that high court gave decision without issuing notice.

NHMP close routes due to heavy fog

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Motorway M-1, Swat Expressway, Hazara Expressway and Motorway M14 have been closed for all traffic due to heavy fog.

The Motorway M-1 (from Peshawar to Islamabad), Swat Expressway (from Col Sher Khan to Ismaila), Hazara Expressway (from Burhan to Jhari Kis) and Motorway M14 (from Hakla to Tarap) have been closed for all traffic due to heavy fog, said National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP) Spokesperson.

The spokesperson said citizens were requested to avoid unnecessary traveling during foggy hours.



ISLAMABAD: Senator Kamil Ali Agha, Chairman Senate Functional Committee on Government Assurances presiding over a meeting of the committee at Parliament House.

Kamil Agha chairs meeting of senate functional body on government assurances

ISLAMABAD: A meeting of Senate Functional Committee on Government Assurances was held here at Parliament House on Thursday with Senator Kamil Ali Agha in Chair.

The Senate Committee deliberated on the assurance provided by the then Minister Incharge of the Capital Administration and Development division regarding the regularization of services for teachers working in the education department of Islamabad Capital Territory on daily wages.

Senator Kamil Ali Agha stated that the matter has been pending since 2016 and termed the delay as a bureaucratic hurdle.

The Committee expressed utter disappointment on the delay and called it a failure of the government. However, the ministry contended that the report was placed before the cabinet with the prior approval of the Prime Minister but to no avail. The Committee deferred the matter for further report and deliberation, anticipating the new Government.

Additionally, the committee discussed the assurance given by the then Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training and Minister Incharge for Capital Administration and Development Division concerning the construction of new educational institutions in Islamabad. Deputy Chairman Senate, Mirza Muhammad Afridi, remarked that education is a fundamental right.



ISLAMABAD: Machinery being used for extension work of Park Road during development work in the Federal Capital.

ICCPO holds online khuli kachehri

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCPO) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan on Thursday hold an online khuli kachehri to give the residents direct access to the police high ups to solve their issues on priority basis. A police spokesman said that the ICCPO Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan responded to the public queries via phone calls from 03:30 pm to 05:30 pm. ICCPO Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan listened to the problems of the callers and directed the concerned officers for their immediate solution.

The ICCPO said that the security plan regarding the upcoming election was finalized. Administrative and security measures are also being implemented regarding Election 2024.

Legal actions against illegal foreigners will continue during the election. Moreover, action will be taken against those who vote on fake ID cards. 10,000 officers and officials of the Islamabad Capital Police and other law enforcement agencies will perform security duties during the poll.

ICCPO said that no laxity will be tolerated on the display of arms, protest, aerial firing, or disturbance of public order before, during and after the elections. He further said that to maintain peace and tranquility during the election in the federal capital was the top priority of the Islamabad Capital Police. Citizens are requested to report any unusual activity on "Pucar-15" or at "ICT-15" app, he added.

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Army duties

The state cannot hold elections without the Pakistan Army. On Tuesday, the caretaker government formally approved the deployment of military and civil armed forces personnel at polling stations and sensitive constituencies "in order to maintain peace and security" during the upcoming general elections.

It is understood that these personnel will not only be deputized to guard polling stations on election day but also serve as a rapid reaction force in case any law-and-order situation arises.

The government is said to have approved the arrangement after receiving a summary recommending the same from the hitherto minister-less interior ministry, which cited a severe shortfall of available personnel. The ECP had previously demanded the services of 275,000 troops from the interior ministry for election-related duties after learning that it was facing a shortage of more than 277,000 security officials, of which about 169,000 were needed in Punjab alone.

It is understandable why the ECP wants boots on the ground for the elections. Apart from various administrative and other reasons, there has been a surge in militant attacks targeting security forces in recent months, and the commission would not want anything untoward happening close to or on election day.

There has also been a recent spate of attacks targeting political leaders, mostly in KP, while there are multiple alerts regarding some politicians facing active threats. It is imperative for the state, in these conditions, to provide a secure environment for politicians and voters in the lead-up to and on election day.

However, the troops being deployed should be clearly instructed that their role is limited to providing security and ensuring peace. They must not, for whatever reason, enter polling stations or interfere in the voting and post-voting procedures. The controversies that arose after the 2018 polls must be avoided at all costs.

Finally, though Dr Goher Ejaz was given the additional charge of caretaker interior minister last evening, it is worth asking what took the government so long to nominate him given that Dr Ejaz's predecessor, Sarfaraz Bugti, had resigned in December.

The government has been quite aware of the deteriorating security situation and has brought it up on various occasions and in different contexts; why, then, had it left the ministry responsible for law and order without a head for more than a month?

This was a rather reckless approach, given the serious challenges that have emerged, with the elections drawing nearer.

Dr Ejaz's new role will require much attention and energy from him as he tries to address various emergent security-related challenges; will he be able to do so, considering he is also holding several other important portfolios? It is a big ask: the responsibility for the safety of millions now lies with him.



By Qamar Bashir
Press Secretary to the President(Rtd); Former Press Minister at Embassy of Pakistan to France; Former MD, SRBC

The Bloomberg Economics report, lauding the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N)'s economic management, especially under Ishaq Dar's tenure, comes at a critical time as Pakistan faces severe economic challenges. With the country in the throes of a financial crisis, marked by soaring inflation of 20-25% and an unemployment rate above 8%, the populace is burdened and seeking immediate relief. This backdrop has triggered a wave of extravagant election promises from various political parties, including free electricity, doubled salaries, free housing, transport, petrol, and gas. However, these promises often lack a concrete and rational economic roadmap, raising questions about their feasibility in the current economic climate. This situation positions the PML-N's acknowledgment by Bloomberg as a notable endorsement of their past economic governance, potentially influencing public perception and electoral decisions in these trying

times. The report had employed a 'misery index' tailored for Pakistan, which combines unemployment and inflation rates, to evaluate economic performance. This index showed the PML-N with a score of 14.5%, indicating less economic hardship under their rule compared to Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) at 16.1% and the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) at 17.2%. The scores represent averages during the periods each party has been in power since 1990, with a lower score suggesting better economic management.

The "misery index" is an economic indicator created by economist Arthur Okun. One of the main advantages of the misery index is its simplicity, which makes it easy to calculate and understand. However, this simplicity also means it might not capture the full complexity of an economy's health. While the misery index provides a quick snapshot of economic conditions, it's not a comprehensive measure. Its findings can vary significantly if other factors are included, offering a more nuanced view of economic well-being. For detailed economic analysis, it's often necessary to look beyond the misery index to a broader set of economic indicators.

It has influenced the public opinion and voter behavior. In a scenario where economic management is a top voter concern, a report suggesting one party has a better track record could sway undecided voters. This might

lead to a shift in the electoral battleground, with economic policy becoming a central theme of the campaigns.

Since its publication, the report has become a hot topic in media discussions and public debate, potentially shaping the narrative around the elections. Almost every big and small TV channel ran stories on this, soliciting comments from the economic and financial experts. Every anchorman of prime time talk shows mentioned it as a positive omen for PML(N).

How each party responds to this report, and how they leverage or defend against it, could be crucial in the days leading up to the election potentially shaping the narrative around the elections.

In light of Pakistan's dire economic situation, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) should capitalize its election campaign with a focus on realistic and responsible promises. The party needs to emphasize its proven economic management skills while transparently communicating the severity of current economic challenges, including the country's high debt, inflation, and sluggish growth.

The campaign should pivot towards proposing long-term, sustainable eco-

omic strategies and structural reforms, particularly in the energy sector and state-owned enterprises. Engaging economic experts and emphasizing the development of robust social safety nets to protect vulnerable populations will be crucial.

Additionally, a focus on improving international relations and trade to attract foreign investment and bolster foreign exchange reserves is vital. By adopting this multifaceted approach, PML-N can position itself as a party capable of guiding Pakistan through these challenging times while retaining public trust and support. Rival political parties in Pakistan, in response to the Bloomberg report favoring PML-N, can craft a cohesive counter-strategy by critically analyzing and questioning the report's methodology and relevance to current economic challenges.

They should highlight the pressing issues of high debt, inflation, and unemployment, and present comprehensive, forward-looking economic recovery plans that prioritize transparency and accountability. Emphasizing on addressing immediate public concerns, such as rising living costs and job scarcity, through grassroots campaigning and effective use of media and public debates, can resonate more with voters. Additionally, focusing

on diverse governance aspects like social development and foreign policy, and leveraging social media for wider outreach, especially among the youth, can strengthen their position. Forming coalitions and alliances can also offer a united and formidable alternative to PML-N, emphasizing current solutions over past achievements.

Amidst the political maneuvering following the Bloomberg Economics report, Pakistan's stark economic realities remain unchanged and pressing. Political parties, while vying for public favor, must ground their promises in these realities: the daunting \$126 billion national debt with a \$25 billion repayment due in 2023-24, meager reserves of about \$8.8 billion, and significant circular debts in electricity and gas sectors. Additionally, they must consider the soaring inflation rate at 25%, the substantial depreciation of the Pakistani rupee, critically low foreign exchange reserves bolstered by external deposits, a tepid GDP growth rate of 1.7%, barely surpassing the population growth rate, and a worrying 8% unemployment rate. In this challenging economic landscape, electoral promises need to be carefully calibrated and responsibly aligned with the nation's fiscal and economic capacity.

E-Governance:

Building Resilient Societies in an Uncertain World



By Qaiser Nawab

In the face of unprecedented global challenges such as economic downturns, financial crises, pandemics, and climate change, the need for innovation and adaptability in the public sector has become increasingly evident. However, within these challenges lies an opportunity for nations to harness the power of digitalization, turning adversity into innovation. The COVID-19 pandemic acted as a catalyst for the acceleration of digitization, forcing industries worldwide to adapt to the new normal. This article explores the role of e-governance in building resilient societies, with a focus on innovation and its potential impact on efficiency, transparency, and accessibility.

The industrial sector, particularly in developed economies like the UK, demonstrated remarkable adaptability by shifting to remote work and embracing digital transformation. Similarly, nations such as Brazil and Canada witnessed a surge in businesses transitioning to e-commerce. However, developing nations face the challenge of creating awareness among policymakers about the importance of digitalization. Conducive policies,

support for innovation, skill development, and improved connectivity are crucial components for these nations to harness the opportunities presented by digital transformation. Climate change, a pressing global challenge, further underscores the importance of E-Governance in building resilient societies. As nations grapple with the far-reaching impacts of a changing climate, innovative digital solutions can play a pivotal role in developing and implementing effective environmental policies. E-Governance can facilitate real-time data collection, analysis, and dissemination, enabling governments to make informed decisions for climate mitigation and adaptation. Collaborative efforts between nations, guided by E-Governance principles, can enhance the coordination of climate-related initiatives, ensuring a more efficient and unified response to environmental threats. By leveraging digital technologies, governments can not only strengthen their resilience to climate change but also foster a sustainable and eco-friendly trajectory for future development. The integration of climate-focused E-Governance strategies aligns with the broader vision of creating a world that not only adapts to uncertainties but actively works towards a more sustainable and environmentally conscious future.

The rise of digital technologies, including cryptocurrencies, brings both benefits and challenges. Addressing vulnerabilities, bridging the digital divide, and ensuring inclusive development require global collaboration and strategic policy initiatives. Developing a comprehensive approach to tackle knowledge gaps, infrastructure disparities, and potential job displacement is crucial for the sustainable integration of digital technologies. E-governance emerges as a linchpin in the digital transformation of the public sector. Its potential impact on efficiency, transparency, and accessibility cannot be overstated. The United Nations, World Bank, European Commission, McKinsey, and Deloitte all attest to the transformative power of e-governance, citing reductions in corruption, increased citizen satisfaction, reduced processing times, and cost savings.

COMSATS, with its network of 25 Centers of Excellence across three continents, stands as a beacon of support for member states in their digitalization endeavors. These centers offer scientific solutions, policy inputs, training programs, and research to aid industries and governments in navigating the complexities of the digital era. Particularly in middle and lower-middle-income economies, COMSATS members have shown remarkable progress in digitalization, surpassing expectations for their respective stages of development. With internet penetration rates exceeding 80%, these nations are setting an example for others to follow.

Innovation stands as the cornerstone for the success of e-governance

initiatives, constituting a dynamic force that propels governance into the digital age. Governments, as stewards of societal progress, bear the responsibility of fostering an environment conducive to experimentation and the adoption of emerging technologies. To achieve this, a collaborative ecosystem must be cultivated, where policymakers actively engage with the private sector and research institutions. Such partnerships are essential to identify, develop, and implement innovative solutions that address the evolving needs of a digitally-driven society.

As the digital landscape undergoes continuous transformation, innovation becomes not just a strategic choice but a necessity. Policymakers need to navigate the rapidly changing technological terrain, ensuring that governance models are not only adaptive but anticipatory of emerging challenges and opportunities. Embracing a culture of perpetual innovation allows governments to proactively tackle issues such as cybersecurity threats, data privacy concerns, and the ethical implications of emerging technologies. Moreover, it positions nations at the forefront of technological advancements, fostering a competitive edge in the global arena. In essence, the commitment to continuous innovation in e-governance is a commitment to building responsive, forward-thinking, and resilient societies that can effectively navigate the uncertainties of the digital era.

Navigating the path towards a digitally trans-

formed future is laden with multifaceted challenges that necessitate strategic foresight and collaborative efforts. One of the foremost challenges lies in the realm of cybersecurity threats, where the rapid evolution of digital technologies exposes governments and organizations to increasingly sophisticated cyber risks. Addressing these threats demands proactive measures, including robust cybersecurity frameworks and continuous monitoring to safeguard critical information infrastructure.

Data privacy concerns emerge as another pivotal challenge, as the collection and utilization of vast amounts of personal information raise ethical questions and demand stringent regulations. Striking a delicate balance between leveraging data for societal benefits and safeguarding individual privacy becomes imperative. Moreover, the ethical implications of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence and biotechnology, necessitate careful consideration and ethical guidelines to prevent unintended consequences.

In addition to technological hurdles, there is a pressing need for international cooperation to establish global standards for digital governance. The absence of harmonized regulations may hinder the seamless flow of information and create disparities in digital development. Policymakers face the intricate task of fostering innovation while upholding responsible governance, ensuring that the benefits of digitalization extend

across diverse socioeconomic strata. Moreover, addressing social challenges, including digital literacy disparities and the potential exacerbation of existing inequalities, becomes crucial to fostering an inclusive digital society. Policymakers must navigate these intricate challenges with agility and inclusivity, recognizing that the journey toward a digitally transformed future demands a holistic and collaborative approach.

In conclusion, the imperative for building resilient societies in an uncertain world is underscored by the transformative potential of e-governance-driven digitalization. As nations grapple with unprecedented challenges, including economic downturns, pandemics, and climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic has acted as a catalyst, accelerating the adoption of digital technologies. While developed economies showcase adaptability, developing nations face the dual challenge of raising awareness among policymakers and implementing supportive policies. E-Governance emerges as a linchpin, endorsed by global entities for its transformative impacts on efficiency, transparency, and accessibility. Policymakers must balance innovation with responsible governance, emphasizing international cooperation and inclusivity. — **Qaiser Nawab, serving as the President of the Belt and Road Initiative for Sustainable Development (BRISD), is an expert in International Relations and Impact Technologies. You can contact him at qaisernawab098@gmail.com**

Building trust



Jamil Ahmad

There is no doubt that climate change is one of humanity's most complex challenges and needs to be urgently tackled. But is the world faltering in forging a cohesive response? The year 2023 was the hottest recorded, with the annual average global temperature climbing 1.45 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reports indicate that world temperatures could tip over the 1.5°C threshold by 2030. Prospects of failing to realise the targets of the Paris Agreement are getting starker. Such a scenario could have

irreversible catastrophic consequences.

Climate change is already exacerbating existing crises and triggering new ones. The nexus between climate change and socioeconomic issues is increasing poverty, inequality, and hunger in the Global South. The inextricable link between climate and health is responsible for the rise of infectious diseases and aggravation of chronic health conditions. Floods and droughts displace people, deprive them of a means of living and subject them to mental stress. According to the World Bank, by 2050, climate change would have internally displaced 216 million people, mostly in Africa and Asia.

A fresh account of how climate change-related risks continue to rise each year is furnished by the World Economic Forum's risk report for 2024, released this month under the WEF theme 'Building Trust'. This

year, like the last, the first four global risks in terms of severity are related to climate change. These are extreme weather events, critical changes to Earth's systems, biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse, and natural resource shortage, in that order, as well as pollution, which ranks 10 on the list of 34 global risks. The report warns that connections between climate change risks and other risks "may collectively evolve into a 'polycrisis' centred around natural resource shortages by 2030".

The report found that the impact of climate change could result in the loss of \$12.5 trillion to the world economy and lead to an additional 14.5m deaths by 2050, mostly due to extreme weather events, including floods, heatwaves, droughts, wildfires, and tropical storms.

Floods, "the highest acute risk of climate-induced mortality", are es-

timated to claim 8.5m lives by 2050. Droughts, the second leading cause of climate-related mortality, are estimated to cause another 3.2m deaths. In terms of economic losses, heatwaves top the list with an estimated loss of \$7tr to the world economy by 2050. Being the most vulnerable and least prepared, South Asia and Africa will bear the brunt of these human and economic losses. In countries most vulnerable to climate change, floods, intense heatwaves, prolonged dry spells, and droughts are adversely impacting lives in terms of health and livelihood. Air pollution and heavy smog are making people sick and badly disrupting economic activity in Pakistan and other parts of South Asia.

While urgent climate action is needed, efforts of the international community to control global warming are dampened by geopolitical tensions, conflicts, inflation, and economic fragility, further

exposing the population to the severity of extreme weather events.

Noting the lack of "deep and concerted progress on climate targets", the WEF report says, "growing demands on public- and private-sector resources from other crises will reduce the speed and scale of mitigation efforts over the next two years alongside insufficient progress towards the adaptation support required for those communities and countries increasingly affected by the impacts of climate change".

The inadequacy of climate finance, a major contentious point in climate negotiations, is deepening the mistrust between the developed and developing nations. Slow progress in mobilising adaptation funds is preventing concerted global climate action.

Even if the already committed amounts for adaptation are realised,

these will be too little too late to bridge the gap between available and required resources, which stands between \$194bn and \$366bn per year and is widening.

The United Nations Environment Programme estimates that developing countries' financial needs for adaptation will soar from \$215 billion to \$387bn by 2030, and rise significantly by 2050. A global response to climate change will only be effective when adaptation in the Global South is prioritised besides mitigation measures in the industrialised countries. COP28 reiterated the call for doubling adaptation finance by 2025 and scaling it up even further.

For building trust, reducing risks, and controlling a further rise in global warming, it is vital to mobilise and deliver funds for adaptation to developing countries. The lives and hopes of billions of people depend on it. — *Courtesy Dawn*

CM Baqar says: Diligent officers work selflessly to serve people by formulating innovative public policies

KARACHI (APP): Caretaker Sindh Chief Minister Justice (retired) Maqbool Baqar on Thursday said that a diligent public servant works day and night selflessly to serve the people by taking pains in formulating innovative public policies and interventions, and making sure that the policies and interventions were implemented effectively so that the public at large felt served.

He said, "If the public does not own the public servants, it should be taken as a sign of dissatisfaction. Against all the odds and challenges of this profession, he urged the officers to work with

conviction and personal commitment."

He said this while speaking at the Graduation Ceremony of BS-19 officers who completed their 16-week-long Senior Management Course (34th SMC) at the National Institute of Management (NIM), Karachi. Those who attended the program include the Director General, NIM Dr. Lubna Ayub, Chief Instructor, Senior Management Course (SMC) Khaliq Shaikh and others.

The chief minister said this course, though being a mandatory requirement for promotion to BS-20 positions, must have brushed up the officers under existing

repertoire tools and skills, and helped them gain critical new insights on numerable issues and challenges through various training activities including lecture and panel discussions by distinguished speakers/scholars/economists.

He said that since the performance in the NIM course carried significant weight for officers' career advancement, therefore he hoped that the course participants must have invested their time, energy, and passionate efforts to gain knowledge, skills and necessary tools, for their personal and professional transformations as required for holding senior echelons of policy.



LAHORE: Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Raza Naqvi and Corps Commander Lahore Syed Amir Raza witnessing the signing ceremony of handing Administration of Data Darbar Hospital to Anti-Narcotics Force.

DG Audit KP calls on Governor, present audit report 2022-23

PESHAWAR (APP): Director General (DG) Audit Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Shehzad Naem here on Thursday called on KP Governor, Haji Ghulam Ali and presented audit report of provincial expenditures and revenue in the year 2022-23.

Director Audit, Sajid Khan and Audit Officer, Aadil Shah were also present on the occasion.

Speaking on the occasion, the KP Governor termed the report a step forward towards transparency and said that the audit guarantees clarity and judicious use of funds by government departments.

He highlighted the significance of proper implementation of recommendations mentioned in the audit report and it would further improve transparency and

clarity in financial matters.

The Governor said that recommendations were not against any department but they were meant to formulate a result-oriented planning to avoid financial irregularities in the future. He also directed to inform the relevant departments about irregularities in their financial affairs and added that provincial government and public sector departments were working to ensure good governance and transparency.

Later, a delegation of traders community met with the Governor and informed him about the loss of Time Center's shopkeepers. He assured his cooperation to the traders and said that the provincial government and concerned authorities would be contacted for providing them financial help to cover losses incurred by the fire.

KP Labour Deptt launches first ever Child Labour Survey of KP

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Labour Department on Thursday has launched its first ever Child Labour Survey 2022-23 conducted across all districts of the province including the newly merged districts in a ceremony held here at a local hotel.

KP Child Labour Survey 2022-23 is the second provincial survey in Pakistan, after Punjab, it was said during the event attended by the officials of various government departments, representatives of UN agencies, civil society organizations, donor agencies and academia.

This survey collected data from 49,734 households including 5,976 urban and 43,758 rural,

achieving a response rate of 92.5 percent despite harsh weather and security challenges, especially in the newly Merged Districts. According to the survey report, the child population of age between 5 and 17 years is approximately 8.28m in the province, adding that 11.1 percent of them are working children; of which 80 percent are in child labour while 73.8 percent of them are working in hazardous conditions.

Referring to the population from 14 - 17 years, it said that 21.6 percent were working children and 15.5 percent were in child labour or hazardous work respectively. The report revealed that the major four industries for child labour included agriculture,



HYDERABAD: Officials of Inland Revenue burn a large quantity of Cigarettes during the destruction ceremony of non custom paid items, in the city.



KARACHI: Caretaker Sindh Chief Minister Justice (Retd) Maqbool Baqar addresses a press conference at CM House.

Baligh commends role of Pak Navy in making defence of water boundaries impregnable

LAHORE: Commander Central Punjab, Commandant Naval War College, Rear Admiral Azhar Mahmood, called on Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman at Governor House Lahore.

During the meeting, Commander Central Punjab briefed Governor Punjab on the professional affairs of Pakistan Navy and informed about the performance and activities of the War College.

Speaking on the occasion, Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman said that the role of Pakistan Navy in making the defence of the country's water

boundaries impregnable is commendable. He said that the professionalism of Pakistan Navy is a source of pride for the entire nation. Governor Punjab said that the martyrs and soldiers of Pakistan Navy who protect Pakistan's maritime boundaries are the pride of the country and the nation. The two sides also discussed Cadet College Khanpur in detail. Governor Punjab said that due to the change of government in 2018, despite the completion of this project, Cadet College Khanpur could not be started. He expressed hope that the future Punjab government would start classes in Cadet College Khanpur as soon as

possible to ensure the provision of quality education to the children. On this occasion, Commander Central Punjab, Rear Admiral Azhar Mahmood invited Governor Punjab to visit Pakistan Navy War College.

Later, Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman attended the closing ceremony of Pakistan Learning Festival 2024 at Children's Library Complex as Chief Guest.

Governor Punjab, Muhammad Balighur Rehman, while addressing the ceremony, said that it is very important to teach students high moral values and build their character. He said that after 2018,



PESHAWAR: Director General Audit Shehzad Naem presenting Audit Report 2022-23 to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Haji Ghulam Ali.

PEN calls on minister for IC&TE, discusses issues of private schools

PESHAWAR: A delegation of private educational institutions organisation 'Private Education Network' on Thursday called on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister for Newly Merged Districts Affairs, Industries, Commerce and Technical Education, Dr Aamer Abdullah here at his office and discussed issues related to private educational institutions.

The delegation was comprised of Vice Presidents of the organisation and members of the Private Schools Regulatory Authority Fazlullah Daudzai and Syed Anas Takreem Kakakhel, office bearers of the organisation from Nowshera district Qazi

Fazal Hakeem, Rashid Maqbool and Noorshad.

Special Secretary Elementary and Secondary Education Department, Samar Gul, Managing Director Private Schools Regulatory Authority Tanzila Sabahat and other officials of the education department were also present on the occasion.

The representatives of the delegation apprised the caretaker minister about certain issues being faced by private institutions pertaining to education boards and departments of private schools.

On this occasion, the caretaker minister directed the concerned officials for taking all possible steps for the resolution of their problems.



LAHORE: Commander Central Punjab, Commandant Naval War College, Rear Admiral Azhar Mahmood (HIM), called on Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman at Governor House

Making country an Islamic welfare state is vision of Jamaat-e-Islami: Mushtaq

RUSTAM, Mardan: Jamaat-e-Islami Senator Mushtaq Ahmed Khan says that making the country an Islamic welfare state is the vision of Jamaat-e-Islami, where there is worship of Allah and slavery of the Prophet, and where every child, oppressed, youth, orphan, and widow gets free education, justice, treatment, employment, and justice, and the system of oppression and drugs is abolished.

He expressed these views while addressing a convention at Rustam Eidgah, where Jamaat-e-Islami candidates for NA-21 and PK-55 district and tehsil leaders also spoke. He said that the

PDM government passed a law to abolish the tax on drugs, and he raised his voice against it on the Senate floor for six years. He has fought and will fight for the rights of the people. He said that Allah gave him the opportunity to help the people in the parliament, and he met for the release of Dr. Aafia Siddiqui in America, and Jamaat-e-Islami will bring her to Pakistan. He said that those who have been ruling for 50 years are asking for votes from the people who have ruined the nation, and the country is facing inflation and the hereditary politicians are sucking the blood of the people, and eleven types of taxes are taken on the electricity bills in the name of humanity.

Administration of Data Darbar Hospital entrusted to Anti-Narcotics Force

LAHORE: A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed to transfer the management of Data Darbar Hospital to the Anti-Narcotics Force.

The signing ceremony took place at the Chief Minister's Office with the presence of Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi, Lt Gen Syed Aamer Raza and DG Anti-Narcotics Force Maj Gen Aneeq Ahmad Malik. Secretary Health Punjab Ali Jan and Regional Director ANF Brig Sikandar Hayat Ch signed the MoU. Following the agreement, documents

were exchanged.

According to the terms of the agreement, the Anti-Narcotics Force will oversee the rehabilitation and upgrading of Data Darbar Hospital. The hospital's focus will be on the treatment and rehabilitation of individuals struggling with drug addiction.

Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi announced the dedicated allocation of Data Darbar Hospital for the rehabilitation of drug addicts. The event was attended by Ministers Dr Jamal Nasir, Azfar Ali Nasir, chief secretary, IG Punjab, secretary Auqaf and others.



KARACHI: Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori talking to media persons during his visit to Haideri Market.

Federal Ombudsman visits KP Ombudsman Secretariat

PESHAWAR: Federal Ombudsman Ijaz Ahmad Qureshi paid a visit to Provincial Ombudsman Secretariat and held meeting with Provincial Ombudsman Syed Jamal ud Din Shah here at his staff the other day, said a press release issued here on Thursday.

The provincial Ombudsman welcomed the Federal Ombudsman and briefed him regarding the role and activities of the Provincial Ombudsman. He also apprised him in connection with the complaints and redressal method of the complaints at the secretariat level. He said that in the year 2023, the provincial Ombudsman Office has received record number of complaints which were more than the previous years and majority of complainants received relief by resolving their grievances with in specific period as

prescribed in the Ombudsman act.

He also congratulated the Federal Ombudsman for their election as President of Asian Ombudsman Organisation and hoped that he would continue to focus on the promotion and well being of the Ombudsman office at international level.

Speaking on the occasion, Federal Ombudsman Ijaz Ahmad Qureshi appreciated the role of Provincial Ombudsman Secretariat for providing speedy relief to the common man. He eulogized the role and steps taken by Syed Jamal ud Din Shah as Provincial Ombudsman for the opening of regional offices at DI Khan, Malakand and Abbottabad which will enable the people of that areas to lodge their complaints near their region by avoiding their visit to the Provincial Secretariat.



PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister for Labour Department Riaz Anwar and Representative of UNICEF Pakistan Abdullah Fadil in a group photo with other participants during launching ceremony of KP Child Labour Survey.

Police conduct raid on Javed residence, arrest his son in law, servants

MULTAN (Online): Police have conducted raid on the residence of Javed Hashmi and arrested his son in law and domestic servants. Javed Hashmi has said in this regard police conducted raids at his residence during PTI workers convention in Makhdoom Rashid and arrested PTI candidate and his domestic servants.

Police broke the doors and rushed into his home besides subjecting the women to violence.

PTI leader Mehrbano Qureshi and Zain Qureshi were to participate in PTI workers convention.

Teenager shot, injured over land dispute

MUZAFFARGARH (APP): A child was shot at and injured in a heated verbal clash that erupted over a land dispute between the two families, according to the rescuer.

The victim was identified as Muhammad Rashid, 17, s/o Muhammad Latif, a resident of Moza Kotla, who was reported to have received gunshot wounds on the forehead.

Japanese CG calls on Mayor Karachi

KARACHI (APP): Consul General of Japan in Karachi Hattori Masaru along with the Deputy Consul General Nakagawa Yashushi called on Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab in KMC head office on Thursday.

Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab welcomed the Consul General of Japan who discussed with him matters of mutual interest.

The Mayor Karachi said that cooperation between Pakistan and Japan is continuing in various fields and Japan's

support to Pakistan in the industrial sector, including development projects, is valuable.

Mayor Karachi said that we want to take advantage of Japan's technical expertise in improving and modernizing infrastructure in Karachi. He said that Japanese companies would be fully supported for investment in Karachi since attractive opportunities are available for foreign investment in the city and the government is taking all possible steps to promote investment.

ANF recovers 138 kg drugs in eight operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting eight operations across the country managed to recover 138 kg drugs and arrested nine accused including two women, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Thursday.

He informed that 2 kg of Ice drug was recovered from a parcel at a Cargo Office in Lahore.

In another operation, 1 kg of Ice was recovered from a parcel being sent to Bahrain from DHL Sadar, Peshawar.

In the third operation, 50 kg hashish and 40 kg opium were recovered from the possession of two accused arrested near M-1 Motorway Islamabad.

15 kg hashish and 12 kg opium were recovered from an accused netted near Motorway Bridge Peshawar.

In the fifth operation, 6 kg of weed was recovered from the possession of 2 suspects nabbed near M-9, Jamshoro Toll Plaza.

Revolutionary initiatives in IT sector start bearing fruits: Saif

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunications, Dr. Umar Saif has said that the presence of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) is leading to increase in foreign direct investment (FDI) and setting the pace of the country's development.

Addressing a Town Hall meeting during his visit to the Pakistan Software Houses Association (P@SHA) office, Dr. Saif said, "We have achieved 13 out of 15 important targets for the promotion of the IT & Telecom sector in a short period of 5 months in the caretaker set-up. The forum of SIFC will prove to be a great support for the upcoming elected government in the process of building and developing the country, and the elected government will also reap the benefits of the measures we have taken during the caretaker period."

Ms. Aysha Morani Additional Secretary MOITT, Muhammad Zohaib Khan Chairman P@SHA, Nadeem Malik, General Secretary P@SHA and representative from IT Industry attended the event.

Dr. Umar Saif further said that, to facilitate IT exporters and boost

exports of IT and IT-enabled services, the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has increased the permissible retention limit from 35% to 50% of their export proceeds in the Exporters' Specialized Foreign Currency Accounts (ESFCAs). "We worked with the SIFC and the State Bank to make a significant policy intervention, allowing IT companies to keep 50% of their export revenue in dollars.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for IT and Telecommunication Dr. Umar Saif in a group photo after Town Hall meeting.



KARACHI: Governor SBP Jameel Ahmed along with Japanese CG Hattori Masaru and other diplomats visiting Traditional Pottery and Ceramic Exhibition 'Yakishime, Earth Metamorphosis' at SBP Museum.

Pakistan's public-sector insurance companies' engine of economic growth: Gohar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for Commerce, Industry, Investment and Interior Dr. Gohar Ejaz on Thursday said that Pakistan's public-sector insurance companies are engine of economic growth.

He expressed these views in a meeting chaired by Caretaker Finance Minister Dr. Shamshad Akhtar.

During the meeting, discussion was made on reforms in the insurance industry, a news release said issued here. He said that State Life Insurance Company, National Insurance Company and Pakistan Reinsurance Company have managed around Rs. 2 trillion of funds. These companies have established themselves as pillars of financial stability and innovation, he said.

These are the best

state-owned enterprises in Pakistan, he said. Over the years, he said that the companies have consistently demonstrated their ability to navigate economic cycles, maintain financial stability, and adapt to evolving market conditions. He added that these companies were at the forefront of expanding insurance coverage to underserved segments of the population, particularly in rural areas. He further stated that the companies have played a pivotal role in supporting Pakistan's economic growth by providing risk mitigation solutions to businesses and infrastructure projects.

Dr. Gohar Ejaz said: "These companies have outperformed their counterparts in the private sector and their performance is a benchmark for others."

Trade and Investment officers visit PSGMEA

SIALKOT (APP): Trade and investment officers appointed by the Ministry of Commerce to abroad visited the Pakistan Sports Goods Manufacturers and Exporters Association (PSGMEA) here on Thursday.

PSGMEA Chairman Arshad Latif Butt, Senior Vice Chairman Zafar Ahmed Dohdy, Vice Chairman Umer-Uz-Zaman and Secretary General Mohsin Masood welcomed the guests. According to Secretary General Mohsin Masood, Arshad Latif Butt and the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) jointly organized an outstanding interaction with the newly-inducted counsellors at different stations abroad. Addressing to the participants, Arshad Latif Butt said development of cottage industries in Sialkot had assumed a model status for the developing world.

He said thousands of small and medium enterprises engaged in their global commitments

Pakistan an attractive investment destination for US investors: Masood

WASHINGTON (APP): Pakistan is the most attractive and profitable investment destination for US investors, and urged them to take advantage of the country's improved business climate, Ambassador Masood Khans said Wednesday.

"The Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) would provide every possible facilitation and one-window solution to investors in reaping benefits of a huge market of Pakistan and the region," he said during a virtual meeting with the President of the Pakistan Chamber of Commerce USA, Amir Piprani, and his team, according to a press release of the Pakistani embassy here.

Pakistan's Consul General in Houston, Aftab Ahmed Chaudhry and Trade & Investment Attache, Shaista Bunyad, were also present. "IT, energy, agriculture and minerals remain our priority areas. However, we would facilitate every single investment in all areas of our economy," the Pakistani envoy said.

SIFC, he said, has been established to ensure that foreign investors, especially Pak-American business community, wanting to invest in their motherland are properly facilitated in their business pursuits.

Piprani briefed Ambassador Masood Khan about the activities of PCC-USA.



ISLAMABAD: Kazakhstani Ambassador to Pakistan H.E. Yerzhan Kistafin called on the Federal Minister for Commerce, Industries, Investments and Interior, Dr. Gohar Ejaz to discuss regional connectivity and bilateral trade at the Commerce Ministry.

Positive changes coming to Pakistan Railways, assures CEO on Facebook live

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Railways' Chief Executive Officer, Amir Ali Baloch, expressed optimism about significant enhancements in train facilities.

Responding to public queries on Facebook live on Thursday, Baloch highlighted ongoing efforts to address workers salaries, with plans to secure approval for a minimum wage increase. Despite rising diesel costs, he noted that fare adjustments had not been made last year, with the burden absorbed by the Railways. However, he pledged to consider fare reductions if diesel prices decrease. Baloch emphasized plans to restore closed train services gradually, with recent efforts focused on reopening the Sibbi section. Additionally, he outlined initiatives to upgrade station washrooms and install new charging ports onboard trains. Notably, improvements to train coaches, starting with the Karachi Express, are also on the agenda, extending to the Sukkur Express and Pakistan Business Express. Highlighting a commitment to sustainability, Baloch announced plans to transition all railway stations to solar energy, with regulations in the final stages of preparation. He underscored ongoing efforts to streamline promotion processes and introduced the "Rabbit" mobile application for passenger feedback.

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QUETTA: A vendor selling country-hens as demand increased during winter season for preparing 'yakhni' in Provincial Capital.

Food group imports decrease 19.48% in 06 months of FY 2023-24

ISLAMABAD (APP): Food group imports into the country during the first half of the current financial year decreased by 19.48 per cent as compared to the imports of the corresponding period of last year.

During the period from July to December 2023, different food commodities costing \$3.957 billion were imported as compared to the imports of \$4.914 billion in the same period of last year, according to the data of the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics.

During the period under review, the imports of the commodities that

went down included milk cream, milk for infants at 25.93 per cent was recorded at \$60.298 million as compared to the imports of \$81.404 million, wheat unmilled by 34.84 per cent and reached \$39.126 million as compared to the imports of \$609.434 million of the same period of last year.

Meanwhile, the imports of soybeans were reduced by 41.20 per cent which came down from \$155.20 million to \$91.147 million in the last three quarters of the current financial year as compared to the imports of the same period of last year.

Minerals used in smart phones, cars manufacturing found in Pakistan: Minister

KARACHI (APP): Caretaker Sindh Minister for Mines and Minerals Development, Mir Khuda Bax Marri on Thursday said that many of the leading sources of minerals commodities used world over in mobile devices and cars manufacturing were found in Pakistan.

The minister expressed these views while addressing a press conference in the Karachi Press Club (KPC) here.

He highlighted that these sources of minerals were gift from Allah to Pakistan and same were being used the world over in

manufacturing of the top three global industries. We should also utilize these sources for development and prosperity of the country instead of exporting these minerals in raw form, he said.

The caretaker minister called for a need to establish industries in the country to utilize these available mineral sources to produce more iron, cement and other commodities which are high in demand.

He highlighted that the leading mineral resources like lake salt, bentonite, China clay, lime stone, marble, granite and

others were found in Sindh. The minerals or minerals sources like zinc, lead, cobalt, graphite, iron, steel, cooper, glass/sand, calcium carbonate, talc, silica, nickel and others are also found in Pakistan, he added.

He pointed out that these minerals were used in various industries for the production of decorative stones, construction stones, cement, ceramics products, mud of oil drilling, oil filtering, cosmetics, fungicides, textiles and others industries but there was a need to properly utilize these minerals.

PSX witnesses bearish trend, loses 524 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bearish trend on Thursday, losing 524.43 points, a negative change of 0.81 percent, closing at 64,298.01 points against 64,822.43 points the previous trading day.

A total of 460,691,033 shares valuing Rs 25,248 billion were traded during the day as compared to 479,982,148 shares valuing Rs. 22,501 billion the last day.

Some 353 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 102 of them recorded gains and 233 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 18 remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were Oil and Gas Development with 49,679,574 shares at Rs.135.31 per share.

Governor SBP inaugurates Japanese traditional pottery, ceramics exhibition Yakishime

Independent Report
KARACHI: Governor State Bank of Pakistan, Jameel Ahmed, inaugurated a special exhibition "YAKISHIME, Earth Metamorphosis- Japanese Traditional Pottery and Ceramics" at the SBP museum on Thursday.

Consul General of Japan, Hattori Masaru, diplomats from different countries and renowned political and cultural personalities attended the launching ceremony of the exhibition organized by Japan Foundation in collaboration with the State Bank of Pakistan Museum.

Governor SBP, Jameel Ahmed, speaking on the occasion, said that cultural exchanges and

people-to-people contacts were instrumental in fostering understanding and good-will between the nations.

He said that the cultural agreement, signed in 1957 between Pakistan and Japan, has been the bedrock of bilateral relations as it laid the foundation for deepening and broadening the bilateral relations.

"Programs we have undertaken jointly include performances, exhibitions, student exchange, scholarships and joint research initiatives between the two nations," he said adding that such activities played an important role in fostering cultural learning, cross-cultural relations.



FAISALABAD: A worker busy in his work at a local Polyester factory in the city.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Shipping activity reported at the Port where four ships namely, Maersk Cabo Verde, Clemens Schulte, Charade and Lusail carrying Containers, Steel Coil and LNG, berthed at Container Terminal, Multi-Purpose Terminal and Elengy Terminal, respectively on January 24.

Meanwhile five more ships, MSC ADU-V, Encore, Theodora, Sea Elegant and Nord Anthem also arrived at outer-anchorage of the Port Qasim to load/unload Container, Rice, Chemicals and Coal during the last 24 hours.

A total of nine ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them four ships, Clemens Schulte, Maersk Cabo Verde, IVS Windsor and Marangas Asclepius are left the port on today morning and three more ships, Limra, Charde and Sea Runner are expected to sail on same day. Cargo throughput of 172,616 tonnes, comprising 145,841 tonnes imports cargo and 26,775 tonnes export cargo carried in 2,298 Containers (979 TEUs are Import and 1,319 TEUs are export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

Roadshow in Bangkok for Pak 300MW floating solar plants on Jan 29

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan will hold a roadshow in Bangkok on January 29 to attract investment for the 300-megawatt floating solar plants project to be executed at the Tarbela-Barotha Complex sites.

Under the project, Pakistan aims to develop two 150-MW AC floating solar plants, the Pakistan Embassy in Thailand said on its X account, inviting potential bidders to participate in the roadshow.

The interested parties

can submit international competitive bidding with two envelopes for technical and financial proposals.

The embassy said the project sites were within the Tarbela-Barotha Complex, owned by the Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA), a highly secure area with controlled access.

The environmental and social impacts of the floating solar plants have already been studied and declared by experts as manageable.

LESCO detects 389 power pilferers

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Electric Supply Company (Lesco) has detected a total of 389 connections from where the customers were pilfering electricity in all its circles of five districts (Lahore, Sheikhupura, Nankana Sahib, Kasur and Okara) on the 138th day of grand anti-power theft campaign. The Lesco spokesman told media here Thursday that the company has also submitted

applications against 389 electricity thieves, out of which 168 FIRs have been registered in respective police stations, while 10 accused have been arrested.

Grand anti-power theft operations against electricity thieves are being conducted on the directives of the Federal Power Division and Lesco Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Engineer Shahid Haider is supervising these operations.

PTCL Group renews partnership with SNGPL for cellular services



(PTCL & Ufone 4G), and largest integrated gas company of Pakistan, SNGPL have renewed their partnership for the continued provision of the state-of-the-art cellular services to SNGPL under PTCL Group Business

Independent Report
LAHORE: Pakistan's largest telecommunications and integrated ICT services provider, PTCL Group

Solutions. Group Chief Business Solutions Officer (GCBSO), PTCL & Ufone 4G, Zarrar Hasham Khan,

connectivity and a host of bundled services to SNGPL.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, Zarrar

and MD/ CEO, SNGPL, Amer Tufail signed the agreement at SNGPL headquarters in Lahore, in the presence of senior officials from both organizations. Under this agreement, PTCL Group will provide wireless

Hasham Khan, Group Chief Business Solutions Officer PTCL & Ufone 4G, stated, "PTCL Group takes pride in playing a significant role in driving technological advancement and transformation in Pakistan.

NATO's largest military exercise since Cold War kicks off

Monitoring Desk WASHINGTON: The US Navy dock landing ship Gunston Hall left port on Wednesday to mark the first movement for the largest NATO exercise since the Cold War, officials said.

Some 90,000 troops from the United States and fellow NATO allied nations are due to join the Steadfast Defender 2024 drills that will run through May.

More than 50 ships from aircraft carriers to destroyers will take part, as well as more than 80 fighter jets, helicopters and drones and at least 1,100 combat vehicles including 133 tanks and 533 infantry fighting vehicles.

The drills will rehearse NATO's execution of its regional plans, the first defence plans the alliance has drawn up in decades, detailing how it would respond to a Russian attack.

NATO did not mention Russia by name in its announcement. But its top strategic document identifies Russia as the most significant and direct threat to NATO members' security.

The exercise comes at an important moment after Russia's invasion of Ukraine started the deadliest war on European soil in more than 70 years.



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un attends the 19th expanded political bureau meeting of the 8th Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea in Pyongyang, North Korea.

Aid groups call for stopping arms supply to Israel

Monitoring Desk LONDON: Sixteen international humanitarian and rights organisations on Wednesday called for a halt to weapons transfers to Israel and Palestinian armed groups in a bid to end the Gaza conflict.

In a joint statement they urged United Nations member states to stop sending weapons, parts and ammunition to "stop the crisis in Gaza and avert further humanitarian catastrophe and loss of civilian life."

Gaza officials say Israeli fire strikes a crowd waiting for aid, killing at least 20

Monitoring Desk NEW YORK: Gaza's Health Ministry said Israeli fire struck a crowd of people waiting for humanitarian aid at a roundabout in Gaza City on Thursday, killing at least 20 and wounding 150.

The Israeli military says it was looking into the reports.

Japan man gets death sentence for killing 36 in anime studio arson - NHK

Monitoring Desk TOKYO: A Japanese man was convicted and sentenced to death on Thursday for the arson and killing of 36 people at famed anime studio Kyoto Animation in 2019.

Erdogan, eyeing more trade with Iran

Monitoring Desk ANKARA: Turkey is considering opening new border crossings with eastern neighbour Iran, President Tayyip Erdogan said late on Wednesday after talks with his Iranian counterpart, as they seek to revive sagging economic relations.

Trade between Turkey and Iran peaked in 2012 at nearly \$22 billion but has since fallen. It stood at \$7.4 billion in 2023, according to Turkish Trade Minister Omer Bolat, down from around \$10 billion a year earlier.

Attacks in Nigeria's Plateau state leave at least 30 dead

Monitoring Desk MAIDUGURI: At least 30 people have been killed and several others injured in Nigeria's central Plateau state in a series of attacks around Mangu town, despite a curfew imposed by the state government, a community spokesperson said.

Farmer-herder attacks and communal conflicts are rife in central Nigeria, an ethnically and religiously diverse hinterland known as the 'Middle Belt' where a circle of violence has claimed hundreds of lives in recent years.

The latest violence on Wednesday came after a Christmas Day attack in the area which left at least 140 people dead. A dusk-to-dawn curfew was imposed on Jan. 23.

A Plateau police spokesperson did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the attacks which took place over two days.

Trudeau says Trump 'represents uncertainty'

Monitoring Desk TORONTO: Canada's government is preparing for the possibility that Donald Trump could reach the White House again and the "uncertainty" that would bring, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said Tuesday.

Speaking at a Cabinet retreat, Trudeau said that Trump "represents uncertainty. We don't know exactly what he is going to do."

Trump is eyeing a win in New Hampshire's Republican primary on Tuesday, which would be his second straight victory in his quest for the 2024 GOP nomination after a commanding triumph in Iowa.

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.



RAFAH: Palestinians inspect the site of an Israeli strike on a mosque, amid the ongoing aggression in the southern Gaza Strip

US Navy intercepts missiles in Red Sea while escorting Maersk ships

Monitoring Desk COPENHAGEN: Maersk said explosions nearby forced two ships operated by its US subsidiary and carrying US military supplies to turn around when they were transiting the Bab al-Mandab Strait off Yemen, accompanied by the US Navy.

"While en route, both ships reported seeing explosions close by and the US Navy accompaniment also intercepted multiple projectiles," Maersk said in a statement, adding it was suspending Red Sea transits by vessels of the US subsidiary.

A spokesperson for Yemen's Houthi military forces said they fired ballistic missiles at several US warships that were protecting two US commercial vessels.

Muslim shopfronts torn down in Mumbai after Ram temple opening sparks communal clashes

Monitoring Desk MUMBAI: Authorities in India's financial capital Mumbai have torn down several Muslim-owned makeshift shopfronts after communal clashes sparked by a divisive Hindu temple opened this week by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Minor clashes broke out on Sunday in parts of Mumbai, including one incident where Hindus chanting religious slogans passed through a Muslim neighbourhood on the megacity's outskirts.

No serious injuries were reported in the melee but by Tuesday, authorities had called in excavators to knock down more than a dozen shopfronts belonging to Muslims in that locality, according to local media reports.



Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) authorities demolishing structures on the facade of an eatery near Minara mosque in Mumbai.

Nearly all US Senate Democrats back two-state solution for Israel and Palestinians

Monitoring Desk WASHINGTON: An overwhelming majority of President Joe Biden's fellow Democrats in the Senate on Wednesday backed a statement reiterating US support of a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Forty-nine of the 51 members of the Senate Democratic caucus backed an amendment supporting a negotiated solution to the conflict that results in Israeli and Palestinian states living side by side, ensuring Israel's survival as a secure, democratic, Jewish state and fulfilling the Palestinians' "legitimate aspirations" for a state of their own.

Russian Black Sea oil refinery fire extinguished

Monitoring Desk MOSCOW: A fire at a Rosneft-owned export-oriented oil refinery in the southern Russian town of Tuapse overnight has been extinguished, local officials said early on Thursday.

The refinery is one of many energy infrastructure facilities hit by fire or drone attacks across Russia in the past week.

The plant's annual capacity is 12 million metric tons (240,000 barrels per day). It supplies fuel mainly to Turkey, China, Malaysia and Singapore.

Philippine says armed forces to ensure unimpeded and peaceful exploration in South China Sea

Monitoring Desk MANILA: The Philippines armed forces will guarantee the "unimpeded and peaceful" exploration and exploitation of natural resources within the country's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) as it shifts its focus to external defence, Manila's defence secretary said.

"We are evolving into a defence concept which projects our power into areas where we must, by constitutional fiat and duty, protect and preserve our resources," Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro told the Manila Overseas Press Club on Tuesday night.

Sri Lanka votes on new law to regulate online content

Monitoring Desk COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's lawmakers are set to vote on a social media regulation bill on Wednesday which opposition politicians and activists allege will muzzle free speech.

The Online Safety Bill proposes jail terms for content that a five-member commission considers illegal and make social media platforms such as Google, Facebook and X, formerly known as Twitter, liable for those posted on their platforms.

Brazil probes ex-spy chief in illegal espionage raids

Monitoring Desk BRASILIA: Brazil's federal police on Thursday searched addresses linked to far-right former President Jair Bolsonaro's ex-spy chief, as part of an investigation into alleged illegal spying by the Abin intelligence agency, two sources said.

The probe into suspected illegal surveillance of Bolsonaro's foes in the courts, politics and media adds to the former president's legal woes. He has already been ruled politically ineligible until 2030 and faces multiple criminal investigations that could still land him in jail.

Russian who insulted Putin jailed

Monitoring Desk MOSCOW: Prominent Russian nationalist Igor Girkin, who accuses President Vladimir Putin and the army top brass of not pursuing the Ukraine war effectively enough, was convicted by a Moscow court on Thursday of inciting extremism and jailed for four years.

Girkin, who denied the charge, had publicly entertained ideas about running against Putin in a March presidential election, saying he could do a better job than Russia's veteran leader.

