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KARACHI: A view of last sunset year 2023 in Provincial Capital

Five terrorist killed in Awaran operation Three terrorists killed for attempting to sneak into Pakistan from Afghanistan

Terrorists tried to infiltrate Pak-Afghan border in KP's Bajaur; Weapons, ammunition and explosives were also recovered; In separate incident, Pakistan Army soldier martyred in border post attack by terrorists from inside Afghanistan

RAWALPINDI (APP): Three terrorists were killed by the security forces on Sunday who were trying to infiltrate the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, in the general area Batwar of Bajaur District, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). The Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) in a news release said that their movement was picked up by the security forces in the general area Batwar and in the ensuing exchange of fire all three terrorists were killed. Weapons, ammunition and explosives were also recovered from them.

Meanwhile, a soldier of the Pakistan Army embraced martyrdom while valiantly thwarting terrorists' firing attempt on the border post in the general area of Spinwam, North Waziristan District, KP. The Army troops responded in a befitting manner causing considerable losses to the terrorists.

Meanwhile at least five terrorists were killed in an intense exchange of fire during an intelligence-based operation (IBO) conducted by the security forces on December 30-31 in general area Mashkai, Awaran District of Balochistan province. "During the conduct of the operation, after intense fire exchange between

own troops and the terrorists, 'Five Terrorists' were sent to hell. Terrorists' hideout was also busted and a cache of arms, ammunition and explosives was recovered," an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release on Sunday said. The sanitization operation is being carried out to eliminate any other terrorists found in the area. "Security Forces of Pakistan, in step with the Nation, remain determined to thwart attempts of sabotaging peace, stability and progress of Balochistan," the ISPR said.

Fazlur Rehman escapes armed attack in Dera Ismail Khan

Monitoring Desk
DERA ISMAIL KHAN: In a disturbing incident on Sunday, the convoy of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman was targeted in a brazen attack at the Yarik Interchange in Dera Ismail Khan, party officials said.

The assailants opened fire on the convoy, aiming from two sides, according to preliminary information.

Fortunately, all individuals, including Maulana Fazlur Rehman, emerged unharmed from the attack.

The JUI-F chief was reportedly passing through Dera Ismail Khan as part of his election campaign when the incident occurred. After the attack, Fazl successfully reached his ancestral home in Abdul Khel, where he is reported to be safe.

JUI-F spokesperson Aslam Ghori condemned the attack, describing it as a

cowardly act. Ghori expressed frustration over what he perceives as a lack of concrete action by the administration despite repeated warnings about the threats faced by the party's leadership.

"We have repeatedly warned that the situation is not favourable for our leadership," Ghori stated in a press release. He criticized the administration for writing threat letters daily without taking effective measures.

Ghori urged an immediate investigation into the incident, questioning the institutions responsible for ensuring the safety of political figures.

Furthermore, Ghori highlighted the deteriorating law and order situation in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, expressing concerns about the escalating security challenges faced by political leaders in the wake of general elec-

tions, scheduled for February 8.

Contrary to initial reports, Regional Police Officer (RPO) DI Khan Nasir Mehmood Satti stated that Maulana Fazlur Rehman is safe. Satti clarified that the JUI-F chief was present to refuel his vehicle and that the firing was not targeted at him. According to Satti, the gunfire was directed towards the Toll Plaza, adding a different dimension to the incident.

Taking notice of the reports, the interior secretary has called for a report on the incident. "Miscreants will not be allowed to spread chaos and sow discord in the country," said the spokesperson of the Ministry of Interior.

He said full security will be provided for political activities during election campaign, adding that all possible steps will be taken to ensure law and order and safety of the people.

President felicitates Nation, Muslim Ummah on new year

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi Sunday felicitated the Pakistani Nation, the Muslim Ummah and the international community at the beginning of the new year 2024.

In a message, he said, "I would like to extend my heartfelt felicitations to the entire Pakistani Nation, the Muslim Ummah and the international community at the beginning of the new year."

"As we bid farewell to the passing year and welcome the dawn of a new year, I pray to Allah Almighty that may the coming year bring prosperity, political and economic stability for Pakistan as well as the entire world."

"At the beginning of the new year, we should not

forget our brothers and sisters in Palestine who continue to face the brutal and barbaric attacks at the hands of the Israeli forces."

He urged the international community to take urgent steps to stop genocide in Gaza and work for just and lasting peace in Palestine.

"Similarly, my thoughts are with the people of the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir, who have been enduring atrocities and the longest siege by the Indian occupation forces."

"It is essential that the international community should take practical measures to resolve these longstanding disputes in accordance with the UN resolutions to promote global peace and security."



QUETTA: Caretaker Health Minister Dr. Amir Muhammad Khan Jogezaei visiting different wards of Children Hospital

Protection of life, property of citizens priority of govt: Jamali

Independent Report
QUETTA: The caretaker Provincial Minister for Home, Mir Zubair Jamali has directed to take action without any discrimination against those involved in the aerial firing, hooliganism and one wheeling on the occasion of New Year.

Gilani says: PPP key player for formation of govt

MULTAN (APP): Former Prime Minister and PPP Central Leader Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani said on Sunday that no government could be formed in the country without the Pakistan Peoples Party.

He said this while talking to journalists on the occasion of the participation of a good number of people from the Christian Community in PPP.

Gilani stressed the need for a level playing field in politics. He called on the Election Commission to ensure transparent elections.

Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani thanked the Christian community in South Punjab, particularly in Multan, for their support for PPP.

Rejection & acceptance of papers: Two judges of High Court appointed for hearing of appeals

Independent Report
QUETTA: Two judges of Balochistan High Court (BHC) have been appointed for hearing of the appeals against acceptance or rejection of the nomination papers of the candidates in the province.

According to the Election Commission of Pakistan, Judges of the High Court including Mr. Justice Hashim Khan Kakar and Mr. Justice Muhammad Aamir Nawaz Rana have been appointed for hearing of the appeals.

Mr. Justice Hashim Kakar would hear the appeals regarding the seats of National Assembly and those reserved there.



KARACHI: Members of National Trade Union Federation (NTUF) are enlightened candles to express solidarity with martyred innocent people of Palestine and against Israeli cruel and inhumane acts, during protest demonstration at Karachi press club

GoB abandons public ceremonies on New Year due to Palestine situation

Independent Report
QUETTA: The caretaker Government of Balochistan had abandoned the public gatherings and ceremonies on eve of New Year due to the tragic incidents occurred in Palestine that claimed lives of large number of Palestinians.

In an official statement issued here on Sunday, the caretaker Provincial Minister for Information, Jan Achakzai said that we are going to abandon all public ceremonies of the New Year following the directives of caretaker Prime Minister Anwarul Haq Kakar.

Jan Achakzai said that we would encourage the people to observe the occasion remembering the aggrieved Palestinians in their prayers and give charity to the deserving people.

The Minister Information said that let express solidarity and support the Palestinian brethren and sisters who are grieved and in pain.

We still remember those people who embraced martyrdom and bring hope and sympathy with them, adding he stressed.

Jan said that we share the grief with Palestinian people. He said that Pakistan has always raised voice for the right of freedom of the Palestinians at every front.

He said that recent barbarism and massacre of innocent Palestinians has exposed the naked face of Israel.

Caretaker CM congratulates KPC's newly elected office bearers; expresses best wishes

Independent Report
QUETTA: The caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki has congratulated the newly elected office bearers of the Karachi Press Club, Saeed Sarbazi, Shoaib Khan and others.

In a felicitation message issued here on Sunday, the Chief Minister expressed best wishes for the newly elected president KPC, Saeed Sarbazi, Secretary Shoaib Khan and other office bearers.

Mir Ali Mardan Domki said that KPC always played key role in highlighting the national issues.

He said that the election of office bearers through democratic process reflects the democratic approach.

The Chief Minister also said that the role of KPC has also been important in the national media.

Nomination papers of 1,941 candidates out of 2,419 accepted

Independent Report
QUETTA: The nomination papers of 1,941 candidates have been accepted for the general elections in Balochistan province after completion of the process of scrutiny.

According to the sources of Election Commission of Pakistan, a total of 2,419 candidates had filed their nomination papers for the elections on different seats of provincial and National Assemblies from the province.

However, the papers of 479 candidates were rejected.

In all 612 male and 19 female candidates filed papers for 16 seats of the National Assembly.

At the outset, papers of 539 out of total 631 candidates were accepted.

Acceptance or rejection of nomination papers constitutional process: Solangi

Independent Report
ISLAMABAD (INP): The Caretaker Federal Minister of Information, Murtaza Solangi, has said that the approval or rejection of nomination papers of the candidates is a constitutional process, and any decisions in this regard fall within the legal framework.

In an interview with a private TV channel, he said the majority of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) candidates have successfully submitted their nomination papers. He clarified that the acceptance or rejection of these papers is a constitutional process. He said that the caretaker government has no involvement in these matters, and only the Election Commission of Pakistan can act in such electoral affairs.

Reiterating the adherence to constitutional boundaries, Murtaza Solangi emphasized that all political parties, including PTI, receive fair coverage based on ethical editorial policies.

He further noted that registered political parties are receiving unbiased coverage on state media, adhering to ethical journalistic standards.

Murtaza Solangi also expressed the commitment to provide necessary support to the Election Commission for financial and administrative facilitation. He informed that the Election Commission's financial needs were initially met with an allocation of 10 billion rupees, followed by an additional disbursement of 17.4 billion rupees.

Talking about the progress in the negotiations with Baloch protesters, the Information Minister revealed that in the first phase, all children and women were safely released.

In the second phase, 163 male individuals were also set free, and the remaining 34 individuals were released in the third phase. Murtaza Solangi asserted the right to peaceful protest for every citizen but clarified that actions such as road closures, entering restricted zones, assaulting the police, and pelting stones are outside the boundaries of peaceful demonstrations and are not permitted.

Complete shutter down strike observed in favour of dharna in Chaman

Chaman Dharna Committee gives call for shutter down strike all over Balochistan today



Independent Report
CHAMAN: The complete shutter down strike was observed in favour of protest dharna in Chaman on Sunday. The call for shutter down was given by the Chaman Dharna Committee in support of the dharna being staged for last 73 days.

All parties, traders' Laghri ittehad and Anjuman Tajran also endorsed the strike as a result of which, all the trading centers, business concerns and shops remained closed.

Meanwhile, the Chaman Dharna Committee has announced to observe shutter down strike all over the province today (Monday).

In this regard, all the traders and shopkeepers have been appealed to close their shops and other business concerns today.

Needless to mention here that the protest dharna is continued by All Parties Traders Laghri Ittehad at the international highway near Pak-Afghan border.

The protesters are demanding restoration of the across border movement ending the condition of passport and visa. According to the spokesman of Chaman dharna committee, Sadiq Khan, the livelihood of thousands of people is linked with the Chaman border as there's no other source of income for them to make their both ends meet.

Three killed, 15 injured as coaster hits tree

Independent Report
NASIRABAD (INP): At least three people were killed and 15 others including women and children injured when a coaster carrying wedding guests hit a tree on Sunday.

According to details, the accident took place on Indus Highway where a coaster with wedding guests onboard returning from Karachi got out of control due to over speeding and crashed into a tree near village Chanhar in Nasirabad.



GWADAR: Pakistan's Ambassador to Beijing Khalil Hashmi visiting GDA Pak-China Friendship Hospital. Chairman Gwadar Port Authority Pasand Khan Buledi is also present

Daily Voice of Masses
Independent

Kashmir killings

While India continues to push the fiction that it has brought normality to held Kashmir through the constitutional subterfuge of August 2019, periodic acts of violence perpetrated by its security forces in the disputed region point to a much darker reality. Over the past few days, the custodial killings of three Kashmiri men, apparently by the Indian military, have highlighted the state-sponsored violence that Kashmiris are being subjected to, while Indian officials have sought to 'pacify' the region in the aftermath of these crimes. The killings occurred after Indian troops were ambushed by fighters, resulting in the deaths of at least four security men. Following this episode, eight civilians were picked up for questioning in the Poonch region. A week ago, the families of three of these detained men received calls to collect their bodies. The families say their loved ones were tortured by Indian forces. A highly disturbing video circulating on social media appears to show Indian troops sprinkling chilli powder on the exposed body parts of detained men. The Indian military says it is investigating, while Defence Minister Rajnath Singh travelled to Indian-occupied Kashmir to 'condole' with the families of the victims, promising them 'justice'.

Sadly, justice has eluded the people of Kashmir since partition; their wishes have been ignored, and India has sought to create new facts on the ground to cement its illegal occupation of what remains an internationally disputed region. The Indian supreme court's recent validation of the BJP government's dubious decision to annul the region's limited autonomy has further emboldened those in New Delhi who wish to subjugate Kashmir like a conquered territory. International human rights bodies have frequently been pointing to the use of torture and violence by Indian forces in the region. Unfortunately, the Indian state uses 'counterterrorism' as a convenient alibi to deny the Kashmiri people their rights, and inflict odious violence upon them. How many more Kashmiris will have to be tortured and killed for the international community to realise that India must be held to account for its cruel policies in the held territory? Instead of taking the path of dialogue and engaging Pakistan and the Kashmiris to arrive at a peaceful solution, India insists on flexing its muscles, and crushing the Kashmiri struggle through the use of gratuitous violence.

New challenges

By Mohammad Ali Babakhel

In Pakistan, technological innovation has altered the nature of crime, yet law enforcement remains mired in an outdated organisational structure, legal framework, and procedures, reflecting its colonial past.

Former colonies with dense populations, like Pakistan, rely heavily on a numerical policing model. This approach is increasingly ineffective against the tougher challenges posed by globalisation and technological advancements. In contrast, organised criminals and terrorists are proficiently utilising technology for nefarious purposes. This scenario calls for a balanced approach, combining traditional numerical policing with innovative, technology-led solutions. Technology can be instrumental in enhancing interactive community relations and preventing and detecting crime.

Law enforcement faces new challenges due to disparities between external and internal security policies. Historically, negotiations with militants resulted in escalation of violence against police and negatively impacted the peace index.

Bridging the gaps between internal and external security policies is crucial and needs effective communication coupled with a democratic ethos.

Historically, some administrative decisions, including administrative and police reforms, impacted the quality of law enforcement in Pakistan. Such decisions negatively impact policing standards and performance. For instance, the merger of FATA with KP increased the number of personnel in KP Police but posed new challenges. Likewise, con-

verting 'B' areas into 'A' in Balochistan and reversing the decision in 2008 adversely impacted law enforcement. Since its inception, policing in Pakistan has been a contentious subject, oscillating between bureaucratic and political control, which has adversely affected organisational integrity, public interest, and safety.

Pakistan's low ranking in the recent Rule of Law Index, particularly in categories like order and security, criminal justice, and human rights, underscores the urgent need for comprehensive reforms supported by political commitment, public backing, and increased funding.

The post-9/11 era has significantly increased the security duties of police, burdening them and affecting their preventive and investigative functions. Police Order, 2002, and KP Police Act, 2017, which provide a legal framework for external accountability, are yet to be fully implemented. The US exit from Afghanistan has facilitated militants' access to advanced weaponry. KP Police's establishment of an explosives handling school is a proactive measure in building capacity to counter these threats. However, the rise in militancy has also led to police becoming increasingly militarised, affecting public service delivery and widening the gap between police and community.

Pakistan has seen the loss of thousands of police officers in the line of duty, reflecting the militants' deadly proficiency. This situation necessitates a critical examination and improvement of police recruitment, training, and supervision processes.

Additionally, the structural design of police stations, especially in areas located in the peripheries, has made them more vulnerable to militant attacks.

The 'war on terror' has also brought to light several human rights issues, tarnishing the image of the police as custodians of fundamental human rights. The widespread availability of weapons, influenced by both internal and external factors like preferential arms policies and a tribal and feudal social fabric, has aggravated challenges in crime, disorder, and terrorism. A comprehensive, long-term de-weaponisation strategy, including the revision of arms policies and voluntary surrender of illegal arms, is imperative.

Pakistan's tendency to over-legislate, often without effective enforcement, undermines the standards of governance. The gap between lawmaking and enforcement is particularly evident in laws where the police are direct or indirect stakeholders. Effective law enforcement demands stakeholder involvement in both the pre-enactment consultation and post-implementation review phases to ensure the effectiveness of laws.

To assess the quality of policing, a statistical approach is preferable over solely relying on public satisfaction metrics. The existing training facilities, including the National Police Academy, nine training colleges, and 22 schools, are inadequate to address the modern challenges faced by over 500,000 police personnel.

Training modules need to be updated to cater to contemporary issues such as the nexus between militants and organised criminals, sectarian violence, and terror financing. Emphasis should be placed on capacity building and public satisfaction, with a shift towards short-duration, focused online training programmes. — Courtesy Dawn

Pakistan beyond COP28

By Muhammad Asad Rafi

Every United Nations Climate Change Conference – or COP – carries the weight of expectation, the pressure to inch closer to a sustainable and climate-resilient future.

COP27 delivered the Loss and Damage Fund, a vital lifeline for communities already bearing the brunt of a changing climate. COP28, which came at the heels of the warmest year recorded in human history, witnessed a different kind of milestone – the mention of "fossil fuels" in the final text, a first in nearly three decades. But the euphoria quickly dimmed upon closer inspection. The language, watered down to "transitioning away from fossil fuels in a just, orderly and equitable manner", lacked the teeth needed to bite into the heart of the issue. Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative reported about fossil fuel expansion and exploration just 24 hours after COP28 concluded, and the International Energy Agency has warned that emissions-cutting pledges made by more than 100 countries and 50 fossil fuel firms at the start of COP28 aren't enough to limit global warming to 1.5 C, a key target enshrined in the Paris Agreement.

While the inclusion of fossil fuels in the final text is a step forward, it's a small one, leaving countries like Pakistan, on the frontlines of a climate crisis despite negligible emissions. For Pakistan, transitioning away from fossil fuels might ease the burden on its import bill. However, the scars of climate change – floods, droughts, and heatwaves – run deeper than energy dependence. Even if Pakistan becomes a beacon of green energy, the damage wrought by the current trajectory will be irreversible.

The final text's silence on mandatory action, mainly around climate finance and adaptation, from

major polluters exacerbated the existing inequities in the global response to climate change. Finance and fairness, the fuel that drives adaptation and resilience, were woefully absent from COP28's engine room. Developing countries like Pakistan pleaded for resources to leapfrog the fossil fuel era and build climate-proof communities. But the developed world, responsible for this crisis, looked the other way. While the Loss and Damage Fund marks a positive step, it seems akin to a drop in the ocean. The pledges made (\$770 million) barely cover 0.2 per cent of the annual losses faced by vulnerable nations, and its reliance on voluntary contributions is a recipe for uncertainty.

While Pakistan's voice resonated loud and clear in Dubai, the time for outward appeals has passed. Vulnerable nations stand at the precipice of a climate cliff and cannot afford to be mere bystanders. Instead, for Pakistan, it's time to turn inward, harness our own resources, and build a climate-proof future based on a combination of governance, innovation, and resourcefulness. This doesn't require billions of dollars; it requires a strategic shift and a commitment to action. First, we must tackle the governance gap when it comes to climate action. Climate change is a multi-headed beast, demanding collaboration across federal, provincial, and local levels. Pakistan's vulnerability to climate change places adaptation at the forefront of our agenda. Unlike global mitigation efforts, adaptation is inherently local. While policymakers often emphasize Pakistan's susceptibility to climate change and its limited access to climate finance, they seldom discuss the structural deficiencies within our nation.

What we urgently require are inclusive decision-making processes, not stifling bureaucratic silos. Bridging the governance gap hinges on empowering local governments and providing them with the necessary resources and authority. This empowerment fosters an inclusive decision-making process that amplifies diverse voices and perspectives, particularly those closest to the ground, serving as a vital catalyst to unlock finance and implement grassroots-level adaptation.

Second, the potential of the 2017 Climate Change Act remains untapped. It is time to breathe life into this vital document by establishing the Pakistan Climate Change Authority (PCCA), which can become the engine of climate action in Pakistan. The Act not only embodies our commitment to addressing climate change but also grants the PCCA extensive powers and responsibilities. Under its mandate, the PCCA can lead the charge in both mitigation and adaptation efforts, taking a proactive role in shaping our climate policies. Moreover, the PCCA is well-positioned to play a crucial role in crafting bankable projects that not only benefit our environment but also our economy. By leveraging its authority, the PCCA can attract both domestic and international support, fostering collaboration and partnerships that drive sustainable initiatives. Third, Pakistan cannot afford to wait for the mirage of foreign finance to shimmer into reality. While international funding is crucial, we must also take charge of our own climate destiny. It is imperative that we proactively climate-proof every existing and upcoming development project. This responsibility falls squarely on the shoulders of the Ministry of Planning and provincial planning departments. These entities wield the authority and influence to ensure that every step we take in our development journey aligns with a sustainable and climate-resilient future. Let's start with what we have, and what we can. — Courtesy The News

Commerce News

Pak earns \$892.972m from IT services' export

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan earned US \$892.972 million by providing different Information Technology (IT) services to various countries during the first four months of the current fiscal year 2023-24.

This shows a growth of 4.45 per cent as compared with the US \$854.918 million earned through the provision of services during the corresponding months of the last fiscal year 2022-23, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported.

During the months under review, the export of computer services grew by 4.81 per cent as it surged from US \$688.078 million last year to US \$721.162 million during July-October 2023.

Among the computer services, the exports of software consultancy services witnessed an increase of 93.76 per cent, from US \$1.009 million to US \$1.955 million this year while the export of hardware consultancy services also surged by 1.13 per cent, from US \$253.543 million to US \$256.408 million.

The export of repair and maintenance services increased by 3.16 per cent from US \$0.443 million to US \$0.457 million whereas the export and imports of computer software services also surged by 4.01 per cent, from \$190.228 million to \$197.862 million.

Meanwhile, the export of information services during the months under review dipped by 25.18 per cent from US \$1.390 million to US \$1.040 million.

Among the information services, the exports of information-related services increased by 21.04 per cent, from US \$0.366 million to US \$0.443 million whereas the exports of news agency services however decreased by 41.70 per cent, from US \$1.024 million to US \$0.597 million.

The export of telecommunication services increased by 4.45 per cent as these went up from US \$165.45 million to US \$170.770 million, the data revealed.

Among the telecommunication services, the export of call centres services increased by 8.84 per cent during the months as its exports increased from US \$69.641 million to US \$75.800 million whereas the export of other telecommunication services witnessed a nominal decrease of 0.88 per cent.



PESHAWAR: Secretary Energy & Power Nisar Ahmad Khan and CEO PEDO Engr. Naeem Khan took oath from the newly elected cabinet of PEDO's Officers Association.

Newly elected cabinet of PEDO's Officers Association took oath

Employees should work to take PEDO to the highest revenue generating institution of province: Nisar Ahmad, Naeem

Independent Report an additional income of more than Rs. 10 billion to the province. He stressed on all officers to devote all their energies to make the institution as number one.

The Chief Executive Naeem Khan reiterated that he has taken measures to solve all the problems of employees and will continue to work for the welfare of the organization in the future. Later on, the newly elected President, Habib Ullah Shah and Chairman Muhammad Ibrar presented the charter of demand, in which the association has included the gratuity of employees, health facilities for employees and residential colony etc. in the future agenda and expressed hope that they will devote all their energies in the best interest of the organization. They will do their best to solve the problems of the employees.

New policies, reforms required for ease of doing business in 2024: APBF

ISLAMABAD (INP): President All Pakistan Business Forum (APBF), Syed Maaz Mahmood has stressed the need for new policies and widespread structural reforms in the upcoming year of 2024 to help investors launch their ventures with ease and comfort, as the country has been lagging behind in the ease of doing business index over the years and especially in the concluding year of 2023.

In his new year message issued on Sunday, he observed that a policy should be finalized after incorporating inputs from real stakeholders of the business community, including the APBF, with the sole aim of facilitating foreign and domestic investment by removing the unnecessary bureaucratic and administrative hurdles that slow down the process of starting new business ventures and hinder economic growth.

Quoting the figures, Maaz Mahmood stated that in the recent Ease of Doing Business Index, Pakistan is considerably behind peer economies, ranking 108 out of 190. In the regulatory area of Starting a Business, Pakistan ranked 72 out of 190 countries.

The scope of the new policy intervention in 2024 should be limited to NOCs required by federal regulatory agencies for incorporation and starting operations of a business activity.

This policy should cover business registration and authorization required for business operations. The policy should be applicable on all public sector entities of the federal and provincial governments that regulate businesses.

The business leader said that World Bank Group's Doing Business project provides a measure of the "Ease of Doing Business" through a set of objective indicators that focus on the impacts of laws, regulations and their enforcement across 190 economies.

SNGPL cuts off another 485 connections for gas theft

LAHORE (APP): In a relentless effort to curb gas theft, Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL) conducted a series of targeted raids in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), and Islamabad. During the operations, 485 unauthorized connections were disconnected, and fines totaling Rs 4.14 million were imposed.

According to a spokesman for the department, in Lahore, the regional team acted decisively, severing 25 connections for illegal gas usage and an additional 24 for compressor-related violations. Fines amounting to Rs 0.08 million were imposed on gas theft. In Rawalpindi, 183 connections were severed for unauthorized gas consumption, and 4 for compressor misuse, with fines totaling Rs 0.11 million.

The crackdown extended to Islamabad, where three connections were disconnected due to illegal gas usage. In Multan, the team disconnected 4 connections for unauthorized gas usage and 36 for compressor violations, resulting in fines of Rs 0.45 million. One FIR was lodged against gas pilferers. In Peshawar and Karak, SNGPL took stringent action by disconnecting 66 connections for direct and illegal gas usage, imposing fines amounting to Rs 2.33 million, and filing 2 FIRs against gas theft.



LAHORE: Provincial Minister for Industries and Chairman United Business Group SM Tanveer being welcomed at Lahore Airport after attending election of FPCCI.



LAHORE: A large number of people are busy buying warm clothes outside Impress market during cold weather in Provincial Capital.

Industry be prioritized in power, gas supply in winter: PFC

LAHORE (APP): The Pakistan Furniture Council (FC) has demanded the government to accord top priority to the industrial sector regarding uninterrupted power and gas supplies during the winter season.

PFC Chief Executive Officer Mian Kashif Ashfaq made this demand while talking to a delegation of industrialists led by Chaudhary Araib Arain here on Sunday.

He argued that the industrial sector plays a pivotal role in the economic growth and uninterrupted gas and power supplies are essential for its smooth functioning. It will not only sustain production but also safeguard jobs and contribute to overall economic stability besides help achieve export targets.

Pakistan in 2023: Another year of economic turmoil, political unrest, and security challenges

In the wake of last year's devastating floods, the revocation of a brittle truce with militants, the ousting of former-cricketer-turned-Prime Minister Imran Khan, public uproar over rising costs, and persistent economic challenges, 2023 has left Pakistan at a crossroads. As Pakistan navigates through these interwoven dilemmas, the economic turmoil, political instability, and security challenges form a symphony of uncertainty — underlined by the looming 2024 general elections. Pakistan wrestles with an enduring economic crisis, striving to fulfill its external financial obligations to avert default. Soaring inflation and minimal foreign exchange reserves have contributed to the economic downturn. Despite the steady flow of capital into the nation, top-level mismanagement and institutionalized corruption have steadily depleted foreign exchange reserves and increased the overwhelming debt. Ongoing negotiations between Pakistan and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have repeatedly stalled due to the reluctance of both the former ruling party and the current coalition government to undergo adequate monetary and fiscal reforms. Several of Pakistan's partners, such as China and Saudi Arabia, have emerged as significant players by providing temporary loan rollovers and financial support.

The economic crisis further exacerbates basic security concerns, including fuel supply shortages and energy austerity measures, that have triggered widespread civil unrest. One significant indicator of a struggling economy is the grounding of nearly 400 flight operations by national flag carrier Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) in the fall. Several credible sources indicate that two decades of Chinese lending to Pakistan has contributed to more of the country's external debt than previously estimated. That Pakistan is one of the top three recipients of Chinese loans is particularly

concerning to leading experts. Political Unrest as General Elections Loom Large

In 2023, Pakistan's domestic politics went through numerous bouts of upheaval. Shehbaz Sharif, the brother of the longest-serving Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, was appointed as the prime minister in April 2022 after Imran Khan was ousted due to allegations of poor governance and policy mismanagement. Khan claims a falling out with the military elites led to his ousting, rallying a series of widespread protests in his defense. Shehbaz Sharif's tenure as the country's leader from April to August resulted in temporary political stagnation. During Shehbaz Sharif's tenure, a turning point occurred on May 9 following the detention of Khan. The protests, which erupted spontaneously in Lahore, Peshawar, and other major cities, witnessed participants blocking traffic and expressing vehement anti-military sentiments.

The May 9 protests were significant not simply because of the number of protesters but because of what they were asserting. For example, demonstrators in Mardan chanted "death to the Pakistani Army" outside a military facility, accusing the army of corruption. The aftermath of the protests witnessed a severe crackdown, with more than ten protesters killed and 5,000 PTI supporters detained. Khan, though distancing himself from the attacks on military installations, faced internal dissent as some of his party leaders and aides abandoned him, condemning the violence against the army establishment. The military's response to the protests was unprecedented, resulting in three commanders being dismissed and disciplinary actions against 15 top-level officers who exhibited outward displays of support for Khan. This move was one of the strongest actions taken by the military against its own leadership in decades, further intensifying the rift

between the army and the civilian leadership.

On August 9, 2023, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif recommended that parliament dissolve to trigger general elections, the dissolution signaled at least an outward commitment to democratic renewal. The turmoil has raised concerns among experts regarding the potential politicization of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) by military-backed elites. The delays in provincial and other polls fuel skepticism about the ECP's impartiality and its ability to ensure fair and timely elections.

In October, Nawaz Sharif returned from self-imposed exile in the UK, marked by a historic rally in Lahore. The timing of his return, combined with previous corruption allegations stemming from the Panama Papers leak, gives rise to credible speculation that he is receiving support from the army — especially considering the military's involvement in the May 9 protests. In November, a court overturned Nawaz Sharif's conviction in a corruption case, requiring only an acquittal from the Panama Papers corruption case to meet the eligibility criteria for participating in the upcoming election.

Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar is currently the appointed caretaker prime minister, and his credible links with the military are widely acknowledged. The appointment of a caretaker prime minister without a mandate raises doubts about governance legitimacy, especially in light of Nawaz Sharif's return and other recent developments.

Nawaz's acquittals and potential political comeback, which appears to be backed by Pakistan's military, may draw international scrutiny. As Pakistan heads into 2024, democratic nations will likely call for anti-corruption efforts to mitigate the diplomatic backlash against the judiciary's overturn of Nawaz's corruption convictions. These unstable political transitions create significant uncertainty for crucial bilateral and multilateral lenders.

As Pakistan confronts

the multifaceted challenges of economic turmoil and political unrest, the rising rates of terrorism pose a critical threat to the country's stability. A recent report by the Islamabad-based Center for Research and Security Studies highlights a surge in militant attacks, resulting in over 700 fatalities in the first nine months of 2023. The provinces bordering Afghanistan, Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, experience 92 percent of all fatalities, most of them security forces. The TTP, the so-called Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K), and various Baloch separatist groups typically claim responsibility for the attacks. While the violence is currently concentrated in the northwestern provinces, there are ominous signs of its potential spread to other regions, such as Punjab and Sindh. The impact of this uptick in violence on elections is a concern for all Pakistan watchers.

This symphony of domestic challenges has implications for Pakistan's foreign relations, as they have the potential to alter Pakistan's interactions with key regional players. Pakistan's evolving economic relationship with China, perhaps its most significant strategic partner, is particularly notable as Pakistan formally seeks membership in BRICS — a group of emerging economies that includes Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. As Islamabad seeks to deepen its ties with Beijing, the November high-level security meeting affirmed Pakistan's commitment to safeguard Chinese personnel in BRI projects. That same month, Pakistan hosted an advanced Chinese destroyer during the Sea Guardians naval drill, underscoring the countries' deepening bilateral defense cooperation.

Islamabad's relations with two of its other contiguous neighbors, Kabul and New Delhi, remain fraught. For Pakistan, there are three primary issues that persist in its relationship with Afghanistan.



LAHORE: Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi inspecting the on-going construction works at Lahore Zoo.

Naqvi inaugurates Jinnah Hospital's emergency unit

CM also inspects upgradation work of Lahore Zoo

Independent Report

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi Sunday inaugurated the newly equipped emergency ward at Jinnah Hospital Lahore on the eve of New Year 2024.

Addressing the media persons at the hospital premises alongside Caretaker Federal Minister for Commerce and Industries Dr. Gohar Ejaz, he said that the state-of-the-art emergency unit has been completed within a record time.

The CM said that the Board of Management of Jinnah Hospital, under the guidance of Dr. Gohar Ejaz completed the emergency unit on the last day of the year.

The expansive emergency wing, comprising 120 beds, is now operational and is expected to cater to the needs of more than 2000 visiting patients daily, he hinted, adding that Gohar Ejaz personally supervised the entire project.

He was all praises of Gohar Ejaz and said that Mr Gohar is running Punjab's largest dialysis center. "Jinnah Hospital is at the forefront in terms of treatment facilities."

Mohsin continued that the cancer hospital in Manawan will be of international standard.

Further enhancing the province's healthcare infrastructure, he said that the renovation work of Children's Hospital Multan and Nishtar Hospital Multan has been completed.

These facilities, along with others, including one in Dera Ghazi Khan, are slated to open in the coming days.

CM KP emphasises role of journalists in Society

ABBOTTABAD (APP): Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Justice (ret'd) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah on Sunday underscored the pivotal role journalists play in identifying societal issues, raising awareness, and fortifying democracy.

He expressed these views during a meeting with a delegation of journalists from Abbottabad.

The chief minister emphasized the media's significance as a pillar of the state and acknowledged the vital function of journalists in highlighting prevalent issues. He commended their role in steering public awareness and contributing to the robustness of democracy.

The meeting was attended by key officials, including Commissioner Hazara Division Syed Zaheer-ul-Islam, Deputy Commissioner Abbottabad Khalid Iqbal, DPO Omar Tufail and others.

The CM asserted that journalists have the power to contribute to the eradication of corruption and steer the country out of crises.

He urged journalists to foster unity and consensus among themselves, providing leadership to the public and collectively working towards eliminating societal evils.

International News

Gaza death toll reaches 21,822 as Palestinians end dark year amid Israeli attacks

Monitoring Desk

GAZA STRIP: Israelis and Palestinians end a dark year on Sunday, with no end in sight to the deadliest military offensive on Gaza, triggered by Hamas' bloodiest attack on Israel.

There has been no respite from Israel's air raids, artillery fire or ground fighting with Hamas in the Gaza Strip, to the despair of Palestinians surviving the onslaught.

"We were hoping that 2024 would arrive under better auspices and that we would be able to celebrate the new year at home with our families," said Mahmoud Abou Shamma in a camp for displaced people in Rafah, on the Egyptian border.

"We hope that the war will end and that we will be able to return to our homes and live in peace," said the 33-year-old from Khan Yunis, an epicentre of the conflict in the south of Gaza. Gaza's Hamas-run health ministry says the Israeli military campaign has killed at least 21,822 people, mostly women and children — by far the heaviest death toll of any Israeli operation.

On Sunday the ministry reported numerous deaths in overnight strikes on central Gaza's Zawayda and the

nearby Al-Mughazi refugee camp.

The fighting began with Hamas' October 7 attacks, which left about 1,140 people dead in Israel, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally based on official figures.

Militants also took about 250 people hostage, and Israel says 129 of them remain in captivity.

The Israeli army says 170 soldiers have been killed in combat inside Gaza.

An Israeli siege imposed after October 7, following years of crippling blockade, has led to dire shortages of food, safe water, fuel and medicine in Gaza, with aid convoys able to offer only sporadic relief.

The UN says more than 85 percent of Gaza's 2.4 million people have fled their homes.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has warned of the growing threat of infectious diseases and the UN says Gaza is "just weeks away" from famine.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Saturday that Israel's war against Hamas will last for "many months" — until the Palestinian militant group has been eliminated.



Fireworks burst from the Sky Tower in Auckland, New Zealand to celebrate the New Year



Residents inspecting the damage outside an apartment building after the overnight Russian drone attack in Kharkiv.

North Korea's Kim vows to launch 3 more spy satellites

Monitoring Desk

SEOUL: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un vowed to launch three additional military spy satellites, produce more nuclear materials and introduce modern attack drones in 2024, as he called for "overwhelming" war readiness to cope with U.S.-led confrontational moves, state media reported Sunday.

Kim's comments, made during a key ruling Workers' Party meeting to set state goals for next year, suggest he'll intensify a run of weapons tests ahead of the U.S. presidential elections in November. Observers say Kim believes a boosted nuclear capability would give him another chance for high-stakes diplomacy with the U.S. to win sanctions relief if former President Donald Trump returns to the White House.

During the five-day meeting that ended Saturday, Kim said "vicious" anti-North Korea moves by the United States and its followers "have reached the extremes unprecedented in history," pushing the Korean Peninsula to the brink of a nuclear war, according to the official Korean Central News Agency. Kim cited the expansion of U.S.-South Korean military exercises and the temporary deployment of powerful U.S. military assets such as bombers and a nuclear-armed submarine in South Korea — steps the allies have taken in response to the North's weapons testing spree since last year.

Final bodies found after China's most serious earthquake in a decade

Monitoring Desk

BEIJING: The bodies of the two remaining people missing in the aftermath of China's most serious earthquake in nearly a decade were found on Sunday, a tragedy that has renewed concern over exposed populations in seismically active zones.

That raises official fatalities from the magnitude 6.2 quake that rocked the northwestern provinces of Qinghai and Gansu almost two weeks ago to 151. The final bodies were found in Qinghai at 1:16 a.m. (1716 GMT Saturday), state media reported.

The earthquake, whose epicentre straddled Qinghai and Gansu, was the most serious in China since a magnitude 6.5 temblor struck the southwestern province of Yunnan in 2014 and killed 617 people.

The tragedy in disaster-hit Qinghai and Gansu, home to many Hui people, a tight-knit ethnic minority characterised by its distinctive Muslim identity, has renewed concern over outdated and poorly built homes.

Many of the homes destroyed were made of earth-wood or brick-wood structures. Their load-bearing walls were constructed from earth, providing little defence against any earthquake, say local authorities.

Gansu, Qinghai, Tibet, Xinjiang and the rugged highlands in Sichuan and Yunnan are located on the fringe of the geologically complex Qinghai-Tibet plateau. Many populations living near the edge of the plateau, often atop active fault lines, are rural farmers and herders subsisting on very low incomes.

Han Ting, 33, whose village in Gansu was nearly wrecked by the quake, chose to stay put in an emergency tent set up by relief workers because of fears her partially damaged family home could still collapse on her.

"The prefab house assigned to us is also a bit far, so we still choose to stay here in the tent," said Han, one of the thousands of Hui people who live in the area. "It's not too cold at the moment, and we aren't lacking in daily necessities, and the children have also resumed school."

Russia launches fresh drone strikes on Ukraine after promising retaliation for Belgorod attack

Monitoring Desk

KYIV, Ukraine: Russia launched a fresh drone assault on Ukraine on Saturday night, after promising that strikes on the Russian border city of Belgorod earlier in the day "would not go unpunished".

The Ukrainian Air Force said Sunday that it had shot down 21 of 49 drones launched by Russian forces overnight.

Twenty-eight people were wounded in an attack on the eastern city of Kharkiv, regional Gov. Oleh Syniehubov said Sunday. A central hotel, apartment buildings, kindergarten, shops and administrative buildings sustained damage, according to the regional prosecutor's office.

Russia's Defense Ministry said that it had hit "decision-making centers and military facilities" in Kharkiv, reporting that its strike on the Kharkiv Palace Hotel had "destroyed representatives of the Main Intelligence Directorate and Ukrainian Armed Forces" involved in the "terrorist attack" in Belgorod.

In the Kyiv region that surrounds the capital, a Russian drone attack caused a fire to break out at a critical infrastructure facility, local officials said. They did not identify the facility further.

Shelling in the center of the Russian border city of Belgorod Saturday killed 24 people, including three children. A further 108 people were wounded in the strike, regional governor Vyacheslav Gladkov said Sunday, making it one of the deadliest attacks on Russian soil since the start of Moscow's invasion of Ukraine 22 months ago.

Russian authorities accused Kyiv of carrying out the attack, which took place the day after an 18-hour Russian aerial bombardment across Ukraine killed at least 41 civilians.

Russia's Defense Ministry said it identified the ammunition used in the strike as Czech-made Vampire rockets and Olkha missiles fitted with cluster-munition warheads. It provided no additional information, and The Associated Press was unable to verify its claims.

"This crime will not go unpunished," the ministry said in a statement on social media.

In an emergency meeting at the U.N. Security Council demanded by Russia Saturday night, envoy Vasily Nebenzya accused Kyiv of a "terrorist attack." In comments carried by Russian state media, Nebenzya claimed Ukraine had launched "a deliberate act of terrorism directed against civilians."

Ukrainians are bracing for further attacks. A blistering New Year's Eve assault by Russia last year killed at least three civilians.



Federal Health Minister Dr. Nadeem Jan addressing National Conference on Integrated Approach for Evidence Based Public Health and Role of National Health Data Centre in Islamabad.

Improvement in health sector? Govt working on digitalization program

ISLAMABAD (INP): Caretaker Minister for Health Services Dr. Nadeem Jan has stated that the government is working on digitalization program to bring about improvement in health sector as well as tangible results. Speaking at a seminar titled Role of Digital Health System in Islamabad on Sunday, he said with the coordination of provinces, health related data is being integrated to formulate comprehensive reforms. The Minister said digitalization program will help in collection of accurate, concise and clear results for future challenges. He expressed the hope that Digital Health Centre will help in reforms and improvement of all programmes being carried out in the country.

Ashrafi calls for accountability of May 9 culprits

LAHORE (APP): Prime Minister's Special Representative and Pakistan Ulema Council Chairman Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi demanded punishment for those involved in attacks on the state and military installations on May 9. Addressing the media at the Lahore Press Club on Sunday, Ashrafi announced a ban on New Year celebrations in solidarity with Palestinians, urging citizens to support them financially instead of fireworks. He acknowledged the government's efforts to reduce Hajj costs and proposed further reductions. On international matters, Ashrafi revealed military leaders' warnings regarding the global repercussions if an immediate ceasefire is not achieved in Palestine. He suggested that making Pakistan "green" would improve agriculture, leading to decreased prices of essential commodities. Ashrafi concluded by calling for the punishment of May 9 culprits and the release of the innocent.

to enhance security for the Christian community during Christmas. Addressing contemporary challenges, he called for legal action against triple talaq (divorce) issuers, combating obscenity's role in divorces, and countering fake news damaging homes. Ashrafi urged a focus on justice, education, health, and equal food provision for the implementation of a true spirit of righteous caliphate (Khilafat e Rashida).

Expressing concern about the justice system, he appealed to the Chief Justice of Pakistan to address issues faced by the lower-income population and emphasized the need for a just legal system and the improvement of the Zakat system to combat poverty effectively. Highlighting the importance of righteous caliphate (Khilafat e Rashida), he stressed the principles of justice, equal treatment for all, and protection of non-Muslims' rights. Ashrafi commended efforts



SOHBATPUR: Member Chief Minister Inspection Committee Aslam Tareen being briefed by XEN Ahmed Nawaz Umrani about under construction projects

Rashid vows to challenge nomination papers rejection

RAWALPINDI (INP): Former Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmad on Sunday expressed determination to contest his disqualification, asserting that despite his clear success, he will not relinquish his rightful place in the electoral arena. In a video statement, addressing the rejection of his nomination papers, Sheikh Rashid stated that he has been relentlessly pursuing a copy of the decision since yesterday to seek recourse from the Supreme Court. Underdeterred, he pledged to continue the legal and constitutional battle for his political rights. The former minister disclosed that he was informed yesterday about his disqualification on the grounds of not paying a meager sum of 942 rupees, supposedly for a stay in a Murree rest house 12 years ago. Sheikh Rashid Ahmad dismissed the allegations as a "brazen and vile joke," condemning the decision.

PML-N believes serving of people: Fatima

QUETTA (APP): Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N) leader of Balochistan Fatima Khan on Sunday said that the Muslim League (N) believed in serving of people, whenever the party came to power, it took practical steps for the development and prosperity of the country. She said that in the general elections of February 8, the PML-N will win from Balochistan with a huge majority. She expressed these views while addressing the women's corner meeting in Wahdat Colony Quetta. Fatima Khan said that Pakistan's history was a witness that Pakistan has progressed in every term of Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif's government. She said that under the leadership of party leader and former prime minister Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, the party was determined to get the country out of the current crisis, for which the entire nation stands with him.



QUETTA: Warm clothes are being selling at roadside stalls as the demand of warm clothes increased in city during the winter season.

TTP using US leftover weapons in terrorism on Pakistani soil: Analysts

ISLAMABAD (APP): The weapons left over by the US forces in Afghanistan are being used by the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in cross-border terrorist activities against Pakistan. It was evident from the recent terror attacks by the TTP in Pakistan that its terrorists were blatantly using the weapons left behind by the foreign forces in Afghanistan to damage peace and security in the region, the well-informed political and defence analysts said on Sunday.

They said the Pakistan Army had been fighting the war against the TTP for the last two decades. However, it was a known fact that its terrorists had full access to the weapons, which the US and NATO forces had left behind after facing humili-

ating defeat in the so-called war against terror. It had significantly damaged the security of the region, particularly in Pakistan, which had seen a surge in terrorist activities since the fallout of Afghan defence forces. An intelligence-based operation was conducted against terrorists in Mir Ali area of North Waziristan district on December 29, 2023. At least, five terrorists, including their commander Rahzaib Khurray, were killed in the exchange of fire during the operation.

Foreign weapons, including M4 Carbine and Ak-47 along with ammunition were recovered from the terrorists. Such type of foreign arms had been used in many terrorist attacks in Pakistan in the past also. The Baloch Liberation

Army, which attacked FC camps in Nowshki and Panjgur districts in February, 2022, was also using the same weapons.

The attack on the Zhob Garrison on July 12, 2023 also involved the use of American weapons by the TTP. On September 6, 2023, the TTP terrorists armed with the latest American weapons attacked two army check posts in Chitral.

The weapons recovered from the terrorists in the November 4 Mianwali Air Base attack were foreign-made, including RPG-7, AK-74, M-4 and M-16/A4.

Moreover, the night vision goggles and American rifles were also used by terrorists in the terrorist attack in Daraban area of Dera Ismail Khan on December 12.

Justice Mazhar's plea to stop SJC proceeding to be held on Jan 8

ISLAMABAD (Online): Supreme Court of Pakistan (SC) will hear the application filed by Justice Mazhar Naqvi against stopping the proceedings of the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) on January 8, 2024. Earlier, the court had not given relief on stopping the proceedings on December 15, 2023.

First hearing was held in the open court on his petition regarding the complaints against Supreme Court (SC) Judge Justice Mazhar Naqvi in Supreme Judicial Council. Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhel observed that lawyer of Justice Mazhar Naqvi raised objection to the formation of the bench. The matter of the three-member committee is administrative.

Follow rules to get 'bat' symbol, Saad tells PTI

LAHORE (INP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Khawaja Saad Rafique on Sunday asked the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) to follow the right direction to get "bat" symbol for the upcoming elections.

Addressing the workers' convention in Lahore, Saad said: "The PTI should count their feats in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) for the last 10 years. The uproar has caused us to rule the country for 40 years. How could we rule the country for 40 years as the country witnessed martial law four times? The PTI founder was also a part of the martial law."

Speaking about the upcoming polls, he said: "We will look horns against those who put the country into crisis."

Firdous says: IPP to change people's fate

SIALKOT (APP): Former Federal Minister for Information and Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party Central Information Secretary (IPP) Dr. Firdous Ashiq Awan has said that people of all ages are joining the party caravan and it is a positive change that will change the destiny of Pakistan. In a statement, she said, "The bustle of the elections is at its peak. I am participating in the elections from my native constituencies NA-70 and PP-44 on behalf of the party. Inshallah, we will deliver our manifesto to every home." She said that after the announcement of elections, the process of scrutiny of nomination papers submitted by candidates had been completed. She said the Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP) had become a grassroots level party. "Inshallah, people will repose their trust in the party in the election and we will prove that the country's bright future can be ensured."

Electricity bills packed with 8 hidden taxes other than surcharges

ISLAMABAD (INP): Electricity bills in the country come with more than just surcharges, as revealed by documents from the Power Division. Apart from the additional fees, consumers, spanning domestic, commercial, industrial, agricultural, and bulk categories, are subject to eight distinct types of taxes.

According to the Power Division's documentation, a 18% general

sales tax is levied on all consumers. Meanwhile, commercial and industrial consumers face a 10% income tax on bills ranging from Rs 19,000 to Rs 20,000.

For non-filer household customers with bills exceeding Rs 25,000, an advance income tax of 7.5% is imposed.

Additionally, inactive commercial and industrial customers are subject to an extra sales tax ranging from 5% to 7%.

PTI all set to take caretaker govt to court over disqualification

PESHAWAR (INP): The Peshawar High Court is now the battleground for a legal showdown following the caretaker government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's decision to include the names of former Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) ministers and assembly members in the Fourth Schedule. The move resulted in the rejection of their nomination papers for the upcoming elections.

Prominent figures from PTI, including Dr. Amjad Ali, Salim-ur-Rehman, Mian Sharaft Ali, Gul Zafar Khan, Anwar Zeib, Humayun Khan, and Fazal Hakeem, have filed petitions challenging the decision. Advocates Syed Sikandar Hayat Shah and Muhammad Adil Khan (Senior) have submitted the pleas on behalf of the aggrieved former assembly members and provincial ministers. The petitions target the provincial government, Additional Chief Secretary Home, Inspector General of Police (IGP), and the administrations of the respective districts as respondents. The petitioners argue that they are former Members of Parliament and law-abiding citizens. They emphasize that the District Intelligence Coordination Committees (DICC) of various districts recommended their inclusion in Schedule IV, leading to the rejection of their nomination papers. The rating officers, acting upon these recommendations, cited the Schedule IV listing as grounds for dismissal.



QUETTA: Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) Leader, Muhammad Azeem Kakar addresses to media persons during press conference, at Press club.

Chinese language learning brings job opportunities to Pakistani youth: Scholars

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chinese language learning brings job opportunities to Pakistani youth, said Dr. Tahir Mumtaz Awan, Director of the China Study Centre at COMSATS University at the 2023 CPEC and People-to-People Exchange Forum. China is Pakistan's largest trading partner. Proficiency in Chinese can open up job opportunities, especially in sectors related to trade, technology, and infrastructure. According to Dr. Tahir Mumtaz Awan China is becoming an increasingly popular destination for Pakistani students pursuing higher education.

As Pakistan's youth population represents a significant proportion of the country's workforce, investing in their skills development through language

learning is crucial for national development.

Learning Chinese can promote cultural understanding and exchange between the people of China and Pakistan, fostering stronger people-to-people ties. Efforts are being made in Pakistan for Chinese language learning, including establishing China-Pakistan Higher Education Research Institutes and the CPEC Consortium of Universities," he added, Gwadar Pro reported on Sunday.

The Confucius Institute at the University of Karachi has been committed to promoting people-to-people and cultural exchanges between China and Pakistan. It has implemented the 2+2 joint training program for undergraduate Chinese language majors with Sichuan Normal University.

BRI, CPEC practical manifestation of win-win cooperation, shared prosperity: Ambassador Hashmi

BEIJING (APP): Pakistan Ambassador to China, Khalil Hashmi has said that the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and its flagship project - China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), is a practical manifestation of win-win cooperation and shared prosperity for both China and Pakistan and the countries participating in the initiative.

Sharing his vision for collaboration between China and Pakistan in the upcoming decade, he told CGTN in an interview that there is an excellent foundation that already exists in the last 10 years or before. "So, going forward, we have the essential constituents, which is the infrastructure and energy in place."

Expressing a need to intensify focus on industrial cooperation, he said, it means special economic zones, enhanced trade and investment and cooperation in Information Technology and agriculture, adding there are also areas within these bigger fields.

Expressing his resolve to deepen the economic relationship between the two countries, he said, Pakistan and China have signed a free trade agreement. They have signed five protocols on agriculture this year. Pakistan's exports to China have increased. Trade volume between the two countries has increased.

On connectivity projects from the Karakoram Highway to the Gwadar port to enhance ties between the two countries, he said, these projects are essentially about connectivity and infrastructure development. But more than that it is a vehicle or a means for people-centred development to use it as a platform to enhance livelihoods for people.

He said the Silk Road is an ancient connection for the people and in the 1960s, the two countries jointly built Karakoram Highway. With the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor coming into play in the last 10 years, we are going into a new high gear which is Phase II of the Karakoram Highway.

Gwadar port is functional and that is also a great example of Pakistan and China working together to build means of transport and livelihood. In his remarks on the role of infrastructure projects under the Belt and Road Initiative and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor to enhance people's livelihoods, he said, that in the last 10 years, 236,000 jobs have been created. More than 8,000 megawatts of electricity have been added to our national grid. More than 800 kilometres of highways have been built. Nearly, 900 kilometres of

electricity transmission lines have been upgraded.

"I think this is a huge contribution in terms of direct contribution to the creation of jobs but also laying the foundation for people to enjoy the benefits of development on a more longer term and more sustained basis," he added. About his priorities as the newly appointed ambassador of Pakistan to China, he vowed to help implement the consensus and decisions reached between the leadership of the two countries.

To deepen the very high level of trust that we have between our governments, people and institutions, we will also promote people-to-people connections more specifically in the area of art, culture and tourism, he added.

He said that this year, the Pakistan embassy organized a visit of 15 Chinese tour operators to Pakistan to explore the possibilities of more Chinese tourists going to Pakistan.

And then this year in November, eight Pakistani tour operators arrived in China and participated for the first time in the Beijing outbound travel and tourism fair. "We have a very unique time-tested, ironclad partnership between our two countries. And this is rooted in the hearts of the people."



DERA ALAHIYAR: Inspector General of Police Balochistan Abdul Khaliq Sheikh offering Fateha to condole with relatives of Shaheed Tayyab Umrani

Interviewing 2300 election candidates; PMLN declares democratic milestone

ISLAMABAD (Online): Spokesperson Muslim League-N Maryam Aurangzeb has said in her statement on the social media website that Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PMLN) has successfully crossed another democratic and electoral milestone, starting from December 2, 2023.

The series of interviews of the Parliamentary Board has been completed today.

2300 candidates from across the country were interviewed.

The parliamentary board under the chairmanship of party leader Nawaz Sharif and President Shehbaz Sharif conducted this democratic exercise involving long sittings, the process lasted for about 184 hours, in which all the candidates, male and female, were heard with great satisfaction.

He said that the recommendations and suggestions of the candidates were considered. Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PMLN) is the only party in the country which went through such a large, extensive and comprehensive process of consultation.

Khosa alleges 90% nomination paper of PTI's candidates rejected

ISLAMABAD (INP): PTI leader Latif Khosa has alleged that nomination papers from a staggering 90 percent of Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) candidates have been rejected.

Latif Khosa, while speaking on a TV channel, Khosa claimed that this mass rejection stands in stark contrast to the PMLN, where only a single candidate had faced rejection across the country.

Khosa asserted that PTI candidates are prepared to engage in a robust legal battle against the rejection of their nomination papers. Despite the setback, he highlighted the presence of strong alternative candidates within the party.

The ongoing scrutiny of nomination papers by

the Election Commission has been a subject of controversy, with PTI alleging widespread rejection of its candidates on December 30. Media reports confirm that even central figures within PTI, including Imran Khan, have had their nomination papers rejected.

Prominent leaders such as Shah Mahmood Qureshi faced rejection in National Assembly Constituencies NA 151 and 150, while his sons Zain Qureshi and Mehrabano also encountered a similar fate. Azam Khan Swati's nomination papers from Manshera constituency NA 15, and Zulfi Bukhari's from NA 50 Attock were not spared either.

Irfan Khan, Imran Khan's cousin and PTI candidate from PP-90 in



UTHAL: Doctors examining patients during free medical camp in BHU Sukani by PHC Global in collaboration with Health Department Lasebella

FBR collects over Rs.1trln gross revenue in a single month

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has created history by collecting Rs.1021 Billion in December 2023 and after adjusting refunds of Rs.38 billion issued during the month, reached net collection of Rs.984 billion.

Targets for the month as well as for the first six months of the current financial year were also surpassed, said a news release here on Sunday.

The target for the first six months was Rs.4425 billion (as agreed with IMF), which was surpassed by 43 billion and recorded a collection of Rs.4468 billion.

FBR in the corresponding six months of the previous year collected Rs.3428, thus registering an increase of more than Rs 1 trillion.

This is despite the fact that refunds of Rs.230 billion have been issued against Rs.177 billion dur-

ing the corresponding period of the previous year and continuous import compression.

Contraction in imports continues to impede revenues collected at the import stage. In the past, the revenue mix at the import stage and domestic taxes used to be 50:50.

This has now changed to 36:64 and FBR has absorbed the entire impact of import compression through raising more revenues domestically.

The ratio of direct and indirect taxes has also altered and the share of Direct Taxes has increased to 49% for the first 6 months. However, in December alone the share of Direct taxes was recorded at 59%. This share also registered an increase of 41% in the first 6 months as compared to the corresponding period of the previous year.

Again, within Direct Taxes, FBR during the past

two years, has reduced the share of withholding taxes from 70% to 55-58%. However, during December 2023, the share of withholding taxes has been recorded as low as 40%.

It would not be out of place to mention that, FBR collected 1 trillion as an annual collection back in 2007-08. It took 50 years to achieve this milestone. Whereas, in a span of only 15 years, this feat has been accomplished in a single month; through untiring efforts, sheer dedication, and hard work of field formations and top brass of FBR.

Chairman FBR congratulates Member (Customs Operations), Member (IR-Operations), and their teams for achieving this unsustainable task.

He also thanks the taxpayers, without whose continuous support and correct declarations, this target could not have been accomplished.