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LAHORE: Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari addresses to his supporters during public gathering meeting regarding Election Campaign in connection of the General Election 2024 coming ahead, in Lahore.

Bilawal tells PTI workers to support PPP in polls, vows to eliminate politics of revenge

Says I have experienced the oppression of the PML-N and I would never wish for any political party worker to endure such hardship

LAHORE (INP): Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Sunday urged Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) supporters to rally behind his party in the upcoming general elections, pledging to put an end to the politics of revenge and division.

"I've experienced the oppression of PML-N myself, and I wouldn't want any political party worker to go through such difficulties," he said during a rally in Lahore.

On the occasion, Bilawal targeted the former

coalition partner with strong criticism, questioning how long the people of Punjab would endure the alternating rule of PML-N President Shehbaz Sharif and Wasim Akram plus (PTI's Usman Buzdar) in Lahore.

Accusing the PML-N of engaging in vengeful politics with full force and terrorising workers of the PTI, Bilawal highlighted the PPP's consistent opposition to retaliatory politics and advocacy for the release of political prisoners.

Appealing to the

youth aligned with PTI, Bilawal urged them to cast their votes in the upcoming elections. He empathised with the struggles faced by PPP supporters under the rule of the PML-N and urged the nation to steer clear of the divisive politics of the 1990s.

"Those who used to chant slogans of vote kizzati do (give respect to vote) are nowhere to be found," he said, referring to former prime minister Nawaz Sharif.

Bilawal reminded that those who now mock the

PPP's limited presence in Lahore have forgotten that the city warmly welcomed Benazir Bhutto, and in turn, she was elected as the prime minister of the country.

The PPP chairman highlighted his 10-point welfare agenda, emphasising that upon assuming power, 17 federal ministries would be abolished and the elites would no longer receive subsidies. Instead, he added, the funds saved from these decisions would be spent on the welfare of the people.

Islamabad dharna poses threat to law & order:

Mah Rang attempting to defame Pakistan in name of missing persons, says Jan Achakzai

Caretaker Minister Information asks Islamabad administration to tackle Mah Rang-led dharna administratively; alleges dharna wala getting foreign funding; says Jaishul Adl doesn't exist in Pak

Independent Report

QUETTA: The caretaker Provincial Minister for Information, Jan Achakzai has urged the Islamabad local administration to look into and deal the protest dharna being staged by Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC) led by Mah Rang Baloch administratively as it is an administrative matter not a court one.

He said that there are serious threats of any subversive act in the Islamabad dharna and the enemy country's agencies can target the dharna camp just to

blame Pakistan for it later. The Minister for Information, Jan Achakzai has hurriedly called press conference at the Civil Secretariat on Sunday.

He said that Pakistan has made certain achievements at various fronts against terrorism these days. The major attempt was also foiled by the armed forces recently, he added.

He said that the protest camp staged by the relatives of the terrorists has also been exposed.

Jan Achakzai said that

Mah Rang is trying to defame Pakistan on the matter of missing persons. He said that those being declared missing persons by the protesters in their camp were killed in Iran.

He said that the group staging protest in Islamabad can cause law and order issue in Islamabad, so the administration should tackle the issue dealing with the protesters administratively.

The Minister Information alleged that those staged

Continued on page 2

Pakistan, China agree to enhance cooperation in diverse fields

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and China on Sunday agreed to enhance focus on high-quality advancements in industry, agriculture, information technology, science and technology to ensure tangible socio-economic benefits for the people through the evolution of CPEC.

The agreement was reached during the 4th meeting of CPEC Joint Working Group on International Cooperation and Coordination (JWG-ICC) held here. The meeting, which was chaired by Foreign Secretary Muhammad Syrus Sajjad Qazi and Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs of China, Sun Weidong, exemplified the commitment of both countries to foster international cooperation and coordination.

The two sides reviewed with satisfaction the progress made since the third meeting of the Joint Working Group held virtually on 21 July 2022. The meeting underscored CPEC's pioneering role in strengthening international and regional connectivity while appreciating the open and inclusive nature of this flagship project.

Noting that Pakistan and China were All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partners and Iron Brothers, the Foreign Secretary reaffirmed the importance of CPEC in promoting win-win cooperation and sustainable development. He also emphasized on welcoming interested third parties to explore mutually beneficial avenues of cooperation.

Maryam launches election campaign; PTI candidate backs her

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz Chief Organizer and candidate from constituency NA 119 Maryam Nawaz on Sunday formally started her election campaign in the constituency. Addressing a meeting of her campaign team in NA 119, she said that she would never leave the constituency.

She said that progress of each person and family in the constituency was her responsibility and added that people of the constituency had always supported her. She said that she would meet people in the constituency on January 25.

Maryam Nawaz said that she does not consider herself a leader but wanted to serve people. "PML-N Quaid Nawaz Sharif's message of progress would be conveyed to every house," she said and added that the PML-N would win the general elections with a thumping majority. She said that her party had made a development plan for the next five years.

It is pertinent to mention here that PTI candidate Mehar Muhammad Waseem and his supporters would make a formal announcement of joining the PML-N on January 25.

ECP categorizes over 17,500 polling stations as highly sensitive

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has categorized over 17,500 polling stations as highly sensitive, 32,508 as sensitive, and 42,500 as normal out of a total of 92,500 polling stations nationwide. Polling stations are categorized into A, B, and C groups, determined by their sensitivity levels, official sources told APP.

From over 17,500 polling stations designated as highly sensitive across the country due to concerns of potential unrest, 6,599 are in Punjab, and 4,430 are in Sindh, all set to be monitored by CCTV cameras.

A total of 2,038 polling stations in Balochistan and 4,344 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have been categorized as highly sensitive. In Punjab, 15,829 polling stations are classified as sensitive, 8,030 in Sindh, 2,068 in Balochistan, and over 6,000 polling stations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa fall under the sensitive category.

Responding to a question he said official polling scheme to be revealed 15 days before the scheduled Febru-

Pakistan Army, Royal Saudi Land Forces commences in Okara Garrison

RAWALPINDI (APP): The joint military training of the Pakistan Army and Royal Saudi Land Forces commenced in Okara Garrison.

According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release on Sunday, the military forces of the two countries presented an exemplary military drill at the beginning of the joint training.

On this occasion, the national anthems of both countries were also played during the unveiling of the national flags. The Garrison Commander was the chief guest of the ceremony.

Through the joint training programme, the forces of both countries will have classroom sessions and the opportunity to hone their collective combat skills.

At the end of the opening ceremony, the Chief Guest presented badges of joint training to the officers and men of the forces of both countries.

Dr. Malik slams incident, demands protection: Two NP leaders survive bid on life in Kech area

Independent Report

QUETTA: Two senior leaders of National Party survived the major attempt on their lives when unknown armed assailants targeted their vehicle with sophisticated weapons in Dasht area of Kech district on Sunday.

According to the reports reaching here, the National Party leaders including Abdul Rasheed and Kuhdar Akram Baloch were on their way in Dasht Khudan area when some armed men resorted to fire targeting their vehicle.

Although the bullets hit the vehicle, but the leaders of National Party riding in

it escaped unhurt in the shootout.

The reports suggested that the vehicle was bullet-proof thus the bullets didn't hurt the leaders of the party.

The party's Secretary General Jan Buledi confirmed the incident and told that both the leaders remained safe in the incident of firing.

Meanwhile, president of party, Dr Abdul Malik Baloch condemned the incident and said that the party leaders were targeted.

He demanded of the government to provide necessary protection to the party leaders.



LORALAI: Caretaker Provincial Health Minister Dr. Amir Muhammad Khan Jozezai visiting Teaching Hospital

Govt striving hard to improve existing health facilities: Jozezai

QUETTA (APP): Caretaker Provincial Health Minister Dr. Ameer Muhammad Khan Jozezai on Sunday visited Loralai Teaching Hospital, RHC and MCHC Mekhtar and District Headquarters Hospital Ziarat to inspect health care facilities provided to the patients in the government-run hospitals.

On the occasion, he expressed his displeasure over the absent staff, lack of medicine and poor sanitation, in addition to the dispute between two parties over the land of the hospital and the illegal recruitment in the previous government.

The Minister issued directives to the Deputy Commissioner Loralai and DHO Loralai to form an inquiry investigation committee and probe the land disputes and illegal recruitments and carry out a transparent inquiry. He directed the hospital administration to take necessary steps to further improve the quality of health facilities.

The caretaker provincial minister said the provincial government is striving hard to improve existing health facilities.

Shehbaz expressed confidence in PML-N securing sufficient seats to form the government at the center. He claimed that "PML-N will 'surprise' everyone in the February 8 election."

Providing insights into the party's preparedness, Shehbaz mentioned that the PML-N has fielded 208 candidates for the 266 National Assembly general seats.

Overall, the party issued 671 tickets for the 859 seats across five legislatures, he added.

Education Ministry reveals 2.62 million children deprived of schooling in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (INP): A recent report from the Federal Ministry of Education has disclosed a startling revelation that a staggering 2.62 million children in Pakistan are deprived of attending school. The data for the report, covering the academic year 2021-2022, is set to be officially released soon.

According to the report's findings, Punjab tops the list with 1.17 million children lacking access to education, followed by Sindh with 763,000, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with 363,000, and Balochistan with 313,000. Additionally, the federal capital, Islamabad, has 80,000 children who are not attending school. The report highlights that 39% of these children are not attending school for various reasons, with Balochistan having the highest percentage of 65% of children out of schools, although Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has a comparatively better educational standard. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 30% of children are not attending school. Analyzing the data, the report shows a slight improvement from 44% of out-of-school children in 2016-2017 to 39% in 2021-2022. However, at the intermediate level, 60% of students are still deprived of education, while at the matriculation, middle, and primary levels, 44%, 30%, and 36% of children, respectively, are not attending school.

From over 17,500 polling stations designated as highly sensitive across the country due to concerns of potential unrest, 6,599 are in Punjab, and 4,430 are in Sindh, all set to be monitored by CCTV cameras.



QUETTA: General Secretary Muslim League (N) Balochistan Jamal Shah Kakar and candidate PB-43 Naseem-ur-Rehman addressing a corner meeting at joint Road.



LAKKI MARWAT: Chief of JUI Maulana Fazlur Rehman addressing students during a ceremony

New Delhi has no proof of 2019 Balakot strike success, admits ex-Indian envoy

ISLAMABAD (INP): Former Indian high commissioner to Pakistan Ajay Bisaria admitted that India only has narratives but no concrete proof of the success of the 2019 Balakot strikes.

He made this revelation during an interview with The Wire to mark the launch of his recently published book "Anger Management: The Troubled Diplomatic Relationship between India and Pakistan".

"You will perhaps never know for sure how successful the strike was," the former envoy said during the interview.

This is the first time an Indian senior diplomat who was serving as Indian high commissioner in Islamabad at the time of the Balakot strike has admitted to the media that to date India has no proof of the targets the Indian Air Force had boasted it had struck in Balakot.

India had conducted an airstrike in Balakot on February 26, 2019, while

Pakistan responded by conducting airstrikes in Indian-held territory and an ensuing dogfight, Pakistan Air Force (PAF) jets shot down two Indian jets and captured Indian pilot Abhinandan Varthaman.

Earlier when the book was published, a senior source at the Pakistan Foreign Office told a section of the press that the former Indian high commissioner "has certainly given an exaggerated account of the events. The timing of the release of the book is also suspicious. Clearly, he wants to project Modi as a strong leader who has the ability to take bold decisions."

During The Wire interview, conducted by journalist Karan Thapar, Bisaria had, according to Thapar, discussed that the terrorists behind the Pulwama attack of February 2019 "lucked out in getting an unprotected target in a convoy of vehicles" and thus "met with unexpected success".

Iftikhar, Nawaz lead Pakistan to consolation win over New Zealand

WELLINGTON (INP): Pakistan's spinners ran through New Zealand to pick up a consolation 42-run win in the fifth and final Twenty20 international on Sunday and avoid a series clean sweep. The tourists lost the five-match series 4-1 but it ended on a positive note as they dismissed the Black Caps for a paltry 92 in defence of 134-8. Part-time offspinner Iftikhar Ahmed produced career-best figures of 3-24 as a weakened New Zealand batting lineup struggled against the turning ball and were skittled for their eighth-lowest T20 total. Only opener Finn Allen (22) and Glenn Phillips (26) passed 20 as Pakistan claimed the last eight wickets for 39 runs in comfortably their best bowling display of the series. Left-arm spinner Mohammad Nawaz (2-18) was effective with the new ball, removing Rachin Ravindra and Will Young cheaply, while Shaheen Shah Afridi had something to cheer at the end of his maiden series as captain, taking 2-20. New Zealand were missing three of their first-choice batters: Kane Williamson (knee injury), Devon Conway (Covid-19) and Daryl Mitchell (rested). Earlier, it appeared the home side had done enough to push for a clean sweep when they restricted Pakistan's batters with another disciplined bowling display. Seamers Tim Southee, Matt Henry and Lockie Ferguson all claimed two scalps, along with spinner Ish Sodhi. Southee (2-19), the highest wicket-taker in T20 cricket, dismissed debutant Haseebullah Khan in the opening over and returned in the 13th over to remove the dangerous Fakhar Zaman, who had raced to 33 off 16 balls. Top-scorer Mohammad Rizwan departed soon afterwards for 38 off 38, ultimately consigning Pakistan to the lowest first-innings score by either team in the series. Shaheen Shah Afridi said it was "very important" his team avoided a whitewash series loss to New Zealand. He said the series was primarily seen as a chance to build towards the T20 World Cup in June but it would have been a setback to lose five from five. "Today's game was very important for us. We needed that as a unit to step forward," Shaheen said. "In the first four games, there were a lot of collapses, as a fielding unit, as a batting unit, but I think today we played as a team and we needed that win. "It's not easy for any team to come here. And I think our mind is on the World Cup. We're just checking out every spot for every player and giving chances to youngsters."



Caretaker Provincial Health Minister Dr. Amir Muhammad Khan Jogezevi visiting District Headquarter Hospital Ziarat

Will lay network of dev. projects in Chitral after elected MNA: Talha

CHITRAL (INP): Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) candidate from NA-1 Chitral, Senator Talha Mehmood has said that he will lay network of development in the area after being elected Member National Assembly (MNA). He stated this while addressing various public gatherings during his visit to tehsil Torkhow of district Chitral on Sunday. Senator Talha Mehmood said that due to the negligence of the former rulers and elected representatives, the people of Chitral were still forced to live a stone-age life. He said that the roads of area were not fit for travelling and people were deprived of basic rights. If got chance, will change the map of Chitral, he added. He said that while travelling to Upper Chitral he realized that there was no electricity, no potable clean drinking water and no good roads. It takes several hours to cover a few kilometers on this road. He said that Chitral was a tourist spot having bundle of opportunities to develop but the former rulers showed criminal negligence and ignored the area. Talha Mehmood said that his welfare organization has already done a lot of work in Chitral especially during natural calamities, provided free treatment to victims, set up free medical camps, distributed ration and other basic necessities to the affectees. He assured that if elected on February 8, he will never allow anyone to exploit the rights of the people of Chitral.

Two-day Elum Winter Festival concludes in Buner

ISLAMABAD (APP): A two-day Elum Winter Festival concluded in Buner organized in collaboration with Pakistan Army and Frontier Corps North Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. According to a private news channel, 110 bikes and 60 jeeps from all over Pakistan participated in a festival organized for the first time in the history of Buner. The participants of the Jeep and Bike Rally received a warm welcome on their arrival in the area. Paragliders performed fabulously while the Martial Dance Party of Frontier Corps presented cultural Khattak dance. The chief guest of the festival, Corps Commander Peshawar, distributed certificates, shields and trophies among the players. These areas were the centre of operations of terrorists for Ten years and due to the operation and sacrifices of the Pakistan Army, happiness returned and tourism has reached its peak in Swat and Malakand. Talking on this occasion, a female tourist said that this area is now peaceful only because of the Pakistan Army. A Sikh citizen said that the local population is very happy to hold this event in Buner.

Ballot paper printing set for February 4 finish

ISLAMABAD (APP): The printing of ballot papers is on track, the Election Commission is satisfied with the quality and the process is expected to conclude by February 3 or 4, says official source. He informed APP that the Election Commission (ECP) had directed the Printing Corporation of Pakistan on January 14 to print 260 million watermarked ballot papers for the February 8 polls. The ongoing printing process involves 270 tons of special paper, he said, adding that printing for Balochistan and Sindh constituencies is continuing in Karachi, while for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, and Islamabad constituencies, the ballot papers are being printed at the government printing office in Islamabad. Distinctive watermarks will embellish the ballot papers, which are slated to be printed using three different machines. Stringent security measures have been implemented at the Printing Corporation premises throughout the ballot paper production process. The introduction of watermarked ballot papers in the country took place during the 2018 general elections, signifying a notable milestone.



QUETTA: Muslim League Leader and Candidate for NA-264, Haji Arz Muhammad Barriach along with others addressing a press conference, at Quetta press club.

Additional FS reaffirms Pak commitment to NAM's efforts towards peace, equality

ISLAMABAD: Additional Foreign Secretary United Nations, Ambassador Syed Haider Shah on Sunday outlined Pakistan's firm commitment to the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and its founding principles. In a national statement delivered at the 19th NAM Summit in Kampala, Uganda, he also reaffirmed Pakistan's continued support to the Movement's efforts towards peace, equality, cooperation and well-being for all. Ambassador Haider Shah is leading the Pakistan delegation to the NAM Summit after Caretaker Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani had to cut short his official visit in view of recent developments, the Foreign Office spokesperson said in a press release. Ambassador Haider Shah underlined that the current multi-dimensional global challenges could only be overcome through effective international collaboration. He called for urgent action to reform the systems of finance, trade and technology to ensure balanced and sustained socioeconomic growth, particularly in the developing countries. The additional foreign secretary also called for an early resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute in accordance with the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council and aspirations of the Kashmiri people.

Rana Sana says: PML-N to win elections with thumping majority

FAISALABAD (APP): Nawaz Sharif formed his government in 2013, the country was under the severe grip of loadshedding and terrorism. "However, the PML-N leadership overcame the menaces and put the country on the road to progress and prosperity. The PML-N is a pro-people party and due to its popularity, 20 to 25 candidates from each constituency appeared to contest the general election from its platform. This situation created great difficulties for the central leadership of the party in the distribution of tickets," he maintained. "However, it is an indisputable and logical fact that only one candidate from one constituency could be fielded by any party. Hence, the top leadership of the PML-N took better decisions on the distribution tickets by redressing apprehensions of all party workers and activists for greater national interest," he added. He said that some apprehensions were also raised by Jamiat Ahl-e-Hadith and the same were addressed amicably. "Now the PML-N and Central Jamiat Ahl-e-Hadith would form the government together after winning the February 8 elections," he added. He also thanked all leaders of Central Jamiat Ahl-e-Hadith Pakistan who promised to support the PML-N in the upcoming election. He said that when addressing worker convention organized under the auspices of Central Jamiat Ahl-e-Hadith Pakistan here on Sunday, he said that the country was making tremendous progress under the leadership of Mian Nawaz Sharif before 2018 when an incompetent person was imposed on the nation who inflicted the country with economic and moral crises. This hostile man spent his energies only to tame the opposition with mental and physical torture for his vested interests. Resultantly, the country suffered multifaceted crises, he added. Rana Sana Ullah termed the government and opposition as two wheels of a vehicle and said that both were imperative for national progress and prosperity. He said that the PTI leader followed only one statement throughout his tenure that "Main Opposition Ko Nahi Chhooron Ga". "That's why he could not launch any worth-mentioning development project in the country," he added. He said that when

Pak Emirati star Waseem's brilliant 51 in just 26 balls in ILT20

DUBAI (INP): Dubai Capitals, riding on belligerent half-centuries from Rahmanullah Gurbaz and Jake Fraser-McGurk, recorded an emphatic seven-wicket win over MI Emirates in the second match of the ILT20 season 2 at the Dubai International Stadium. This contest, played in the presence of Bollywood star Shah Rukh Khan and a large Saturday crowd, saw Afghanistan's Gurbaz crack an aggressive 81 runs off 39 balls with eight boundaries and four sixes and Australia's 21-year-old rising star Jake Fraser-McGurk hitting a breezy 54 off 25 balls with four boundaries and four sixes. The pair put on a 114 runs partnership for the second wicket in 51 balls to chase down MI Emirates' total of 159 for 9 in 20 overs (Muhammad Waseem 51, Andre Fletcher 30, Nicholas Pooran 21, Tim David 27, Jason Holder 3 for 34, Sikandar Raza 3 for 21). Dubai Capitals 160 for 3 in 16 overs (Rahmanullah Gurbaz 81, Jakes Fraser-McGurk 54, Trent Bouldt 2 for 23). Player of the Match: Sikandar Raza of Dubai Capitals



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan-China Institute hosts dialogue on "outlook on South Asia Security."

Sania Mirza greets Shoab Malik on his third marriage

ABU DHABI (INP): Sania Mirza congratulated Shoab Malik on his third marriage to Sana Javed, said the sister of the Tennis star, Anum Mirza. Anum Mirza said Shoab Malik and Sania Mirza were separated months ago and added that her sister congratulated her ex-husband on his third marriage. Sania has always kept her personal life away from the public eye, Anum said. "At this sensitive period of her life, we would like to request all fans and well-wishers to refrain from indulging in any speculation and to respect her need for privacy," Anum's message stated as per Indian media reports. Shoab Malik shocked fans by announcing his marriage to Sana Javed on the social media application Instagram. The newlyweds shared their matrimonial pictures on their account. The cricketer's announcement proved the speculations of his divorce from India tennis great Sania Mirza true as well. It is pertinent to mention that Shoab Malik married Sania Mirza in April 2010 and their first child, Ishaan, was born in October 2018.

Attack on PTI, PPP election offices leaves several injured in Karachi

KARACHI (INP): Tensions soared in Karachi as the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) accused the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) of orchestrating attacks on their respective offices. The clashes resulted in injuries to several political workers from both parties. According to media reports, the incident unfolded at the electoral office of PTI candidate Arsalan Khalid in Constituency NA-248 of the National Assembly. Over ten individuals, including Arsalan Khalid, were reportedly injured in the attack. PTI's spokesperson laid blame on MQM workers, alleging that the assault was orchestrated by them. The wounded party workers were swiftly transported to Abbasi Shaheed Hospital and Jinnah Hospital for medical attention. In response, PTI supporters staged a protest at Liaquat Ali Khan Chowk against the incident. Simultaneously, in the vicinity of Hyderabad Town, within the limits of PS-250 and PS-129, an attack was reported on the Pakistan Peoples Party's office. Four party workers sustained injuries in this assault. Khawaja Sahil Mansoor claimed that MQM workers were behind the attack. Four PPP workers, injured in the incident, have lodged complaints against the assailants. Just days earlier, during a rally following an organizational meeting in Karachi, unknown assailants opened fire, injuring two individuals. The incident occurred after Pakistan Peoples Party's candidate Agha Rafiullah concluded the gathering. Agha Rafiullah remained unharmed during the incident, and the police are currently investigating the case. Meanwhile, in the provincial capital of Lahore, an explosive attack targeted the electoral office of a Pakistan Peoples Party candidate in Constituency PP-162. Police have initiated an inquiry into the petrol bomb attack. The complainant, Mirza Abbas Khokhar's son, alleged that unknown individuals threw petrol-filled bottles, setting fire to the office.



QUETTA: Independent Candidates, Malik Faisal Khan Kakar, Mir Saleem Jan Langoo, Alamgir Khan and others are inaugurating the Election office, at Airport road in Quetta.

Candidates seek large tribes support for general elections in Peshawar

PESHAWAR (APP): The candidates of different political parties and independent heavyweights started approaching strong baradaris (tribes) to get their support to win general elections in 2024 as 13 Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assembly seats have accelerated the election campaign and addressed rallies and corner meetings on Sunday. In the 2018 general election, the politically fertile Peshawar had 14 representatives in the KP Assembly, however, it lost one seat in the wake of fresh delimitation in the 2024 election. The candidates of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf had won all the five NA seats from Peshawar in the 2018 election. However, three of them are no longer part of the party. The PTI nominees are contesting the polls as independent candidates after it lost its iconic electoral symbol 'bat'. Former speaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Kiramatullah Chagharmati of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) is contesting against former MNA Noor Alam Khan of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUIF) and ex-MNA Sajid Nawaz of PTI as independent candidate on NA 28 Peshawar-1 in 2024 election. Former provincial minister Hafiz Hashmat of Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) and Muhammad Fayyaz Khan of Awami National Party (ANP) are also in the run for NA-28. Former MNA Arbab Amir Ayub who won the 2018 election on the PTI ticket is again candidate of the PTI as an independent candidate while other frontrunners included former MPA Saqibullah Chamkani of ANP, Akhundzada Irfanullah Shah of JUIF, Malik Amjad Awan of PPP and Gulam Muhiyuddin of Junat e Islami on NA 29 Peshawar-11. In NA-30 Peshawar, former PTI MNA Shandana Gulzar is contesting against Nasir Musazai of JUIF, Arbab Zain Umar of ANP, Raees Khan of PMLN, Kashif Azam of JI and Misbahuddin of PPP. Nasir Musazai won the polls from the area in 2018 as the candidate of PTI but he joined the JUIF last year. Shandana was elected MNA on a reserved seat for women in 2018. Similarly on NA-31 Peshawar, former MNA Arbab Sher Ali of PTI is contesting against former federal minister Arbab Alamgir of PPP, Pir Haroon Shah of ANP, Muhammad Saeed Jan of JUIF, Sobia Shahid of PMLN and Imdad Khalil of JI. Arbab Sher Ali was elected MNA from this constituency in the 2018 general election as a PTI contender. Arbab Alamgir also remained MNA from this constituency in 2008; both were trying to get support from strong baradaris. Besides billboards and panaflexes, the candidates have also installed posters and banners on all roads, squares, bazaars and streets to attract voters' attention. Mashallah Jehangi, a hub of printing and advertising businesses in Peshawar attracted roaring business courtesy of the 2024 General Election.

Coalition formed to ensure free media

ISLAMABAD (INP): Representatives of CPNE, AEMEND, various press clubs, unions and associations of journalists and media workers established an alliance — Coalition for Free Media — to jointly resist media curbs through pressure tactics and trolling on social media and to ensure freedom of expression.

Almost all groups and factions affiliated with media professionals, including Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ), Council of Pakistan Newspapers Editors (CPNE), All Pakistan Newspapers Employees Confederation (Apnec), press clubs of four provincial capitals and the National Press Club, attended a meeting where the initiative by the Association of Electronic Media Editors & News Directors (AEMEND) to form the 'Coalition for Free Media' was endorsed by the participants.

The joint meeting also decided to establish a 'steering committee' of the coal-

ition to resist the continuous degradation of the freedom of information in the country. It decided to seek cooperation from human rights activists and lawyers and create deterrence over the safety of journalists and 'shrinking space' for free speech in the media.

The meeting was moderated by AEMEND President Azhar Abbas, who after a consensus among the participants including those who had joined through an online link announced that freedom of speech did not mean an unregulated and unethical media practices.

The participants noted that character assassination of journalists on social and mainstream media had become a norm in recent years.

PFUJ (Barna) President Afzal Butt said many countries had placed curbs on media but it seemed too obvious and blatant in Pakistan. He was of the opinion that regressive policies were being followed, even by political parties, against

media freedom.

According to a statement issued by the coalition, successive governments, political parties and some state institutions have adopted the policy to defame independent journalists and tarnish their image through a sustained campaign.

Unfortunately, it added, even some media persons and journalists also joined hands with powerful institutions in this campaign. Some TV channels and newspapers allegedly tried to justify such defamatory campaigns, accusing the media organisations and professional journalists of committing treason and even blasphemy, it noted.

"There is an urgent need to not only condemn this practice, but also to act collectively to put a stop to it," the statement added.

It was agreed that media organisations and journalists could have different editorial policies and report the same stories differently, and there could be fair and justified criticism on these



ISLAMABAD: People are sitting around fire, warm themselves as the temperature dropped in Federal Capital.

EPA team inspects 383 vehicles, indicates diesel HTV major smoke contributor

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Environmental Monitoring Team of the Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA) and the Islamabad Traffic Police conducted a week-long Vehicular Emission Control and Monitoring Campaign from January 9 to 17 across the federal capital.

During the campaign, a total of 383 vehicles were inspected across various categories, including 80 buses, 47 vans, 30 cars, 120 minitrucks, 93 trucks, and 13 tractors. However, heavy transport vehicles

(HTV) using diesel fuel were identified as the primary contributors to smoke emissions, with fines imposed on 27% of the vehicles, a news release said.

A rigorous test of soot carbon smoke emissions led to the imposition of 105 fines on vehicles exceeding the National Environmental Quality Standard (NEQS) emission levels by over 40% against the Ringelmann scale.

The initiative aimed to address the growing concern about air pollution in Islamabad caused by vehi-

cular emissions. The basic objective of the survey was to ascertain the factual position of vehicular emissions during the dry spell of winter and their contribution to the formulation of smog in the current fog episode.

Air pollution, a significant environmental issue, refers to harmful substances in the air that can adversely affect human health, animals, and the overall ecosystem. One major contributor to air pollution is vehicular emissions, including carbon

PPP pledges to public welfare: Faisal Kundi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Information Secretary Faisal Karim Kundi on Sunday pledged that the PPP is committed to the public welfare. Talking to a private news channel, he declared PPP's 10-point election manifesto as a public welfare agenda.

He said that PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari was appearing in the people's court with his party's manifesto. He said Bilawal's 10-point manifesto was the public welfare manifesto.

PPP's election manifesto reflects the party's focus on addressing the issues of unemployment, poverty, health and free

education for the citizens, he added.

PPP information secretary proposed to Nawaz Sharif to hold a public debate with Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on national TV. He was of the view that the former three-time prime minister does not stand a chance to win the debate with Bilawal.

He claimed that the PPP has a public welfare manifesto that has upset his opponents.

He said that the PPP has increased the salaries of government employees by 200 percent, while alleging that Nawaz Sharif had dismissed thousands of workers whenever he came to power.

IIU offers Sunday classes for Arabic language learning

ISLAMABAD (INP): The International Islamic University, Islamabad (IIUI), invited applications from students interested in enrolling in short Sunday courses to learn the Arabic language. According to the University official, a 24 week Arabic learning course, taking place only on Sundays, is set to begin on February 18, 2024.

Admissions are open in three phases: certificate for individuals without prior knowledge of Arabic, diploma for those who complete the certificate course.

Private institutions offer quality education to children: Abrar

ISLAMABAD (APP): All Pakistan Private Schools and Colleges Association (APPSCA) Central President Malik Abrar Hussain has said that more than 60 per cent of children in Pakistan are studying in private educational institutions to get quality education to compete in the world.

He said the private sector is playing its best role in improving the literacy rate in the country.

Students in private educational institutions not only earn decent jobs but also make the name of the country and nation shine.

The meeting of the executive body of Rawalpindi and Islamabad of All Paki-

stan Private Schools and Colleges Association was held here on Sunday.

Central President of All Pakistan Private Schools Federation Kashif Mirzane attended the meeting as a special guest.

It was discussed that the problems faced by the private education sector with solutions.

Both leaders in their respective addresses demanded the protection of private educational institutions and said that the services of the private education sector in the country are commendable.

The private sector has an important role in the education, political and social development of the country, they added.



ISLAMABAD: A man walks past banner of a political party Jamaat-e-Islami candidate on a bridge in the Federal Capital, ahead of the country's general elections 2024.

Thick fog forces motorway closures, disrupts traffic across north, south Zones

ISLAMABAD (INP): A blanket of dense fog has wreaked havoc on major motorways in the North, South Zones, leading to road closures and strategic diversions from the Peshawar to Islamabad stretch on M1, M2, M4, M5, M11, M-14, E35 and commuters are grappling with limited visibility, prompting authorities to take decisive measures.

The motorway spokesman said on Sunday that adverse weather conditions had thrown several key motorways in North Pakistan into chaos as thick fog engulfed major stretches from the M1 Peshawar to Islamabad Motorway to the Swat Expressway and beyond, commuters faced disruptions and diversions due to reduced visibility. The National Highway and Motorway Police (NHMP) has issued comprehensive update on the affected routes and the latest traffic management measures.

The M1 Motorway, connecting Peshawar to Islamabad, witnesses a complete closure from Islamabad Toll Plaza (KM

351) to Peshawar Toll Plaza (KM 498) due to dense fog. The limited visibility of 40-50 meters prompts authorities to divert northbound traffic from Islamabad Toll Plaza.

The traffic at southbound on the E35, from Burhan to Thakot is diverted from JhariKas to GT Road (KM 18) due to challenging foggy conditions as navigating through the thick fog becomes a significant challenge for commuters.

The dense fog persists on the M2 North Motorway from Islamabad (KM 350) to Kalar Kahar (KM 242), significantly reducing visibility to 200-300 meters. The challenging conditions prompt cautionary measures for drivers on this stretch.

M14 Hakla to D.I.Khan, northbound traffic at the M14 Motorway is diverted from Kharpa (KM 74) due to thick fog, leading to a complete closure to Kharpa (KM 74) for both north and southbound lanes. The foggy conditions persist as of the latest update on January 21, 2024, at 08:41.

Wanted members of snatcher and bike lifter gang arrested

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Police Karachi Company and Lohi Bher police team have arrested two wanted members of notorious snatcher and bike lifter gang involved in numerous snatching and bike lifting activities and recovered snatched mobile phones, motorbike, weapon used in crime and three stolen motorbikes from their possession, a public relations officer said.

He said that, following the special directions of Islamabad Capital City Police officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad Capital Police had categorically started a crackdown against criminal elements in order to save the precious lives and property of citizens.

Following these directions, the Karachi company police team used technical and human resources and succeeded in apprehending a wanted member of a notorious bike lifter gang involved in numerous bike lifting activities in various areas of Lohi Bher police station. The accused was identified as Shahram. Police team also recovered three stolen motorbikes from his possession.

Cases have already been registered against the nabbed accused and further investigation is underway. ICCPO Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan directed all senior officials for effective crackdown against the accused involved in criminal activities and said that safety of the lives and property of the citizens is our prime responsibility and no laxity will be tolerated in this regard.



ISLAMABAD: Labourers busy in construction work of Park Road with the help of heavy machineries during development work in the city.



ISLAMABAD: Commuters on the way at Islamabad Expressway during heavy fog in night hours, in the Federal Capital.

Justice continues to elude Gaw Kadal massacre victims in IIOJK

ISLAMABAD (INP): Justice continues to elude the victims of Gaw Kadal massacre victims in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) despite the passage of 34 years.

A report released by Kashmir Media Service on Sunday, said that over 50 people were martyred in Gaw Kadal area of Srinagar on January 21 in 1990 when Indian troops had resorted to indiscriminate firing on peaceful demonstrators who were protesting against the molestation of several women by troops, the previous night.

Indian troops had committed scores of brutal massacres since 1989 in IIOJK, it said, adding that over 96,287 Kashmiris had fallen to the Indian bullets in the past 35 years and that the memories of Gaw Kadal like bloodbaths were still fresh in the minds of Kashmiris.

The report pointed

out that the aim of committing massacres was to instill fear among the people of Kashmir, adding that the large-scale killings of the Kashmiris were also meant to change the demography of the territory by turning its Muslim majority status into a minority.

The Gaw Kadal and other massacres are a reminder of the criminal face of the occupation troops, the report deplored and added that the RSS-backed Indian regime had planned to carry out more Gaw Kadal-like carnages in the occupied territory. It lamented that the Hindutva-inspired Modi had broken all records of atrocities in the occupied territory.

However, the report said, wanton killings would not deter the Kashmiris from pursuing their struggle for right to self-determination and they would not rest till achieving freedom from Indian yoke.

11 outlaws arrested; drugs and weapons recovered

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Police apprehended 11 outlaws including four professional baggers from different areas of the city during the last 24 hours and recovered drugs and weapons from their possession, a public relations officer said.

He said that, following the special directions of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad Capital Police has intensified crackdown against the criminal elements in order to eliminate the crime from the city.

Following these directions, the Khana police team arrested two accused namely Shahzaib Khan and Rafiq and recovered 540 gram heroin and one dagger from their possession, while police team also arrested the accused namely Hamza involved in illegally refilling gas cylinders.

The Kirpa police team arrested an accused namely Huzaifa involved in illegally refilling gas cylinders.

Likewise, the Lohi Bher police team arrested an accused namely Sikandar and recovered 542 gram hashish from his possession, while police team also arrested the accused namely Zakir involved in illegally refilling gas cylinders. The Bhara Kahu police team arrested an accused namely Abdul Rehman and recovered one 30 bore pistol from his possession.



ISLAMABAD: Children riding electric car at Rose and Jasmine garden in the Federal Capital.

Over 55,000 cases pending before SC

ISLAMABAD (INP): The number of pending cases before the Supreme Court (SC) of Pakistan is more than 55,000 as of 16th December 2023, a report issued by the apex court read.

According to a quarterly report (from 17th September 2023 to 17th December 2023), the top court of the country has disposed of 859 during the period. The report, issued under Article 19-A which guarantees right to informa-

tion, read that the number of pending cases was 56,503 on 17th September 2023 and dropped to 55,644 on 17th December 2023.

The SC disposed of 859 cases in the three months.

The apex court is issuing a quarterly report for the first time under Article 19-A. "Access to information is the right of every citizen under Article 19A," the SC maintained

It is pertinent to mention here that earlier Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa vowed to formulate a "comprehensive policy" on fixation of pending cases and formation of benches. The development was shared by Pakistan Bar Council (PBC) Chairman Hassan Raza Pasha while addressing a press conference after a meeting with Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa Senior Puisne Judge Justice Sardar Tariq Masood.



ISLAMABAD: Laborers busy in construction work to enhance the beauty of the city on the wall of a flyover at Rawal Dam Chowk in the Federal Capital.

Averting climate effects for economic growth, food security

ISLAMABAD (APP): Falling among top five countries vulnerable to climate change, Pakistan faces a unique challenge of balancing its economic growth with the adverse effects of climate change and ensuring food security for its people.

Mostly relying on agriculture that is highly prone to climate change impacts like erratic rainfall, droughts and floods, the country's economy, GDP growth and climate finance have become crucial factors in overcoming environmental crisis and ensuring economic stability.

Understanding the recent happenings, the experts believe that growing environmental challenges were posing serious threat to our sustainable development and livelihood.

With its economic growth intricately linked to ability in adapting to and mitigating climatic effects, global organizations like World Bank, UNEP, UNDP

and climate watchdogs have extensively studied and reported on Pakistan's climate vulnerability.

The World Bank, in its report titled "Pakistan Climate Change: A Risk Assessment," has cited Pakistan as highly susceptible country to extreme weather events like floods, droughts and heat waves.

In view of serious implications of these events on our agriculture, water resources, infrastructure and human health, the report emphasizes need for immediate action to build resilience and adapt to changing climate.

The United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) also in its report titled "Climate Change in Pakistan: Impacts and Adaptation Strategies," has mentioned the adverse effects of climate change on our agriculture, coastal areas and biodiversity and urged for sustainable development practices, ecosystem conservation and adop-

tion of climate-resilient strategies.

"We are at the crossroads of both climate change and economy due to our vulnerability to climate change, recurrent climate catastrophes, fossil fuel based economy and energy mix," remarked CEO, Climate Resilient International, Aftab Alam Khan.

"Simply taking the energy sector, we have a mixture of fossil fuel consumption and gradually permeating renewable energy into the existing system. Since, there is inconsistency in just energy transition at household or corporate level, it was hampering our way to a climate resilient future," Khan said.

He stressed across the board capacity building for a holistic and effective outcome and said, "effort in silos would hardly bear any fruit as the task of managing climate crisis demands nation's response as a whole."

The massive youth

bulge, the third most crucial component has been given lesser representation in policy endeavors, he added. "They can become a conduit for desired outcomes in terms of achieving climate resilience at national level."

Khan mentioned that existing curriculum was inconsistent to pave way for a well planned and intricately designed response to the complex issue of climate change.

At the same time, he said, the climate change crossroads serve as a great opportunity for Pakistan to achieve many ambitious goals and the just energy transition to net zero emissions and a carbon free economy could provide basis for setting up climate resilient infrastructure.

Meanwhile, Climate Watchdogs like IPCC and GCRI have mentioned to disproportionate impact of climate change on vulnerable communities, particularly women, children and

marginalized groups and stressed inclusive and gender-responsive climate policies for disaster risk reduction measures.

These assessments also underscore the urgent need for international cooperation, financial support and technology transfer to assist Pakistan in its climate adaptation and mitigation efforts.

Therefore, it is crucial for Pakistan to collaborate with international organizations, governments and stakeholders to address its climate vulnerabilities and build a sustainable and resilient future for its people.

"The contemporary state of climate related urgencies needs a thorough attention to address this issue," stated Dr. Athar Hussain, a Climate Expert and Professor of Meteorology at COMSATS University Islamabad, Pakistan.

"The burden of climate urgencies has to be carried by ourselves in partnership with our global stakehold-

ers by educating and raising awareness among our people to create a climate resilient nation," he added.

Since, the country is at a critical juncture facing the challenges of economic growth and sustainable development it is taking significant steps to mitigate climatic impacts by prioritizing climate finance, integrating climate change considerations into policy frameworks and implementing adaptation measures.

Pakistan recognized the importance of climate financing in supporting sustainable development initiatives and actively engaged with international organizations like Green Climate Fund (GCF) to secure financial assistance for climate change adaptation and mitigation projects.

It revised its National Climate Change Policy to integrate climate change considerations into development planning and promote low-carbon growth.

Daily Voice of Masses Independent

Monday January 22, 2024

Olive branch?

Dare one hope? Imran Khan's recent overture to "hold dialogue" surfaces as a beacon of potential reconciliation in a political landscape that has increasingly become fraught with venomous rhetoric and hardened stances. However, the ambiguity shrouding the intended recipients of this dialogue raises questions.

Historically, Mr Khan, as the leader of PTI, has taken an unyielding stance against engaging with other political factions — to the extent that he once said he could talk to the militant group TTP, but not "thieves". Such history prompts us to ask: with whom does he now wish to converse, and what has brought about this sudden shift?

Mr Khan's refusal to engage with other political entities despite their willingness to talk has been a hallmark of his political career. His rhetoric not only widened the chasm between the PTI and other parties but also contributed to a fragmented political environment. Such divisiveness is not something Pakistan can afford. Therefore, this newfound desire to initiate dialogue, albeit vague, must be cautiously welcomed, yet scrutinised for its authenticity and direction.

For the dialogue to serve the nation's interest, it must be rooted in the spirit of democracy, involving the country's political stakeholders. History has shown that stability and progress come from collaborative efforts among political entities, not from unilateral decisions or alignments with non-political establishments. It is imperative for the incarcerated PTI chief to clarify that his call for dialogue is not a veiled attempt to negotiate with the establishment, but a genuine effort to bridge gaps with other political parties.

Labelling political opponents — who are simply that, and not enemies to be vanquished — as unworthy of dialogue has done little in the past to foster the environment crucial for democratic discourse. For the nation to move forward, it is essential that political leaders shed animosity and engage in constructive dialogue, prioritising national interest over personal or party agendas.

The onus is now on Mr Khan to elucidate his intentions. It is an opportunity for him to demonstrate statesmanship by extending an olive branch to his adversaries, paving the way to addressing together Pakistan's myriad challenges. The success of an offer for dialogue hinges on its inclusiveness and transparency. For the sake of the nation's democratic health, this dialogue — if it ever occurs — must not be an echo chamber but a platform for genuine engagement among all political stakeholders. Meanwhile, Mr Khan's rivals, including the PPP and PML-N, must respond positively to any sincere overture on his part, rather than bind themselves to elements outside the political realm. Numerous examples establish that it is through dialogue, not discord, that nations forge paths to unity and strength. This nation is waiting for a new chapter of political maturity and inclusiveness to dawn.

Muhammad Amir Rana

After a lengthy trial in an anti-terrorism court, followed by the rejection of appeals from superior courts, the killers of Sarfraz Shah, who was shot by paramilitary forces in 2011, finally appealed to the president of Pakistan for a pardon under Article 45 of the Constitution. When the President's House denied their appeal in 2018, it was a significant step towards restoring the confidence of ordinary citizens in the existing justice system. In a similar incident in 2020, the arrest of a Frontier Corps soldier for the killing of a university student in Turbat, Balochistan, proved to be a significant confidence-building measure between the local populace and the security forces. However, such examples remain rare in Pakistan's legal and judicial landscape. Last year, on Jan 23, a dark day unfolded when Rao Anwar, a police officer accused of killing over 400 people in fake encounters, was acquitted in the high-profile Naqibullah murder case. This case had

significantly impacted the political landscape of Pakhtun-dominated regions, and the army chief at that time had personally assured justice for the victim's family. Adding to the irony, the Sitara-i-Shujaat was awarded to a police officer from Punjab who was implicated in the Sahiwal tragedy. This tragedy occurred in January 2019, when the Counter Terrorism Department mistakenly killed a family travelling to a wedding ceremony, suspecting them of being terrorists. The court eventually acquitted all the accused officials.

A lot has been written on these four cases from the legal and human rights perspective, but academic curiosity has no limits. These cases expose the power dynamics of how power corrupts officials in law-enforcement agencies (LEAs), how low-ranking and high-ranking officials alike misuse their authority, and how the system protects them.

Sarfraz Shah's case is a rare example of justice done. Perhaps the reason was that the culprits had little defence. Sarfraz, a 22-year-old man who went out

for a walk in a public park in Karachi, was killed by Rangers, and a camera captured the entire scene. This began an era of social media activism and vigilant citizenry. Civil society played a vital role in bringing justice to the victim's family.

The killing of university student Hayat Baloch in Turbat, amidst volatile security and rising political grievances in Makran, sparked the birth of the Haq Do Tehreek in Gwadar. Security forces took a different approach in this case, arresting a Frontier Corps soldier. A wise move, this arrest proved a major confidence-building measure and prompted a dialogue between security leaders and communities, particularly youth. This led to administrative changes, including relaxed security checks and expanded border markets along the Iran border. However, the initiative faltered as local grievances resurfaced, fuelled by the provincial counterterrorism department's excessive resort to extrajudicial practices. This further accentuated the ongoing sit-in camp for missing persons in Islamabad, led by coura-

geous Baloch women.

The lower ranks are often scapegoats in police brutality cases, and are sacrificed by LEAs to appease public anger while maintaining their impunity. This pattern persists despite high-profile incidents such as the killings of Sarfraz Shah and Hayat Baloch, demonstrating the lack of accountability within law enforcement.

Across Pakistan, reports of LEAs indiscriminately killing innocent civilians surface regularly — from Karachi to Islamabad and from Gwa--dar to Quetta. This entrenched culture of violence is enabled by the flawed political, social and justice systems, which continue to support figures like Rao Anwar and the late Chaudhry Aslam, notorious for their extrajudicial practices.

Ironically, LEAs justify such unlawful actions and demand both immunity and rewards. Even when caught, legal loopholes and judicial leniency, as seen in the Sahiwal tragedy, often shield them from consequences. The anti-terrorism narrative conveniently allows LEAs to sweep these

incidents under the rug, with no real accountability within the civilian, security and judicial systems. An audit of recent 'police encounters' would likely expose a staggering number of injustices, a fact the system is unwilling to confront.

If the state institutions had been vigilant enough, they would have recognised the advantage of engaging with the families of missing persons from Balochistan who are protesting in Islamabad. A dialogue with them would have been more effective, but the institutions fear that the issue of the missing persons is complicated and could damage their reputation. Apparently, not only the state institutions but also political parties are convinced that publicly sympathising with these families will come at a cost, and they are deliberately trying to distance themselves from the protesters. The mainstream parties, betting on the establishment's support in the upcoming election, and even Baloch nationalist parties, are reluctant to extend their full support to the victims' families.

State institutions' re-

luctance to engage with Baloch families and their counterproductive tactic of establishing 'victims of terrorism' camps nearby are backfiring. Though the Baloch missing persons' movement initially focused solely on the rule of law, state institutions, political parties, and their media allies have framed it as a potential PTM-like threat in Balochistan. This narrative threatens not only the status quo, but also Baloch nationalist parties who have not adapted to the changing aspirations of Baloch society. The rights movements challenging the status quo and demanding transparency in actions of state institutions have often faced a harsh response. Instead of engaging in dialogue and addressing concerns, state institutions have opted for coercive measures, pushing the movements towards more confrontational tactics. A charged protest atmosphere can create the perfect environment for law enforcement to abuse their power. The judiciary alone can prevent LEAs from exploiting the ambiguity inherent in such confrontational situations. -- Courtesy Dawn

The languages of history

Dr Naazir Mahmood

In Pakistan, there are not many writers who write about history in Urdu or any other regional language, with an independent and objective lens. But there are certain writers who excel in this craft.

Dr Shah Muhammad Marri has single-handedly done the work that even institutions cannot manage to accomplish in decades. Dr Marri has over 100 books in the Balochi language to his credit, through which he has chronicled the history of Balochistan. He has also written a series of books about significant fighters for democracy in the country.

In Saraiki, more writers than history, but even that fiction is a useful tool to understand the oppression the Saraiki people have endured for centuries. Writers such as Hafeez Khan, Nazeer Leghari, Rana Mahboob Akhtar, and Rafat Abbas have contributed greatly to Saraiki language and literature in the 21st century.

In Sindhi language a prominent name is Naseer Memon whose latest book

'Bartanvi Raaj Mein Punjab Ji Taraqqi' (Punjab's Development under the British Raj) is an impressive piece of research.

But before discussing the significance of this book, a word is in order about some of his earlier contributions in Sindhi and English languages. He has nearly two dozen books to his credit dealing with various aspects of development challenges in the country especially in Sindh.

For example, his English book 'Discriminatory Development Paradigm of Pakistan' has seen multiple editions since it was first published in 2011. In this 240-page book, he has devoted the first part to the political and socio-economic development of the country; the second part discusses water and environmental issues ranging from climate change and glacial melt to the causes of floods and the impact of large dams.

In 2012, his Sindhi book 'Badaljander Dour Mein Sindh' (Sindh in a Changing World) was published. In this book, Naseer Memon mostly deals with the changing economic and political dynamics of Sindh

under the PPP rule from 2008. He also debates topics such as the significance of Karachi for Sindh and for the rest of the country and how urban development needs a more circumspect approach.

From 2017 onwards, Naseer Memon has mostly focused on history writing. His book 'Harhonki Sindh Ji Tareekh' (History of Today's Sindh) published in 2017 deals with the post-independence economic and political developments of Sindh. He begins with the conflict of the central government with the provinces right after Partition.

In his opinion, the rigid attitude of the centre resulted in the emergence of nationalistic feelings across the country. The One-Unit scheme further aggravated the situation as all the provinces were dissolved to create a new West Pakistan province with its capital in Lahore.

His next book 'Sindh Sochey Thi' (Sindh is Thinking) came out in 2021, and carries the discussion forward about the strategies needed for Sindh's economic, political, and social development. He suggests that a new thinking pattern is needed for Sindh to get

out of its governance crisis. The book points out that as industries in Sindh faced a declining trend and hardly any new industrial units were set up in the three successive provincial governments run by the PPP, both rural and urban people in the province faced economic hardships.

In 2023, Naseer Memon published a book in Sindhi, 'Pakistan ji Siyasi Tareekh: 1947-2013' (Political History of Pakistan from 1947 to 2013). In this book, he goes much beyond Sindh and discusses the overall emerging scenario in the new country that needed a more powerful parliament than a powerful governor-general.

He argues that the trend of dismissing provincial governments in quick succession became a root cause of discontent in nearly all provinces. He particularly targets the so-called 'Objectives Resolution' that adversely impacted constitutional development in the country with a clearly religious tinge.

Finally coming to his latest Sindhi book 'Bartanvi Raaj Mein Punjab Ji Taraqqi', we see a more insightful approach to history writing. The book draws

from original sources of Mughal history discussing how Punjab shaped its administrative and military structure from the 16th century onwards. Then he moves on to discuss the beginning of the British period in which a more modern military structure was set up.

He has consulted numerous books, documents and research journals for his analysis of Punjab under the British Raj. He explains that till 1857, Punjab did not have a dominant position in the British army.

Before the War of Independence in 1857, Bengal was the central pivot on which the British army mostly relied. When the revolt reached Bengal, its ferocity there shocked British rulers who then decided to recruit more Punjabi soldiers, expecting them to be more pliant and obedient.

Gradually, the British had a more favourable tilt towards soldiers from Punjab while Bengal became an unfavourable spot for British rulers who reduced their recruitment from the eastern parts of India and hired more from the western and north-western parts of British India.

Gradually, in almost all organs of the state the so-

called 'martial races' started occupying prominent positions in the civil and military bureaucracy, a practice that greatly harmed national unity in the country. The book also deals with the role of feudal lords and religious leaders who have played in strengthening 'martial races' and their dominance in the country.

After the implementation of One Unit, most appointments and postings originated from Lahore for the rest of West Pakistan. Migrants from India — Mohajirs — who had a major share in the early civil bureaucracy of Pakistan gradually lost their dominance as 'martial races' from the country's north and north-west prevailed. According to the statistics that Naseer Memon has given in his book, in 1947 nearly 75 per cent of administrative staff came from Punjab and UP (Uttar Pradesh). The last two chapters of the book are highly informative as they deal with the landed families of southern Punjab too that served British masters. It will be worthwhile to translate this book into Urdu; there are already many books available on similar topics in English. -- Courtesy TheNews

Beyond headlines

Muna Khan

You can't get all your news from headlines. I was reminded of this last month in the US, when reading stories about Harvard president Claudine Gay's resignation following allegations of plagiarism. In reality, her resignation was the result of a well-coordinated campaign which had to do more with race and misogyny than upholding academic principles. But you wouldn't think so reading the headlines.

This campaign to oust the first Black president at Harvard was led by conservative activist Christopher Rufo, who is against DEI (diversity equity inclusion initiatives) and Bill Ackman, Harvard alum and hedge fund billionaire. They were then joined by donors and Republican Elise Stefanik, who headed a Congressional committee looking into accusations of antisemitism on elite campuses. Essentially, they were enraged by Gay's "failure" to condemn antisemitism; ie, pro-Palestinian student demonstrations on Harvard.

"Does calling for the genocide of Jews violate Harvard's rules of bullying and harassment?" asked Stefanik, who herself is a Harvard alum and was removed from an advisory board after she said the 2020 election was stolen from Donald Trump.

"The rules around bullying and harassment are quite specific," replied Gay, "and if the context in which that language is used amounts to bullying and harassment, then we take action against it."

The backlash to Gay's response was swift and calls for her to be removed were amplified. (Incidentally all three universities called to the hearing were headed by women, and only the MIT president still has her job.)

However, there was little mention of how, in those hearings, Stefanik was framing protest to Israel's occupation of Palestinian land as genocide. At one point, Stefanik described the "call for intifada as a call to commit genocide against the Jewish people". Even a basic internet search will show that intifadas have not called for eliminating Jewish people. But it was clear no one in the press wanted to make this distinction, perhaps fearing it would be seen as antisemitic. Unfortunately, the most innocuous or seemingly obvious thinking can be framed as antisemitic in the US.

Gay didn't stand a chance. When the hearings weren't able to produce the desired results, her detractors amplified the accusations of plagiarism. An investigation by Harvard into those claims found "few incidents of inadequate citations" but no wrongdoing. In reality, the right-wing (read rich men) cannot tolerate a Black woman in charge of an institute whose history is rooted in protecting white interests.

Gay resigned on Jan 2, but the trifecta of Ackman, Rufo and Stefanik — as MSNBC's Ali Velshi called them — has vowed to pursue probes into "deep institutional rot" at Harvard. I read this as protecting elite interests, one of which they say is freedom of speech on campuses. But whose speech do they want to protect?

US colleges have never been bastions of free speech because Palestinians and other marginalised voices, have struggled to tell their stories. However, this is changing as DEI initiatives have allowed new perspectives, and younger generations no longer accept mainstream media narratives, especially about

genocide. The establishment continues to bully them into silence, but I don't know how much longer for.

Advocates of free speech are often the ones who suppress the most marginalised voices. These are usually the same people against DEI initiatives which, they claim, is the only reason Gay got the job. Men like Ackman, with access to formidable resources, are now trying to equate DEI initiatives as racist and/or antisemitic. On the other side are Palestinians and their supporters with far fewer resources but with truth on their side.

The media's focus on Gay's 'plagiarism' should remind us how easy it is to distract from coverage on Palestine. I'm not here to say that Gay's story isn't important, but surely there's space in newspapers about Israel's war that is now starving Palestinians. It is also a reminder of how elitist the media is — more keen to talk about palace intrigues at Harvard than starvation in Gaza because that's what its audience wants. This serves politicians like Stefanik well because they don't have to answer questions about their Israel policies. The media aids them in this.

The interest in Gay's future or Harvard's policies will wane when journalists, editors and media owners realise they can't just serve elite interests. The tide is turning, albeit slowly, and the resistance to this change is immense.

The Israel lobby has upped the ante on keeping its narrative alive, but a new audience is emerging that isn't buying their Kool Aid anymore. This number will grow and won't rely on the media for information. They're already on TikTok; how long before everyone else is too? -- Courtesy Dawn

Security decisions

Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry

Nearly every country facing the kind of security challenges that Pakistan confronts maintains a national security council (NSC) as a principal decision-making body that brings together the civil and military leadership onto one platform. However, in Pakistan, this idea has not been fully embraced.

Gen Ayub Khan constituted a national advisory council to give the impression of collective decision-making by the civil and military leadership. In 1969, Gen Yahya Khan established an NSC for advice. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto constituted a cabinet committee on national security in 1976. Gen Zia also created an NSC in 1985 but abolished it the same year. In 1997, the interim government of Malik Meraj Khalid established a council for defence and national security to aid the government but the idea was abandoned by the elected dispensation, which preferred the forum of a defence committee of the cabinet.

In October 1998, Gen Jehangir Karamat floated the idea of an NSC for institutionalised decision-making on national security. However, the suggestion was resisted by the Sharif government on grounds that it would give constitutional legitimacy to the army's role in political governance. Gen Musharraf revived the idea in 2004 and set up an NSC as a statutory body, which worked till 2008. In 2013, prime minister Nawaz Sharif softened up to the idea but reconstituted it as a national security committee (not council), subservient to the cabinet.

Evidently, the idea of having an NSC could never take root in Pakistan. The story is no different when it comes to the office of national security adviser

Pakistan had NSAs in 1969, 2004 to 2008, and then 2013 to 2022. Since April 2022, there has been no NSA.

Clearly, there is no consensus in Pakistan about the powers and role of an NSC. Civilian rulers perceive it as a forum to give the military a greater say in political governance, which, they believe, undermines the mandate of elected governments.

A counter argument is given that since an NSC is chaired by the prime minister and includes several leading cabinet members, involving the military leadership in decision-making on critical issues of national security could strengthen, rather than weaken, the hands of the civilian government. Further, given our ground realities, a high-level civil-military forum for collective decision-making could address misunderstandings before these morph into military interventions.

Given the enormous geostrategic changes underway globally and regionally, and instability on our borders with Iran, Afghanistan and India, Pakistan needs an NSC to address security challenges. It is worth noting that national security is now defined more comprehensively as a tripod of traditional security, economic security and human security. Given the interconnected and wider spectrum of threats to national security — external, internal and non-traditional — a whole-of-the-nation approach is needed.

It would also be relevant to look at how the rest of the world is managing decision-making on issues of national security. In the US, the NSC was created in 1947 as the president's principal forum for considering national security and foreign policy matters. It is chaired by the president

and its regular attendees include the vice president, secretaries of defence, state, treasury and homeland, chairman joint chiefs of staff and director of national intelligence. It has become the president's principal arm for coordinating between domestic and foreign policies and across federal agencies. Time has shown that this forum has enabled the president to make informed policy decisions.

In our own neighbourhood, India's prime minister Vajpayee established an NSC in November 1998, six months after the South Asia nuclear tests, and one month after Gen Karamat had proposed the idea in Pakistan. Since then, India's NSC has functioned regularly on all matters relating to the external and internal security of India, with key union ministers and military leaders in attendance. Five NSAs (three with diplomacy and two with intelligence background) have served the country. The NSC has a three-tiered structure, comprising a strategic policy group, an advisory board, and a joint intelligence committee.

Pakistan can learn from these and several other examples where national security interests have been better served by institutionalised decision-making.

Given that we have border security issues with our neighbours to the east and west, and with the forces of terrorism raising their head again, the next elected government needs to consider setting up a fully empowered NSC, chaired by the prime minister, and also appoint an NSA, so that serious challenges to Pakistan's national security can be addressed collectively and more effectively. -- Courtesy Dawn

CM announces 15pc quota for news room journalists in residential plots

Says first time in history of Punjab, 3,300 residential plots granted to the reporters, photographers, cameramen and journalists of the News Room through a transparent balloting mechanism.

Independent Report
LAHORE: Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi has announced granting residential plots to reporters, photographers and cameramen and 15 per cent quota for journalists working in the news rooms. Addressing a ceremony organised for journalists at the CM Office on Sunday, he said that for the first time in the history of Punjab, 3,300 residential plots had been granted to the reporters, photographers, cameramen and journalists of the News Room through a transparent balloting mechanism. Reporters will be granted 7-marla

residential plots, while cameramen and photographers will be granted 3-marla residential plots through a transparent balloting mechanism. The advertisement for eligibility for acquiring the plot will be advertised on Monday, January 22. Ravi Urban Development Authority (RUDA) will inform the journalists community about the mode for acquiring the plots. Mohsin Naqvi stated that approximately, one year of the incumbent government has passed. "Whichever city I visit, the only demand being made by the journalists community is to do something substantial for their welfare. Today,

we have fulfilled our promise being made with our journalist brothers." He said that he is fully aware that majority of the journalists lead a low profile lifestyle and they hardly make both ends meet. Residence for the journalists is a big issue as residence is a basic need for the journalists across Punjab including Lahore. Mohsin Naqvi apprised that a final shape to the journalists residential project has been given after holding a detailed consultation in this regard. It was our utmost strive to find a suitable place and make a long-term planning as well.



LAHORE: Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Raza Naqvi addressing the ceremony organized in connection with allotment of Residential Plot to Professional Journalist of Punjab.

Mayor Karachi launches campaign to put covers on open manholes

KARACHI (INP): Mayor Karachi and Chairman Karachi Water and Sewerage Corporation (KWSC) Barrister Murtaza Wahab took another positive step to improve the drainage of the city and formally launched the campaign to put covers on the open manholes across the city.

cover campaign is being conducted in four districts of Central West Kemari and Korangi while in the second phase, manholes cover campaign will be conducted in the rest of the districts. He said that manholes covers will be installed under the supervision of the concerned executive engineer and elected UC chairman.

According to the spokesperson of (KWSC) CEO Water Corporation Engineer Syed Sallahuddin Ahmed, COO Water Corporation Engineer Asadullah Khan and Chief Engineer Sewerage Aftab Chandio were present on the occasion of the launch of the Manholes Covers campaign.

On this occasion, Mayor Karachi said that the campaign of manholes covers has been formally started in all the districts, in the first phase, manholes

On this occasion, he said that let us all work together for the betterment of our city, because providing better drainage facilities to citizens is one of our top priorities. Mayor Karachi said that steps are being taken on an emergency basis to improve drainage throughout the city and in this context, we are working on various projects to improve drainage.

JI delegation greets newly elected body of Regional Press Club Shikarpur

Our Correspondent
SHIKARPUR: The Jamaat

Islamic-JI Local Leaders



reached at Regional Press Club Shikarpur here on Sunday and congratulated the newly body of Regional Press Club Shikarpur for 2024 and with the Hope that they will amplify the voice of General Public from their Platform.

gional Press Club Shikarpur and paid great their appreciation to the newly body for 2024 including it's President Zakhmi Rasheed Ahmed, General Secretary Abdul Sami Bhutto, Additional General Secretary and Daily Independent Reporter Adeel Ahmed Dal and others.

According to details, the JI delegation led by JI District President Abdul Sami Bhatti, Sr. Advocate of Supreme Court and JI Candidate for PS-7 Shikarpur Advocate Abdul Qadir Abro, Advocate Ali

Asghar Pahore and others expressed their happiness over the Members of Regional Press Club Shikarpur and paid great their appreciation to the newly body for 2024 including it's President Zakhmi Rasheed Ahmed, General Secretary Abdul Sami Bhutto, Additional General Secretary and Daily Independent Reporter Adeel Ahmed Dal and others.

One killed, 5 injured in road accidents

FAISALABAD (APP): One woman was killed and five others including a minor girl sustained multiple injuries in two road accidents here on Sunday.

Rescue-1122 spokesman said that a speeding container hit two women and a minor girl, who were crossing Jhang Road near Lakkar Mandi.

As a result, 25-year-old Tahira Bibi received serious injuries and died on the spot, while Rescue 1122 shifted Sumaira Bibi (30) and Muskan (2 years) to Allied Hospital in critical condition.

Meanwhile, a stray horse caused collision between rickshaw.



KARACHI: Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori addressing the Ceremony of Mehfil-e-Zikr-e-Mustafa at Governor House.

Talha Mehmood says: Developmental network to be established in Chitral district if elected MNA

PESHAWAR (APP): Due to the negligence of the rulers and elected representatives, the people of Chitral are still forced to live a stone-age life and the roads here are not fit for human beings, people are deprived of their basic rights.

"If I get a chance, I will change the map of Chitral," these views were expressed by Senator Mohammad Talha Mehmood, who is a candidate for the National Assembly seat from NA 1 Chitral in the forthcoming general election to be scheduled on Feb 8, 2024.

Contesting the elections from Chitral on the ticket of Jamaat Ulema-e-Islam, Muhammad Talha Mehmood said during his visit to different areas of Tehsil Torkho. He addressed public gatherings there. The people of Veerkop,

Shahgram and other areas gave him a warm welcome. The JUI workers welcomed him outside the city and took him in a convoy to the public meeting place.

On this occasion, Haji Shakeel, the candidate of provincial assembly constituency PK-1, former Amir Sher Karim Shah and other members of JUI were also present with him. Senator Muhammad Talha Mehmood, said that when I travelled to Upper Chitral, it seemed that the people here were still forced to live in the stone age.

He said that there is no electricity, no potable clean drinking water and no good roads. He said that Chitral is a tourist area where nature has created a lot but unfortunately due to the negligence of representatives elected from here in the past.



KARACHI: View of site after a fire broken out incident at a factory as the fire brigade officials are busy in extinguishing fire and rescue operation, at New Karachi Industrial area of Karachi.

IG Punjab reviewed the ongoing works of DIG Security office

Independent Report
LAHORE: Inspector General Police Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar paid a surprise visit to the under construction office of the DIG Security Division and issued instructions while reviewing the ongoing works of finishing and fixtures.

IG Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar said that after the completion of the civil work, the decoration should be completed as soon as possible according to high standards and no compromise should be made on the quality standard.

Anwar said that police offices and Police stations have been upgraded with the latest resources with the support of Punjab Government and new office of DIG Security Division will be inaugurated soon.

IG Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar further said that police infrastructure development has improved public service delivery to citizens. DIG Security Kamran Adil, DIG Telecommunication Imran Ahmar, SSP Security Division Khalid Mehmood, AIG Operations, SPs, senior officers were present on the spot.

Firdous says her politics has always been anti-PML-N

SIALKOT (INP): Categorizedly stating that the Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP) candidates did not need other political parties' support for getting elected to assemblies, the party spokesperson Firdous Ashiq Awan on Sunday said that the seat adjustment agreement the IPP had reached with the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) was on paper. In an interview with a private TV Channel in Sialkot, she said not only her politics had been anti-PML-N right from the very beginning, but voters of her constituency too were opposed to the party.

"I was opposed to any kind of seat adjustment with the PML-N right from the world go," she said. "What happens in the world does have an impact on any country's domestic politics," Firdous said, adding, "For us, Pakistan comes first. If any country attacks Pakistan, we will stand with our armed forces."

IPP spokesperson was of the view that the leadership of both Iran and Pakistan had shown sagacity by not escalating tensions in the region. "This has certainly disappointed those who wanted to see these two Muslim countries pitted against each other."

Sindh CM writes letter to PM Kakar for completion of M-6 motorway

KARACHI (INP): Caretaker Chief Minister of Sindh Maqbool Baqar has requested Interim PM Anwarul Haq Kakar to facilitate completion of M-6 motorway by taking personal interest.

In a letter to Prime Minister Kakar, Sindh's caretaker CM wrote that all portions of Peshawar to Karachi motorway have been completed but a key link of the road project from Hyderabad to Sukkur has been still incomplete. Caretaker CM has said that lack of progress in implementation of the M-6 project at site has been a matter of concern.

"The M-6 project was approved for implementation under the build-operate and transfer framework with the cost of Rs.308.194 billions." Sindh chief minister said. Now the National Highway Authority (NHA) has cancelled the agreement awarded to the Techno-CMC-ACC Consortium. "The reason has been given that the company has failed to complete its financial close within given time". Justice Maqbool Baqar has requested to the government to direct the competent authority to complete the M-6 project as soon as possible.

"The project was approved for implementation under the build-operate and transfer framework with the cost of Rs.308.194 billions." Sindh chief minister said. Now the National Highway Authority (NHA) has cancelled the agreement awarded to the Techno-CMC-ACC Consortium. "The reason has been given that the company has failed to complete its financial close within given time". Justice Maqbool Baqar has requested to the government to direct the competent authority to complete the M-6 project as soon as possible.

Flight inquiry helpline 'out of order' at Lahore airport

LAHORE (INP): Passengers are facing difficulties in conforming to their flights as flight inquiry lines at Lahore airport are "out of order".

According to sources, contact with the flight inquiry section is not being established at the Lahore airport, causing difficulties for the passengers.

We are unable to confirm flights as the schedule is badly affected due to dense fog, the passengers said. The dense fog across the country has badly affected the flight operations. On January 16, four Islamabad-bound flights were diverted to Karachi.

Ji announces election manifesto for Karachi city

KARACHI (INP): Jamaat Islami Pakistan (JIP) Karachi head Hafiz Naeem ur Rehman announced the election manifesto to solve the problems of the city on Sunday.

He addressed a press conference on Sunday and announced that this manifesto is not of Karachi but the manifesto of Pakistan. For the upcoming elections, he said Jamaat-e-Islami has fielded an excellent team of doctors and engineers, who have a better understanding of parliamentary politics.

He said when they came to power, JIP would correct the census of

Karachi city and every government school would be made a model school. He said they will promote IT education in city universities and a scholarship program will also be launched in the city on a large scale. He added the youth will be given government jobs.

He said the constitution said that the province from where the gas comes out should be given priority and JIP will implement this provision of the constitution.

To end water scarcity, he said sea water will be made drinkable while the monopoly of K-Electric.



GILGIT: Chief Secretary Gilgit-Baltistan Abrar Ahmad Mirza chairing a meeting of Secretaries, Divisional Commissioner and Deputy Commissioners at CS Secretariat.

Fire erupts in Yarn factory, emergency declared

KARACHI (APP): A fire has been reported in a yarn factory in New Karachi Industrial area Sector 12 here Sunday. According to a spokesman for Karachi Water and Sewerage Corporation, an emergency had been declared at Water Corporation's Sakhi Hasan Hydrant. Several tanks filled with water had been dispatched to the fire site. CEO Water Corporation Engineer Syed Salahuddin Ahmed said that the in-charge of Hydrants Cell was actively in contact with the Karachi Fire Brigade authorities. He said that water tankers would be provided to the Fire Brigade until the fire was extinguished.

Rwp Ring Road project to be completed by July 31: Commissioner

RAWALPINDI (APP): Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Liaquat Ali Chatta has said that Rawalpindi Ring Road project would be completed by July 31. He informed that the work had been started at the bridges of river Swan and Sil.

Thalian Interchange is also being remodeled while the modeling of traffic network of Ring Road and Motorway is also in progress, he said.

He said that Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA) would give a plan for plantation on both sides of the Ring Road. Over 18 percent

physical work of the Ring Road project had been completed. Liaquat Ali Chatta informed.

He said that the Ring Road project would be completed by July 31 and the project would be inaugurated on August 14.

There will be no compromise on the quality of the construction work, he added. Five interchanges, 11 overpasses and bridges on two rivers, six canals and a railway bridge would be constructed on the Ring Road besides 15 subways.

The design of the rest area on the Ring Road would also be prepared soon.



HYDERABAD: Members of Left Democratic Front (LDF) are holding protest rally against forced disappearances of Baloch and expressed solidarity with the Baloch, in Hyderabad.

Persistent use of e-cigarettes badly affects human health

PESHAWAR (APP): The persistent use of e-cigarettes in Pakistani society has exposed the younger generation to serious respiratory, oral and brain issues that may prove fatal in later stages of life.

Besides an increasing possibility of drug addiction and long-term damage to brain and IQ development as well as the respiratory system, constant use of e-cigarettes along with other tobacco products can do even more damage to the human body than conventional cigarette smoking. "Electronic cigarettes

are equally harmful that of conventional cigarettes and their regular use can prove fatal due to threats of lung, oral and mouth cancers," said Dr Malik Riaz Khan, Principal Medical Officer, Government Hospital Pabbi, Nowshera while talking to a state run news agency.

Citing reports, he said that about 6.2 per cent of the population used vaping/e-cigarettes while 15.9 million (12.4pc) used smokeless tobacco. "The young adults, especially college and university students, when consumed these products do not realize the long term

harmful impacts of e-cigarettes and at a later stage expose themselves to serious lung related diseases, nicotine addiction, depression and anxiety," he said.

In recent years, electronic cigarettes or vapes have gained popularity among youngsters and students as a fashionable alternative to traditional tobacco smoking. Supporters claimed that e-cigarettes are less harmful than conventional cigarettes but the true intensity of the habit is still unknown to the public. "I started first

naswar, then e-cigarette as a fashion and now conventional cigarette due to unemployment and today I could not go a day without a vape," said Sajid Khan, an e-cigarette smoker of Pabbi.

"These drugs have snatched my happiness and prestige," Sajid Khan said, adding my family had left me abandoned after smoking and I felt angry at myself when children started laughing at me due to my ugly attire.

Dr Riaz said every segment of society, non-governmental organizations and social bodies are on the same page

to control the alarming use of e-cigarettes, stressing the need for collective efforts to save youngsters from the harmful habit.

Blue Veins and the Provincial Alliance for Sustainable Tobacco Control Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has also urged the provincial government and concerned authorities to remain vigilant of the manipulative ways of the tobacco industry emphasizing the need for concerted efforts to combat these nefarious strategies.

"Governments and civil society organizations must remain active.

Revenue shortfall to be met with more taxes

Monitoring Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has committed with the International Monetary Fund to further increase gas prices before February 15—third raise in one year—and also stands ready to impose additional Rs18 billion per month taxes including Rs5 per kilogram levy on sugar. The additional taxes, having an annual impact of Rs216 billion, would be imposed only if the government's income from the Federal Board of Revenue and other sources falls short of the agreed targets, according to a report that the IMF released on Saturday. Caretaker Finance Minister Dr Shamsud Akhtar has given the commitments to the IMF.

The report also disclosed that the caretaker government had missed the primary budget surplus target of the first quarter

of the fiscal year. The IMF board had to give a waiver on this key performance criterion to make Pakistan eligible for the \$706 million loan tranche.

Pakistan would issue a notification of the December 2023 semi-annual gas tariff adjustment determination by February 15, 2024, according to the staff level report.

This is the third gas price increase that would be enforced in the past one year.

In November last year, the caretaker government had increased the gas prices by 1,100%, according to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. The energy ministry claims that the average increase was 172%.

Despite implementing two increases, circular debt in the gas sector has jumped to over Rs3 trillion as of Nov-end—an addition of

Rs938 billion in just five months (Jul-Nov) 2023.

The interim government has committed that the Feb price increase would include maintaining the current progressive slab structure for domestic consumers as well as not disturbing the protection cover enjoyed by the most vulnerable household consumers.

However, the caretaker government has apparently misguided the IMF that the most vulnerable gas consumers were protected from the November 2023 increase. The PBS weekly report showed that the country's poorest segment earning Rs17,000 per month also faced the 1,108% increase in prices.

The IMF in its report admitted that the November gas price increase will add to the headline inflation in coming months.



BERLIN: Caretaker Minister for National Food Security and Research Dr. Kausar Abdullah Malik in a meeting with Managing Director, IFW Expo and Management of DLG International Stefan Kresse, on sidelines of Global Forum for Food and Agriculture held in Berlin, Germany.

Spokesman says: Amendment in Biosafety rules aimed to align with International standards

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of National Food Security and Research on Sunday said that the proposed amendments in Pakistan's National Biosafety Rules (2005) aimed to align with international standards and enhance regulation.

In a press statement, the spokesman of the ministry said that proposed amendments in regulations also aimed at adopting a dual approval approach for planting and

processing respectively as enshrined in 'Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety' concerning GMO imports and focusing on cultivation and food, feed and processing (FFPs).

The other objectives of ongoing processes are to ensure the safe and beneficial integration of GMOs into the country's agricultural landscape, besides fostering collaboration between stakeholders and authorities.

He said that scientific evidence supports the safety of GMOs, with reputable organizations endorsing their consumption, and rigorous testing before approving GMO crops ensures minimal harm to biodiversity and environmental sustainability.

He said Pakistan stands at a pivotal juncture regarding GMO integration into its agricultural landscape.

IT, solar sectors can significantly boost the economy

ISLAMABAD (INP): Iftikhar Khan, the advisor to the president of FPCCI, stated on Sunday that the IT and solar sectors are both promising and ought to be encouraged.

He said that these industries can boost the struggling economy by pushing IT exports to \$25 billion and lowering the cost of oil imports.

In a statement released today, Iftikhar Khan advocated for a preferred resolution of the issues facing the IT and solar industries, as well as a reduction in the tax burden on these two significant sectors to enable them to operate at full potential.

Because of the

intimate connection between the internet and national development, he said, taxes on the internet and telecom sector should be lowered as well.

The business leader said that India and Pakistan both achieved independence at the same time; however, while Indian IT exports are valued at 194 billion dollars, Pakistani IT exports are valued at less than two billion dollars, even though Pakistanis have greater qualifications than Indians. Iftikhar Khan stated that whereas India's economy has grown to over 3750 billion dollars, ours is at 375 billion dollars, is rapidly contracting because of several problems.

LESCO finds three power pilferers at Wagha

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) Wagha Sub-Division's SDO along with his team checked main transmission lines and power meters during a search operation late last night and found three customers stealing electricity in Hamad Garden area. The company's spokesman told media here Sunday that two accused were stealing electricity by hooking wires on LESCO's main supply lines, while the other one was pilfering power through a bogus meter. The inspection team seized the wires and bogus meter used in electricity theft and submitted an FIR.



LAHORE: Warm clothes are being selling at a roadside stalls as the demand of warm clothes increased in city during the winter season, at Delhi Gate.

Malik Iftkhar urges people to buy 'Made in Pakistan' products

LAHORE (APP): SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry's former president Iftikhar Ali Malik has urged the people to buy 'Made in Pakistan' products to promote the local market that will curtail the import bill and keep the foreign reserves in good shape.

Talking to a traders delegation led by Muslim Khan Buner here Sunday, he added that economically, prioritizing locally made products bolsters the country's industries, generates employment opportunities and increases economic growth. "When people choose Pakistani goods over imported ones, it strengthens the domestic market contributing to a more robust and self-reliant economy. It also leads to a positive cycle of increased investment, innovation and competitiveness," he

argued.

Iftikhar Ali Malik suggested enhanced collaboration between public and private sector to make this initiative successful. He added that government must formulate policies which support local industries, while businessmen must ensure the quality and competitiveness of their products, that align with the ethos of 'Made in Pakistan, Buy Pakistani, Be Pakistani.' He said it symbolizes a collective effort to build a stronger, more self-reliant and culturally rich Pakistan. Embracing this slogan can contribute to a thriving economy. Iftikhar Ali Malik said "Be Pakistani" encourages a shared responsibility for the country's well-being, and also promotes a sense of unity and collective pride.

PFC plans for global presence of Pakistani furniture

LAHORE (APP): The Pakistan Furniture Council (PFC) has strategically chalked out an ambitious yearly plan to ensure global presence of Pakistani furniture.

Chairing the council's Board of Directors (BoD) meeting here Sunday, the PFC Chief Executive Officer Mian Kashif Ashfaq disclosed the annual plan in which throughout the calendar year, the council aims to showcase its diverse range of furniture products in key international expos. This proactive approach would not only help explore new markets but also captivate the attention of foreign buyers, he added.

In order to strengthen the global footprint, the PFC envisions collaborative efforts by fostering partnerships with international counterparts. The plan emphasizes the significance of joint ventures within the furniture industry, focusing to create synergies that can propel the Pakistani furniture sector onto the international stage, he added.

Dr Malik meets MD IFW Expo in Berlin

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Dr. Kausar Abdullah Malik met with Managing Director, IFW Expo and Management of DLG International Stefan Kresse, on sidelines of the Global Forum for Food and Agriculture (GFFA) held in Berlin, Germany.

They discussed issues related to the usage of modern technology in agriculture, Pakistan Embassy in Germany posted on X on Sunday.



KARACHI: Director General Sindh Food Authority Agha Fakhar Hussain and Nutrition International Team in a group photo during their visit to Flour Mill.

Pakistan's imports from Iran up by 16% during current FY

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan's reliance on imports from Iran has increased during the ongoing fiscal year (FY).

According to sources, imports from the neighbouring country went up by 16 per cent in the first six months of the current FY (from July 2023 to December 2023) as goods worth over \$480 million were imported during the period under review compared with the corresponding period last year when imports from Iran stood at over \$420

million. On the other hand, 13 per cent increase in imports on a yearly basis was recorded in December, 2023.

Sources informed that in December, 2023, the volume of Pakistan's imports from the Gulf country stood at over \$80 million, while during the same period last year, it was over \$70 million.

Only recently both Pakistan and Iran have agreed on a five-year programme to increase cooperation in trade.

Livestock counter at BFC to promote cattle, poultry farming

MULTAN (APP): The Livestock Department established a special counter at the Business Facilitation Centre (BFC) to issue 13 different sorts of Non-Objection Certificates (NOC) to ensure investment in different sectors of Livestock.

Director Livestock Multan Division Dr Muhammad Ashraf said that NOCs were being issued for animal feed mills, poultry feed mills, animal compound feed mills, poultry feed, Halal Certification, artificial insemination, livestock semen/Embryo importer, Livestock semen distributor, mini production units and some others.

He added these NOCs are being issued within 30 days. The counter will also help promote business in the region. The persons who want to get proper awareness about these businesses are also being guided properly, Dr Ashraf stated.

Deputy Director Jalalpur Pirwala Dr Jamsheed also urged citizens to invest in the Livestock sector as it has immense potential.

Aleem Khan vows to introduce reforms in agriculture sector

KHANEWAL (APP): President Istehkam-e-Pakistan (IPP) Abdul Aleem Khan said on Sunday that IPP would introduce reforms in the agriculture sector and also offer cheap petrol and 300 electricity units to each poor family after coming to power.

He was addressing party workers, ex-chairmen and vice chairman of union councils at Kacha Khoh. He also vowed to provide free of cost electricity to farmers having less than 12.5 acres of land. Similarly, barren land will be made fertile, he added. He alleged that

previous governments could not deliver however IPP would surely offer maximum relief to the masses.

Aleem Khan also promised to provide shelter to waif and strays. IPP will also introduce wash-rooms, and filtration plants and upgrade schools as well as the grades of teachers. About contesting elections from PP 209, he remarked that Ayaz Khan Niazi was his neighbour in Lahore and it was an honour to contest from the constituency. Aleem Khan also promised to ensure record development in the region.



SARGODHA: Farmer busy making traditional sweet item Gurr near Khushab Road.

NAVTTTC empowering youth through skill development programs

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTTC) is running extensive programs by taking memorable initiatives to uplift technical training and skill development in the country.

Technical Training and Skill Education has occupied a very important place in the modern-day economy, according to a

news release on Sunday.

The Prime Minister's Youth skilled program is a key pillar to empower them with the necessary tools and innovative skills, which will grow globally.

NAVTTTC invites media friends to join hands with it and have a good look at the programs and initiatives to enhance the technical sector in the country.

Petroleum Division flays the malicious campaign against the SSGC

Independent Report

ISLAMABAD: This is with reference to recent news items circulating in electronic, print and social media concerning Sui Southern Gas Company (SSGC) and its Board. Petroleum Division condemns the malicious campaign against the SSGC, its Chairperson and its Board of directors. Dr. Shamsud Akhtar along with the Board members has successfully led the organization since her initial appointment in 2019.

Under her visionary leadership, SSGC has achieved significant milestones in crucial areas such as upgradation in the technology, improvement of business operations, Human Resources, policy formulation, discipline, Risk Management and significant reduction of Unaccounted-for Gas (UFG). The Chairperson and Board members work as a team and decisions are taken based on

collective wisdom and consensus of the Board. The Board have contributed significantly to Budgetary systems, Audit, Finances, UFG strategies etc. It is noted with satisfaction that the UFG in Sindh province has been decreased from 15% to 7%, which is a testament to the effective approach of the management and the SSGC Board, especially the Chairperson of the Board.

The Board has strictly been involved in the Policy & strategic decision making and delegates the implementation to Management team. Since its formation, the Board has been steadfast in pursuing an agenda of HR and institutional reforms, recognizing their critical role in the transformation of SSGC.

The institutionalization of high quality performance assessment and results-based accountability is underway to meet the expectations of stakeholders.



LAHORE: A vendor is busy in displaying and selling warm hats, scarves and gloves at his roadside setup.

BRI opens new page in development of China, world

BEIJING (APP): The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) launched by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2013, has opened a new page in the development of China and the world.

"In 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping proposed to jointly build the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. Since then, the Belt and Road Initiative has opened a new page in the development of China and the world," highlighted Sun Chao in her book titled "Ambassadors' Views on Chinese Modernization."

"Rooted in history, the Belt and Road Initiative points to the future;

Proposed by China, the Belt and Road Initiative belongs to the whole world. Our ancestors used to traverse desert miles by miles and transcend hills by hills, leaving their footprints on the new regions," she added.

Sun Chao interviewed hundreds of global leaders and ambassadors to learn the vigor and vitality of the new Silk Road. Sitting face to face, she listened closely to their diversified stories and different voices. She opined that by listening the interviews, the global leaders could make the rest of the world understand China better and "we can share China's narratives well."



QUETTA: All Balochistan Car Dealers Association Chief, Haji Rahim Nasir administrates oath of newly elected cabinet during oath taking ceremony held in Quetta.

President Sisi says Egypt will not allow any threat to Somalia or its security

Monitoring Desk
CAIRO: Egypt's president said on Sunday it will not allow any threat to Somalia, after Ethiopia said it would consider recognising an independence claim by Somaliland in a deal that would give it access to a sea port.

The remarks by President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi were the strongest yet made on the issue by Egypt, which already has frosty relations with Ethiopia, and were a sign that Cairo may get involved in a dispute that has raised fresh tensions in the volatile Horn of Africa.

Somaliland declared independence from Somalia in 1991 but has not won

recognition from any country. The port lease deal, which was agreed earlier this month but not yet finalised, would be a boon to landlocked Ethiopia and has enraged Somalia.

"Egypt will not allow anyone to threaten Somalia or affect its security," Sisi said, speaking at a news conference with visiting Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud.

"Do not try Egypt, or try to threaten its brothers especially if they ask it to intervene," he added.

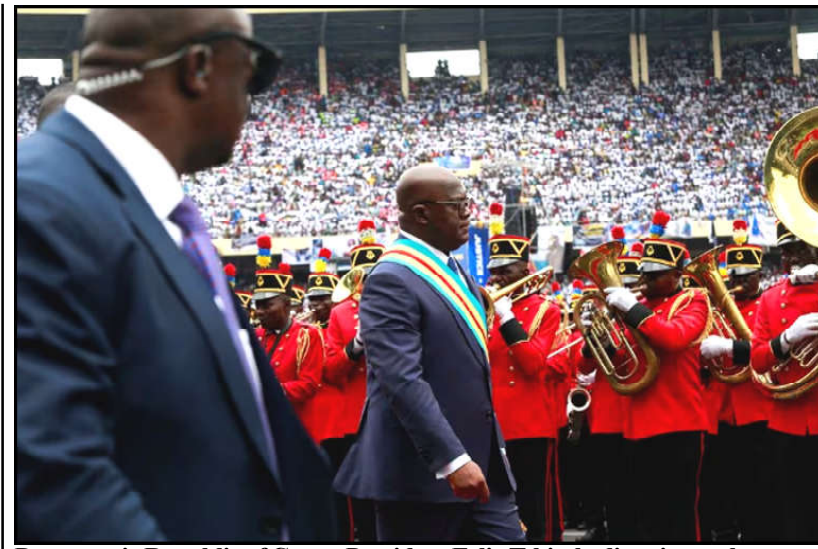
In a Jan. 1 memorandum of understanding, Ethiopia said it would consider recognising Somaliland's independence in return for the

port access. It would lease 20 km (12 miles) of coastland around the port of Berbera, on the Gulf of Aden, for 50 years for military and commercial purposes.

Ethiopia's current main port for maritime exports is in the neighbouring country of Djibouti.

"My message to Ethiopia is that ... trying to seize a piece of land to control it is something no one will agree to," Sisi said, saying cooperation on development was a better strategy.

Representatives for Ethiopia did not immediately respond to requests for comment on his statements.



Democratic Republic of Congo President Felix Tshisekedi arrives to be sworn in for a second term as a president during the inauguration ceremony at Martyrs Stadium in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo.

Israeli strike on Damascus kills Iran's spy chief in Syria

Monitoring Desk
DAMASCUS: An Israeli strike on Damascus killed the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps's (IRGC) spy chief for Syria and four other Guards members on Saturday, Tehran said, in an attack that tore into a multi-storey residential building.

Iran condemned the strike as a "desperate attempt to spread instability in region", state media reported.

"Iran...reserves its right to respond to the organised

terrorism of the fake Zionist regime at the appropriate time and place," foreign ministry spokesperson Nasser Kanaani said.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), a Britain-based monitor, said 10 people were killed in the Israeli strike on the Mazzeh neighbourhood of the Syrian capital.

The Mazzeh area is also home to the United Nations headquarters, embassies and restaurants.

Biden cancels nearly \$5 billion more in student debt relief

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: U.S. President Joe Biden on Friday announced student debt cancellation of nearly \$5 billion for an additional 74,000 borrowers, including more than half who earned forgiveness after 10 years of public service as teachers, nurses and firefighters.

The White House announcement brings the total loan forgiveness approved by the Biden-Harris administration to \$136.6 billion for more than 3.7 million Americans.

How much carnage is enough, wonders UN General Assembly chief

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: "How much carnage is enough to call for a ceasefire" in Gaza, wondered the president of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) at a gathering of non-aligned nations in Uganda on Friday.

"That situation (in Gaza) be- hooves us to ask: how much is enough? And does the very concept of enough even exist in this setting?" asked UNGA President Dennis Francis as the death toll in Gaza carnage exceeded 25,000.

"We cannot allow what has been happening in Gaza to continue. We need an immediate humanitarian ceasefire." Addressing a gathering of 120 nations in Kampala, the Ugandan capital, the UNGA chief said the only viable pathway for both Israelis and Palestinians to have peace "is through a negotiated political solution based on the two-state solution".

Here in Washington, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's rejection of a two-state solution during a phone conversation with US President Joe Biden on Friday reverberated in the US Congress.

India plans to fence off Myanmar frontier

Monitoring Desk
NEW DELHI: India plans to erect a fence along its vast and porous frontier with Myanmar and will scrap a free movement border zone agreement, Indian media reported on Sunday.

The announcement by Home Minister Amit Shah comes after hundreds of troops from Myanmar who were fleeing insurgent attacks crossed into India.

The government had "decided to fence the entire open India-Myanmar border", Shah said on Saturday during a visit to the north-eastern state of Assam.

'4 survivors' after Russian jet crashes in Afghan mountains

Monitoring Desk
MOSCOW: Four people survived and two are unaccounted for after a Russian plane crashed in mountainous northeastern Afghanistan, the air transport agency Rosaviatsia said on Sunday.

The Falcon 10 business jet was believed to be carrying six people on a hospital flight from India to Uzbekistan and Russia before communication was lost on Saturday evening.

"Of the six people on board the aircraft, tentatively, four are alive. They have various injuries. The fate of two people is being clarified," Rosaviatsia said, citing the Russian embassy in Afghanistan.

The RIA Novosti news agency said two passengers were Russians, one who was seriously ill, and the other her husband who had paid for the flight.

The two-engine plane was built by France's Dassault in 1978 and owned by a company called Athletic Group and a private individual.

A provincial government official in Afghanistan told AFP the aircraft came down in Badakhshan province, which borders China, Tajikistan and Pakistan.

The area of the crash is eight hours by road from the provincial capital Faizabad, said Zabiullah Amiri, head of the provincial information department.

Iran launches satellite that is part of a Western-criticized program as regional tensions spike

Monitoring Desk
JERUSALEM: Iran said Saturday it had conducted a successful satellite launch into its highest orbit yet, the latest for a program the West fears improves Tehran's ballistic missiles.

The announcement comes as heightened tensions grip the wider Middle East over Israel's continued war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip, and just days after Iran and Pakistan engaged in tit-for-tat airstrikes in each other's countries.

rocket, the state-run IRNA news agency said. It did not immediately acknowledge what the satellite did, though telecommunications minister Isa Zarepour described the launch as having a 50-kilogram (110-pound) payload.

The launch was part of Iran's Revolutionary Guards' space program alongside Iran's civilian space program, the report said.

Footage released by Iranian media showed the rocket blast off from a mobile launcher, a religious verse referring to Shiite Islam's 12th imam written on its side.

An Associated Press analysis of the footage suggested the launch happened at the Guard's launch pad on the outskirts of the city of Shahroud, some 350 kilometers (215 miles) east of the capital, Tehran. Iran's three latest successful satellite launches have all happened at the site.

Trump, Haley duke it out in New Hampshire before primary

Monitoring Desk
MANCHESTER: Former South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley and former President Donald Trump will make their closing arguments in New Hampshire on Sunday in a final stretch of campaigning for the Republican presidential nomination before voters go to the polls on Tuesday.

Time is running short for Haley, who served as Trump's ambassador to the United Nations, to topple the Republican presidential frontrunner after his victory in the Iowa caucuses underscored his dominance in the primary race.

If she cannot score an upset win in New Hampshire on Tuesday, her already-narrow path to the nomination could close altogether. Trump, who is leading Haley and Florida Governor Ron DeSantis here, addressed a stadium full of cheering supporters in Manchester on Saturday night, encouraging them to go to the polls on Tuesday, when the primary will take place. But he also appeared to shift some of his focus to the next major nomination contest, in South Carolina in late February.

At the rally, several high-ranking state and federal officials from that state spoke on Trump's behalf, including South Carolina Governor Henry McMaster. "They understand that I am the only candidate in this race who is going to save America and we're gonna get rid of this Biden disaster right away," Trump said.

"So you know what I'm doing? I'm kissing ass." Haley has stepped up her attacks on Trump in recent days with a late-in-the-game move to draw contrasts with a businessman and politician whose time in the White House was characterized by chaos and who faces four criminal cases, including for his efforts to overturn the results of the 2020 election that he lost to now President Joe Biden.

World's biggest iceberg 'battered' by waves in Antarctica as it heads north

Monitoring Desk
PARIS: It was impossible to see through the snow and fog on the Antarctic seas but expedition leader Ian Strachan knew his ship was approaching a true behemoth: the world's biggest iceberg lay somewhere ahead.

The ship will proceed to the Kucukcekmece anchorage area under escort tugs, the report also said.

making it more than twice the size of Greater London. After three decades stuck to the Antarctic ocean floor, the iceberg is now heading north on what could be its final journey. It contains an estimated one trillion tonnes of fresh water that is likely to melt off into the ocean along way. The iceberg, which is up to 400 metres thick in places, is currently drifting between Elephant Island and the South Orkney islands.

Strachan was speaking to this news agency as his ship, run by the expedition's firm EYOS, was wrapping up a private tour of the Antarctic Peninsula. It had been planning to go to South Georgia island but due to a bird flu outbreak there, it visited A23a instead. It was not the first ship to witness the majesty of the iceberg.

"Then the clouds lifted and we could see this expansive — almost abstract — white line that extended each way across the horizon," he said. As the ship got closer during its visit on Sunday, huge gaping crevasses and beautiful blue arches sculpted into the edge of the iceberg came into focus.

Waves up to four metres high "smashed" and "battered" its wall, breaking off small chunks and collapsing some arches, Strachan said. He compared sailing along the endless jagged edge to looking at sheet music. "All the cracks and arches were different notes as the song played." The tooth-shaped iceberg named A23a is nearly 4,000 square kilometres across,



DAMASCUS: Security and emergency personnel search the rubble of a building destroyed in an Israeli strike.

At least 25 dead in a shelling of a market in Russian-occupied Ukraine, officials report

Monitoring Desk
KYIV: At least 25 people were killed Sunday by shelling at a market on the outskirts of the city of Donetsk in Russian-occupied Ukraine, local officials reported.

A further 20 people were injured in the strike on the suburb of Tekstilshchik, including two children, said Denis Pushilin, head of the Russian-installed authorities in Donetsk. He said that the shells had been fired by the Ukrainian military.

Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs described the strike, which it blamed on Ukraine, as a "terrorist attack".

"These terrorist attacks by the Kyiv regime clearly demonstrate its lack of political will towards achieving peace and the settlement of this conflict by diplomatic means," it said. Also Sunday, fire broke out at a chemical transport terminal at Russia's Ust-Luga port following two explosions, regional officials said. Local media reported that the port had been attacked by Ukrainian drones, causing a gas tank to explode.

The blaze was at a site run by Russia's second-largest natural gas producer, Novatek, 165 kilometers southwest of St. Petersburg.

In a press statement to Russian media outlet RBC, the company said that the fire was the result of an "external influence."

UK to upgrade warship defence missile system used in Red Sea

Monitoring Desk
LONDON: Britain's Ministry of Defence said on Sunday it would spend 405 million pounds (\$514 million) to upgrade a missile system now being used by the Royal Navy to shoot down hostile drones over the Red Sea.

The Sea Viper Air Defence system will be upgraded with missiles featuring a new warhead and software enabling it to counter ballistic missile threats, the MoD said in a statement.

The contracts were awarded to the British division of MBDA, a missiles joint venture owned by Airbus, opens new tab, BAE Systems, opens new tab and Leonardo, opens new tab, the MoD said.

"As the situation in the Middle East worsens, it is vital that we adapt to keep the UK, our allies and partners safe," defence minister Grant Shapps said in the statement.

"Sea Viper has been at the forefront of this, being the Navy's weapon of choice in the first shooting down of an aerial threat in more than 30 years."

Secretary General Antonio Guterres aired similar sentiments in an earlier statement, telling the world:



LONDON: Pro-Palestinian activists hold flags and placards while taking part in a 'Day of Action for Palestine' demonstration outside the British multinational aerospace company BAE Systems.

Ethnic killings in Sudan city left up to 15,000 dead: UN

Monitoring Desk
UNITED NATIONS: Between 10,000 and 15,000 people were killed in one city in Sudan's West Darfur region last year in ethnic violence by the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and allied Arab militia, according to a United Nations report.

In the report to the UN Security Council, seen by Reuters on Friday, independent UN sanctions monitors attributed the toll in El Geneina to intelligence sources and contrasted it with the UN estimate that about 12,000 people have been killed across Sudan since war erupted on April 15, 2023, between the Sudanese army and the RSF.

Years after civil war, security wall holds back Iraqi city

Monitoring Desk
SAMARRA: Khaled Ibrahim dreams of a home on the outskirts of Samarra, but a concrete wall built to protect the Iraqi city is stopping him and hampering sorely-needed urban expansion.

Built more than a decade ago at the height of Iraq's civil war which tore apart the multi-faith, multi-ethnic country, authorities say the wall must remain to prevent the threat of jihadist violence, even as security has gradually improved across the country.

Samarra is home to the Al-Askari shrine, one of Shiite Islam's holiest sites and famed for its golden dome, but sits in the predominantly Sunni province of Salahaddin.

An attack by Sunni militant group Al-Qaeda in 2006 destroyed the dome, and set off a brutal sectarian conflict in which tens of thousands of people were killed. A year later, a second attack destroyed the two minarets at the site.

Ship traffic to resume in Turkey's Bosphorus Strait

Monitoring Desk
ISTANBUL: Ship traffic in Turkey's Bosphorus Strait is set to resume for north-bound vessels as of 1700 GMT on Sunday, after a suspension due to an anchor failure on one ship, the Tribeca shipping agency said.

According to a report shared by the agency, the Liberia-flagged tanker Peria's anchor self-released due to bad weather around the Yavuz Sultan Selim bridge area during its passage through the strait and tugs were dispatched for assistance.

The ship will proceed to the Kucukcekmece anchorage area under escort tugs, the report also said.

Pope calls for release of hostages in Haiti

Monitoring Desk
VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis on Sunday called for the release of hostages, including six nuns, who were kidnapped on a bus in Haiti on Friday, and said he was praying for social harmony in the country.

Gunmen hijacked a bus in Haiti's capital Port-au-Prince with at least six nuns on board and drove off to an unknown destination taking all passengers hostage. Vatican News reported on Saturday, citing the Haitian Conference of Religious group.



People remove debris at a food market following what local Russian-installed authorities say, was a Ukrainian military strike in the course of Russia-Ukraine conflict in Donetsk, Russian-controlled Ukraine.

Alvi for blacklisting proven bank fraudsters, directs banks to refund Rs 2.74 million to fraud victims

ISLAMABAD (Online): President Dr Arif Alvi has asked the Banking Mohtasib to take up the matter of banking frauds with the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) to get essential SOPs issued so that proven fraudulent personnel's CNICs could be blacklisted, placed at Central negative list, and no Banking/financial facility could be extended to them by the Banking industry.

The President issued these directions while rejecting two separate representations filed by the United Bank Ltd (UBL) and Bank Alfalah Ltd (BAL) directing the banks to pay Rs 1.9 million and Rs 0.744 million respectively to their customers who fell victim to online banking fraud at the hands of fraudsters.

As per details, Mr Qaiser Mehmood who was holding an account with UBL received a call from a number resembling the Bank's helpline and the caller advised him to activate his disabled digital banking app. He activated

his app, after which Rs 2 million were transferred from his account through multiple transactions. Similarly, Brigadier Muhammad Arif Shaikh received a call from fraudsters asking him for his banking credentials to remove some technical flaws from his account. Later, an amount of Rs 994,000 were transferred from his account through 19 transactions. They asked their respective banks to refund their money, but to no avail. Feeling aggrieved, they separately approached the Banking Ombudsman to get relief. The Ombudsman directed the banks to refund the lost amounts to the customers. The banks, then, separately filed representations against the Ombudsman's decisions with the President.

The President held personal hearing of the cases, and having listened to the parties and going through the available record, decided the cases in the complainants' favour.

The President observed that the banks were found non-compliant with the SBP's directives regarding the implementation of monitoring systems to detect fraudulent transactions. He added that multiple consecutive transactions were conducted but it did not raise alerts and allowed the money to pass through the system. He noted that the banks also failed to establish the legitimacy of transactions in terms of Section 41 of the Payment System and Electronic Fund Transfers Act, 2007. He said that the banks failed to submit any proof of compliance with the directions of SBP despite being given ample opportunity. He concluded that malpractice and maladministration stood established on part of the banks and they were liable to make good the financial loss of the complainants.

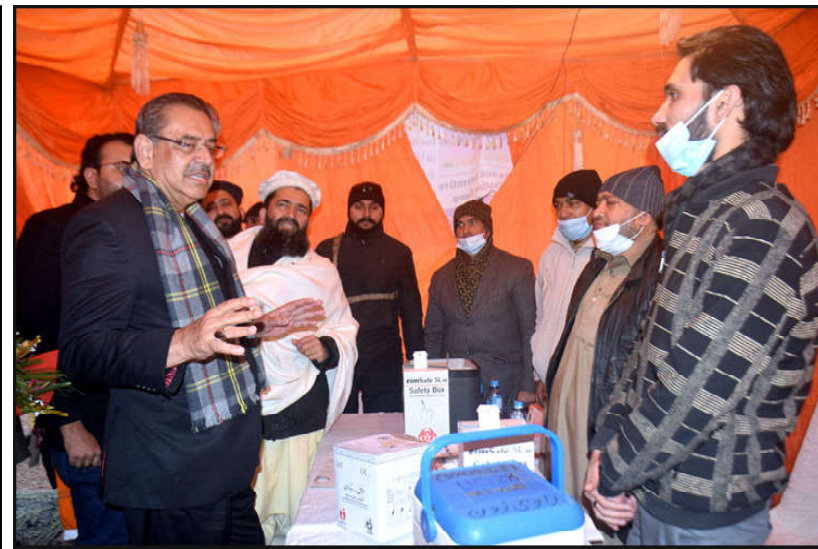
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LAHORE: Caretaker Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed Khan along with Abdul Khabeer Azad, Chairman of Ruet-e-Hilal Committee, Pakistan visiting free medical camp titled role of Mمبر and Mehrab in Healthy Society organized by Primary and Secondary Healthcare Department Punjab at Badshahi Masjid.

Aneeq inaugurates free medical camp at Badshahi Masjid

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed Khan inaugurated a health camp at Badshahi Masjid here on Sunday, and stressed the need for collective efforts to establish a healthy society.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony and a seminar on 'Role of mosques, member and mehrab for healthy society', he said there were more than 250,000 mosques in the country, which should be made a centre of medical and other facilities. He added that these mosques should be given the status of community centres.

Caretaker Federal Minister Health Dr Nadeem Jan, Punjab Health Minister Dr Jamal Nasir, Minister Auqaf Sayed Azfar Ali Nasir, Chairman Ruet-e-Hilal Committee Abdul Khabeer Azad, Joint Secretary Ahmad Nadeem, Secretary Auqaf Dr Tahir Raza Bukhari and others were also present.

Aneeq Ahmed said that medical camp had been established at historic

Badshahi Masjid and other mosques of big cities like Karachi, Rawalpindi and Islamabad in which dentists, ultrasound, sugar screening and other facilities are being provided free of cost to people. He vowed that the scope of these facilities and camps would be extended to other areas of the country soon. He said that all provincial departments concerned are playing an active role for establishing and maintaining free medical camps; however, continuity and commitment are important for provision of the best medical facilities to people.

The religious minister appealed to consider mosques in the lists of priorities as these could play an effective role in developing and establishing healthy society. He termed education and health the major aspects of any society and stressed the need to extend great importance toward these vital sectors. Well-being is not an inheritance but a process of continuity that is achieved over time, he added.

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Non-state actors threat to regional, national security: Mushahid

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Senate Standing Committee on Defence, Mushahid Hussain Sayed has said that the Iran crisis resolution was the 'model of crisis management', whereas the non-state actors have become a threat to the regional and national security now linked to regional geopolitics. He was speaking at the Pakistan-China Institute dialogue on "Outlook of Security Situation in South Asia in 2024" organized under Friends of Silk Road (FOSR) Initiative that took place simultaneously at two venues; Islamabad and Quetta Press

Club, said a news release issued here Sunday. In his opening speech, Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed highlighted the significance of the current scenario, dominated by turbulence and transformation. In this context, he analyzed China's Global Security Initiative (GSI) as a new framework for peaceful resolution of security issues, since GSI focuses on security as being indivisible, based on respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of states. It seeks also to promote a security governance framework, including A.I., cyber security and

related security threats based on accepted international norms of behavior enshrined in the UN Charter and international law. He strongly condemned the ongoing Genocide and Crimes against humanity in Palestine by Israel. Delving into security issues, he discussed three new realities; the shattering of the Middle East status quo after October 7, serious challenges posed by Non-State Actors, and the complex security situation between Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan which is now inextricably intertwined with regional geopolitics.

Protest in Muzaffarabad against incidents of massacres in IIOJK

MUZAFFARABAD (INP): A protest demonstration was organized by the International Forum for Justice and Human Rights in Muzaffarabad against the various incidents of massacres, including Gaw Kadal, Handwara, Kupwara and Sopore in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

A large number of people participated in the protest and raised slogans against the war crimes of the Indian government and soldiers. They were also carrying placards and banners with slogans against the massacre of Kashmiris.

Addressing the protesters, the speakers said the Indian soldiers are committing the worst kind of human rights violations in occupied Jammu and Kashmir. They said despite the passage of three decades, no action has been taken against the Indian soldiers involved in the massacre of the Kashmiri people.

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Sardar Mahtab firms to support PTI

ISLAMABAD (INP): Sardar Mahtab Abbas has boldly declared that he has never cared about the consequences for principles.

According to details, following his expulsion from the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Sardar Mahtab Abbas has reacted to the party's previous decision, stating that he is contesting the upcoming elections independently. He clarified that he did not seek a ticket from the PML-N, as he believes it's not the time for political compromises.

Kh Asif asks PML-N workers to launch door-to-door campaign

SIALKOT: Former Federal Minister for Defence Khawaja Muhammad Asif is addressing to the participants of Workers Convention at PML-N House at Paris Road.

Khawaja Muhammad Asif is addressing to the participants of Workers Convention at PML-N House at Paris Road. He urged the youth to go door to door to apprise people of development agenda of the party and victory would be destiny of PML-N on February 8.

Addressing the worker convention at the PML-N House at Paris Road Saturday night, he said the youth were valuable asset to the country and they should keep unity in their ranks. He said the PML-N was a symbol of development and prosperity, and whenever the party came to power, Sialkot, the city of Allama Iqbal, witnessed unprecedented development. Various educational institutions were built, women's university was established, and motorways were made. The former minister said Sialkot was a stronghold of the PML-N. Candidates from PP-46 and PP-47 Chaudhry Faisal Ikram and Muhammad Manshaullah Butt, respectively, City President PML-N Muhammad Rafique Mughal, Former Mayor Sialkot Chaudhry Toheed Akhtar, District Youth Coordinator Umer Chachi and City Coordinator Hafiz Chand Sheikh were also present.

China-Pak companies sign \$43 mln new energy order

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan's leading distributor of solar energy products, MaxPower signed a USD 43 million order with China's new energy company, CHISAGE ESS. According to CHISAGE, they have supplied over 300,000 units of inverters and will provide a full range of low-voltage single-phase and

three-phase hybrid inverters as part of the order. In March 2023, MaxPower showcased the prototype of CHISAGE ESS hybrid inverters at 12th International Renewable Energy Exhibition and Conference in Pakistan, drawing the attention of numerous local dealers, traders, and EPC companies.

Khursheed assures PPP would save Pakistan economically

SUKKUR (APP): PPP leader Syed Khursheed Ahmed Shah on Sunday confidently declared his party will win the upcoming general elections. "InshaAllah, the next government will be of the Pakistan Peoples Party".

Addressing a gathering here, he assured that the People's Party would save Pakistan economically. He said that the PPP Government in Sindh has accomplished a lot, endured oppression, and faced challenges but has never left the field.

He mentioned that there are role model hospitals like NICVD and SIUT in Sindh, while the others have not built a single hospital in Punjab. He said that PPP has undertaken projects in both rural and urban areas of Sindh, consistently contributing to historical developments. Syed Khursheed Ahmed Shah criticized Imran Khan, stating that the PTI government has damaged the country's economy, and in 2018, an incompetent person was imposed on Pakistan.



KARACHI: Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM-P) Convener, Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui along with Farooq Sattar, Mustafa Kamal, Nasreen Jalil and others waving hands to their supporters during public gathering as part of Election Campaign in connection of General Election 2024, at Jinnah Bagh.

"Take care of your tongue," Ahsan warns Bilawal on debate challenge to Nawaz

SHAKARGARH (INP): PML-N leader Ahsan Iqbal on Sunday infuriated over People's Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto over challenging Nawaz Sharif for an election debate.

"It is not the level of Nawaz Sharif to debate with an 'under-training'," Ahsan Iqbal here said. "I am warning Bilawal to take the name of our leader with due respect," PML-N leader said. "We know, how to reply, if he doesn't care of his tongue," he warned.

PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto in a media interview has challenged the PML-N candidate for prime minister's office to hold a television debate with him.

Political temperatures are getting high in the country as the February 08 date of Pakistan's general elections coming near. Political opponents using scathing language and exchanging allegations before the election date.

PPP Chairman and former foreign minister Bilawal Bhutto, targeting the PML-N and its top leadership.

In an interview he challenged that the PML-N's candidate for prime minister's office to hold a television with him. "Nawaz Sharif didn't learn from his mistakes and playing final innings of his political career," he said. "He will continue the politics of victimization after coming into power. He has to take revenge from Adiala Jail Superintendent and judges," Bilawal said.

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ECP initiates actions against candidates over violation of election code

ISLAMABAD (INP): The monitoring teams of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) have initiated the process of issuing notices and imposing fines against candidates involved in the violation of code of conduct.

The active monitoring teams of the ECP in this regard took action against the candidates in various districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on the violation of the code of conduct. Similarly, monitoring teams of the Election Commission are also active in Punjab.

In Nankana Sahib, a warning was issued to election candidates for displaying Panaflex and billboards. Panaflex and other promotional materials have been removed from Jhelum, Rawalpindi, Islamabad, Sargodha and Bhakkar.

Panaflex hoardings have also been put up in Chiniot, Faisalabad, Nankana, Kasur, Lahore and Multan. Provincial Election Commissioner Punjab has issued strict instructions to District Monitoring Officers in this regard.

Five die, two injured in fog-related accidents

ISLAMABAD (INP): At least three people were killed and two others were wounded in a fog-related road accident in Kasur on late Friday night.

According to private news channel, an accident occurred at the Kutcheri Road in Pattoki where a truck collided with a trailer parked on the road side due to dense fog, killing three persons on the spot and injuring two others.

Police and rescue teams reached the spot after getting information and shifted the dead and injured to a nearby hospital. In another incident, two people died when a passenger van crashed into a loader near Jehan Khan on Jhang Road in Bhakkar.

According to Rescue officials, the fatal smash between the passenger van and loader resulted in on-the-spot deaths of two passengers, while seven other travelers sustained injuries. They said that the accident occurred due to dense fog engulfing the area.

Seminar held on Balochistan Livelihood & Entrepreneurship

Independent Report QUETTA: The seminar was held on the citizens participation and awareness under auspices of Balochistan Livelihood and Entrepreneurship Project (BLEP) in Zhob on Sunday.

The provincial high ups of BLEP as well as the male and female members of the Zhob and Shirani communities participated in the seminar.

Speaking on the occasion, the District Coordinator of BLEP, Afzal Khan spoke at length about the aims and objectives of the

Citizens participation and awareness: Seminar held on Balochistan Livelihood & Entrepreneurship

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Asghar Khan Achakzai says: Those making politics in name of religion as well as Zai & Khaili failed

Independent Report CHAMAN: The provincial president of Awami National Party (ANP) Asghar Khan Achakzai has stated that those making politics in name of religion as well as Zai and Khaili have failed and now the people would vote to the candidates of ANP on the basis of their character.

The ANP provincial leader was addressing the gathering at residence of Dost Muhammad in old Chaman on Sunday. The gathering was arranged by the ANP District Chaman. Abdul Khaliq Haqmal presided over the event while Asghar Khan Achakzai was the chief

Pneumonia claims lives of 8 children in Punjab in 24 hours

LAHORE (INP): As many as eight children died of pneumonia and related cases in different areas of Punjab in a single day amid intense cold weather.

Punjab Health Department said on Sunday that 799 suspected pneumonia cases were reported across the province in 24 hours. According to the statistics, 108 suspected pneumonia cases were reported from provincial capital Lahore in a single day.

Out of the total 799 suspected cases reported across Punjab in 24 hours, 295 were aged between three to 12 months, 68 children aged of two months and 37 children having age of one month. The health department said that in January, 108 children died of pneumonia. Punjab Caretaker Health Minister, Dr Javed Akram said that every year same number of pneumonia cases were reported in province.

He said that the basic objective of the seminar is to provide opportunities of livelihood to the unemployed youth, besides disseminating information about the sustainable economy, self-confidence and different professional training. Deputy Director Mines and Minerals Abdul Razaq Kakar, Muhammad Abid Sherani and other experts from Livestock, Forests, Community development also addressed the seminar.



QUETTA: Workers busy preparing Election 2024 posters on Mekangi Road.