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SC deplures unfortunate criticism, misreporting of ruling in 'proscribed literature' case

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Supreme Court of Pakistan on Thursday said that many misunderstandings have been created owing to the misreporting of a judgment on the release of a person accused of distributing the proscribed literature.

A press release issued by the SC in the matter said that an impression was being given as the apex court violated the Second Constitutional Amendment (interpretation of Muslim) and has directed to abolish the sections of offenses against religion. This impression is completely wrong, it said.

It stated that the SC has ruled that even the accusations of the FIR in this case are believed they didn't merit the applications of sections charged but rather section V of the Criminal Law Amendment Act 1932 related to the dissemination of proscribed literature under which the maximum punishment of publishing proscribed books is six-month imprisonment.

The press release said that the SC accepted the bail of the accused and ordered for his release keeping in

view the rulings of Islam, constitutional sections and principles of law and justice, as the concerned person has already spent more than one year in prison.

It further said that it is sad that in such cases sentiments are inflamed and Islamic rulings are used to be forgotten. The written judgment has quoted the relevant verses of the Holy Quran in this context, he added. It said that Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa tried to ensure that the interpretation of the law by the court be aligned with Islamic sources of law as well as the country's constitution.

It further stated that if anyone felt there was a mistake by the court then avenues of legal recourse were always present, which the apex court or the chief justice would never stop anyone from approaching. The verdicts can be criticized within reason but an arranged campaign in the name of criticism without adopting the constitutional path of a review is unfortunate," the press release added.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar chairs a meeting of the Caretaker Federal Cabinet.

Caretaker setup leaves behind useful strategy safeguarding national interests: PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Thursday said the caretaker setup in a short span of time had left behind a useful strategy for the upcoming elected government that would ensure public welfare and protect national interests.

"The caretaker government always gave priority to national interests while taking policy decisions as it believed to work together for national stability and development," the prime minister said while chairing a

meeting of the federal cabinet at Prime Minister office.

He said the government had improved the national economy, adding "we are leaving country's economy in a better condition than before".

He appreciated and thanked his cabinet members and the civil servants for their tireless efforts during short tenure of the government.

The federal cabinet expressed satisfaction over the steps taken by the caretaker government regarding re-

structuring of various institutions, promotion of foreign investment and providing facilities to businesses.

Appreciating the prudent leadership of Prime Minister Kakar on behalf of the federal bureaucracy, the cabinet secretary said that he had taken important difficult decisions in interest of the country, which would have far-reaching results.

Among other agenda items, the cabinet, on the recommendation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, allowed Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir NI (M) to receive the "Turkish Armed Forces Legion of Merit" awarded by Turkiye in honor of his services regarding cooperation between the armed forces of Pakistan and Turkiye.

On the recommendation of ministry of finance, the cabinet also approved the extension of deputation period of Lubna Farooq Malik as Director General Financial Monitoring Unit (FMU) from June 9, 2023 to June 8, 2024.

Ex-Rawalpindi commissioner retracts 'rigging' accusations against CEC, CJP

"I apologise to entire bureaucratic circles of country whose reputation has been seriously dented by my actions"

RAWALPINDI (INP): In a surprising turn of events, the Ex-Commissioner Rawalpindi, Liaquat Chatha, on Thursday withdrew all his allegations related to rigging in the general elections 2024 and apologized to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP).

In a recorded statement before the ECP's investigative committee, Chatha revealed that he was under huge pressure due to retirement and surrendered before the authorities.

The former commissioner clarified that he did not direct any Returning Officer (RO) or interfere in anyone's support during the general election of 2024.

The ex-commissioner clarified that he never instructed any Returning Officer to show favoritism or intervene in the election process.

"With a 32-year service record, I was scheduled to retire on March 13, 2024, and held concerns about potential loss of benefits in the future. I deeply regret

my statement and offer a sincere apology to the nation," Chatha stated.

The former commissioner revealed that during his role as Punjab's secretary, he forged close ties with a political party official, aiming for future advantages.

"The party official went into hiding due to involvement in the May 9 incidents, I was in touch with him and also used to assist him secretly," he said.

Liaquat Chatha disclosed a covert meeting with the leader of a political party in Lahore on February 11 and was tasked with devising a plan to "confirm" allegations of election rigging, however, concerned about the potential ineffectiveness of the accusations, he opted to conduct an emotionally charged press conference. The former Rawalpindi commissioner revealed that, according to the political leader, the plan had the backing of a particular party's top leadership. The press conference was strategically tied to a party's protest plan.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Minister for Information Murtaza Solangi and Caretaker Federal Minister of National Heritage & Culture Syed Jamal Shah along with Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan H.E. Mitsuhiro Wada cutting cake to celebrate the 64th Birthday of His Majesty the Emperor.

Imran Khan wants IMF aid halted over 'rigged' election

ISLAMABAD (INP): The founder of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) will send a letter to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), asking the money lender to cease its monetary support for Pakistan due to alleged "electoral rigging," party leader Ali Zafar announced on Thursday following a meeting with the cricketer-turned-politician at Rawalpindi's Adiala Jail.

"Today, the PTI founder will dispatch a letter to the IMF," Senator Zafar informed a group of journalists, emphasising that according to the charters of the IMF, European Union and similar institu-

tions, their assistance or loans to a nation were contingent upon the presence of "good governance".

According to Barrister Zafar, a fundamental tenet of these charters was the requirement for democratic governance. "These institutions are not meant to operate within nations without a democratic system in place. And the basic pillar of democracy is free and fair elections."

Unfortunately, the recent election was marred by allegations of manipulation, the PTI senator stated, adding, "The entire world saw how the public mandate was stolen."



MUZAFFRABAD: Women activists of International forum for justice shouting slogans during protest ahead of Kashmiri Women's Resistance Day 23rd February, in the city.

Jan Achakzai criticizes PTI founder for decision about writing letter to IMF

Independent Report QUETTA: The caretaker Provincial Minister for Information, Jan Achakzai has criticized the founder of PTI, Imran Khan for his decision about writing letter to International Monetary Fund (IMF).

In an official statement issued here on Thursday, Jan Achakzai said that the founder of PTI has decided to send a letter to IMF, other investors and friendly countries for not extending financial assistance to Pakistan.

He said that it is very

sorrowful that the PTI founder has become ready for playing with the economic future of Pakistan.

The PTI founder only wants chaos and instability in the country. It had also been his policy in the past, Jan Achakzai added, He further said that the announcement made by PTI about writing letter to IMF is irresponsible and unjustified.

The PTI has already made similar mistake in the past. No political party had not done like that on allegations of rigging in year 2018.

Pakistan's total liquid foreign reserves reach \$ 13.097 billion

KARACHI (APP): The total liquid foreign reserves of Pakistan stood at US\$ 13,097.8 million while foreign reserves held by State Bank reached \$ 8,012.8 million in the week ended on February 16, 2024.

The State Bank of Pakistan, in a statement issued here on Thursday, informed that foreign exchange reserves held by the central bank decreased by \$ 44 million to \$ 8,012.8 million due to debt repayments during the week under review.

Meanwhile net foreign reserves held by commercial banks stood at \$ 5,085 million. Total liquid foreign reserves held by the country, in the previous week ended on February 9, 2024, were \$ 13,149.1 million. Among them foreign reserves held by the central bank were \$ 8,056.5 million while net foreign reserves held by commercial banks were \$ 5,092.6 million.

Six wedding party members die, 17 injure in road mishap

LODHARAN (APP): Six members of a marriage party were killed while another 17 sustained injuries when a wagon they were boarding hit a tractor trolley from the rear side on Basti Malook-Dunyapur Road late on Wednesday night.

Rescue 1122 District Emergency Officer (DEO), Dr Syed Majid Ali, told this news agency that the ill fate wagon hit the tractor trolley full of husk which resulted the road mishap.

He informed that apparently the cause of accident was over speeding adding that the members were returning to their home after attending a wedding ceremony in Shujabad.

The dead were identified as Sajida, Ramzan, M.Yousuf, Uzma Ramzan, Zainab Bibi, Zainab Mai, and Hafiz Raheem, the DEO said and added that the injured were shifted to DHQ Lodhara.

Dr Majid regretted that the joys of the family turned into sorrows after a few hours of wedding.

He maintained that the victims belonged to Chak no 369-WB.

Pak won't allow spread of false propaganda on social media platforms: Solangi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi said on Thursday that some elements were using social media platforms to incite violence, which was an illegal activity.

Addressing a press conference along with Prime Minister's Special Representative on Inter-

faith Harmony Hafiz Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi, he said the government would take strict action against such illegal activities under the law.

He said that freedom of expression under Article 19 of the Constitution was not unlimited, rather it was subject to law of the land.

Under Article 19, derogatory remarks against judiciary, armed forces and

brotherly countries were not allowed, Solangi remarked.

He said that the companies earning billions of dollars from the social media platforms could not abdicate themselves from the responsibility if their platforms were used to disturb law and order in any country and incite people to violence and hatred, he maintained.



QUETTA: Caretaker Home Minister Mir Muhammad Zubair Jamali meeting with Governor Balochistan Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar

Over 2.65 million children to be vaccinated: Seven-day polio immunization campaign to be kicked off in Balochistan from Feb. 26

Chief Secretary pledges to mobilize all available resources for eradication of polio; emphasizes upon convincing parents who refuse to get their children vaccinated

Independent Report

QUETTA: The seven-day polio immunization campaign is due to start all over Balochistan from February 26 (Monday).

Over 2.65 million children below five years of age would be administered the anti-polio vaccine along with Vitamin "A" drops during the immunization campaign.

More than 11,000 teams would take part in the anti-polio campaign and administer the anti-polio and Vitamin "A" drops to the children.

These and similar other details were shared during a briefing conducted for Chief Secretary, Shakeel Qadir Khan at a meeting of Provincial Task Force for polio eradication here on Thursday.

The Secretary Health, Abdullah Khan, Coordinator Emergency Operation Center (EOC), Syed Zahid Shah, representatives of UNICEF, World Health Organization and other concerned departments were

present in the meeting. The meeting reviewed the measures taken for eradication of polio in the province.

Speaking on the occasion, Chief Secretary said that the anti-polio campaign going to be started next week is very important. He said that it is very necessary to administer anti-polio vaccine to the children below five years of age during the immunization campaign in order to eradicate the virus fully.

He reiterated the government's resolve of mobilizing all available resources for eradication of polio from the province. In this regard, he also emphasized upon convincing the parents who otherwise refuse to get their children vaccinated against polio.

He mentioned that special attention is being to the children left from vaccination and that at the transit points. He said that it is very necessary to convince the patients for vaccination of their children so as to protect them from crippling disease.



QUETTA: Secretary Higher Education Zafar Ali Buledi, Director General Levies Naseebullah Kakar and Vice Chancellor Bolan University of Medical & Health Sciences Prof. Dr. Shabbir Ahmed Lehri meeting with Caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki

Matters about formation of Govt discussed: PML-N and PPP Balochistan's parliamentary parties vow to resolve issues of province

Independent Report QUETTA: The parliamentary groups of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP) Balochistan have expressed resolve to resolve the issues of province together.

The parliamentary groups of the two major political parties of the province expressed the resolve about resolving issues of the province in a joint meeting held in Islamabad on Thursday. Those who were in attendance at the meeting were included former Chief Ministers of the province, Nawab Sanaullah Zehri, Jam Kamal Khan and Mir Sarfraz Bugti.

Also present in the meeting were the provincial President of PPP, Mir Changezi Jamali, provincial President of PML-N, Sheikh Jaffar Khan Mandokhail, other senior leaders and members of national and provincial assemblies-elect including Jamal Shah Kakar, Ali Madad Jatak, Mir Ubaid Gorgej, Sardar Sarfraz Domki, Asfandyar Kakar, Abdul Khaliq Achakzai, Toor Utamankhail, Muhammad Khan Lehri, Maulvi Noorullah, Sardar Abdul Rehman Khetran, Wali Muhammad Noorzai, Asim Kurd, Sardar Faisal Jamali, Barkat Ali Rind, besides others.

Maryam Nawaz calls for early completion of Ramzan package

LAHORE (INP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's senior vice president and chief organiser, Maryam Nawaz, the party's nominee for the Punjab CM slot, has called for early completion of the Ramzan package.

Maryam Nawaz, who was all set to become the first woman chief minister in Punjab, has directed the administration to ensure the timely completion of the Ramzan package to provide relief to the general public.

Sources further said that Punjab's expected next CM has ordered the administration to give the status of Ramzan Bazars to the Model Bazars as her government will start with the commencement of the Holy month of Ramadan.



QUETTA: Nawab Sanaullah Zehri, Jaffar Khan Mandokhail, Jam Kamal Khan and others are participating in the important meeting of Pakistan Peoples Party and Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N) regarding government formation in Balochistan, in Quetta.

Daily Voice of Masses Independent

On a leash

It is a done deal. Despite several hiccups and one party's many ifs and buts, negotiations over the configuration of the next government concluded rather abruptly late Tuesday.

Under the understanding reached between the PPP and PML-N, Islamabad will get another coalition government headed by Shehbaz Sharif less than seven months after the last one was dissolved. PPP co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari will be the PML-N and PPP's joint nominee for president, the Speaker of the National Assembly will be from the PML-N, while the Senate chairmanship and the KP and Punjab governorships will go to the PPP.

The two parties will also jointly form a government in Balochistan. Though the spoils have been quite generously divided, the PPP's support for the PML-N government will not be guaranteed in all matters.

Under what seems to be a confidence and supply arrangement, the PPP will vote with the PML-N only on motions of confidence and spending bills. For all else, the PML-N may be on its own.

Meanwhile, in its new incarnation as the Sunni Ittehad Council — and likely to emerge as the single largest party in the Lower House barring any further engineering — the PTI will sit on the opposition benches and is poised to take the opposition leader's slot.

With legislative power thus distributed, this government will likely prove to be the most formidable political test faced yet by Mr Sharif, who ruled without any real opposition the last time around. And it won't just be parliament that will be testing his mettle. His government is likely to face a public legitimacy crisis due to the circumstances in which it will come into being: it is already being accused of attempting to govern on a stolen mandate by parties that collectively represent the vast majority of those who voted on Feb 8. Does Mr Sharif expect to deliver in such circumstances? His biggest task will be to clean out the Augean stables left behind by his own administration, especially where the economy is concerned.

With a vast section of the public angry over the election results and the citizenry in general nearly bankrupted by relentless inflation, he will not find it easy to introduce the much-needed major changes to the economy without running into resistance. Considering the beating his party has taken in the polls, will his priority be to push ahead during such times at the expense of what little political capital it has left or to do what all politicians do when they realise their own interests are on the line, i.e. find a short-term fix and leave the heavy lifting for whoever comes next? Mr Sharif has said he wants to 'save' Pakistan. Many will be watching to see how long his resolve lasts.

Economic cost of internet, social media shutdown

By Qamar Bashir

Former Press Secretary to the President; Former Press Minister to the Embassy of Pakistan to France; Former MD, SRBC



Pakistan, like any nation, faces challenges in balancing the interests of its people, businesses, and the state. Decisions made by authorities, including interim governments, can sometimes prioritize immediate or specific objectives over broader economic and social impacts. The act of slowing down or terminating internet services, including access to social media platforms, is a significant decision that can have far-reaching consequences. Such actions, while intended to serve particular goals, can inadvertently hinder the country's economic vitality by affecting business operations, trade, investment, and exports. They also pose risks to employment rates and GDP growth, potentially exacerbating poverty levels across the nation.

The internet and social media are modern-day lifelines for commerce, communication, and information exchange. Restricting access to these services can be likened to constricting the arteries of the nation's economy, impeding the flow of business and innovation. While security and regulatory concerns are valid, solutions should be sought that balance these needs with the preservation of open and free internet access

to support the nation's socio-economic development.

According to international internet and social media watchdogs, during the 2024 elections in Pakistan, there were widespread disruptions to internet and mobile services on the orders of the Interior Ministry on the lame and excuse of "maintain law and order." Ironically, despite the assurance of the government and the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority multiple regions experienced internet blackouts and mobile network disruptions on the very election day. Independent watchdogs like NetBlocks confirmed these outages, indicating a significant impact on connectivity. Furthermore, the Open Observatory of Network Interference (OONI) reported that specific websites, including those of the PTI political party and investigative news platforms, were blocked prior to the elections. Cloudflare Radar observed significant drops in internet traffic for several local ISPs on the day of the elections, indicating widespread service disruptions.

The direct losses incurred to the nations can easily be calculated by inserting vital information in simple formulas. For example, Given Pakistan's GDP of \$1.24 trillion in February 2023 and forecasted merchandise trade of \$95.96 billion in 2024, the daily GDP for 2024 is approximately \$15.85 billion. With per day merchandise trade roughly at \$1.23 billion and assuming a 50% impact on merchandise

trade due to closures, the daily loss from shutting down the internet is about \$615 million. For Twitter, the daily loss stands at approximately \$14.25 million.

The indirect costs of internet shutdowns on businesses, trade, and investment are significant and multifaceted. Internet shutdowns disrupt economic activities, leading to losses in e-commerce, delays in time-sensitive transactions, increased unemployment, and interruptions in business-customer communications. These disruptions result in financial and reputational risks for companies, affecting both local businesses and international trade and investment.

For instance, in specific cases like Algeria, internet restrictions impacted various sectors, including the tourism industry, where businesses faced material losses due to hindered communications with customers and missed reservation deadlines.

In India, the economic impact of internet shutdowns was quantified at \$1.9 billion for the first half of 2023 alone, highlighting the substantial direct economic losses incurred due to such disruptions. These shutdowns not only affect the immediate economic output but also have long-term consequences on investor confidence and the country's digital infrastructure.

Such actions not only impose direct economic losses on an already strained economy but also lead to broader socio-economic

instability. They not only infringe upon basic human rights guaranteed by the Constitution of Pakistan and international human rights standards but also erode the country's democratic fabric by undermining the freedom of information and press. The irony is stark as these actions, meant to secure political gains or regulate the political narrative, result in billions of dollars in losses to the national economy, contributing to its vulnerability. This situation leaves political parties wary of assuming power in the aftermath of the 2024 elections, given the looming economic challenges compounded by such disruptive practices.

When a country's actions to block social media platforms, slow down the internet, and disrupt internet services lead to widespread condemnation by international bodies like the United Nations, Amnesty International, and Transparency International, as well as foreign leaders and institutions, the resulting costs can be multifaceted and significant.

These costs extend beyond direct and indirect economic impacts to include the erosion of the country's soft image, which can lead to further financial, business, tourism, and soft capital losses.

The erosion of a country's soft image can be even more detrimental in the long term. Condemnation by international bodies and foreign leaders can lead to a decline in investor confidence, reduced

foreign direct investment, and a negative impact on the country's diplomatic relations and international standing. This can further result in decreased tourism revenues, as potential visitors may choose to avoid a country perceived as politically unstable or repressive in terms of digital rights.

Moreover, the disruption of internet services can hinder innovation and the digital economy's growth, essential components of modern economic development. It can also affect the country's attractiveness as a destination for international events, conferences, and cultural exchanges, further impacting its soft capital and potential revenue streams.

Overall, the indirect costs of such actions, compounded by international condemnation, can significantly hinder a country's economic growth, international reputation, and ability to engage in global commerce and diplomacy effectively.

To safeguard the right to internet and social media access, ensuring economic, business, trade, and innovation opportunities remain unhampered, a comprehensive and collaborative approach is essential. Governments, alongside legislative bodies, must enact and enforce laws that protect internet access as a fundamental right, with a clear emphasis on transparency, accountability, and adherence to international human rights standards.

This legal framework should be designed to prevent unwarranted internet shutdowns, maintain neutrality, and ensure open access, with independent regulatory bodies established to oversee compliance and enforce regulations.

Additionally, policies should mandate transparency in actions by both government and ISPs, especially concerning decisions that may affect internet access, ensuring any restrictions are justified, transparent, and subject to public scrutiny.

Moreover, civil society, the judiciary, and political entities must play active roles in advocating for and protecting internet freedom. This involves promoting digital literacy to empower citizens to demand their digital rights, strengthening data protection to build trust in digital services, and supporting the pivotal role of independent media and civil society in holding power to account.

International cooperation is also vital, as global collaboration fosters a supportive environment for internet freedom, sharing best practices and advocating for digital rights on the world stage. Inclusive policy making, involving a broad spectrum of stakeholders, ensures diverse interests are represented and the public good is protected, fostering an environment conducive to growth, innovation, and the free exchange of ideas.

Commerce News

Pakistan aims lifting bilateral trade with Saudi Arabia upto \$20 billion: Gohar Ejaz

ISLAMABAD (APP): Observing that the current trade volume falls short of expectations, Caretaker Federal Minister for Commerce and Industry, Gohar Ejaz said in Riyadh Thursday that Pakistan wanted to lift bilateral trade with Saudi Arabia upto \$20 billion.

Addressing the Pakistan-Saudi Business Forum, the minister said that legislation would be

enacted to promote bilateral investment between the two brotherly countries, according to press statement issued by Commerce Ministry here.

Dr. Gohar Ejaz, who is heading a delegation of Pakistani industrialists, also met with the Saudi Minister of Commerce, Dr. Majid bin Abdullah Al-Kassabi. The meeting focused on enhancing investment in sectors such

as construction, digital economy, and infrastructure between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

The Pakistani delegation included Punjab Minister S.M. Tanveer and notable businessmen; Arif Habib, Muhammad Ali Tabba, and Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI) President Atif Ikram. Ejaz mentioned that a Free Trade Agreement

(FTA) between Pakistan and Gulf countries had been ratified.

Speaking at the forum, Chairman of the Saudi Business Forum Hassan Al Hazawi stated that bilateral trade between the two countries has increased by 35 percent.

The Saudi Minister of Commerce commended efforts to strengthen bilateral trade relations and praised Gohar Ejaz.



LAHORE: President Dr. Arif Alvi in a group photo with a delegation of the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry, who called on him, at Governor House.



Caretaker Federal Minister for IT and Telecommunication, Dr. Umar Saif chairing 6th Board of Directors meeting of National Information Technology Board (NITB) in Islamabad.

Pak inks agreement to export skilled workers to S. Arabia in construction sector

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Assistant to the Prime Minister, Jawad Sohrab Malik has signed an agreement recently with NESMA & Partners for the export of skilled Pakistani labor to Saudi Arabia. The agreement was signed at the Embassy of Pakistan in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, said a press release received here on Thursday.

The agreement marks a pivotal collaboration between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, paving the way for the export of a substantial Pakistani workforce to contribute to Saudi Arabia's ambitious

infrastructure and development goals.

NESMA & Partners, as the leading construction company in Saudi Arabia, holds responsibility for numerous mega-projects within the kingdom.

The agreement would provide Pakistani workers with the opportunity to showcase their expertise and contribute to the success of these critical infrastructure projects.

Jawad Sohrab Malik highlighted the exceptional reputation of Pakistani workers for their dedication and hard work.

PSX stays bullish, gains 355 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bullish trend on Thursday, gaining 355.19 points, a positive change of 0.58 percent, closing at 61,914.34 points against 61,559.16 points the previous trading day.

A total of 324,830,445 shares valuing Rs 13.966 billion were traded during the day as compared to 362,771,035 shares valuing Rs12.492 billion the last day. Some 352 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 185 of them recorded gains and 143 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 24 remained unchanged.

ICCI invites Saudi importers to import agricultural products from Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari on Thursday invited the Saudi importers to import agricultural products from Pakistan to meet their consumption.

He said that Pakistan produces quality food products and Saudi Arabia is an import-based market receiving supplies from foreign markets.

He urged Saudi Arabia to import agricultural products from Pakistan at competitive prices to meet the needs of its consumers.

He said this while talking to Fadel Abdallah, General Manager, Al-Shaqqa Trading Est of Saudi Arabia during his

visit to ICCI.

Ahsan Bakhtawari said that Pakistani wheat, rice, fruits, and vegetable has great potential in the Saudi market and assured that ICCI would fully cooperate in enhancing exports of these products from Pakistan to Saudi Arabia.

He said that Pakistani meat, poultry products, textiles, IT products, surgical instruments, sports goods, leather products, and construction materials can also find good a market in Saudi Arabia.

He urged the Pakistan and Saudi Arabia to focus on further improving bilateral trade and investment relations that would create new jobs and bring prosperity to both countries.



HYDERABAD: Participants visiting a stall during Job fair at Isra University.

Trade Conference 2024: Ambassador Tirmizi highlights opportunities for Pakistani companies in Middle East

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates Faisal Niaz Tirmizi, has highlighted opportunities for Pakistani companies in the Middle East (ME), particularly in the UAE, focusing on sectors such as dairy, meat, fruits, vegetables, and non-food products.

He emphasized the country's trade potential at the Pakistan Middle East Trade Development Conference 2024, held at the Pakistan Association Dubai (PAD) auditorium,

according to a news release received here from Dubai.

The conference, organized in collaboration with Pakistan's Embassy, the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) and Engro-Pakistan, was attended by Pakistani exhibitors participating in Gullfood-2024 and the Emirati business community.

The event aimed to exchange ideas to explore trade relations between Pakistan and the Middle East, providing networking opportunities for Pakistani

traders, particularly with UAE buyers.

Ambassador Faisal Niaz Tirmizi explained that the UAE market was continuously growing, offering ideal opportunities for dedicated Pakistani companies with sound business plans to maximize their potential.

Panel discussions during the conference focused on developing strategies to enhance market penetration and overcome challenges effectively.

Rupee gains 17 paise against dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Rupee on Thursday gained 17 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 279.32 against the previous day's closing of Rs 279.49.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 279.5 and Rs 282.3, respectively.

Mobilink Bank witnesses 72% revenue growth

ISLAMABAD: Mobilink Bank achieved multiple financial milestones in 2023, solidifying its position in the banking industry. With a revenue of PKR 41,053 million, representing 72% growth from the previous year, the Bank's performance underscores its commitment to excellence and innovation, particularly in its support for women and Small and medium-sized enterprises

(SMEs). Mobilink Bank's commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) is exemplified through its flagship initiative, the Women Inspirational Network (WIN) program and MobilinkHER Women Returnship Program, which have emerged as a catalyst for change. Through WIN, the Bank has empowered over 5,000 female entrepreneurs with essential digital and business skills.

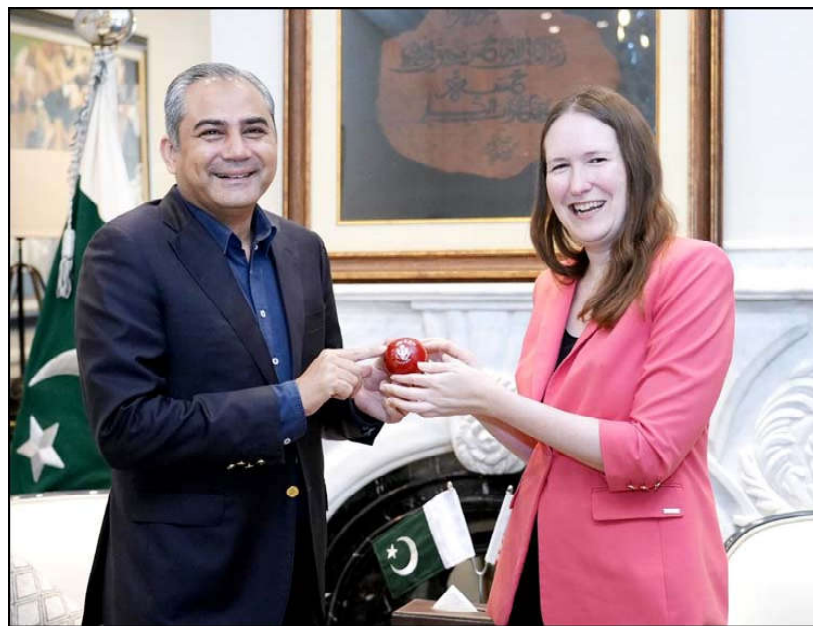
Promotion of sports vital for the establishment of a healthy society: Baligh

Independent Report
LAHORE: The Dutch Hockey Club team and the HEC Pakistan team participating in the Shuhada Punjab Police Hockey Series called on Governor Punjab, Muhammad Balighur Rehman at Governor House Lahore. During the meeting, Chief Organizer Chairman Khawaja Junaid briefed Governor Punjab about the series. Speaking on this occasion, Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman said that the promotion of sports is very important for the establishment of a healthy society. He said

that hockey is our national game and hockey players have brought laurels to the country. He expressed hope that we will once again regain our lost position in this field. He welcomed the teams and officials to the Governor House on this occasion. Governor Punjab said that the sports legends are the heroes of the nation who brought glory to the country through their outstanding performance in their respective sports. He further said that sports equipment of best quality is manufactured in Pakistan and the city of Sialkot is

famous for manufacturing sports equipment. Governor Punjab said that it is a matter of great pride for us that the high quality footballs produced in Sialkot have been used in last year's FIFA World Cup. He said that sports are an important means of strengthening ties between people of different countries.

Speaking on the occasion, the Dutch player who was part of the delegation said that Pakistan is a beautiful country and Pakistani people are very hospitable and friendly.



LAHORE: American Consul General Ms. Kirstin Hawkins presenting gift of cricket ball to Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Raza Naqvi.

Minister stresses govt role in fostering growth of pharma sector

Independent Report
LAHORE: Caretaker Punjab Health Minister Professor Dr Javed Akram Thursday said he expected the new government would play its role in promoting the pharmaceutical industry. "Pakistan's pharmaceutical industry has a good position in the world and should be happy over its progress," the minister said during his visit to 16th Pak Pharma and Healthcare Expo at the Lahore's Expo Centre. The two-day Pak Pharma and Healthcare Exhibition was held by the Prime Event Management with the support of Pakistan Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association (PPMA). He said a lot of progress in science also transformed the pharmaceutical businesses across the globe.

SFA distributes food licenses

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Food Authority (SFA), distributed food licenses to the business community engaged in food businesses in a ceremony held at Deputy Commissioner's office Khandkot - Kashmore. Director SFA Masood Bhutto along with Deputy Commissioner Ameer Fazal Awasi distributed food licenses, said a statement issued here on Thursday. Speaking on the occasion, Director SFA Masood Bhutto said that on directives of DG SFA Agha Fakhr Hussain, SFA has been made more effective at the district level across the province and now SFA teams will conduct regular inspections in district Kashmore.

Railway police foil narcotics smuggling attempt

PESHAWAR (APP): Railway Police in Peshawar conducted a successful operation at Peshawar City Station, apprehending two women for smuggling narcotics via train. The suspects were caught by SHO Jamal Abdul Nasir and other officers based on suspicion at the internal passage of Peshawar City Station.

3-day Intl congress of soil science concluded at PMAS-AAUR

RAWALPINDI (APP): Chairman Higher Education Commissioner (HEC) Dr. Mukhtar Ahmad here on Thursday urged the scientists and researchers to play a leading role in conservation, land and water resources and guide the policy makers in the evolving research priorities. He also stressed on the management of soil through the latest technologies for maximum agricultural production to meet the country's demand for food. The Chairman speaking as chief guest at the concluding session of the three-day 20th International Congress of Soil Science at Pir Mehr Ali Shah Arid Agriculture University Rawalpindi (PMAS-AAUR) stressed the need to adopt latest agricultural practices to address the country's food security and emphasized the importance of protecting and improving natural resources, particularly soil for increasing agriculture production in the country. The event was organized by the Institute of Soil & Environmental Sciences (ISES).

1400 plots allotment: CM fulfills promise made with journalists

LAHORE (APP): Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi has fulfilled his another promise made with the journalist community by allotting over 1,400 plots in RUDA Maskane-Ravi project. Distribution of allotment letters among journalists was inaugurated by Caretaker Punjab Information Ministers Amir Mir at a ceremony, held at Alhama Arts Council. RUDA Chief Imran Amin and DGPR Rubina Afzal participated in the ceremony. Amir Mir said that a high-level committee conducted a lengthy scrutiny to finalise the list of eligible journalists. He said RUDA was itself intimating those journalists who were declared eligible for getting plots.



HYDERABAD: Gypsy women searching for the valuable items from heap of garbage at Latifabad area.

PKMT Youth Wing protest Rally against Sponsorship of KFC in PSI-9

Independent Report
SHIKARPUR: Pakistan Kissan Mazdoor Tahreek-PKMT Youth Wing District Shikarpur took out a protest Rally against Massacre in Palestine by Israel and sponsorship of KFC in PSI-9 by Pakistan here on Thursday. According to reports reached here that the Pakistan Kissan Mazdoor Tahreek-PKMT Youth Wing District Shikarpur took out a Rally from Mirani Park to Shikarpur Press Club Shikarpur in protest against the Massacre of innocent people in Palestine by Israel and ill attitude of Pakistan Cricket Board-PCB for having sponsorship from KFC of the Israeli Company. Speaking on the occasion Najeullah Jatui, Ali Gul Solangi, Zubair Ahmed and others said that the whole world is boycotting the products of Israel and our PCB is going to run the PSL-9 with the sponsorship of KFC the Israeli Company which is so shameful for all of us. The angry protesters while taking placards and banners in their hands raised slogans against Israel and opposed the act of PCB for PSL-9 with the support of KFC Company. The activist of Pakistan Kissan Mazdoor Tahreek-PKMT have demanded from Government of time to immediate withdrawal from the sponsorship of KFC Company for PSL-9 and impose Ban over any kind of advertising of KFC and other Israeli products in our Country Pakistan.



RAWALPINDI: Chairman World Peace Jirga Program Rayatullah Khan addressing press conference at Pindi press club in the city.

Jinnah House attack case: ATC extends interim bail of sisters of PTI founder

LAHORE (Online): Anti Terrorism Court (ATC) Lahore has extended interim bail of Aleema Khanum and Uzma Khanum sisters of PTI founder in Jinnah House attack case. The interim bail pleas of Aleema Khanum and Uzma Khanum came up for hearing before ATC Thursday in Jinnah House attack case. Aleema Khanum and Uzma Khanum appeared in the court during the hearing of the case. The court extended interim bail pleas of Aleema Khanum and Uzma Khanum till March 12.

KPHC gives licenses to Category-I hospitals

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Healthcare Commission (KPHC) here Thursday organized a ceremony to give licenses to Category I hospitals of the province. The ceremony was held in the Postgraduate Medical Institute Hayatabad Medical Complex. The hospitals that were given licenses include Alfalah Hospital Abbottabad, Bahadur Khan Hospital Bakhela, Jinnah Teaching Hospital Peshawar, Irfan General Hospital Peshawar, Sahab Orthopedic Hospital Peshawar, PIMS Hospital Peshawar, Abaseen General Hospital Peshawar, Kuwait Teaching Hospital Peshawar and Bacha Khan Medical Complex Swabi. Addressing the ceremony, Chief Executive Officer KPHC, Dr. Nadeem Akhtar said that licenses were given after examining the health delivery infrastructure of these hospitals adding that license is mandatory under KPHC Act 2015.

International News

Kremlin says Biden calling Putin a 'crazy SOB' debases the U.S.

MOSCOW (Internews): The Kremlin said on Thursday that Joe Biden had debased the United States by calling Russian President Vladimir Putin a "crazy SOB", casting the U.S. president's remark as part of a failed "Hollywood cowboy" act. The U.S. president made the "crazy SOB" remark as part of a sentence about threats to the world - including "that guy Putin and others", the risk of nuclear conflict and the existential threat to humanity from climate change. "The use of such language against the head of another state by the president of the United States is unlikely to infringe on our president, President Putin," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said. "But it debases those who use such vocabulary." Peskov said the remark was "probably some kind of attempt to look like a Hollywood cowboy. But honestly I don't think it's possible." "Has Mr Putin ever used one crude word to address you? This has never happened. Therefore, I think that such vocabulary debases America itself," Peskov said, adding that such language was a disgrace for the United States. Putin ally Dmitry Medvedev, who served as president from 2008-2012, said the existential threat to the world came from "useless old geezers, like Biden himself". Medvedev said Biden was "senile" and "ready to start a war with Russia". The war

in Ukraine, the death of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny and U.S. assertions that Russia plans to put a nuclear weapon in space have led to the biggest crisis in relations between Russia and the West since the Cold War. Some Russian and U.S. diplomats say they do not remember a time when relations between the world's two biggest nuclear powers were worse, including during the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. Biden said last week after prison officers announced Navalny's death in a Russian penal colony that it was "a consequence of something that Putin and his thugs did." Navalny had previously accused Putin of trying to kill him, an allegation the Kremlin denied.



GAZASTRIP: A man records the names of the deceased during the funeral of Palestinians killed in overnight Israeli strikes at a cemetery in Rafah.

As war with Russia enters third year, US aid to Ukraine hangs in the balance

WASHINGTON (Internews): Top Biden administration officials spent last weekend in Europe trying to soothe the jitters over the prospect of U.S. military aid to Ukraine ending, assuring counterparts from Paris, Berlin and Kyiv as the war enters its third year that Washington will somehow come through. Just two days later, the Republican Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, Mike Johnson, who has so far blocked passage of a bill that includes \$60 billion in new funding for Ukraine, posted a picture of himself smiling with former Republican President Donald Trump, who has opposed aid for Kyiv. The contrast underscored the challenges facing the Biden administration if Congress fails to approve more military assistance, which Ukraine desperately needs to hold off Russian invaders. So far, President Joe Biden's administration has ruled out discussing a plan B. Trump, frontrunner for the Republican presidential nomination and a long-standing critic of the NATO alliance.

Ship abandoned in Red Sea faces unknown fate, sources say

LONDON (INP): A cargo ship abandoned four days ago in the Gulf of Aden after it was hit by missiles fired by Yemen's Houthis is still floating despite taking in water, and could be towed to nearby Djibouti, industry sources said. Shipping risks have escalated due to repeated drone and missile strikes in the Red Sea and Bab al-Mandab Strait by the Iran-aligned Houthis since November. U.S. and British forces have responded with several strikes on Houthi facilities but have so far failed to halt the attacks.

Israeli continues air strikes in Gaza, China urged UNSC for ceasefire

GAZA (Online): Nineteen Palestinians were martyred and several injured in unabated Israeli air strikes on refugee camps in Gaza during the last twenty four hours. According to Wafa news agency, Israeli army continued bombardments on Nuseirat refugee camp and the Zeitoun neighborhood. In the Nuseirat camp in central Gaza, Israeli air strikes on the home of the al-Daalis family martyred 17 people and wounded dozens of others. In Zeitoun, local journalist Ihab Nasrallah and his wife were martyred. Their three children were also badly burned in the attack. Britain and Jordan have air-dropped four tons of aid including medicines, fuel and food at a hospital in northern Gaza. Britain's Foreign Office said the UK-funded aid was delivered by the Jordanian Air Force. British Foreign Secretary David Cameron said in a statement that thousands of patients will benefit and the fuel will enable this vital hospital to continue its life-saving work. China has urged the UN Security Council to push for ceasefire in Gaza. A Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said during a regular briefing in Beijing that protracted Palestinian-Israeli conflict has resulted in a devastating humanitarian situation in besieged enclave. She said that China will continue to work with the rest of the international community to push the Council to take further actions that are meaningful for de-escalation.



Farmers riding tractors arrive in front of Madrid's Puerta de Alcalá square during a protest against the European Union's agricultural policy.

UK Parliament in turmoil after a debate over a Gaza cease-fire raised fears for lawmakers' safety

Monitoring Desk
LONDON: The chaotic debate over a cease-fire in Gaza reverberated through Britain's Parliament on Thursday as the speaker of the House of Commons faced calls to resign, and lawmakers said they feared for their safety amid pressure from all sides of the issue. After more than six hours of sometimes heated debate on Wednesday, both the governing Conservative Party and the Scottish Na-

Fresh aggression: US, UK launch five strikes on Yemen's Hudaydah

SANA'A (Online): The United States and Britain have conducted fresh aerial assaults on Yemen's strategic western province of Hudaydah. The al-Masirah television network reported three airstrikes on Ras Issa area in Hudaydah's a-Salif district late on Wednesday. Earlier in the day, it added, four similar air raids also targeted al-Jabana and al-Arj areas in Hudaydah. Meanwhile, the US Central Command (CENTCOM) said in a statement that its forces had carried out four strikes on areas in Yemen, targeting "seven mobile anti-ship cruise missiles and one anti-ship ballistic missile launcher" in the act of aggression. It claimed that the targets "presented an imminent threat to merchant vessels and to the US Navy ships in the region." CENTCOM also said that its forces had shot down a "one-way attack unmanned aircraft system."

Iran says Israel continues to violate Palestinians' right to self-determination

UNITED NATION (Internews): The International Court of Justice, the UN's top court, on Thursday continued its hearing from dozens of states and three international organizations who question the legality of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories. Representatives from countries including China, Iran, Iraq, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon and Libya were expected to deliver their positions during the third day of the hearing at the ICJ, also known as the World Court. Speakers from the UAE, Egypt and Saudi Arabia have already demanded Israel end its occupation of the Palestinian territories, with the Kingdom's envoy to the Netherlands Ziad Al-Atiyah stating Israel's continued actions were legally indefensible. Safadi closed his remarks, saying "Palestinians are being killed in the hundreds every day in Gaza."

South Africa's parliament impeaches top judge

Monitoring Desk
WESTERN CAPE: In a historic move, South Africa's parliament has impeached one of the country's top judges for misconduct. An investigation found that John Hlophe, the leading judge in Western Cape province, tried to influence justices at the country's top court in a case relating to former President Jacob Zuma.

Turkey calls for Gaza ceasefire, two-state solution at G20 meeting

ANKARA (Internews): Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan called on the international community to take a more active role towards an urgent ceasefire in Gaza and a two-state solution to the conflict during talks at the G20 meeting in Brazil, a Turkish diplomatic source said. Turkey, which has harshly criticised Israel for its attacks on Gaza and backed measures to have it tried for genocide at the World Court, has repeatedly called for a ceasefire. Unlike its Western allies and some Gulf nations, NATO member Turkey does not view Hamas, the Palestinian militant group which runs Gaza and on Oct. 7 carried out an attack inside Israel that prompted the Israeli campaign, as a terrorist organisation. Fidan told a G20 foreign ministers meeting in Rio de Janeiro on Wednesday that the "savagery" in Gaza must be stopped, and discussed steps to achieve an urgent ceasefire and get more aid into the enclave during talks with counterparts from the United States, Germany, and Egypt, the source said. "Steps that can be taken to achieve a full ceasefire as soon as possible were discussed," during talks between Fidan and U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, the source said, adding Fidan also discussed "concrete steps" to stop the fighting with German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock. "The fact that a decision on a ceasefire did not come out of the U.N. Security Council once again, has shown that reform is a must," Fidan told a session at the G20 meeting, according to one of his aides, referring to a third U.S. veto on a ceasefire call at the 15-member body. Ankara says the U.N. Security Council must be reformed to be more inclusive and representative of the world.



LAHORE: President Dr. Arif Alvi addressing the recognition ceremony of officers of the Federal Insurance Ombudsman and representatives of insurance companies, at Governor House.

Solangi calls for promoting trend of research among people

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Thursday called to promote the trend of research among people.

Delivering his speech at the launching ceremony of the Display Center of the Directorate of Electronic Media and Publication at Pak-China Friendship Center, he said the tendency of reading books and writing was decreasing in the digital era.

He said that the Directorate of Electronic Media and Publications (DEMP) had worked hard to promote the trend of reading and writing among the people.

"This organization has done a great job in a short time with hard work", Murtaza Solangi said while appreciating the performance of the DEMP.

The minister said that the quality of books and periodicals at the display center was high from both the content and printing point of view.

He congratulated the officers and staff of the DEMP on the inauguration of its first Display Center at Pak-China Friendship Center and hoped that as planned it will open more display centers at the mausoleum of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Lok Virsa and Islamabad Monument at Shakar Pariar. Earlier Executive Director General DEMP Imrana Wazir briefed the minister about the vision behind the creation of DEMP and its mission.

Executive Director General Information Service Academy Arshad Munir was also present on the occasion.

Ashrafi denounces misuse of apex court ruling ambiguities

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister's Special Representative for Religious Affairs, Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi, and Pakistani Diaspora in the Middle East and Islamic Countries, Thursday denounced attempts by certain individuals to exploit ambiguities arising from the Supreme Court verdict in the Mubarak Ahmed Sani case for political purposes.

Addressing to the media persons with the Caretaker Minister for Information, Broadcasting, and Parliamentary Affairs, he asked the detractors of verdict to use legal avenues to address issues, rather than opting for street protests or violence.

This is particularly crucial, considering the possibility of allowing the use of banned material in Pakistan.

Urging the Punjab government to submit a review petition to the Supreme Court of Pakistan, he emphasized the fundamental belief in the finality of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as the last Prophet of Allah, which was an integral part of the Muslim faith.

According to the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, this matter is settled. Every Muslim is entrusted with safeguarding the sanctity of the finality of the holy Prophet (PBUH).

He appealed to everyone to foster an environment that ensures the stability and peace of the country remains undisturbed.

The religious freedom of every Pakistani, including non-Muslims, is enshrined in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Similarly, the rights of non-Muslim Pakistanis are safeguarded in the constitution. It is essential to ensure the protection of their rights as well.

Praising the efforts of law enforcement agencies for ensuring peaceful elections nationwide, he called upon YouTubers and social media activists to refrain from causing disturbances, emphasizing that Pakistani Muslims unanimously uphold the sanctity of the finality of the Holy Prophet.

In every city, hundreds of Huffaz are present, demonstrating their love for their country.

Fast decision-making essential for national development: Alvi

Independent Report
LAHORE: President Dr Arif Alvi has underscored the need for taking fast decisions to put the country on the path of progress and prosperity. He said that slow decision-making has hindered the process of national development. He expressed these views while addressing the recognition ceremony of officers of the Federal Insurance Ombudsman (FIO) Secretariat, CEOs and MDs of Insurance Companies, organized by the Federal Insurance Ombudsman, at Governor House, Lahore, today.

The President said that the institutions of Ombudsmen had played a commendable role in providing speedy and free-of-cost justice to the aggrieved complainants against the administrative injustices of government organizations.

He congratulated FIO on its outstanding performance by providing monetary relief to the tune of over Rs. 5 billion to the aggrieved policyholders.

The President also remarked that Pakistan has tremendous potential to grow but it required honesty and fast decision making to put it on the right track. He stressed that honesty must be the foundation stone with a key focus on integrity and fair play. He stated that institutions of the country were required to do justice. The President added that he firmly believed in merit, saying that he had never asked for any favour for anyone during his tenure as the President. He expressed the hope that Pakistan would turn around as it was blessed with enormous potential and talented youth.

Federal Insurance Ombudsman, Dr Muhammad Khawar Jameel, highlighted the role of FIO in providing justice to the policyholders against the maladministration of insurance companies. He said that under the guidance of President Dr Arif Alvi, FIO had significantly improved its performance and processed 6000 complaints last year. The President also distributed recognition shields among the representatives of insurance companies and officials of FIO for their valuable services in the provision of timely relief to insurance policyholders against the maladministration of insurance companies.

Later, a delegation of Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry also called on the President and discussed the economic situation.



ISLAMABAD: Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori meeting with Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar, MQM leaders Dr. Farooq Sattar and Mustafa Kamal were also present in the meeting.

PHC orders to remove name of Asad Qaisar from ECL forthwith

PESHAWAR (Online): Peshawar High Court (PHC) has ordered to remove name of Asad Qaisar former speaker National Assembly (NA) from ECL (Exit Control List).

The petition filed against putting name of Asad Qaisar in ECL came up for hearing before two members bench of PHC comprising Justice Shakil Ahmad and Justice Sahibzada Asad Ullah Thursday.

The court declared June 23, 2023 order of putting name of Asad Qaisar in ECL unconstitutional.

Muazzam But advocate counsel for Asad Qaisar said Asad Qaisar is former speaker NA and he was going to Saudi Arabia for performance of Umrah but he was stopped.

Justice Sahibzada Asad Ullah questioned his name was included in ECL when.

The counsel told the court his name was put in ECL on June 23.

Justice Shakil Ahmad questioned has been elected member of national assembly now.

The counsel for petitioner said yes he is member of assembly and senior politician.

AIMS to hold Congenital Heart Disease Health Camp in Quetta

QUETTA (APP): Aria Institute of Medical Sciences (AIMS) Quetta will hold a Congenital Heart Disease Health Camp and CME in its office located on Spini Road on Saturday, February 24. A press statement issued here on Thursday said experienced pediatric cardiologists from various reputable centres in the country will be conducting a CHD screening camp followed by CM-a public health approach to CHD. The Congenital Heart Disease Health Camp will start at 9:00 am and will continue till 2:00 pm. The heart patients mainly the parents of kids patients have been asked to visit the camp to be established at Aria Institute of Medical Sciences Spini Road Quetta.

Independent Report
QUETTA: The Governor Balochistan, Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar has highly appreciated the invaluable services of outgoing Vice Chancellor of Balochistan University, Professor Dr. Shafiqur Rehman for higher education in the province.

The Governor said that teacher holds high status in any society and the portfolio of Vice Chancellor is an honour too.

He was speaking to the Vice Chancellor Balochistan University, Professor Dr. Shafiqur Rehman who paid farewell call-on to him here at the Governor's House on Thursday. The Governor expressed best wishes for more success of Professor Dr. Shafiqur Rehman.

PTA strengthens measures against illegal SIM issuance

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) Zonal Office in Lahore, in close collaboration with the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Cyber Crime Circle, conducted a successful raid against the franchise of a mobile phone company located in Raiwind.

The franchisee was found to be involved in the illegal issuance of SIMs, said a news release on Thursday. During the raid, 256 active SIMs were discovered. The FIA team confiscated these active SIMs along with 16 BVS devices as evidence.

One person was also apprehended on the premises by the FIA team. FIA is currently investigating the matter. PTA had filed the complaint with FIA earlier based on information regarding the illegal issuance of SIMs by the sale channel. The recent raid is part of PTA's ongoing efforts to prevent the circumvention of the Multi-Finger Biometric Verification System (MBVS).

15th Pediatric Neurology Conference due to be inaugurated today

Independent Report
QUETTA: The 15th Pediatric Neurology Conference is scheduled to be inaugurated today (Friday) here at a local hotel.

According to an official handout issued here on Thursday, the Governor Balochistan, Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar would formally the Pediatric Neurology Conference while the caretaker Provincial Minister for Health, Dr. Amir Muhammad Khan Jogezi would be the chief guest. The Secretary Health Abdullah Khan would participate as the guest of honour at the Conference which would continue for three days.

The renowned pediatricians from Pakistan and abroad would be participating in the Conference being organized by the Pediatric Association Balochistan chapter.

The Chairman organizing committee and Chief Executive Officer Children Hospital, Professor Dr. Habibullah Babar and Co-Chairperson and President Pakistan Pediatric Association, Dr. Attaullah Bizenjo termed the Pediatric Conference as an important development for mental health of the people especially of children.

This is first conference of its kind in the history of province from which the pediatricians and post-graduate doctors would benefit from it.

The participants would present their thesis in the conference, which would go a long way in creating innovation and technology in treatment of children in the province.



Pakistan Ambassador to the US, Masood Khan meeting with delegation of USAID led by Zeinah Salahi, Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator. Other members of the delegation included Peter Young, Asia Bureau Director for South & Central Asia, Adeline Joshua and Brittany Brown.

FAO holds stakeholders consultation workshop on fisheries policy

Independent Report
QUETTA: Two-day stakeholders consultation workshop was held under the auspices of Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) on the fisheries policy and laws in Karachi.

The workshop was organized on the theme of one part of technical assistance to the provincial government Gwadar Lasbela Economic Support Project-II in collaboration with International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

The workshop was aimed at promoting cooperation and getting wisdom for preparations of the fisheries policy framework and formation of legal appliances.

The federal and provincial government high ups as well as governmental organizations, experts, representatives of fishermen community and Aquaculture value chain actively participated in the workshop.

Prominent among them were the Naib Admiral (R) Iftikhar Ahmed, Imran Gichki, Lal Jan Jaffar, Dr Muhammad Ali Mastoi, Director General Sindh Maritime Fisheries besides others.

The participants stressed the need to promote policy of fisheries sector.

Jan Achakzai, Zubair Jamali grieved over death of Naji

Independent Report
QUETTA: The caretaker Provincial Minister for Information, Jan Achakzai and Minister for Home, Mir Zubair Jamali have expressed deep grief and sorrow over death of the senior journalist, Nazir Naji.

In their separate condolence statements issued here on Thursday, the caretaker Ministers expressed sympathy and condolence with the bereaved family over his death.

They also paid rich tributes to late Nazir Naji saying that his services in the field of journalism would be remembered for long.

He prayed that may Allah Almighty rest the departed soul into Its eternal peace and give enough patience and strength to the bereaved family to bear the loss of his death.

Secretary health for stern action against illegal labs in Balochistan

QUETTA (APP): Secretary Health Balochistan Abdullah Khan on Thursday directed the Healthcare Commission and Balochistan Clinical Laboratory Regulatory Authority to take stern action against the unregistered and illegal laboratories working across the province. Declaring the registration of laboratories with Balochistan Clinical Laboratory Regulatory Authority as mandatory, the secretary said laboratories and diagnostic centres must follow the procedure laid down by the BCLRA for sanitation and waste management. The secretary of health further directed the owners of the laboratories to get their facilities registered with the BCLRA after meeting the diagnostic and pathological test standards.

Telecom work completes, navigational work in offing at new Gwadar Int'l Airport

GWADAR (INP): In a significant development, high-tech telecommunication work has completed in connection with ongoing gradual development of New Gwadar International Airport (NGIA).

NGIA's state of art telecommunication paraphernalia involves telecom networks and systems that use various technologies and protocols to facilitate the transmission of voice, data, and audio-video signals between devices, including smartphones, computers, and other communication devices.

Talking to Gwadar Pro GPA official said that NGIA's telecommunication work deals with telecom networks which are made up of various components, including transmission systems, switching systems, and network management systems.

These components work together to ensure that communication signals are transmitted and delivered efficiently and securely, he added.

Meanwhile Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) official said that next step is to install and apply "modern navigational system" at New Gwadar International Airport.

"Navigational system constitutes mechanism of interplay of radio- electric and visual aids. Visual aids will encompass signaling devices, guidance signs besides signs painted over the pavement (runway, taxiways, aprons) and lights (runway, taxiway)", he added. "Guidance signs at NGIA will provide moving directions and information to aircraft to be operating in the airport, but also to airport vehicles.

Navigational system also deals with Location signs (yellow colored on black background) that identifies the runway or taxiway in which the aircraft is about to enter," he elucidated.

When asked, he said that fiber optic cables have already been laid from Gwadar port and Passni to NGIA. New Gwadar International Airport (NGIA), an iconic project of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), cost Rs. 60.208 billion.

With the joint effort of professional teams of China Communications Construction Company (CCCC) and Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) Pakistan, fencing around the New Gwadar International Airport has already been completed.

PPP ready to cooperate in federal govt with no power sharing: Kaira

ISLAMABAD (APP): Leader of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), Qamar Zaman Kaira on Thursday affirmed PPP's willingness to be part of the federal government without seeking a share in power.

Talking to a private news channel, he highlighted PPP's commitment to national interests and willingness to offer cooperation to the treasury benches, even without holding ministerial positions.

Although coalition governments are typically perceived as weak, he said adding that they can also be strength if managed effectively with unity.

Answering a query, he said that even in these difficult situations, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) attitude towards reconciliation and progress has been undemocratic.

Furthermore, responding to the news about his candidacy for the Governorship of Punjab, Qaira stated that the decision rests with the party leadership.

ECP asks multi-seat winners to vacate extra seats ahead of oath

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) Thursday urged winning candidates who secured more than one seat in the February 8 polls to vacate one seat before taking the oath.

The commission urged the candidates to submit applications for relinquishing seats to either the office of the Chief Election Commissioner at the Election Commission of Pakistan Secretariat in Islamabad or the Provincial Election Commissioner in Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Balochistan. Alternatively, in accordance with Article 223(2), if no action is taken within 30 days, all seats, except the one for which the candidate is ultimately declared successful, will be deemed vacant.

The candidates will have to retain only one seat they want before they are sworn in as legislators.



ISLAMABAD: Mr. Murtaza Solangi, Caretaker Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting inaugurated a 'Display Centre' at Directorate of Electronic media and Publications (DEMP).

Gohar, Umar Ayub uphold independent status rather to join SIC

ISLAMABAD (INP): Two independent members of the National Assembly elected on a Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) ticket, Barrister Gohar and Umar Ayub, have opted to remain unaffiliated with any political party despite the deadline for such decisions having passed.

According to PTI sources, 86 independent candidates have joined the Sunni Ittehad Council and 8 have aligned with the Muslim League-N. Gohar and Ayub have chosen to maintain their independent status. This decision is reportedly linked to their intentions to contest for Chairman and General Secretary positions in the upcoming PTI intra-party elections.

PTI has officially announced its intra-party election schedule, with polling set for March 3rd. The nomination process will commence on February 23rd and 24th, with submissions accepted both physically and digitally through email. Scrutiny of nominations will occur on February 25th, followed by decisions on the same by February 27th.

Recent elections mockery of nation, Rs50 bln wasted on fraudulent exercise: Siraj

LAHORE (INP): Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), Sirajul Haq terming the recent general elections as mockery of nation has said that Rs50 billion of national exchequer were wasted over a fraudulent exercise.

Addressing a press conference following his participation in a JI Youth meeting at Mansoorah on Thursday, he criticized the re-emergence of two dynasties against the people's February 8 vote.

Sirajul Haq asserted that a government formed on a fraudulent mandate would not sustain itself, emphasizing the need for a fair investigation into electoral rigging through a judicial commission. He called for the resignation of the Election Commissioner to ensure an impartial investigation.

He highlighted the disillusionment of the youth, stating that their confidence has wavered due to the alleged election rigging, which he claimed turned the country's democracy into a laughingstock.



QUETTA: A group photo of participants of two-day Stakeholder Consultation Workshop on Balochistan Fisheries Policy and Legislation organized by FAO.