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SC dismisses plea against 2024 general elections

Three-member bench headed by CJP Isa imposes Rs500,000 fine on petitioner for skipping hearings and requesting withdrawal of plea; barred from adding 'brigadier' before his name

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Supreme Court of Pakistan on Wednesday dismissed a petition seeking to annul the February 8, 2024 general elections and imposed a fine worth Rs 500,000 on petitioner for non-appearance.

A three-member bench presided over by Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa and comprising Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar and Justice Musarrat Hilali, announced the verdict.

The order read, "The application for withdrawal of the petition is allowed and the case is dismissed as withdrawn with costs of five hundred thousand rupees which are directed to be paid equally to the Pakistan Bar Council and to the Supreme Court Bar Association within thirty days, failing which they be recovered from the petitioner as arrears of land revenue."

It said, "We trust that the government will be ensuring that the petitioner does not use the rank of a Brigadier or Ex or former Brigadier with his name."

The order said, "This petition has also consumed valuable court time, which is to be spent on deciding the cases of genuine litigants; not use the media for ulterior and nefarious purposes. The petitioner got prominent coverage and then the petition was abandoned and the petitioner left the country. Responsible media will undoubtedly want to disclose this order and the petitioner's conduct to redress the damage done."

It further stated, "The petitioner did not disclose the fact of being court martialled and mentions the rank which he held before

being court martialled. He misused the rank which he had previously held in the Army which he could not do so. The petitioner must have used his rank to attract publicity and to ensure that the contents of his petition are widely broadcast in the media and published in the newspapers. And after having achieved such purpose, the petitioner immediately bought a ticket (on February 13, 2024) to catch a flight out of the country.

The usual practice is to buy a return ticket, but the petitioner bought a one-way ticket. He also did not disclose when he will return to Pakistan.

The petitioner also did not disclose CUO 18/244 the reason for his sudden departure from Pakistan nor why he had to go to Bahrain.

He said it would also further strengthen the ties with the U.S.

"This joint venture is a manifestation of the fact that Pakistan has the most



ISLAMABAD: A delegation of Miracle Salt Collective Inc called on Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.

Mineral sector achieving new development goals under SIFC: PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Wednesday said Pakistan's mineral sector, valued in billions of dollars, was achieving new heights of development under Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC).

He was talking to a delegation of Miracle Salt Collective Inc which called on Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar here.

During the meeting, the prime minister hoped that salt export from the country would increase after the signing of joint venture between Pakistan Mineral Development Cooperation (PMDC) and Miracle Salt.

He said it would also further strengthen the ties with the U.S.

"This joint venture is a manifestation of the fact that Pakistan has the most

suitable destination for foreign investment," he added.

He said Himalayan pink salt was the identity of Pakistan in all over the world and its export in international markets would be a welcome sign.

He said during its short tenure, the caretaker government took several steps to promote foreign direct investment and to facilitate the businesses in the country which yielded positive results.

The delegation of Miracle Salt thanked the government, especially the Special Investment Facilitation Council for its cooperation with the company.

He told the prime minister that after the formation of the company in Pakistan, it would be listed on major stock exchanges around the world, which would benefit the government of Pakistan and local investors.

PPP optimistic about Zardari's nomination for president

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan People's Party Central Secretary Information Chaudhry Munawar Anjum expressed optimism regarding the nomination of Asif Ali Zardari for the presidency, highlighting its potential positive impact on the national economy. In a statement issued here on Wednesday, Anjum congratulated Zardari on his nomination and asserted that his presidency could usher in a favorable economic transformation akin to his previous endeavors.

He further emphasized Zardari's capability to address political and social challenges, bolster democracy and parliamentary efficacy, and steer the coalition government with sagacity. He underscored Zardari's potential to facilitate the resolution of public concerns and enact progressive legislation.

Prices of life-saving drugs hiked

ISLAMABAD (INP): In a major blow to the inflation-hit people of the country, the caretaker federal government on Wednesday increased the prices of 146 life-saving medicines.

The decision, according to a notification issued today, primarily targets essential medications crucial for treating conditions such as cancer, vaccines, and antibiotics. The prices of life-saving medicines crucial for treating heart disease diabetes, physical pain, epilepsy and injections were also increased.

It is pertinent to mention that the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) had sent a summary to the caretaker government to increase the prices of 262 drugs. However, the government opted to implement adjustments exclusively for 146 medicines vital for saving lives.

Coalition govt Pakistan's internal matter: US

WASHINGTON (INP): Reacting to a new political situation in the country following announcement of a coalition government by PPP, PML-N and their allies, the United States Tuesday said efforts for the formation of an allied government was an internal matter of Pakistan. Expressing his thoughts, US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said the new development in the form an alliance was the internal matter of Pakistan and the US did not want to interfere in these political affairs.

He said, "We want to see a transparent investigation of rigging and fraud according to Pakistani law."

Earlier, the high-level committee of ECP recorded statements of District Returning Officers (DROs) and Returning Officers (ROs) of concerned constituencies. The sources privy to the development said that Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) also submitted the transcript of former Rawalpindi Commissioner Liaquat Ali Chatha's presser, accusing ECP and Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa of involvement in the 'election rigging'.

Every citizen needs to play role in improving environment by planting a tree: CM Baqar

KARACHI (INP): Sindh Caretaker Chief Minister Maqbool Baqar has urged every citizen to play role in improving the environment by planting a tree.

He was speaking after inaugurating the Urban Forest scheme by planting saplings in Karachi on Wednesday.

Maqbool Baqar said that it was the national and

moral responsibility of every citizen to participate in the Urban Forest scheme.

He said that the planting of trees will improve the environment not only in Sindh but entire country.

The Caretaker Chief Minister was informed on the occasion that the Sindh Forest Department had planted 147400 plants in Karachi.

Maryam Nawaz unveils plans for Punjab as Pak first woman CM

LAHORE (INP): PML-N senior vice-president Maryam Nawaz, who is set to become Pakistan's first-ever woman chief minister (CM), vowed to set 'new records' in Punjab while fulfilling her duties as the provincial chief executive.



Maryam Nawaz, the political scion of PML-N supreme leader Nawaz Sharif, was nominated as the party's candidate for the coveted position of the chief minister of the country's most populous province, Punjab.

Addressing PML-N's first parliamentary party meeting in Punjab, the CM nominee said there is a "clear majority" of the party in the provincial assembly as she congratulated the MPs on their successful election and praised the inclusion of young MPs among the lot.

From today, Maryam said, a "new era" will begin for Punjab, as per the traditions and examples laid down by Nawaz Sharif and party president Shehbaz Sharif during their terms as chief ministers. "We will set new records of development in the province," she added.

New NFC Award with enhanced share to reinvigorate provinces' economy: Khuhro

Nisar Khuhro congratulates Asif Zardari on nomination for slot of President of Pakistan

LARKANA (APP): Pakistan Peoples Party leader Nisar Ahmed Khuhro on Wednesday said the new NFC Award to be announced by the new government, would eventually reinvigorate the economy of provinces.

He expressed the optimism that PPP Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari, who was expected to assume the office of President, would pave the way for the new National Finance Commission (NFC) Award with enhanced share of provinces, he said while talking to media-persons.

The NFC Award was

among the provisions of the 18th Constitutional Amendment related to the provincial autonomy, which had not been fully implemented as yet, he added.

Congratulating Asif Zardari on his nomination for the office of President, Nisar Khuhro said it was the PPP which could help the country come out of the economic and political crises. He said the new governments to be formed as the result of February 8 elections, would complete their 5-year constitutional term.

Khuhro said strong provinces were the hallmark of a strong federation.

MQM-P assures cooperation to strengthen Pakistan's democracy

KARACHI (INP): The Muttahida Quami Movement - Pakistan (MQM-P) leadership expressed support and assured cooperation with Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) to stabilize democracy in Pakistan.

The leaders from the PML-N and the MQM-P held a meeting related to the formation of the government in the centre.

The joint meeting was attended by prominent figures such as Ishaq Dar, Ayaz Sadiq, Azam Nazeer Tarar, and Malik Ahmad Khan from the PML-N, while representatives from the MQM-P, including Kamran Tessori, Farooq

Sattar, and Mustafa Kamal.

The MQM-P leadership expressed full support and assured cooperation at all levels to PML-N for the strengthening of democracy in the country, meanwhile, no specific ministerial portfolios were formally requested by the MQM-P or proposed by the Nawaz-led party. However, the meeting members will soon provide the complete details brief of the meeting to Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui and the Rabita committee.

During the meeting, the MQM-P delegation urged the importance of maintaining Governor Sindh Kamran Tesori in his current role.



ROMANIA: Vice Chief of the Naval Staff, Vice Admiral Ovais Ahmed Bilgrami in group photo with Pakistan Navy and M/S DAMEN Shipyard Galati officials during launching Ceremony of state-of-the-art 4th Offshore Patrol Vessel, PNS YAMAMA (Design) being built for Pakistan Navy was held at M/S DAMEN Shipyard Galati, Romania.

PTI demands 'constitutional right' to form govts in Centre, Punjab and KP

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on Wednesday demanded its "constitutional right" to form governments in Centre, Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) due to public mandate given to Imran Khan-led party in general elections 2024. Talking to Twitter, PTI leader Barrister Gohar Ali Khan said that the country's future was linked with "complete supremacy" of the Constitution.

"The country always engulfed in crisis whenever it derailed from Constitution," he added.

He pointed out Imran Khan-led party emerged single largest party in the elections despite the challenges it faced, which included the "snatching" of iconic symbol bat. "We weren't allowed to conduct an election campaign," he regretted.

"Daylight robbery of public mandate is a desecra-

tion of votes," he said, stressing the need for political stability and put Pakistan on the path of development. Barrister Gohar also demanded the election commission issue election results in sync with Form-45. "The seats that are robbed should be returned to PTI," he said, adding that his party would fulfill the responsibility of safeguarding the public mandate.

The presser came after PML-N and PPP reached an agreement on forming a government in Centre as both parties have agreed on a "power-sharing formula" following days of negotiations. "PPP and PML-N have achieved the required number and [now] we are in a position to form the government in Centre," PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari said while addressing a joint press conference at Zardari House in Islamabad.



KARACHI: Inspector General Police Sindh Rifaat Mukhtar Raja presides over the high level meeting.

SHC orders govt to restore social media platforms across Pak

KARACHI (INP): The Sindh High Court (SHC) on Wednesday directed the federal government and the Pakistan Telecommunications Authority (PTA) to restore services of social media platforms including X, formerly known as Twitter, across Pakistan.

The order was issued by SHC bench, headed by SHC Chief Justice Aqeel Ahmed Abbasi, on a petition against the "unconstitutional" internet outages across the country in recent days.

The court also summoned report from PTA for suspending internet

services on election day and issued notice to federal government. Social media platform X, formerly known as Twitter, continues to remain inaccessible to users in Pakistan after internet watchdog groups started to report outages on Saturday.

NetBlocks, an organisation that monitors accessibility issues on the internet, on February 17 confirmed that a "national-scale disruption" has hit X in Pakistan.

in the aftermath of widespread protests in the country triggered by the alleged vote rigging in general elections.

MQM demands governorship of Sindh

ISLAMABAD (Online): MQM Pakistan has demanded governorship of Sindh from PML-N.

MQM sources said the alliance cannot be forged without any post with a party having 17 seats in national assembly. First of all local bodies system and constitutional amendments will be discussed and then the decision will be made to join cabinet. It is pertinent to mention here that as per sources MQM and PML-N will hold talks today in Islamabad.

MQM Pakistan will stress for the post of governor Sindh in the meeting.

Solangi grieved over demise of senior journalist Nazir Naji

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Wednesday expressed deep grief and sorrow over the demise of renowned journalist, editor and columnist Nazir Naji.

The minister, in a condolence message, prayed to the Almighty to rest the departed soul in eternal peace and grant courage to the bereaved family to bear the loss with equanimity.

Paying tribute to the late senior journalist, the minister said Nazir Naji had dedicated his whole life to journalism and service of the country.

Senior journalist Nazir Naji passes away

LAHORE (APP): Senior journalist and columnist Nazir Naji passed away here on Wednesday after a prolonged illness.

According to sources, the 81-year-old breathed his last at a private hospital in Lahore where he was admitted. He had remained associated with different mainstream media groups for the last several decades.

Naji served 27 years for Urdu publication Daily Jang as senior columnist. He was formerly chairman of the Pakistan Academy of Letters. The veteran journalist has been honored by Hilal-i-Imtiaz for his services.



KARACHI: Caretaker Provincial Minister for Information Muhammad Ahmed Shah and Caretaker Provincial Minister for Cultural Dr. Junaid Ali Shah addressing a joint press conference.

Meeting of joint Parl party of coalition government to take place next week

ISLAMABAD (Online): All newly elected members of coalition government have been directed to reach Islamabad next week.

The joint parliamentary party meeting of coalition government will take place next week. The allied parties will nominate Shehbaz Sharif as joint candidate for premiership.

The allied parties will go for show of power in parliamentary party. The National Assembly (NA) session will be summoned after nomination. As per sources under clause 2 of article 224 of the constitution the national assembly session is must after 21 days of election.

After oath taking of members of assembly of election of speaker and deputy speaker will be held under article 53 of the constitution.

Sources said consultations have been started in PML-N for nominating the candidate for the post of speaker. Former speaker Ayyaz Sadiq once again is strong candidate for speakership. Khawaja Asif and Tanvir Ul Hassan are also in the race for speakership post. PML-N supreme Nawaz Sharif will make final decision. The post of deputy speaker will go to PPP. Party leadership is considering the name for this post.

ECP completes probe into alleged rigging in election 2024

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) high-level committee completed probe into allegations of the former Rawalpindi Commissioner regarding the alleged rigging in general elections 2024, sources said on Wednesday. According to sources, the committee's last meeting will be held in Islamabad where the report on Commissioner Rawalpindi Liaquat Ali Chatha's election rigging allegations will be finalized and the report will be submitted to the ECP.

Sources further said that the recorded statements of DROs and RO of 13 National Assembly constituencies and 26 provincial assembly constituencies of Rawalpindi division will be included in the committee report.

Earlier, the high-level committee of ECP recorded statements of District Returning Officers (DROs) and Returning Officers (ROs) of concerned constituencies. The sources privy to the development said that Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) also submitted the transcript of former Rawalpindi Commissioner Liaquat Ali Chatha's presser, accusing ECP and Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa of involvement in the 'election rigging'.



KARACHI: Jamal-e-Islami (JI) Karachi Chief, Hafiz Naeem-ur-Rehman exchanges views with Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Sindh President, Haleem Adil Sheikh during meeting held at Idara-e-Noor-ul-Haq in Karachi.

Daily Voice of Masses Independent

Silencing the public

The stench of desperation hangs heavy over Islamabad. The powerful have had a lot of trouble lately keeping the public under their thumb. Short of ideas, they have decided to block Pakistan's access to X (formerly Twitter), one of the most popular digital mediums for self-expression.

The authorities are seemingly so afraid of the public setting the narrative agenda that they have decided to simply pull the plug. Such repressive actions are a shame in this day and age: millions of opinion-makers and citizens around the world converge virtually each day on the platform to exchange important news and views — why can Pakistanis not be among them?

There has been no word from the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority or the IT ministry, which would previously issue at least a mealy-mouthed explanation when denying the citizenry access to mainstream internet services. Even they have not figured out how to justify what is being done.

One marvels at the hypocrisy of some of our caretaker ministers, who have ostensibly been using VPN services to continue posting on X even as their own people are being denied the same privilege.

The IT minister's behaviour, in particular, is galling: during this latest blockage, he has celebrated the 'take-off' of Pakistan's IT industry and achieving 13 items on his agenda, while also announcing two new schemes for the industry — all while not saying a word about why Pakistani users suddenly cannot access one of the world's most popular social mediums.

It seems he is more interested in self-promotion while the state is busy broadcasting its abject disregard for the digital economy. He should be asked: why would any entrepreneur bother investing in Pakistan, especially when the country's internet access and telecom policies always seem subject to change without notice?

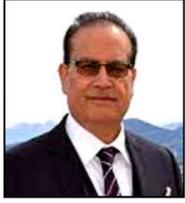
As for the PTA, the less said the better. In suspending mobile phone services without any prior warning throughout election day and well after, it had already wreaked immeasurable damage on Pakistan this month.

Many citizens were left unable to exercise their constitutional rights due to the communications blackout, which also contributed towards worsening the political instability by providing a convenient cover for the alleged irregularities that occurred later that night. And yet, the authority refuses to learn. Acting as if it is unaccountable, it is now curtailing citizens' digital rights without even bothering to come up with a justification. It seems that the PTA has quietly become just another tool in the hands of our habitually oppressive state, to be used against the people of Pakistan whenever they start inconveniencing the powers that be. It is important that it be checked immediately. With precedents available thanks to prior court rulings on internet bans, it should be sued for its actions.

How to end the scourge of missing persons?

By Qamar Bashir

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



The Islamabad High Court's response to the disappearance of 12 Baloch students from Islamabad reveals a profound frustration with the violation of their fundamental human rights, as guaranteed by the constitution and the law. The court expressed dismay over the failure to recover the missing individuals even after two years, attributing responsibility to state institutions. In a stern warning, the judge highlighted the paradox of citizens needing protection from their own security agencies, which are mandated to ensure their safety. The court's summons of high-ranking officials, including the caretaker prime minister, reflects a commitment to accountability, with the judge cautioning that future disappearances could lead to legal action against top government officials. The judge's assertion that if those in power are unable to control the institutions under their purview, they should resign underscores the gravity of the situation and the need for effective governance and oversight.

The statements made by the High Court judge during the hearing reveal a deep-seated frustration with the issue of enforced disappearances. The judge's remarks underscore the failure of state institutions, including security agencies, to safeguard citizens as mandated by the constitution and the law. The formation of the committee comprising heads of top spy agencies and summoning the caretaker

prime minister, the court aims to ensure a thorough investigation and provide answers regarding the missing persons, regardless of political considerations. The judge's warning to state officials about potential consequences if such issues persist reflects the urgency and seriousness with which the court views the matter, emphasizing accountability and the judiciary's role in upholding human rights and the rule of law.

Ironically, the interim prime minister's inability to enforce authority on the powerful spy agency likely stems from a combination of factors, including institutional resistance, complex power dynamics, and political constraints. The spy agency operates with a degree of autonomy and influence that may make it challenging for the prime minister to compel them to release the missing persons. Additionally, the sensitive nature of intelligence operations and national security concerns may further limit the prime minister's ability to intervene directly.

The issue of missing persons has drawn condemnation from various quarters, both domestically and internationally, which are tarnishing the soft image of the country. International bodies such as the United Nations, Human Rights Watch, and Amnesty International have extensively documented and criticized the human rights abuses in Balochistan, including enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings. Additionally, the European Parliament has passed resolutions urging the Pakistani government to address these issues.

Within Pakistan, organizations like the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) and Baloch political leaders have been vocal in condemning the actions of security forces in

Balochistan and advocating for justice for the victims.

Despite these condemnations, the situation in Balochistan remains dire, with ongoing human rights abuses continuing to affect the lives of the Baloch people. Pakistani civil society organizations have also joined the chorus of voices calling for an end to these violations and for accountability for those responsible. International leaders and activists have echoed these sentiments, urging the Pakistani government to respect human rights and address the grievances of the Baloch people and restore their fundamental human rights such as the right to liberty, fair trial, and protection from enforced disappearance, as guaranteed by the UN Charter and the Constitution of Pakistan.

Enforced disappearances, a global phenomenon, extend far beyond the borders of Pakistan. Numerous countries grapple with this issue, where individuals vanish without explanation, often with impunity.

Mexico contends with tens of thousands of missing persons, primarily linked to organized crime and drug cartels, while Syria's civil war has led to widespread disappearances attributed to government forces and armed factions.

Colombia's history of enforced disappearances, though improving, remains a concern, particularly regarding paramilitary groups and drug trafficking. Similarly, Sri Lanka's civil war aftermath includes ongoing cases, often involving state security forces.

Unlike the examples quoted above, established democracies distinguish themselves by their robust systems, where occurrences of missing persons are exceptionally rare. This is

attributed to optimized institutions with high levels of accountability, including law enforcement and intelligence agencies. Transparency is a cornerstone, ensuring adherence to constitutional and legal frameworks, thus resolving political intricacies. Non-state actors are brought within legal bounds, eradicating covert operations. Parliament, judiciary, and government operate independently, devoid of coercion or intimidation, and are subject to rigorous accountability measures for any lapses in fulfilling their mandates. This unwavering commitment ensures the effective functioning of democratic processes, fostering public trust and stability.

The unrest and insurgencies, like in Balochistan primarily stem from a combination of historical grievances, political marginalization, economic disparities, and cultural identity issues. Historically, Balochistan has faced marginalization and exploitation of its natural resources by the central government, leading to feelings of neglect and resentment among the Baloch population.

Additionally, the lack of political representation and autonomy, coupled with human rights abuses and military operations in the region, have fueled grievances and resistance. Resultantly, during ensuing struggles individuals vanish into a void of uncertainty and fear. The lack of accountability for those responsible perpetuates a cycle of anguish and injustice, echoing the urgent need for international cooperation and concerted efforts to address this pressing human rights concern.

However, everything's not lost, there are examples of

countries, which were facing the abhorrent phenomenon but they resolved this curse. One such country is Argentina. Following the return to democracy in 1983, the government of Argentina established the National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons (CONADEP) to investigate human rights abuses. The report documented the atrocities committed by the military regime, laying the foundation for accountability.

In parallel, the Argentine parliament repealed amnesty laws that shielded military officials from prosecution for human rights abuses. This legislative action enabled the judiciary to prosecute and convict numerous perpetrators through landmark trials like the Trial of the Junta in 1985. These legal proceedings underscored the importance of judicial independence and accountability in addressing state-sponsored violence.

Civil society organizations, notably the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, played a pivotal role in advocating for justice for the victims of disappearances. Their tireless activism, alongside broader societal pressure and international scrutiny, contributed to the dismantling of impunity and the pursuit of truth, justice, and accountability.

Together, these short-term, medium-term, and long-term measures exemplify a multifaceted approach that can serve as a model for addressing the issue of missing persons and promoting human rights worldwide.

In light of Argentina's example, there are several actions that parliament, judi-

ciary, government, and civil society in Balochistan could take to resolve the issue of missing persons once and for all.

Firstly, parliament could enact legislation to establish a commission or task force dedicated to investigating cases of enforced disappearances in Balochistan. This body should be granted sufficient powers and resources to conduct thorough and impartial investigations into each case.

Secondly, the judiciary should prioritize cases of missing persons and ensure that perpetrators are held accountable for their actions. This may involve repealing any laws or policies that hinder prosecution or provide immunity to state actors involved in enforced disappearances.

Additionally, the government should actively cooperate with investigative bodies and provide support to families of missing persons. This includes facilitating access to information, legal assistance, and psychological support for affected families.

Lastly, civil society organizations play a crucial role in advocating for justice and raising awareness about the issue of missing persons. They should continue their efforts to pressure the government and hold authorities accountable for their actions. Moreover, international scrutiny and support can also be instrumental in addressing human rights abuses and promoting accountability in Balochistan.

By implementing these measures and adopting a collaborative approach, parliament, judiciary, government, and civil society can work together to bring an end to the scourge of missing persons in Balochistan.

Commerce News

Pak focusing on increasing exports to improve economic situation: Alvi

ISLAMABAD (Online): President Dr. Arif Alvi has said Pakistan is focusing on increasing exports to improve its economic situation.

Talking to a delegation of Miracle Saltworks Collective, a USA-based salt mining and processing company, in Islamabad Wednesday he said Pakistan wants to promote foreign investment and joint ventures in various sectors. He said we want mutually beneficial business partnerships with foreign companies.

The President noted that better processing, packaging and marketing can add value to our salt. He said Pakistani salt can be obtained with high quality and very low

investment. The delegation apprised the President about the potential of Pakistani salt mines in earning foreign exchange, saying that quality and mineral rich rock salt is found only in Pakistan.

The delegation acknowledged that Pakistani salt is of low cost and high quality, emphasizing that the country can benefit from the largest salt market in the world.

It noted that the quality of Pakistani salt in terms of mineral content is the best in the world, and responsible mining, better processing and marketing can increase the value of Pakistani salt.

The delegation informed the President that Miracle Salt Works Collective will invest in Pakistan's salt sector. The company will mine and process Pakistani salt using high-quality technology. APP add: President Dr Arif Alvi on Wednesday said that Pakistan desired to build mutually beneficial partnerships with foreign firms by building joint ventures and attracting foreign investment in multiple sectors.

He in a meeting with a delegation of Miracle Saltworks Collective Inc, a USA-based salt mining and processing company here, said Pakistan was fully focused on boosting its exports to improve its economic condition.

president was briefed about the company's performance in salt mining, processing and marketing.

President Alvi said that Pakistan could make value addition to its salt products through better processing, packaging and marketing.

Reaffirming the government's commitment to facilitate the investors, he appreciated Miracle Saltworks Collective Inc for its investment in Pakistan as well as its joint venture agreement with Pakistan Mineral Development Corporation.

The delegation members apprised the president of the potential of Pakistan's salt mines to earn foreign exchange, adding that Pakistan.



ISLAMABAD: A delegation of Miracle Saltworks Collective Inc, a USA-based salt mining and processing company, called on President Dr Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.



Caretaker Federal Minister for IT and Telecommunication, Dr. Umar Saif chairing meeting regarding Spectrum Availability in Islamabad.

Sudanese envoy, LCCI chief want more trade between his country, Pakistan

LAHORE (APP): Ambassador of Sudan Salih Mohamed Ahmed Mohamed Siddig has said that Sudan and Pakistan have very good relations but the economic ties are below the ambitions. Sudan is very rich in natural resources, agriculture, mining and livestock, and is keen to make mutual trade and economic ties stronger.

He expressed these views in a meeting with President of Lahore Chamber of Commerce and

Industry, Kashif Anwar, here at LCCI Wednesday. Senior Vice President Zafar Mahmood Chaudhry and Executive Committee Members were also present.

The ambassador said that Pakistan and Sudan have very good relations since the establishment of diplomatic ties. Besides good diplomatic relations, both countries have very good cultural ties and many Sudanese students are studying here in Pakistan, he added.

SCCI donates office equipment to BFC manager

SIALKOT (APP): President Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) Abdul Ghafoor Malik hosted a delegation from the Business Facilitation Centre (BFC) Sialkot, marking a significant occasion wherein essential office supplies and equipment were formally handed over. During the meeting, the SCCI president stressed the need to bolster awareness of the facilitation centre among the business community to enable a larger number of businesses to reap the benefits of the transformative initiative.

IT exports up by 39% in January: Minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication, Dr Umar Saif has said that IT exports in January witnessed an increase of 39.4 per cent to \$265 million compared to \$190 million in the same month of the last fiscal year.

"Pakistan's IT industry continues to grow and sets new records. IT exports in January are up

by 39.4 per cent to \$265 million, compared to \$190 million in the same month in 2023," the minister posted on X.

Additionally, the minister disclosed that IT exports during the first seven months of the current fiscal year (July-January) reached \$1.7 billion, marking a 13 per cent increase from \$1.5 billion in the corresponding period of the last year.

Saqib Fayyaz says: Industry demands implementation of 9 cents/kwh power tariff

KARACHI: Mr. Saqib Fayyaz Magoon, Acting President FPCCI, has apprised that the industries in general, and industries in SMEs sector in particular, are on the verge of total collapse and shut down due to the unbearable and unsustainable financial losses emanating from unprecedented cost of doing business; primarily caused by prices of

electricity and gas — which has made Pakistani exporters uncompetitive in the export markets by a large margin. Mr. Saqib Fayyaz Magoon, Acting President FPCCI, categorically stated that FPCCI unequivocally demands that the announced 9 cents / kWh power tariff by the government should be implemented with immediate effect.

FBR working on extension of EFS to whole textile value chain: chief collector

LAHORE (APP): Punjab's Chief Collector Customs (A p p r a i s e m e n t) Muhammad Sadiq has said that the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) is working on extension of Export Facilitation Scheme (EFS) to the whole textile value chain.

Talking to members of APTMA [All Pakistan Textile Mills Association] during an interactive session on exports and

other Customs related issues here on Wednesday, he said that a committee of stakeholders had already been constituted in this regard. Ms. Azmat Tahira, Collector Customs (Appraisal-East)

Laahore, Ms. Nazia Saleem, Additional Collector Customs, and Ms. Irum Sohail, Additional Collector Customs also accompanied the Chief Collector, while APTMA

(North) Chairman Kamran Arshad, senior members Anjum Zafar, Faisal Perviz and APTMA Secretary General Raza Baqir were also present.

The Chief Collector assured APTMA of removing all irritants in the EFS and other customs procedures, formalities to facilitate exporters by helping them in focusing on how to boost exports.

Gold rates up by Rs 750 per tola

ISLAMABAD (APP): The price of per tola 24 karat gold increased by Rs 750 and was sold at Rs 215,200 on Wednesday compared to its sale at Rs 214,450 on the last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24karat gold also increased by Rs 644 to Rs 184,500 from Rs 183,856 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold went up to Rs 169,124 from Rs 168,535, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

Zong 4G to promote urban farming/Agri Tech in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Zong 4G Pakistan's leading telecommunication organization Zong 4G, has collaborated with BaKhabar Kisan to facilitate seamless communication between the Farmers and Agri Experts to make informed and timely decisions, maximize yield and financial benefits to their

livelihoods. BaKhabar Kisan is a comprehensive agricultural knowledge platform for farmers throughout Pakistan offering expert guidance on weather, crop and livestock advisory, modern agricultural practices, and disaster management, said a news release issued here on Wednesday.

Punjab Governor says: Government fully focused on providing Intl standard medical services in provincial hospitals

Independent Report
LAHORE: Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman today inaugurated the 16th Pak Pharma and Healthcare Exhibition and Conference organized by Pakistan Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association (PPMA) at Expo Center Lahore.

Punjab Governor Muhammad Balighur Rahman while speaking to the media on this occasion, said that Pakistan's pharmaceutical industry is not only playing a positive role in the country's economy, but it is also providing employment opportunities to millions of people.

He said that organising Pak Pharma and Healthcare Exhibition is a good initiative which will give boost to the pharmaceutical industry. Governor Punjab said that it is encouraging to see that 115 foreign and local exhibitors are participating in this exhibition.

He said that he appreciates the organizers of the exhibition for their efforts in arranging this exhibition regarding pharmaceuticals manufacturing and associated health related products and services. Governor Punjab said that this exhibition will provide an excellent opportunity to all those who are interested in promoting their products and services. Governor Punjab further said that the Punjab government is fully focused on providing international standard medical services in the provincial hospitals.

Governor Punjab said that it is a good sign that Pakistani pharmaceutical companies are exporting medicines to different countries of the world, which is increasing the country's foreign exchange.

In response to a question, Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman said that it is the responsibility of the government to maintain balance in the regulation of drug prices.



LAHORE: Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur-Rehman inaugurates 16th Pak Pharma and Health Care Exhibition at Expo Center Lahore.

Punjab govt trying to bring more improvement in Children's Hospital Lahore: Minister

Independent Report
LAHORE: Caretaker Punjab Health Minister Professor Dr. Javed Akram has said that the provincial government is trying its best to bring more improvement in Children's Hospital Lahore.

Addressing the 10th syndicate meeting of the University of Child Health Sciences held under the chairmanship of the caretaker provincial health minister here on

Wednesday, he said that fundamental steps are being taken to make the University of Child Health Sciences paperless. He said that under the leadership of Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Syed Mohsin Naqvi, the revamping project has been successfully completed in the hospital.

The minister said that Children's Hospital Lahore is the second largest hospital in the

Chinese, Iranian CC call on CM Naqvi

Independent Report
LAHORE: Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi held separate meetings with the Consul General of China Mr. Zhao Shiren and the Consul General of Iran Mehran Mowahid Far, here on Wednesday.

The Chinese and the Iranian Consul Generals felicitated CM Mohsin Naqvi on being elected as the Chairman Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB). Mohsin Naqvi extended an invitation to the Chinese and Iranian Consul Generals to witness a PSL match. Both of them accepted the invitation and thanked the CM.

The Chinese and the Iranian Consul Generals lauded the performance of CM for extending



LARKANA: Mayor of Municipal Corporation Adv. Anwar Ali Lohur along with Principal Government Girls Degree College Professor Nafees Akhtar Ansari and other visiting the Department of Geography at GGD College.

South Punjab Secretariat aims to pace development

Independent Report
BAHAWALPUR (APP): Additional Chief Secretary South Punjab Captain (ret'd) Saqib Zafar on Wednesday said that the South Punjab Secretariat is addressing the gaps of development by enhancing infrastructure in health, education, and other sectors.

Addressed officers undergoing the 39th Mid-Career Management Course at the National Institute of Management in Islamabad during their visit to the South Punjab Secretariat, he said that major projects in



LAHORE: Australian High Commissioner, H.E. Neil Hawkins with Embassy delegation visiting stall during visit to the shrine of Bibi Pakdaman.

PSC schedules ability test in various departments

Independent Report
PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Public Service Commission on Wednesday scheduled ability tests for various posts.

The posts including Speech Therapist (BPS-17) Health Department, Quantitative Analyst (BPS-16) Home and Tribal Affairs Department, Industrial Development Officer (BPS-16) in Industries, Commerce Technical Education Department, Assistant Forest Economist (BPS-17) Forestry, Environment and Wildlife Department, Bio-Chemist (BPS-17) Forestry, Environment and Wildlife Department, Senior Research Officer (BPS-18) Agriculture, Livestock and Dairy Development Department, Biomedical Engineer (BPS-17) Agriculture and Dairy Development Department, Librarian (BPS-17) in Law Officer (BPS-16) in Parliamentary Affairs And Human Rights Department, Librarian (BPS-16) in Inspectorate Of Prison.

Two LESCO employees dismissed

Independent Report
LAHORE (APP): Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) has dismissed its two employees for showing poor performance in the dues recovery campaign against dead defaulters in the BRB Sub-Division of LESCO, according to LESCO spokesman here Wednesday.

He added that on the instructions of Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Engineer Shahid Haider, the recovery campaign is going on throughout the LESCO region.

The relevant officers and employees of LESCO are working day and night to ensure the recovery from defaulters as well as the elimination of electricity theft.

In this regard, he said, Basit Salim Lineman Grade-I and Muhammad Sarfaraz, Assistant Lineman, of the BRB Sub-Division were dismissed for non-fulfillment of recovery target and continuous poor performance. Despite several warning letters by their high-ups.

Commissioner reviews upgradation work at Services Hospital

Independent Report
LAHORE (APP): Lahore Divisional Commissioner Muhammad Ali Randhawa has announced significant advancements in the construction of the new collection centre at Services Hospital.

Expressing satisfaction, the commissioner revealed that the state-of-the-art diagnostic and collection lab at Services Hospital is nearing completion.

During a morning visit here on Wednesday, Commissioner Randhawa personally inspected the ongoing work and received a comprehensive briefing.

Beyond the lab, Commissioner Lahore meticulously reviewed the construction of parking and waiting areas, emphasizing the holistic approach to healthcare infrastructure.

The successful completion of the new lab, equipped with cutting-edge technology, is expected to greatly enhance residents' access to medical facilities.

PHC Chief stresses rule of law, justice

Independent Report
PESHAWAR (APP): Chief Justice Peshawar High Court Ibrahim Khan stated on Wednesday that efforts would be made to ensure the innocent are not punished and the guilty do not escape punishment.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony of a bachelor hostel in the Judicial Complex Karak, he emphasized that no one is exempted from accountability, and he presents himself first. The chief justice highlighted that piety is the greatest wealth and emphasized the importance of judges being pious.

International News

US vetoes Algerian resolution demanding immediate ceasefire in Gaza

Independent Report
NEW YORK (Online): The US has vetoed a UN Security Council draft resolution demanding an immediate ceasefire in Gaza.

Thirteen countries on the 15-member body backed Algeria resolution, while the UK abstained.

Washington's ambassador to the UN, Linda Thomas-Greenfield said it was not the right time to call for an immediate ceasefire. The UN Security Council met again in emergency session in New York on Gaza Tuesday, where the United States vetoed a resolution put forward on behalf of Arab States by Algeria demanding "an immediate humanitarian ceasefire that must be respected by all parties".

The latest Council meeting on the Middle East crisis spiralling outwards from the war in Gaza has ended, with another US veto and an abstention on the part of the UK, while Algeria's resolution gained support from 13 out of the 15 members around the iconic horseshoe table.

Qatar's Ambassador Alya Ahmed Saif Al-Thani speaking on behalf of the Gulf Cooperation Council, called on the UN to assume its responsibilities and condemn the Israeli threat of unleashing its military operation in Rafah. More than a million displaced are sheltering there with nowhere else to run to.

"We are living the worst humanitarian disaster the world has ever seen," she said. "We also condemn the forced displacement of civilians and regret the suspension of the financing of UNRWA," she said.

For its part, Qatar will continue its facilitating efforts to free all hostages, to protect civilians in Gaza and to secure a ceasefire.

Riyad H. Mansour, Ambassador and Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine, said the Algerian-drafted resolution was brought to the Council "precisely" because Israel persists with its onslaught "despite near unanimous" calls by the international community for a ceasefire.



US Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield is seen alongside Algerian Ambassador Amar Bendjama during a UN Security Council vote calling for a ceasefire in Gaza, at UN Headquarters.

Russia reacts to US vetoing Gaza ceasefire

Independent Report
MOSCOW (Online): By again vetoing a UN Security Council (UNSC) resolution calling for a ceasefire in Gaza, the US has shown a disregard for human life, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova has claimed.

On Tuesday, Washington blocked a third attempt by UNSC members to pause the fighting in Gaza. The Algerian-drafted resolution, calling for an immediate humanitarian truce, was backed by 13 nations in the 15-member body, including Russia and China. The US was the only country to vote "no," while the UK abstained.

The Americans "are blocking the call for a ceasefire. That's it. This is their attitude towards people, not towards people of a certain nationality, but towards people in general," Zakharova said in an interview with Sputnik Radio on Wednesday. "The solution [to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict], towards which the US is pushing people and regions, does not exist," she stressed, without explaining what she believes Washington is trying to achieve in Gaza. While the Americans continue to obstruct a truce, the situation in Gaza "only deteriorates," the spokeswoman added.

Zakharova also commented on Washington's decision in early February to sanction several Israeli settlers, who were accused of stoking violence in the occupied West Bank.

"Just think about it. Did these settlers come out of nowhere?... They are part of the [Israeli] government system, which was supported by the US in the first place. The US is the guarantor of the well-being of the people who developed these lands," she stated.



Lyudmila Navalnaya, the mother of late Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny, and lawyer Vasily Dubkov arrive at the regional department of Russia's Investigative Committee in the town of Salekhard in the Yamal-Nenets Region, Russia.

Ukraine outnumbered, outgunned, ground down by relentless Russia

Independent Report
KRAMATORSK (Internews): As the Ukraine war enters its third year, the infantry of 59th Brigade are confronting a bleak reality: they're running out of soldiers and ammunition to resist their Russian invaders.

One platoon commander who goes by his call sign "Tygr" estimated that just 60-70% of the several thousand men in the brigade at the start of the conflict were still serving. The rest had been killed, wounded or signed off for reasons such as old age or illness.

Heavy casualties at the hands of Russian forces have been compounded by dreadful conditions on the eastern front, with frozen soil turning into thick mud in unseasonably warm temperatures, playing havoc with soldiers' health. "The weather is rain, snow, rain, snow. People get ill with simple flu or angina as a result. They're out of action for some time, and there is nobody to replace them."

Palestinians to Hague court: Israeli occupation is illegal

Monitoring Desk
PALESTINIAN: Israel has been deliberately violating international law for decades, the Palestinian Authority argued on the first day of an International Court of Justice (ICJ) hearing on Israel's policies in the occupied Palestinian Territories.

"The force of law must prevail," said Riyadh al-Maliki, the foreign minister of the Palestinian Authority (PA) on Monday before the highest court of the United Nations in The Hague.

The PA argues that Israel has been violating international law since 1967, when Israel took control of the areas in the so-called Six Day War, by annexing wide strips of land and not granting Palestinians the right to self-determination.

The UN General Assembly asked the court for an opinion on the legal consequences of Israel's actions towards Palestinians in the occupied territories in late 2022, before the beginning of the latest Gaza war last year.

EU approves 13th round of Russia sanctions ahead of war anniversary

Monitoring Desk
ANTWERP: The European Union agreed on Wednesday to a new round of sanctions on Russia ahead of the second anniversary of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Welcoming the decision, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said on X, formerly Twitter, that the latest salvo of sanctions keeps "the pressure high on the Kremlin."

EU representatives in Brussels signed off on the package, which targets persons and organizations linked to the Russian government and the Russian invasion.

Almost 200 people have been included in the 13th package, top EU diplomat Josep Borrell said.

The package also includes measures to clamp down on sanctions evasion, he said.

The EU recently targeted companies based in China, Uzbekistan, Iran and the United Arab Emirates, for example, which are allegedly involved in circumventing the EU's punitive measures.

Israeli missile strike on Damascus flat kills two, Syria says

Monitoring Desk
DAMASCUS: At least two people have been killed in a suspected Israeli missile strike in Syria's capital, Damascus, Syrian state media and activists say.

The Syrian military said two civilians died when several missiles hit a block of flats in the Kafr Sousa district. A monitoring group said two foreigners and a Syrian civilian were killed, and that the area was frequented by senior figures from Iran's Revolutionary Guards.

Russian agents may be to blame Poland is concerned by pro-Putin slogans at farmers' protests

Monitoring Desk
WARSAW: Polish authorities voiced grave concerns Wednesday after slogans praising Russian President Vladimir Putin and his war against Ukraine appeared at Polish farmers' protests.

The Foreign Ministry said it believed that extreme groups were trying to take over the farmers' protest movement "perhaps under the influence of Russian agents." On Tuesday, one tractor at a protest in the southern region of Silesia carried a Soviet flag and a banner that said: "Putin, put things in order with Ukraine, Brussels, and our rulers." Interior Minister Marcin Kierwinski called the banner "scandalous," and said that it was immediately secured by police, and that prosecutors were also investigating.

Biden administration to cancel another \$1.2 billion of student loans

Independent Report
WASHINGTON (Internews): President Joe Biden's administration said on Wednesday it is cancelling \$1.2 billion worth of student loans for some 153,000 people who are eligible under a program used to make good on promises to increase loan forgiveness.

Biden last year pledged to find other avenues for tackling debt relief after the Supreme Court in June blocked a broader plan to forgive \$430 billion in student loan debt.

South Africa budget boosts welfare grants ahead of May election

Monitoring Desk
JOHANNESBURG: South Africa's finance minister has boosted welfare payments to more than 18 million people in his last budget ahead of May's general election.

The governing African National Congress (ANC) is facing a tough political challenge as it battles to maintain its outright majority in the 29 May poll.

Left-wing rival the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) has already pledged to double payments to the less well off. But harsh economic conditions leave the government little room for manoeuvre.

Finance Minister Enoch Godongwana was under pressure to curtail the government's growing budget deficit while also maintaining spending, and keeping taxes low, in order to not put voters off.

The ANC won the 2019 election with 57% of the national vote. Opinion polls suggest that for the first time since it took power at the end of apartheid in 1994, the party's share of the vote could fall below 50% in the upcoming election.

To cheer from ANC MPs, Mr Godongwana said monthly payments to the elderly, war veterans and those with disabilities, among others, would go up by 100 rand (\$5.32; £4.22) a month - an increase in line with inflation of nearly 5%.

The minister also announced a rise in grants to others, including those with children.

There had been speculation, in line with what President Cyril Ramaphosa had said earlier this month, that the government would increase monthly payments to low earners and those most in need.

This Social Relief of Distress Grant (SRD grant) of 350 rand (\$5.33) is currently paid to nine million people.

Resignation to not annul SJC's proceeding against judge: SC

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Supreme Court of Pakistan on Wednesday ruled that the resignation or retirement of a judge would not stop the underway proceeding of the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) against him.

The court announced the verdict with the majority of 4/1 as Justice Hassan Azhar Rizvi gave disagreement.

A five-member bench of the top court headed by Justice Amin ud Din Khan announced the verdict which was earlier reserved after hearing arguments from respondents in the intra court appeal (ICA).

Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail, Justice Syed Hassan Azhar Rizvi, Justice Musarrat Hilali and Justice Irfan Saadat Khan were also

part of the bench.

The written order said, "For the reasons to be recorded later, the delay in filing both the appeals is condoned.

Both the appeals are partially allowed to the extent that if the proceedings have already been initiated by the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) against a Judge, same shall not abate on his resignation or retirement, as the case may be, during such proceedings.

It is the prerogative of the SJC to proceed with the matter accordingly. The impugned judgment is modified to that extent.

This order is with the majority of four by one disagreeing (Syed Hassan Azhar Rizvi, J.) on the point of limitation as well as on merits."



ISLAMABAD: Leader of Jamaat-e-Islami Sirajul-Haq addressing press conference at Al-Falah Hall sector F-8, in the Federal Capital.

Sindh Police Chief for joint strategy to combat riverine bandits

KARACHI (APP): During a meeting chaired by IGP Sindh Riffat Mukhtar Raja, comprehensive discussions were held on issues and measures about the adoption of a joint strategy, plan of action, and implementation decisions aimed at ensuring success in the operation against bandits in the riverine areas (Katcha areas) of Sindh and Punjab. Decisions were made with a focus on concrete and effective measures.

Various officials including RPO Bahawalpur, DIGPs Sukkur, Larkana, along with their respective SSPs and DPOs, briefed on the outcomes and suc-

cesses of the joint strategy and measures between Sindh and Punjab Police against dacoits in Katcha areas. The operation garnered unanimous support and approval. The IGP Sindh highlighted the significant challenge posed to law enforcement agencies by criminals who lure unsuspecting citizens into traps through deception and greed in the riverine areas of Sindh and Punjab. He emphasized the need for active and effective police check posts in Katcha areas, along with intensified patrolling and random snap-checking on highways through joint measures.

Commissioner chairs meeting regarding polio arrangements

HYDERABAD (APP): The Divisional Commissioner Syed Khalid Hyder Shah has said that a better strategy should be prepared for making environmental sample negative in Hyderabad and Jamshoro and coverage for refusal cases in order to make Hyderabad Division polio free.

He expressed these views while presiding over a meeting with all Deputy Commissioners and DHOs for reviewing outcome of last polio campaign and arrangements made for upcoming polio campaign to begin from 26th February.

Commissioner asked all Deputy Commissioners to complete their arrangements so that 100 percent

results could be achieved.

Commissioner directed Deputy Commissioner Jamshoro Zulfiqar Memon that more polio camps should be set up on the occasion of annual Urs of Hazrat Lal Shahbaz Qalandar to be celebrated at Sehwan Sharif so that polio drops could be administered to devotees as well as children upto five years.

He directed all DCs to hold review meetings in their respective districts during polio drive and accomplish 100 percent results.

He further directed that different death cases in children due to measles had been reported so that a comprehensive strategy should be made to deal with it.



KARACHI: Pashtoonkha National Awami Party hold protest outside KPC.

More than 8mn Pakistanis left abroad during 2023: report

KARACHI (INP): More than 8 million Pakistanis had left abroad during the outgoing year 2023, the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) said in its annual immigration report.

According to the report, FIA Immigration successfully processed 19.5 million passengers at international arrival and departure counters. Out of 9.2 million passengers, 7.1 million Pakistanis and 2.1 million foreigners visited Pakistan. Out of 10.3 million passengers, 8.1 million Pakistani nationals and 2.2 million foreigners departed from Pakistan.

A maximum of 3.6 million Pakistanis traveled through Lahore Airport for overseas arrivals and departures. 3.5 million Pakistani passengers traveled through Islamabad Airport.

The FIA Integrated Border Management System processed 2935 stop list cases, arrested 1602 human traffickers while carrying out operations against human traffickers, the report said. As many as 25 most wanted human traffickers were also arrested during the year 2023, it said, adding that the US State Department maintained Pakistan's Tier 2 status in its annual Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report 2023.

As many as 1,129 passengers were offloaded and shifted to respective police stations on the basis of fake documents.

Strict screening was introduced at airports to prevent beggars going under the guise of Umrah and horrific incidents like the Greece boat accident.



ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi in a group photo with a delegation of military officers from friendly countries undergoing training at Command and Staff College Quetta, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Pakistan calls for boosting UN peacekeeping missions' role to deal with conflicts

UNITED NATIONS (APP): Pakistan has called for strengthening the role and capacity of UN peacekeeping in hotspots around the world, saying the missions must be part of the effort to address and resolve the underlying causes of conflict that the Blue Helmets monitor.

"A peacekeeping mission must be part of an overall 'political strategy' that seeks to address and resolve the underlying causes of conflict and violence," Ambassador Munir Akram told the U.N. Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, which held its first 2024 session on Tuesday.

The Pakistani envoy said that peacekeeping—

U.N.'s flagship activity — was a "success story."

Pakistan, he said, has over the years contributed more than 200,000 personnel to 47 peacekeeping missions in "often challenging theatres" of conflict around the world, in addition to hosting one of the first such operations — the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP), which monitors the ceasefire along the Line of Control (LoC) in disputed Jammu and Kashmir.

Ambassador Akram called for accountability of the growing attacks against UN peacekeepers, noting the increasingly difficult challenges — from terrorists' criminal groups, and tribal rivalries, with unprecedented levels of threats to the peacekeepers' safety and security. "Often there is no peace to keep," he added.

"We are also concerned by the increased misinformation and disinformation against UN Peacekeeping Missions and Peacekeepers resulting in threats to their safety and security," the Pakistani envoy said.

In this regard, Ambassador Akram suggested an updated strategy that would ensure provision to each Mission with adequate financial, human, material resources and advanced capabilities — UAVs (unmanned aerial vehicle), radar, early warning, intelli-

Political parties urged to forge national accord to steer country out of crises

ISLAMABAD (APP): Religious scholars and leaders on Wednesday urged political parties to forge a national accord requiring collective efforts to steer the country out of crises.

In the joint declaration adopted at the "Convention for Pakistan Accord", the scholars and leaders from all religious schools of thoughts emphasized the necessity for all stakeholders, including state institutions, and political and religious parties to jointly formulate a covenant for the betterment of the nation.

The covenant, named the Pakistan Accord, should outline the trajectory for the country's next 25 years addressing both internal and external challenges and finding effective solutions for economic cri-

sis and combating extremism, terrorism, and youth radicalization, they added.

The convention organized by the Pakistan Ulema Council (PUC) was chaired by its Chairman Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi.

They said it should outline a unified plan for steering beloved country for the next 25 years.

The Ulema and scholars urged the political parties to accept one another's mandate and resolve their electoral disputes as per the Constitution and law. They emphasized that economic stability was intricately linked with political stability. "As Pakistan faces several challenges, which can be addressed through cooperation from all democratic forces," they added.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan Ulema Council & Special Assistant for interfaith Harmony, Hafiz Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi addressing a Press conference during the 3rd Misaq-e-Pakistan Convention.

Sindh Excise dept collects Rs.5.88 million taxes

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Excise and Taxation department, on the second day of ongoing road checking campaign for recovery of outstanding taxes, collected over Rs.5.88 million across the province.

Director General Excise and Taxation Aurangzeb Panhwer, in a statement issued here on Wednesday, said that a total of 6692 vehicles were checked till the second day of the campaign by inspection teams of the department.

The inspection teams checked 1589 vehicles in

Karachi, 1789 in Hyderabad, 1206 in Sukkur, 885 in Larkana, 725 in Mirpur Khas and 498 vehicles in Shaheed Benazirabad, he said adding that a total of 651 vehicles were confiscated by the inspection teams and documents of 670 vehicles were also seized while tax collection of more than Rs.5.88 million was also ensured during initial two days of the campaign.

He informed that road checking campaign to collect tax will continue till March 7, 2024.

SFA inaugurates Food Testing Lab in Tando Jam

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Food Authority (SFA) marked a significant milestone with the inauguration of the SFA Food Testing Lab in Tando Jam.

This initiative stems from ongoing Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) between seven institutions, including the Agriculture University Tando Jam, focused on enhancing food science laboratories and providing internship training for students in the Food Sciences Department.

Under these MoUs, various universities with Food Sciences departments are set to undergo upgrades, facilitated by national and international donor agencies in collaboration with the SFA.

These upgraded facilities, including the newly inaugurated lab in Tando Jam, will serve as district food testing labs and support the research efforts of the SFA in the domains of food safety and hygiene.

This development was lauded by Vice Chancellor of Agriculture University, Tando Jam Dr. Fateh Mari recognising its potential to offer practical experience to students and faculty in the field of Food Sciences.

The establishment of these labs reflects a collaborative effort towards advancing research and ensuring the highest standards in food safety.



KARACHI: Officials of excise and taxation issuing a challan to a vehicle owner for non-custom paid (NCP) vehicle, violating the traffic rules at a road, in Provincial Capital.

KU 21 Senate meeting approves annual actual statement of accounts

KARACHI (APP): The 21st Senate meeting of the University of Karachi approved the annual actual statements of accounts for the financial year 2017-18, 2018-19, 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22 during the meeting held at the Chinese Teachers Memorial Auditorium on Wednesday.

KU Vice Chancellor Dr. Khalid Mahmood Iraqi chaired the Senate meeting while the Director of Finance Tariq Kaleem presented the annual statement for FY 2017-18, 2018-19, 2019-20, 2020-21, and 2021-22 and the revised budget for FY 2018-19, 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23, which the members unanimously approved.

According to the de-

tails, in 2017-18, a grant of Rs 2031.894 million was received from the federal government, a grant of Rs 469.610 million was received from the provincial government and the KU's own income was Rs 2004.106 million.

Rs1140.359 million was spent on salaries of faculty members, Rs 488.725 million on salaries of administrative staff, Rs 407.271 million on allied staff salaries, Rs 30.120 million on tenure track and Rs 236.547 million on other establishment charges.

Meanwhile, Rs 422.199 million spent for utilities, rent of residential building cost Rs189.662 million, Rs104.183 million for conducting examina-

Fixation of prices of medicines notification challenged in LHC

LAHORE (Online): The notification regarding fixation of price of medicines has been challenged in Lahore High Court (LHC).

The petition has been filed by a citizen Muhammad Aslam making federal government and others respondents.

The petitioner took the plea the care taker government issued notification against law for fixing the prices of medicines. The prices of medicines will increase after notification.

It was further said in the petition government is removing the section of fixing prices of medicines from drug act. Care taker government does not have these powers. Democratic government is coming and this step can be taken only by it.

Naila Bhutto emphasis young girls to get vocational training

HYDERABAD (APP): The Principal Government Vocational Training Center for girls Naila Bhutto has emphasized upon young girls to get vocational training in order to make them self sufficient. Talking to APP here at Vocational training center Qasimabad on Wednesday she said that our centre was imparting vocational training in yearly and 6-months certificate course in various trades under CBT in which girls having at least matriculation complete their vocational training.

Naila said that trend of joining vocational training was low as compared to general education even our admission fee was nominal could be afforded by young aspirant students but they prefer private institutions for vocational training whose monthly fees were so high.

Famous News-caster Farhana Owais honored

KARACHI (APP): Arts Council of Pakistan Karachi, organized an event titled "Itraf e Kamal" to honour renowned TV anchor Dr Farhana Owais, in a program at the Haseena Moyn Hall here on Wednesday.

The event was specially attended by the Provincial Minister of Information, Minority Affairs, Social Protection, and President Arts Council of Pakistan Karachi, Muhammad Ahmed Shah. Professor Ahmed Qadri presided over the event.

During the ceremony, Ahmed Shah stated that the Arts Council has adopted a family-like structure where each member is considered like a family member.

Mayor Karachi calls for a peaceful and prosperous city

KARACHI (APP): Mayor Barrister Murtaza Wahab has said that he would like to have a peaceful and prosperous city for him and everyone's children.

No one from London or Canada will come to fix Karachi, if we connect hearts and adopt each other, then the problems of this city and province will be solved. He said this while addressing a seminar on Digital Sindh and oath taking ceremony of newly elected office bearers of Sports Journalists Association Sindh (SJAS) at Karachi Gymkhana on Wednesday.

Caretaker Sindh Minister for Sports and Culture Dr Junaid Ali Shah, central office bearers of SJAS, representatives of sports associations and a large number of sports journalists were also present on the occasion.

The Mayor Karachi expressed hope that the newly elected governing body of SJAS would take sports journalism to a higher standard and the interests of journalists associated with sports journalism would be protected. It is expected that sports activities will be promoted at the Sindh level and new talent will emerge, he said.



DUBAI: Muhammad Zubair Motiwala, Chief Executive, Trade Development Authority of Pakistan exchanges views with an exporter at the Pakistan Pavilion during his visit to the Gulf Food Exhibition, Dubai World Trade Centre.

Agreement of political parties to shape govt commendable: Mian Zahid

KARACHI (INP): Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain has consensus between the major political parties to form a government was a good move that will reduce general anxiety and help bring the country out of the crisis.

In a statement issued here on Wednesday, he said that it was believed that Mian Shahbaz Sharif and Asif Ali Zardari will bring the nation out of trouble and ensure political stability.

He said that Mian Nawaz Sharif was the favourite for the slot of PM, but he has preferred Mian Shahbaz Sharif for the post which indicates his political maturity.

The PPP's dream of making Bilawal Bhutto a prime minister was not fulfilled, but it has agreed with the PML-N on important national issues, which is a sign of good leadership, he added.

The business leader said that the business community was confident that nominated Prime Minister Mian Shahbaz Sharif and nominated President Asif Ali Zardari have the potential to improve the economy and manage repayments or rollovers that were due shortly.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that the leadership of Mian Shahbaz Sharif and the PPP have a duty to improve the situation in the country, make effective measures against unemployment and terrorism, and give the public some relief.



MOHENJO DARO: Consul General of France Alexis Chahtahinsky is visiting and expressed keen interest in the historical ruins of the World Heritage Monuments of Mohenjo Daro.