

Independent

Member APNS & CPNE

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www.dailyindependent.com.pk Quetta

Ph: 2841470/2841473 REG: No. BC-116 B/ID-445 Vd XXV No 163, Rajab 20, 1445 AH Thursday February 01, 2024 Pages 08, Price Rs.15

Vows to deal with terrorists with full might

No one will be allowed to sabotage elections: Military top brass

CCC discusses deployment of Pakistan Army to assist ECP in peaceful conduct of February 8 general elections: Vows to expose India's violations of international norms; Pakistan's sovereignty, territorial integrity sacrosanct, inviolable: COAS

RAWALPINDI (APP): Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir on Wednesday said that Pakistan's sovereignty and territorial integrity were sacrosanct and inviolable.

"Pakistan believes in peaceful co-existence with all states, however, there would never be any compromise over country's sovereignty, national honour and aspirations of Pakistani people," he said while chairing the 262nd Corps Commanders' Conference (CCC) at the General Headquarters.

According to an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release, the forum paid rich tribute to the supreme sacrifices of Shuhada (martyrs), including officers and men of the Armed Forces, law enforcement agencies and the citizens who have laid their lives for ensuring peace and stability in the country.

The forum resolved that terrorists, their facilitators and abettors, working on behalf of hostile forces to destabilise Pakistan, would be dealt with full might of the state.

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RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir chairing the 262nd Corps Commanders' Conference (CCC) at the General Headquarters.



QUETTA: Balochistan Caretaker Minister for Home and Tribal Affairs Mir Muhammad Zubair Jamali addressing a consultation on gender issue organized by National Commission on the Status of Women.

NCSW holds pre-NCSW 68 consultation with provincial stakeholders: Zubair Jamali reiterates interim Govt's resolve to empower women economically

Chairperson NCSW Ms Nilofar Bakhtiar says females are deprived of fundamental rights of equal opportunities for education, health, and economic growth

Independent Report

QUETTA: The caretaker Provincial Minister for Home, Mir Zubair Jamali has reiterated the interim government's resolve to empower the womenfolk economically.

The Provincial Minister was speaking at the ceremony organized in collaboration with the National Commission on Status of Women (NCSW) here on Wednesday.

The Chairperson NCSW, Ms Nilofar Bakhtiar was also present on the occasion.

The consultation was held with provincial stakeholders in Quetta on the preparation of the National report on "Need Analysis for financing and strengthening institutions with a gender perspective for

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Chairman Pakistan People's Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari is addressing the election rally of Pakistan People's Party in Malakand district.

Bilawal vows to bury old politics of revenge, divisiveness

MALAKAND (INP): Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Wednesday resolved to start a process of reconciliation in the country by burying 'old politics of revenge, divisiveness and hatred' if his party is voted to power in Feb 8 elections.

Addressing an election

rally in Malakand, the former foreign minister hit out at Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder and PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif for their politics of revenge and divisiveness.

He said Mr Sharif had vowed to fight for the sanctity of vote but the situation was other way around in this election.

Tosha khana case judgement proved: no one is above law, says Jan Achakzai

QUETTA: The caretaker Provincial Minister for Information, Jan Achakzai has stated that the Tosha khana case has proved that no one is above the law.

The Tosha khana case. Jan Achakzai maintained that we welcome the judgment of court and said that the judgment has proved that no one can get away with abusing the trust of people. The caretaker Minister for Information also said that PTI founder has the option of relief i.e., appeal against the judgment, but the law has taken its course.



QUETTA: IGFC Balochistan (North), Major General Chaudhry Amir Ajmal along with officers and soldiers of FC Balochistan and Pakistan Army paid their final respects to the Martyrs of Mach and Kolpur, at Headquarters FC Balochistan (North) in Quetta.

Govt increases petrol price by Rs13.55 per litre

Monitoring Desk ISLAMABAD: The federal government on Wednesday increased petrol and diesel prices in a fortnightly review.

A notification issued by Finance Division states that the petrol price has been jacked up by Rs13.55 to Rs272.89 per litre while high speed diesel price has been increased by Rs2.75 to Rs276.21 per litre.

The revised prices will come into effect from February 1, 2024. The latest increase comes as tension continues to flare up in Middle East amid Israeli military strikes in Gaza.

The notification added that the increase in petroleum prices had been recommended by the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (Ogra).

Trials of May 9 cases will be held in jail

ISLAMABAD (Online): Trials of May 9 cases will be held in jail.

367 accused including Imran Khan have been summoned in Adiala jail. Notification regarding jail trial of cases pertaining to May 9 siege and arson, riots has been issued. The accused have been summoned in Adiala jail.

According to media reports Sadaqat Abbasi, Umar Tanvir Butt and Wasim Qayyum Abbasi have become approvers. They have recorded their statements under 364.

The judicial remand of Sheikh Rashid has been extended upto February 6.

Order has been issued to all persons accused in May 9 incident to come to Adiala jail from May 6 in connection with jail trial.

The hearing of May 9 cases against PTI founder and Shah Mehmood Qureshi will also take place in Adiala jail. Notices of jail trial have been issued to SHOs and investigation officers of all police stations. Copies will be distributed among the accused in connection with indictment of cases on February 6.

Imran Khan, Bushra Bibi sentenced to 14 years

Both barred from holding public office for 10 years, fined Rs787m each; verdict comes a day after Imran was sentenced to 10 years in the cipher case; Bushra Bibi 'put under house arrest' as Bani Gala declared sub-jail; Barrister Gohar slams Toshakhana sentence; PTI to move IHC against verdict

RAWALPINDI (Online): Judge Muhammad Bashir of Accountability Court (AC) Islamabad has awarded 14 years Rigorous Imprisonment (RI) each to Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi and fined Rs787 million each in Toshakhana reference.

The accused have been declared disqualified for holding any public office for 10 years. Under NAB ordinance the two accused will not be able to make any financial dealing with any bank or financial institution.

On reaching jail Bushra Bibi was arrested under court's decision. NAB deputy prosecutor General Sardar Muzaffar Abbasi was present in the court along

with his team. The court ordered at the inception of hearing the two accused be called in the court. Jail authorities presented both the accused in court.

The court while addressing Imran Khan inquired Khan Sahb have you prepared statement under 342. Imran Khan replied yes he has prepared. But first let my lawyers and Bushra Begum come. I will file my statement. The court said you should file your statement in the court as we have to move ahead IN the proceedings.

Upon it former Prime Minister said why the court is in haste. Islamabad High Court has already rejected our plea for stay order. I have been called by assistant su-

perintendent jail for marking my attendance.

The PTI founder left for his barrack after saying this.

The court sent message for calling Imran Khan again. Assistant Superintendent Jail told the court

Imran Khan is not ready to come to court. The court after some time, decided to announce the verdict.

Meanwhile Bushra Bibi wife of PTI founder Imran Khan has presented herself for arrest in Toshakhana case. Following the announcement of awarding sentence to Bushra Bibi and Imran Khan in Tosha Khana case, wife of PTI founder decided to present herself for arrest in Adiala Jail.

She reached Adiala jail

and presented herself for arrest. Women police arrested her. Earlier in the day, Accountability Judge Muhammad Bashir sentenced the former prime minister Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi to 14 years in jail in the Toshakhana case.

The PTI founder has also been disqualified for 10 years while a fine of Rs1.573 billion has also been imposed on the couple.

During the hearing of the case the court recorded statement of Bushra Bibi under 342 in regard to questionnaire containing 25 questions.

The lawyers for Imran Khan had filed petition to court to restore the right to cross question.

The court rejected the petition for restoration of right to cross examine after hearing the arguments.

Imran Khan while addressing Judge Muhammad Bashir of AC had said you had abolished our right to cross examine. I myself wanted to cross question the witnesses. It is my request our right to cross question be restored. Is the announcement for awarding sentence to be made today.

Judge Muhammad Bashir said don't worry.

Imran Khan told the court real price of Toshakhana gifts has come to us. We were to cross examine due to it. I was to expose false witnesses. You did all in haste.

CM seeks report of different subversive acts; directs to improve security arrangements further

Independent Report

QUETTA: The caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki has sought report of different incidents of terrorism at the election offices of political leaders and public places in different areas of the province.

The caretaker Chief Minister directed to the Provincial Home Department to improve security arrangements further.

While taking notice of the incidents of terrorism in different areas of the prov-

ince, the caretaker Chief Minister directed to the Chief Secretary Balochistan and Home Department to prepare effective security strategy.

He also appreciated the timely action taken by the law enforcement agencies in response to these incidents.

He said that all the institutions are active to foil every conspiracy of sabotaging national process of general elections in Balochistan.

He also said that all resources are being mobilized for restoration of peace.



NAROWAL: Senior Vice President PML-N Maryam Nawaz addressing a public gathering in Zafarwal.

Maryam continues to fire salvos at Imran

NAROWAL (INP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz Senior Vice President and chief organiser Maryam Nawaz on Wednesday took jibe at the embattled PTI founder who, she said, spread evil in the country.

Speaking to constituents in Narowal, she applauded the large crowd that gathered over there. She said she was eagerly waiting for her visit to Narowal.

She said many conspiracies were hatched against Nawaz Sharif, ask-

ing what injustice did not happen to him.

She claimed, "One by one all the enemies of Nawaz Sharif are getting exposed as today people see all cases against the PML-N supremo as just conspiracies to keep him out of power."

Speaking about Bushra Bibi, she said she was not elated about the arrest of the former premier's wife. She, however, recalled the time when she had spent time in prison emphasising she too was someone's wife.

PPP election offices, candidates attacked with hand grenades in Quetta, Kech and Mangochar

Independent Report

QUETTA: The election offices of Pakistan Peoples' party (PPP) were attacked with hand grenades by unknown assailants in Quetta, Mangochar area of Kalat and Buleda of Kech on Wednesday.

According to the reports, five persons were injured when some unknown assailants hurled a

hand grenade at the election office of PPP located on Sariab road.

The assailants fled from the scene after hurling the hand grenade. The rescue teams and police reached the spot and shifted the injured to the civil hospital for treatment.

An emergency was already declared in the civil hospital.

Independent candidate for NA-8 Bajaur shot dead

PESHAWAR (APP): Rehman Zeb, an independent candidate for the National Assembly seat NA-8, Bajaur was shot dead by unknown assailants on Wednesday.

Police said Rehman Zeb along with his friends was going for his election campaign in Bajaur when armed men fired at them near Siddique Phatak.

Rehman Zeb and his three two friends sustained bullet injuries in the firing and were rushed to Tehsil Headquarters Hospital in Khar where he succumbed to injuries.

Rehman Zeb was an active worker of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf and was contesting from NA-8 as an independent candidate after having some rifts with party leadership for not allotting him the party ticket.

A large number of his supporters and relatives gathered in front of Tehsil Headquarters Hospital Khar after hearing the tragic news of Rehman Zeb's death.

PTI terminates party membership of two senior leaders

QUETTA (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on Wednesday terminated the party membership of two senior leaders from Balochistan.

As per details, the Information Secretary of PTI's Balochistan chapter Sardar Hasan Shah said that the party membership of Sardar Khadim Hussain and Sadiq Agha have been terminated.

He said that step was taken as both the leaders refused to withdraw from the elections against PTI candidates.



ISLAMABAD: Advisor to PM on Aviation Air Marshal (R) Farhat Hussain Khan called on caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.

We don't want to give such order which causes delay in election: SC

ISLAMABAD (Online): Supreme Court (SC) during the hearing of the case related to acceptance of nomination papers has remarked we don't want to give such order which causes delay in the election.

Appeal of candidate from PP-224 regarding acceptance of his nomination papers came up for hearing before single bench of SC led by Justice Jamal Mandokhel here Wednesday.

Special secretary Election Commission (EC) appeared in the court.

The court remarked during the hearing of the case petitioner filed appeal

late by 12 days. Permission for election could have been given had the appeal been filed in time. We don't want to give such decision which causes delay in the election.

Justice Jamal questioned from special secretary why the EC has kept schedule for small period. EC should have known that appeals have to be filed.

Special secretary EC told the court if nomination papers are accepted at this stage then the election can delay in the constituency.

The process of printing of ballot papers has been completed. In several districts the process of sending ballot papers is underway.

Nothing educates & illuminates better than cinema: Solangi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Wednesday underlined the need for promoting cinemas in the country to foster cultural values of tolerance and harmony in the society.

Addressing the screening ceremony of a Kazakh movie at the Pakistan National Council of Arts, he said, "Nothing impresses,

educates and illuminates better than cinema. Probably hundreds of high-pitch, hyperbolic and hyper ventilating speeches cannot educate you like this movie, I am sure, can educate and sensitize you better."

He expressed gratitude to the ambassador of Kazakhstan in Pakistan and Caretaker Minister for Culture and Heritage Jamal Shah for inviting him to speak on the screening of "Kazakh Khanate".



KHARAN: President Balochistan National Party Sardar Akhtar Jan Mengal addressing a public meeting in connection with general elections

Solangi says: Pervaiz Shaukat's services for media community to be remembered for long time

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi said on Wednesday that the demise of senior journalist and trade unionist Pervaiz Shaukat was a great loss for the media community.

Addressing a condolence reference, organised by Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (Workers) in memory of Pervaiz Shaukat, he said the late journalist served the media community selflessly for over four decades career.

Solangi said Pervaiz Shaukat had devoted his entire life in the struggle for the rights of journalists.

"The services of late Pervaiz Shaukat for the protection of the rights of journalists and media workers would be remembered for a long time," he added.

Pneumonia outbreak in Punjab kills 13 kids

ISLAMABAD (APP): A pneumonia surge in Punjab killed 13 more children with 1045 new cases registered during the past 24 hours.

According to Punjab Health Department, the provincial capital Lahore registered 248 new cases during the said period, a private news channel reported.

The largest province in the country so far this year recorded 288 deaths and 17,248 cases due to the deadly disease, whereas Lahore only reported 57 deaths and 3,151 cases.

The current surge in pneumonia-related deaths indicates a troubling trend, with over 85 children lost their lives in the past week—14 on January 24, 12 on January 25, 13 on January 26, seven on January 27, 18 on January 28, three on January 29 and 14 on January 30 with additional 13 children have reportedly died from the disease on last date of this month.

US calls Imran Khan's imprisonment sentence matter for Pak courts

WASHINGTON (APP): The United States Tuesday sidestepped comments on the 10-year sentence awarded to ex-Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief, Imran Khan, for leaking state secrets — known as "cipher case", saying it was a matter for the Pakistani courts. "It is a legal matter ultimately for Pakistan's courts," State Department Spokesperson Mathew Miller told reporters at his daily press briefing while responding to a series of questions.

"We have been following the cases ... brought against the former prime minister but I don't have any comment on the sentencing," Miller said. "As we have stated consistently, we continue to call for the respect of democratic principles, human rights, and the rule of law in Pakistan, as we do around the world," he added. Questioned about Khan's sentencing, Miller reiterated that the prosecution of the former prime minister was a legal matter, and the State Department would defer to Pakistani courts regarding such matters. However, he stressed the importance of a democratic process that allows broad participation and respects democratic principles.



ISLAMABAD: President, Dr. Arif Alvi exchanging views with Major General (Retd) Faheem-ul-Aziz, High Commissioner-Designate of Pakistan to Sri Lanka during meeting held at Aiwan-e-Sadr in Islamabad.

MC, PML-N forge future political unity as Attique, Shehbaz meet

MIRPUR-AJK (APP): The All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference and the Pakistan Muslim League (N) have reached an agreement to collaborate in future politics in Pakistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Muslim Conference has announced.

The consensus was reached during a meeting at Model Town Lahore on Tuesday between PML-N President Shehbaz Sharif and the Muslim Conference delegation led by MC President Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan, as reported by Muslim Conference spokesperson Hameed Shaheen told APP.

The spokesperson said PML-N President, Shehbaz Sharif stated that the Muslim League and Muslim Conference were like two souls in one body, and this unity had spanned over the past 40 years.

Shehbaz mentioned that Mohammad Nawaz Sharif, Sardar Abdul Qayyum Khan, Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan, and their teams had stood united in national politics, and this unity needed to be maintained.

Shehbaz Sharif reiterated on the occasion that both parties give priority to unity in the Kashmiri freedom struggle, and they could not remain aloof from the special circumstances prevailing in occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

He expressed the belief that the understanding between PML-N and MC would have a positive impact on efforts to resolve the Kashmir dispute.

MC Chief Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan specially thanked for the inclusion of the Kashmir dispute in the electoral manifesto of the Pakistan Muslim League-N. Present in the meeting were ex-Federal Minister Khwaja Saad Raguie, President AJK Muslim League Shah Abdul Qadir, and others.



QUETTA: Representatives of different areas meeting with Governor Balochistan Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar

Pakistani crew rescued from Somali pirates by Indian Navy

NEW DELHI: The Indian Navy has conducted two anti-piracy operations in the Arabian Sea off Somalia and rescued two hijacked fishing vessels along with 36 crew, according to an official statement on Tuesday.

The Navy said that Indian Naval Ship Sumitra, deployed for anti-piracy and maritime security operations East of Somalia and Gulf of Aden, rescued crew from two vessels hijacked by pirates. According to the Navy, in an anti-piracy operation off the East Coast of Somalia, fishing vessel Al Naeemi and her crew—19 Pakistani nationals were rescued from 11 Somali pirates.

It also said on Sunday, the Navy responded to a distress message regarding the hijacking of an Iranian-flagged fishing vessel Iman.

"The FV was intercepted by INS Sumitra and following the SOPs (Standard operating procedure) and coercive posturing, the vessel and her crew (17 Iranian Nationals) were safely rescued in the early hours of 29 Jan 24," the statement said.

Indian Navy said over the course of "less than 36 hours", through "swift, persistent and relentless efforts," has rescued two hijacked Fishing Vessels along with 36 crew (17 Iranian and 19 Pakistani) in the Southern Arabian Sea and prevented "the misuse of these fishing vessels as mother ships for further acts of Piracy on merchant vessels."

Fake document attributed to Pak Head of Afghan Mission: FO Spox

ISLAMABAD (APP): Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zehra Baloch on Wednesday said that a document attributed to Pakistan's Ambassador to Afghanistan Ubaid Ur Rehman Nizamani on the social media was fake.

"Such fake letters are being circulated with malicious intent. We advise caution to all," she posted on X.

The fake document was purportedly addressed to the Afghan Acting Minister of Interior expressing concerns over statements on a water dam in the Kunar province.

ECP decides to reduce size of ballot papers

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) Wednesday said that a decision had been made to reduce the size of the ballot paper for the upcoming election scheduled for February 8.

In a high-level meeting convened to discuss the reprinting of ballot papers in certain constituencies, the Election Commission said that the decision to downsize the ballot paper was a response to a shortage of special security paper and time constraints.

The commission has decided that in areas where a reprint of ballot papers is deemed necessary, the printing process will commence only after the completion of the printing of ballot papers for all other constituencies across the country.

However, the feasibility of this decision depends on the availability of special security paper and the timely functioning of printing presses.

The ECP discussed the challenges posed by the need to reprint ballot papers in some constituencies, particularly in obtaining the required special security paper and completing the printing process in a timely manner. In 2018, a total of 800 tons were utilized for printing ballot papers.

However, the surge in the number of candidates in the 2024 elections has increased the requirement to a staggering 2400 tons.

PPP to address challenges, protect people's rights if voted to power: Khurshheed

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leader Syed Khurshheed Shah on Wednesday said that if voted to power, his party would involve everyone in addressing the country's challenges and to protect basic rights of people. Talking to PTV News, he said that whenever the PPP took reins of government it always endeavoured to resolve their problems and provide them maximum relief. He urged the public to exercise their right to vote carefully and choose the leadership which was committed to working for the country's development.

Khurshheed Shah said that PPP co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari had taken difficult but right decisions during difficult times. It was the PPP which could save Pakistan economically, he claimed.

Amir's brilliant bowling make Vipers win against Emirates

DUBAI (INP): Desert Vipers produced a nail-biting two-wicket win off the last ball after a fierce battle against MI Emirates in the 14th match of the DP World ILT20 season 2 at the Dubai International Stadium.

MI Emirates was restricted to 149 for 9 in 20 overs, but they fought back to reduce Vipers to 62 for 5. The fate of the match swung like a pendulum till the last over.

Vipers' Sherfane Rutherford lit up hopes of a victory through a quick 35 runs after taking 17 runs off Boul's 17th over with a six and two boundaries. Then Bravo had Rutherford caught by Kusal Perera at mid-on off a slower delivery. Shaheen Afridi (17n.0) and Luke Wood (6n.0) took up the challenge of scoring 17 runs from the last 12 balls and ten off the last over from Trent Boult to win off the last ball. They ran for the three runs needed to win off the last ball. Earlier MI Emirates' batting cracked against the tight bowling of Mohammad Amir (3 for 26), Luke Wood (2 for 32) and Matheesha Pathirana (2 for 32). Their total was shaped by Ambati Rayudu and Akeal Hosen's 49 runs partnership in 45 deliveries for the fifth wicket through knocks of 23 and 24 runs respectively.



QUETTA: Chief Secretary Balochistan Shakeel Qadir Khan presiding over a meeting

No one will be allowed to sabotage...

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The conference was briefed on the callous Indian campaign of extra-territorial and extra-judicial killings, perpetuating state-sponsored terrorism and targeting Pakistani citizens.

It agreed that blatant violation of international laws by India and its real face be exposed to the world.

The international community has already shown serious concerns over the criminal behaviour of India and its use of state apparatus for killing spree around the world," the forum noted.

It reiterated unequivocal support for Palestine and the people of Gaza while noting the extremely negative fallout of the conflict and the potential to spill over in the wider region.

The immediate need for a permanent ceasefire and enduring solution to the Palestinian question was unanimously recognised by the forum.

In the same vein, the forum reiterated Pakistan's resolve to support the people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IIOJK) for their right of self-determination.

Pakistan would continue to morally, politically and diplomatically support the Kashmiri brothers and sisters till justice was served in accordance with the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions, it added.

The forum also discussed deployment of Pakistan Army to assist the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) in the peaceful conduct of general elections 2024.

"The Pakistan Army will perform assigned duties as per the constitutional mandate, under the guidelines of ECP. No one would be allowed to indulge in violence in the name of political activity and sabotage the quintessential democratic exercise of conduct of free and fair elections," it resolved.

The forum acknowledged and appreciated the steps taken against the spectrum of illegal activities and criminal mafias including smuggling, hoarding, money laundering, power theft and illegal aliens.

The participants emphasised that such actions and their positive impact on the economy and well-being of the people needed to continue without any let up. The forum was briefed on operational preparedness of the formations. The COAS asked the formation commanders to continue their focus on the training, administration and morale of the soldiers.

Zubair Jamali reiterates interim Govt's...

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empowerment of Women and girls". This report is aimed to be presented by the commission in CSW68 to be held this year from March 11th to 22nd on the theme: "Accelerating the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective."

Addressing the gathering, Mir Zubair Jamali said that the women are provided wholehearted opportunity of freedom of expression.

He thanked the Chairperson Balochistan Commission on Status of Women and all United Nations partners including UN-Women, UNICEF, UNDP and others for extending cooperation to empower the women.

He said that women represent almost half of the country's population as such they would have to be encouraged besides highlighting their capabilities.

He said that there is a major role of women in our economy.

However their role is not formally recognised due to lack of conducive environment.

The caretaker Home Minister Muhammad Zubair, applauded the efforts of NCSW. He stated that women in Balochistan are progressive, viable, and performing their roles in every area. Our government is committed to eradicating poverty and providing our people with equal opportunities to grow. We do believe communities cannot end poverty without gender equality. Education, vocational training, and health facilities for women are our emphasis.

The Chairperson of NCSW also addressed the gathering and highlighted the overall functioning of her institution.

Chairperson NCSW Ms. Nilofar Bakhtiar extended gratitude to the Consortium partners for their continued support to NCSW and pre-CSW consultations. Talking about women in Pakistan and specifically Balochistan, she said females are deprived of their fundamental rights of equal opportunities for education, health, and economic growth. Females in rural areas, which are in majority in Balochistan, are very less educated and informed of their basic rights. Unfortunately out of 27 percent literate females of Balochistan, only 2 percent are rural-based. We need to understand that eradicating poverty is not possible without empowering women economically and providing them with equal opportunities to live and grow. Our focus towards sustainable remedies for gender-related challenges with a particular focus on economic empowerment and the eradication of poverty is needed. Civil Society Organizations, government departments and the commercial sector need to play their part towards gender equality to minimize poverty.

The Secretary NCSW Khawaja Imran thanked the chief guest for his presence and resolved to curb gender inequality. He thanked the consortium partners for their continued support to NCSW for its consultations across Pakistan. He also thanked the chief guest, government officials, civil society and media personnel present in the occasion.

Later, the chief guest of the closing session, Minister for Law and Parliamentary Affairs Aman Ullah Kinrani, said that the provincial government acknowledges the fact that empowering women is not just a matter of social justice but also an economic imperative. The women's inclusion and access to equal opportunities call for the need for creating equal opportunities for women in all sectors, ensuring that they have the same access to education, employment, and entrepreneurship. The issue of the gender gap can be addressed by the promotion of transparency and adherence to national and international commitments.

The Chairperson for Balochistan CSW Ms. Fauzia Shaheen thanked the efforts of NCSW for its support to the Balochistan Commission towards initiatives of poverty and economic uplift of women. She said investing in women's education and job training programs can be a key driver for sustainable development, social progress, and inclusive growth. Economically empowered women can lead progressive societies towards prosperous economies.

Speaking on the occasion, consortium partners from UNFPA, UNICEF, UNDP, and UN Women assured their commitment towards support to NCSW and shared their confidence in the efforts of NCSW in building grounds across Pakistan to provide women with their basic rights.

The consultations in Quetta were fruitful and provided valuable insights from provincial stakeholders. The NCSW will now compile the reports from all provinces and finalize the National report for submission to the CSW68.

Court issues written order regarding termination of defence's cross examination right

ISLAMABAD (APP): An Accountability Court (AC) on Wednesday issued a written order regarding termination of the right of defence for cross-examination of the prosecution witnesses in the Toshakhana case.

The court said that the prosecution witnesses had been appearing before it in several hearings but the defence lawyers used delaying tactics to avoid their cross-examination.

It further said that the accused were using delaying tactics by repeatedly changing lawyers for adjournment and the witnesses had to wait in jail for many hours.

The court said that the defence lawyers did not appear before it on January 24 and 25th.

The jail trial of the reference is continuing as per the notification of the federal government, it added.

The order said that the court was trying to complete the trial as soon as possible but the accused were deliberately disrupting the proceedings.

It further said that the accused could not be given any more opportunity to cross-examine the witnesses.



GWADAR: Deputy Commissioner Aurangzeb Badini presiding over a meeting regarding arrangement of general elections

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ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi, Caretaker Federal Minister for Education Madad Ali Sindhi, Vice Chancellor AIOU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood in a group photo during convocation of Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU), at Jinnah Convention Centre.

Madad Ali Sindhi stresses to revamp existing govt schools' education system

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training Madad Ali Sindhi Wednesday stressed the need for structural reforms to ensure quality education on merit and for up-gradation of existing government school system for sustainable economic growth.

Talking to PTV news channel, he called for revamping the education system to prepare students to effectively face the challenges of new century, while upholding the Pakistani values and ethos at the same time.

To a query, he said the caretaker government in a short span of time, performed well and work hard for education reform agenda on a priority basis.

Political parties should keep the education reforms agenda on the top of their election manifestos by ensuring quality education in government schools and affordability to the masses at the doorstep.

"Policymakers and the next five years' government must ensure that every child receives a holistic and quality education in government schools," he added.

Minister advised the government, academia and the industry bodies to join hands in implementing rigorous academic standards and in creating the necessary infrastructure.

Voicing his other serious concern over instances of social and gender discrimination, he called for a

change in the mindset of the society.

Caretaker government did all to improve the education system in government sector, adding, he personally hold various meetings with provincial ministers to enrolled out of school children.

"He said we tried our best to ensure a uniform and quality educational system in the country besides improving the ability of public sector teachers to modernize the education system. He said the condition of government schools need to be improved, adding that the services of private schools cannot also be ignored.

The public-private schools would equally be standardized across the country, he mentioned.

Toshakhana, 190 million pounds cases: IHC declares notification regarding jail trial of Imran, Bushra Bibi as correct

ISLAMABAD (Online): Islamabad High Court (IHC) has declared as correct notification regarding jail trial of PTI founder Imran Khan in Toshakhana and 190 million pounds cases.

Chief Justice (CJ) IHC Aamer Farooq and Justice Tariq Jahangiri issued the detailed decision. The court rejected the objections of petitioner on appointment of judge of Accountability Court (AC).

The court while rejecting PTI founder petitions against jail trial in two NAB references remarked prima facie jail trial is there keeping in view life threats to the petitioner. Apparently jail trial is not based on malafide intent.

It has been said in the decision that the powers for determining the venue of sessions court rest with the

executive as per NAB law. If executive order is not there then the respective court can issue order for hearing the case on some other venue. In the presence of executive order, the respective court has to hear the case at the given venue.

IHC remarked the appeal related to the pending hearing matter under official secret act before two members bench in cipher case.

Due to lack of clear law in official secret act with reference to determination for venue of the court, section 352 of criminal procedure will be applicable to official secret act case.

The court said that high court rules and section 352 of criminal procedure will be applicable only when sessions court passes order in regard to venue.



ISLAMABAD: Children are playing with Hail outside their house at sector I-8 after the heavy Hail Storm in the Federal Capital.

ISSI to collaborate with Int'l centre for integrated mountain development

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Centre for Strategic Perspectives (CSP) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) on Wednesday hosted a fruitful in-house session with Dr. Pema Gyamtsho, Director General of the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), Nepal.

The meeting brought together key representatives from both organizations including Director General ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, Director CSP Dr. Neelum Nigar, and CSP research team, Shekhar Gimire, Director Operation, ICIMOD, and Dr. Faisal Mueen, Intervention Manager, ICIMOD, a news release said.

Executive Director, Civil Society Coalition for Climate Change (CSCCC), Aisha Khan also attended the meeting.

In her introductory remarks, Dr. Neelum Nigar

extended a warm welcome to the ICIMOD delegation. On the occasion, Ambassador Sohail Mahmood highlighted ISSI's efforts in organizing various international and national conferences on climate change and its effects, multi stakeholder consultation in the pre and post COP28 phases. He also highlighted the ISSI's commitment to deepen its collaboration with civil society on cross-cutting issues.

He emphasized that ISSI and ICIMOD should collaborate to promote objectives relating to awareness about challenges posed by climate change on mountains, glaciers and mountain communities.

Dr. Gyamtsho, in his remarks, emphasized ICIMOD's interest in working closely with ISSI on issues of mutual interests particularly focusing on the need for regional cooperation on climate change.

Senate body on law and justice meets

Independent Report
ISLAMABAD: The Senate Standing Committee on Law and Justice convened Wednesday chaired by Senator Ali Zafar in Islamabad.

The committee commenced by extending warm congratulations to Senator Sania Nishtar for her appointment as the CEO of GAVI. Additionally, Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayyed was acknowledged and congratulated on his election as the Vice President of IPU's Human Rights Body.

During the meeting, extensive discussions were held regarding the Constitution Amendment Bill

2024 (Amendment of Article 51) introduced by Senators Kauda Babar, Manzoor Ahmed Kakar, Naseebullah Bazai, Sana Jamali, and Danesh Kumar in the Senate sitting on January 1st, 2024. Senator Danesh Kumar emphasized that the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan designates ten reserved seats for non-Muslims in the National Assembly, with the entire country as the constituency.

This unrestricted geographical allocation allows political parties to nominate candidates freely, resulting in disproportionate representation favoring populous provinces.

FGEHA, Hammer Properties signs MoU to provide residential plots

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federal Government Employees Housing Authority (FGEHA) and MS Hammer Properties Pvt Ltd Wednesday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to provide residential plots to government employees at a low rate with the help of the private sector.

The signing ceremony was presided over by Di-

rector General FGEHA Capt. (Retd) Muhammad Zafar Iqbal participated by Chief Executive Officer, MS Hammer Properties Mohammad Sohail Khan and other senior officials of the authority, said a news release issued here. Director Joint Venture Projects briefed the details regarding the MoU and said that under the agreement around 530 acres of land located near M-9 Motorway.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture, Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Pakistan Yezhan Kistafin and others are looking at painting during movie screening titled "Kazakh Khanate Diamond Sword" at Pakistan National Council of the Arts in the Federal Capital.

Kaspersky solutions declared most effective in anti-malware protection

ISLAMABAD (INP): Amid the current prevalence of malware attacks, Kaspersky's anti-malware tools have achieved the highest possible rating in examination by independent security testing company SE Labs.

Kaspersky Endpoint Security for Business, Kaspersky Small Office Security and Kaspersky Plus were subjected to a mixture of targeted attacks using well-established techniques and threats found live on the internet at the time of the test. All three products were awarded the maximum possible 1136 points and an "AAA" awards certificate.

According to a recent Kaspersky global study, 28% of companies all over the world experienced cyber incidents due to malware attacks in the last two years. The majority of cyber incidents occurred in financial organizations, telecommunications companies, critical infrastructures such as energy, oil and gas,

because employees downloaded malware.

In SE Labs' anti-malware protection test, Kaspersky Small Office Security and Kaspersky Endpoint Security for Business were tested in the "small business" and the "enterprise" categories respectively, while Kaspersky Plus was assessed in the "home" segment. Test scenarios in this examination represented real-world cyberattacks, allowing vendors to show the effectiveness of endpoint security solutions in terms of detection, prevention, and mitigation.

All Kaspersky products received the highest 400 points in the "Protection Accuracy Rating", as they detected and blocked all threats and didn't allow them to compromise the system. Additionally, maximum of 736 points were earned in the "Legitimate Accuracy Ratings" as the products classified legitimate applications and URLs correctly.

Ali advises students to make career decisions based on future environmental, sectoral needs

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Energy, Muhammad Ali, on Wednesday advised the students to make their career decisions based on future environmental and sectoral needs.

While inaugurating the first-ever national-level 'Fuelling Futures Career Expo 2024,' organized by the Ministry of Energy (Petroleum Division) in collaboration with Pakistan Petroleum Limited (PPL), he highlighted the critical nature of the energy and minerals sectors, encouraging students to explore career paths in these areas.

The event witnessed an overwhelming attendance of students, faculty, and company representatives.

Muhammad Ali said that the Expo is planned for students to explore career opportunities with energy and minerals being showcased by respective companies in the event.

The energy minister noted that there is massive transformation happening in the Energy sector globally and the commodity should be affordable, accessible, and sustainable for the consumers.

He said that Pakistan

is energy deficient and an oil importer, and there is an opportunity to convert the energy deficiency country into the surplus.

"There are many in-demand mineral resources in the country with opportunities for their extraction in the future," he added.

MD and CEO PPL Imran Abbasi on the occasion welcomed the large number of students from across the country and thanked the participating companies and universities for making the two-day Career Expo a success.

He said that the plat-

form provides an opportunity for students to interact with the leaders of the energy and minerals industry and to learn from their experiences with the view to selecting, pursuing careers in the Oil, Gas, and Mineral sector.

Around 5000 students from across Pakistan along with faculty members and staff of around 30 universities and schools have participated in the event.

The managing directors, senior management, and staff of 14 oil, gas, and mineral companies also attended the Expo.



ISLAMABAD: The 4th meeting of the steering committee for the 2024 South Asian Games was chaired by the Caretaker Federal Minister for Inter-Provincial Coordination (IPC) Fawad Hassan Fawad and Ministry of Planning Development & Special Initiatives, Muhammad Sami Saeed.

Chairperson BISP emphasizes role of call agents as ambassadors of empathy, support

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Dr. Muhammad Amjad Saqib during his visit to the newly established BISP call centre underscored the crucial role of call agents as ambassadors of empathy and support for the poorest and most deprived citizens of Pakistan.

The BISP call centre has recently been established at the National Telecommunication Corporation (NTC) to inform and address the grievances of the general public related to BISP. DG NTC, Faisal Bashir Ch briefed Dr. Amjad Saqib that this centre is operational with more than 25 call agents and is

set to expand its capacity in the future to further assist the vulnerable segments of society. Dr. Amjad Saqib stressed the need for a Performance Evaluation Mechanism for call agents to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in their services.

He emphasized the ethical treatment of the needy by call agents during his visit to the call centre, acknowledging their significance in facilitating the underprivileged. He expressed gratitude to the NTC for its collaboration in establishing this advanced call centre, which aims to enhance the overall perception of BISP.

"Helping the poor is equivalent to charity and worship," remarked Dr. Amjad Saqib, highlighting the noble cause that the BISP call centre serves.

He believed that the call centre would play a pivotal role in improving the public's perception of the institution and providing authentic information, as well as expediting the resolution of complaints.

Dr. Amjad Saqib affirmed that all complaints lodged through the Complaint Management System would be directly forwarded to BISP field offices for prompt resolution. This commitment to efficient complaint resolution aims to streamline the process and ensure that the needs of the citizens are met effectively.

CDA starts cleanliness drive

ISLAMABAD (APP): Capital Development Authority here on Wednesday started special drive for cleaning of markets in the federal capital.

The special cleanliness drive was started from Aabpara market and it will be extended rest of the commercial areas of the city.

Different teams were formed by the Sanitation Directorate for said special campaign, which will wash the roads, footpaths.

Director Sanitation, Mashuq Ali Sheikh personally supervised the process and announced that other markets across the city will also be specially cleaned on the pattern of Aabpara market.

4 killed as passenger van plunges into ravine in Dir Bala

ISLAMABAD (APP): At least four people were killed while other several passengers sustained injuries as a speedy van fell into a ravine near Dir Bala on early Wednesday morning.

According to details, Rescue sources said that the speedy van was en route when the driver lost control on a bend in the road, which was slippery with snow and rain, a private news channel reported.

Rescue teams, locals and police arrived at the spot after receiving information.

IHC reserves judgment on PTI founder, Bushra petition against Nikah in Iddat case

ISLAMABAD (Online): Islamabad High Court (IHC) has reserved judgment on PTI founder and Bushra Bibi petition against Nikah during iddat case.

The petitions seeking dismissal of Nikah during iddat case came up for hearing in IHC Wednesday.

Chief Justice (CJ) IHC Aamer Farooq took up the case for hearing.

Suleman Akram Raja and Usman Riaz Gill gave arguments on behalf of PTI founder and Bushra Bibi.

Suleman Akram Raja while giving references to

different court's decisions said Shariah Appellate Tribunal of Supreme Court (SC) decision is there that if nikah takes place after 39 days it cannot be declared annulled. This can be described as regular nikah.

Rizwan Abbasi prosecution counsel said if January 1 Nikah was correct then why the necessity for solemnizing second nikah was felt. Who were witnesses and nikah khan in second nikah they are witnesses in this case. The court reserved the judgment after hearing the arguments.



ISLAMABAD: Youngsters are sitting around fire keep warm them during rainy weather in the Federal Capital.

ECP grants first-class magistrate powers to Presiding Officers

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has delegated first-class magistrate powers to the Presiding Officers to ensure the seamless execution of the general elections in 2024.

"All the Presiding Officers will have the powers of magistrate from February 7 to 9 in the upcoming general elections on February 8," the spokesman of the ECP told APP.

The spokesman said that the Presiding Officers will be able to conduct trials on the spot besides the powers to be able them to proceed under Sections 169, 171 and 174 of the Election Act.

He said the ECP had

already granted the powers of a first-class magistrate to the District Returning Officers (DROs) and Returning Officers (ROs) to ensure smooth electoral process.

"The magisterial powers were conferred upon District Returning Officers (DROs) and Returning Officers (ROs) in accordance with Section 193 of the Election Act 2017," he added.

These powers can be utilized by ROs and DROs during the general elections for national and provincial assemblies in Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Balochistan until the official announcement of final results for the candidates.



ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervez Ashraf Launching the Web Portal for the Parliamentary Reporters Association (PRA).



Daily Voice of Masses Independent

Thursday February 01, 2024

Cipher case result

The writing had been on the wall. Given how hastily the special court, appointed under the Official Secrets Act, had been proceeding in the cipher case trial, seemingly without regard for due process, a rushed verdict had been expected.

It was delivered yesterday, a week before the country heads to polls, with sentences of 10 years' imprisonment for both former prime minister Imran Khan and former foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi.

Special Court Judge Abul Hasnat Zulqarnain, who oversaw the proceedings inside Adiala Jail, read out the verdict even as the accused — now convicts — were protesting the denial of their trial rights.

It bears noting that the Islamabad High Court had ordered retrials of this same case on two previous occasions, noting each time glaring procedural irregularities in how it was being conducted. The third attempt doesn't seem to have gone differently, and many observers predict the higher courts may not be charitable towards the special court whenever the verdict goes into appeal. Given the IHC's earlier rebukes, it is worth asking what the special court was seeking to accomplish by concluding the matter so hastily. Considering that the death penalty had been sought against both politicians, the situation called for far more restraint.

Instead, there were some bizarre developments over the weekend: the judge appointed state counsel for the defendants without their consent, and later reportedly denied the defendants their right to cross-examine the prosecution's witnesses. Meanwhile, the legal teams appointed by the two accused complained that they were repeatedly denied access to the proceedings.

To top it off, on Monday, the case was wrapped up at breakneck speed in a marathon session that ran till well into the night. Everything made it seem as if some kind of deadline had been set for the trial to be concluded and a verdict issued.

From Mr Khan waving a paper from the podium as he addressed a large political gathering, claiming that he had unearthed a conspiracy against his government, to his conviction for divulging state secrets, the cipher saga will be remembered as a sorry episode in our diplomatic, legal and political history.

A diplomatic faux pas was needlessly dragged into a political dispute. The immediate fallout saw already soured relations with the US deteriorate further, and for no meaningful purpose.

Politically, the conspiracy narrative proved less useful in bolstering public sympathy for the PTI than its political opponents' failure to manage the precarious economic situation they inherited from its ouster.

Lastly, whatever case there may have been against Mr Khan and Mr Qureshi, it was weakened irreparably by conducting the trial in haste. What good did any of it achieve? One can only marvel at the shortsightedness displayed by all actors in this sordid drama.

Rafia Zakaria

For months now, Muslims across the world have seen the people of Gaza suffer unspeakable horrors. According to the United Nations, the condition is beyond horrific with few working toilets and no place to shower for the thousands crammed into makeshift camps, hospitals, schools and anything still standing. Because this situation has gone on for so long, there are new problems emerging from the overcrowding. There are outbreaks of dysentery and respiratory illness — thanks to the absence of facilities to maintain a hygienic environment and the lack of sufficient food and water to nourish the sick and aid their recovery.

Then this past weekend, matters got even worse. The US, the UK, Australia, Germany and several other countries declared that they would suspend funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency. This is catastrophic news for Gazans who have already faced unimaginable horrors since Oct 7. In response, the agency

suspended "several" of its employees following allegations by Israel that some UNRWA staffers had a role in the Oct 7 Hamas strike.

The suspension of aid by these nations is a grotesque and heartless move. Undoubtedly, these countries are aware of what their actions are likely to do for those suffering in Gaza. The move came hours after the International Court of Justice declared that Israel should prevent a genocide against the Palestinians. This move likely annoyed Israel and its allies who have held that their massive bombing, shelling and raids of Gaza are justified because of the Oct 7 attacks. It also called into question the Israeli insistence that its actions in Gaza are justified as self-defence by "using any means necessary".

Even as all this was happening, the Qataris were holding a meeting with Israel, the CIA and Egypt to come up with an elusive ceasefire. The sticking point in that negotiation is that Israel is not willing to agree to a permanent ceasefire, as it wants to be able to go back into Gaza and carry out further operations there whenever it

deems it necessary.

The actions of those supporting Israel and suspending humanitarian funding are despicable. At the same time, given the length of the conflict and the desperation of the Gazans it is worth asking why Muslim humanitarian organisations have not been able to raise more funds to help the people in Gaza. It is not because there isn't a framework to do this. Following 9/11 and the designation of many Western-based Islamic charities as implicated in terrorist funding (most of the allegations are baseless) many new Islamic charities with wider networks have emerged.

Meanwhile, a number of Muslim charities have done incredible work. One of them is Islamic Relief. The charity has been instrumental in providing aid all across the Muslim world — from the floods in Pakistan to running a camp of thousands of refugees in Yemen. Islamic Relief is collecting funds for Gaza but considering the thousands of people who have poured into the streets to protest against Israeli actions, there has not been a similar out-

pouring of funds being sent to the impoverished and war-affected: people have spoken with their feet but not with their wallets.

However, the people of the Muslim world can be forgiven. After all, most Muslim countries are poor and the people praying for Gaza within them are barely eking out an existence themselves. The post-Covid era has brought about joblessness, inflation and ailing economies. Predatory leaders regularly milk these publics for their own benefit, and so theirs is hardly an enviable existence.

There are, however, many rich Muslim countries. Headquartered in Saudi Arabia, the International Islamic Relief Organisation (different from the previously mentioned Islamic Relief) has made commitments to providing crisis relief at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016. It has a budget running into tens of millions of dollars. Despite this, it is unclear what exactly this organisation is doing to help the people of Gaza. Surely, Muslim nations

can pump in more funds if they really want to help the people of Gaza.

The announcement of the suspension of aid to UNRWA should have spurred an immediate meeting of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. It is not known why hardly any Muslim country has made an effort to go beyond condemnatory statements and token assistance. Watching the videos of the recent wedding of the prince of Brunei I could not help but wonder how many people could be saved in Gaza if his new princess donated just one of the incredibly large diamond necklaces she wore to the many ceremonies.

The humanitarian aid complex, created as it was following the two world wars, has always been in the hands of Western nations who deem who is "human" enough to be considered a part of humanity. The issues faced by non-white populations, largely Muslims, lie on the margins of the Western imagination; sometimes these people are considered human enough to receive

humanitarian assistance.

When this happens, the UN can come marching in with tents and blankets, and conditions can at least be marginally improved. The Gazans have been deemed inhuman by this logic and they are suffering the consequences of that designation at the hands of the countries who have chosen to suspend funding to UNRWA. This need not be a death knell for the Gazans, Muslim countries can make up whatever deficit there is in funding, thus making a clear statement that the persecuted, displaced people of Gaza are not available to the West to abuse at will. There is an ideological position in this — for years now, Israel has wanted the dissolution of UNRWA clearly because it is a group created especially for Palestinian refugees to provide them with assistance and services. Allowing UNRWA to be dismembered in this manner is to allow Israel and the US to say that the long-suffering Palestinians do not have the right to return. -- Courtesy Dawn

The land where time stands still

Dr Ayesha Razzaque

A few weeks ago, I was invited to a panel on the issue of harassment on university campuses. The audience comprised students, 20-something-year-old men and women, from various public universities within driving distance from the capital.

Given the theme of the event, I was expecting some self-awareness, but incidents of harassment were unfolding in the audience while the programme was being conducted. At one point, the programme even had to be brought to a halt and organizers had to step in to re-establish order in a section of the audience.

Some of the conversation at the event, and the thinking it betrayed, could have made you believe the year was not 2024, but 2004 or 1984 (pun intended). One solution to campus harassment of women that was put forward was the same enforcement of mandatory uniforms, implying once again that it is women's choice of clothing that invites harassment and that the onus of stopping harassment rests

on them, something that has been debunked every time it is brought up in public discourse for decades.

One member of the panel proudly presented their solution to verbal harassment — slapping the offender: that is, escalating the situation by responding with physical violence and inviting violence in turn. Instead of recoiling with horror, this anecdote was met with roaring laughter and approval. Ours is a brutalized society where it is well known that the slightest affront can quickly escalate into a scuffle, even deadly violence.

Advising young people to inject violence into possibly already dangerous situations is irresponsible. In civilized societies, there is a firm line between verbal abuse and disagreements on one side and physical violence on the other, and crossing it is never acceptable. When an entire auditorium, filled with university graduates no less, cheers such anecdotes (real or made up), you know that society still has a lot of evolving to do.

Inevitably, someone in the audience had to bring up the state-sanctioned solution that someone even-

tually always brings up: that the solution to all our national woes is a stronger dose of religion, an idea that has been around since at least the '80s. Never mind the fact that mandatory religious indoctrination in public (and much of private) education in Pakistan now (by some measures) well exceeds that of our spiritual mothership — Saudi Arabia. And in the age of TikTok, (usually) a cocky young man delivers this opinion in the form of rousing sermons and a tone that disinvents further arguments (or else?) while being recorded, possibly in the hope of going viral and hitting the social media clout jackpot.

Never mind that nearly half the youth nationwide wish to head for the country's exit doors, mostly to more or less secular societies. On Twitter threads, Pakistanis are asking neighbours across our eastern border to reconcile their secular constitution with the daily news reports of violence against minorities coming out of their country, but then turn around to demand a theocracy at home. All this while remaining completely oblivious to their own con-

traditions.

One young man in the audience asked to be explained whether sending 'Good morning' messages — the unsolicited eye-roll-inducing staple of South Asian WhatsApp — constitutes harassment. The snickering from the audience that accompanied the question told you that everyone fully understood that stubbornly sending unwelcome messages to people is just poorly disguised harassment. Nevertheless, that did not dissuade some in the audience from attempting reductio ad absurdum arguments, possibly in the hope of identifying a loophole to low-level harassment. The basic etiquette of leaving people who do not wish to talk is too much to comprehend for some, despite the discourse around these issues in recent years.

This issue has frequently been at the forefront of public discourse in recent years and has been dissected and re-dissected. These talking points should stand long debunked and buried. Instead, like zombies in 'The Walking Dead', they refuse to die, they rise again, and they travel in groups. It seems a lot of

people are unwilling to learn, to pick up a book and inform themselves on issues, to be willing to change their opinion, attitude and behaviour. I am beginning to believe that the stunting resulting from malnourishment that a vast segment of our population suffers from may be to blame. If my opinions today seem unusually harsh and make me sound frustrated, it is because I am.

Between 2019 and 2022, the country had a public debate on the Single National Curriculum (SNC), the brainchild of the PM of the time. Part of that debate early on was to have not just a single curriculum, but a single school system in the country. The stated goal was to level educational opportunities for all. What it would have done is take away choices from professional and middle-class parents while preserving them for the wealthiest, who can school their children abroad. At the same time, the architects of this ill-conceived plan also acknowledged the much greater effectiveness of alternate foreign high school exams (IGCSE, O/A-level, IB). While the PTI government and the PDM govern-

ment that came next, rammed through the SNC for public schools, the idea of ending other school systems was thankfully shelved.

I found little to disagree with in the raft of programmes promised for the education sector. Clearly, a committee sat down and put some thought into it but here is my question: Did anyone estimate the cost of each programme (and where can we find those numbers)?

Lately, any issue I look at — social or political — makes it seem like we, as a society, are standing still. Pick an issue, and it seems like nothing has changed in decades. Few seem able or willing to inform themselves on issues before forming an opinion. Fewer still are willing to change their opinion in the face of new facts. Whether that is a manifestation of the lack of those elusive 'critical thinking' everyone demands or something else, I do not know. Every day it feels like we are stuck in 2014/2004/1994/1984/1974, in a land where nothing changes, nothing is learned — a land where time stands still. -- Courtesy TheNews

Changing India

Javid Husain

Two critical developments are radically transforming India, with far-reaching implications for its minorities, the region, and the world at large.

The first and foremost is the transformation of a secular India, as envisioned by its founding fathers, into a Hindu rashtra driven by Hindutva. The second development is the rapid economic growth of India over the past three decades, which has catapulted its economy to the fifth position at the global level.

The growing sway of Hindutva in India under the leadership of the Modi-led BJP, which is closely allied with RSS, gives shrinking political and social space to non-Hindu religious minorities, which are facing increasing difficulties in leading their lives according to their own social and religious customs, besides discrimination generally.

This is not surprising if one looks at the philosophy of RSS as defined by its founder, V.D. Savarkar, and his successors. For instance, M.S. Golwalkar, the second RSS supreme leader, stressed that non-Hindu minorities "must cease to be foreigners, or may stay in the country wholly subordinated to the Hindu nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far less any preferential treatment — not even citizens' rights".

The statements and policy decisions of the Modi-led BJP government and its leaders clearly reflect this policy of Hindutva in action. There have been frequent reports of mob attacks on Muslims and their persecution; in some cases, there has been a tragic loss of lives with

the connivance of local officials. As chief minister of Gujarat, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was implicated in the deadly anti-Muslim attacks.

The official consecration of the Ram temple on the site of Babri Masjid in Ayodhya under Modi's leadership is the latest example of the continued implementation of the Hindutva agenda. BJP activists are agitating to replace mosques with temples at many other sites.

The growing sway of Hindutva in India is not only bad news for the Muslims and other minorities in the country, it is also the harbinger of a belligerent approach by New Delhi towards its neighbours in pursuit of its hegemonic designs in South Asia and the Indian Ocean region.

Under Modi, one can expect India to pursue a hard-line policy in handling its relations with Pakistan. The annexation of occupied Kashmir by India in August 2019, in violation of UN Security Council resolutions, was a clear example of this belligerent approach, as was the earlier Indian air attack on Balakot.

Indian support to terrorist groups in Balochistan and its nefarious designs against Pakistan's security were established by the arrest of Indian agent Kulbhushan Jadhav in March 2016. India has also been following a long-term policy of weakening Pakistan's friendly relations with Iran by attempting to exploit Pakistan-Iran policy differences on Afghanistan, cross-border terrorism, and sectarian issues.

It is unfortunate that both Iran and Pakistan in the past failed to come to grips with the machinations of India and some non-regional powers in

exacerbating their bilateral tensions on account of the issue of cross-border terrorism as reflected by the recent exchange of air strikes between them.

Hopefully, the recent visit of the Iranian foreign minister to Islamabad would lead to the strengthening of Pakistan-Iran cooperation in combating cross-border terrorism as announced by the foreign ministers of the two countries.

India's rapid economic growth provides it with the resources for the build-up of its military might and the realisation of its hegemonic designs in South Asia and the Indian Ocean region.

According to IMF estimates, India's GDP was estimated to be \$3.73 trillion in 2023 as against \$341 billion only for Pakistan. This enabled India to increase its defence budget to \$81.4bn as against \$10.3bn for Pakistan in 2022, according to the research institute Sipri. The huge and growing difference between the power potential of the two countries could have serious consequences for Pakistan's security.

Pakistan, therefore, cannot afford to lower its guard in the management of its relations with India. We should avoid the mistakes of the two extremes of appeasement, which will merely embolden India, and a high-risk and adventurist policy which will prove to be counterproductive as our Kargil experience shows.

Instead, Pakistan should adopt a long-term approach for the realisation of its own strategic goals based on the synthesis of the political, economic, diplomatic, and military dimensions of policy in facing the enduring threat to its security emanating from India. -- Courtesy Dawn

Israel über alles

Mahir Ali

Once the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague endorsed the substance of South Africa's case against Israel (albeit not in its entirety) last week, the Zionist project's international collaborators were as desperate for a distraction as Israel. The latter promptly provided it with the allegation that a dozen UNRWA employees participated in the Oct 7 atrocities in southern Israel.

Led by the US, Germany and UK, a number of Western nations and their allies suspended their crucial funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, which was set up in 1949, in the wake of the Nakba, to provide means of subsistence to Palestinian refugees. These include basic education, primary healthcare and other vital services. Its operations stretch from Gaza and East Jerusalem to the West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.

A secondary distraction was provided by a drone attack that killed three US personnel and injured dozens in Jordan. US media reports suggest the drone wasn't intercepted based on the suspicion that it might be 'friendly' (Israeli), and that the US authorities had no idea where it came from, although they showed no hesitation in blaming 'Iranian-allied' militias and vowing vengeance. That's the latter-day equivalent of the much-mocked command to "round up the usual suspects", but perhaps the bigger question is why there should be a US military base where Jordan's borders meet those of Syria and Iraq — or anywhere else in the country.

'Guilty until proved innocent' also applies to UNRWA, which has previously been accused by Israel of preaching hatred

in its schools — which, mind you, help to place the Palestinians among the best-educated Arab populations. The accusation cannot be taken seriously in a milieu where reciting the true history of Israel as a colonial-settler society is deemed antisemitic, and there is no equivalent focus on the pernicious nonsense drummed into the innocent minds of Israeli schoolchildren.

UNRWA has suspended nine of its accused employees pending an internal probe, and two others are among the dozens of staff killed in Israel's latest invasion of Gaza. It is distressing that the accusations involving 0.01pc of its 13,000 employees, whether or not true, have been deemed sufficient by so many Western states to cut off funding to one of the only organisations that may be able to avert a famine. All too many of them, meanwhile, continue to arm and diplomatically abet the perpetrators of what the ICJ deems a potential genocide.

That impression was consolidated on Sunday when 11 members of the Netanyahu cabinet attended a congregation in Jerusalem tagged the 'Victory of Israel Conference: Settlement Brings Security', which called for the 'voluntary migration' of Palestinians away from the Gaza Strip. That not only defies the ICJ's interim injunction against incitement to genocide, but also reflects the Nazi attitude towards European Jews before the Germans opted for gas chambers.

Notwithstanding the 'never again' slogan of 80 years ago, the Zionists brought with them to the 'promised land' the Nazi concepts of lebensraum and intermenschens — territorial expansion and lesser beings, the first applying to European Jews and the second to Palestinians. The devotion to their

would-be exterminators stretched to hiring one of Hitler's leading henchmen, Otto Skorzeny, as a Mossad hitman — after he had, equally deplorably, served as military adviser to Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser.

It was the Nazi regime's expansionism, rather than the related Judeocide, that propelled the British and eventually joint Anglo-American response — although the latter was also instigated by the Soviet advance into Eastern Europe after the Red Army had turned the tide against the Wehrmacht. It remains to be seen how far the Israel Defence Forces will go before any nation other than the dispersed Palestinians steps up to challenge the Israelis.

The resistance so far has been restricted to so-called non-state actors. Saudi Arabia remains keen on establishing formal ties with Israel. Arab and other Muslim states have vaguely backed South Africa's case at the ICJ, but none of them has officially signed up as a party to the dispute, as Germany has disgustingly done on behalf of Israel, even as it shaves off its own neo-Nazis.

Whatever the ICJ's verdict, it is likely to come too late to halt the genocide. It may depend on how far Israel goes henceforth, but its establishment is accustomed to defying UN injunctions — as long as the pecuniary and moral assistance from the US and the rest of the West remains intact. It does not have much to worry about on that score. Its self-conception of uber alles remains intact among its acolytes, whose every action is directed towards enabling Israel to achieve its clearly genocidal and arguably Nazi-like aims. -- Courtesy Dawn

CM Naqvi inaugurates first govt cancer care hospital

Independent Report
LAHORE: The first cancer hospital at the government level has been made operational on the special direction of Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi.

The CM inaugurated the Mayo Cancer Care Hospital at Manawan, here on Wednesday.

Mohsin Naqvi while announcing to provide free treatment facility to the patients in the cancer hospital revealed that every patient will be provided free treatment and no patient suffering from any stage will be denied treatment in the first government cancer hospital. For the time being, the cancer hospital comprises 100-beds and will be increased up to 1000-beds in the coming few years. The CM visited the cancer hospital and reviewed facilities being

provided to the patients. He obtained a token from the machine and ordered to simplify the automated system, adding that besides English writing, Urdu writing should also be displayed on the token machine for the facilitation of the patients. The CM reviewed the treatment mechanism of the cancer patients and monitored the whole chemotherapy mechanism. He visited the room for collecting blood samples and also planted a sapling in the lawn of the hospital.

Mohsin Naqvi issued directions to write in the Urdu language on the sign boards for the facilitation of patients. He revealed that Chemotherapy and surgery will be carried out in the cancer hospital. All the administrative and financial affairs of the cancer hospital have been handed over entirely to the

King Edward Medical College University. A state of the art hospital has been built for the treatment of cancer patients at the government level, headed.

The CM apprised that the cancer treatment is highly expensive which a common man cannot afford, adding that free treatment will be provided to the patients in this hospital. It is a dire need of the people of Punjab to have a high-quality cancer hospital at the government level. It is the foremost responsibility of the government to provide a state of the art hospital for cancer patients at the government level, headed.

CM Naqvi while addressing the inaugural ceremony of the Mayo Cancer Care Hospital apprised that the first complete cancer care hospital of Punjab has been established.



LAHORE: Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi cutting the ribbon to inaugurate Mayo Cancer Care Hospital Manawa.

Sindh CM urges govt partners to help establish social protection system

KARACHI (APP): Caretaker Sindh Chief Minister Justice (Retd) Maqbool Baqar on Wednesday urged the provincial government's partners to help establish a social protection system that empowers and safeguards the most vulnerable segments of the society.

Speaking at a "Consultative Seminar on Social Protection in Sindh", he commended the organizers in bringing together diverse perspectives and expertise for exploring ways to strengthen the social protection system in the province. The chief minister

expressed gratitude to the participants for their valuable contributions to the crucial dialogue, highlighting the collaborative spirit that was essential for the success of the government's endeavours.

He stated that the Sindh Government "provides effective social assistance and protection to the most vulnerable people".

He emphasized the crucial role of a well-coordinated and comprehensive social protection system in alleviating poverty and promoting equity among the diverse population of the province.

He also stressed the importance of being aware of the significant impact the government's decisions could have on the lives of "those who rely on their well-being".

He said that the discussions in the seminar and the associated documentation had shed light on the challenges within the social protection framework.

"These challenges include fragmentation across programmes, gaps in coverage, coordination deficiencies, targeting inefficiencies, and inadequacies in monitoring and evaluation mechanisms."

Punjab Governor says: Prophet Muhammad (SAWW) life and teachings are source of guidance for all mankind

Independent Report
LAHORE: Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman today attended the "Serat-ul-Nabi (SAW)" prize distribution ceremony at Al Hamra Hall Mall Road Lahore as a special guest.

Speaking on this occasion, Punjab Governor Muhammad Balighur Rehman said that love and reverence for Prophet Muhammad (Peace be Upon Him) is a part of every Muslim's faith. Governor Punjab said that Prophet Muhammad's life and teachings are the source of guidance for all mankind. He emphasized that we should take guidance from Serat Tayyaba (Peace be Upon Him) in order to build a society based on love, tolerance, and brotherhood. Governor Punjab appreciated the author of the book, Rai Manzoor Nasir, and said

that he did a commendable work by writing a very simple and easy to understand book on the Prophet's (PBUH) life and teachings. Governor Punjab also appreciated the efforts of Rai Manzoor Nasir for organizing the first unique competition on the Serat ul Nabi (PBUH). He said that organizing the prize distribution ceremony for the winners of Serat-ul-Nabi (SAW) competition is a good initiative. On this occasion, Punjab Governor Muhammad Balighur Rehman distributed prizes among the winners of Serat ul Nabi (SAW) Competition. Former Punjab Governor, Chaudhry Mohammad Sarwar, senior journalist Hassan Nisar, Mujibur Rahman Shami, Mufti Abdul Rahim, Justice Nazir Ghazi and a large number of people were present in the ceremony.



LAHORE: Governor of Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman, giving check to winner Muhammad Ismail during International Competition Serat-ul-Nabi (Peace Be Upon Him) at Al-Hamra Hall, in Provincial Capital.

Punjab Police will never forget eternal sacrifice of constable Arshad: IGP

Independent Report
LAHORE: IG Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar visited Qila Gujjar Singh Police Lines, attended the funeral prayers of Shaheed Constable Muhammad Arshad of Lahore Police.

Regional Directorate Commander Anti-Narcotics Force Brigadier Sikandar Hayat, CCPO Lahore Bilal Siddique Kamyana and other senior officers also offered the prayer.

Lahore 31st January 2024:

Inspector General Police Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar attended the funeral prayer of martyred Constable Muhammad Arshad of Lahore Police at Police Lines Qila Gujjar Singh. Regional Directorate Commander Anti-Narcotics Force Brigadier Sikandar Hayat, CCPO Lahore Bilal Siddique Kamyana, DIG Organized Crime Unit Captain Retired Liaqat Ali Malik, DIG Admin Lahore Muntazir Mehdi, DIG Investigation Imran Kishwar, SSP Discipline Lahore Sohaib Ashraf, Lahore Police SSPs, SPS and ANF

officers were also present in the funeral prayer. Muhammad Arshad, a constable posted at Achhra Police Station, was martyred by the firing of a drug dealer. IG Punjab saluted the body of Constable Muhammad Arshad, laid final wreath. Prayers were prayed for the high ranks of constable Muhammad Arshad's soul, Active squad of police also saluted the martyr.

IG Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar while paying tribute to Constable Muhammad Arshad's eternal sacrifice said that Constable Muhammad Arshad made the department proud by sacrificing his life in the line of duty. Constable Muhammad Arshad sacrificed his life bravely in the ongoing special campaign to eradicate the menace of drugs, Punjab Police will never forget the eternal sacrifice of constable Muhammad Arshad's and his dutifulness. Constable Muhammad Arshad belongs to district Nankana, his family includes wife.



LAHORE: Inspector General Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar solacing the sons of Shaheed Constable Muhammad Arshad after offering funeral prayers.

Asifa Bhutto seeks public support on Election Day

HYDERABAD (APP): Pakistan Peoples Party leader Asifa Bhutto Zardari has expressed the belief that the future government will belong to the PPP, with Bilawal Bhutto as its Prime Minister.

She said people should place a stamp on the arrow on election day to make us successful so that people's rule can be established across the country.

We believe in serving the people and we stand with our people in every difficult time. Asifa Bhutto reached Hyderabad on Wednesday regarding the election campaign and addressed the workers at different places in the city while starting a rally from the residence of the candidate of PPP Jam Khan Shoro.

stated that political parties in the country fight elections for power, but we fight elections for the people and Shaheed Benazir Bhutto also raised her voice for the wellbeing and prosperity of the common man, the poor, labourers and farmers.

Asifa Bhutto said that we have presented a ten-point manifesto in the elections, which reflects the public aspirations, and we will fulfil our manifesto. She added that in five years, we will double the salaries of government employees and labourers, provide 300 units of electricity free of cost to the people, and provide health facilities to the poor, farmers and women.

She appealed to the people of Hyderabad to vote for PPP candidates.



KARACHI: Caretaker Sindh Chief Minister, Justice (Retd) Maqbool Baqar is being briefed by officials about digital Library during his visit at Habib University in Karachi.

Minister inspects vehicle fitness certification process

Independent Report
LAHORE: Caretaker Provincial Transport Minister Ibrahim Hasan Murad conducted a comprehensive visit to the Vehicle Inspection and Certification System (VICS) on Madir-e-Millat Road on Wednesday and inspected the vehicle fitness certification process.

General Manager Operations Qasim Raza provided a detailed briefing to the minister on the stages involved in obtaining a fitness certificate. The examination encompasses wheel alignment, suspension system, brake inspection, tyre examination, LTV (light transport vehicle) and HTV (heavy transport vehicle) undercarriage inspection, rickshaw

assessment, high beam headlight, low beam headlight, fog light, and more. Every vehicle undergoes the same rigorous process to obtain the fitness certificate.

Approximately 150 vehicles undergo inspection daily, with three active centres in Lahore and a total of 31 centres across Punjab, as outlined by the briefing. The transport minister emphasised that preventing air pollution and adhering to safety laws was a collective moral obligation. The focused efforts of the Punjab government on vehicle fitness over the last two months had yielded impressive results, and it was anticipated that such measures would significantly contribute to combating environmental pollution.

KP CIP official pays surprise visit to inspect ongoing dev. projects

PESHAWAR (APP): Project Director of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Cities Improvement Project (KPCIP), Syed Zafar Ali Shah, on Wednesday paid a surprise visit to a sewerage treatment plant executed in Mardan and inspected progress there.

He chaired a meeting attended by Director Technical, Mian Muhammad Shakeel, Chief Engineer of Cities Implementation Unit (CIU) Mardan, Engineer Muhammad Khalil Akbar, PMSC Resident Engineer, Arshid Qayum Babar, General Manager of Matracon, Imran Haider, and Deputy Manager of the Project, Qasim Mumtaz Awan.

During the meeting, the General Manager of WSSCM and Chief Engineer of CIU Mardan,

Engineer Muhammad Khalil Akbar, briefed the Project Director about the ongoing development works.

He mentioned that under KPCIP project, a modern sewerage treatment plant would be constructed. He stated that through the STP project, domestic sewerage connections of six urban union councils would be treated. The construction work on an eighty-two-kilometre sewerage network is in progress, he said adding that the task will be completed within the speculated timeframe. Construction in Rorya is almost ninety percent completed, while survey in the rest of the union councils (UCs), have also been completed. The plan includes the construction of four thousand and three hundred manholes.

Sindh Police enhance election security measures

KARACHI (APP): Inspector General of Police (IGP) Sindh, Riffat Mukhtar Raja, directed law enforcement personnel to enforce the election code of conduct and organized public awareness campaigns to inform citizens about police efforts to maintain law and order.

These directives were issued during IGP visits to the Mirpurkhas and Hyderabad ranges, where he chaired meetings to discuss security arrangements for the upcoming General Election 2024. During these sessions, IGP received updates on the prevailing law and order situation and reviewed preparations for the election. Emphasizing the urgency, he stressed the need for swift finalization of security plans, highlighting the allocation of resources and manpower in the Mirpurkhas area for comprehensive security measures.

Commissioner reviews law, order situation

FAISALABAD (APP): Commissioner Sitwat Saeed has said that law and order should be the first priority of the administration.

She was presiding over a video-link meeting in connection with general election, here on Wednesday. The meeting was attended by Regional Police officer (RPO) Dr Muhammad Abid, Deputy Commissioner Faisalabad Abdullah Nayyar Sheikh, and Capital Police Officer (CPO) Capt (retd) Muhammad Ali Zia. The deputy commissioners of Jhang, Chiniot and Toba Tek Singh participated in the meeting through video-link. The election commissioner and officers of law-enforcement agencies were also present.

CM KP directs to compliance with Urban Mobility Plan

Independent Report
ABBOTABAD: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Justice @ Syed Arshad Hussain Shah chaired a meeting in Islamabad to deliberate on the Urban Mobility Plan concerning divisional headquarter Abbottabad.

In the meeting, senior officials from the National Highways Authority (NHA), Planning Commission, as well as pertinent federal and provincial officials were also present.

The meeting focused on the approved strategies for constructing an interchange along the Hazara Motorway to facilitate Abbottabad City. NHA has outlined plans to establish an interchange linking Abbottabad and Sherwan Road, while the PC-1 for the proposed project has also been approved by the C&W Department.

In addition to the interchange, the project encompasses the construction of a flyover and tunnel.



RAWALPINDI: Chief of Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan Saad Hussain Rizvi waving to his supporters during election campaign rally at Murree road in the city, ahead of upcoming general election 2024.

LHC directs PEMRA to ensure free media access for PTI founder, candidates

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore High Court (LHC) has directed the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) to ensure that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder and candidates of all political parties are given free and unrestricted access to media platforms/channels, in view of the general elections.

In a 10-page written verdict released here on

Wednesday, Justice Shams Mehmood Mirza passed the directions on a petition filed by PTI founder last year against PEMRA's ban on broadcast of his live and recorded speeches.

On January 4, 2023, the court disposed of the petition in the light of a statement by PEMRA's counsel and observed that it would issue appropriate directions to the authority and TV channels in written order.

Bangash inaugurates Reconstruction and upgradation of LMH

Independent Report
PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister for Finance, Ahmad Rasool Bangash on Wednesday formally inaugurated the reconstruction and upgradation of Liaquat Memorial Hospital Kohat with a cost of Rs. 2 billion.

Medical Superintendent LMH, Dr. Hashim Jamshed Syed, Principal Kohat Medical University Professor Dr. Musarat Jabeen and Dr.

Fauzia Gul also addressed the inauguration ceremony and thanked the finance minister for taking a keen interest in the affairs of the hospital.

The minister also inaugurated the Town Municipal Administration (TMA) Shabistan Plaza with a cost of Rs. 432 million. On the occasion, Tehsil Mayor Kohat, Qari Sher Zaman and Town Municipal Officer, Muhammad Shoaib briefed the provincial minister regarding municipal services.

Two outlaws arrested by Shikarpur Police

Our Correspondent
SHIKARPUR: Shikarpur Police succeeded in arresting of two snatchers/outlaws in injured condition after an police encounter took place near Shar Laaro in the jurisdiction of Lakhli Ghulam Shah Police Station on Wednesday.

According to initial reports, The Lakhli Police with the help of villagers caught the two robbers after an encounter took place between the outlaws and the police and arrested the two robbers identified as Abdul Qadeer Shar and Syed Musharaf Ali Shah in injured condition and also recovered two pistols from their possession.

Suspect killed in police encounter

PESHAWAR (APP): The suspect, identified as Mujahid, son of Sabz Ali, who had escaped after shooting and killing Constable Amir Ghulam by taking out a gun from the clerk's room under the pretext of using the washroom, was killed in a police encounter at Safan check post, Badaber.

SSP Syed Ashfaq Anwar and Superintendent of Police Operations.



HATTIAN BALA: Students are attending their class outside Government Primary Schools for Girls Nandar area, during cold weather.

Gohar urges private sector to help achieve \$100 billion exports target in 5 years

Also says government to increase FDI for boosting country's economy

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for Commerce and Interior Dr Gohar Ejaz on Wednesday said that the government intended to take the exports to US\$ 100 billion in next 5 years and the business community should play an active role in achieving the target. Pakistan needed to boost exports to improve its economy, and for that the private sector should focus on diversification, he added.

Bakhtawari, an ICCI news release said. He said that the business community should partner with the government in accelerating the economic development. The business community should also take an active part in corporate social responsibility activities to address issues of the poor segments of the society and promote welfare activities in the country, he added.

Gohar Ejaz assured that he would cooperate in resolving the key issues of the businessmen to facilitate them in business promotion. Speaking on the

occasion, ICCI President Ahsan Bakhtawari said that the Chamber was making efforts for the establishment of an expo centre and a new industrial estate in the region and urged the government to cooperate in that regard.

He also urged for giving the ICCI representation in the Export Development Fund, besides setting up a facilitation desk of the Passport Office at its office and a separate immigration counter at airports for the taxpayers. ICCI Senior Vice President Faad Waheed requested the government to announce a special package.



ISLAMABAD: Minister for Energy Muhammad Ali inaugurating Oil, Gas and Minerals Career Expo.

Minister inaugurates Railway's IoT-based fuel monitoring system

ISLAMABAD (INP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Railways, Communication and Maritime Affairs, Shahid Ashraf Tarar Wednesday inaugurated Internet of Things (IoT)-based Monitoring System in Pakistan Railways.

The initiative is in line with the Ministry of Railways decision to equip the locomotives with latest gadgets to conduct online monitoring to enhance financial and operational efficiency with special on safety measures, a news release said.

The minister said the IT-based system would approximately save 15 percent of the fuel budget with operational efficiency

and targeted maintenance. It will save financial resources of railways and would reduce wastage and pilferage.

Accordingly, a dashboard was being developed where all related information would be available on a single click, he added.

The system will enable Railways to check real-time consumption and refueling, average speed, idle time, real-time location tracking and maintenance requirements.

Importantly, behavior of the driver can be analyzed as well as the dashboard will show a red pop-up and an abnormal increase/decrease in consumption patterns.

Atif Ikram says: Saudi Arabia is most potential market for Pakistan's exports

Independent Report ISLAMABAD: The Commercial Session of Pakistan consulate General Jeddah organized an

Atif Ikram Sheikh, President FPCCI indicated that Saudi Arabia is the most potential market for Pakistan's exports of



interactive session with Pakistani businessmen based in Saudi Arabia and Saudi Importers on the occasion of visit of Mr. Atif Ikram Sheikh, President of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) to Saudi Arabia. Mr. Khalid Majid, Consul General of Pakistan alongwith other senior Officials of the Consulate and Commercial Section were also attended the session.

In his remarks, Mr. cereal, textile, pharmaceutical, medical equipment, leather, fruits and vegetable etc. Aggressive market, regular interaction of business community, exchange of trade delegations and holding of trade fairs and exhibition can enhance Pakistan's share in Saudi Arabia trade. He hoped that with the implementation of Pak-GCC Trade Agreement, Pakistan trade in Gulf market would flourish.

Minister discusses sugar payment to TCP

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Provincial Minister for Industry and Commerce SM Tanveer chaired a meeting at Committee Room of Punjab Food Department on Wednesday to discuss the matter of payment for imported sugar to the Trading Corporation of Pakistan (TCP) for the fiscal years 2020-21 and 2021-22.

A ministerial committee was constituted regarding release of funds for the purpose and approved payment of remaining principal amount of Rs.180 million, while the committee decided to negotiate with the TCP to pay the markup.

Caretaker Provincial Ministers Azfar Ali Nasir and Mansoor Qadir, Secretary Food and other officers concerned attended the meeting.

Rupee gains 04 paise against dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Rupee on Wednesday gained 4 paise against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 279.50 against the previous day's closing of Rs 279.54. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 279.8 and Rs 281.5 respectively.

The price of the Euro decreased by 35 paise to close at Rs 302.33 against the last day's closing of Rs 302.68, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen remained unchanged and closed at Rs 1.89, whereas a decrease of 59 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs 354.26 compared to the last closing of Rs 354.85. The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal decreased by 02 paise each to close at Rs 76.09 and Rs 74.52.



KARACHI: Federal Minister for Interior, Commerce, Industries, Overseas Pakistanis and Investment, Dr. Gohar Ejaz addressing to foreign and local investors at Overseas Chamber of Commerce and Industry Karachi.

Ambassador Blome says: US, Pakistan working together for climate-smart agricultural practices

ISLAMABAD (Online): U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan, Donald Blome said on Wednesday that the United States and Pakistan are collaboratively striving to provide farmers, ranchers, and foresters with innovative revenue streams.

"Joint efforts aim to assist farmers in adopting climate-smart agricultural practices while expanding market options and ensuring fairer prices for their produce," he said

while addressing an event organized to celebrate the Pakistan Agricultural Development project, a 20.9 million dollar US Department of Agriculture-funded initiative with a wide array of impressive accomplishments.

"Together, we provided 63,000 farmers with training on using Good Agricultural Practices. We introduce new production techniques and improved post-harvest storage and processing," he

added. He said, "We established model plots with select farmers and private sector service providers to demonstrate the benefits of these practices. Jobs have been created for 600 women in Khairpur and Sindh through the establishment of three date-pitting centers," he added.

Pakistan Agricultural Development grants enabled farmers to build high-efficiency drip irrigation systems.



LAHORE: Special Assistant to Prime Minister for Human Rights and Women Empowerment Mushaal Hussain Mullick in a group photo with the officials of Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI).

USDA trains over seventy thousand farmers, stakeholders

ISLAMABAD (APP): The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) imparted skill-based trainings to over 70,170 farmers, workers and suppliers of different crops during the past seven-and-half years across the country to enhance crop output and farm income. The skill-development trainings were imparted through the Pakistan Agricultural Development (PAD) project to farmers, workers and suppliers of red chillies, tomatoes, bananas and dates across the 12 districts of Punjab and Sindh provinces.

The project worth \$20 million, spanning over 7.5 years focused on the

districts of Sheikhpure, Khanaewal, Multan, Muzaffargarh, Lohran and Bhawalpore of the Punjab Province. The project also targeted the districts Thatta, Hyderabad/Matiari, Tando Allahyar, Mirpur Khas, Umerkot and Khairpore and improved the livelihood of about 1,215,038 individuals in these areas.

The project aimed to increase farm productivity, reduce post-harvest losses, improve the quality of the produce and expand trades also benefited about 7,100 women in the targeted districts and helped to enhance their income and empower them economically.

Jazz, Switch join hands to provide digital ease for junior users

ISLAMABAD (APP): Jazz, Pakistan's leading digital operator, and Switch Communications on Wednesday joined hands for Kidjo, a digital product designed to provide a safe, engaging, and educational environment for junior users. "Kidjo is a meticulously crafted digital ecosystem that combines entertainment and education seamlessly," a Jazz news release said.

This product, it added, catered to the needs

of children by offering a diverse range of educational games, limiting access to unsafe contents, empowering parents with robust content control features, and screen time management. "With over 2,500 videos, stories, and games, Kidjo offers kids a comprehensive digital library where they can explore, read, and listen to exciting educational content." Approved by more than 500,000 parents globally.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Port activities reported at Port Qasim where four ships namely, Maersk Boston, Chem-Ocean Leo, Al-Deebal and African Hornbill carrying Containers, Chemicals, LNG and Coal, berthed at Container Terminal, Engro Terminal, Elengy Terminal and Bulk Terminal respectively on January. Meanwhile a bulk cargo carrier 'World Crest' carrying 59,022 tonnes of Coal also arrived at outer anchorage of the Port Qasim on Wednesday.

A total of eleven ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them two ships, Maersk Atlanta and Tromso are left the port on today morning and two more ships.

PSX turns around to bullish trend, gains 137 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) turned around to bullish trend on Wednesday, gaining 137.44 points, a positive change of 0.22 percent, closing at 61,979.18 points against 61,841.74 points the previous trading day.

A total of 276,464,818 shares valuing Rs 9,271 billion were traded during the day as compared to 436,120,659 shares valuing Rs.15,286 billion the last day.

ADB committed record climate finance of almost \$10 billion in 2023

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Asian Development Bank (ADB) committed a record amount of climate finance in 2023 to help its developing member countries (DMCs) in Asia and the Pacific cut greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the impacts of a warming planet. The ADB committed \$9.8 billion in climate finance from its own resources last year – \$5.5 billion for mitigation and \$4.3 billion for adaptation – a more than 46% increase on its 2022 climate financing commitments.

"The bank's climate adaptation finance commitments in 2023 mean that the ADB has provided more than \$10.4 billion in cumulative adaptation financing from 2019 to 2023 – surpassing its target of \$9 billion in 2019-2024 a year early," an ADB press release said on Wednesday.

The ADB said that adaptation financing was critical in Asia and the Pacific which is experiencing more extreme heat, droughts, and heavy rains, but where investments in adaptation remained a fraction of what was required. "Climate change threatens the future of all development. 2023 was the hottest year on record and saw a swathe of extreme, deadly climate impacts in our region," said ADB President Masatsugu Asakawa. "This crisis threatens energy and food security and creates fiscal challenges.

As the climate bank for Asia and the Pacific, ADB is deeply committed to helping our developing members de-fossilize their economies, progress along their climate transition pathways, and achieve their net-zero goals.



RAWALPINDI: A mechanic busy in winding and repairing motors at his shop in a local market.

SNGPL advises sensible use of gas to avoid tragedies

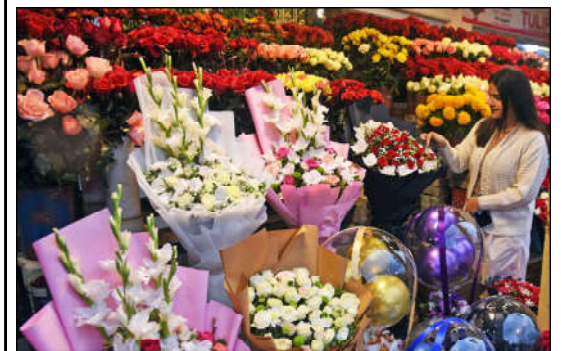
ISLAMABAD (APP): A spokesperson for Islamabad-Region SNGPL on Wednesday advised gas consumers to utilize the commodity in the winter season with due care to avoid tragedies triggered by gas leakages.

"By following precautionary measures while using natural gas during the winter season can help to avoid potential disasters," SNGPL spokesperson Shahid Akram said while talking to APP. He highlighted that individuals and households

using gas should be well-informed about safety measures at home and in workplaces.

To ensure safe gas usage, Shahid Akram provided guidelines, including raising awareness about safety guidelines for gas appliances and fittings among family members and colleagues.

He recommended using standardized gas appliances and fittings from reputable brands, as they not only reduce gas consumption but also ensure safety.



ISLAMABAD: A woman is buying flowers at flower market in sector F-6 during rainy weather in the Federal Capital.

KP Governor assures support to KPTMA in resolution of problems

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali has said that problems of the textile industry would be resolved and efforts would be made to further strengthen the textile sector.

He was talking to a delegation of the KP Textile Mills Association (KPTMA) that was led by Muhammad Taimur Shah. Textile association informed the governor about their problems urging him to make efforts for resolution. They apprised the governor about their concerns regarding rumors about the increase in gas prices and said that it would prove detrimental to the textile sector. They said that KP is producing ample

gas adding our province should be given precedence in gas supply.

They said that the industrial sector of KP is consuming 35 MMCFD gas while the textile sector is using only 10 MMCFD. They said that issues of the textile industry should be resolved to keep in view its contribution to the national economy. Speaking on the occasion, the KP governor assured cooperation to the delegation and said that their concerns would be conveyed to relative authorities for consideration.

He said that the provincial government is also making efforts to facilitate the textile sector and added that all the stakeholders.

Macroeconomic stabilization leads to improvement: Report

ISLAMABAD (APP): The country's economy experienced a notable stabilization during the first half of the current fiscal year (2023-24), owing to implementation of effective measures and prudent policies by the interim government that played a pivotal role in achieving this milestone.

"The first half of FY2024 has ended with economic stabilization. The government's effective measures and prudent policies helped stabilize the macroeconomic situation, leading to a gradual improvement in economic activities," says Monthly Economic Update and

Outlook for January 2024 released by finance ministry here Wednesday.

According to the report, this persistent uptick in economic indicators has resulted in improved GDP growth of 2.13% in the first quarter of FY2024, with expectations for continued growth in the second quarter.

It is apparent from the real sector visible in month-on-month (MoM) increase in Large Scale Manufacturing (LSM) growth, an improvement in high-frequency indicators and better crop prospects. Despite the challenges, external stability has been

observed as evident from a surplus in the current account in December, it says adding on the fiscal side, the revenue performance is encouraging, however, there is significant pressure on expenditures attributed to higher markup payments.

"Despite this, the government is taking measures to manage non-markup spending, which is evidenced by continuous improvement in primary surplus," it adds. According to the report, Pakistan has recently received a tranche equivalent to US\$ 705.6 million, following the successful completion of

the first review by the Executive Board of International Monetary Fund (IMF) under Stand by Arrangements (SBA), which is providing market confidence and exchange rate stability.

The report predicted that economic activities would further strengthen during second half of FY2024 – contingent on the continuation of sound and prudent economic policies which will gear toward achieving the set growth target for the current fiscal year.

The report highlights the performance of agriculture sector saying, wheat crop for Rabi 2023-24 has been cultivated on an

estimated area of 9.160 million hectares, surpassing the sowing target of 8.998 million hectares by 1.8 percent to achieve the production target of 32.12 million tonnes.

During Jul-Dec FY2024, the agriculture credit disbursement reached to Rs 1105.8 billion as compared to Rs 842.4 billion last year, an increase of 31.3 percent. According to the report, Large Scale Manufacturing (LSM) during November 2023, increased by 1.6 percent on YoY basis against the decline of 4.9 percent in the same month last year. While on a MoM basis.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Railways, Shahid Ashraf Tarar inaugurated Online Fuel Monitoring System, at Margalla Station in Islamabad

Biden says he's decided response to Jordan strike

Monitoring Desk

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden said on Tuesday he had decided on a response to a drone strike that killed three American troops in Jordan but said he did not want a wider war in the Middle East.

Facing growing pressure in an election year, Biden said he held Iran responsible for supplying the weapons to the people who carried out the deadly attack on a military base.

The White House warned that "multiple actions" were likely in retaliation for the first fatal attack on US forces in the region since the Gaza crisis broke out in October, but gave no further details. Biden, 81, who was hitting the campaign trail in Florida, has previously

blamed Iran-backed militias for the attack which has further raised fears of a regional conflict.

"Yes," Biden told reporters at the White House when asked if he had decided on his response, but he did not give details on what actions he would take. "I don't think we need a wider war in the Middle East. That's not what I'm looking for," he added when asked about fears that taking on Iran could inflame a broader conflagration.

Iran has denied any links to the drone strike, and said it was not seeking an expansion of conflict, either.

Republicans have urged the Democrat to punish Iran for the drone strike on a US military facility near the Jordanian-Syrian

border, with some urging direct strikes on Iran itself.

But Biden's administration believes hitting Iranian territory could cause the region to erupt, with strikes on Iranian-backed militias and possibly on Iranian Revolutionary Guard facilities in other countries more likely, US media reported.

"It's very possible that what you'll see is a tiered approach here, not just a single action but potentially multiple actions," National Security Council spokesman John Kirby told reporters aboard Air Force One.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that the response "could be multi-leveled, come in stages, and be sustained over time."



Civilians watch as Gaza-based Palestinian Health Ministry workers bury the bodies of unidentified Palestinians whose date of death is not known after they were returned by Israel earlier on the same day through the Kerem Shalom crossing, at a mass grave east of Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip.

US blocks \$3-b drone sale to India until 'meaningful investigation' of plot to kill Sikh leader

NEW DELHI (INP): The US government has held back delivery of 31 MQ-9A Sea Guardian and Sky Guardian drones to India until New Delhi carries out a "meaningful investigation" into the conspiracy to assassinate Sikh leader, Gurbaj Singh Pannun.

Gurbaj Singh Pannun, who holds dual US and Canadian citizenship, is a New York-based activist of the Khalistan movement - the struggle for independent homeland for Sikhs by separating Punjab from India.

The Wire reported that the proposed \$3 billion purchase includes 15 Sea Guardian drones for the Indian Navy, while the Indian Air Force and Army are supposed to get eight Sky Guardian drones each. The report said that Washington has also held back smaller Indian acquisitions, including a proposal to buy six Boeing P-8I long-range maritime

patrol aircraft. These are to supplement 12 P-8I Poseidon aircraft that the Indian Navy already operates.

Ironically, the Indian Ministry of Defence's internal approval for the now-stalled drone procurement came in June 2023, a week before Prime Minister Narendra Modi's state visit to Washington. This was also the time when the conspiracy to kill Pannun - set in motion by an Indian security official named CCI, according to a federal indictment made public last November - shifted to high gear.

Today, "the purchase is stuck in the US Congress because of anger over the brazen attempt to assassinate Pannun. US representatives have frozen the legislative movement needed for proceeding with the sale," the Wire quoted a highly-placed source in Washington as having said.

Russia to Japan:

Drop territorial claim if you want a peace treaty

MOSCOW (Internews): Senior Russian security official Dmitry Medvedev told Japan on Tuesday it would have to drop territorial claims to a group of Pacific islands if it wanted to conclude a peace treaty with Russia formally ending World War Two.

The blunt remarks by Medvedev, a former president who is deputy chairman of Russia's Security Council, over what Moscow calls the Kuril islands are likely to anger Japan which lays claim to four of the southernmost islands, which it calls the Northern Territories.

Russia, the main successor state to the Soviet Union, and Japan have never signed a peace treaty formally ending their hostilities during World War Two, with the islands remaining the primary stumbling block.

The islands are located off Hokkaido, Japan's northernmost main island, and were seized by the Soviet Union at the end of World War Two.

Diplomats on both sides once spoke of the possibility of reviving a Soviet-era draft agreement that envisaged returning two of the four islands to Japan as part of a peace deal.

But Russia withdrew from peace treaty talks with Japan and froze joint economic projects related to the islands in 2022 because of Japanese sanctions over Russia's war in Ukraine and relations have soured further since.

Medvedev said he was responding to comments by Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida who he said had spoken in favour of a peace treaty with Russia.

Japan earthquake survivors battle unsanitary conditions with no running water

Monitoring Desk

SUZU: A month on from a huge earthquake that struck Japan's west coast, survivors are battling freezing and unsanitary conditions while tens of thousands of homes remain without running water.

Some areas in the isolated Noto peninsula may not have water restored for another two months, the government of Ishikawa prefecture said, adding to risks for those living in cramped evacuation centres where authorities say respiratory infections and gastroenteritis have been detected.

"There's no water, so we can't wash our clothes or bathe," said Yoshio Binsaki, a 68-year-old resident of the battered coastal town of Suzu, as he prepared to haul a 20 litre (5.3 U.S. gallon) water tank to his car to take home. More than 230 people died in the magnitude 7.6 quake, Japan's deadliest in eight years, which also left 44,000 homes fully or partially destroyed while 40,000 have no running water.

Kerala court sentences 15 PFI workers to death

ALAPPUZHA (INP): A court in the Indian state of Kerala has sentenced to death 15 members of prominent Muslim organization, Popular Front of India (PFI).

According to Kashmir Media Service, the court sentenced the PFI members in connection with the murder of Bharatiya Janata Party OBC (Other Backward Class) wing leader Ranjith Sreenivasan in Alappuzha district in 2021, the special prosecutor of the case said. The sentence was pronounced by Mavelikkara Additional District judge, V G Sreedevi. Those convicted in the case are Naisam, Ajmal, Anoop, Muhammad Aslam, Abdul Kalam, Abdul Kalam, Sarafudheen, Manshad.



President of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) Judge Joan Donoghue speaks during a hearing in a case whereby Ukraine accused Russia of violating an anti-terrorism treaty by funding pro-Russian forces, including militias who shot down the Malaysia Airlines flight MH17, and discrimination, in The Hague, Netherlands

Israel returns 100 bodies to Gaza authorities

Monitoring Desk

DOHA: Several unidentified Palestinians were laid to rest at a mass burial in Gaza on Tuesday after Israeli authorities handed over bodies they had been holding in Israel.

Many onlookers covered their noses with masks as about 100 bodies were placed in graves in the southern city of Rafah before bulldozers piled sand on them. Palestinian officials said the bodies included victims of the war and corpses that had been dug up as Israeli forces

pushed through Gaza. Israel did not comment on the assertion that some corpses had been dug up.

"They were buried anonymously following Islamic Sharia. We don't know where they were injured or even their names," said Abu Taha, a doctor, at the scene. The bodies were photographed before burial and the victims' injuries documented, he said. "God willing, after the war ends, DNA and other tests will happen but at the time being.

US says fentanyl talks with China 'meaningful'

Monitoring Desk

BEIJING: Talks between the US and Chinese officials on stemming the flow of chemicals used for the production of deadly fentanyl have been "substantive" but "much more" needs to be done, the head of the White House delegation to Beijing said on Wednesday.

Washington hopes for deeper law enforcement cooperation, including on tackling illicit finance, and wants Beijing to put further controls on the chemicals that can be used to make fentanyl, said Deputy Assistant to the President.

Neuralink has installed brain implant in first human patient: Elon Musk

Monitoring Desk

SAN FRANCISCO: Elon Musk said on Tuesday his Neuralink startup had installed a brain implant in its first human patient with "promising" initial results.

The neurotechnology company co-founded by Musk in 2016 aims to build direct communication channels between the brain and computers. The ambition is to supercharge human capabilities, treat neurological disorders like ALS or Parkinson's, and maybe one day achieve a symbiotic relationship between humans and artificial intelligence.

World Court to rule on Russian violation of international treaties in Ukraine

Monitoring Desk

THE HAGUE: The United Nations' top court will rule on Wednesday on whether Russia violated an anti-terrorism treaty by funding pro-Russian separatists in Ukraine, including those who shot down Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 in 2014.

Kyiv says Russia also violated a human rights treaty by discriminating against ethnic Tatars and Ukrainians in Crimea, the peninsula that Russia declared annexed over Ukraine in 2014.

Ukraine had asked the International Court of Justice to find Russia guilty of breaching obligations under

the two UN treaties, which both countries have signed, and to order it to pay reparations.

In a hearing at the court in The Hague last June, Russia dismissed Ukraine's allegations as fiction and "blatant lies".

Lawyers for Moscow denied systematic human rights abuses in Ukrainian territory that it occupies and rejected the accusation that it violated the UN treaty against the financing of terrorism.

Kyiv took Russia to the United Nations' highest court in 2017, before Russia's full-scale invasion on Feb. 24, 2022.

In the case, which has



Meta's CEO Mark Zuckerberg, X Corp's CEO Linda Yaccarino, TikTok's CEO Shou Zi Chew and Discord's CEO Jason Citron are sworn in during the Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on online child sexual exploitation at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, U.S.

NATO chief plays down concerns a Trump re-election would weaken alliance

Monitoring Desk

WASHINGTON: NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg on Wednesday played down fears that a re-election of former U.S. President Donald Trump would weaken the defense alliance as it works to ensure robust support for Ukraine. Stoltenberg said he did not think a second Trump presidency would jeopardize U.S. membership in NATO. "I believe that the United States will continue to be a staunch NATO ally, regardless of the outcome of

the U.S. election, because it is in the U.S. interest," he said in an interview with CNN. Republican Trump, a fierce critic of NATO when he was president, repeatedly threatened to pull out of the alliance. He cut defense funding to NATO and frequently complained that the United States was paying more than its fair share.

"I worked with him for four years and I listened carefully, because the main criticism has been about the NATO allies spending too little on NATO."

German woes darken central Europe's recovery prospects

BUDAPEST/PRAGUE (Internews): The sickly state of the German economy is the next big challenge for the export-reliant countries of central Europe, which are still recovering from some of the world's worst inflation spikes in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Close trade ties with Germany and its once-mighty auto sector were for years a boon for the region since the collapse of communism. But now those ties risk becoming a drag on the economies of Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovakia.

Already, some local companies reliant on ties

with Germany are trying to tap deeper into other overseas markets and branch into industries like defence to mitigate the weakness of their large western neighbour, where another year of near-recession looms. However such efforts come at a time of major geo-political uncertainties, with the Ukraine war, Middle East conflict and rising protectionism. Despite the push into the defence sector, all of these factors could hamper the efforts of the region's companies. "Economic disruption in the region's most important trade partner, and persistent weakness in the auto sector.

150 people are killed in Gaza in 24 hours, Health Ministry says

Monitoring Desk

NEW YORK: Gaza's Health Ministry says 150 people have been killed in the territory in the last 24 hours and another 313 were wounded as Israeli forces continue to battle militants, even in the northern part of the territory.

The north, where entire neighborhoods have been flattened, was the initial target of Israel's ground offensive in late October.

Israel's military said Wednesday that its forces killed more than 15 Hamas militants in northern Gaza over the past day and targeted militant infrastructure in a school.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

has rejected two key demands made by Hamas in indirect cease-fire talks, saying that Israel will not withdraw from the Gaza Strip or release thousands of jailed militants.

The latest deaths bring the Palestinian death toll from Israel's offensive to 26,900, according to the Hamas-controlled Health Ministry. It does not distinguish between civilian and combatant deaths but says most of those killed were women and children.

Hamas' Oct. 7 attack in southern Israel that sparked the war killed 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and about 250 people were taken hostage, according to Israeli authorities.

Taiwan holds military drills to defend against the threat of a Chinese invasion

Monitoring Desk

KAOHSIUNG: Almost every day, Chinese warships sail in waters around Taiwan and warplanes fly toward the island before turning back. What if they suddenly attacked?

Taiwan's military conducted a two-day exercise at sea, on land and in the air this week to practice defending against such a surprise attack. As journalists looked on from fast escort boats, a mine layer released at least a half dozen dummy mines from a chute in its stern.

Maj. Gen. Sun Li-fang, the chief defense ministry spokesperson, told reporters at Zuoying Naval Base in southern Taiwan that China's recent actions threaten to spark a conflict that could have devastating effects on the entire region, where billions of dollars in trade pass the 160 kilometer (100 mile)-wide waterway separating Taiwan from China.

Troops in red helmets representing the People's Liberation Army parachuted in, while Taiwanese army drones buzzed overhead.

Israel floods Hamas tunnels as UN pleads for aid funding

Monitoring Desk

GAZA STRIP: Israel's army has begun flooding Hamas's network of tunnels in Gaza, with the UN warning of the potential "collapse of the humanitarian system" in the territory after a funding row hit its Palestinian aid agency.

The epicentre of the fighting in recent weeks has been Khan Yunis, southern Gaza's main city, where vast areas have been reduced to a muddy wasteland of bombed-out buildings, and where an AFP journalist witnessed people leaving town on Tuesday as explosions sounded nearby.

"We left the Nasser hospital without any mattresses, under tank and air strikes. We didn't know where to go," said one young woman. "We're out in the cold, left to fend for ourselves, with no tents and nothing to survive on."

Elsewhere in the city, Israeli troops gave journal-

ists a tour of a tunnel they said had been used as a Hamas command centre.

"Every war has its own characteristics, and I think that this war, its basic character is about that over-and-underground manoeuvre," Dan Goldfus, commander of the 98th Paratroopers Division, told reporters outside of the shaft. "I think the enemy is on the run and is trying to put itself under the civilians as much as it can," he added.

The Israeli military, which has dubbed the vast network of tunnels "the Gaza metro", said Tuesday that it had begun flooding the underground complexes with water in a bid to "neutralise the threat of Hamas' subterranean network". The war was touched off by Hamas's October 7 attacks on Israel, which resulted in the deaths of around 1,140 people, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally based on official Israeli figures.

Belgian farmers to block Zeebrugge port as French protests spill over

BRUSSELS (Internews): Belgian farmers angry about rising costs, European Union environmental policies and cheap food imports plan to block access roads to the Zeebrugge container port from Tuesday, the port said, confirming a report from financial daily De Tijd.

The protesters plan to bar access to the North Sea port, the country's second-largest, for at least 36 hours from 1400 CET (1300 GMT), the paper reported, citing organisers and police.

"Police services have received information about an action at the Zeebrugge port," a port authority spokesman said. He said it was not clear what the action would entail.

The Belgian protest movement has been boosted by similar action in France, where angry farmers have set up dozens of roadblocks and disrupted traffic around Paris, putting the government under pressure.

Belgian farmers also disrupted traffic during the morning rush hour on Tues-

day. One of the blockades was close to the Dutch border on the E19 highway, local media said.

Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo is set to meet with farmers' associations on Tuesday.

"It is important that they are listened to", De Croo told reporters on Tuesday, referring to the challenges farmers face in terms of, among others, sustainability.

He said Belgium, which currently holds the 6-month presidency of the Council of the EU, will discuss a number of European agricultural rules with the European Commission.

The European Commission is set to propose an exemption on Thursday on rules requiring farmers to leave part of their land fallow if they apply for EU subsidies, an EU spokesman said on Tuesday.

The rules on fallow land were part of the grievances that have led to protests by farmers in France, Belgium and elsewhere in recent weeks.



Members of the French Gendarmerie stand near armoured vehicles, as tractors park on the A6 highway during a protest over price pressures, taxes and green regulation, grievances shared by farmers across Europe, near Chilly-Mazarin, near Paris, France.

President Dr. Alvi says Youth may play active role for overall progress & development

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Wednesday said youth could play a pivotal role in transforming the destiny of the country through optimum utilization of intellect, morality and education.

He said the country required strong leadership and appropriate use of intellect and expressed the optimism that youth was fully capable of playing an active role in the overall progress and development.

Addressing the convocation of Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU), the president said education and health had a vital role in the robust development of Pakistan and added that the Chinese model of materializing the goals of rapid development.

Calling the passed-out AIOU graduates as elite of the country, he said they had the distinction to secure a graduate degree in a country where 44% or more than 26 million children were still out of school. He pointed out that all the re-

gional countries had 98% ratio of school-going children.

"In order to accommodate all out-of-school children, the government will have to build 50,000 additional schools which is not an easy task, keeping in view the resource availability," he added.

He pointed out that around 300,000 mosques in the country could be utilized to educate the out-of-school children.

President Alvi regretted there had been no sense of sympathy with humanity though the developed world posed itself as champion of democracy.

He said the world was now just going after the vested interests, as zero sympathy was being shown by the West amid the atrocities with innocent people of Gaza.

He said Pakistan intended to get the Kashmir issue resolved at United Nations platform but despite the lapse of over 70 years, the issue still remained unresolved.

He called for an end to

the exploitation of wealth in the world to ensure a person his due right, eventually leading to peace and unity.

He advised passed-out graduates to continue the struggle for the pursuit of knowledge in practical life.

He also asked the women graduates to opt for the practical life even after getting married.

He said in today's era of technology, women could simultaneously manage their jobs and family life.

The president said Pakistan was declared as world's 5th best-performing country during COVID-19 due to timely and prudent strategies of the government.

Recalling the leadership's decision to establish the AIOU in 1970s, the president said the university had been playing a key and leading role in imparting education to the people, especially in remote areas.

Earlier, the president conferred degrees and medals to the fresh students.



ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi addressing the convocation of Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) at Jinnah Convention Centre.

Aneeq Ahmed says: Holy Prophet (SAWW) Seerah must for Quran's comprehension

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed on Wednesday stressed for following the Seerah of Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAWW) in true sense in order to have a full comprehension of the Holy Quran.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony of the Seerat Chair at Federal Urdu University, he said that truth was the basic trait of Seerat. Follow the truth, speak the truth and its implementation in every sphere of life were the lessons derived from the Holy Prophet's Seerah, he added.

The minister said the establishment of the Seerat Chair at Urdu University was a commendable initiative for guiding the new generation.

The greatness of Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) would continue to be articulated until the Day of Judgment, and familiarity with

his life was essential for leadership, he added.

Those doing the job of preaching Islam should align their conversations and discussion with the Holy Quran and Seerat Tayyiba, as both had been leading the human mindset and would continue to do till the end of time, he added.

"Today, we must reflect on whether we are disloyal to our Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him). Our religion is complete, containing solutions to all issues. Knowledge and action are both necessary," he said, adding that students must be made aware of challenges such as secularism, artificial intelligence, and contemporary issues. Minister Aneeq said it was imperative to include a Seerat book in the curriculum from primary to master's level.

Vice-Chancellor Dr. Rubina Mushtaq, Dr. Mustafaez Ahmad Alvi, Dr. Ahtesham-ul-Haq, and Dr. Hafiz Abdul Rashid

also spoke at the event.

Dr. Mustafaez Ahmad Alvi, Head of Department of Islamic Thought and Culture at NUML, highlighted that the descent of the Holy Quran and the prophethood of Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) transformed the course of the world.

He mentioned that the purpose of establishing the Seerat Chair was to help students to follow the Seerat Tayyiba in their practical lives. "Accepting religion and adopting Seerat are one and the same," he added.

Dr. Rubina Mushtaq, Vice-Chancellor of Federal Urdu University, remarked that the Western culture was having negative impacts on young generation.

She said teaching the Holy Quran and Sunnah was essential for all departments of Urdu University.

Shields were presented to the dignitaries at the conclusion of the event.

Chinese envoy lauds PAF's steadfast determination for balance of power in region

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador of the People's Republic of China, Jiang Zaidong, called on Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Zabeer Ahmed Baber Sidhu here on Wednesday.

The Chinese ambassador lauded the steadfast determination of PAF leadership to ensure balance of power in the region.

During the meeting, matters pertaining to evolving geo-strategic environment and regional developments were discussed, a Pakistan Air Force (PAF) news release said.

broad contours of the PAF's modernization drive in order to transform Pakistan Air Force into a Next Generation Air Force through induction of niche technologies with a special focus on indigenization and revamping of training.

Highlighting the significance of the longstanding strategic partnership between the two countries, he emphasized that the PAF leadership wished to further deepen the existing aviation cooperation and exchanges with China in the fields of human resource and technology so as to jointly address shared security challenges.

He further said, "Pakistan values its strong diplomatic, economic, defence relationship and time-tested friendship with China which are based on convergence on all important issues relating to regional peace."



The dignitaries underscored the necessity of revitalizing the framework for operational training across all domains, emphasizing the paramount importance of preparedness and seamless coordination in the face of evolving security challenges. The Air Chief shared

Shehbaz says: PML-N high on popularity graph

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President Shehbaz Sharif has claimed that his party's popularity graph among people is still high, despite its active participation in the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) government in the past.

Talking to digital media representatives here on Wednesday, he emphasized the importance of February-8 elections and highlighted its vitality for the country's economic and social fabric. Amid numerous challenges confronting Pakistan, Shehbaz believed that general election was finally going to be held on the scheduled date, wherein the fate of Pakistan would be determined by its people through their constitutional right to vote.

He called upon all

stakeholders to learn from country's political history and set aside their personal interests and make collective efforts for achieving the unmet developmental goals of Pakistan by exploring its great potential in various fields. Shehbaz Sharif cited that hardworking nations find a niche at international level, asserting that keeping in view Pakistan's current internal and external challenges, "we all have to get united to face these challenges firmly."

He claimed that during the PML-N government in 1990s, Pakistan had been outperforming India in various fields, and called for assessing all those factors which landed the country in the current situation.

"We have to learn from the past; nothing will be done by crying over the split milk."

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QUETTA: Additional Chief Secretary Home Zahir Saleem meeting with caretaker Home Minister Captain (retd) Mir Muhammad Zubair Jamali.

Zubair Jamali says War against terrorism to remain continue till restoration of peace

QUETTA: The caretaker Provincial Minister for Home and Tribal Affairs, Mir Muhammad Zubair Jamali has condemned the hand grenade attack at Sariab road Quetta.

In an official condemnation statement issued here on Wednesday, the caretaker Minister Home said that the miscreants can't weaken the morale of general public by carrying

out such terrorism incidents.

He pledged that our war against terrorism would remain continued till complete restoration of peace in the province.

The Minister Home said that no one would be allowed to spoil the law and order situation in the province. Mir Zubair Jamali prayed for early recovery of those injured in the Sariab road blast.

Sardar Jogezi thanks TNFJ for supporting PPP in election

QUETTA- (APP)-Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Provincial Leader of Balochistan Information Secretary Sardar Sarbuland Jogezi said that the doors of PPP were open to all political parties.

No single political party can form a government in Balochistan. After the elections, the People's Party will form a joint government with other political parties, the PPP will win in the elections to be held on February 8, he said.

He also thanked Tehreek Nafaz Fiqia Jafaria (TNFJ) for supporting the candidates of the PPP.

He expressed these views on Wednesday while addressing a press conference at the office of the PPP Hazara Town along with Information Secretary

Sardar Tariq Ahmad Jafri. Provincial Leader of PPP, Engineer Hadi Askari, Information Secretary of Tehreek Nafaz Fiqia Jafaria Balochistan, Ghulam Mustafa, President of Tehreek Nafaz Fiqia Jafaria Balochistan and other were also present on this occasion.

Tehreek Nifaz Fiqia Jafaria Balochistan Information Secretary Sardar Tariq Ahmad Jafari said that the chairman of the PPP Bilawal Bhatto Zardari met with the central leaders of the movement and appealed to support the candidates of the party.

On which Tehreek Nafaz Fiqia Jafaria announced its support for the candidates of Pakistan People's Party.



WASHINGTON: Raja Nasir Ali Khan Maqpoon, Minister for Planning & Development Gilgit-Baltistan called on Ambassador to the United States Masood Khan in Washington DC.

Pak pavilion at New York's tourism show captivated visitors: Masood

WASHINGTON (APP): Pakistan's Ambassador to the U.S., Masood Khan, Tuesday congratulated the visiting Gilgit-Baltistan's Planning Minister, Raja Nasir Ali Khan, over the success of Pakistan pavilion at the weekend's 'Travel & Adventure Show' in New York, saying it would take the country's rich tourism potential to the next level. During a meeting with the minister at Pakistan Embassy, Ambassador Masood Khan said the pavilion, which he inaugurated on Saturday, captivated the global community and evinced keen interest in Pakistan's rich cul-

tural and tourism potential, according to an embassy press release.

"It augurs well not only for the tourism industry but also for the image building of the country," he said.

"Tourism industry of Pakistan can play a significant role in cultivating better people-to-people ties and linkages between Pakistan and the United States," the Pakistani envoy added. Raja Nasir Khan thanked the Ambassador for the support provided by the Consulate General in New York and Pakistan Embassy, Washington, in successfully showcasing the tourism

potential of the country.

The GB planning minister said that US tourists were the second highest in numbers visiting Gilgit-Baltistan annually for eco- and adventure-tourism, among others. He also said that various steps were being taken to improve infrastructure and facilitate foreign visitors.

In this context, the minister said that GB Government was focusing on establishing IT parks, incubation centers, vocational institutes and winter sports for the youth. Equal attention was being paid to girls' education, providing them with sports facilities.



QUETTA: Conservator of Forest Monitoring Uprising of Green Pakistan Program Umar Farooq Kakar presenting a shield to Director General Public Relations Balochistan Muhammad Noor Khetrnan.

NAB Balochistan lucky to have hard working staff, says Director General

Commendation certificates distributed among employees

Independent Report QUETTA: The Director General National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Balochistan, Zafar Iqbal Khan has stated that the NAB is very lucky to have very hardworking and dedicated staff.

The DG NAB was addressing the ceremony arranged for distribution of meritorious certificates in recognition of outstanding performance of the Bureau's employees here on Wednesday.

The commendation certificates were distributed among the employees for outstanding performance during the year 2023.

The DG NAB (Balochistan) Zafar Iqbal Khan, Deputy Prosecutor

General Accountability Jaffar Raza Khan, Director NAB Dr. Muhammad Rashad, Officers of NAB and other employees participated in the ceremony.

The Director NAB Dr. Muhammad Rashad, in his inaugural speech, welcomed the audience and shared the run of events of the ceremony. Thereafter, Director General NAB, in his address, appreciated the efforts of NAB officials. He said that development of any department is directly linked to the performance and hardworking of its employees.

NAB (Balochistan) is very lucky that it has very hard working staff. He said that merit is the scale to measure capability of any individual.



QUETTA: Director General NAB Zafar Iqbal Khan and Director NAB Dr. Muhammad Arshad addressing an appreciation certificate distribution ceremony among employees on their best performance in 2023.



QUETTA: Inspector General of Police Balochistan Abdul Khaliq Sheikh enquiring about health of policemen injured in Mach attack.

Zmarak Achakzai demands ECP to take notice of firing on ANP's workers

QUETTA (APP)-Awami National Party (ANP) leader and former Provincial Minister and candidate from PB-50 Constituency Engineer Zmarak Khan Achakzai on Wednesday said that a worker of ANP was martyred and another was injured due to firing by opponents in Mezai stop.

He said that since the election campaign has started, there have been four attacks on our workers and camps. He also demanded the Election Commission, federal and provincial government to take notice of attack on ANP workers in order to control such incident in future for interest of peace. In response to a question, Engineer Zmarak Khan Achakzai said that the recent firing incident was an attempt to suppress the ANP saying that however, we wanted to inform the opponents that we would not be intimidated by such high tactics.

Engineer Zmarak Khan Achakzai said that political opponents fired on our party workers in Mezai Stop, as a result of which one worker of ANP Zahoor Ahmed martyred and another Moin Khan were seriously injured.

He said that since the election campaign has started, there have been four attacks on our workers and camps. He also demanded the Election Commission, federal and provincial government to take notice of attack on ANP workers in order to control such incident in future for interest of peace. In response to a question, Engineer Zmarak Khan Achakzai said that the recent firing incident was an attempt to suppress the ANP saying that however, we wanted to inform the opponents that we would not be intimidated by such high tactics.

PTA intensifies crackdown on illegal issuance of SIMs

Independent Report ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) in close collaboration with the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) cyber crime circle, conducted raid against the BISP outlet at Sharqurp involved in activation of SIMs illegally.

During the raid, 28 active SIMs were discovered. The FIA team confiscated active SIMs along with 01 HBL Konnect device as evidence, said a news release.

In the joint operation, a person was apprehended by the FIA team. FIA is currently investigating the matter.

PTA had filed a complaint regarding illegal issuance of SIMs by the sale channel. The raids are part of PTA's ongoing efforts to prevent the circumvention of the Multi-Finger Biometric Verification System (MBVS). This unwavering commitment underscores the authority's dedication to eradicate illegal issuance of SIMs, the news release added.



QUETTA: Peoples Party (PPP) Leader, Ali Madad Jattak addresses to media persons during press conference, in Quetta.

Death of candidates Elections postponed in 3 constituencies of KPK

By M.Ilyas PESHAWAR - Notification of postponement of elections in 3 constituencies of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has been issued due to the death of candidates.

Due to the postponement of the elections, a notification was issued.

According to the details, due to the murder of independent candidate Rehan Zaib Khan in NA-8 and PK-22 Bajaur and the death of ANP's Asmatullah Khattak in PK-91 Kohat, the notification was issued to postpone the elections.

It has been reported that the Returning Officer has issued a formal announcement of the cancellation of the election because under Clause 73 of the Election Act, the election is

postponed due to the death of the candidate after the issue of election marks.

It is learned that 13 candidates including Asmatullah Khattak were participating from PK-91 Kohat and former senator Abbas Afridi is also a candidate from PK-91 Kohat, he was an ANP aspirant from PK-91 Kohat. On the other hand, Rehan Zaib Khan, an activist of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf and contesting as an independent candidate from NA-8 and PK-22 Bajaur killed, police sources say that Rehan Zaib Khan was shot by unknown persons near Siddiqabad, as a result of the firing. Rehan Zaib Khan was seriously injured, Rehan Zaib Khan was shifted to the hospital in critical condition.