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Gas bomb:

Caretaker govt raises tariff by 67%, effective from Feb 1

Monitoring Desk

ISLAMABAD: In a move that has stirred public outcry, the caretaker government has greenlit a 67% increase in gas prices, effectively burdening consumers with higher costs of living starting from February 1.

The decision, approved in a meeting of the federal cabinet led by caretaker Prime Minister Anwarul Haq Kakar, follows the recommendation of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) to raise gas prices by a staggering 67%. This sharp hike in rates will apply to both protected and non-protected customers, translating to a surge of Rs100 and Rs300 per MMBTU (million British thermal units), respectively.

Notably, while the increase will apply to consumption charges, there will be no increase in fixed charges for both categories of consumers. However, bulk gas consumers will bear the brunt of a significant surge, facing a whopping increase of Rs900 per MMBTU.

Furthermore, the CNG sector is set to face its own set of challenges, with prices anticipated to surge by Rs170 per MMBTU. Collectively, these price hikes are expected to impose an additional burden of Rs204 billion on all consumers.

The decision has sparked widespread criticism, with many decrying the government's imposition of further financial strain on an already beleaguered populace. As citizens brace for the impact of increased gas prices on their household budgets, concerns mount over the potential escalation of inflationary pressures across the economy.

As the caretaker government drops a gas bomb on consumers within just days of its departure, it is also expected to raise the price of petroleum products as per the fortnightly adjustments.

The possibility of an increase in petrol and diesel prices today is being considered due to fluctuations in global oil prices.

Following a hike of Rs13.55 per liter in petrol prices from February 1, authorities are now contemplating an increase in the price of high-speed diesel.



QUETTA: Members of Four-Party Alliance are holding protest demonstration against alleged rigging in General Election 2024, outside DC Office in Quetta.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister, Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar chairs a meeting of the Caretaker Federal Cabinet, in Islamabad.

Cabinet approves Syed Tariq's appointment as PBM MD

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federal Cabinet on Thursday approved the appointment of Syed Tariq Muhammad ul Hassan as Managing Director of Pakistan Baitul Maal (PBM).

The decision was taken on the recommendation of Ministry of Poverty Alleviation and Social Security, according to a press release issued by the Prime Minister House Media Wing.

Caretaker Prime Minister Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar presided over the cabinet meeting.

On the recommendation of the Ministry of Commerce, the cabinet approved the transit/transfer of vehicle spare parts and new tires used by the Country Office of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in

Afghanistan from Karachi Port to Kabul.

It was informed that such imports and their transfer to Afghanistan were prohibited to prevent smuggling in the country, however, the said spare parts and tires would be used by the United Nations and were not for commercial use. On the recommendation of the Ministry of Defence Production, the cabinet also approved the redeployment of Grade-20 officer Khan Nawaz of the Secretariat Group as Member Finance in the Heavy Industry Taxila.

The cabinet, on the recommendation of the Finance Ministry, also gave its approval for the exemption of JS Bank's sponsoring shareholder Shabbir Ahmed Randiri from Sec-

tion (IV)(1)14 of the Banking Companies Ordinance.

Under the exemption, Shabbir Ahmed would be able to exercise his voting rights in JS Bank Limited as a 7.06% sponsoring shareholder. Furthermore, on the recommendation of the Ministry of Interior, the meeting approved the handing over of Irfan Qadir Bhatti, an accused with dual citizenship, to the Kingdom of Norway.

It was told that the Norwegian Government had alleged that the accused was involved in terrorism. The Additional Deputy Commissioner Islamabad was appointed as an inquiry officer, who after investigation came to the conclusion that the accused was involved in terrorism and other illegal activities.

AJK ECP issues arrest warrants of Ali Amin

MUZAFFARABAD (Online): Azad Kashmir Election Commission has issued arrest warrants of former minister for Kashmir affairs and nominated Chief Minister KP Ali Amin Gandapur.

Petition on violation of election code in AJK general election 2021 by Ali Amin Gandapur was filed against him.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) D.I Khan has been ordered to present Ali Amin Gandapur in Azad Kashmir as he has not appeared despite being summoned by election commission repeatedly.

Ali Amin Gandapur be arrested and presented on February 28.

ANP rejects alliance with PTI, citing electoral rigging

PESHAWAR (INP): After Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), the Awami National Party (ANP) has also declined to forge an alliance with the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI).

ANP leader Mian Ifkhar Hussain stated that the party's position stemmed from the belief that supporting PTI in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa resulted in ANP's loss of seats. He explained that given these circumstances, negotiations with PTI were deemed inappropriate by the ANP.

The ANP has already announced plans to protest against electoral fraud, result alterations and financial misconduct during the elections.

Shehbaz apprises Nawaz of progress in talks with allies over formation of govt

LAHORE (Agencies): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President Shehbaz Sharif apprised three-time prime minister Nawaz Sharif on Thursday about the progress in the negotiations with the allies, including the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) in the centre.

Shehbaz Sharif called on the PML-N supremo at Jati Umra. On this occasion, both leaders discussed the latest political position of JUI-F supremo Maulana Fazlur Rehman.

A meeting of PML-N bigwigs was also held under the chairmanship of Nawaz Sharif. During the meeting, consultation was

held on the possible names of the Punjab cabinet. The possible names of the Punjab assembly speaker and deputy speaker were also considered.

The consultations were also held regarding the inclusion of allies in the provincial cabinet and their possible ministries in Punjab.

In the meeting, Ishaq Dar, while giving a briefing on the joint meeting of the coordination committees of the PML-N and PPP, said, "There has been progress in matters regarding government formation, while the third meeting of the coordination committees will be held on Friday."



Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf addressing the troops onboard PN ship during exercise SEASPARK 2024

Naval Chief oversees conduct of Exercise Seaspark 2024

RAWALPINDI (APP): Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf on Thursday visited naval ships at sea, creeks areas on the coastal belt of Sindh and coastal areas of Balochistan to oversee the conduct of Exercise Seaspark 2024 and meet the deployed troops in the exercise.

Exercise Seaspark 2024 is a major maritime exercise of Pakistan Navy (PN) which is regularly conducted after every two years on two force concept

i.e. Blue Force (own force) and Orange Force (enemy force). The purpose of the exercise is to plan and conduct naval operations as per wartime procedures to check operational readiness, major mobilisation of personnel and practice coordination between various elements of PN to undertake complex operations, an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release said.

During the operations

Continued on page 2

Election process in Pakistan is its internal matter : FO

ISLAMABAD (Online): Pakistan wants Kashmir issue is resolved as per aspirations of people of Kashmir in accordance with UN resolutions, this was said by Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch here in weekly press briefing Thursday.

"We have welcomed foreign observers and Commonwealth observers. We discharge our constitutional obligations forcefully. Political leaders are being targeted in Occupied Kashmir.

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QUETTA: Provincial President PML(N) Sheikh Jaffar Mandokhail, newly elected MNAs and MPAs Jam Kamal Khan, Jamal Shah Kakar, Abdul Rehman Khetran, Shoaib Nausherwani, Masood Luni, Zarak Khan Mandokhail and other addressing a Press conference

PTI announces nationwide protest campaign on Saturday

Imran picks Omar Ayub as PTI's candidate for prime minister, Mian Aslam Iqbal as Punjab CM

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): In a significant development, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has officially nominated former provincial minister Aslam Iqbal as its candidate for the chief minister position in Punjab. This announcement came from PTI leader Barrister Gohar Ali Khan, signalling PTI's intent to solidify its leadership in the province.

Speaking to the media on Thursday, Barrister Gohar also disclosed that PTI has put forward Salar Khan Kakar as its candidate for the chief minister position in Balochistan.

Moreover, the PTI has announced its plans for a nationwide protest scheduled for Saturday. "We will protest peacefully all over Pakistan on Saturday," Barrister Gohar added.

Emphasizing the peaceful nature of the protest, the PTI leader asserted that the demonstration aims to convey a strong message against what the party perceives as electoral irregularities, particularly the alleged theft of 80 seats.

"According to records, the PTI has won 180 seats. Nobody has the right to form a government with a

fake mandate," he insisted, adding that in the protest, they will give the message that 80 of their seats have been stolen. "The protest will be peaceful, and there should be no arrests," Barrister Gohar asserted.

Addressing concerns over potential power-sharing arrangements, Barrister Gohar firmly stated that PTI will not engage in any such agreements with parties like the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), and Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM).

Imran Khan was ousted on Gen Bajwa's directives: Fazlur Rehman

Monitoring Desk

ISLAMABAD: Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) Emir Maulana Fazlur Rehman said Thursday that the no-confidence motion that ousted former prime minister Imran Khan was tabled on the directives of ex-army chief General (retired) Qamar Javed Bajwa.

In an interview on a private news channel, Fazl, who was the chief of the multi-party alliance Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) responsible for removing Khan, said: "I was personally against the no-confidence move [...] but if I had said no despite insis-

tence of other parties, then an impression would've been given that I 'saved' the PTI founder."

The PDM removed the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government in April 2022 and led by Shehbaz Sharif, the multi-party alliance ruled the country for 16 months before handing over the reins to the caretaker set-up.

At first, Khan insisted that the US had him removed — a claim that the Joe Biden administration vehemently rejected. However, the ex-prime minister later shifted the blame to Gen Bajwa.



QUETTA: Caretaker Provincial Minister for Information Jan Achakzai meeting with Caretaker Home Minister Mir Muhammad Zubair Jamali

Independent MPAs from Balochistan unite to join party for province's dev

QUETTA (INP): Newly-elected independent candidates from Balochistan convened a consultative meeting and unanimously decided to join a political party together.

During the meeting, the newly-elected MPAs, including Wali Noorzai, Maulvi Noorullah, Liaqat Lehri, Bakht Muhammad Kakar, and Asfandyar Kakar, participated, while Abdul Khaliq Achakzai

joined via video link. The MPAs of the Balochistan Assembly resolved to adopt a unified stance for the development and prosperity of the province, affirming their collective commitment to representing the people of the province in the Balochistan Assembly. Sources said that these MPAs are in contact with the provincial leaderships of the PML-N, PPP and JUI.

BUJ to move courts against wrongful termination of journalists

QUETTA (APP): The Balochistan Union of Journalists (BUJ) on Thursday decided to move courts against wrongful termination of journalists from several media outlets.

The decision to the effect was taken in the inaugural meeting of the newly-elected BUJ cabinet, chaired by President Khalil Ahmed, at the Quetta Press Club.

The BUJ's leadership voiced their concern over firing of journalists by the media outlets without any warning or prior consultation, and reaffirmed their commitment to defend the legal rights of the media workers.

They emphasised, "Media owners cannot fire journalists from their respective organisations without serving any notice and fulfilling a due legal procedure."



QUETTA: A delegation of teachers led by Master Abdul Karim meeting with Governor Balochistan Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar

Achakzai urges public reject calls for disruption from losing candidates

QUETTA (APP): Caretaker Balochistan Provincial Information Minister Jan Achakzai on Thursday urged the public to reject calls of agitation by the unsuccessful candidates and parties of elections, instead, he encouraged citizens to keep their role in efforts to promote national development and prosperity.

Minister Achakzai emphasized that creating chaos and blocking roads is not a solution to existing problems. He characterized such actions as attempts by "rejected individuals" to mask their disappointment with the electoral outcome. He advised those with

genuine concerns to seek legal recourse rather than resorting to disruptive protests.

Furthermore, the Minister appealed to individuals blocking roads to consider the impact on ordinary citizens. He urged them to demonstrate peacefully on the side of the road, allowing for unimpeded traffic flow, if their intentions are truly focused on public well-being.

While acknowledging the democratic right to peaceful protest, he warned that obstructing roads and disregarding the law would not be tolerated for long.

ECP dismisses Nawaz's plea against defeat in NA-15 Mansehra

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Thursday binned the plea of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz supremo Nawaz Sharif against his defeat in NA-15 Mansehra.

According to unofficial and unconfirmed results

from all polling stations in the constituency, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf-backed independent candidate

Shahzada Gustasp Khan won the seat with 105,249 votes, while Nawaz Sharif remained second with 80,382 votes.

PBS to conduct 7th Agricultural Census this year

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) has devised a plan to conduct the 7th Agricultural Census in 2024, across the country to undertake an integrated digital count of agriculture, livestock and machinery as per international best practices under United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (UNFAO) guidelines.

According to the news release, effective and efficient management of human and financial resources is crucial in the 7th Agricultural Census to ensure the provision of credible statistics.

The census consumed around Rs 650 million while the field operation will be conducted in September-October this year.

For broader involvement and wider acceptability, PBS initiated engagements with partner organizations and provincial stakeholders namely the Board of Revenue, Agricultural (Extension), Livestock, Provincial Bureau of Statistics, Crop Reporting Services etc.

The participation of stakeholders helped in diversified perspectives, identifying needs, and addressing the shortcomings and potential issues for the provision of credible statistics as per requirements and avoiding any inconvenience during field operation of the Agricultural Census.

The process started with the meeting of all provin-

cial focal persons (SMBRs) at PBS HQ Islamabad on 20th December 2023.

After this series of Provincial meetings started, the first provincial meeting held at Provincial Census Coordination Center (P3C), Sindh, and the second meeting was held at the Provincial Office, Punjab, Lahore under the chair of Dr. Naem uz Zafar, Chief Census Commissioner.

Muhammad Sarwar Gondal, Member (SS/RM), senior officers from PBS and senior officers from Provincial departments also attended the meeting.

The Chief Census Commissioner highlighted that Pakistan is an agricultural country and agriculture has a 23% share in the GDP out of which 64% of livestock shares in agriculture and provides employment to 37% of the labor force.

Therefore, the latest data on the agricultural sector is required for evidence-based policy planning and the Agricultural Census 2024 will be a huge source in this regard.

He emphasized on the participation and cooperation of provincial stakeholders, for the successful completion of the field operation for the 7th Agricultural Census.

Muhammad Sarwar Gondal, Member (Support Services/IT), apprised in detail regarding the methodology, field operation plan, Media Strategy, and Budget requirements.



Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf interacting with troops at forward post during exercise SEAPARK 2024.



ISLAMABAD: The ambassador of Japan, WADA Mitsuhiro addresses the inaugural ceremony of the exhibition titled Yakishime Earth Metamorphosis organized by The Japan Foundation, Embassy of Japan in Pakistan with the collaboration of PNCA at Pakistan National Council of the Arts.

Multan Sultan's not to repeat previous mistakes: Khushdil Shah

MULTAN (APP): Senior player of Multan Sultan, Khushdil Shah Thursday said that the team would enter the ground with high spirits and the previous mistakes would not be repeated in the current edition of PSL 9.

Holding a press conference at Multan Cricket Stadium before the practice session here, Khushdil Shah said that the team management has selected the team with a combination and strategy. He said that everyone has a role in the march and the players would play their role for dominance in the tournament. He said that he was the most senior player of the Multan Sultan franchise as he had been representing Multan Sultan for the last six years.

He said that

Muhammad Rizwan was a top player and he was aware of the strength of all players and he would use the players as per the situation of the match. He said that the wicket of Multan Cricket Stadium was good and people have witnessed tough matches where high targets have been chased and low targets have also been defended.

He said that the cricket fans from Multan always supported and praised all teams. "We do not have Rilee Rossouw this season but senior player Iftikhar Ahmed as his replacement would be a good choice", he said and added that Iftikhar has the capabilities to change the match position. Khushdil Shah maintained that Multan Sultan has won more matches than Lahore Qalandars.

PML-N rejects result of election in KP

PESHAWAR (Online): PML-N KP has rejected result of general election in KP.

PML-N central leader and spokesperson Ikhthiar Wali Khan has said that PTI founder has adopted anti state agenda by nominating Ali Amin as chief minister KP.

If Ali Amin becomes chief minister then Balochistan like situation will be created in KP.

He stated PTI is hatching conspiracy to turn KP into Toru Bora. PML-N rejects KP general election results. Not only rigging but robbery has been committed for PTI.

SJC grants Mazhar Naqvi permission to cross-examine witnesses

ISLAMABAD (INP) - Continuing its ongoing proceedings against Mazhar Ali Akbar Naqvi, a former judge of the apex court, the Supreme Judicial Council recorded the statements of seven witnesses on Thursday.

During the proceedings, Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa remarked that the Supreme Judicial Council would not reach any decision until the Supreme Court's decisions were made. He also stated that upon Mazhar Naqvi's request, the SJC proceedings were open to the public. The SJC is scheduled to

Notification regarding Aun Chaudhry's victory withdrawn: IHC told

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Thursday informed the Islamabad High Court (IHC) that it had withdrawn the notification regarding the victory of Aun Chaudhry from NA-128 Lahore in the general elections.

IHC Chief Justice Aamer Farooq heard the petition of independent candidate Salman Akram Raja Advocate against the election results.

Pakistan's total liquid foreign reserves reach \$ 13.149 billion

KARACHI (APP): The total liquid foreign reserves of Pakistan slightly increased to US\$ 13,149.1 million in the week ended on February 9, 2024 while foreign reserves held by State Bank reached \$ 8,056.5 million.

The State Bank of Pakistan, in a statement issued here on Thursday, informed that foreign exchange reserves held by the central bank increased by \$ 13 million to \$ 8,056.5 million during the week under review. Meanwhile net foreign reserves held by commercial banks stood at \$ 5,092.6 million.

Total liquid foreign reserves held by the country, in the previous week ended on February 2, 2024, were \$ 13,097.6 million.

Among them, foreign reserves held by the central bank were \$ 8,044 million while net foreign reserves held by commercial banks were \$ 5,053.6 million.

Training on leadership traits for BISP officers conducted

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Dr. Muhammad Amjad Saqib Thursday emphasized the significance of leadership, stating that it encompasses vision, knowledge, skills, and traits.

He underscored the importance of integrity and humility, highlighting that integrity is the alignment between words and actions, and humility is essential in inspiring others.

While addressing the officers of grade 17 and 18 (BISP HQs and BISP field offices) in a training session at the Institute of Rural Management (IRM) today, Dr. Amjad Saqib reiterated that it is a collective dream and an apolitical program dedicated to serve 9.3 million poor families across Pakistan, regardless of caste, color, or creed.

He stressed that BISP stands as one of the nation's premier institutions, committed to uplifting marginalized communities.

Naval Chief overseas...

for defence of Creeks areas which constitutes the South Eastern maritime boundary with India.

Karachi Kings on the hunt for their second HBL PSL title

PESHAWAR (APP): The HBL PSL-9 edition is around the corner with some of the leading stars of limited-overs cricket racing to light up cricket grounds in Pakistan.

With a new coach and captain, Karachi Kings enter HBL PSL 9 with oodles of optimism and they'll show faith in their local talent as well as global firepower to rebound. Karachi Kings will get their campaign underway on Feb 18 against Multan Sultans at the picturesque Multan Cricket Stadium.

They've snapped up West Indies superstar Kieron Pollard in their squad who will try to swing their fortunes with his all-round capabilities. They have also secured the services of Australia all-rounder Daniel Sams as well as retained seasoned campaigner Shoaib Malik. Pace bowling is further stacked with Mir Hamza and Anwar Ali who will provide squad depth given their vast domestic experience and international exposure as well.

Karachi Kings managed to bag only three wins in the 2023 season and despite having the firepower in their ranks to spring more surprises, they could not coalesce as a unit. The team's ethos includes resilience and a fighting spirit, and they'll be aiming to rejuvenate this season and give Karachi fans a lot to cheer about.

The 2020 HBL PSL champions are determined to hit the ground running early on as the highly experienced Shoaib Malik will be looking to shine at the twilight of his career. Phil Simmons comes with a wealth of coaching experience. He coached West Indies and is at present the head coach of Trinbago Knight Riders in the Caribbean Premier League (CPL) and LA Knight Riders in Major League Cricket (MLC).

"The decision to bring in Phil Simmons as head coach was influenced by his impressive credentials, including being a T20 World Cup-winning coach. His experience in guiding teams to success at the highest level adds a valuable dimension to our coaching setup, and we look forward to harnessing his expertise for a successful campaign in the upcoming HBL PSL

edition and to build a team for the future", said Salman Iqbal, owner of Karachi Kings.

Kings retained Shan Masood as their captain who currently leads the Pakistan Test team. Karachi Kings' director Haider Azhar shed light on the decision to appoint Shan as skipper of the side.

He said: "Securing Shan Masood for Karachi Kings was nothing short of a coup for us. His leadership qualities and captaincy feats are well-documented and we are proud to have a local boy from Karachi lead the team. On a personal note, having worked closely with Shan in the past, I believe he is the ideal captain for our team that will be undergoing a transitional phase and we expect him to be central to our project."

On the objectives set for this year's HBL PSL, Haider Azhar said, "Our first objective for this year has been to set up a platform and building blocks for the future, all the while assembling a squad that would be competitive in the upcoming edition of HBL PSL.



QUETTA: Sardar Muhammad Iqbal Khilji meeting with Director General Public Relations Muhammad Noor Khethran regarding Inter-Faith Harmony Conference

Refusal to join Test squad: PCB terminates pace ace Haris Rauf's central contract

Sports Desk

LAHORE: Pace ace Haris Rauf's central contract was terminated by the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Thursday following a probe into his alleged refusal to join Pakistan's Test squad for the tour of Australia 2023-24, the cricket board said in a press release.

In November, chief selector Wahab Riaz had revealed that Rauf refused to take part in the Test tour of Australia and told selectors he wanted to focus on white ball cricket and manage his workload.

According to ESPNcricinfo a source close to the player revealed that Rauf had never committed to playing the Test matches in Australia. Riaz said that Rauf's decision would "hurt Pakistan cricket".

"After a thorough hearing process conducted by a PCB committee and taking into consideration the views of all stakeholders involved in the matter, Haris' central contract has been terminated from December 1, 2023, and no NOC (No objection certificate) to play any foreign league will be granted up to June 30, 2024," the press release said.

It said that the board had provided Rauf a chance for a personal hearing in compliance with the principles of natural justice, however, the board found his response unsatisfactory.

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NASEERABAD: Members of Pakistan Medical Association (PMA) are holding protest demonstration for acceptance of their demands, held at Allahwala Chowk in Naseerabad.



A delegation of Karakoram International University, Gilgit Baltistan and University of Batistan, Skardu, called on President Dr. Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, Islamabad.

Trail-5 & 6 visitors' info centres "illegally sealed" by CDA: Rina

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairperson, Islamabad Wildlife Management Board (IWMB) Rina Saeed Khan on Thursday said the Capital Development Authority (CDA) illegally sealed the visitors' information centers at the Trail-5 and 6 of the Margalla Hills National Park (MHNP) being managed by the Board.

The Chairperson took to her official handle on X (formerly Twitter) to apprise the masses of the rogue behaviour of the civic agency that took many aback as the visitors' information center were the only source of guidance for local and foreign tourists visiting the national park's nature and biodiversity-rich hiking trails.

In her X post, she wrote: "URGENT: CDA thugs have come this morning and taken over our Visitor Info Center on Trail 5 throwing out IWMB furniture. This building was

made by Himalayan Wildlife Foundation not CDA and we have handing over documents. We are going to police and courts now! @WildlifeBoard."

She also shared the official order of CDA allocating the land of existing information centres to the Board for establishing its offices whereas any handing over or taking over of the building would be carried out through the Environment Directorate of the CDA through intimation to the Authority's Administrative Directorate.

The Board also issued a news release stating that the Federal Development Agency illegally sealed the Visitor Information Center located on Trail-5 and Trail-6. "CDA officials broke the locks of the office including the conference room and took out the belongings. However, the concerned building was handed over to IWMB by the Administration Directorate of

CDA after formal paperwork. The CDA officials acted without notice and ignored all legal aspects," the IWMB alleged.

When contacted the CDA spokesperson Kamran Qureshi, he hanged up and gave a silent treatment to the queries on the matter. Director General, the CDA's Environment Directorate, Irfan Niazi was also contacted for his official version who also hung up the call and did not turn up to provide his version on the matter.

It may be mentioned here that the civic agency and the Board have recently locked their horns over the possession and control on the erstwhile Islamabad Zoo which was currently operating as the only wildlife rescue and rehabilitation center awaiting funds by the government to develop it into a most-modern public information center and a virtual zoo and the wildlife preservation center.



ISLAMABAD: Former Member Norwegian Council Aamir Sheikh calls on President Azad Jammu and Kashmir Barrister Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry at Kashmir House.

NUST announces article writing competition on 'Women in Climate Action'

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National University of Science and Technology (NUST) has called on all voices of Pakistan to become part of its efforts to amplify the importance of Women in Climate Action by participating in an 'Article Writing Competition'.

According to an official of NUST, the article writing competition, being arranged in collaboration with the Gender Intersectionality and Climate Change (GICC), is aimed at stimulating thoughtful discourse on the intersectionality of gender and climate resilience.

The last date for submission of the articles is

February 29. The details of the event can be accessed through the website: gicc.nust.edu.pk.

The article writing competition is part of the "Women in Climate Action - Celebrating Resilience" event being arranged by the NUST and GIZ Pakistan on the occasion of International Women's Day (March 8) in Islamabad.

This empowering event aims to recognize and applaud the significant contributions of women in climate action, emphasizing their leadership, innovation, and impact on creating sustainable and climate-resilient communities.

NH&MP to ensure safe transportation of vehicles

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP) wants to ensure safe transportation of vehicles carrying flammable and hazardous materials on Motorways and Highways.

In this regard, a meeting chaired by Inspector General Salman Chaudhry was held at the Central Police Office of NH&MP.

The various stakeholders, including representatives from OGRA, Senior Executive Director (Enforcement) Sohail Ahmad Tariq and Senior Executive Director (LPG) Sarmad Aslam, from Ministry of Energy (Petroleum Division) Director Aftab Qazi and Director Samad Khan of Explosive Department,

Consultant Scientist Dr. Omer Quershi, DIG Saad Akhtar Bharwana and AIG Syed Muhammad Bilal from NH&MP were present in the meeting.

Key issues related to the safe transportation of these vehicles were discussed, and IG Salman Chaudhry highlighted the importance of a comprehensive policy in this regard.

Ensuring the safety of patrolling officers and commuters was emphasized in the meeting, with plans for training programs and the provision of necessary safety equipments.

Cooperation among stakeholders was deemed essential for ensuring the safe movement of such vehicles across the country.



Principal Information Officer (PIO) Dr. Tariq Mehmood Khan in a meeting with a delegation of Rawalpindi Islamabad Bureaus Journalists Association (RIBJA) at PID Headquarters, Islamabad.

Three killed in Chiniot road accident

ISLAMABAD (APP): At least three people were killed in a collision between a tractor-trolley and a motorcycle in Chiniot, on Thursday.

According to rescue sources, the accident occurred at the Sahiwal Road in Chiniot, where a rashly driven tractor-trolley hit a motorcycle, killing three persons on the spot, said a private news channel reported.

Police and rescue teams rushed to the site and shifted the bodies to a nearby hospital.

Further investigation is underway.

FIA arrests two suspects involved in fraud and harassment

ISLAMABAD (APP): Two suspects were arrested on Thursday, who were involved in financial fraud and harassment.

According to private news channel, the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) cyber wing carried out a raid in Rawalpindi and Mian Channu's area, the culprits were involved to deceive the citizens by fake recipe of bank's cheques and child harassment.

Tribute to Mirza Ghalib on 155th death anniversary

ISLAMABAD (APP): Today marks the solemn occasion of the 155th death anniversary of the illustrious Urdu poet, Mirza Asadullah Khan Ghalib.

Ghalib wrote hundreds of Ghazals during his life which have since been interpreted and sung in many different ways.

Mirza Asadullah Khan Ghalib is considered one of the most popular and influential poets of the Urdu language.

FIA arrests CDA's DG Land after court terminates his bail

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) on Thursday arrested Director General Land of the Capital Development Authority (CDA) Afnan Alam in a case of illegal allotment of plots after termination of his interim bail by a lower court.

Special Court Judge Sharukh Arjmand heard the interim bail case of Afnan Alam in a first information report registered by the FIA against the CDA officials about illegal allotment of plots.

During the course of proceedings, the defence

Gohar for effective system to provide quality water supply, sanitation services to twin cities

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Interior Minister Dr. Gohar Ejaz said on Thursday that water supply and sanitation were basic needs and an integrated, comprehensive and effective system must be devised so that quality facilities could be provided to the people of twin cities.

He said this while presiding over a meeting held regarding water supply and sanitation in Islamabad and Rawalpindi.

Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs

Murtaza Solangi also participated in the meeting.

Representatives of Chief Commissioner Islamabad, the Local Government Department, Rawalpindi Development Authority and the Cantonment Board also attended the meeting. The existing system of water supply, sanitation and waste disposal in the twin cities was reviewed in the meeting.

The meeting was informed that 8,000 sanitation workers disposed of 2,300 tons of waste daily with an annual budget of Rs

7 billion but still, the sanitation situation in both cities could not be described as satisfactory.

The meeting was informed that currently, the twin cities were facing 47 per cent water scarcity. "We want the capital to be an example for other cities," the interior minister said adding decisions will have to be made today to meet the needs of tomorrow. He said in this regard, the implementation of all necessary actions should be ensured as soon as possible.

Ensuring good sanitation is essential for improv-

ing water supply systems, he maintained.

Minister for Information Murtaza Solangi said that improvement of groundwater level was very important for better water supply and attention had to be paid to this issue.

He directed that the natural nullahs and of Islamabad should be cleaned on a priority basis.

Minister for Information and Broadcasting Murtaza Solangi, who also attended the meeting, said improvement of groundwater level is very important.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Dr. Gohar Ejaz chairing a meeting on Integrated Sanitation and Water Supply System for Islamabad and Rawalpindi.

Japan Foundation Exhibition "Yakishime: Earth Metamorphosis" inaugurated at PNCA

ISLAMABAD (Online): To showcase the depth of traditional Japanese cultural heritage from its earliest origins to contemporary works, a Japan Foundation's travelling pottery exhibition "Yakishime: Earth Metamorphosis", one of the most basic or primitive means of producing ceramics, opened up at the National Art Gallery of the Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) for visitors to get familiar with this unique and centuries old cultural facet of Japan.

The exhibition, which runs until February 29, is jointly organized by the Japan Foundation and the Embassy of Japan in Islamabad in collaboration with the Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA).

Jamal Shah, the Caretaker Federal Minister for

National Heritage & Culture, and WADA Mitsuhiro, the Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan, together with the other distinguished guests inaugurated the exhibition on Thursday February 15 at the National Art Gallery to provide an opportunity to the visitors to witness the evolution of yakishime from its ancient roots to contemporary expressions.

This captivating showcase focuses on a traditional Japanese ceramics technique yakishime (firing unglazed wares at extremely high temperatures) and introduces its history and evolution that has developed in distinctive directions in Japan from 4th and 5th centuries through present day. It features over 80 exquisite pieces from the earliest examples to the present through yakishime wares, tea vessels, food ves-

sels, jars, containers and more that have become an essential part of everyday life in Japan. It also presents a wide range of non-utilitarian objects created by the contemporary ceramic artists working in yakishime styles aiming to provide an opportunity to communicate this distinctively Japanese sensibility and aesthetic to the people abroad.

H.E. Ambassador WADA, while speaking at the inaugural ceremony, expressed his deep admiration for this time-honored traditional Japanese art of producing ceramic art and crafts, and said that "one of the unique characteristics of Japanese culture is the fusion and coexistence of tradition and innovation. We are good at adding new interpretation to tradition, while respecting old methods and tastes."

Activist warns of escalating child begging crisis, its societal impact

ISLAMABAD (APP): Human and child rights activist Rubina Fareed highlighted the alarming rise of child begging as it would contribute to societal challenges, including robbery and exploitation.

Talking to APP here on Thursday, she said estimates suggest there are between five and twenty-five million beggars, comprising approximately 2.5 to 11 percent of the population.

Rubina pointed out that the concerned ICT Authority has failed to address issues such as neglecting the rehabilitation of beggars, ignoring children's educa-

tion, and failing to take action against parents who force their kids to beg on the streets. Rubina highlighted that among the beggars, a significant portion comprises chronic drug addicts who have been abandoned by their families, leading them to spend nights on roads, under bridges, footpaths, parks, and other open spaces.

Additionally, she pointed out that many beggar children, including young and teenage girls, are particularly vulnerable to child abuse, as well as various forms of crimes and harassment.



ISLAMABAD: A woman visitor take keen interest in pottery and ceramics during exhibition titled "YAKISHIME Earth Metamorphosis" at Pakistan National Council of the Arts, organized by embassy of Japan, in the Federal Capital.

SSP Operations commended officials for effective measures during elections

ISLAMABAD: Under the special directions of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Senior Superintendent of Police (Operations) on Thursday presided over a crime meeting, which was attended by all Zonal DPOs, SDPOs and all incharge police stations.

SSP Operations commended all the officers for good duties during the elections. He reviewed the performance of all police stations in detail.

During the meeting, the SSP Operations reviewed the crime situation in the federal capital and commended the perfor-

mance of the police officials for effective measures in crime combating. SSP Operations also emphasized the need for continued vigilance and proactive measures. He directed all Zone DPOs to boost the campaign against drug peddlers in different areas of the city adding that a special crackdown against proclaimed offenders and absconders should be started immediately. He further directed the officials to ensure the arrest of the suspects involved in dacoity, vehicle and motorcycle theft, especially against those involved in murder cases adding that the ratio of challan of the cases and recoveries should be increased.

Number of pending cases in courts increased by 3.9%: Report

ISLAMABAD (APP): The overall pendency of cases in courts has increased by 3.9%, reaching the staggering number of 2.26 million during the second half of the year 2023.

The Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan, in its Bi-Annual Report of Judicial Statistics for the period from July to December 2023, revealed that 82% of the pending cases (1.86 million) were at the district judiciary level and the remaining 18% (0.39 million cases) were at the upper tier, including the Supreme Court, Federal

Shariat Court, and high courts, according to a news release.

According to the report, 2.38 million new cases were filed during the period, while the courts managed to decide 2.30 million cases.

Despite significant settlement of cases, the pending cases increased due to the continual filing of new ones, the news release said.

"Civil cases constitute 81% of the cases pending in the high courts, while criminal cases account for 19%.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Heritage & Culture, Jamal Shah and the ambassador of Japan WADA Mitsuhiro inaugurate the exhibition titled 'Yakishime Earth Metamorphosis' organized by the Japan Foundation, Embassy of Japan in Pakistan with the collaboration of PNCA at Pakistan National Council of the Arts.

Hearing of 190mln pounds reference against Imran, Bushra adjourned till 20th

ISLAMABAD (Online): Hearing of 190 million pounds reference against PTI Founder Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi in Accountability Court (AC) Islamabad has been adjourned till February 20 due to non availability of the judge.

Judge Muhammad Bashir of AC was to hear 190 million pounds reference against Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi on Thursday in Adiala jail.

The hearing was adjourned without further

proceedings due to non availability of the judge.

Next hearing will take place on February 20.

It is pertinent to mention here that the previous hearing could not take place due to non availability of judge.

Earlier on February 01, the hearing of this case against PTI founder and his wife Bushra Bibi was adjourned till February 10 without any proceedings due to non availability of judge Muhammad Bashir of AC

26 outlaws arrested; drugs and weapons recovered

Independent Report

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Police apprehended 26 outlaws including eight professional beggars from different areas of the city during the last 24 hours and recovered drugs and weapons from their possession, a public relations officer said. He said that, following the special directions of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad Capital Police has intensified crackdown against the criminal elements in order to eliminate the crime from the city.

Following these directions, the Aabpara police team arrested two accused namely Muhammad Usman and Irfan Masih and

recovered 15 liters of liquor and one 30 bore pistol from their possession. The Secretariat police team arrested an accused namely Najeeb Shah and recovered 322 gram heroin from his possession. Likewise, the Karachi Company police team arrested two accused namely Sani Masih and Aamir Masih and recovered 40 liters of liquor from their possession. The Golra police team arrested three accused namely Muhammad Sheraz, Muhammad Awais and Dilawar involved in illegally refilling gas cylinders. Likewise, the Sabzi Mandi police team arrested an accused namely Noor ul Amin and recovered 371 gram heroin from his possession.

Daily Voice of Masses
Independent

Friday February 16, 2024

Staged show

The country barely survived the trailer; now, it appears, a full five-year show has been penned for PDM 2.0. There is little that can be considered new or improved, and there are very few changes in the cast: the PML-N will once again take the lead under Shehbaz Sharif, with the PPP content with reprising its supporting role.

There will be the usual favourites — parties that were first herded into the PTI government, and then into the PDM: MQM, PML-Q and BAP, as well as familiar faces from the IPP. The directors will continue calling the shots, especially on critical matters like the economy and foreign affairs.

Their 'backing' will be the glue that holds the rickety government together, with legislation likely to be reduced to an on-demand farce. This ragtag bunch of 'patriotic' politicians will soon resume their mission of 'saving' Pakistan, despite making a hash of it the first time around.

It will be grating not only to PTI sympathisers, who voted for change, but also PML-N supporters how this arrangement has come to pass. The latter were told that these elections would usher in Nawaz Sharif's fourth term as PM. Instead, it seems like his party ended up using his name and stature to strengthen another candidate's hand.

Mr Sharif may have had an idea he was not the 'preferred choice', which could be why he did not campaign as aggressively as he was expected to. The manner in which his victory in this election was announced also seemed designed to put him in a corner. It is puzzling, though, why the seasoned politician did not refuse to play once it became clear he was being manipulated.

His decision to, instead, give the government to Shehbaz Sharif was a sad reminder of all that he had achieved and was made to lose over his career. Still, he has ensured that his daughter will get a head start. The Sharifs have deemed Maryam Nawaz ready to take over as Punjab chief minister — a major responsibility. It remains to be seen how successful she is in regaining lost ground.

Meanwhile, the PPP has emerged as the most astute of the lot. It is likely to secure several constitutional posts despite refusing to carry the PML-N's baggage.

The other parties will also be accommodated, most likely through various ministries: the PDM's last term, too, had featured an obscenely bloated cabinet. But how will the alliance address the country's challenges this time around?

It will not be easy to tackle economic despair, social fragmentation, deep political polarisation and having to please allies while governing with a dubious mandate. Another big challenge will be to demonstrate some stability to international lenders. Has it learned from experience, and will it do a better job?

Ali Tauqeer Sheikh

All politics is local. The nature of the local polity sets the direction of national policies. In fact, the poor quality of local governance has determined the quality of electoral processes and the misplaced national development discourse.

Candidates are elected or re-elected based on their ability to deliver on local issues. How would the PTI, PML-N, PPP, and MQM, the four political parties that have bagged the most seats at both the national and provincial levels, change the ugly realities on the ground? How would they translate their mandates to deliver local development, described interchangeably as municipal or environmental services?

Efficient and transparent service delivered at the constituency level is a necessary building block for climate resilience. Ideally, the elected representatives will need to climate-proof their mandates to serve their constituents and the feeble national reform agenda.

The big challenge for newly elected assemblies is

to transform their respective mandates and craft a clear reform roadmap for equitable, low-carbon, and climate-resilient development. Each of these political parties has stalwarts in its ranks to reach out to his or her counterparts in other parties and broker a non-partisan consensus.

In Pakistan, consolidation of the democratic dispensation and building climate resilience are intertwined. It will be a sustained effort spread over several years, but the functioning of the new national and provincial governments and effectiveness of their opposition groups will hinge on two foundational actions: i) form local government and governance structures, ii) accept, adopt, and accelerate the institutional reform agenda. Let's take a look at them.

Formation of local government and governance structures: The absence of constitutional protection to LGs has weakened the foundations of Pakistan's economy, institutions, human resource development, and the physical environment. Democracy cannot consolidate or deliver without the national and provincial assemblies getting trained human resources from the lowest rung of society.

LG institutions are the first line of defence against climate-triggered disasters, ranging from floods, droughts, heatwaves, and glacial outbursts to snowstorms, mudslides, urban flooding, and tropical storms. Every district faces at least two of these climate-induced disasters. At any given time of the year, it is likely that the country would be grappling with at least two climate-triggered extreme weather events in two or more different regions of the country.

This climate vulnerability at the community level is made worse by the absence of local institutions at the district, tehsil, and union council levels. Health, education, clean drinking water and sanitation, town planning for waste collection, pavement of streets, the provision of streetlights, footpaths, and storm drains, have all become orphan functions over the years, as has the protection of playgrounds, parks, parking spaces, and communal lands and wetlands.

Herein lies the genesis of Pakistan's worsening indicators in health, education, climate vulnerability, and economic growth. Instead of increasing budgetary allocations at the national and provincial levels, we need to first stop bleeding at the local level.

These are all provincial functions and the election results have given a strong mandate for action to these political parties in the provinces. Instead of usurping the rights and functions of LGs, they can prioritise LG elections in their respective provinces. The split mandate at the federal level can be leveraged to adopt a new Charter of Democracy that can help the provinces prioritise the devolution of powers, transferring finances to local levels, and strengthening institutions for climate resilience.

On its part, the federal government can help devise new mechanisms. It can become a champion for the formation of local government and governance structures. The issue can be accelerated by bringing it up in a meeting of the Council of Common Interests for national consensus.

There will hardly be any better use of a hung parliament than utilising the weaknesses of a coalition government to agree on a new magna carta. The last time the CCI was used for such a higher purpose was when the PTI from KP, PPP from Sindh, PML-N from Punjab and BAP from Balochistan signed the National Water Policy and Pakistan Water Charter in 2018.

Accept, adopt and accelerate reform agenda: The new government will need to build upon several ongoing national initiatives and global commitments. It will, for example, have no option but to immediately strike a follow-up agreement with the IMF. This is important, among other reasons, for the continuity of financial discipline and reforms that have been initiated, including the implementation of Climate-PIMA, the IMF checklist for climate-related institutional reforms at the federal level. A bigger challenge for the incoming government will, however, be to accept and own the urgency of institutional reforms that are necessary rather than undertak-

ing them reluctantly, grudgingly, and halfheartedly. The secret recipe for the success of these reforms rests on speed and consistency of action. Pakistan has already dragged its heels on reforms that were first initiated in the early 1990s. The delays have cost the economy, society, and environment dearly.

A coalition government offers opportunities to create a consensus for a long-aspired-to charter of economy, to ensure continuity and accelerate institutional and economic reforms. The fleeting references to this have so far not articulated how it will make society more inclusive and equitable, and contribute towards reducing climate vulnerabilities.

In a risk- and reform-averse environment, these are ambitious directions. But the climate-proofing of electoral mandates will merely entail implementing our existing national policies and ongoing international commitments. After all, climate-proofing electoral mandates is essential to reduce existential risks to the country. -- Courtesy Dawn

The people have spoken

provincial seat shot dead his son because he had announced that he was voting for the PTI and had put up a party flag outside their home.

This of course is an extreme example, but across the country, houses are divided. Many young voters opt for the party they think has taken the best stance against systems in the country and who still believe in the cult-like charisma of its real leader.

The rage has significance. Some believe it has so much significance that it could multiply in the days ahead. This cannot be determined with certainty, but this rage is not surprising in a country which, according to top economists, has no resources and where inflation has defeated people so badly that they are unable to put a meal on the table or send children to school.

The financial condition of most families has become worse. When a wage earner falls sick, most families fail to cover the medical bills. A few months ago, protests erupted in Punjab against the increasing costs of gas and electricity. Protesters tore up the bills or set them on fire. These small but significant episodes highlight the

anger that lurks in the country. This is always dangerous and can take even more dangerous forms in the future.

We understand the reasons for this rage in a nation that has the highest infant and maternal mortality rate in the South Asian region. We also understand the desperate situation in which people live. In many ways, the manner in which they voted was intended to reflect this. The question is: as governments are formed, one way or the other, with alliances coming up amongst candidates from mainstream parties, will there be further demonstrations and exhibitions of the anger that now lies among the youth? This is a dangerous situation. Anger like this led to the Arab Spring a decade or so ago and to other incidents in countries across Africa, Asia and Latin America. We need to watch carefully what direction this anger will take now and the fact that it is more strongly embedded amongst people aged between 18 and, say, 40 or 50.

There can be many ways to display public anger. We have seen this happen in many places. The question for us is whether

anything can be done to cool the rage that lurks everywhere. Will some actions that help people carve out a better standard of living for themselves make a difference?

The answers are uncertain, and it is questionable whether any government in Pakistan can make these changes. We know that the public exchequer is essentially empty. A new deal with the IMF has to be reached in March, and we already know that this deal will not be kind to desperate people or to households that simply cannot manage on the income they have. What the government can do in this situation is difficult to say. The danger therefore lurks of a new outbreak of rage, this time in a more dangerous form, perhaps, with the arrest of PTI workers in small groups in Punjab and other places certainly not helping matters.

No government will be in a situation to make a difference at any speed. The main challenge for those who come to power will be to persuade people that change will happen in, say, eight years or more and to put forward a full blueprint for this. Eight years or a decade seems a long time to wait

for the young but if significant alterations in our badly marred system can be made by then, this would still carry some weight, provided that the plan of action was put across clearly to people everywhere. These people have already shown that they are savvy both in terms of technology and in their ability to determine where and what they want to vote for.

It is extremely difficult to say precisely how the much-awaited change is to come. Many analysts have said that Pakistan will suffer a period of between three and seven years of worsening economic times. Perhaps only after this will it make some kind of recovery based on what actions the government takes. Whether the people are willing to wait is difficult to determine. The wave of voting that has shocked many in the country shows the times have changed and the people are no longer willing to accept things that were always accepted in the past.

There are some assessments that outside powers may intervene in the democratic process, which has been restored to the country after long years and periods of autocratic rule, and

this will only worsen the situation for many. This again is something we do not know much about. The forces that could intervene are of course unwilling to show themselves, but major changes are needed. Steps like land reforms, something which never happened in Pakistan but began quickly in India soon after the country appeared on the map of the world, must be implemented. The taxation system needs to change, but how this will be done and how people will react to it is difficult to say. For now, we live in a time of rage and a time of mass anger. Households have been divided, and society has been cut across lines of age as well as belief. There is now more hatred than ever before. This makes it extremely difficult to ensure that peace and harmony can continue in a country where so many people clearly believe that the events of the past were not just and that they have suffered as a result.

The coming days will be volatile and through them, we can only wait to see which turn is taken and how the future is worked out by whatever government comes to power. -- Courtesy TheNews

A lousy election**F.S. Aijazuddin**

Pakistan is the only faux-democracy that holds general elections yet learns nothing from each experience.

Many remember the general elections of December 1970 — the first (and some say only) free and fair elections in our history. The electoral mood then bordered on the euphoric. President Ayub Khan's ham-fisted experiments with Basic Democracy had been relegated to oblivion. His renegade ex-foreign minister, Z.A. Bhutto, had launched his PPP. He crisscrossed the country, mustering support for his home brand of social democracy.

At the time, I happened to be in Gambat, in the interior of Sindh, managing our family textile mill. Political loyalty in that area was sharply divided between the feudal Pir Pagaro and the progressive Mr Bhutto.

Both sought to call on me to raise election contributions. My family was divided: the eldest brother followed Pagaro, another Bhutto. I was told to receive Pir sahib. During our discussions, Pir sahib predicted victory for his group.

After the results came in, I called on Pir sahib at Pir jo Goth to congratulate him on the victory of his candidate (his brother Sain Nadir Shah) over his PPP rival. Seeing me, Pir sahib

crowded: "We have won by a margin of 35,000 votes." I replied: "Pir sahib, by my calculation, you've actually lost by 95,000 votes. If in your own stronghold of Sanghar, so many dared vote for the PPP and not you, you have actually lost by that number."

Fifty-four years later, the scenario of 1970 has been repeated. Then, the Bengali leader Mujibur Rehman was in jail in West Pakistan. Yet, in distant East Pakistan, his Awami League swept 160 of the 162 general seats.

Today, the PTI chief Mr Imran Khan is in Adiala jail. No stone has been left un-hurled at him and his wife, even the charge of adultery. Yet, his PTI nominees — batless, denied an uneven playing field, hamstrung and harassed — rode the crest of his popularity and secured 100-plus NA seats for him, more than any other single party.

In cricket, that number carries a special aura of success. For the other main political parties and their invisible sponsors, that number reeks of their failure.

The results have yielded inexplicable surprises. Jahangir Tareen's coffers funded Imran Khan's PTI's fledgling years. He left it, founded a new party (IPP), and lost in two constituencies. PML-N's Saad Rafique endured victimisation and jail only to be defeated by PTI's Latif Khosa (until only three months ago a PPP diehard). The Jamaat-i-Islami chief Sirajul Haq lost. Former prime minister Yousuf Raza Gilani won by only 104 votes. PTI's Dr Yasmin Rashid from her Adiala jail cell gave the PML supremo and thrice PM Nawaz Sharif a run for his money. She secured 115,643 votes in his PML-N stronghold.

Even before the ballot papers had been distributed, Nawaz Sharif had warned his sponsors that he would not accept the premiership if he was not given a clear majority. His ambition has been scuttled. His PML-N with 73-plus seats must now cohabit with the PPP's 54-plus in a coalition euphemistically labelled a 'national unity

government'. As one wit put it: "They are all the same in the fact that they will never be the same."

Even before the results have been sanctified by the Election Commission, President Dr Alvi regretted that ballot papers were being hand-counted when the ECP/Nadra had the last five years to perfect the electronic voting machine system.

Even as the political parties jostled for supremacy, the COAS (speaking for the establishment) cautioned them: "Elections are not a zero-sum competition of winning and losing but an exercise to determine the mandate of the people. Political leadership and their workers should rise above self-interests and synergise efforts in governing and serving the people."

Such a belated homily notwithstanding, many Western pundits believe that the election results are an indictment of hybrid democracy. They foresee an uneasy alliance between the same parties whose last PDM coalition removed Imran Khan's PTI government two years ago. The new coalition may all too soon fulfil the prophecy made by a 17th-century Royalist to his Roundhead captors: "Now that you have done with us, go fight among yourselves."

Following the 1970 electoral impasse, Dr Henry Kissinger met Gen Yahya Khan on July 8, 1971. He recalled: "Am I a dictator?" Yahya Khan asked every American and Pakistani present. Naturally, everyone protested that he was not. When Kissinger's turn came, he told Yahya bluntly: "I don't know, Mr President, except that for a dictator you run a lousy election." How many more elections will be needed to delouse our democracy? -- Courtesy Dawn

House of Lord**Shahzad Sharjeel**

It is not for the first time that people are fighting over places of worship; and unfortunately, it appears not to be the last. After the consecration of Ram Mandir in Ayodhya recently, Varanasi, or Banaras, as it was known historically, has become the focus of another masjid-mandir controversy. A court has ordered that the mosque's basement be opened to Hindu worshippers. The Muslim caretaker is said to be concerned about a Babri Masjid-like fate.

Ayodhya-Kashi-Mathura is the BJP/RSS ambition in terms of reclaiming India, nay Bharat, for Hindus. The Gyanvapi mosque is adjacent to the Kashi Vishwanath temple in Varanasi, which is venerated as a place where Lord Shiva manifested his presence. The temple had been attacked and destroyed many times in history, the last being on Aurangzeb's directives. The current temple was built on an adjacent site by Ahilyabai Holkar, a female Maratha ruler, in 1780.

Mathura, also in UP, is important in the Hindu religion because it is considered the birthplace of Lord Krishna. The Keshavdeva temple, part of a complex built to mark Krishna's janamasthan, was destroyed on Aurangzeb's orders, and the Shahi Idgah mosque is believed to have been built on its site.

The question is if it will stop there. So far,

as political expediency goes, it has to. The BJP reclaims the three sacred sites of Hinduism it considers were usurped, declares a victory, and moves on. Pushing it any further would be more than just counterproductive; it would be stupid. The ambition of projecting itself as a global power must be tempered with inclusion and restraint. All the gilded mandirs worldwide would not make India shine if it allowed exclusion's dark shadow to eclipse it at home.

The controversy behind it is well-known but worth summarising. Around 1922, Lahore's Hindu community built a temple in the Shah Alam neighbourhood. The Muslims insisted that a mosque be made on the adjacent plot. The matter was taken to the British court, and legend has it that the Muslims of the area overnight built a mosque to trump any adverse court order. Since the mosque was made without the requisite permission of the municipal committee, it was razed by the government.

The quaint little mosque one sees presently was constructed in 1934. It would be interesting to know if the temple that spurred the Muslim fervour to build the mosque overnight, with shops on the ground floor, is anywhere to be found today. One is reminded of Jamal Ehsani's couplet:

Let us admit that we have all done wrong or have been brainwashed into be-

lieving stuff that does not reflect the whole truth. The destruction wrought by Mahmud of Ghazni, including the sack of the Somnath temple, is still taught in schools.

Most readers would know that famous Indian author Khushwant Singh wished to be buried in Hadali, a town in Khushab, Pakistan, where he was born in 1915. A plaque outside his school commemorates its illustrious student who, among his other scholarly achievements, wrote one of the most comprehensive histories of the evolution of Sikhism. The plaque has Mr Singh's ashes mixed in it. Very few would know that Jaswant Singh, a one-time BJP stalwart, a member of the Lok Sabha, leader of opposition in the Rajya Sabha; a man who held the portfolios for external affairs, defence, and finance through times as tough as the Pokhran nuclear tests, Ka-rgil, the Kandahar hijacking, the scuttled Agra peace summit, attacks on Kash-mir and the Indian parliament; wished for his ashes to be released into the Hingol river in Balochistan. His wish was fulfilled.

Is it too much to hope the region's people could live in peace and interact as neighbours do, instead of waiting for their mortal remains to be united with the soil their ancestors called home? Variations of the following verse are attributed to Bulleh Shah, the 18th-century Sufi: -- Courtesy Dawn

Over 10,000 students to get eco-friendly electric bikes in Punjab: Minister

Independent Report
LAHORE: Caretaker Provincial Transport Minister Ibrahim Hassan Murad Thursday said that his government has inaugurated a landmark project to distribute over 10,000 electric bikes among students from various educational institutions where such students in Lahore, Faisalabad, Multan, Bahawalpur, and Rawalpindi would be the primary beneficiaries of this initiative.

Around 7,000 electric bikes would be allocated to male students, while 3,000 will be designated for female students, he said while talking to a Private news channel.

He said that these students must have a driving license while such an eco-friendly initiative will reduce environmental pollution, adding, that electric two-wheelers will offer long-term financial advantages to these students and would overcome their financial

expenditures. The launch of electric bikes can overcome the problems of exertion and would not take much time to reach their destinations, he added.

E-bike supply program is a government pilot project aiming to capitalize on the market and promote electric bike usage in the country, he mentioned.

Replying to a question, he said that in the first phase, we will distribute e-bikes through a balloting scheme facilitated by the Bank of Punjab.

According to him, the province administration was tackling environmental issues and the public was welcoming the 'Green Wheels' program.

Meanwhile, the students of Punjab also hailed the historic Punjab government's initiative and said that the Green Wheels program was taking place and marking a significant milestone in the province.



LAHORE: Ombudsman Punjab, Major (Rtd) Azam Sulaiman meeting with Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman at Governor House.

NACTA delegation, DG Info KP discuss media role in peace

PESHAWAR (APP): A two-member delegation from National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) on Thursday met with Director General Information and Public Relations here at his office and discussed matters relating to the role of Information Dept in promotion of peace in the province. The role of media, especially the Radio in providing timely and accurate information to the general public was also discussed in detail.

DG Information KP, Muhammad Imran said the media has played a pivotal and responsible role in maintaining lasting peace in the province. To further

improve its capacity and sphere, the Information Dept has established FM radios in the far-flung areas of the newly merged districts from where transmission in local and Pashto languages was continued. He said the role of people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in promoting national harmony and cohesion was of the prime importance adding that the Info Dept was endeavoring to render its services in a best possible manner in this connection. He said ten radio stations of the department were proving credible information to the public besides informing them regarding their responsibilities.

LHC reserves judgment for removal of name of Imran Riaz from PNIL

LAHORE (Online): Lahore High Court (LHC) has reserved judgment on the petition seeking removal of name of journalist and vlogger Imran Riaz from PNIL.

Justice Shujaat Ali Khan of LHC heard the petition filed by Imran Riaz for removal of his name from PNIL and reserved the judgment.

Punjab government

and FIA filed reply during the hearing wherein FIA informed the name of petitioner has been removed from PNIL list.

He requested the court the petition of the petitioner be dismissed.

Counsel for Imran Riaz took the plea his name is being put in ECL. The court should order to remove his name from ECL.



LAHORE: The pilgrims of Hajj are being guided with all possible efforts by the Ministry of Religious Affairs on the styles of medical camp and training camp in Hajj Camp.

Colorful events held in celebration of Chinese New Year

PESHAWAR (APP): On the occasion of Chinese New Year, China Window, a Chinese cultural center established in Peshawar, organized colorful events.

Caretaker Provincial Minister for Transport Zafarullah Khan, Caretaker Provincial Minister for Energy and Planning Dr. Syed Sarfraz Ali Shah, President Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Fawad Ishaq, Chairperson of Pakistan Academy of Letter's Prof. Dr. Najiba Arif, Additional Inspector General of Police Muhammad Ali Babakhail, former world squash

champion Qamar Zaman and a large number of personalities from different walks of life participated in the event.

The students of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University also created paintings related to Chinese culture which were exhibited.

Local singers performed and greeted their Chinese sisters and brothers on the occasion of Chinese New Year.

Addressing the ceremony, the provincial ministers said that the friendship between China and Pakistan is eternal.



GILGIT: Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Haji Gulbar Khan presiding over the meeting of the steering committee on Power department at CM Secretariat.

KP govt signs MoU for digital skills training

Independent Report
PESHAWAR: A memorandum of understanding was signed between the Higher Education Department of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor Cultural Communication Center on Thursday to increase the skilled workforce in the province.

The signing ceremony of the memorandum took place at the Pakhtunkhwa House in Islamabad, says a handout.

In addition to the provincial ministers Dr. Amir Abdullah, Dr. Najibullah, and Dr. Qasim

Jan, relevant officials of the provincial government also participated.

The Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Justice (Retd) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah, participated in the ceremony via video link. According to the memorandum of understanding, two hundred thousand students from the province's public colleges will be trained in various fields of digital skills.

Students receiving training in digital skills will also be provided employment opportunities in domestic and international markets.

Syed Arshad Hussain Shah said that the memorandum of understanding between the provincial government and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor Cultural Communication Center is a major success for the current provincial government.

Chief Minister said that this partnership will prove to be crucial in fulfilling the requirements of digital skills in the province. He said that the implementation of this memorandum of understanding will be highly beneficial to enhance skilled labour.

Two minor sisters burn to death as hut catches fire

MUZAFFARGARH (APP): Two minor sisters burn to death while another girl sustained injuries as hut of wood caught fire in Basti Goram Pitafi chowk on Thursday. According to Rescue officials, three minor girls including two sisters were present into their house when suddenly fire erupted in hut made with wood near Basti Goram Pitafi chowk Mondka road. As a result, seven years old Hijab d/o Ansar and 8 Nayyab d/o Ansar burn alive while 8 Dua Fatima d/o Abid sustained serious.

Court dismisses bail petitions of two co-accused in Gujrat development projects case

LAHORE (INP): An accountability court on Thursday dismissed bail petitions of two co-accused in a case of alleged corruption in Gujrat's development projects against Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf President Chaudhry Parvez Elahi.

The court dismissed bail petitions of co-accused, Muhammad Khan Bhatti, former principal secretary to chief minister, and Asif Mehmood.

Accountability Court Judge Zubair Shahzad Kiyani heard bail petitions

filed by the accused and announced the verdict on completion of arguments by the defence counsel and prosecution.

The National Accountability Bureau had filed a reference against Parvez Elahi and 13 others on the charges of "misusing authority and receiving kickbacks" in Gujrat's development projects.

The bureau had accused the former chief minister and others of receiving Rs1.2 billion as kickbacks in 116 development projects.



PESHAWAR: Supporters of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf hold protest on alleged rigging in the general election outside the Deputy Commissioner office.

Health Deptt issues working days for MTI hospitals

PESHAWAR (APP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Health Department issued a declaration of days for working in MTI hospitals on Thursday with the approval of Health Advisor Dr. Riaz Anwar.

The days were approved in light of MTI Policy Board recommendations, according to the official letters. "Working days will be implemented at MTIs Hospitals and its affiliated colleges," according to the notification issued in this connection by the health department KP. "IBP days in MTI hospitals will be from Monday to Saturday, and working days in affiliated MTI Medical Colleges will be from Monday to Friday.

PPHI Sindh inaugurates new Mother & Child Health Center in Mirpurkhas

MIRPURKHAS (APP): The Chief Executive Officer of PPHI Sindh Javed Ali Jagirani inaugurated the newly renovated building of Mother and Child Health Center Abdul Qayyum Khair in Mirpurkhas to provide better health facilities to the people, on Thursday here.

He added that PPHI Sindh is working hard to improve the quality and accessibility of primary health care services, so that the people can benefit from modern and reliable health care at their doorstep.

He also praised the efforts of the staff and the management of PPHI Sindh for their dedication and professionalism.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by Regional Director PPHI Mazhar Vissar, District Manager PPHI Mirpurkhas Jethanand, Col. Farooq Mehr, District Manager PPHI Col. Akhtar Ali and other dignitaries.

District admin completes preparations for polio campaign in Khyber

PESHAWAR (APP): The district administration of Khyber has announced the start of a seven-day polio eradication campaign starting from March 2. Polio teams will administer anti-polio drops to children at their doorsteps.

The polio eradication campaign in Khyber district will involve over 945 teams vaccinating more than 230,000 children against polio, continuing until March 8. Under the supervision of Deputy Commissioner Captain @ Sanaulah Khan, a district

committee meeting was held to discuss the polio eradication campaign. Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) Muhammad Hameed, Dr. Ayub Afridi from the Health Department, representatives from the WHO, police, and other officials attended the meeting. The meeting included detailed briefings on comprehensive reports regarding the campaign, security of polio teams, awareness, arrangements, reluctant parents, and other related matters.

Ombudsman Punjab plays vital role in by providing justice to the people: Baligh

Independent Report
LAHORE: Ombudsman Punjab, Major (Rtd) Azam Sulaiman met Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman at Governor House Lahore. During the meeting, the Ombudsman Punjab Major (Rtd) Azam Sulaiman informed the Governor Punjab about various steps taken to provide speedy justice to the petitioners.

Speaking on the occasion, Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman said that the office

of Ombudsman Punjab is an easy and effective means of providing cheap and quick justice to the people. He said that he appreciates the Ombudsman Punjab and his team for the good work. Governor Punjab said that the office of Ombudsman Punjab is playing an important role in the improvement of the system by providing justice to the people. He lauded the Ombudsman Punjab office for redressing the grievance of the complaints in a short period of time. Governor

Punjab further said that initiatives such as digitization of the Ombudsman Punjab office and mobile app for resolving the problems of overseas Pakistanis are commendable. Ombudsman Punjab Major (retd) Azam Sulaiman said that research and development wing has been established in the office of the Ombudsman. He said that the ombudsman Punjab received a record number of 35,139 applications in the last year and all of them were disposed of.



KARACHI: Chief Justice Sindh High Court Mr. Justice Aqeel Ahmed Abbasi speaking during Full Court Reference on the eve of retirement of Mr. Justice Nadeem Akhtar Honable Senior Puisne Judge Sindh High Court at the Court room of high court of Sindh Karachi.

CM visits new access road for Bibi Pak Daman shrine

LAHORE (APP): On the orders of Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi, the construction of a new access road to Bibi Pak Daman shrine from Empress Road is progressing swiftly, following the removal of all obstructions along the route.

The CM inspected the road construction and ordered early completion of a designated parking area along the new access road. Naqvi appreciated efforts of Shalimar assistant commissioner-led team and ordered to provide a separate space for burning incense. The 20-foot wide road strip would ensure easy access for visitors. The CM also prayed for the country.

Provincial ministers Azfar Ali Nasir, Mansoor Qadir, secretary C&W, commissioner Lahore, secretary Auqaf and others were also present.

ATC orders to seize property of PTI leaders declared POs

LAHORE (Online): Anti Terrorism Court (ATC) Lahore has ordered to seize the property of PTI leaders who have been declared proclaimed offenders. Court has ordered to seize their moveable and immovable properties. Under this order 2 residential plots and one bank account of former provincial minister Mian Aslam Iqbal, 5 agriculture lands of former federal minister Hammad Azhar and 4 bank accounts, one residential property and one insurance policy will be seized. It has been told that order has been issued to seize 2 bank accounts and

one vehicle of Murad Saeed and 3 agriculture land, one residential property, 2 vehicles and 35 horses of Ali Amin Gandapur 2 residential properties, 3 bank accounts and 2 vehicles of Andleeb Abbas will be seized. Order has been issued to seize 2 agriculture lands, 2 residential properties, 5 bank accounts, one vehicle 3 plots flats, 51 percent shares in Swati Enterprises and properties in US and Dubai of former federal minister Azam Swati. Decision has been taken to arrest 9 newly elected members of assembly including Ali Amin Gandapur involved.

Retired female employee receives pension arrears on Dera Ombudsman's orders

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): A retired woman employee finally received long-overdue pension arrears following the intervention of Federal Ombudsman Office DI Khan.

Soon after receiving the application, he said, the Regional Incharge of the Federal Ombudsman Office, DI Khan, Sang Marjan Mehsood, initiated an immediate inquiry and summoned officers of the FESCO to share details of the case.

office, seeking help to get her pension arrears, which accumulated on account of increases, and the amount had not been paid since 2018, despite repeated requests.

A spokesperson of the Dera Ombudsman Office said in a press release issued here that a female employee of Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (FESCO) had lodged an application with the Federal Ombudsman's

Sindh Police chief visits KATI

KARACHI (APP): Inspector General of Police (IGP) Sindh, Riffat Mukhtar Raja on Thursday paid a visit to the Korangi Association of Trade and Industry (KATI), accompanied by Additional IGP Karachi, AIGP Admin, SSP Korangi, and other police officials.

Upon arrival, Deputy Pattern-in-Chief of KATI, Zubair Chhaya, along with President Syed Johar Ali and other office bearers, warmly welcomed the IGP Sindh, said a news release.

During the visit, KATI office bearers

provided a comprehensive briefing on neighbourhood care/community policing and security measures in place at KATI.

The IGP Sindh examined proposals to establish Korangi Industrial Area as a model zone for community policing and issued further directives accordingly.

He announced the allocation of an additional 200 police personnel to enhance security at KATI, underscoring the importance of leveraging technology for robust security measures.



KARACHI: Supporters of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam protest against alleged vote-rigging in some constituencies in the parliamentary elections, outside of the Pakistan Election Commission office, in provincial capital.

President Alvi underscores need to promote creativity

ISLAMABAD (INP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Thursday underlined the need for nurturing the "intellect ability" and "innovative ideas" of the educated youth to achieve the required goals of national progress and prosperity.

"Pakistan does not lack solutions [to confronted issues] but the doers," he said while addressing the award distribution ceremony of the grand finale-III of the country's biggest ideas competition held under the National Idea Bank (NIB) vision, organised by the National University of

Technology (NUTEC) and SPIRES Pakistan.

He said the ideas, shared by the youth in the competition, needed such an environment where these could be transformed into qualitative and competitive products, enabling the country to increase its exports and reduce imports.

President Alvi said he had been proponent of exploring innovative ideas for the last 15 years. He said this was the best forum through which the youth could be engaged to seek innovative ideas.

"This is era of human resource and innovation so

the intellectual ability is the most important in this regard," he added.

Sharing success story of the country's data management on scientific lines coupled with ideal civil-military cooperation during COVID-19, he said Pakistan was declared the third best performing country in the world, while its neighbouring countries were far behind in this index. He said Pakistan had utilised the experience and data collected during countrywide anti-polio drives to properly manage the disease spread. He said the country should have to make similar and effective

policies to improve world ranking in other areas as well. He said some 26.2 million children were currently out of school across the country.

The president pointed out that this area too needed proper attention as without developing human resource, the country could not compete with the world. He also raised questions about the validity of the recent polls, asserting that the introduction of electronic voting machines (EVMs) could have averted the chaos surrounding the election results.



ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi in a group photo with the winners and organizers of the National Idea Bank Season III, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.



ISLAMABAD: A delegation of Pakistan Association of Large Steel Producers (PALSP) and Industrialists of KP led by Senator Noman Wazir call on caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.

PCJCCI for Pakistan-China cooperation in mulberry seeds

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan-China Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCJCCI) President Moazzam Ghurki said on Thursday that Pakistan is importing silk worth Rs 67 billion and it produces more silk locally, it will provide employment to 600,000 people mostly the rural women.

Sharing his views in a think-tank session here at PCJCCI Secretariat, he added that Mulberry is one of the most popular fruits in Pakistan. Mulberry trees, fast-growing and small to medium-sized, are being cultivated in rural areas of Pakistan. Apart

from wide presence in Punjab, these can also be found in KPK, Abbottabad, and Gilgit-Baltistan. "Thanks to the hot climate, the growth period of mulberry trees in Pakistan is about 10 months, which means its leaves can be harvested several times within one year," he said.

Ghurki said that it is a fruit tree with no part going waste as its leaves can be used as feed for silkworms, which provide silk for the textile sector; its branches are used to make different types of baskets that can be seen in almost every rural house of Pakistan. Its fruit is edible

and can be processed into mulberry juice, powder, jam, vinegar, and tea.

The PCJCCI Senior Vice President Fang Yulong said that the techniques of seed cultivation can be commonly used. "Most of our techniques can also be applied in Pakistan as long as local climate fits." He added that several improved mulberry varieties selected and bred by the research institute has proved to increase mulberry leaf output by around 30 percent. Up till now, two new series, namely, Nongsang and Qiangsang, have covered over 70 percent of China's grafted mulberry fields.

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FAISALABAD: A farmer spraying pesticides on the crop to protect them from insects at his field.

FPCCI seeks govt's consultations for economic development

PESHAWAR (APP): The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) on Thursday urged the forthcoming elected government to prioritise the culture of consultation for the country's economic development and its people's social well-being.

The call was made during a meeting chaired by Regional Vice President of FPCCI Aun Ali Syed, who emphasized on the inclusion of proposals and recommendations of the business community in upcoming budgets for effective policy-making.

Aun Ali said that Pakistan possessed

abundant natural resources, but there was for robust and efficient policies to harness them effectively.

He underscored the importance of boosting exports to curb the depreciation of the dollar.

The meeting discussed various challenges faced by industries in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, including the issues related to mines and minerals, tea industry, commercial exporters, and marble industries, and stressed the need for serious attention from both federal and provincial governments to address them.

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PSX witnesses bearish trend, loses 1,133 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bearish trend on Thursday, losing 1,133.78 points, a negative change of 1.82 percent, closing at 61,020.06 points against 62,153.84 points the previous trading day.

A total of 345,126,091 shares valuing Rs.11.873 billion were traded during the day as compared to 303,886,073 shares valuing Rs.14.687 billion the last day.

Some 344 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 85 of them recorded gains and 238 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 21 remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were K-Electric Limited with 33,326,471 shares at Rs 4.3 per share, PIAC(A) with 28,606,500 shares at Rs 10.61 per share and Media Times Limited with 22,428,500 shares at Rs 1.98 per share.

Rafhan Maize Products Company Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 223.75 per share price, closing at Rs. 8,500.0, whereas the runner-up was Philip Morris (Pakistan) Limited with a Rs 11.50 rise in its per share price to Rs 740.00. Mari Petroleum Company Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 54.67 per share.

Gold rates up by Rs.300

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold increased by Rs.300 and was sold at Rs.211,100 in the local market on Thursday against its sale at Rs. 210,800 on last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat also increased by Rs.257 to Rs.180,984 from Rs.180,727 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat gold went up to Rs.165,902 from Rs. 165,666, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola and ten gram silver remained unchanged at Rs2,580 and Rs.2,211.93 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market increased by \$3 to \$2,013 against its sale at \$2,010 the previous day, the Association reported.

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Cattle fair announced in DG Khan

DG KHAN (APP): On the direction of the Punjab government, the Cattle Fair is announced to begin on February 20.

An additional Commissioner Coordination DG Khan Division Kareem Bakhsh said in a meeting that sports competitions along with cultural and local programs would be arranged during the cattle fair to be concluded until February 26.

He said competitions and exhibitions of high-yielding dairy cows, goats, and buffaloes would be arranged on the occasion.

The MD of the cattle company, Mohammed Younis, Shahzad Qadir, and other relevant officers were present in the meeting.



ISLAMABAD: Senator Khalida Ateeb, Chairperson Senate Standing Committee on Industries and Production presiding over a meeting of the committee at Parliament House.

Pak IT companies to contribute 3.1b USD

LAHORE (APP): Experts at the Information Technology Career Fair have said that Pakistan's IT companies based on services and products will contribute 3.1 billion dollars in 2024.

The 13th Career Fair was organized by Punjab University Faculty of Computing & Information Technology (FCIT), sponsored by Dubizzle Labs here on Thursday. More than 65 leading IT companies from the software industry set up their stalls to hire the graduates of FCIT from a batch of around 500 coming from domains of computer science, software engineering and information technology.

PU Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Khalid Mahmood, FCIT Dean Prof Dr Shahzad Sarwar, faculty members and a large number of students were present on the occasion.

Addressing the

ceremony, PU VC Prof Dr Khalid Mahmood said, "We all have to play our role to get Pakistan out of the crisis." He praised the organizers for providing the best career opportunity to the students. Students at the career fair were also enlightened about scholarships and entrepreneurship. Stalls were also set up by Punjab University Alumni Office, Placement and Alumni Office FCIT, Career Counseling & Placement Centre, Skill Development Centre and Business Incubation Centre.

FCIT Dean Prof Dr Shahzad Sarwar said that FCIT is committed to make an impact by delivering quality IT education and enhancing Pakistan's share in the global market of software industry. He said that FCIT is the leading public sector institution of Pakistan which is producing skilled graduates who are working.

PARC to install solar system for aeroponics seed potatoes production

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Agriculture Research Council (PARC) in collaboration with the Korean Program on International Agriculture (KOPIA) would provide a 100-kilowatt solar system for seed potato production using aeroponics technology to boost virus-free seed production in the country.

The KOPIA-Pakistan Center also intended to provide about 160,000 tons of certified seed potatoes during the next five years under its Technical Cooperation Project, which will further strengthen the government's efforts to

produce certified high-yielding seed potatoes to enhance its output in the country, said Chairman PARC Dr Ghulam Muhammad Ali.

Talking to APP here on Thursday, he said that the other objectives of the project are cutting potato production costs, boosting yields with quality seed potatoes and achieving self-sufficiency by establishing a sustainable system with aeroponic technology and trained staff. He further said that during the period under review, 04 aeroponics greenhouses and 32 screen-houses would also be constructed.



MULTAN: Labourers off-loading bunches of bananas from delivery truck at Fruit Market.

Pak-China friendship strengthening with passage of time: SCCI

PESHAWAR (APP): Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Fuad Ishaq said there is no doubt that Pak-China friendship is unmatched which is further strengthening with the passage of time and its example is that events are being held on eve of new Chinese year across the Pakistan.

Fuad Ishaq was speaking at an event at China Window Peshawar and inauguration of a culture exhibition, arranged by students of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University Peshawar (SBBWUP), held in connection with China New Year here on Thursday.

The SCCI chief

praised artwork and paintings of the students displayed during the exhibition and said citizens of Peshawar will get aware about Chinese culture through this event.

He said Pakistan and China are tied with strong trade, cultural and tourism relationships, and its example wasn't found anywhere in the world.

China and its people have always extended support to Pakistan in their difficult situation, he added.

Fuad Ishaq noted Pakistan and China relationship has touched new heights owing to unflinching leadership of the two countries and vigorous efforts initiated by government.

Steel industry acknowledge PM for assuring support

ISLAMABAD (APP): A delegation of Pakistan Association of Large Steel Producers (PALSP) on Thursday met with caretaker Prime Minister for Anwar ul Haq Kakar and acknowledged the government support for industry.

The delegation included leading member of long steel manufacturers which included senior members of PALSP including Senator Nauman Wazir Khattak, Abbas Akberali, Javid Mughal, Saqib Riaz, Hussain Agha, Zarak Khan Khattak,

Hassan Farid and Wajid Iqbal Bukhari- Secretary General, PALSP. The meeting was also attended by senior officials of Finance, FBR, SBP and NHA, said a press release issued by PALSP here.

PALSP delegation briefed the Prime Minister about the challenges and most pressing issues of steel sector.

The members of delegation expressed their concerns over current difficult period for industries amid exorbitant interest rates, sky rocketing cost of inputs

especially electricity prices etc.

In order to bring the Steel Industry out of the current situation, the PALSP delegation urged the PM that the Govt must take effective measures to facilitate steel sector.

PM Kakar keenly heard all the issues of industry and assured govts full cooperation and support.

He recognized the pivotal role that the steel sector can play in fortifying the country's economy and directed the relevant authorities.

Jawad appointed convener of FPCCI agri committee

KARACHI (APP): President of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) Atif Ikram Sheikh has appointed Chaudhry Ahmad Jawad as Convener of the FPCCI Central Standing Committee on Agriculture for the year 2024-25.

The appointment of Ahmad Jawad was made in view of his vast experience in the field and he will succeed Chaudhry Muhammad Zaka Ashraf in the slot, a notification in this regard issued on Thursday.

The FPCCI president hoped that under the leadership of Ahmad Jawad, prompt recommendations will help FPCCI to address agriculture sector problems before the government.

Ahmad Jawad said to feed the ever-growing population, Pakistan needs around five percent consistent annual growth in the agriculture sector and the FPCCI hopes the incoming government will address agriculture issues in the federal budget.

He said that to meet challenge of achieving national food security and economic prosperity, a two-prong approach is required, i.e. vertical growth by increasing per acre yield of crops and horizontal growth by bringing more area under cultivation through corporate farming.



NOWSHERA: The Pakistan China Friendship Association Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zone Development & Management company (KPEZDMC) celebrate Chinese Spring Festival 2024 at Rashakal Special Economic Zone L-R Ashraf Hayal, Adil Salahudin Chief Companies Officer KPEZDMC, Gouhong Beng Deputy Project Management CRBC, Syed Ali Nawaz Gilani Secretary General PCFA, & Bilal Durani.

MTT-WOP to complete oil pipeline from Karachi to Peshawar

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Machike-Thallian-Taru Jabba White Oil Pipeline (MTT-WOP) project aimed to complete the oil pipeline backbone from Karachi to Peshawar, achieving energy-efficient movement of petroleum products, preventing adulteration, and increasing safety.

It will connect Punjab from Machike, near Lahore, to Tarujabba, near Peshawar explained the Petroleum Division in a news release issued here on Thursday. The pipeline consists of two segments: Machike-Thallian and Thallian-Tarujabba along

the Motorway with connectivity options to Attock refinery, Chakpirona, and Faqirabad, completing the infrastructure supply chain from Karachi to Peshawar.

This project may be called a flagship project spearheaded by FWO jointly supported by PSO and ISGS. The 477 km long pipeline aims to ensure a smooth supply chain of petroleum products from Karachi to Peshawar with an initial carrying capacity of 7 MTPA, extendable to 10 MTPA.

The pipeline is expected to significantly reduce traffic congestion.



RAWALPINDI: A vendor displaying the different kinds of decorative stuff using during marriage ceremonies at his workplace.

Jazz tops key categories of Opensignal's mobile experience report

ISLAMABAD (APP): Opensignal – the global independent analytics company specializing in quantifying global mobile network experiences – has ranked Jazz the winner in four key categories.

In its latest Mobile Network Experience Report, Opensignal has found Jazz taking the lead in crucial areas including 4G availability, coverage experience, live video experience, and upload speed experience, said a press release on Thursday.

With a score of 90.4, Jazz tops the 4G availability chart, followed by Zong with a score of 89.0, Telenor with 84.4, and Ufone at 79.9 in 0-100

points. In terms of coverage experience, Jazz dominates at a clear margin with a score of 6.3 on a 0-10 scale. Zong, Telenor, and Ufone trail with scores of 5.3, 4.8, and 3.3 respectively.

Live video experience is another area where Jazz was found superior to its competition with a score of 35 with Ufone following in at 31.4. Zong and Telenor follow with scores of 29.4 and 20.2 respectively.

Likewise, the report finds Jazz to have the best upload speed experience reaching 6.1 Mbps, trailed closely by Zong at 5.9 Mbps. Ufone achieved upload speeds of 3.8 Mbps while Telenor could only reach 1.8 Mbps.

At least 11 civilians, including children, killed in Israeli strikes on Lebanon

BEIRUT (Online): At least 11 people, including children, have been killed in Israeli strikes on villages in southern Lebanon, according to a report.

A hospital director and three Lebanese security sources told Reuters that 11 people, including six children, were killed during strikes the Israeli military carried out against villages across southern Lebanon on Wednesday.

The Tel Aviv regime said in a statement that it had responded to an earlier rocket attack conducted by the Lebanese Hezbollah resistance movement that killed an Israeli trooper. The resistance group, however, did not announce any operations on Wednesday.

Initial reports had said four civilians were killed in

the strikes.

Hezbollah and Israel have been trading near daily cross-border fire since the occupying regime waged a deadly war on Gaza on October 7.

Hezbollah, whose constant rocket fire has prompted tens of thousands of Israeli settlers to flee from the northern areas of the occupied territories, says its operations are meant to support Gaza's resistance.

Two security sources said that a woman and her two children had been killed in an Israeli strike on the village of al-Sawana on Wednesday.

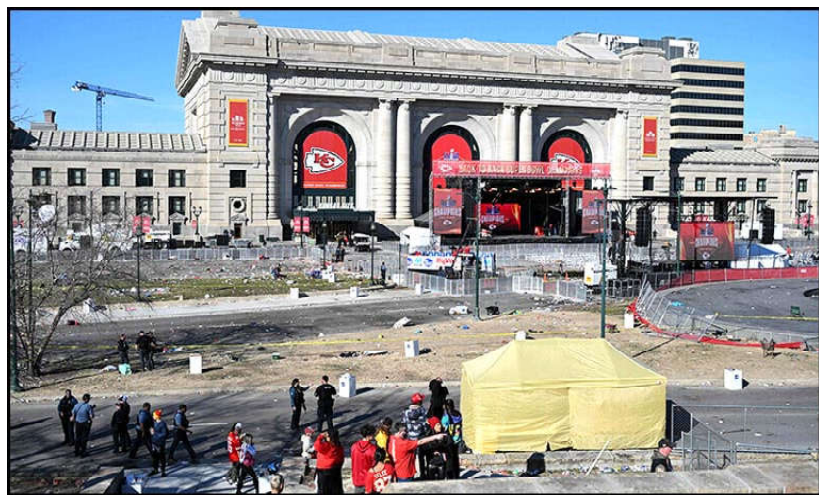
Another strike on a building in Nabatieh claimed the lives of four more children, three women and a man, according to the

director of the town's hospital, Hassan Wazni, and three other security sources. Wazni further said that seven people were also wounded in the strikes.

Sources also said that four Hezbollah fighters were also killed in separate strikes.

Hezbollah has warned it would expand the anti-Israel front in the south if the occupying regime escalated its acts of aggression against the Lebanese territory and the Palestinians in the besieged Gaza Strip.

The resistance group has vowed to keep up its retaliatory operations as long as the usurping entity continues its aggression against Gaza, which has so far killed more than 28,500 Palestinians, mostly women and children.



A view of the Union Station area after shots were fired near the Kansas City Chiefs' Super Bowl LVIII victory parade.

Netherlands joins coalition to supply Ukraine with advanced drones

Monitoring Desk

THE HAGUE: The Netherlands is joining a military coalition with allies including Britain that will supply Ukraine with advanced drone technology and bolster its offensive capabilities in the war against Russia, the Dutch defence minister said.

The pledge from the Netherlands comes in addition to F-16 fighter jets, artillery, ammunition and air defence systems provided by the Dutch to Kyiv.

For the Netherlands, there may be additional costs on top of 2 billion euros earmarked already for 2024, Dutch Defence Minister Kasjia Ollongren told Reuters in an interview ahead of two days of NATO defence minister meetings in Brussels starting on Wednesday.

"We know of course that drones are very important in this war," Ollongren

said. "That's why we are joining the drone coalition that Ukraine has started together with Latvia, together with other countries, to make sure that we do just that - increase production, use the latest technology and to provide exactly what Ukraine needs."

Ukraine's Defence Ministry announced Britain's participation last month.

Drones have become a crucial part of both Ukraine and Russia's wartime strategies for reconnaissance and striking targets, thanks in large part to their relatively low cost. Both Britain and the Netherlands had already been helping Ukraine build out its drone fleet. "What is new is that we are now forming this coalition. So we're connecting, let's say, the things that we're doing separately into one coalition that will be able to respond to the new demands of Ukraine."

Republicans vote to impeach Homeland Security secretary

Monitoring Desk

WASHINGTON: The Republican-controlled US House of Representatives narrowly voted on Tuesday to impeach President Joe Biden's top border official, as immigration shapes up to be a major issue in this year's elections.

By a vote of 214-213, the House approved two articles of impeachment accusing Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas of not enforcing US immigration laws, which Republicans argue led to record flows of migrants across the US-Mexico border, and making false statements to Congress.

The vote marked just the second time in US history, and the first time in almost 150 years, that the House has impeached a member of a president's cabinet.

Tuesday's vote reversed an embarrassing legislative defeat that Speaker Mike Johnson

suffered last week when a similar effort fell short. Republican Representative Steve Scalise, who missed last week's vote while he received treatment for cancer, provided the deciding vote on Tuesday.

Republicans hold a slim 219-212 majority in the House.

"Secretary Mayorkas has willfully and consistently refused to comply with federal immigration laws, fuelling the worst border catastrophe in American history," John-son said following the vote. A poll last month showed that immigration was voters' No 2 concern, following the economy.

No Democrat backed Tuesday's impeachment, while three Republicans — Representatives Ken Buck, Tom McClintock and Mike Gallagher — defied their leadership in voting 'no'. They also voted against impeachment last week.



Members of the farm union Bharatiya Kisan Union (Ekta Ugrahan) block railway tracks and shout slogans during a protest to demand minimum crop prices at a railway station in Rajpura, India.



Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi meets with Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva to discuss the latest developments in the Gaza Strip amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas, at the Ittihadia presidential palace in Cairo, Egypt.

Hezbollah says Israel will 'pay price' after deadly day

BEIRUT (Internews): Hezbollah said on Thursday Israel would pay "the price" for killing 10 people including five children in southern Lebanon, the deadliest day for Lebanese civilians in four months of hostilities across the Lebanese-Israeli border.

An Israeli strike killed seven people in the city of Nabatieh late on Wednesday, including three children, sources in Lebanon said. It followed an earlier attack that killed a woman and her two children in the village of al-Sawana at the

border.

"The enemy will pay the price for these crimes," Hezbollah politician Hassan Fadlallah told media. "The resistance will continue to practice its legitimate right to defend its people."

Several of the armed Lebanese group's fighters were also killed in separate strikes on Wednesday, including on Nabatieh, according to the group and security sources.

Asked about the Nabatieh strike, a spokesperson for the Israeli army

UNRWA funding freezes risk 'aiding' deaths in Gaza: Saudi official

Monitoring Desk

RIYADH: Freezing funds to the UN agency for Palestinian refugees risks "aiding" the deaths of civilians in Gaza, the head of Saudi Arabia's humanitarian agency told AFP on Tuesday.

Several countries — including the United States, Britain, Germany and Japan — have suspended funding to the UNRWA agency in response to Israeli allegations that some of its staff members participated in the October 7 attack by Hamas militants.

Last week, as its war against Hamas entered a fifth month, Israel's mili-

tary also said troops had uncovered a Hamas tunnel under UNRWA's evacuated Gaza City headquarters.

The UN has sacked the 12 UNRWA staff members accused by Israel of involvement in the October 7 attack and said the tunnel claim should be investigated once the conflict is over.

"We should not penalise the innocent people, millions of people who are living in Gaza, because of an accusation on a handful of people," Dr Abdullah al-Rabeah, head of the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre, told AFP in an interview on Tuesday.



PARIS: Former French president Nicolas Sarkozy arrives for the verdict on his appeal in the so-called 'Bygmalion' case over illegal campaign financing.

Court confirms Nicolas Sarkozy conviction, but softens sentence

Monitoring Desk

PARIS: An appeals court on Wednesday confirmed a conviction for former French president Nicolas Sarkozy over illegal campaign financing, but lightened his original one-year prison sentence.

The court said he should serve six months, with another six months suspended. The ruling was still harsher than the one-year suspended sentence that prosecutors had called for.

It remains unlikely he would ever go to prison, with such short terms in France usually being served as a form of house arrest.

The Paris court of ap-

peal was confirming a lower court's guilty verdict for Sarkozy, who was convicted of hiding illegal over-spending in his unsuccessful 2012 re-election campaign.

His lawyer Vincent Desry immediately said the combative ex-president would challenge the appeal verdict at France's highest court.

"Mr Nicolas Sarkozy is fully innocent. He has taken note of this decision and he has decided to appeal to the Court of Cassation," he told reporters. "He therefore maintains his fight, his position in this matter," he added.

U.S. Centcom says its forces seized Iranian arms shipment bound for Houthis on Jan. 28

DUBAI (Internews): U.S. forces seized advanced conventional weapons and other lethal aid from Iran that were bound for Houthi-held areas of Yemen on a vessel in the Arabian Sea on Jan. 28, the U.S. Central Command said in a statement on Thursday.

Over 200 packages containing medium-range ballistic missile components, explosives, unmanned underwater/surface vehicle (UUV/USV) components, military-grade communication and network equipment, anti-tank

guided missile launcher assemblies, and other military components were discovered on board, it said.

Iran's continued supply of advanced conventional weapons to the Houthis continues to undermine the safety of international shipping and the free flow of commerce," U.S. Centcom commander Michael Erik Kurilla said.

Houthi militants in Yemen have repeatedly launched drones and missiles against international commercial shipping since mid-November.

Putin says European greens capitalising on climate fears

Monitoring Desk

MOSCOW (Internews): Russian President Vladimir Putin criticised the green movement in Europe for capitalising on peoples' fears about climate change, while questioning Germany's commitment to phasing out coal.

Long demonized by Germany's Green party, which leads some of the government's top ministries, coal was due to be phased out by 2030, but Russia's conflict with Ukraine and gas export curbs brought coal back into favour.

Democrats pick up seat in US House as Suozzi wins in New York

Monitoring Desk

NEW YORK (Internews): Democratic former congressman Tom Suozzi won a special U.S. House of Representatives election in New York on Tuesday, narrowing an already razor-thin Republican majority that has struggled to pass legislation.

The seat became available after the House took the extraordinary step of expelling Republican George Santos, whose dizzying array of lies about his biography led to his indictment on fraud charges.

Suozzi, who had held the seat before stepping down to run for governor, defeated Mazi Pilip.



Exhibition celebrates 'unknown artist' Yoko Ono

Monitoring Desk

LONDON: She is the world's most famous unknown artist — everyone knows her name, but no one knows what she does, John Lennon once said of the perceived disregard for his wife Yoko Ono, who turns 91 on Sunday.

From Thursday, Ono's impact on conceptual art will be on display in a retrospective exhibition at the Tate Modern in London.

The "Music of the Mind" show, which runs until September 1, explores the multi-disciplinary works of a woman more famed for being the murdered Beatle's wife than a conceptual art icon.

Peruvian woman accused of cutting off sleeping partner's penis

LIMA (INP): Peruvian authorities said Tuesday they were investigating a woman accused of cutting off her partner's penis with a kitchen knife as he slept.

"We are awaiting the results of the investigation to determine the motive and circumstances of the events," Darinka Lossio, a prosecutor with the city of Chota in northern Peru.

Local media, citing police reports, said that the 39-year-old woman had argued with her partner after he returned home drunk.

1 dead, children among 21 injured in Super Bowl parade shooting in US

Monitoring Desk

WASHINGTON: One person was killed and children were among the 21 injured after a mass shooting at the Kansas City Chiefs' Super Bowl victory rally on Wednesday triggered panic among huge crowds of fans.

Shots rang out moments after jubilant Chiefs players addressed a vast, cheering crowd, sending shocked fans and VIPs fleeing in a tragic end to what had been a joyous morning of celebrating the NFL champions.

Police said three people had been taken into custody after the attack near Kansas City's Union Station, but the motive behind the shooting was still under investigation.

Fire department chief Ross Grundyson told a press conference that many

of the victims had sustained "life-threatening injuries."

A local DJ, Lisa Lopez, was killed in the assault, her radio station said. "This senseless act has taken a beautiful person from her family and this KC Community," KKFI posted on its Facebook page, referring to Kansas City.

Children's Mercy Hospital said it was treating 12 people — 11 of them children, nine from gunshot wounds — after the shooting. A hospital spokesman said all were expected to recover.

Paul Contreras, who was at the rally with his three daughters, said he tackled and disarmed one of the suspected shooters before the police arrived. "I got the right angle on him and I hit him from behind."

Special counsel urges US Supreme Court to rebuff Trump in immunity fight

WASHINGTON (Internews): The special counsel prosecuting Donald Trump on federal charges involving the former president's efforts to overturn his 2020 election loss urged the U.S. Supreme Court on Wednesday to reject Trump's bid to further delay trial proceedings as he presses his claim of immunity.

"The nation has a compelling interest in seeing the charges brought to trial," Special Counsel Jack Smith said in his filing to the justices, adding that "the public interest in a prompt trial is at its zenith where, as here, a former president is charged with conspiring to subvert the electoral process so that he could remain in office." Smith's filing responded to a request by Trump's lawyers on Monday to put on hold a decision by a three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit rejecting the claim of presidential

immunity from prosecution.

If the justices do not immediately reject Trump's request, Smith asked that they take up the case and hear it on a fast-track basis.

Smith said Trump's criminal charges reflect an alleged effort to "perpetuate himself in power and prevent the lawful winner of the 2020 presidential election from taking office. The charged crimes strike at the heart of our democracy." A president's alleged criminal scheme to overturn an election and thwart the peaceful transfer of power to his successor should be the last place to recognize a novel form of absolute immunity from federal criminal law," Smith added.

Trump's lawyers asked the justices to halt the trial proceedings pending their bid for the full slate of judges on the D.C. Circuit to reconsider the case, and, if necessary, an appeal to the Supreme Court.

UK economy falls into recession, adding to Sunak's election challenge

LONDON (Internews): Britain's economy fell into a recession in the second half of 2023, a tough backdrop ahead of this year's expected election for Prime Minister Rishi Sunak who has promised to boost growth.

Gross domestic product (GDP) contracted by 0.3% in the three months to December, having shrunk by 0.1% between July and September, official data showed.

The fourth-quarter contraction was deeper than all economists' estimates in a poll, which had pointed to a 0.1% decline. Sterling weakened against the dollar and the euro. Investors added to their bets on the Bank of England (BoE) cutting interest rates this year and businesses called for more help from the government in a budget plan due on March 6.

Thursday's data means Britain joins Japan among the Group of Seven

advanced economies in a recession, although it is likely to be short-lived and shallow by historical standards. Canada has yet to report GDP data for the fourth quarter.

Britain's economy stands just 1% higher than its level of late 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic struck with only Germany among G7 countries faring worse.

Sunak promised to get the economy growing as one of his key pledges to voters last year. His Conservative Party has dominated British politics for much of the past seven decades, with a reputation for economic competence. But Labour is now more trusted with the economy, according to opinion polls, opens new tab. British households are due to see their first drop in living standards between one national election and the next since the Second World War, analysts have said.

Kites battle drones as farmers take on police during India protests

Monitoring Desk

NEW DELHI: Farmers protesting in India this week are using a homemade arsenal to counter the state-of-the-art weaponry of the security forces trying to disperse them: they're flying kites to ensnare police drones carrying tear gas canisters.

For the past two days, thousands of farmers have fought pitched battles with security forces some 200 kilometres north of Delhi after police stopped their "Delhi Chalo" or "Let's go to Delhi" march to the capital to demand the government provide higher prices for their crops.

On Thursday, representatives of the farmers unions met with government officials in a bid to reach a solution.

The farmers had brought their tractors and trucks along to the protest and have used these, and other farm equipment, as deterrents to the police action: jute vegetable sacks are soaked in water and used to contain the tear gas can-

isters while blowers disperse the fumes.

In addition to the kites, the farmers also have slingshots and flare guns to fire against the drones.

"Many people in this movement are veterans from the army, police or other forces, and they are suggesting ideas on how to minimise damage," said Sarvan Singh Pandher, general secretary of the Punjab Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee, one of the farm unions leading the march.

Many servicemen in India's Punjab and Haryana states turn to farming to make a living after they retire. Karampal Singh, a 23-year-old protester, said the police were "forcing" farmers to act this way. "Let them do what they want, we will find a solution," he said. The police are also using their own innovative tactics. Local media reported that this was the first time that security forces had used drones to drop tear gas canisters, and in addition to the usual sandbags and barbed wire.

Pakistan calls for UNSC's urgent intervention to impose ceasefire in Gaza

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan on Thursday called upon the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to fulfill its responsibility mandated under the UN Charter and to urgently intervene to impose a ceasefire and bring an end to the massacre of the Palestinian people.

"The siege of Gaza must be lifted to prevent further deaths and suffering from famine and non-availability of decent medical care. Pakistan stands resolute in its unwavering diplomatic, moral, political, and humanitarian support to the besieged people of Gaza," Foreign Office spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said in her weekly press briefing.

Calling for an immedi-

ate reversal of the decision by some countries to suspend UNRWA's funding, she reiterated Pakistan's endorsement of the OIC's condemnation of ongoing Israeli military aggression against Gaza and the expansion of indiscriminate attacks on the Rafah city.

She said that the OIC had raised alarm on expansion and escalation of the pace of the Israeli aggression and warned against an unacceptable attempt to forcibly displace the Palestinian people from their land.

"Israel's merciless onslaught against the 1.4 million displaced people in Rafah is a blatant defiance of the provisional measures outlined by the International Court of Justice in its

interim order," she remarked.

Highlighting the Kashmir issue, the spokesperson said India's campaign to curb dissent in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) remained in full swing.

"On 10th February 2024, India's National Investigation Agency (NIA), conducted multiple raids on 15 properties of Jammat-i-Islami, Kashmir in different cities. These raids were part of an ongoing crackdown against the Kashmiri political organizations. Jamaat-i-Islami is one of the six political organizations already proscribed by India," she said. The spokesperson urged the Indian authorities to end intimidation and persecution of the Kashmiri

political activists and parties, also calling for the release of all Kashmiri political prisoners and activists.

"As far as Yasin Malik is concerned, we have expressed our serious concerns about his prolonged and continued imprisonment. We have condemned the illegal and fictitious cases in which he has been framed and we have also rejected the basis of awarding him the death penalty," she added.

"Pakistan will continue to extend political, diplomatic and moral support to our Kashmiri brothers and sisters for the just and peaceful settlement of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute in accordance with the UN Security Council Resolutions," she reiterated.



ISLAMABAD: A delegation of READ Foundation call on President Dr Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.



KARACHI: Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM-P) Convener, Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui along with other leaders and party workers addressing a press conference, at Bahadurabad Markaz in Karachi.

JI announces to issue white paper on rigging in election

LAHORE (Online): JI while announcing to issue white paper on the result of general election has said we will go to Election Commission (EC) and court against election rigging.

"The seats won by JI in election were snatched from it through worst rigging. We demand of chief election commissioner to resign, this was said by Naib Amir JI Liaqat Baloch while addressing a press conference here in Mansoorah Thursday.

He said election 2024 also remained controversial. The entire nation rejects the result of the election.

He went on to say the winners and losers of elec-

tion 2024 are both worried. This election is in continuity of past election.

The politics in Pakistan has become a game. Engineering is done for government making. The desired results are achieved by targeting 30, 35 constituencies and these results are imposed on the entire nation.

He remarked Pakistan was dismembered through election rigging in 1977.

Every time they talk of puncture, some time opening boxes and some time placing them again.

He remarked the result of form 45 is changed on the basis of result of form 47.

ATC declares 11 PTI leaders proclaimed offenders

LAHORE (INP): An anti-terrorism court (ATC) on Thursday declared 11 Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders proclaimed offenders (POs) in a case of torching a container at Kalma Chowk, during May 9 riots.

The leaders include Azam Khan Swati, Muhammad Zubair Khan Niazi, Murad Saeed, Hammad Azhar, Mian Aslam Iqbal, Imtiaz Ahmad Sheikh, Wasiq Qayyum Abbasi, Musarrat Cheema and Jamshed Cheema.

ATC Judge Muhammad Naveed Iqbal passed the orders while allowing an application, filed by the police for the purpose.

The investigation officer had filed the application for declaring the PTI leaders proclaimed offenders, stating that hectic efforts were made for the arrest of the accused but they could not be arrested as they went into hiding to avoid arrest.

Sherry confirms nomination of Zardari for presidency

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) senior leader Senator Sherry Rehman clarified on Thursday that no formal discussions have taken place with Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) regarding coalition government formation.

Talking to a private news channel, Senator Rehman emphasized that while there have been discussions with the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) regarding government formation, no such talks have occurred with the PTI.

Sherry Rehman expressed openness to dialogue with all parties, stat-

ing, "Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) seems to be confused; PPP's doors are open for everyone for discussion."

Furthermore, she highlighted the ongoing formation of provincial committees and the process of provincial government formation with allies.

Senator Rehman said that peaceful protest was the democratic right of everyone, but apolitical sit-ins and mob demonstrations could undermine national stability.

She underscored the importance of political and economic stability for the country's progress.

Shujaat, Elahi discuss politics, family matters in Adiala Jail meeting

RAWALPINDI (INP): Chaudhry Wajahat, Chaudhry Salik, Muntaha Ashraf also present in meeting. In a significant development, senior Pakistan Muslim League-Q (PML-Q) leaders held a meeting with Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) President Chaudhry Parvez Elahi at Adiala Jail.

The meeting, which lasted for nearly three hours, delved into various aspects of the country's political landscape and family matters.

Among those present at the meeting were prominent figures from the Chaudhry family, including Chaudhry Shujaat, Chaudhry Wajahat, Chaudhry Salik, and Muntaha Ashraf. Discussions centered around the overall political situation in the country and pertinent family issues. Notably, PTI President Elahi and Chaudhry Shujaat engaged in a private meeting that lasted for two hours and 40 minutes.

President for enhancing public-private partnership to educate out-of-school children

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Thursday said that the cooperation between public and private sectors was inevitable to educate around 26 million out-of-school children in the country.

The president, in the meeting with a delegation of Read Foundation - a non-profit organization - led by Muhammad Shafiq Khan, said that the education and self-dependence of the or-

President for enhancing public-private partnership to educate out-of-school children

phan children were essential for an inclusive society.

Similarly, he also called for a special focus on girls' education to make the country achieve progress.

The president lauded the services of the Read Foundation in the fields of education and welfare.

He said that the educational institutions played a key role for the human resource development.

In the briefing about the Foundation's contribu-

tions, it was told that the organisation was running over 400 schools and colleges across the country.

It was informed that the Read Foundation was striving for promotion of quality and result-oriented education as well as for enhancing the access to free or low-cost education.

The Foundation was also taking measures for education and upbringing of the orphan children, it was told.

There is option of reserved seats allocation for PTI: Kanwar

ISLAMABAD (INP): Kanwar Dilshad has said that there is option of the allocation of the NA reserved seats for the PTI.

Talking to a private TV channel, Dilshad, a former secretary of the ECP, said that the election commission could seek a way out on the PTI's petition.

"There are past instances of such facilitation," he said. "Hopefully the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) will give consideration to the request," Kanwar Dilshad said.

"It could get relief, if the PTI submits petition to the election commission about an agreement with another party," former ECP official said. "If the electoral body rejects the request, the Supreme Court could resolve the issue," he was opined.

He said the lawyers should leave their politics and go to the election commission.



QUETTA: A group photo of Director PID Abdul Manan Babar during a luncheon hosted by him in honour of APS Press Information Department Muhammad Yasin Bangulzai on eve of his retirement.

Caretaker Federal Interior Minister visits FIA headquarters

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Interior Minister Dr. Gohar Ijaz along with Interior Secretary Aftab Akbar Durrani on Thursday visited Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) headquarters.

On arrival at the headquarters, Director General FIA Ahmad Ishaq Jahangir along with senior officials of the Agency welcomed the Minister. The Minister presided over a high-level meeting of FIA officials where he was briefed on institutional issues. All Additional Director Generals, Directors and other senior officers of FIA attended the meeting.

In the briefing, the report on the annual performance of all the wings was presented to the Federal Minister.

The minister appreciated the performance of Wings saying that the FIA has a very important leading role in homeland security and safety.

The initiation of projects to modernize FIA is welcoming, said the minister adding that the importance of modern technology has increased to cope with the modern day challenges and effective use of technology to prevent human trafficking and cyber-crime is the need of the hour.

It is also very important to enhance the capacity of investigators and align them with modern requirements, said the minister adding that the overseas Pakistanis are our valuable asset who are playing an important role in the country's development.

KP to become Afghanistan's Tora bora under Gandapur CM tenure: PMLN

PESHAWAR (INP): Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) chapter spokesperson Akhtiarwali Khan on Thursday rejected the results of KP and alleged that KP to become Afghanistan's Tora bora with Gandapur as CM.

It is pertinent to note that Tora Bora is linked to the battle of Tora Bora on December 3-17 2001 wherein a U.S.-led coalition attacked the cave complex of the White Mountains at Tora Bora in Afghanistan.

He alleged that the PTI founder adopted the anti-

state agenda by appointing Ali Amin Gandapur as the Chief Minister.

"If Ali Amin Gandapur becomes the CM, a situation similar to Balochistan will arise in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. PTI is plotting to make Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Tora-Bora," he alleged. He said PML-N rejected the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa election results.

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has nominated Ali Amin Gandapur as the Chief Minister candidate of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP).

PPP contact & coordination committee meets Bilawal

ISLAMABAD (APP): The members of the contact and coordination committee of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Thursday met with the party Chairman of Bilawal Bhutto Zardari.

They briefed Bilawal Bhutto about their meetings with the other political parties, said a press release issued by the party secretariat.

Qamar Zaman Kaira, Syed Murad Ali Shah, Nawab Sanaullah Zehri, Shuja Khan, Saeed Ghani, Nadeem Afzal Chan and Bahadur Khan Sehwar were present in the meeting.

Meanwhile, Chairman PPP also met with former Governor of Punjab Chaudhry Mohammad Sarwar at Zardari House in which the political situation of the country was discussed.



QUETTA: Mir Behram Baloch and Mir Behram Lehri presenting Right to Information Act to Director General Public Relations Balochistan Muhammad Noor Khetrnan

Concerns loom over timely conduct of Senate elections

ISLAMABAD (INP): Concerns loom over the timely conduct of Senate elections due to the unresolved status of the Electoral College, potentially leading to a postponement of the crucial electoral process. As the term of the current Senate nears its end on March 11, the anticipated Senate elections slated for the first week of March face uncertainty, with speculation mounting over a delay until the establishment of all provincial governments. Media reports suggest that the delay in the country's general elections has cast a shadow over the scheduled Senate elections, raising doubts about their timely occurrence. With the election schedule spanning a month, Senate elections might be deferred until the third week of March, pending the completion of necessary electoral procedures.

In preparation for the conclusion of the current Senate term, a final session has been convened on February 19, presided over by

Chairman Senate Sadiq Sanjrani. Senators are expected to bid farewell during this session, with a summary forwarded to President Dr. Arif Alvi for formal summoning.

Amidst legislative discussions, the Senate Standing Committee on Finance, chaired by Senator Salim Mandvi, convened to address pressing economic issues. Senator Sadia Abbasi raised concerns over exorbitant gas bills burdening citizens, attributing the surge to pressure from the IMF. Senator Kamil Ali Agha questioned the influence of the IMF on national policies, prompting Chairman Saleem Mandviwala to clarify that gas price hikes fall under the purview of the petroleum division, not the Ministry of Finance. As debates intensify over economic policies, the impending Senate elections remain contingent upon the resolution of electoral complexities, underscoring the critical juncture facing Pakistan's political landscape.



QUETTA: A large numbers of vehicles stuck in traffic jam due to negligence of traffic police staffs and illegal parking, in Quetta.

Court bars repatriation of Afghan's transgenders

PESHAWAR (INP): The Peshawar High Court on Thursday issued a temporary order barring the repatriation of 16 Afghan transgender women and directed authorities to stop harassing registered Afghan transgender migrants residing in Pakistan.

The order came in response to a writ petition filed by the transgender women against their potential deportation under a government decision to repatriate all Afghan nationals. Their lawyer argued that their lives would be in danger if they were sent back to Afghanistan, where persecution of transgender individuals is widespread.

Justice Shakeel Ahmed and Justice Waqar Ahmed heard the petition, acknowledging the precarious situation of Afghan transgenders in their home country. However, the court also clarified that foreign nationals do not have the same rights as Pakistani citizens and can only stay

if they have valid visas.

Despite this, the judges noted that even registered Afghan refugees with valid documentation, including Proof of Registration (POR) cards, were being harassed by authorities. They deemed such actions unacceptable and damaging to Pakistan's international reputation. Therefore, the High Court directed authorities to halt the repatriation of the 16 Afghan transgender women and keep their deportation on hold until further proceedings. The Court also ordered to end the harassment of registered Afghan transgender migrants as they are protected under Pakistani law and must be treated with dignity and respect.

This decision provides temporary relief to the affected transgender women and highlights the ongoing challenges faced by this marginalized community in both Afghanistan and Pakistan.

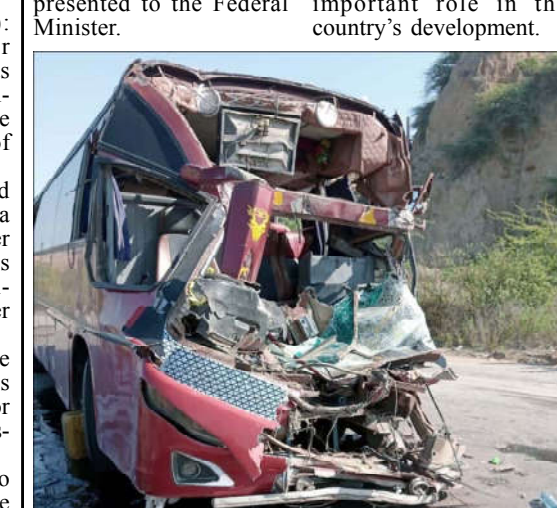
Re-polling in six polling stations for NA-43 on Monday

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has directed to conduct re-polling in six polling stations of NA-43, Tank-cum-Dera Ismael Khan, on February 19, (Monday).

According to ECP spokesperson, re-polling in these six polling stations, initially planned for Feb 17, has been moved to Feb 19. The polling on Feb 8 was interrupted because of the law and order situation.



QUETTA: Caretaker Provincial Minister for Finance Amjad Rasheed presiding over a meeting regarding financial issues of Balochistan's public sector universities. Caretaker Education Minister Dr. Qadir Bakhs and other officials are also present.



HUB: View of site after traffic accident due to over speeding and break failed, at Quetta-Karachi Highway road near Winder in Hub.

Private Hajj bookings set to commence today: Ashrafi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister's Special Representative for Religious Affairs and Pakistani Diaspora in Middle East and Islamic Countries, Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi on Thursday announced that the private Hajj organizers would start booking for the Hajj 2024 from Friday, February 16, nationwide.

Addressing a press conference along with Hajj Organizers Association of Pakistan (HOAP) Chairman Jamal Khan Tarakai, Vice Chairman Hajj Sanaullah and other representative, said the intending pilgrims within the country and abroad could grab this sacred opportunity till February 25.

Ashrafi who is also the chairman of Pakistan Ulama Council expressed

optimism about the possibility of extending the application submission deadline by a month through private Hajj organizers' platform. He revealed that Hajj quota allocated to the private Hajj organizers was 89,604 pilgrims, with fifty percent quota of 44,802 pilgrims is reserved for Sponsorship Hajj Scheme.

Ashrafi urged the government to provide all possible assistance to the intending Pakistani overseas pilgrims for smoothly re-mitting their funds in the local financial institutions. He proposed that it would be far better if they could be allowed to send their money into the private Hajj organizers' accounts in Saudi Arabia through International Bank Accounts Numbers (IBAN).