

Independent

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Vol. XIV No. 308 Reg. mails-B / ID-445 Saturday January 04, 2025, Rajab 03, 1446 A.H. Ph: 2158688, 2158997 Pages 4: Rs. 12

Calls for unity as national interest is above all;

Time to eradicate anti-state conspirators, their facilitators: Premier

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif addresses meeting of the National Action Plan (NAP) Apex Committee; Lauds robust response against cross-border terrorist attacks; Warns that enemies with malicious intent are lying in wait; Calls for measures to counter "digital terrorism"; Vows to combat challenge of misinformation, fake news on social media

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Friday vowed to tackle the growing challenge of digital media including the fake news and misinformation on social media platforms, calling it inevitable for elimination of terrorism and extremism from the country.

"On digital front, the venom against Pakistan is being spitted through social media from some elements abroad. This is also a big challenge, which is supported by distorted facts and twisted reality," the prime minister said while chairing the meeting

of the Apex Committee of National Action Plan.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, the federal cabinet members, chief ministers of all provinces, Chief of Army Staff and other high officials.

The prime minister said that certain questions were being raised by distorting facts and twisting the reality on social media that were denting the state's image.

"If we don't counter this challenge, all efforts (to eliminate terrorism and extremism in the country) will go waste," he said expressing the

confidence that the government would overcome such challenges.

The prime minister recalled how fake news were spread with regard to martyrdom of personnel of Rangers on November 26.

The sacrifices of the Armed Forces are immense which would not go waste and Pakistan will continue its journey towards peace, stability and prosperity, he added.

PM Shehbaz Sharif on the occasion congratulated the nation as Pakistan assumed non-permanent membership of United Nations Security Council.



Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf addressing parade during Fleet Efficiency Competition Parade 2024.

Fazal stresses dialogue, says its key to strengthening democracy

ISLAMABAD (APP): Maulana Fazlur Rehman, leader of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F), on Friday stressed that dialogue between political parties is crucial aspect of the democratic process, as avoiding talks or refusing negotiations harms democracy.

Maulana said that while speaking to Senator Irfan Siddiqui, spokesperson for the government negotiation committee and Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) leader, who visited him at his residence to inquire about his health.

Maulana Fazlur

Rehman reiterated that mutual discussions and negotiations are the only way to address key national issues.

He further emphasized the need for political harmony to ensure Pakistan's stability and unity across all sectors.

Senator Irfan Siddiqui updated Maulana Fazlur Rehman on the progress of negotiations with Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI).

He also commended Rehman's role in amicably resolving the issue of religious seminaries' registration.



ISLAMABAD: Senator Irfan-ul-Haq Siddiqui, spokesperson for the government negotiation committee, meets with JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman at his residence.

Zardari, Nawaz, Imran could sit together when time comes: Raja Pervaiz Ashraf

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan People's Party (PPP) leader Raja Pervaiz Ashraf has said that when the time comes, President Asif Ali Zardari, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) chief Nawaz Sharif, and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan could sit together to address issues.

Speaking to journalists after meeting the PTI negotiation committee, Ashraf said on Thursday that the committee's current atmosphere is positive.

He revealed that while PTI has not formally presented its demands, it has demanded the release of workers and the formation of a judicial commission to probe the May 9 and November 26 events.

PTI representatives have also sought time to consult their party leader-

ship, he added.

Addressing the need for a new charter of democracy, Ashraf said the country requires a consensus to overcome the prevailing political uncertainty and economic challenges.

"All parties need to come together to address the current economic and political crisis," he remarked, adding that dialogue is essential for national stability.

Ashraf emphasised the importance of unity among political stakeholders, citing the current positive tone of the negotiation process as a hopeful sign for future collaboration.

The government and the embattled former ruling party held their second round of negotiations on Thursday, which National Assembly Speaker Ayaz Sadiq said was held in a cordial environment.

NA speaker calls Pakistan's UNSC seat a diplomatic milestone

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq extended congratulations to the nation as Pakistan assumed its position as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, describing it as a testament to the country's diplomacy and dedication to global peace.

Sardar Ayaz Sadiq in a statement emphasized that Pakistan has been an active and proactive participant in the United Nations, consistently contributing to global peace, human rights protection, and the promotion of the rule of law.

He expressed optimism that Pakistan's membership in the Security Council will be instrumental in advancing worldwide peace and stability.

JC summoned for appointment of judges in superior judiciary

ISLAMABAD (Online): Meeting of Judicial Commission (JC) has been called in connection with appointment of judges in superior judiciary.

Meeting of JC has been summoned on January 17 for appointment of judges in Islamabad and Balochistan high court.

Meeting of JC for appointment of additional judges in Sindh High Court (SHC), Peshawar High Court (PHC) and Lahore High Court (LHC) will be held on January 23, February 1 and February 6 respectively. Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Yahya Afridi will preside over the meeting of JC.



ISLAMABAD: Senator Manzoor Ahmed Kakar, Shahadat Awan, Hidayat Ullah Khan meeting with Deputy Chairman Senate Syedaal Khan Nassar



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs the meeting of Apex Committee of National Action Plan.

Top PTI leaders put weight behind dialogue with govt for country's sake

Monitoring Desk

ISLAMABAD: In view of the security and economic challenges facing the cash-strapped country, the top leadership of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on Thursday termed Pakistan their top priority and threw their weight behind the dialogue with treasury benches for the sake of the country.

The development came as the Imran Khan founded party is set to present its "charter of demands" in the upcoming session which is likely to be held in the next week. The two sides have met twice — on December 23 and January 2 — to defuse prevailing political tensions in the country.

Talking to journalists in Islamabad, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Chief Minister Ali Amin

Gandapur said: "Pakistan is [our top] priority and [we] will hold talks for [the sake of] it."

Referring to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's remarks during today's meeting of the Central Apex Committee on the National Action Plan (NAP), the firebrand chief minister said that the premier should not deny "facts" that no shots were fired during the crackdown on the PTI protesters in Islamabad in November last year.

"Making such comments is inappropriate for PM Shehbaz," he added.

Following the police crackdown against PTI's November 26 protest in the federal capital, the former ruling party claims that 13 of their supporters were killed, 58 sustained injuries and 45 are still missing.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi meeting the under training officers during his visit to National Police Academy.

KPK Governor stresses need for improved security and governance

Provincial Assembly should discuss the security situation as a top priority, warns if the situation spirals out of control, it will be challenging to restore order

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, emphasized the importance of addressing the security situation in the province during a meeting with editors and journalists at the Governor's House in Peshawar.

Kundi stressed that the provincial assembly should discuss the security situation as a top priority, warning that if the situation spirals out of control, it will be challenging to restore order. He also highlighted the need to strengthen the peace jirga, a traditional dispute resolution mechanism, to promote peace and stability in the region.

Additionally, Kundi

emphasized the importance of constructing an alternative route to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to prevent future disruptions and ensure the smooth flow of traffic. He announced plans to discuss this proposal with the National Highway Authority (NHA) and other relevant authorities.

The governor also underscored the need for effective utilization of provincial resources and protection of provincial rights. He noted that Sindh is enhancing its institutional capacity to manage its resources and suggested that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa should follow suit by establishing a team to optimize the use of provincial resources.

PN holds fleet annual efficiency competition parade Naval Chief expresses satisfaction over PN fleet's operational readiness

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Navy fleet annual efficiency competition parade was held Friday at Pakistan Navy Dockyard, Karachi.

Chief of the Naval Staff (CNS) Admiral Naveed Ashraf, was the chief guest, said a news release issued by Directorate General Public Relations (Pak Navy).

The event marked the culmination of a professionally rewarding and eventful operational year for the combatants of Pakistan Navy Fleet, including warships, submarines, and aviation assets.

Upon arrival, the chief guest was received by Commander Pakistan Fleet, Rear Admiral Abdul Munib, and a smartly turned-out contingent presented the Guard of Honour.

In his address, Chief of the Naval Staff expressed

complete satisfaction and confidence in the operational readiness of Pakistan Navy Fleet.

He lauded the dedication and professionalism of officers and sailors in safely and efficiently achieving the operational objectives and milestones for the year 2024.

The CNS acknowledged the valuable contributions of Fleet towards maritime security and the protection of national and international Sea Lines of Communication.

He highlighted Pakistan Navy's efforts to ensure the security of strategic maritime zones, particularly Gwadar Port and maritime projects under CPEC.

The CNS also elaborated on the evolving dynamics of the region, particularly the maritime security environment, which necessitated that Pakistan

Navy remained ever-ready to address any threats to the nation's maritime frontiers.

Earlier, in his welcome address, the Commander Pakistan Fleet highlighted the operational achievements of the Fleet during the preceding year.

He emphasized that the Fleet maintained a high level of combat readiness throughout the year, with its units participating in various bilateral and multi-lateral exercises in both home and foreign waters.

The Fleet undertook multiple Regional Maritime Security Patrols and Overseas Deployments.

During the ceremony, the Chief of the Naval Staff presented efficiency awards and trophies to the best-performing squadrons and units of Pakistan Navy Fleet Command.

Naqvi announces upgradation of NPA

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Friday visited the National Police Academy (NPA) and announced its upgradation. During his visit, Interior Minister conducted a detailed inspection of the academy, hostels, and mess, and reviewed the facilities provided to the probationers. He met with the under training officers and inquired about the facilities. He also visited the officers' mess, where he had a meal, checked its quality and praised food. He directed that high-standard residential facilities should be provided to the probationary officers and also sought the master plan of the National Police Academy.

Mohsin Naqvi stated that a new master plan for the NPA should be prepared by an international consultant. He announced that a check of Rs. 250 million from the National Po-

lice Foundation would be handed over to the NPA soon. He added that NPA should be made a financially autonomous institution. He directed that the reorganization of the National Police Academy should be completed within three months. He also emphasized that all necessary measures must be taken immediately to grant the status of university to the National Police Academy.

Mohsin Naqvi underscored the need to update the ASPs' courses according to modern requirements. He also announced the addition of new courses on counter-terrorism, anti-riots, cyber, and other fields at the academy. He stated that the best officers would be appointed in the National Police Academy like the Military Academy Kakul. He said that officers appointed in the police academy would receive better allowances and facilities.



PESHAWAR: Chief Editor Independent Group of Newspapers, Syed Farooq Shah photographed with Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi during a meeting with the Editors of Newspapers at Governor House

Syedaal stresses importance of collective efforts to address national challenges

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Chairman Senate Syedaal Khan here on Friday held meetings with

Members of the National Assembly, Senators and tribal leaders to discuss legislative matters, progress on development projects in Balochistan, and other key issues.

During a meeting with Shahadat Awan, Hidayat Ullah Khan, Manzoor Ahmed Kakar and others, the Deputy Chairman Senate highlighted the government's successful economic policies and said

that the country's economy is on the right track.

Referring to the Urhaan Pakistan initiative, he described it as a testament to these policies and expressed confidence that it would fulfill Pakistan's vision for economic progress. "The Uraan Pakistan initiative is gaining public support and reflects our commitment to economic growth," he said, applauding Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and his team for their commendable efforts. yedaal Khan reiterated the government's pri-

ority of providing relief to the common man, stressing the importance of collective efforts to address national challenges.

He said that Pakistan's economic reforms have been well-received internationally and called for setting aside differences to ensure the country's forward momentum. "Dialogue and negotiations are the only way to resolve issues," he said, commending the nation's leadership for prioritizing communication and consensus-building on critical matters.

Daily Voice of Masses
Independent

Kurram peace deal

The volatile situation in KP’s Kurram tribal district appears to have been defused as the parties to this tribal-cum-sectarian conflict signed a 14-point peace deal on Wednesday. While the area has a decades-old history of conflict, the present round of bloodletting was sparked after a convoy was attacked last November, resulting in at least 40 fatalities. In the subsequent cycle of violence, at least 130 people were killed; in three particularly gruesome cases, the victims were beheaded.

As a result of the hostilities, Parachinar — Kurram’s main town — was under de facto blockade, resulting in a critical humanitarian situation, with shortages of edibles and medicine reported. Particularly appalling were reports that a large number of babies died due to lack of treatment or medicine. Hopefully, with the signing of the latest accord, this cycle of bloodshed and suffering will come to an end, and Kurram’s people can live in peace.

At face value, the peace accord appears to cover all the key factors fuelling violence in the region. The pact calls for a ban on the display of arms while bunkers will also be destroyed. Moreover, land disputes — amongst the main irritants behind tribal tension — will be resolved, while safe passage will be assured on thoroughfares. While such peace agreements have been signed — and broken — in the past, it is sincerely hoped that this time all involved, particularly the tribes of Kurram as well as state institutions, will go the extra mile to ensure that the pact does not fail.

Too many precious lives have been lost in this conflict, while routine life in Kurram has been paralysed for weeks. Furthermore, as this paper has observed in these columns, the sectarian dimension of Kurram’s disputes has the potential to disrupt communal harmony in other parts of Pakistan. Sit-ins in solidarity with Kurram were held in other cities, particularly Karachi, and matters threatened to get out of hand when Shia demonstrators and the police came face to face at the main protest at Numaisht. When the banned ASWJ entered the fray and announced to hold sit-ins of its own, there were palpable fears of sectarian clashes. Luckily, efforts to give the matter an ugly sectarian colour were averted, but only by a hair.

Returning to Kurram, it is the state’s responsibility to ensure that people of all sects can travel to and from the district without fear of violence. Moreover, militant and sectarian groups active in the area need to be neutralised, while effective conflict-resolution mechanisms need to be in place to deal with any emergent disputes. The past few months have been a nightmare for Kurram’s people. The state must ensure they do not have to live through such an ordeal again by making sure the peace pact is honoured in full.

Nikhat Sattar

A majority of people reading this phrase would interpret it as meaning riches, wealth, health, eating well, travelling and generally having a good time. One has a good life if one parties, has hosts of friends and a house or houses full of splendidous valuables collected from over the world. Full of enjoyment, one’s hours are spent in activities that relax the mind and excite the imagination. Success is often associated with such a life and is defined by money, family and friends, and if possible fame and connections with people in power.

Yet, such a life may not be good at all, from the perspective of Islam. If one is to lead a good life, one must possess faith and belief in all the tenets of Islam and live righteously. The Quran asks Muslims to be righteous and “... to believe in God and the Last Day, and the Angels, and the Book, and the Messengers; to spend of your substance, out of love for Him, for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves; to be steadfast in prayer, and practice regular charity; to fulfil the contracts which you have made; and to be firm and patient, in pain (or suffering) and adversity, and throughout all periods of panic. ... (2:177)”.

The verse emphasises giving, to whoever needs it; helping others gain freedom; fulfilling promises; remaining optimistic throughout adversity and bearing pain and suffering with fortitude. Believers or momineen are defined at several places as those who live with humility, modesty and chastity; avoid frivolous or vain behavior. In a good life, a Muslim will possess a deep

sense of the afterlife and their actions in this world will be defined by what pleases God and the Prophet (PBUH) and that will earn them paradise. From intent to action; thought to deed, virtues to practice, a good life will be a chain of links between each, without contradiction.

For example, to live a good life, a Muslim will be hopeful and optimistic, giving up despair and always looking at a glass half-full; she will be generous and outpouring, not only with her wealth but also with herself, her time and effort to help others in need; honest and truthful, meeting commitments and keeping her word, fair and just in dealing with others even if it means she must give evidence against her kith and kin; in commercial dealings and sales, the material sold would be properly weighed and equal in measure to the price charged.

She would be patient, soft-spoken and respectful of others, including respecting differences of opinions and beliefs. She would not consume beyond her needs, whether it be food, water or other resources. Surah Taha, verse 81 says: “Eat and drink, but not in excess”. Indeed, it is recommended by the Prophet that the stomach be filled one third with food, on third with water and one third left empty (Sunan Ibn Majah). Most importantly, the source of her consumption would be halal means, ie her income would be generated through ways that are halal and the manner in which this income is used would also be halal.

As an example, the income would not be taken as a bribe or unfair means, and would not be used for lavish and luxurious activities.

The “good life” of the Muslim is the Siratal

Mustaqeem, the straight path that leads to paradise. Should one deviate from it, but realises their error and revert to God, one is forgiven by His eternal mercy.

Compare the above with the kind of lives Muslims lead today and you will find that an almost opposite path is being taken. Viciousness, greed and corruption are normal, as are lies, false evidence and every possible kind of repression including religious, po-litical, economic or social injustice. The poor remain poor while the rich few get wealthier by dubious means. The wealthy are also powerful and are able to take control of resources. There is general anarchy and chaos with occasional protests that are quickly suppressed. Corruption abounds in every form and crime rates are high with low convictions. The poor get caught, the rich get away. Society shows severe signs of depravity and lowering of morals and while some Muslim countries and populations are bombed, ravaged and destroyed, powerful Muslims refrain from action against the oppressors. There are major contradictions: accumulation of resources on the one hand and starvation on the other; a breakdown of the legal system with criminals getting away with major crimes but overflowing jails with people against whom fake cases have been filed; men of Lilliputian intelligence and integrity are in positions of power, having perfect impunity to abuse it. Today, the ‘good’ life of the Muslim is, in reality, a tortuous path that belies all that Islam stands for: social justice, morality and ethics and kindness and compassion. -- Courtesy Dawn

The corporate grab

Aasim Sajjad Akhtar

Many amongst the Pakistani intelligentsia claim that colonialism is dead. They say we should take responsibility for problems that we have created rather than laying blame at the altar of our past masters. What they fail to acknowledge, however, is that our present masters reproduce structures of power that scarcely differ from their colonial predecessors.

The much-hyped corporate farming initiative is the latest example in this regard. Initially introduced into the policy lexicon by the Musharraf dictatorship two decades ago, the scheme has been revived to great fanfare by the military-backed PDM 2.0 regime. As one of the main pillars of the SIFC, corporate farming envisions the construction of new perennial irrigation canals that will then facilitate the establishment of oligopolies in the agricultural sector.

The colonial lineages are clear for anyone who wishes to see them. The foundational imperative is to put millions of acres of ‘wa-steland’ to productive use through mega water infrastructure. This is the same imagination of development that undergirded the British Raj’s social engineering over a century ago.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Punjab and northern Sindh were sparsely populated regions where agriculture was limited to riverine belts. Most indigenous communities were pastoralists with distinct social mores from the prototypical peasantry. The British considered these populations backward and declared their grazing lands as ‘waste’, thereby setting the stage for infrastructural and social transformation.

The colonial state initiated a wave of canal and barrage-building, creating what Imran Ali famously called a new ‘hydraulic so-

ciety’, by drawing on the productive power of the Indus water system. Millions of people from east Punjab were migrated west to populate the so-called canal colonies. Indigenous peoples were relegated to the bottom rung of the social ladder, prohibited from owning new agricultural lands under the colonial property regime.

The Pakistani state carried on where the British Raj left off. The Tarbela and Mangla dams were constructed within the first two decades of 1947, laying the foundations for further social engineering. The World Bank and Asian Development Bank happily funded all postcolonial development projects, as they continue to do today. But the fallouts of colonial developmentalism were never acknowledged. Caste divisions were deeply entrenched, with agriculturalists privileged over so-called ‘non-agricultural’ castes. Caste overlapped with class to give rise to a propertyless mass that was permanently depressed due to a patronage-based political order.

Caste and class divisions were at least challenged periodically by left-progressives. Ecological fallouts were not even recognised for decades.

Today we know that excessive damming and canal-building upstream has devastated the Indus delta and agricultural regions in lower Sindh. Mega water infrastructure also gives rise to a host of other environmental crises, including water-logging and excess salinity. On the economic front, dams and canals cost a literal fortune, contributing significantly to our foreign debt burden. And they need to be rehabilitated every few decades, providing further funding opportunities for the WB and ADB while reinforcing the power of the irrigation bureaucracy.

Corporate farming

(read: the new great land grab) is the latest phase of the (post) colonial developmental regime. On the one hand it will condemn small farmers who cannot compete with big agribusiness firms. It will thus add to ranks of the propertyless mass in rural Pakistan, a number that is already beyond 30 million.

On the other hand, new water infrastructure — like the Cholistan Canal — will displace historical pastoralists and completely transform ecosystems in several regions. It will also seal the fate of already devastated ecologies in coastal Sindh. The Diamer-Bhasha dam has already set this new ecological disaster in motion.

As was the case under the Raj, asking critical questions about corporate farming in particular and mega water infrastructure in general means being declared anti-development. We are supposed to offer only salutes of approval to all fantastical establishments. It is taken for granted that handing over millions of acres of land to opaque ‘private-public partnerships’ is all in the so-called national interest.

In case anyone has forgotten, Pakistan enjoyed a bumper wheat crop a few months ago but small and medium-sized farmers could not market their surplus because the hybrid regime approved the import of millions of tonnes of wheat. We are now being told that corporate farming will allow the country to not only meet its own needs but also flood export markets.

Colonial masters pilage people and ecosystems at will, turn light into day, and then tell us to close our eyes and applaud. Some things never change. -- Courtesy Dawn

Commerce News



ISLAMABAD: Meeting of Sugar Advisory Board under the Chairmanship of Federal Minister Rana Tanveer Hussain.

Ministry of IT, Huawei launch Pakistan ICT Training Portal

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication, in collaboration with Huawei on Friday launched the ICT Training Portal to enhance IT skills among youth.

Minister of State for Information Technology, Shaza Fatima Khawaja, while addressing the launching ceremony, said that the portal is expected to play a pivotal role in nurturing a digitally competent workforce, contributing to Pakistan’s progress in the global IT sector.

She further explained

that young men and women interested in receiving training can apply through this portal, where they will have access to free online training. “The main objective of this program is to impart training to our youth, making them eligible for jobs and enabling them to contribute to the country’s development,” she added. Shaza Fatima Khawaja said that over 150 million young people in Pakistan are under the age of 30, highlighting the critical role of skilled youth in strengthening the country’s economy. “To bolster the

economy, it is essential to equip our young population with the necessary training and skills,” she said. She underlined the importance of empowering youth through education and vocational programs to unlock their potential and drive national progress.

“Utilizing information technology is of paramount importance in the modern age,” Shaza Fatima said. She highlighted that, under Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif’s vision, efforts are underway to provide young individuals with advanced IT training.

Short-term inflation falls by 0.26pc: PBS

ISLAMABAD (APP): The weekly inflation, measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), went down by 0.26 percent for the combined consumption groups during the week ended on January 2, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday. According to the PBS data, the SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 326.10 points as compared to 326.96 points during the past week.

As compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group

in the week under review witnessed an increase of 3.97 per cent.

The weekly SPI with the base year 2015-16=100 covers 17 urban centres and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups.

The SPI for the lowest consumption group of up to Rs 17,732 witnessed decrease of 0.51 per cent and went down to 320.01 points from last week’s 321.65 points. The SPI for consumption groups of Rs 17,732 to 22,888; Rs 22,889-29,517; Rs 29,518-44,175 and above Rs 44,175, declined by 0.59 percent, 0.28 percent.

PSX stays bullish, gains 467 more points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bullish trend on Friday, gaining 467.33 points, a positive change of 0.40 percent, closing at 117,586.98 points as compared to 117,119.66 points on the last trading day.

A total of 935,783,268 shares were traded during the day as compared to 1,037,862,969 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 39.620 billion against Rs. 46.570 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 456 companies transacted their shares in the stock market,

167 of them recorded gains and 246 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 43 companies remained unchanged. The three top trading companies were WorldCall Telecom with 73,230,816 shares at Rs 1.70 per share, Energyco PK with 57,326,691 shares at Rs 7.55 per share and Fauji Cement with 54,376,196 shares at Rs 34.83 per share. Al-Ghazi Tractors Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 62.97 per share price, closing at Rs 692.63, whereas the runner-up was Mehmood Textile Mills Limited with Rs 45.94 rise in its per share price to Rs 665.00.

NA Railways panel calls for improved punctuality, strict encroachment action

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Assembly Standing Committee on Railways emphasized the need for the Ministry of Railways to prioritize punctuality in train operations and take stern action against individuals encroaching on commercial land. The committee meeting, chaired by Rai Hassan Nawaz Khan, MNA, in Lahore highlighted train punctuality as a major issue, to which the Chief Executive Officer responded

that Pakistan Railways was working to improve it.

The committee was briefed by the Divisional Superintendent of Pakistan Railways, Lahore, on various aspects, including the organizational structure, human resources, jurisdiction, total track length, number of stations, closed sections, punctuality, commercial earnings, land lease revenues, removed encroachments, encroached lands, infrastructure improvements, public facilities, measures to enhance land revenue, and the work plan for the Financial Year 2024-25 of the Lahore Division. A committee member later inquired about the ministry’s policy on encroached land. The committee advised the Secretary of the Ministry of Railways to provide a detailed briefing on the matter in the next meeting.

A committee member raised concerns about the security and cleanliness of the dry port, to which the

Divisional Superintendent responded that the issue was being addressed. Another member inquired about improvements in Pakistan Railways’ public service. The committee had directed the Chief Executive Officer of Pakistan Railways to provide a detailed briefing on the matter in the next meeting. Following this, the committee visited the Lahore Railway Station and the Old Diesel Locomotive Shed of Pakistan Railways.



LAHORE: Chairman National Assembly Standing Committee on Railways Rai Hassan Nawaz Khari Presiding over the meeting at Railway Headquarters.

NA body reviews delays key road projects, urges timely completion

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Assembly Standing Committee on Communications convened at Parliament House here Friday for its 6th meeting to discuss key infrastructure projects and ongoing issues in the sector.

Chaired by MNA Mir Shabbir Ali Bijarani, the Committee reviewed the Ministry’s responses to previous recommendations and expressed concerns over delays in critical road projects aimed at improving national connectivity and road safety.

The Committee approved the minutes of the previous two meetings.

The Ministry’s responses to earlier recommendations were reviewed, with a focus on

several major infrastructure projects aimed at improving national connectivity and road safety. These projects included the Khairpur-Larkana Bridge, the Hyderabad-Karachi Road congestion, and the necessity for pedestrian bridges at Kathore and Maymar Mor. The Committee also examined progress on important bypasses such as Loralai and Zhob, as well as other roads including the Nokundi-Maskheal Road, Chitral-Chakdara Road, and the Pindi Gap to Khushalgarh Package 1.

Additionally, discussions were held on the Lawari Tunnel N-45 North Pole approach road, roads connecting Chitral to Shandrud and Kalkat, and the M-1 Indus River

Service Area. The Committee stressed the importance of completing these projects on time to alleviate traffic congestion, enhance connectivity, and improve public safety. The Ministry was directed to submit its budgetary proposal for the Public Sector Development Program (PSDP) for the upcoming financial year 2025-26 by January 31, 2025. The Committee urged the Ministry to focus on a smaller number of high-priority schemes to reduce the risk of financial losses, cost overruns, and delays caused by non-payment to contractors.

The next meeting will include a proposal for ongoing schemes, ranked in order of priority, and suggestions for streamlining the process.

KP CM challenges fresh ECP notice in PHC

PESHAWAR (APP): Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Gandapur, has approached the Peshawar High Court in response to fresh notice issued by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) regarding his assets.

The petition, filed against the ECP, challenged its authority and motives in issuing the notices.

In the petition, the CM argued that he had submitted all records related to his assets and financial declarations to the relevant authorities prior to the elections.

He emphasized that his eligibility had been affirmed by the ECP after thorough scrutiny of the provided information. Despite this, the ECP issued a notice in April last year, which was later suspended by PHC, preventing further action.

The petition contended that once a successful candidate had been officially notified, the ECP could not initiate such proceedings. Furthermore, it argued that electoral matters should now fall under the purview of election tribunals rather than the ECP.

The petition accused the ECP of harassment and political victimization, asserting that the notices were an attempt to undermine his position.

It further claimed that the ECP was overstepping its constitutional mandate, which was limited to conducting elections and not adjudicating post-election disputes.

The petition urged the PHC to suspend the recent notice and restrain the ECP from initiating further proceedings, describing the notices as a "sword hanging over the head" of the CM.



LAHORE: Punjab Minister for Health Khawaja Salman Rafique presides over the important meeting at Punjab Pharmacy Council.

Azma Bokhari criticises PTI, highlights govt's achievements

LAHORE (APP): Provincial Information Minister Azma Bokhari has accused the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) of relying on lies to gain attraction.

She said that this strategy negatively impacts vulnerable children who fall prey to their false propaganda. Bokhari emphasized that rioters should face no leniency and must be held accountable for their actions.

The minister also outlined several key initiatives under the Punjab government, including a project aimed at providing solar

systems to 100,000 people in the province. With an investment of 10 billion rupees, the initiative's full financial plan is already in place. However, consumers with faulty meters or those involved in electricity theft are excluded from this scheme, as are defaulters.

Bokhari highlighted the government's success in tackling inflation, noting that it has now dropped to 4%. She credited Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz for their roles in this achievement.



LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister, Maryam Nawab Sharif exchanging views with a high level delegation from China during meeting held at Punjab House.

CM Maryam welcomes \$ 700m Chinese investment in Punjab

LAHORE (APP): A high-level Chinese delegation met Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif at Punjab House, Islamabad on Friday.

The delegation was comprised of Chengdu General Coordinator for ICT Hub Ms. Scarlett and Deputy CEO Huawei Mr. Yu Ray. Chengdu expressed its consent to make an investment worth 700 million dollars and she gave its principle approval.

E-taxi service will be launched soon with the cooperation of Chengdu. A Chinese company will

also establish a 'Computing Centre' in Lahore Nawaz Sharif IT City. In the meeting, it was agreed to establish a Data and Cloud Centre in Nawaz Sharif IT City. The Punjab government will provide land and building for establishing a Data and Cloud Centre. It was agreed to establish the first e-commerce platform in Pakistan.

The Chinese company will also impart training to the Pakistani youth for online world-wide trading. Smart control room, smart traffic

control, smart transport, smart sanitation centre will be established in Lahore with the Chinese cooperation.

The Punjab CM, Provincial Transport Minister Bilal Akbar and the delegation were briefed about the latest digital centre during their visit to China. An AI Industry Centre will also be established in Phase Two to introduce the youth with the artificial intelligence technology.

The Chinese government will also provide assistance for platform ser-

vice capacity building in Punjab. Providing assistance in local investment for the establishment of industries was also reviewed in Phase Three. A collaboration will be made to introduce Pakistani youth with the modern technological requirements. CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif said, "We want to make Punjab the biggest artificial intelligence centre with the cooperation of China. Punjab will soon become an IT hub in the region and we want our youth to excel and surpass in the IT sector."

Under leadership of Provincial Ombudsman Sindh

Public complaints against govt. depts being dealt with expeditiously

Independent Report

KARACHI: Public complaints against government departments are being dealt with expeditiously under the leadership of Provincial Ombudsman Sindh Muhammad Sohail Rajput. The 26-year-old issue of plot of Ifthikhar Ahmed, resident of Ayaz Town Gulshan-e-Iqbal Karachi, has been resolved. The complainant Ifthikhar Ahmed had taken the stand in the application that he had booked a flat in Beach Avenue Project Hawks Bay Housing Scheme 42, LDA in 1998, for which all payments had been made.

However, in 2009, the Lyari Development Authority (LDA) declared the said project abandoned through an advertisement and gave various options to the allottees, in which the complainant had used the option of a plot or a flat in a new project as a substitute for the flat in 2015, but no hearing is being held by the LDA yet.

The Provincial Ombudsman Sindh took notice of the application and sent a notice to the LDA authorities. Later, after holding several hearings, the LDA authorities provided the complainant.



KARACHI: Citizens are facing internet connectivity issues, in Karachi.

Air pollution: A persistent threat to lives of Peshawarites

PESHAWAR (APP): Once known as City of Flowers, Peshawar is presently confronted with a monster challenge of air pollution that are posing a serious threat to its residents due to an unchecked smoke emission of hundreds of thousands of vehicles, brick kilns and industrial units mostly operating in its urban areas.

The visitors that once impressed by the fragrance of Gul-e-Dawoodi in Peshawar, is now inhaling the growing thick air smoke mostly emitting from thousands of vehicles, brick-kilns, marble units of Warsak Road and chip board factories operating at Hayatabad Industrial Estate, burning of tyres, hospitals waste's burning,

which could be seen even with a naked eye while standing on top of Suray bridge near Jinnah Park, Peshawar City.

In Peshawar, the Particulate Matter (PM 2.5) pollution is higher than limits set by the National Environmental Quality Standards (NEQS) with a bigger impact on people's lives having more exposure to toxic air increases age-specific mortality risk.

"The PM 2.5 pollution enhances an age-specific mortality risk, and the residents of Peshawar are highly vulnerable to it mostly due to an unregulated traffic, brick kilns and chip boards factories," said Professor Dr Muhammad Shafiqur Rehman, former Chairman Environmental Science Department at the University of Peshawar while talking to APP.

"Basically, PM 2.5 pollution is a complex mixture of extremely small and light particles that stays for longer in the air and once inhaled, can affect people's hearts, nose to lungs, respiratory system besides leading to high blood pressure, strokes, asthma, cancers and other chronic chest related diseases," he said.

Dr Shafiqur Rehman said that the air quality of Peshawar is very poor. He said air quality should be around 25 milligrams (mg) per cubic meter as per WHO standards, adding if the amount of dust, smoke, and zeolite content in the atmosphere exceeds the

WHO limit; it is detrimental to the health of living creatures. He said Peshawar was a geographically and climatically dry city and due to inadequate rainfall, particles of dirt and dust collect up in large amounts in the air and add to the environmental and air pollution.

He said that recent studies revealed that smoke and dust in Peshawar's air is measured between five to 10 feet height where PM2.5 pollution is almost four times higher than NEQS standards and needs special urgent measures to control it.

Dr Sharique Rehman said the research studies further revealed that emissions from the transport sector constitute a significant

portion of overall pollution in Peshawar, accounting for 58.5% while other contributors include roadside dust (17.7%), domestic burning (11.7%), industry (6.6%), waste burning (4.10%), and commercial burning (1.4%).

"The quantity of Nitrogen Dioxide at most of the points has also exceeded NEQS limits, and that its increase can cause lung irritation and weaken body defense against respiratory infections," he said.

"Air pollution first hits the ENT and then attacks a person's lungs. It severely affects the heart and respiratory system besides causing strokes, asthma and cancers, killing thousands of people

mostly children every year worldwide," said Dr Riaz Khan, Principal Medical Officer at Government Hospital Pabbi Nowshera.

He said air pollution kills about seven million people worldwide per year while pollution-induced COPD claim approximately 3.23 million lives per year globally. In Pakistan, he said that COPD causes about 138.2 deaths per 100,000 males and 41.3 per 100,000 females.

Besides implementation of national clean air plan and implementation of environment protection act 2014, he said the Ghari Chaudan forest in the outskirts of Peshawar has been raised to improve air quality in the historic city.

International News

At least 30 people killed by Israeli strikes in Gaza as stalled ceasefire talks set to resume

Monitoring Desk

DEIRAL-BALAH: At least 30 people, including children, were killed in Gaza by Israeli strikes overnight and into Friday morning, hospital staff said, as sirens also sounded across Israel and stalled ceasefire talks were set to resume.

Staff at the Al Aqsa Martyrs hospital said more than a dozen women and children were killed in strikes that hit various places in Central Gaza, including Nuseirat, Zawaida, Maghazi and Deir al Balah. Dozens of people were also killed across the enclave the previous day, bringing the total of people killed in the past 24 hours to 56.

The Israeli army did not comment on the latest strikes. However, in a statement Friday, it said during the past day it had struck dozens of Hamas gathering points and command and control centers throughout Gaza, areas where Hamas had planned and executed

attacks. The army said measures were taken to mitigate civilian harm, such as using precise munitions and aerial surveillance.

Strikes Thursday hit Hamas security officers and an Israeli-declared humanitarian zone. Among those killed early Friday was Omar al-Derawi, a freelance journalist. Associated Press reporters saw friends and colleagues mourning over his body at the hospital, with a press vest laid on top of his shroud.

On Friday, Israel issued a new warning for people to leave an area of central Gaza immediately, saying it was going to attack following launches from there toward Israel. Israelis also woke up to attacks early Friday morning. Israel said missiles were fired into the country from Yemen, which set off air raid sirens in Jerusalem and central Israel and sent people scrambling to shelters.

There were no immediate reports of injuries or damage, though a faint explosion, likely either from the missile or from interceptors, could be heard in Jerusalem. Israel's army said a missile was intercepted.

As the attacks were underway, efforts at ceasefire negotiations were expected to resume Friday.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said he had authorized a delegation from the Mossad intelligence agency, the Shin Bet internal security agency and the military to continue negotiations in Qatar. The delegation is leaving for Qatar on Friday.

The U.S.-led talks have repeatedly stalled during 15 months of war, which was sparked by Hamas-led militants' Oct. 7, 2023 attack into Israel. The militants killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducted around 250.



KHAN YUNIS: Palestinians check a crater caused by an Israeli strike that hit an administrative building in the southern Gaza Strip.

Two dead, 18 injured in small plane crash in California

Monitoring Desk

CALIFORNIA: A small plane crashed into a commercial building in the US state of California on Thursday, killing at least two people and injuring 18 others, police said. The crash took place early in the afternoon near Fullerton Municipal Airport, 40 kilometres southeast of Los Angeles. The cause remains unknown.

"There are two confirmed fatalities," Fullerton police said on X. Additionally, 10 people were hospitalised and eight others

were treated at the scene.

Investigators do not yet know if the deceased were plane passengers or if they were workers at the building where it crashed, a police officer told local station KTLA. Television footage showed a gaping hole in the roof of the building, with smoke pouring out. "All we hear is like a loud noise, boom, and that's it. Then we started running out" of the building, Jerome Cruz, one of the workers who witnessed the scene, told CBS News.

Sweden says EU migrant 'return hub' plan could be pitched in March

Monitoring Desk

LONDON: The European Union could submit a proposal as soon as March on the creation of so-called 'return hubs' to expedite the removal of illegal migrants, Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson said on Thursday. Kristersson sketched out the potential timetable during a meeting in Vienna with Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer, a fellow conservative, in which both urged the European Union to step up efforts to counter illegal immigration.

Growing support for hard and far-right parties across Europe has pushed immigration up the political agenda. EU leaders said in October they were considering a scheme under which migrants with no right to stay in the bloc could be sent to hubs in countries considered safe outside the EU. Kristersson said he had discussed the scheme with the EU Commissioner for Migration, Austria's Magnus Brunner, who had assured him a proposal would be forthcoming this spring. That, Kristersson said, presumably meant sometime in March, according to the interpreter's translation of his remarks during a joint press conference with Nehammer.

Philippines' Marcos drops estranged VP Duterte from security council

Monitoring Desk

MANILA: Philippine Vice President Sara Duterte will no longer sit on the National Security Council after President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. signed an order removing her office from the agency, following a bitter split between the two former allies last year.

Marcos said the reorganisation of the National Security Council (NSC) was needed to "ensure that its council members uphold and protect national security and sovereignty".

The vice-president's office did not immediately respond to a request for comment. "At the moment, the VP is not considered relevant to the responsibilities of membership in the NSC," Lucas P. Bersamin, Executive Secretary to the President, said in a statement. The council's reorganisation was also aimed at guaranteeing a resilient national security institution that was able to adapt to new challenges, according to the order.

Netanyahu authorises Israel negotiators to continue Doha hostage talks: office

Monitoring Desk

JERUSALEM: Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu authorised Israeli negotiators to continue talks in Doha on a hostage release, his office said Thursday, after Israel and Hamas traded blame for their slow progress.

Indirect negotiations mediated by Qatar, Egypt and the United States have taken place in Doha in recent weeks, rekindling hope for a ceasefire and hostage release agreement that has so far proven elusive.

But late last month the two sides accused each other of throwing up roadblocks, again delaying a deal.

"Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has approved the professional-level delegation of the

Mossad (spy agency), the IDF (military) and the ISA (internal security agency) to continue the negotiations in Doha," a statement from his office said.

A team from Hamas had also reached Cairo to prepare for negotiations in Doha "in the coming days," an official from the group told AFP on condition of anonymity as he was not authorised to speak publicly on the issue.

In December, Hamas had said that though negotiations were continuing "in a serious manner", Israeli negotiators had put forward "new conditions" which delayed reaching a deal.

Israel swiftly rebuffed the accusation, saying it was Hamas that was creating "new obstacles" to an agreement.

Dutch police arrest suspect in 'random' Rotterdam shootings

Monitoring Desk

ROTTERDAM: Dutch police on Friday said they had arrested a man suspected of shooting dead three people in the port city of Rotterdam in an apparently random spree over two weeks.

The series of killings has struck fear in local residents and has been headline news in the Netherlands, where armed violence is usually linked to organised crime groups.

Officers arrested a 24-year-old man of no fixed abode and a weapon was found at the scene. There is no indication yet of a motive, chief prosecutor Hugo Hillenaar told reporters.

Syria to include all sectors in new government, foreign minister says

Monitoring Desk

DUBAI: Syria's foreign minister has told Saudi Arabian officials that the new leadership in Damascus wants to set up a government involving all parts of Syrian society following the overthrow of Bashar Al-Assad last month.

Minister Asaad Hassan Al-Shibani was making the first foreign trip by a member of Syria's new administration as Western and regional powers seek signs on whether it will impose strict Islamic rule or show inclusivity in government. Al-Shibani and Syria's defence minister met with Saudi Defence Minister Prince Khalid bin Salman in Riyadh on Thursday.

"Through our visit, we conveyed our national vision of establishing a gov-

ernment based on partnership and efficiency that includes all Syrian components, and working to launch an economic development plan that opens the way for investment, establishes strategic partnerships, and improves living and service conditions," Al-Shibani said in a post on X.

Since ousting Assad on Dec 8, Islamist rebels led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) have sought to reassure Arab countries and the international community that they will govern on behalf of all Syrians and not export Islamist revolution.

HTS was a Syrian affiliate until it broke off ties in 2016.

Saudi Arabia backed the rebels who fought Assad at the onset of the Syrian civil war.

Malaysia doubles patrols to find Myanmar migrant boats after nearly 200 detained

Monitoring Desk

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's coastguard said on Friday it was doubling patrols in its waters to locate boats carrying undocumented Myanmar migrants, after almost 200 were detained on an island in the northwestern Malaysian state of Kedah.

The coastguard said police had detained 196 undocumented Myanmar migrants in the early hours of Friday after their boat came ashore on a beach on the resort island of Langkawi. "Based on information the coastguard received, there are two more boats carrying undocumented Myanmar migrants at sea but their exact location is still unknown," the coastguard said in a statement. Malaysian coastguard director-general Mohd Rosli Abdullah said authorities were patrolling the northern waters off Langkawi and border areas, and had arranged for air surveillance to be conducted to locate the boats.

The coastguard is also in contact with Thai authorities to identify the movement of the boats carrying the migrants, Mohd Rosli said.

Earlier on Friday, local English daily The Star reported about 200 Rohingya refugees from Myanmar had come ashore on Langkawi. The Rohingya are a mainly Muslim minority in majority Buddhist Myanmar. The coastguard did not specify in its statement whether the migrants were Rohingya.

Around one million Rohingya have fled, mostly to neighbouring Bangladesh, to escape a Myanmar military offensive launched in August 2017, a campaign that UN investigators have described as a textbook example of ethnic cleansing. Myanmar's military rulers deny the allegations. Malaysia, which does not recognise refugee status, has long been a favoured destination for ethnic Rohingya fleeing persecution in Myanmar or the refugee camps in Bangladesh.

Romina emphasizes collaborative efforts to tackle climate vulnerabilities in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Climate Change, Rumina Khurshid Alam has emphasized the critical role of partnerships in achieving Pakistan's climate and development goals. Speaking at the signing ceremony of a Letter of Understanding (LoU) with the Aga Khan Foundation, Pakistan (AKF-P) here Friday, she highlighted that such collaborations would significantly strengthen the government's efforts to promote inclusive, climate-resilient socio-economic development in the country. "The LoU represents a major step towards addressing climate vulnerabilities and fostering sustainable livelihoods for communities most impacted by climate change," Rumina stated.

The Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination (MoCC) and the Aga Khan Foundation, Pakistan (AKF-P), formalized their

collaboration through the signing of the LoU, which aims to enhance livelihood security and promote sustainable socio-economic development in Pakistan's rural and coastal areas. This includes Sindh's coastal regions, as well as the rural areas of Gilgit-Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Letter of Understanding was signed by secretary ministry of climate change, Aisha Humera Moriani and CEO of AKF in Pakistan Akhtar Iqbal.

The event was attended by higher officials of the Ministry of Climate Change including Additional Secretary Zulfiqar Yunus, Additional Secretary Hamud Shamimi, Sr. Joint Secretary Muhammad Farooq and Joint Secretary, Khalida Bashir.

Addressing the event, Ms. Alam emphasized that Pakistan is facing significant climate-related challenges, particularly in its vulnerable coastal and mountainous regions. "These areas are

grappling with extreme weather events, glacial melting, sea-level rise, agricultural vulnerabilities, and water scarcity, all of which threaten the livelihoods of communities," she noted.

Acknowledging the urgent need for action, Ms. Alam explained that the Ministry of Climate Change recognized the importance of targeted interventions to mitigate these impacts and support the socio-economic development of these regions. In response to these challenges, the Ministry has entered into this strategic partnership with the Aga Khan Foundation to enhance climate resilience and promote livelihood security in underserved rural areas, she said. Addressing the event, Secretary Ministry of Climate Change, Aisha Humera Moriani said the Gilgit-Baltistan, the 'roof of the world,' is facing severe climate impacts, including glacial lake outbursts, flash floods, and landslides.



ISLAMABAD: Coordinator to PM for Climate Change, Romina Khurshid Alam witnessing signing ceremony of Letter of Understanding (LoU) as Secretary MoCC, Aisha Humera Moriani and CEO of AKF in Pakistan Akhtar Iqbal are signing LoU.

ISSI holds roundtable about US sanctions on Pakistan's missile program

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Arms Control and Disarmament Centre (ACDC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) on Friday hosted a Roundtable Discussion on "Latest Discriminatory U.S. Sanctions and Assertions about Pakistan's Missile Program - Implications and Challenges."

Eminent speakers included Advisor to the SPD Zamir Akram, Dean of Social Sciences and Professor at the School of Politics and International Relations, QAU Dr. Zafar Nawaz Jaspal, DG ACDIS, MOFA Tahir Hussain Andrabi, said a press release. The event brought together senior diplomats, renowned scholars, and practitioners to reflect on the nature of the U.S. sanctions and their implications. In his welcome remarks, DG ISSI Sohail Mahmood highlighted the recent U.S. sanctions against Pakistani entities and the surprising statement by a senior U.S. official, Jon Finer about Pakistan's long-range ballistic missiles. Highlighting the Foreign Office's response to these developments, he noted that the alleged threat perception from Pakistan was characterized as "unfortunate" and U.S. allegations as "unfounded, devoid of rationality and sense of history."

The Foreign Office had also underlined that U.S.'s discriminatory policies accentuated military asymmetries in South Asia and undermined strategic stability in the region. The Foreign Office had also affirmed that Pakistan's strategic program and capabilities were a "sacred trust" of the people, it enjoyed complete consensus in the country, and was not subject to any outside intrusion or compromise.

Sohail Mahmood stressed the importance of constructively engaging the U.S. in order to ensure that the U.S. recognized Pakistan's legitimate security concerns and legitimate defence needs and stress the imperative of fair, equal and non-discriminatory treatment and effectively address the unfounded claim made by Jon Finer. He concluded that, in the end, strategic clarity and national resolve would carry the day for Pakistan.

Earlier, in his introductory remarks, Malik Qasim Mustafa Director ACDC ISSI highlighted the continuing challenges posed by the U.S.'s inconsistent approach towards Pakistan. He stated that by imposing these discriminatory sanctions the U.S. has ignored the fragile dynamics of strategic stability in South Asia.



ISLAMABAD: SSP Operations Muhammad Arsalan Shahzeb addressing a press conference at Rescue 15.

ICT Police arrest key suspect in child abduction case

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police's Tarnol Police team has successfully rescued a 4-year-old boy, Abu Bakr, who was abducted for ransom, and arrested the main suspect involved in the crime, Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Operations Muhammad Arsalan Shahzaib announced during a media briefing at the Rescue-15 office on Friday.

SSP Shahzaib stated that the victim's father, Muhammad Kashif, reported the incident to the Tarnol Police Station on December 29, 2024.

Kashif informed police that his son had gone outside to play and was kidnapped by unidentified individuals. The kidnappers subsequently demanded a ransom of Rs 5 million and issued threats to harm the child if the demand was not met.

IHC decides 10,571 cases during 2024

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) had decided a total of 10,571 cases during the year 2024.

Chief Justice Aamer Farooq delivered the highest 2,525 verdicts during last year, said a report of IHC.

According to the report, Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani delivered 1,616 cases, while Justice Sardar Ijaz Ishaq Khan decided 1,490 cases.

Similarly, Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb decided 1,021 cases throughout the year, while Justice Tariq Mahmood Jahangiri disposed of 925 cases in 2024.

NA deputy speaker shares grief over demise of Bukhari's wife

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Assembly Deputy Speaker Syed Mir Ghulam Mustafa Shah on Friday conveyed his profound sorrow and sympathy over the passing of the wife of former Senate Chairman Syed Nayyar Hussain Bukhari.

In his condolence message to Syed Nayyar Hussain Bukhari, the deputy speaker expressed his heartfelt sympathy over the passing of his wife, describing her death as an irreplaceable loss and a profound shock to the grieving family.

"I share the sorrow and grief of the family during this difficult time," said the deputy speaker, offering his deepest condolences to the bereaved.

IHC seeks ministry's comments about selection of Hajj assistance

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Friday sought comments from Ministry of Religious Affairs till January 20, in a case pertaining to the selections of Hajj assistants.

The court also served notices to the ministry on plea seeking a stay order against the process. Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb in his one-page order said that the petitioners were government employees who have challenged the advertisement issued by the ministry in which applications have been sought.



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Ambassador Designate to France Ms. Mumtaz Zahra Baloch called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

Steering Committee reinforces commitment for equipping youth with skills

ISLAMABAD (APP): The fourth meeting of the Steering Committee for the Prime Minister Youth Skill Development Program (PMYSDP) 2023-26 on Friday convened at the National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTTC) here.

The session was co-chaired by Federal Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training, Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, and Chairperson of the Prime Minister's Youth Programme Rana Mashood Ahmad Khan with the Federal Secretary Mohyuddin Ahmad Wani also in attendance, said a press release.

Executive Director of NAVTTTC, Muhammad Aamir Jan, briefed the committee on the program's achievements in 2023-24, highlighting the successful training of thousands of youth across the country. The program's strong emphasis on international certifications and enhanced employability has enabled participants to compete effectively in both local and global job markets.

Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui underscored the critical importance of skill-based education, stating, "Skills represent the education of the future—they are the cornerstone of a prosperous and self-reliant

Pakistan."

The roadmap for the revised program was also presented to the committee for approval. It included ambitious plans to train 60,000 youth across 11 key sectors, focusing on creating employment opportunities both within Pakistan and internationally.

For the first time, training in banking and finance will be introduced, which is expected to create job opportunities for students with a commerce background. Participants also suggested scaling up the Matric Tech Program and integrating green skills to promote sustainable development.

Govt committed to empower people thru education: PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Today, on World Braille Day, we join the global community in celebrating the transformative power of Braille, a remarkable system that has opened doors to knowledge, communication, and independence for millions of visually impaired individuals worldwide.

Braille is not just a tool for reading and writing; it is a window to inclusivity and equal opportunities, empowering individuals to lead independent and dignified lives.

We are committed in our resolve for creating enablers in our society that empowers all individuals through accessible education, equipping schools with Braille books, enhancing teacher training, and establishing specialized centres for visually impaired students. World Braille Day is a reminder that true progress is measured by how open and equitable our society is and a day for the reinforcement of our pledge to build a Pakistan where every citizen has the platform and opportunities.

IRSA releases 28,100 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Friday released 28,100 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 39,100 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1473.51 feet and was 75.51 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 16,200 cusecs and 6,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1132.95 feet, which was 82.95 feet higher than its dead level.



ISLAMABAD: Students and faculty Members of Rawalpindi Women University Visiting Senate Museum at Parliament House, in Federal Capital.

Senate committee urges FUUAST to resolve issues of students, employees'

ISLAMABAD (APP): The meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on Federal Education and Professional Training on Friday directed the Federal Urdu University of Arts, Sciences, and Technology (FUUAST) administration to resolve the issues confronting by students, workers, and retired employees immediately.

The meeting was chaired by Senator Bushra Anjum Butt. In a response to the Point of Public Importance raised by Senator Syed Masroor Ahsan in the Senate on October 25, 2024, regarding the ongoing strike at FUUAST, Senator Ahsan emphasized that the issues faced by students, workers, and retired employees at the university remain unresolved and demand immediate attention.

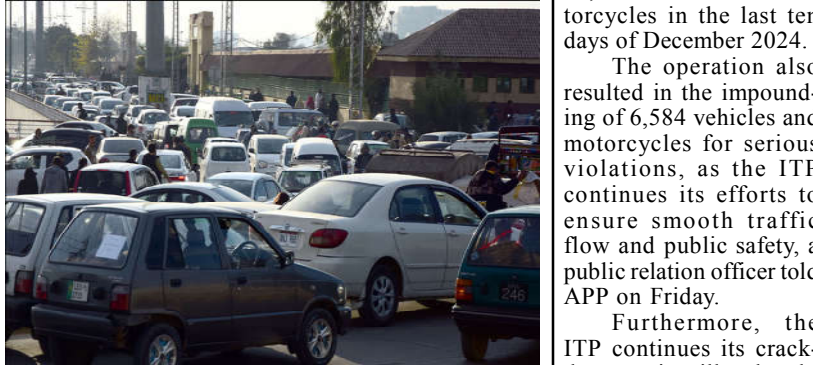
He further highlighted that these groups are not receiving pensions and that house rent payments have been delayed. These individuals have come forward to express their valid concerns. Senator Ahsan also

noted that FUUAST, named after Baba-e-Urdu, holds significant importance. However, persistent issues affecting its faculty and staff could lead to further disruptions, which must be addressed to ensure stability.

A professor from FUUAST shared that retired employees have not received their pensions since 2017.

The Senate committee appreciated the Sindh government's allocation of over Rs 32 billion for higher education, noting that it is the only funding FUUAST has received. While the budget allocation was acknowledged, Senator Bushra Anjum Butt emphasized the need for a time-bound system to resolve recurring issues. Proper systems are crucial in ensuring smooth operations and addressing challenges effectively.

The Chairman of the Higher Education Commission (HEC) mentioned that while an administrative allowance exists, persistent



ISLAMABAD: A large numbers of vehicles parked outside a Friday weekly bazaar at sector H-9 in the Federal Capital.

IG holds command conference at Safe City Islamabad

Independent Report

ISLAMABAD: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad, Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi presided over a high-level meeting at Safe City Islamabad. The meeting was attended by all divisional DIGs, AIGs, SSPs, and SPs.

The meeting included detailed briefings on security measures, crime prevention, and traffic management by divisional DIGs. Additionally, new targets for 2025 were set.

IG Islamabad conducted a thorough review of the performance of all organized units within Islamabad Police to ensure crime prevention in the federal capital. Effective surveillance through Safe City cameras was emphasized, and better strategies were recommended.

The IG Islamabad di-

zens, with the performance of all divisions being the responsibility of the respective DIGs. Zonal officers were also instructed to submit performance reports, and the audit of Islamabad Police personnel was to be ensured.

Furthermore, IG Islamabad directed improvements in the traffic management system to ensure smooth traffic flow on capital roads. He emphasized the importance of training personnel in line with modern demands and conducting various training courses to enhance their capacity.

He urged officers to perform their duties professionally, ensuring public service delivery, citizen safety, security of key installations, crime prevention, and improvement of



rected officers to optimally utilize existing resources and improve performance in tackling crime and ensuring effective security in the city.

He stressed the need for collaboration to maintain peace and protect citi-

zens, with the performance of all divisions being the responsibility of the respective DIGs. Zonal officers were also instructed to submit performance reports, and the audit of Islamabad Police personnel was to be ensured.

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Single digit temperatures to prevail as cold wave intensifies: Sardar Sarfraz

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chief Meteorologist Sardar Sarfraz Friday predicted a significant increase in the intensity of the cold wave sweeping across the country where the mercury is expected to drop further from January 4, with temperatures remaining in single digits for the next one to two weeks.

In an exclusive interview with a private news channel, he said the cold winds originating from Quetta will move towards Karachi, bringing with them a chill that will be felt across the country.

He attributed the im-

pending cold snap to a high-pressure system building up in the north, which will push the cold air masses towards the southern regions.

When asked about the expected temperature range, Sarfraz replied, "Daytime temperatures will struggle to rise above 8-10°C, while nighttime temperatures will plummet to as low as 2-4°C in some areas."

Sarfraz also cautioned that the cold wave may lead to foggy conditions in the mornings, potentially disrupting air and road travel.

NSU Islamabad bid farewell to female graduates

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Skills University (NSU) Friday hosted a special ceremony to bid farewell to its outgoing female students from various technology programs. These students, who have excelled in their respective fields, were praised for their dedication and hard work.

Prof. Dr. Muhammad Mukhtar, the Founding Vice Chancellor of NSU, highlighted the pivotal role of women in shaping the nation's future, describing daughters as blessings from Allah.

Speaking at the newly established Noo-E-Ilahi Garden, a dedicated and secure space for female students within the university premises, Prof. Mukhtar emphasised, "Daughters, like sons, are blessings from God, and as a fatherly figure, I am immensely proud to see daughters from across the country thriving in technology programs at the NSU. These young women are the nation's future and will play a vital role in the country's much-needed, technologically skilled workforce."



ISLAMABAD: Bridge maintenance in progress as laborers work diligently on Srinagar Highway.

SCP disposed off 7482 cases in two months

ISLAMABAD (APP): Under the leadership of Chief Justice Mr. Justice Yahya Afridi, the Supreme Court of Pakistan has gained momentum in fast-tracking cases disposal from October 28, 2024, to January 3, 2025, the Court disposed off 7482 cases, against new institution of 2,950 cases during the period.

The Chief Justice and Judges of the Supreme Court have worked relentlessly to ensure that the highest court of the country remains responsive to the needs of the public. Chief Justice Yahya Afridi has placed a strong emphasis on judicial reforms to enhance the performance, efficiency, and transparency of the judiciary.

Advanced information technology systems are being integrated to streamline

administrative workflows, optimize case tracking, facilitate faster decision-making, and improvements in case management processes with a focus on litigants' facilitation by introducing e-Affidavit and instant certified copies. Mechanisms for collecting feedback from stakeholders, including legal practitioners, litigants, and civil society organizations, have been introduced. These initiatives aim to make the judiciary more accountable, accessible, and responsive to the needs of the public. Recognizing the critical role of the district judiciary as the first point of contact for litigants, Chief Justice Yahya Afridi personally visited remote districts across the country. These visits were aimed at assessing the state of justice delivery at the grassroots level.