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GoB to take solid steps for welfare of farmers, agricultural development: CM

Mir Sarfaraz Bugti inaugurates 7th Agricultural Census in Balochistan

QUETTA (APP): The Balochistan Chief Minister, Mir Sarfaraz Bugti on Wednesday inaugurated the 7th Agricultural Census, linked with GIS technology, through the GIS Dashboard. The inaugural ceremony was attended by Provincial Ministers Mir Ali Hassan Zehri, Mir Muhammad Sadiq Umrani, Mir Asim Kurd Gello, Mir Saleem Khan Khoso, Sardar Kohyar Khan Domki, Bakht Mohammad Kakar, Mir Shoaib Nosherwani, Advisor Meena Majid Baloch, Parliamentary Secretary Haji Wali Muhammad Noorzai, Spokesman of Balochistan Government Shahid Rind, Chief Secretary Shakeel Qadir Khan, Principal Secretary to Chief Minister Babar Khan, Secretary Agriculture Balochistan Ali Akbar Baloch, Secretary Livestock Muhammad Tayyab Lehri, officers from Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, and field supervisors.

While addressing the ceremony, Chief Minister Mir Sarfaraz Bugti said that the agriculture and livestock sectors are the backbone of country's and Balochistan's economy.

He emphasized that accurate and multidimensional data is essential for policy-making in order to address the challenges faced by farmers, resource distribution, and improving crop production.



QUETTA: Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfaraz Ahmed Bugti inaugurating JIS Technology System Connectivity for 7th Agriculture Census in Balochistan organized by Pakistan Bureau of Statistics.

Abdul Khaliq Achakzai reiterates Bilateral relations between Pakistan and Iran would always remain strong, durable

Iranian Consul General pays a farewell call on Balochistan Speaker

QUETTA (APP): Iranian Consul General Mr. Hassan Darvishvand paid a farewell call on Speaker of Balochistan Assembly Capt. @ Abdul Khaliq Khan Achakzai in his chamber on Wednesday.

During the meeting, the Speaker paid tribute to his services as Consul General in Quetta and thanked him for the assistance provided during his tenure.

The Speaker said on the occasion that the Islamic Republic of Iran is a close neighbor and long-standing friend of Pakistan, with which relations are exemplary and brotherly. He reiterated that the bilateral relations between Pakistan and Iran would always remain strong and durable.

He said that Balochistan would make every effort to promote economic and trade relations with Iran.

He also stressed the need for measures to further strengthen people-to-people contacts and cultural ties between the two countries.

Hassan Darvishvand expressed satisfaction over the traditional friendly relations between Pakistan and Iran and hoped that these relations would deepen further in the future.



QUETTA: Provincial Minister for Finance Mir Shoaib Nausherwani and Minister for Local Bodies Sardar Kohyar Khan Domki presiding over joint meeting of 9th Local Councilors Finance Commission (LCF).

Chairman PTA says: Social media applications restricted based on the SC and High Court's directives

ISLAMABAD (Online): Senate Standing Committee on Information Technology and Telecommunication voiced serious concerns over persistent connectivity issues and expressed concerns about the arbitrary shutdown of internet services without justification.

On Wednesday Presided over by Senator Palwasha Mohammad Zai Khan, the meeting scrutinized the deficiencies in monitoring mechanisms.

It criticized the lack of transparency surrounding internet disruptions, even after a detailed briefing by the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) Chairman. The Chairperson emphasized the distinction

between blocking specific content and implementing a complete internet shutdown, asserting that the latter is unwarranted.

Senator Kamran Murtaza echoed this sentiment, suggesting that such shutdowns appear politically motivated rather than based on technical considerations, and called for the process to be politicized.

Highlighting a report published in Dawn that estimated financial losses in billions due to internet disruptions, Senator Palwasha expressed concern over the poor quality of internet services in Pakistan, which ranks just above Myanmar globally despite significant investments.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting of the Federal Cabinet.

PM hopeful of achieving economic targets in next six months

Credit for curbing smuggling goes to army chief: PM; Cabinet terms beginning of Pakistan's term as UNSC member, big achievement on diplomatic front

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday expressed the hope that due to untiring efforts of the economic team, the government would achieve the economic targets in next six months.

Speaking at the cabinet meeting, the prime minister noted that during first five months of current fiscal year, the remittances posted record \$15 billion that he hoped would expand to \$35 billion by the end of the fiscal year.

He said that the government managed to achieve the macro economic stability despite the fact that the opponents made no stone unturned to sabotage the efforts of the

government.

Wishing the participants of the meeting happy new year, the prime minister said that the sun of 2025 will rise with the promise of progress and prosperity for Pakistan.

He prayed that the economic, political and law and order crises that the world faced in 2024 would be overcome by positive progress in the new year.

He said the ambitious homegrown five-year plan titled "Uraan Pakistan" that was launched yesterday would prove to be a milestone for the country's future provided "we remain on track and work hard to achieve the goals set in the plan".

He specifically appreciated the efforts of Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal,

Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb and other cabinet members along with the relevant government officials.

He said having achieved economic stability, the country had now entered the growth stage. "If we want to achieve the economic development, then we will have to focus on export-led growth and we have no other option."

The prime minister also appreciated the efforts of Deputy PM Ishaq Dar, Governor State Bank of Pakistan, Finance Minister and Chairman FBR for collecting additional Rs 72 billion under ADR (advance-tax ratio) due to which the government's target of tax revenue for December

2024 had almost been achieved.

Similarly, he said due to funding by the Bill Gates Foundation of \$6 million, the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) would become completely digitized.

The early results of this project were that the 39% time duration of container inspection had been reduced while the businessmen got relief of 89%.

Additionally, he said smuggling of sugar through Afghanistan had been reduced to zero which was a positive sign for the country's economy. He gave the credit of reducing the smuggling to Minister for Industries and Production Rana Tanvir Hussain, the institutions and the Army Chief.

Pakistan, India exchange lists of nuclear installations, facilities

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and India on Wednesday exchanged the lists of their respective nuclear installations and facilities. This annual exchange was carried out under the Agreement on Prohibition of Attacks against Nuclear Installations and Facilities between Pakistan and India, a press statement issued by the Foreign Office Spokesperson said.

Signed on 31 December 1988, the agreement, inter alia, provides that both countries shall inform each other of their nuclear installations and facilities, falling within its definition, on 1st January of each calendar year.

The list of nuclear installations and facilities in Pakistan was officially handed over to a representative of the Indian High Commission in Islamabad at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Raisani calls for a new social contract to save country

QUETTA (UNA) – Nawab Muhammad Aslam Khan Raisani, former Chief Minister of Balochistan and Chief of Sarawan, has called for a new social contract to address the pressing issues facing the country. Speaking to a private television channel, Raisani emphasized that the federation's survival depends on initiating meaningful negotiations instead of continuing military operations.

"To save the country, there needs to be a new social contract, and the military establishment must announce an end to operations, replacing them with dialogue," he said. Raisani argued that such a move would pave the way for resolving the longstanding issues of Pashtuns and Balochs.

He criticized the government for lacking the authority to resolve critical issues, despite having the capacity to do so. Reflecting on Balochistan's history, he noted that multiple military operations since Pakistan's inception have failed to address the province's grievances and have instead worsened the situation.



QUETTA: Iranian Consul General Hassan Darvishwind talking with Speaker Balochistan Assembly Captain (ret) Abdul Khaliq Achakzai during farewell meeting.

No strike, no action: BHC resolves GHA dispute

Justice Mulakhel directed senior health department officials to ensure that no employee is allowed to refuse duties, call for a strike, or announce protests; The SSP Operations Quetta was also directed not to initiate further action against GHA employees once the protest was called off

Independent Report

QUETTA: A division bench of the Balochistan High Court, headed by Justice Muhammad Kamran Khan Mulakhel, held a hearing on constitutional and contempt of court petitions related to the demands, strike, and protests of the Grand Health Alliance (GHA). During the hearing, Justice Mulakhel directed senior health department officials to ensure that no employee is allowed to refuse duties, call for a strike, or announce protests.

Officials from the GHA assured the court that they would cancel the planned protest and refrain from striking in the health department. Justice Mulakhel further instructed the Secretary of Health not to take any coercive action against the concerned GHA officials and to halt any potential dismissal orders unless

appealed through the appropriate channels.

The SSP Operations Quetta, Muhammad Baloch, was also directed not to initiate further action against GHA employees once the protest was called off. The court urged all health department employees, particularly those affiliated with health associations, to return to their respective duties, and warned that non-compliance with official orders would lead to strict legal action.

The court also requested the GHA officials to submit a formal agreement and directed the Secretary of Health to resolve pending disciplinary actions only against those who have been involved in the protest.

The order was forwarded to relevant authorities, including the Additional Attorney General, for information and compliance.



QUETTA: MPA and provincial emir of Jamaat-i-Islami Balochistan, Maulana Hidayatur Rehman Baloch addressing on Al Parties Conference organized by Grand Health Alliance.

Second round of talks between govt, opposition negotiation committees today

ISLAMABAD (Online): Second round of dialogue between government and opposition will take place today (Thursday) in parliament house.

Speaker National Assembly (NA) Sardar Ayyaz Sadiq will preside over the negotiation committees meeting.

PTI will present charter of demand in connection with its demands in the meeting.

Sources said closed door meeting will take place in committee room No 5 of parliament house at 11 A.M.

Members of government and opposition negotiation committees have reached Islamabad.

Chief Minister KP Ali Amin Gandapur will be part of negotiation committee.

Warring tribes in Kurram agree to peace deal

PESHAWAR (APP): Advisor to Chief Minister on Information Barrister Dr. Muhammad Ali Saif on Wednesday said that a major breakthrough had been achieved in Kurram Jirga with both parties signing a reconciliation agreement in order to ensure lasting peace in the region.

He said that one party had earlier signed the agreement, while the second party finalized it today, paving the way to redress the law and order in the region. Both sides have agreed to dismantle bunkers and surrender heavy weapons, in order to ensure a secure and stable environment in the area, he added.

PM expresses satisfaction Pakistan's inflation drops to 4.1%, reaching 81-month low

ISLAMABAD (INP): Prudent economic policies of the government have led to reduction in the inflation rate to the lowest level of 4.1 percent in eighty-one months.

According to Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, the consumer price index was recorded at 4.1 percent during the last month as compared to 49 percent in June last year. This marks a significant decline compared to the 29.7 percent inflation recorded in December 2023.

The wholesale price index was recorded at 1.9 percent last month, down from 2.3 percent in June 2024 and 27.3 percent in December 2023.

Rates of chicken slashed by 13.06 percent, fresh vegetables 2.27 percent, flour 0.99 percent, and rice by 0.50 percent, while wheat products witnessed a decrease of 0.36 percent in their prices.

Besides, electricity cost also decreased by 5.68 percent, along with the prices of construction materials, which fell by 0.06 percent last month.

Prices of fresh fruits decreased by 8.84 percent, banaspati ghee 5.42 percent, cooking oil 4.39 percent, sugar two percent, and pulses by 0.20 percent, while the cost of milk products also saw a decline by 0.05 percent.

APP adds: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday expressed satisfaction over inflation rate falling to 4.1% which is 81-month low.

He said in a statement issued from the Prime Minister's Office, macro-economic stability was achieved but this was just the beginning.

PM Shehbaz Sharif said it was a welcoming progress that inflation rate came to 4.1% in December 2024.



ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar delivers remarks to mark the beginning of Pakistan's term as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for the years 2025-2026 at a reception hosted for Islamabad based envoys at Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Non permanent membership of UN Security council is honor for Pakistan: Ishaq

ISLAMABAD (Online): Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar while declaring non permanent membership of UN Security Council as honor for Pakistan has said we are determined to uphold UN charter.

We will continue to play our role for global peace and security, he said this while delivering his remarks at a reception hosted for Islamabad based envoys to mark the beginning of Pakistan's term as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for the years 2025-2026.

He held Pakistan will collaborate with all UN member states to uphold the principles of the UN Charter, prevent war, promote peace, foster global prosperity and ensure universal respect for human rights.

He said Pakistan will remain committed to pursuing a just and peaceful resolution of outstanding and ongoing disputes.

He regretted that longstanding unresolved disputes from Jammu and Kashmir to Palestine continue to simmer. He said the ongoing situation in Gaza represents a crisis of credibility for the UN Security Council.

Ishaq Dar said Pakistan's priorities as a non-permanent member are firmly anchored in the fundamental principles of the UN charter.

He said our efforts will focus on ensuring that the UN Security Council's decisions reflect the collective aspirations of all member states. He said Pakistan is looking forward to play a constructive role in bridging existing divides, fostering consensus and upholding the Council's mandate in accordance with the UN Charter.



QUETTA: A view of 2025 sun raise in provincial capital.

Timely completion of ongoing development projects among our top priorities; Mir Saleem Khosa

QUETTA (APP): Provincial Minister for Communications and Works (C&W) Mir Saleem Ahmed Khosa on Wednesday said that the timely completion of all ongoing development projects in the province was among our top priorities. He said that the development and prosperity of the province depended on the completion of these projects.

He said this while reviewing the under-construction Hanna Urak Highway project area Quetta.

Chief Engineer Design Faiz Ahmed Mohsin, SE, SDO and the contractor of the relevant project were also present on this occasion.

Giving a briefing regarding the project, Chief Engineer Design Faiz Ahmed Mohsin said that in the flood of 2022, which was completely washed away the highway for the area.

He said that the current government issued orders to construct it on an emergency basis as soon as it came to power saying that due to which the work on the said project is progressing rapidly. On this occasion, Provincial Minister for Communications and Works Mir Saleem Ahmed Khosa termed the speed and quality of the work satisfactory.

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Looking ahead

Though the nation failed to achieve much-needed stability in the year just concluded, largely due to a controversial election and the associated political dissonance, the dawn of 2025 brings with it the hope that new opportunities can be seized to adopt a more constructive path.

There was much to bemoan in 2024: political discord; institutional atrophy; rising terrorism; lack of dynamic economic growth; a crackdown on the internet; multiple climate challenges, as well as the resurgence of polio. Yet it can be argued that all these issues are interlinked, and the key to addressing them is political stability and good governance undergirded by an unhindered democratic process. Without these key elements, the nation will continue to lurch from crisis to crisis, year after year.

Many had hoped that the 2024 general elections would end the three-way political deadlock between the PML-N and its allies, the PTI and the establishment. Yet this was not to be, as the Feb 8 polls — widely seen as unfair and non-transparent — have only exacerbated Pakistan's political crisis.

But there is some hope that the impasse can be resolved democratically, as the PTI and government parties have started to talk. Yet unless these parleys arrive at a conclusion that prioritises the welfare of the people, and strengthens the constitutional order, instead of further weakening it, we may be back to square one.

The need to tackle economic problems is just as critical as resolving the political stalemate, as both are complementary. Without a political arrangement that emphasises stability and democratic continuity, long-term economic growth will remain a mirage, and Pakistan will not be able to break out of its debilitating debt trap. While back-breaking inflation levels may have come down, the common Pakistani is still struggling to make ends meet. Growth, meanwhile, is slow. A new economic order is needed that taxes the untaxed, protects the weak, focuses on growth and job creation, and stresses financial self-sufficiency over handouts.

Among the other major challenges facing Pakistan is terrorism, as deadly militant attacks spiked considerably in 2024. Defeating the ogre of terrorism requires a united effort with buy-in from all political and security stakeholders. Moreover, the choking smog of the past few years, as well as searing heatwaves and destructive floods, require the ruling class to address climate change with solid policies, not just promises.

Equally, there is a need to tackle the explosion in polio cases with the alacrity it deserves. But all these matters — security, health, climate adaptation and others — can only be dealt with when the political class stops bickering, and focuses on tackling the actual issues of the people. Meanwhile, in order to allow civilian rule to succeed, it is essential that other institutions stay within their constitutional domains.

Carter's centuries

Mahir Ali

Jimmy Carter's extraordinary longevity partly accounts for his exceptional status among the US presidential pantheon. He was born when Calvin Coolidge occupied the White House, the Soviet Union was in its infancy, and European fascism still lay ahead — as did the Great Depression, which he experienced as a boy growing up on a peanut farm in the segregationist deep south.

After a stint in the navy, he returned to Plains, Georgia, to work on the family farm, and entered politics at the local level as a successful rural capitalist, disguising his anti-racist sentiments to win election as state governor in 1970, and announcing his presidential ambitions a couple of years later — which prompted his down-to-earth mother to wonder, "president of what?"

In the wake of Vietnam and Watergate, it should have been a slam dunk for any Democratic candidate, but Carter only narrowly won against Richard Nixon's unelected successor, Gerald Ford. His purported ambition was a transformational presidency that would focus more on human rights in the foreign policy sphere, and combat racism, inequality and inefficiency at home. He also vowed to voters that he would always tell them the truth. No politician can afford to keep such a promise, but Carter was markedly less devious or dishonest than most of his predecessors and most of his successors — though that's a low bar.

To his credit, he pardoned Vietnam-era draft resisters in the face of opposition, but rejected the idea of reparations for Hanoi on the absurd basis that there was "destruction on both sides". His supposed passion for human rights was largely restricted to ex-

tracting minor concessions from the most brutal US allies, from Iran and Indonesia to Chile, instead of cutting off the aid that enabled their atrocities. At the same time, though, he established full relations with China and pursued normalisation with Cuba. Domestically, alongside token achievements on the social, educational and environmental fronts, his administration helped to mainstream the kind of Wall Street-approved neoliberalism that would shortly become the norm.

In the international relations sphere, Carter is best remembered for hosting the Egypt-Israel talks that led to the Camp David accords, which sidelined the Palestinians, divided the Arab world, and facilitated the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon that precipitated the Sabra and Shatila massacres. However, during his mostly laudable post-presidential forays on behalf of the Carter Centre — into conflict resolution, poll monitoring, disease eradication and housing supply — he found the time to pen or co-write more than 30 books. And, to his enduring credit, Carter refused to turn the other cheek when the Israel lobby and its acolytes heaped wrath and scorn on Palestine: Peace not Apartheid, based chiefly on its title.

This wasn't exactly a mea culpa for the inadequacies of Camp David, though, and nor was there ever any explicit expression of regret for conspiring with his anti-Soviet national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski to fund and arm Islamic fundamentalists in Afghanistan to provoke a disastrous military intervention by Moscow. The mujahideen misadventure, with Pakistan serving as a crucial conduit, ballooned under Ronald Reagan into the

CIA's largest covert operation, spawning the likes of Al Qaeda and the Taliban, and laying the foundations of the 'war on terror'.

The Carter administration had a tetchy relationship with Islamabad in the last months of Z.A. Bhutto's rule, bristling at complaints about US backing for the opposition PNA, and diplomatic cables from 1977 point to w-a-s-h-i-n-g-t-o-n's com-pl-a-ce-ncy about July's military coup, followed by a few insincere-sounding appeals for clemency once it was obvious that Ziaul Haq was determined to kill the nation's first elected PM.

Regime change did not shift the focus away from pressure against Pakistan obtaining a French nuclear reprocessing plant. The Zia regime was quick to proffer the begging bowl, redoubling its efforts following the communist takeover in Kabul in April 1978, and bending over backwards after the Brzezinski ploy succeeded in luring the Red Army into Afghanistan in 1979. Carter also faltered on other foreign fronts, not least Iran, amid a few successes such as the Panama Canal treaty.

Anyhow, amid the occasionally nauseating panegyrics in mainstream Western media, it's easy to concede that Carter did prove to be an exceptionally useful exponent across more than four decades, and perhaps some aspects of his White House years have unfairly been derided, but none of that should distract from the deprivations this devout Baptist's presidency unleashed or reinforced at home and abroad. If there's a moral reckoning in the afterworld, both sides of the ledger might turn out to be evenly weighted. -- Courtesy Dawn

Judicial integrity

Sanaullah Abbasi

The recent letters from Justice Mansoor Ali Shah and Justice Munib Akhtar — the two senior-most judges after the chief justice — reflect the existing quagmires in Pakistan's justice system, and confirm that the controversial 26th Amendment has kindled widespread scepticism about the appointment procedure for the Supreme Court chief justice as well as the 'selection' process of judges for the constitutional bench.

Many view the amendment as an attack on the separation of powers — with reason. While an independent judiciary ensures that fundamental rights remain inalienable, these amendments can undermine the integrity of the Constitution. In his letter last month, Justice Mansoor Ali Shah also underscored the fact that the reconstitution of the judicial commission under the 26th Amendment raised questions about its constitutional legitimacy.

The letters of the two senior-most judges reflected the need for the independence of the judiciary and the trichotomy of powers, which have been highly compromised by the 26th Amendment.

Moreover, international laws cannot be overlooked as Pakistan ratified various human rights conventions. The volume of pending cases in the courts proves that Pakistan's international human rights commitments and economic obligations are being flouted, making judicial reforms imperative. The backlog of cases is also emblematic of deeper institutional challenges, which, if left unaddressed, will hinder the country's progress. In

March 2024, there were 57,181 unresolved cases in the Supreme Court, while the Lahore High Court and Punjab's district courts reported over a million pending cases. The Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan's report for July to December 2023 reveals an unsettling increase in case pendency: 3.9 per cent, which comes to approximately 2.26m cases. Alarming, 82pc of these cases are at the district judiciary level, stressing the magnitude of the effort that is required to dispose of them.

Such a trial of patience severely jeopardises the ordinary citizens' access to justice, resulting in distress, diminished resource, lost time, and, above all, a severe lack of trust in the judicial system. When justice is denied, particularly at the district courts level, it creates an environment of frustration and despair; people feel disenfranchised by a seemingly compromised legal framework. Mass discontentment and deprivation of justice can trigger a breakdown in the social order, which in turn deters both domestic and foreign investors from investing in the country.

Besides, Pakistan has to fulfil its international responsibilities. It is a signatory to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, as well as the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women among other legal instruments. In 2023, the EU extended the Generalised System of Preferences until 2027 for developing countries, including Pakistan. These obligations mandate an absolute and across-

the-board adherence to transparency and impartiality in legal proceedings.

The World Bank Enterprise Survey — described as "a firm-level survey of a representative sample of an economy's private sector" — reported that 38pc of Pakistani firms find the labyrinthine legal system a major barrier in economic collaboration and growth; the figure drops to 14pc for the rest of South Asia. Hence, the government's failure to honour the fundamental and economic rights enshrined in international treaties risks the country's interests as was experienced in the Reko Diq case.

It should be stressed that honouring judicial independence and human rights obligations are critical for economic prosperity in Pakistan. The lack of an autonomous judiciary may lead to national and international challenges, particularly regarding human and economic privileges, which will deepen the existing challenges of poor economic health, a disgruntled youth, and an acutely polarised society.

Judicial independence is vital for democracy and the economy. As Pakistan navigates the complexities of implementing international commitments in its fraught domestic scenario, fostering collective trust in due process has to be seen as the first line of defence against internal and external threats. A robust and credible judicial system also reinstates the public's faith in legal processes, promoting safety and equitable economic growth in a humane society that respects freedom and dignity. -- Courtesy Dawn

Commerce News

Parliamentary Secretary for Commerce visits IPO-Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Parliamentary Secretary for Commerce, Dr. Zulfiqar Ali Bhatti here on Wednesday visited the Intellectual Property Organization of Pakistan (IPO-PAKISTAN).

According to press release issued by commerce ministry, he was warmly received by Chairperson Ambassador @ Farukh Amil, Director General Ms. Shazia Adnan, and IPO officers.

The visit was an important opportunity for the organization to showcase its functions and achievements, and to brief the secretary on its key

initiatives and performance.

On the occasion, the Chairperson and Director General provided a comprehensive briefing and presentation, covering the organization's functions in detail. It included an overview of the organization's role in promoting Intellectual Property Rights, including Trademarks, Patents, Copyrights, and Geographical indications.

The Parliamentary Secretary was informed about the organization's performance, including its efforts to raise awareness

about IP rights, provide training and capacity-building programs, and facilitate the registration of intellectual property rights.

The briefing highlighted the importance of intellectual property protection in promoting economic growth, innovation, and entrepreneurship in Pakistan.

The Parliamentary Secretary appreciated the performance of the organization and acknowledged the importance of its work in promoting IPRs in Pakistan.

Iftikhar Malik lauds "URAAN" roadmap

LAHORE (APP): Former president of the SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry Iftikhar Ali Malik on Wednesday praised Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's ambitious 10-year "URAAN" roadmap.

In a statement, he stated that this well-conceived plan would usher in an era of sustainable economic growth, the execution of mega projects, and lasting prosperity across the country, while also attracting both foreign and local investments. He said its implementation will hopefully transform Pakistan into a \$1 trillion economy by the next decade. Anchored on the

"Five E's"—Exports, Equity, E-Pakistan, Energy, and Environment—the plan showcases a visionary approach towards fostering sustainable growth and prosperity. He said this strategic vision, underpinned by robust policy implementation and public-private collaboration, has the potential to unlock Pakistan's economic potential, ensuring prosperity and resilience for the years to come. He said focus on Exports underscores the need to boost Pakistan's global competitiveness. By diversifying export markets and enhancing value-added

PSX turns bullish, gains 1,881 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) turned around to bullish trend on Wednesday, gaining 1,881.18, a positive change of 1.63 percent, closing at 117,008.08 points as compared to 115,126.90 points on the last trading day. A total of 956,274,456 shares were traded during the day as compared to 1,236,873,705 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 46.440 billion against Rs. 44.218 billion on the last trading day. As many as 462 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 258 of them recorded gains and 161 sustained losses.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning Development and Special Initiatives Prof. Ahsan Iqbal giving digital device to field workers during inaugural ceremony of field operations of 7th Agricultural Census "Integrated Digital Count" Conducted by Pakistan Bureau of Statistics.

CEO PMEX says:

PMEX advances concept of innovation, market productivity in commodity market

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chief Executive Officer of Pakistan Mercantile Exchange (PMEX), Khurram Zafar on Wednesday said that PMEX wants to advance the concept of innovation and market productivity in the commodity market by increasing efficiency in agriculture and metal.

"We are envisioning future markets under which market regulation will be maintained and competitiveness and productivity in the commodity market will be

enhanced," Chief Executive Officer of Pakistan Mercantile Exchange (PMEX), Khurram Zafar told APP in an exclusive interview.

He said that the exchange registered a trading volume of around Rs 3,800 billion in the current Fiscal Year.

CEO, PMEX said that Commodity futures are derivative contracts in which the purchaser agrees to buy or sell a specific quantity of a physical commodity at a specified price on a particular date

in the future.

Derivatives are investments that derive their value from the price of another asset, typically called the underlying asset, he said. He said that Pakistan Mercantile Exchange (PMEX) has a huge role in future market design and market economy on which the future market depends. Talking to APP, the CEO, PMEX said that the Market Eco-system and Storage are very important on which Pakistan Mercantile Exchange is working.

ICCI fully endorses PM's 'Uraan Pakistan' Initiative

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), has acknowledged the potential of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's "Uraan Pakistan" initiative.

In a press statement, Abdul Rehman Siddiqui, the Acting President ICCI said that a five-year national economic plan focusing on the 5Es (exports, e-Pakistan, environment, energy, equity, and empowerment), to guide the country toward sustainable growth.

He further supported the Prime Minister's emphasis on privatizing and outsourcing loss-making State-Owned

Enterprises (SOEs) as essential measures to curb financial losses and improve efficiency in the public sector.

Siddiqui also highlighted the urgent need to address a range of economic challenges, including rising public debt, unemployment, the closure of industries and businesses, unrealistic tax policies, and the insufficient infrastructure and facilities for Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and Industrial Zones.

He emphasized the importance of eliminating bureaucratic red tape, which hinders business growth and creates barriers to ease of doing business in the country.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Five ships, Maersk Chicago, Kotka, ST. Nikolai, Ginga Ocelot and Aramon carrying Container, Palm oil, Chemicals and Mogas, berthed at Qasim International Container Terminal, Liquid Cargo Terminal, Engro Vopak Terminal and FOTCO oil Terminal respectively on Tuesday.

Meanwhile two more ships, Jaru Bhum and Kosai are also arrived at outer anchorage on same day. Eleven ships were engaged at POA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them three ships, Kotka, Seamec Gallant and Al-Khuwair left the on today morning.

Core inflation decelerates to 4.1 percent in December

ISLAMABAD (APP): The core inflation measured by Consumer Price Index (CPI) decelerated further to 4.1 percent during December 2024 as compared to 4.9 percent recorded during November 2024, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported Monday.

According to PBS data, the CPI based inflation during the same month of last year (December 2023) was recorded at 29.7%. On month-on-month basis, it increased by 0.1% in December 2024 as

compared to 0.5% in the previous month and an increase of 0.8% in December 2023. According to PBS data, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation urban, decreased to 4.4% on year-on-year (YoY) basis in December 2024 as compared to 5.2% in the previous month and 30.9% in December 2023. On month-on-month (MoM) basis, it decreased by 0.1% in December 2024 as compared to 0.5% in the previous month and an increase of 0.7% in December 2023.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan meets RCCI delegation led by President Usman Shaukat to discuss key trade and industry issues.

ZONG - offering Intl calling with innovative "IDD Make Your Own Bundle"

ISLAMABAD (APP): ZONG, renowned for its innovative digital solutions, has introduced a user-friendly and customizable feature for its prepaid and postpaid subscribers: "IDD Make Your Own Bundle."

According to a news release this revolutionary offering empowers users to create personalized International Direct Dialing (IDD) bundles tailored to their unique communication needs for respective destinations. Accessible exclusively through the My Zong App, the feature ensures convenience, flexibility, affordability, and an

enhanced customer experience.

With the "IDD Make Your Own Bundle," subscribers can select their destination, choose between landline and mobile calls and determine the number of minutes and validity period that best suits their preferences. Rates start as low as PKR 1 per minute for destinations like the USA, Canada, and China and go up to PKR 19 per minute for Oman, with popular locations such as Saudi Arabia, UAE, and the UK, ranging between PKR 2 to 15 per minute.



KARACHI: Vice Chairman, Balochistan Board of Investment & Trade (BBoIT), Bilal Khan Kakar and CEO Abdul Kabeer Zarkoon meeting with Chairman AHG Arif Habib, Chairman FPCCI Mian Zahid Hussain and Nasir Khan are also present.

CM KP Gandapur chairs Meeting finalizes action plan for Huqooq-e-Pak Project-II

PESHAWAR (APP): A meeting held here with Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Khan Gandapur in the chair on Wednesday discussed and finalized an action plan for the effective implementation of the Huqooq-e-Pakistan Project-II, and achieving its desired objectives.

Besides, Federal Secretary for Human Rights Allah Dino Khawaja and Advocate General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Shah Faisal Utman Khel, the representatives of the relevant federal and provincial departments and the UNDP, attended the meeting.

The meeting decided to have a coordinated mechanism between the relevant federal and provincial departments for the implementation of the project.

A briefing was

provided about the project's key features, objectives, proposed activities, areas of coordination challenges, and other related matters.

It was informed that this 3.5-year long project is being launched with the cooperation of the European Union and the UNDP, aimed at strengthening relevant institutions and improving the human rights situation in the province.

It was apprised that under the project, human rights institutions will be established to enhance the delivery of services in the province, and all data related to human rights will be digitized and added that the digitization/Integration of data will also help streamline the people-centered complaint management system.

Furthermore, the project will introduce

human rights-related programs in the higher education sector of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and the provincial government will identify two universities for this purpose.

Additionally, various measures have been proposed under the program for implementing the Human Rights National Action Plan in the province.

The Chief Minister assured the provincial government's full cooperation for the proper implementation of the project and directed all relevant departments to ensure their support in this regard. He stated that the government aims to centralize the database of marginalized and underprivileged segments of society, and has already instructed the concerned authorities in this regard.

Provincial stakeholders urge KP Govt to enact Child Marriage Restraint Bill

PESHAWAR (APP): A provincial stakeholders seminar on child marriages has called on the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) government to urgently enact the Child Marriage Restraint Bill to address the deep-rooted social and traditional practice that adversely impacts millions of young lives.

Participants stressed that such legislation is essential to safeguard the potential and future of children.

The seminar was jointly organized by Blue Veins, the National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR), and the Directorate General of Human Rights.

The event featured prominent speakers, including Allama Muhammad Raghay Hussain Naemi, Chairman of the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII); Maulana

Tayyab Qureshi, Chief Khateeb of Peshawar District; Ghulam Ali, Director of the Directorate General of Human Rights; Said Rehman, Director of Local Government KP; Imran Takkar, child rights activist; and Muhammad Rizwan, Coordinator of NCHR, among others.

Speakers highlighted that marriages below the age of 18 constitute a grave violation of fundamental human rights.

They urged the provincial government to make 18 years the mandatory minimum age for marriage for both boys and girls. Participants expressed concern over delays in enacting legislation and emphasized that existing laws, such as the Pakistan Majority Act 1975 and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Child Protection and Welfare Act 2010, define individuals under 18 as children.

Award of Lahore zoo contract to private company challenged in LHC

LAHORE (Online): Awarding contract of Lahore Zoo to private company has been challenged in Lahore High Court (LHC). The petition has been filed by judicial activism panel through Azhar Siddique advocate.

Punjab government, wild life department and forest department have been made respondents in the petition. The petitioner has taken the plea a large number of citizens come to zoo for information and recreation. Zoo was handed over to private company without any legal justification. The petitioner further took the plea private company is extorting money from the pockets of citizens who are coming to zoo. In addition to parking and entry fee, the tickets for swings have shot to sky. People are worried over lack of look after of animals in zoo.



PESHAWAR: Members of Christian Community are attending annual commemoration ceremony on the occasion of New Year Celebration, held at the Saint John Cathedral Church in Peshawar.

CM welcomes 'Uraan Pakistan': A visionary roadmap for sustainable development

Maryam welcomes 2025 with hopes for prosperity

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has lauded Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and his team for unveiling "Uraan Pakistan," a comprehensive roadmap for the sustainable development of the nation.

In a media statement on Wednesday, the CM said: "Pakistan has taken off to fly high," she remarked, emphasizing

that the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) prioritizes development above all.

Reflecting on the vision of Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, the CM said that Pakistan was on the path of economic development. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and his team were tirelessly working towards economic stability and the prosperity of the common

man. She described "Uraan Pakistan" as a transformative plan for long-term growth. She highlighted the importance of "Five-E" vision, which focuses on exports, environment, e-governance, energy, and equity. "This commendable strategy is stabilizing the economy, but equal attention must also be paid to social development," she said.

Azma says 2024 successful year in Punjab's history

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Information Minister Azma Bokhari has declared 2024 as the most successful year in the province's history.

She highlighted that Maryam Nawaz launched over 77 public relief projects, with more than 50 already completed. Importantly, all of these initiatives were funded using Punjab's own resources, she added. Bokhari emphasized that Punjab was leading in development, prosperity, and public welfare

compared to other provinces of Pakistan. Relief has been extended to every segment of society, including students, farmers, women, and youth, without any discrimination, she said and added that for the first time, relief packages had also been introduced for minorities in Punjab.

The Information minister criticised previous leaders, stating that for four years, Punjab's resources were plundered by figures like 'Pinky', 'Googi', and the Captain.

LDA seals another 111 properties

LAHORE (APP): Lahore Development Authority (LDA) on Wednesday sealed another 111 properties, in a crackdown on illegal commercial buildings and defaulters of commercial fees. On the direction of LDA Director General Tahir Farooq, the LDA teams had been conducting daily operations with full force. In the latest operation, the teams sealed and demolished 111 properties in various areas of the city. The targeted locations included Gulberg, Faisal Town, Garden Town, Sabzazar, Shah Jamal, Gulshan Ravi.

Minister directs expediting work on E-Transfer System

PESHAWAR (APP): Provincial Minister for Higher Education, Meena Khan Afridi has directed to expedite work on E-Transfer System and said it would ensure transparency in posting and transfers. Chairing a performance review meeting of Higher Education Department, he said that transfers would be made after completion of E-Transfer System that was meant to ensure transparency and merit in the whole process.

The meeting was also attended by Secretary Higher Education, Kamran Afridi, Special Secretary

and concerned officials.

Minister also directed to identify colleges that lack basic amenities and said that efforts would be made to address shortcomings in these institutions. He also directed concerned committee to speed up work on curriculum reviewing. Expressing satisfaction over performance of higher education department he said that irregularity and corruption would not be tolerated. He urged teachers to further improve performance and work with dedication realizing their responsibilities.



HYDERABAD: Women's going toward home after washing cloth at Indus river.

Punjab introduces free legal aid for indigent prisoners across all jails

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab Home Department has launched a new initiative to provide free legal aid to indigent prisoners in all jails of the province. In line with the directive of Punjab's chief minister, the Punjab government has ensured that no poor prisoner would be deprived of legal assistance.

According to spokesperson for the Home Department, the department has set up free legal aid committees in all 43 jails across the province. The committees would ensure that prisoners who could not afford legal representation for their cases were provided free legal aid. The Home

Department, in collaboration with the Punjab Bar Council and District Bar Associations, has formed the committees. Additionally, the Home Department has also issued the rules and regulations for providing free legal aid to prisoners.

According to the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) issued by the department, the deputy superintendent of jail would identify prisoners who require a free lawyer. Every Tuesday, announcements regarding the availability of free legal aid would be made in the barracks to ensure all prisoners were informed. On Wednesdays.

International News

Israeli strikes kill 12 in Gaza as war grinds into the new year with no end in sight

Monitoring Desk

DEIR AL-BALAH: Israeli strikes killed at least 12 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, mostly women and children, officials said Wednesday, as the nearly 15-month war ground on into the new year with no end in sight.

One strike hit a home in the Jabaliya area of northern Gaza, the most isolated and heavily destroyed part of the territory, where Israel has been waging a major operation since early October. Gaza's Health Ministry said seven people were killed, including a woman and four children, and at least a dozen other people were wounded.

Another strike overnight in the built-up Bureij refugee camp in central Gaza killed a woman and a child, according to the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital, which received the bodies. The military ordered people to evacuate an area near Bureij overnight, saying it would

strike there in response to recent rocket fire by Palestinian militants.

A third strike early Wednesday in the southern city of Khan Younis killed three people, according to the nearby Nasser Hospital and the European Hospital, which received the bodies.

The war began when Hamas-led militants attacked southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, killing some 1,200 people and abducting around 250. About 100 hostages are still held in Gaza, at least a third of whom are believed to be dead.

Israel's air and ground offensive has killed over 45,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. It says women and children make up more than half the fatalities but does not say how many of those killed were militants.

The Israeli military says it only targets militants and blames Hamas for civilian deaths because

its fighters operate in dense residential areas. The army says it has killed 17,000 militants, without providing evidence.

The war has caused widespread destruction and displaced some 90% of Gaza's population of 2.3 million, many of them multiple times.

Hundreds of thousands are living in tents on the coast as winter brings frequent rainstorms and temperatures drop below 10 degrees Celsius (50 F) at night. At least six infants and another person have died of hypothermia, according to the Health Ministry.

American and Arab mediators have spent nearly a year trying to broker a ceasefire and hostage release, but those efforts have repeatedly stalled. Hamas has demanded a lasting truce, while Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to keep fighting until "total victory" over the militants.



People sit inside a flooded field hospital following heavy rains in Khan Yunis.

Driver kills 10 ramming truck into New Orleans crowd in New Year attack

Monitoring Desk

LOUISIANA: A driver crashed his pickup truck into a New Orleans crowd celebrating New Year's Day and opened fire, killing at least 10 people and injuring more than 35, in an attack the FBI said it was investigating as an act of terrorism. "This man was trying to run over as many people as he could," Police Chief Anne Kirkpatrick said at a televised press conference on Wednesday. "He was hell-bent on creating the carnage and the damage

that he did." The incident at 2:15pm PKT (9:15am GMT) occurred at the intersection of Canal and Bourbon Streets during New Year's celebrations, the city said in a statement. Bourbon Street is a historic tourist destination in the city's French Quarter, known for attracting large crowds with its music and bars.

Kirkpatrick said the driver fired at police and struck two police officers from the vehicle after it crashed.

Five dead in Germany from new years fireworks accidents

Monitoring Desk

BERLIN: Five people died across Germany and a police officer was seriously injured from accidents linked to the powerful fireworks Germans traditionally set off to celebrate the new year, police said in a preliminary count. Germans celebrate the new year with a particularly intense usage of fireworks, which spurs a recurrent debate about outlawing the most powerful devices, given the high number of injuries each year, as well as the pollution and noise they cause.

Syria's de facto leader holds talks with Kurds

Monitoring Desk

BEIRUT: Syria's de facto leader Ahmed al-Sharaa has held talks with delegates of the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), an official said on Tuesday, adding that they had been "positive".

"A meeting took place on Monday between senior officials of the Syrian Democratic Forces and Jolani in Damascus," the official said, using Sharaa's nom de guerre.

But as diplomatic efforts continue, Turkish-backed fighters killed three pro-Kurdish security per-

sonnel in Aleppo early Tuesday in the first such attack in Syria's second city since rebels seized power in early December, a war monitor said.

"A checkpoint belonging to the (Kurdish-led) Internal Security Forces in the Kurdish-majority Ashrafieh neighbourhood was attacked by Turkish-backed gunmen and explosive-laden drones, killing three security personnel and critically wounding seven," the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

One killed in Russian drone strike on Kyiv, officials say

Monitoring Desk

KYIV: Russia launched a drone strike on the Ukrainian capital Kyiv early on Wednesday, killing one person, wounding six others and damaging buildings in two districts, city officials said. Explosions boomed across the morning sky as Ukraine's air force warned of drones approaching the capital and Mayor Vitali Klitschko said air defences were repelling an enemy attack. Two floors of a residential building were partially destroyed in the strike, Klitschko said.

Gaza healthcare nearing 'total collapse', says UN

Monitoring Desk

GENEVA: A United Nations report published on Tuesday found that Israeli strikes on and near hospitals in the Gaza Strip had left healthcare in the Palestinian territory on the verge of collapse.

The report by the UN human rights office said such strikes raised grave concerns about Israel's compliance with international law.

"Israel's pattern of deadly attacks on and near hospitals in Gaza, and associated combat, pushed the healthcare system to the brink of total collapse, with catastrophic effect on Palestinian access to health and medical care," the UN human rights office said in a statement.

Its 23-page report, entitled "Attacks on hospitals during the escalation of hostilities in Gaza",

looked at the period from Oct 7, 2023 to June 30, 2024.

It said that during this time, there were at least 136 strikes on 27 hospitals and 12 other medical facilities, claiming significant casualties among doctors, nurses, medics and other civilians and causing significant damage to, if not the complete destruction of, civilian infrastructure.

The report noted that medical personnel and hospitals are specifically protected under international humanitarian law, provided they do not commit, or are not used to commit, acts harmful to the enemy outside their humanitarian function.

It found that Israel's repeated claims that Gaza hospitals were being improperly used for military purposes by Palestinian groups "vague".

US imposes sanctions on entities in Iran, Russia over election interference

Monitoring Desk

WASHINGTON: The United States on Tuesday imposed sanctions on entities in Iran and Russia, accusing them of attempting to interfere in the 2024 US election. The US Treasury Department said in a statement the entities - a subsidiary of Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and an organisation affiliated with Russia's military intelligence agency (GRU) - aimed to "stoke socio-political tensions and influence the US electorate during the 2024 US election".

"The Governments of Iran and Russia have targeted our election processes and institutions and sought to divide the American people through targeted disinformation campaigns," Treasury's Acting Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence, Bradley Smith, said in the statement.

"The United States

will remain vigilant against adversaries who would undermine our democracy," Russia's embassy in Washington said in a statement to Reuters. "Russia has not and does not interfere in the internal affairs of other countries, including the United States."

As President Vladimir Putin has repeatedly stressed, we respect the will of the American people. All insinuations about 'Russian machinations' are malicious slander, invented for use in the internal political struggles in the United States," the spokesperson added. Iran's mission to the United Nations in New York did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Republican Donald Trump was elected president in November, beating Democratic candidate Kamala Harris and capping a remarkable comeback four years after he was voted out of the White House.

Taiwan president wants exchanges with China, sees lack of goodwill

Monitoring Desk

TAIPEI: Taiwan President Lai Ching-te said on Wednesday that he welcomed equal, dignified, healthy and orderly exchanges with China, but wondered whether there was goodwill from Beijing given what he said was their blocking of simple things like tourism.

Lai, who took office in May, has regularly offered talks with China but been rebuffed. China views democratically governed Taiwan as its own territory and detests Lai as a "separatist". He says only Taiwan's people can decide their future. Speaking at a New Year's day news conference, Lai said China was blocking normal interactions with restrictions on

Chinese tourists visiting or students studying on the island, while similar bans do not apply to Taiwanese going to China. "But I still want to stress this: Taiwan hopes to have healthy and orderly exchanges with China under the principles of reciprocity and dignity," he said.

Journalists should ask China why its citizens can freely travel to countries like the United States and Japan, but has all these controls when it comes to Taiwan, Lai added.

"Is this really showing goodwill towards Taiwan? Can't they treat everyone equally?"

Taiwan and China have repeatedly traded accusations about tourism and travel restrictions.

South Korea says will send Jeju Air crash black box to US

Monitoring Desk

SEOUL: South Korean investigators probing a Jeju Air crash which killed 179 people in the worst aviation disaster on its soil said Wednesday they will send one of the retrieved black boxes to the United States for analysis.

The plane was carrying 181 people from Thailand on Sunday when it issued a mayday call and belly-landed before hitting a barrier and bursting into flames, killing everyone aboard except two flight attendants pulled from the burning wreckage.

South Korean and US investigators, including from Boeing, have been combing the crash site in southwestern Muan since the disaster Sunday.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning Development and Special Initiatives Prof. Ahsan Iqbal addressing during inaugural ceremony of field operations of 7th Agricultural Census "Integrated Digital Count" Conducted by Pakistan Bureau of Statistics.

BBoIT, FPCCI to jointly organize Balochistan Summit 2025 in end January

KARACHI (APP): The Balochistan Summit 2025, aimed at promoting business, investment, joint ventures industrialization and global scale trade activities in the province, will be organized on January 27-28, 2025 in Islamabad.

The Balochistan Board of Investment & Trade (BBoIT) and Federation of Commerce and Industries (FPCCI) will jointly organize the two day event, Atif Ikram Sheikh, President FPCCI, informed in a statement issued here on Tuesday.

The FPCCI chief reiterated apex body's stance that Balochistan needs special attention of the government for flourishing economic activities and attract investment in the province including industrialization, tax waivers and incentives, setting up special economic

zones (SEZs), establishing Bank of Balochistan on the lines of other provinces and maintenance of law and order. Vice Chairman, Balochistan Board of Investment & Trade (BBoIT), Bilal Khan Kakar, explained that the motive behind taking FPCCI on board this year is have the backing of the entire business, industry and trade community of Pakistan; and, ensuring their participation in the Balochistan Summit 2025 – as FPCCI represents all 284 chambers, trade bodies and industry associations of Pakistan across all sectors of the national economy.

Saqui Fayyaz Magoon, SVP FPCCI, maintained that like Bank of Punjab, Bank of Khyber and Sindh Bank, the federal and provincial governments should facilitate the establishment of the Bank of

Balochistan to enhance industries' access to finance. "Only a full-fledged and dedicated bank can fill the yawning vacuum in business and industrial financing in the province," he added. Nasir Khan, VP FPCCI from Balochistan, highlighted shrinking youth employment opportunities and urged to support SME sector the real engine of growth and employment generation, and setting up an insurance company in Balochistan. He also proposed a public-private partnership (3P) model for setting up institutions or organizations that create and support an ecosystem for a thriving business environment. Mian Zahid Hussain, Chairman FPCCI-PAB, highlighted the fact that the people of Balochistan are resilient; and, business, commercial, trade, investment, industrial and economic activities.



QUETTA: Director General Public Relations Balochistan Muhammad Noor Khetran briefed Deputy Country Lead UK HAS Dr. Muhammad Batini about Digital Information Cell.

Visits Directorate of Public Relations Balochistan Dr. Asif praises role of DGPR in raising awareness, ensuring effective information dissemination

In line with the vision of Chief Minister Balochistan, the DPR ensures comprehensive promotion of public interest initiatives policies through print and electronic media: Noor Khetran

Independent Report
QUETTA: Dr. Mohammad Asif, Deputy Country Lead of the United Kingdom Health Security Agency (UKHSA), emphasized the importance of strengthening cooperation to effectively address public health emergencies.

He highlighted the priority of aligning Balochistan Health Directorate with the National Action Plan for Health Security, focusing on implementing the recommendations of the Joint

External Evaluation 2023, and minimizing the impacts of disease outbreaks.

Discussions also covered the coordination of activities such as joint reporting systems, establishing protocols for information exchange, streamlined communication, and organizing joint training programs for relevant technical staff. Dr. Asif praised the role of the Directorate General of Public Relations in raising awareness and ensuring effective

information dissemination.

Dr. Asif visited the Directorate of Public Relations Balochistan on Wednesday. During his visit, he met with the Director General of Public Relations Balochistan, Mohammad Noor Khetran. The meeting was also attended by Dr. Rabiya Baloch, Public Health Advisor to Balochistan, and Farhan Ahsan, Coordination Officer at UKHSA.

MERC reports 416 fatalities, 31,854 people injured in 23,257 traffic accidents in 2024

QUETTA (APP): Medical Emergency Response Center (MERC), reported 416 fatalities and 31,854 people injured in 23,257 traffic accidents that occurred on the highways of Balochistan during 2024.

According to data released by Medical Emergency Response Center (MERC), most of the accidents occurred on N-25, N-50 and N-65.

From January 1 to December 31, 2024, 23,257 accidents occurred on highways in the 26 districts of Balochistan, including Kalat, Killa Saifullah, Pishin, Zhob, Mastung, Lasbela, Khuzdar and other areas of the province.

The MERC reported to 23,257 road ac-

cidents that happened on the main highways of Balochistan in the last year and provided medical treatment to 6267 injured people while shifting the dead bodies to the nearest hospitals.

It is to mention that, like rescue teams across the country, MERC teams in Balochistan are being at the forefront of saving lives and serving humanity.

Their dedicated service has been praised by the public, who have called on the government to provide necessary benefits and facilities to the MERC teams in recognition of their outstanding performance, aiming to further improve their work in the province.



Pakistan Navy ship MOAWIN seizes large cache of narcotics at North Arabian Sea.

7th agriculture census launched: Ahsan highlights data importance in meeting food security challenges

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Wednesday launched the long-overdue 7th Agriculture Census, underscoring the importance of accurate data collection in policy-making to effectively address future food security challenges.

"Pakistan's population growth rate has increased from 2.4 percent to 2.55 percent. If this trend continues, an additional 380 million people will be added to the existing population of 240 million by 2047," he said while addressing the agriculture census launch ceremony.

Commenting on the potential consequences, he asked the gathering to consider the implications for food security in 2047 if a viable agricultural strategy was not developed based on reliable data collected by

field enumerators using digital tools.

"That is why the Planning Ministry places great importance on accurate data collection. If there is wrong reporting (in compiling statistics), it will lead to wrong policies," he said.

Ahsan Iqbal said the 7th Agriculture Census was a key initiative that could revolutionize this sector, which has long been considered the backbone of the national economy.

He expressed confidence that the census results would be available by coming August and would lay the foundation for the much-needed transformation in the agriculture sector. He emphasized the necessity of judiciously utilizing available resources and ensuring they were directed toward the right goals. The census data would provide critical insights into crop patterns,

the use of modern machinery, and livestock statistics, enabling targeted interventions and fostering self-reliance in the sector, he added.

The Planning minister also commended the management and team at the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) for their efforts in preparing for the agriculture census and thanked the provinces for their workforce contributions and support from relevant departments.

For the first time, all agriculture-related censuses covering machinery, livestock, and crops have been merged into a single comprehensive census to ensure accurate and actionable data. The census would leverage advanced technology and a centralized dashboard to streamline data collection and analysis, facilitating targeted interventions and optimal resource allocation.



QUETTA: Provincial Minister for Communication & Works Mir Saleem Ahmed Khosa inspecting Hanna Road Project.

Privatisation of hospitals not acceptable: JUI-N

Independent Report

QUETTA: Acting central Ameer, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Nazriyati Pakistan, Moulana Abdul Qadir Luni on Wednesday said that privatisation of hospitals in Balochistan was not acceptable and JUI-N supported all the demands of Health Grand Alliance Balochistan, including provision of healthcare facilities to hospitals, free of cost healthcare facilities and provision of permanent job opportunities.

These views were expressed by him while addressing all parties conference held under the aus-

pices of GHAB at Sandeman Provincial Hospital Quetta.

He said that materialising the policy of privatisation of hospitals in Balochistan would deprive poor people of the province of healthcare facilities, adding that developed countries had prioritised health sector while no priority was being given to health sector in Pakistan. He said that it had been the tactic of each government to sell institution after defaming the institution. He said that instead of privatising hospitals, government ought to have found other solution.

PNS Moawin seizes large cache of narcotics in North Arabian Sea

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Navy Ship (PNS) Moawin seized a large cache of narcotics during a counter-narcotics operation in North Arabian Sea.

The seized narcotics are estimated to be worth approximately \$ 1 million in international market, said a news release issued by Directorate of Public Relations (Pak Navy) on Wednesday.

The cache was being transported via sea to international destinations.

During the operation, PNS Moawin, supported by Pakistan Navy air assets, successfully intercepted a Dhow, conducted boarding operations, and apprehended the narcotics, which were stowed in a hidden compartment of the vessel, it further said.

The successful execution of this anti-narcotics operation demonstrates Pakistan Navy's vigilance, professionalism, and resolve to deter and disrupt all illegal activities, ensuring good order at sea.



QUETTA: Medical Superintendent (MS) Civil Hospital, Dr. Noorullah Musakhel inquires about health of patients during his surprise visit, in Quetta.

Senate IT committee expresses concerns over internet shutdowns

ISLAMABAD (APP): Senate Standing Committee on Information Technology and Telecommunication on Wednesday voiced serious concerns over persistent connectivity issues and expressed concerns about the arbitrary shutdown of internet services without justification. Presided over by Senator Palwasha Mohammad Zai Khan, the meeting scrutinized the deficiencies in monitoring mechanisms. It criticized the lack of transparency surrounding internet disruptions, even after a detailed briefing by the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) Chairman.

The Chairperson emphasized the distinction between blocking specific content and implementing a complete internet shutdown, asserting that the lat-

ter is unwarranted.

Senator Kamran Murtaza echoed this sentiment, suggesting that such shutdowns appear politically motivated rather than based on technical considerations, and called for the process to be politicized.

Highlighting a report published in Dawn that estimated financial losses in billions due to internet disruptions, Senator Palwasha expressed concern over the poor quality of internet services in Pakistan, which ranks just above Myanmar globally despite significant investments.

She underscored that such reports often have some factual basis, though Ministry officials denied the claims, clarifying that national outages referenced in the media occurred only during elections.

Govt introduced pension reforms for retired employees

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan government has 'introduced' pension reforms for retired employees, according to a notification issued by the finance ministry.

Under the new rules, retired employees will not be entitled to both a salary and pension simultaneously if they rejoin any organization.

The reforms specify that retirees will only receive a pension, and if they resume employment, they will forfeit their pension for life.

In cases where the retired employee's spouse is still working, they may continue receiving the pension until the spouse's retirement. Furthermore, the pension will be calculated based on the average salary of the last 24 months of employment.

Report filed in LHC regarding cases against Imran in Punjab comes to open

LAHORE (Online): Report filed in Lahore High Court (LHC) in respect of cases registered against PTI founder Imran Khan in Punjab has come to open.

According to report 59 cases were registered against PTI founder in Punjab after May 9. Imran Khan was arrested in 26 cases. It has been told in the report bail after arrest pleas of Imran Khan have been approved in 18 cases. He has been declared innocent in two cases. PTI founder is nominated in FIRs in 21 out of 59 cases registered against him in Punjab. In 38 cases Imran Khan was nominated after supplementary statement.

Senate committee discusses voting rights for overseas Pakistanis

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Senate Standing Committee on Parliamentary Affairs held a comprehensive discussion on granting overseas Pakistanis, including dual citizens, the right to vote in future elections.

The meeting was presided over by Senator Dr. Mohammad Humayun Mohmand. Highlighting the significance of extending voting rights to overseas Pakistanis, the Chairman said that many countries successfully implement postal balloting and questioned why Pakistan could not adopt a similar mechanism. He observed that the current legal framework neither grants voting rights to dual citizens nor provides a system to facilitate their participation.



QUETTA: Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfaraz Ahmed Bugti receiving Nawab Sanaullah Khan Zehri upon his arrival at CM House.

Providing quality healthcare to all citizens government's top priority: Syedaal Khan

ISLAMABAD (APP): During a meeting with Dr Rana Imran Sikandar, Executive Director of the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS), he commended the government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, for prioritizing healthcare reforms.

He said that efforts are underway to address public healthcare challenges and to plan large-scale developmental projects for various departments of PIMS.

Dr. Sikandar provided a comprehensive briefing on the hospital's performance, challenges, and the state of medical facilities.

The Deputy Chairman praised PIMS as a vital healthcare institution serving patients from across Pakistan but acknowledged the immense

pressure it faces as a primary healthcare provider.

"The provision of medical facilities is becoming increasingly challenging due to the rising number of patients," Syedaal Khan added. He expressed concerns over the frequent breakdown of hospital equipment, which often forces patients to seek diagnostic tests from external facilities.

To address these issues, he underscored the urgency of procuring new machinery through adequate funding. He also called for significant improvements in the hospital's infrastructure, particularly the wards, and urged both administrative staff and medical professionals to take collective responsibility for enhancing patient care.

Sheikh asks all political parties to work for development of Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh on Wednesday asked all the political parties including Opposition to work for development of Pakistan.

This is the responsibility of all the elected members of national and provincial assemblies to utilize energies for boosting economy of this country, he said while talking to a private television channel.

We have rich natural resources and potential to take the country forward in every field, he said.

In reply to a question

about political issues with Opposition, he said, it is the duty of every member to play role to normalize the relations with rival parties. He said political stability is vital to achieve economic growth rate and business targets in Pakistan.

Many countries had lifted the principles of Pakistan's golden era in 1960s, he said adding that the people had to face difficulties due to weak policies of the last regime of PTI. We are hopeful of talks with PTI, he said. He urged the leaders of PTI to come forward and work for national interest.

Muqam slams shelling, baton charge on Peshawar protesters

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan & SAFRON, Engineer Amir Muqam on Wednesday strongly condemned the shelling and baton-charge on municipal representatives in Peshawar.

In a statement, Muqam emphasized that violence against peaceful protests is in direct contradiction to democratic values. Criticizing Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) he said party's double standards has badly exposed.

He condemned the mistreatment of municipal representatives, asserting that they are the true voice

of the people and such behavior towards them is completely unacceptable.

Muqam condemned the excessive use of force by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government, accusing it of attempting to hide its failures.

He reiterated that Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) would continue to raise its voice on every platform to protect the rights of municipal representatives.

He also called on the government to immediately address the issues faced by these representatives, stressing the urgency of resolving the matter.



PESHAWAR: Police officials fired tear gas and restore baton-charged to repel Local Government representatives during their protest demonstration for acceptance of their demands, nearby Provincial Assembly building in Peshawar.

ECP warns MPs: submit asset statements by Jan 15 or risk suspension

ISLAMABAD (Online): Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Wednesday instructed 518 members of the Senate, National Assembly, and provincial assemblies to submit their annual statements of assets and liabilities by January 16.

According to ECP notification, 518 parliamentarians, including 23 from the Senate, 116 from the National Assembly, 208 from the Punjab Assembly, 55 from the Sindh Assembly, 91 from the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly, and 25 from the Balochistan Assembly, have failed to submit their

asset details.

Election Commission had instructed parliamentarians to submit their annual statements of assets and liabilities, including those of their spouse and dependent children, as of June 30 of the previous year, using Form B, by December 31. The commission had warned that failure to comply would result in the suspension of their membership from the Senate, National Assembly, and provincial assemblies, as it is a mandatory requirement under Section 137 of the Elections Act, 2017. Under Section 137, members of the Senate, National Assembly, and provincial assemblies of Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa,