

QUETTA VOICE

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Sherani, Musakhail Forest Fire Brought Under Control: DC

Abdul Rehman Musakhail:

In a commendable display of collaboration and resilience, Deputy Commissioner Zulfikar Karrar, along with Levies Force and residents, successfully brought under control a fierce forest fire that erupted in the mountainous region between Shirani and Musa Khel district.

Night-long Operation to Tackle the Blaze

The fire, which started last evening, prompted an immediate response from local authorities. Throughout the night, the operation continued, with Levies Force and dedicated locals battling the flames in challenging terrain. Careful strategic efforts were made to access difficult hilltops, ensuring the safety of the human population residing in the affected areas.

Caretaker Chief Minister, Ali Mardan Khan Domki Commends Rescue Efforts

Caretaker Chief Minister of Balochistan, Ali Mardan Khan Domki, praised the swift and effective actions of the Levies Force and local citizens. Expressing gratitude, he



Officials on the spot to extinguish flames of fire in the forest

acknowledged their crucial role in preventing a potential catastrophe. Last year's devastating fires served as a stark reminder of the importance of quick and coordinated responses.

Fire Control Achieved in Less than Fifteen Hours

Thanks to the tireless efforts of the response teams, the

fire was brought under control in less than fifteen hours, safeguarding both human lives and valuable forests.

The use of fireballs, despite challenging wind conditions, played a key role in containing the blaze.

Recognition and Awards for Deputy Commissioner Zulfikar Karrar and Levies Team

In recognition of their exemplary service, Caretaker Chief Minister, Ali Mardan Khan Domki announced the awarding of commendation, appreciation certificates, and prizes to Deputy Commissioner Zulfikar Karrar and the entire Levies team involved in the operation.

Their dedication and courage demonstrated the effectiveness of timely actions in averting a potential disaster.

Information minister says 'no crisis' in meeting ECP's financial needs

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Information Minister Murtaza Solangi said on Monday that there was "no crisis" in meeting the financial needs of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) ahead of the Feb 8 polls.

"There is no crisis on meeting the financial needs of the ECP," he said in a post on X (formerly Twitter). "Whatever budgeted amount is needed by the ECP will be released as per its needs accordingly," he said.

The statement came after media outlets reported that the commission had summoned the finance secretary today for the ministry's failure to provide the funds allocated for general elections.

Solangi added that the federal cabinet had already approved Rs42 billion for the ECP's "budgetary needs", adding that Rs10bn had already been released.

The minister said the electoral watchdog had approached the government to release Rs17.4bn out of the remaining budgeted amount.

"We firmly stand behind the ECP in holding free and fair elections as mandated by Article 218(3) of the constitution," the information minister concluded.

Meanwhile, Finance Secretary Imdadullah Bosal visited the ECP headquarters in Islamabad earlier today.

During a brief interaction with the media while leaving the premises, he said the finance depart-



ment would release the funds required for the upcoming elections.

"We will release the funds [..] in two days," Bosal said. "Whatever the ECP's need is, it added.

Last week, the ECP had rejected what it said were "baseless and misleading" reports about a request was submitted to the ECP to postpone the general elections.

The statement had come in response to media reports that a request was submitted to the ECP to postpone the general elections, citing security concerns in Balochistan and the recent wave of terrorism.

The ECP and President Arif Alvi had agreed earlier this month on Feb 8, 2024, as the date for polls — an announcement that has

been more relevant due to the "context of fragile security cum law and order situation prevalent in country".

The ECP secretary highlighted that according to Article 220 of the Constitution, all executive authorities of the Federation and provinces were bound to assist the electoral watchdog in this regard.

The letter also gave a breakdown of the total requirement of security personnel, the available strength of police and the shortfall shown by provinces and the capital city.

Islamabad requires at least 9,000 security personnel and faces a shortage of 4,500. Punjab's available strength of police is 108,500 against the total requirement of 277,610.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa faces a shortage of 56,717 with only 92,360 available against a requirement of 149,077 security personnel.

In Sindh, the available strength of police is 105,000 personnel against the total requirement of 123,300. The available police personnel in Balochistan are 18,150 while the total requirement is 31,919.

The letter said confirmation of the availability of personnel from the Pakistan Army and civil armed forces in both static and quick response force modes for the shortage of security personnel should be given to the ECP not later than December 7 (Thursday). News Desk

Noshki Levies Unearths New Method Of Sugar Smuggling

From Our Correspondent:

NOSHKI: In a recent operation conducted by Mustang Levies in the Sheikh Wasil area,

Nushki, a significant discovery was made as sugar concealed in plastic jars was recovered,

Operations Unmask Extensive Liquor and Sugar Smuggling via Small Vehicles

Reliable sources within the Levies Force disclosed that large quantities of liquor and sugar were being illicitly transported using small vehicles.

The ongoing smuggling activities were tracked from Quetta and Mustang to Afghanistan, prompting heightened vigilance.



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BSS Officers Set 15-Day Deadline for CS Balochistan to Accept Demands

News Desk:

QUETTA: The Balochistan Secretariat Services (BSS) has given the Chief Secretary a 15-day ultimatum to meet their demands.

Malik Kakar, BSS President, urged equal opportunities for BSS officers, echoing the principles of good governance reforms.

Addressing political interference, Kakar highlighted the alleged neglect of BSS officers as part of a pre-planned conspiracy

during a press conference at Quetta Press Club on Monday.

Malik Kakar said blue-eyed officers were being given important positions while ignoring the BSS officers. He noted that 90 percent of law and order was being maintained through the revenue officers (read tehsildars).

This was the job of law enforcement agencies, he said.

Earthquake Tremors in Khuzdar and Surrounding Areas, Damages Reported

Abdul Jabbar Baloch:



KHUZDAR: In the quaint Wadh tehsil of Khuzdar district, a mild earthquake, measuring 5.5 on the Richter scale, rattled the foundations of mud-walled houses on a serene Monday.

Panic ensued as residents, unharmed but alarmed, sought refuge in open spaces across Khuzdar, Nal, Garisha, and neighboring regions. Miraculously, there were

no reported human casualties, offering a silver lining amidst the chaos.

Levies sources confirmed damages to the traditional mud-walled houses on a serene Monday. Panic ensued as residents, unharmed but alarmed, sought refuge in open spaces across Khuzdar, Nal, Garisha, and neighboring regions. Miraculously, there were

Balochistan Minister Reveals 250,000 Cases of Nationality Theft

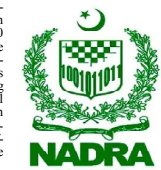
Manan Mandokhail:

QUETTA: Caretaker Information Minister Jan Achakzai disclosed 250,000 cases of nationality theft in the province during a press conference at the Quetta Press Club. He emphasized ongoing investigations by the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA), expressing intent to have NADRA officials brief the press on the matter.

Achakzai clarified that the identity theft investigation does not target any specific ethnic group but encompasses all involved. He commended the caretaker prime minister, Anwar ul Haq Kakar, and Chief of Army Staff, General Syed Asim Munir, for the initiative, that led to the departure of over 400,000 Afghan illegal immigrants from Pakistan. The total number of illegal immigrants in Pakistan was cited at over 1.7 million.

Afghanistan Should Handover Terrorists To Pakistan

Highlighting a significant crackdown against illegal im-



migrants, Achakzai praised law enforcement agencies for swiftly repatriating a large number of individuals within a short period. He reiterated the impartial nature of the crackdown, emphasizing that no specific ethnic group had been targeted.

Achakzai urged the Afghan government to hand over terrorists like Hafiz Gul Bahadur to Pakistan and stressed that Pakistan has consistently raised this issue with the Taliban government. He also encouraged the Afghan government to take steps for international recognition, asserting its mandate to frame policies.

Manzoor Pashteen Arrested In Chaman Over Allegation Of Firing At Police

News Desk:

QUETTA: Police arrested the Chief of the Pashtoon Tahafuz Movement (PTM), Manzoor Pashteen, in Chaman on Monday evening. Raja Athar Abbas, the Deputy Commissioner of Chaman, said armed accused from Pashteen's vehicle opened fire at the police vehicle in Chaman city.

However, PTM leaders accused law enforcers of opening fire at Manzoor Pashteen's vehicle. PTM stated that Pashteen was unharmed in the firing.

The DC Chaman mentioned that levies and police reached the spot after the firing and arrested Pashteen from the Gudamo area of Chaman.

Jan Achakzai, the caretaker information minister of Balochistan, said Manzoor Pashteen had addressed the Chaman sit-in without the approval of the administration. He termed PTM as an anti-state organization. Pashteen was trying



to proceed from Chaman to Balochistan's Turbat city when the incident happened. He was scheduled to address the participants of the sit-in in Turbat.

The minister stated that an FIR has been lodged against Manzoor Pashteen by police in Chaman. He said four people were also injured as Pashteen's guards opened fire.

THE VOICE

Editor: Asim Khan

Empowering Balochistan's Youth: Turning Ambition into Action

Editorial: In a landmark revelation, Balochistan's Caretaker Finance Minister, Amjad Rashid, has laid out an ambitious plan to propel the province's youth towards international employment opportunities. In an exclusive interview with Daily Quetta Voice, Minister Rashid disclosed that over 12,000 young individuals have already enrolled in the Prime Minister's skill development program, signifying a pivotal step towards realizing the government's commitment to enhancing the prospects and livelihoods of the youth.

The essence of this initiative lies in the government's vision to send thousands of skilled individuals abroad, tapping into global employment markets and creating pathways for economic growth. Minister Rashid emphasized that by fostering a culture of skill development, the aim is to elevate living standards while simultaneously contributing to the nation's economic development through remittances.

Korea, Europe And Middle East Best Destination For Youth

The global demand for Pakistani manpower has been pinpointed by Minister Rashid, with a particular focus on regions such as Korea, Europe, and the Middle East. However, the minister cautioned that success in these endeavors relies heavily on ensuring that the youth are equipped with the necessary skills and training demanded by the evolving international job market.

While the announcement of the Prime Minister's skill development program is undoubtedly a positive stride, it is crucial for the government to translate these words into tangible actions. The call to action is clear: expedite the implementation of the program, streamline the process for aspiring individuals, and ensure that the training provided aligns with the demands of the global job market.

Govt Needs To Establish Robust Mechanism

In urging the government to turn its promises into action, it is paramount to establish robust mechanisms for implementation, accreditation, and placement. Furthermore, the collaboration between the federal and Balochistan governments must be seamless, fostering an environment conducive to the success of this initiative.

As Balochistan's youth eagerly anticipate the opportunities promised by the Prime Minister's skill development program, the government must demonstrate its unwavering commitment to transforming aspirations into reality. The success of this endeavor will not only empower the youth but also contribute significantly to the overall economic prosperity of the region. The time is ripe for action, and the government holds the key to unlocking a brighter future for the youth of Balochistan.

Labour inspection

By Parvez Rahim:

PROMINENT labour leaders in Sindh recently complained to the caretaker chief minister regarding non-compliance with labour laws by some employers. In response, the CM asked the secretary labour to carry out inspections of all factories in Sindh and prosecute the violators. The labour leaders' concern was more focused on the contracting out of most jobs, non-compliance with the law on minimum wages, and termination of employment without notice.

It is an arduous exercise to keep track of the status of compliance stipulated in some 200 labour laws and rules. However, one can concentrate on those areas which are critical to the economic welfare of workers and workplace safety. The Employment Federation of Pakistan recently developed a labour inspection questionnaire, covering questions regarding the maintenance of records, payment of wages, occupational safety, health and environment, work timings, overtime benefits, the right to organise, collective bargaining, disciplinary action, etc.

The questionnaire, taken by labour inspectors to factories, primarily comprises questions relating to record-keeping in pursuance of the rules framed under the Factories Act, 1934.

Shops and Establishments Ordinance, 1969, and the Minimum Wages for Unskilled Workers Ordinance, 1969.

Rules relating to record-keeping, such as the display and maintenance of various registers, etc, were legislated decades before the advent of IT, when such work was done manually. However, despite electronic advancement, compliance has been made by successive governments to simplify the requirements and digitise them. In fact, the government, with the involvement of workers and employers' representatives, should review whether such record-keeping is required when lifestyles and technology have drastically changed over the last half century.

The following are some minimalist requirements besides the maintenance of certain records and display of notices on factory premises, which might have been relevant decades ago, but are now obsolete: even absent from the Factories Act, 1934, provides that "a well for the supply of drinking water to a factory for the purpose of humidification in a factory, shall not be constructed or located within 50 feet of any latrine, drain or other source liable to pollute the water in the well". Similarly, the Factories Canteen Rules, 1959 provides that "The canteen building shall be situated not less than 50 feet from any latrine...". An entrepreneur, who has invested in establishing a factory, will discard such a primitive system and switch over to modern living standards. A labour inspector from Sukkur used to frequently visit an American MNC's state-of-the-art fertiliser plant in Daharki, where I worked at the 1970s. Mostly, he would be accompanied by his family and stay in our guest house for a few days, taking advantage of the legal provision cited here, he would object to the distance of just a wall between the uralinal in the washroom and the electric drinking water cooler in the corridor, and insist on the production registers for employment, remuneration and leave, and the inspection book. They also checked whether the employers have displayed the following notices near the main entrance: absence from the Factories Act, the Shops and Establishments Act, and a few other laws and regulations, including the payment, and a list of holidays. Now that it has become more economical for employers to maintain electronic records, there will hardly be any one still maintaining.

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It is anticipated that the fee will form a substantial part of the kitty of at least the three largest political parties, i.e., PML-N, PTI and PPP. These parties need to maintain a record of the application fee collected by political parties. The PML-N has fixed Rs200,000 and Rs100,000 as the non-refundable application fee for party tickets for the National Assembly and provincial assemblies, respectively. During the election, they also check whether the employers have displayed the following notices near the main entrance: absence from the Factories Act, the Shops and Establishments Act, and a few other laws and regulations, including the payment, and a list of holidays. Now that it has become more economical for employers to maintain electronic records, there will hardly be any one still maintaining.

The PTI, for example, earned about Rs478 million through the application fee during

Muhammad Asghar Harifai:

Pakistan is cited as one of the countries blessed with strategic locations connecting extremely important geographical regions of Central and South Asia. Historically speaking, the dividends of geography did accrue and they included the fortification of security by enlarging the security apparatus with the help of western powers and economic progress of a few decades, albeit ephemerally in nature. The country was the cynosure of Western attention from its origin thanks to its location. In the decades of the sixties, eighties and, later during the period of the so-called war against terrorism, Pakistan played a crucial role owing to its location. The security compulsions of the western countries, led by America, turned out to be aligned with Pakistan's security concerns in the region, leading to trusted relations of cooperation.

Pakistan's predominant traditional security predilection has seriously come under strain. Pakistan is again a hub of changes but, this time, not as the traditional fire-arm battalions, but challenged by growing economies and information technology bewildering advancement, defining states' power. With the end of the last Afghan war in the neighbourhood and seismic political changes at the world chessboard, metamorphosing the world from a bipolar to a multipolar world, Pakistan's predominant traditional security predilection has seriously come under strain. More distinctly, one of Pakistan's neighbours and most trusted ally has turned into the second most robust economy of the world challenging the traditional sole power of the world. While another neighbour, although not friendly, is shaping itself into one of the top five world economies. A country's power is now measured with different yardsticks; compelling the internal power repositories to share the power cake with institutions having responsibilities of economic development and information technology promotion.

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Pakistan has once been a hub of tourists

Pakistan, a forest-starved country, can use tourism as one of the instruments for rejuvenating the economy and building an image of a progressive country. Tourism is one of the sectors that will define the country's image, and it serves as a barometer for all other fields underpinning the progress of the country. The flip side of tourism is that it is too timid to lead; it shows in the last when all other sectors have reassured their performance. Tourism flourishes when the institutions are less interfering in people's lives and efficient enough, while the society is tolerant of its failures. Living styles, dress codes and values of others. Pakistan, undoubtedly, has drifted apart and, therefore, is not in that position neither in terms of society or institutions.

The encouraging aspect, however, is that improvement in the former helps the latter by leading to change. The ray of hope is that Pakistan has once been a hub of tourists and resources to the same course is not far from an impossibility. Balochistan is 43% of Pakistan's area and its tourism promotion will have an incredible impact on the country's image, attracting visitors from all over the world. Not only that Balochistan has a bigger landmass, but it

is also badly affected by the war in Afghanistan and political alienation is manifest from the unrest of the last several decades. Pakistan's tourism revival strategy must not only begin from Balochistan, the resource allocation for tourism must have this province as a priority, with the share equal to its size. Tourism promotion is not only vital for wider national development, the spectre of terrorism pervading the whole province, in particular in the coastal tourism potential region, can be tackled with the help of tourism promotion.

Diversity in Balochistan's tourism

Balochistan's tourism is characterised by diversity in the fields of tourism. It has a landscape, incorporating all the individual distinctions, all other provinces pride in. Balochistan has ecotourism potential having high mountains of Sulaiman with Takht-e Sulaiman peak, Kirithar, Zarghon, Toba Kakari and several others. It has vast deserts of Jhal Magsi and Kharan. Balochistan's tourism has not only attracted tourists from all deserts for tourism attraction but providing desert stays and desert

spots activities. The Jhal Magsi jeep rally is a thrilling event, albeit circumscribed to a few sections of the affluent class, as the poor can neither afford to participate in it nor have developed the attraction for it. With economic activities being generated, the composition and frequency of these unique spots can change.

Countries like Egypt, Israel, India and China have utilized cultural heritage to attract tourists generating sizeable foreign. Balochistan has Mehragarh, older than its own styles, archaeological sites of Pakistan. The site utilization for tourism purposes will attract visit from Europe and neighbouring countries. The site development is undertaken by the government of Balochistan and, hopefully, will contribute to the economic development of the province.

Sindh is known for the tourism potential of the coast, with 220 km coast dwarfs before the 770 km coast of Balochistan. Balochistan coast has not only the potential of the province, but it has economic activities, but it can also turn into a Dubai for tourists for its clean beaches, sparse population and extremely pleasant weather in winter.

How is politics funded in Pakistan?

By Ahmed Bilal Mehboub:

THE promised poll of Feb 8 is two months away. It is around this time that the collection and spending of funds by election candidates and political parties has its highest level. A political party spends many more during an election year than at other times. So, it is natural for parties to tap into many more sources of funds closer to the poll date. A popular source of funds is the application fee charged from those who seek party tickets. The PML-N has fixed Rs200,000 and Rs100,000 as the non-refundable application fee for party tickets for the National Assembly and provincial assemblies, respectively. During the election, they also check whether the employers have displayed the following notices near the main entrance: absence from the Factories Act, the Shops and Establishments Act, and a few other laws and regulations, including the payment, and a list of holidays. Now that it has become more economical for employers to maintain electronic records, there will hardly be any one still maintaining.

situation had been just the opposite in 2013. The figures are based on what was officially reported by political parties to the ECP. The information indicates that political parties and their leaders receive far larger sums from the candidates as unaccounted for "donations", also for awarding tickets. This may explain why the number of rich and super-rich candidates has increased in almost all parties. The dependence on the ticket application fee by political parties can also explain the disproportionate small number of young candidates. The PPP and PML-N together can also explain the disproportionate small number of young candidates. The PPP and PML-N together can also explain the disproportionate small number of young candidates. The PPP and PML-N together can also explain the disproportionate small number of young candidates.

disclose the identity of donors and refer to them as 'donors' or 'contributors'. Surprisingly, the PPP earned an interest of about Rs24m on its bank deposits, which translates to over 90pc of its total income during 2013-14. The total bank interest over 13 years also amounts to a decent Rs106m, or 23pc of its total income. Both the PTI and PML-N earn far less under the head, as their statements show 0.49pc and 1.33pc of their total income from this source over the past 13 years. Funding of politics is considered a very sensitive subject in almost all democratic societies. Politicians and political parties compile and submit political finance documents very carefully and watchdog agencies, like the ECP in Pakistan, scrutinise these documents equally seriously. In the past, the ECP had neither the capacity nor perhaps the will to undertake this responsibility seriously.

Even from a long-term perspective, the application fee is a significant part of the funds collected by political parties. Over the past 13 years, the share of this fee in the parties' total income constituted about 19pc, 33pc and 64pc for the PTI, PML-N and PPP, respectively. The PML-N was able to collect Rs596m through application fees at the time of the 2018 election, compared to about Rs124m earned by the PTI. This equated to about 25pc of the PML-N's total income in the 2018 general election, when the PTI received Rs355m compared to only Rs125m by the PML-N, indicating that the PTI election ticket was much more in demand than the PML-N's during the 2018 election, whereas the

share of this fee in the parties' total income constituted about 19pc, 33pc and 64pc for the PTI, PML-N and PPP, respectively. The PML-N was able to collect Rs596m through application fees at the time of the 2018 election, compared to about Rs124m earned by the PTI. This equated to about 25pc of the PML-N's total income in the 2018 general election, when the PTI received Rs355m compared to only Rs125m by the PML-N, indicating that the PTI election ticket was much more in demand than the PML-N's during the 2018 election, whereas the

in the last two years, however, it seems to have reorganised, staffed and equipped its political finance wing and established links to institutions such as the FBR. It remains to be seen what level of scrutiny political finance will face in election year 2024.

A precarious world in 2024

By Malecha Lodhi:

LOOKING ahead to what can be expected in 2024, the world will continue to be in an unsettled state with geopolitical tensions escalating and driving volatility in global markets.

The international landscape has fragmented even more by the wars in Gaza and Ukraine and the US-China confrontation. Strong headwinds unleashed by multiple crises and unmet challenges make the future outlook a troubled one. Adding to uncertainty is a record number of elections next year in countries across the world including the US.

The shift to a more multipolar world will gather increasing momentum but with multilateral institutions under

persisting stress. Global power shifts will continue while major powers will play a growing role in shaping geopolitics. Unpredictability will remain an overarching reality across key geopolitical trends, risks and challenges in 2024. The Economist's "World Ahead 2024" report predicts "multipolar disorder" due to conflicts and intensifying geopolitical rivalries. For sure, the number of cascading crises raging in the world will keep it unstable and uneasy.

Control Risks, the London-based risk consultancy firm, believes the coming year will witness "a high-water mark in crisis complexity and disruptive events", which could create

a "risk management overload". Others, including the World Economic Forum, point to the onset of the "age of poly-crisis".

The most significant strategic dynamic in the year ahead will be the course of relations between the US and China. Although both global powers see the danger of unmanaged confrontation and have sought in recent months to stabilise ties, their differences on issues ranging from Taiwan to trade and technology curbs — as well as their clash of geopolitical interests — will expose relations to continuing turbulence.

Washington's regional strategy of containing China, reaffirmed in the Biden administration's national security strategy, and assertive

pushback by China, will keep relations on a tense track. Such a dynamic will accelerate, military competition will escalate and the two nations remain a dangerous flashpoint.

Control Risks, however, sees relations entering a "holding pattern" as both countries deal with pressing domestic challenges — presidential elections in the US and economic problems in China. Conflict is ruled out in most assessments by international thinkers and investment advisers' companies such as the Brookings Institution. Both countries across the world still worry about an accidental clash in the fraught Asia-Pacific region — the strategic theatre of the US-China stand-off.

East-West tensions linked that the US policy

of normalising relations between Arab states and Israel by ignoring Palestine was deeply flawed and unsustainable, with the PTI, which was generally perceived to be a party of the youth, fielded only 129, or a little over 1pc, of the total candidates in the past election. The PTI, which was generally perceived to be a party of the youth, fielded only 129, or a little over 1pc, of the total candidates in the past election. The PTI, which was generally perceived to be a party of the youth, fielded only 129, or a little over 1pc, of the total candidates in the past election.

Global attention, however, has been diverted from Ukraine to Israel's war on Gaza. The conflict has driven the Middle East into a vortex of violence and instability and what some have termed as a "generation-defining moment" for the Middle East.

On the back-burner for decades, the Palestinian issue has shot to the top of the international agenda, and it is expected that the US policy

of normalising relations between Arab states and Israel by ignoring Palestine was deeply flawed and unsustainable, with the PTI, which was generally perceived to be a party of the youth, fielded only 129, or a little over 1pc, of the total candidates in the past election. The PTI, which was generally perceived to be a party of the youth, fielded only 129, or a little over 1pc, of the total candidates in the past election.

Moreover, structural changes and disruptions in the international system — the very currency of power having changed — has created an enabling environment for middle power diplomatic activism and for them to wield influence. As these trends continue, they will create more space for middle powers to strengthen their bargaining power. This will oblige the two global superpowers to spend more diplomatic capital in engaging middle power countries.

Most international risk assessments consider scores of elections due next year to have significant regional and international implications. Over four billion people are expected to cast their ballot in more

than six dozen elections across the world. None is more crucial than the US presidential election — if former president Donald Trump returns to power this would have far-reaching consequences for the world. As he will likely pursue the same unilateralist, disruptive foreign policy that characterised his past administration, this will negatively impact relations with China, war in Ukraine, ties with allies and US commitments on climate change among other areas. A key question in 2024 will be whether the trend witnessed in recent years of democratic regression will persist or come to a halt. Democratic backsliding has been pervasive as many democracies across the world face challenges.

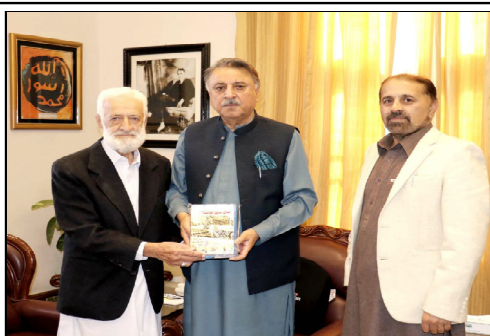
Fawad Chaudhry's interim bail extended

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Session Court on Monday extended the interim bail of the former federal minister Fawad Chaudhry in violation of the section 144 case.

Commissioner Anwarul Haq appeared before the High Court in a case involving the prison facilities of Fawad Chaudhry. During the court hearing, the Chief Commissioner presented an implementation report on former minister's requests.

The report revealed that former federal minister Fawad Chaudhry has been granted B-class facilities in jail, and as per the court's directives, he has been permitted to meet with family and legal representatives.

Senate committee approves student union bill



QUETTA: Author and historian Arbab Usman Khan Kasi presenting his book to Governor Balochistan Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar

Karachi industries observe shutdown over hike in gas tariff

KARACHI (INP): All industrial units of the city observing shutdown Monday to protest against hike in gas tariffs.

"We are also observing strike over the government's failing to enforce its promise of slashing electricity tariffs," Faisal Motiz said.

Businessmen announced a complete production shutdown on Dec 04 (today) to force the caretaker government to reverse the unprecedented hikes in the gas tariffs.

President North Karachi Industries Association said that the central protest will be held at the Site Association.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture, Jamal Shah inaugurating National Music Academy at PNCA.

No IPL 2024 for Archer as ECB looks to manage his workload

LONDON (INP): Jofa Archer will not feature in the 2024 edition of the IPL as ECB looks to take control of his workload in the build-up to next year's T20 World Cup.

Archer has not played any professional cricket since May 2023, when he suffered a recurrence of an elbow stress fracture while playing for Mumbai Indians in the IPL.

At this stage, England are hopeful that Archer could be part of their squad for the T20 World Cup in June 2024 and are planning accordingly.

He was retained by Mumbai Indians' affiliate franchise MI Cape Town as a 'wildcard' player for the second season of the SA20 in early 2024 but his participation in that tournament will depend on how his rehab progresses.

Archer has not played any professional cricket since May 2023, when he suffered a recurrence of an elbow stress fracture while playing for Mumbai Indians in the IPL. He briefly travelled to the World Cup in India as a reserve, but experienced more elbow pain while training in Mumbai and spent less than a week in the country.



CHINA: China's icebreaker Shuilong 2 (nearly) breaks through the ice to create a waterway for the cargo ship Tianhui.

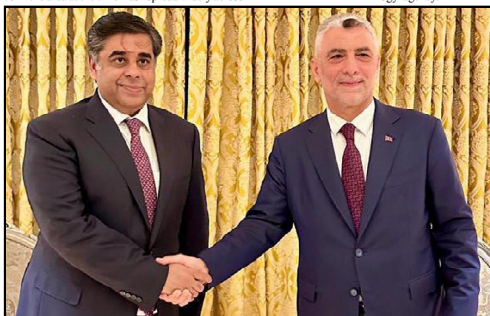
Eleven climbers killed as Indonesia volcano erupts, search on hold

JAKARTA (INP): Eleven climbers were found dead in Indonesia on Monday following the eruption of the Marapi volcano in West Sumatra, a rescue official said.

The 2,891 metre (9,485 ft) high volcano erupted on Sunday, spewing ash and rocks covered with ash.

A small eruption on Monday prompted the search to be suspended, Jodi said.

This year, it erupted between January and February and was spewing ash around 75 metres (246 feet) from the peak.



ISTANBUL: Caretaker Minister of Commerce and Industries, Dr. Gohar Ejaz meeting the Turkish Trade Minister H.E. Dr. Amer Bolat on the sidelines of the 39th Ministerial of COMCEC.

'Absconder Moonis Elahi': FIA told to monitor the case

LAHORE (INP): The Special Central Court directed the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) to monitor the case of PFI leader Moonis Elahi in which he was declared an absconder.

The director FIA was told to monitor the proceedings against Moonis, the son of former chief minister Punjab Ch Parvez Elahi.

The court was not satisfied with the compliance report of foreign minister over the notices against the suspect in the money laundering case.

The written order said that the compliance report of notices against the absconder Moonis Elahi isn't submitted yet in the court.

Table with 7 columns: Ser, Name of work executed during the last 2 years and in hand, agency, Amount of work, Time allowed in months, Date of Comm, Date of completion, Percentage of progress of work in hand, Department performance report in each work by the Engineer in Charge.

The written order was issued by judge Tanveer Ahmad Sheikh of Special Central Court.

Lahore DHA accident: ATC extends interim bail of Afnan's father

LAHORE (INP): An Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) on Monday extended the interim bail of Shafigat Awan, father of an underage driver Afnan involved in the Lahore DHA accident case claiming six lives of a family.

According to the details, ATC Judge Abid Gul Khan presided over the hearing of the bail plea of Afnan's father, Shafigat. The court extended the interim bail of the underage driver's father till December 08 and sought final arguments from the lawyers of both parties on the next hearing. Earlier to this, an anti-terrorism court in Lahore handed over underage driver Afnan Shafigat - accused of causing the death of six members of a family while driving a car without licence - to the police for five days on physical remand. It is pertinent to mention here that six members of the same family were killed in a tragic car accident in Lahore's Defence

Phase 7 area.

The family was reportedly returning home in two cars after visiting relatives in Shadab Colony on Ferozpur Road. As they reached a roundabout, the car rammied into their vehicle. The tragic incident had also led the head of the family to traumatic stress when he saw his wife Ruksana Bibi (45), son Husnain (25), daughter-in-law Ayesha (23), son-in-law Sajjad (30), four-month-old grandson Huzafa, and granddaughter Anya (4) in a pool of blood. Car driver Afnan Shafigat, who was overpowered by the locals on the spot, appeared to be a teen and the police had arrested and booked him soon after the incident. Afnan in his confessional statement said that he was driving his car at over 100 km/h. In the video statement, he admitted that he had been driving his car for one year despite his parents stopping him.



ISLAMABAD: Florence Rolle, Representative of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in Pakistan called on Dr. Kaasar Abdulh Malik, Caretaker Federal Minister for National Food Security & Research at Minister Office.

Shehbaz promises equitable development, argues for Charter of Economy

LAHORE (INP): Shehbaz Sharif - the PML-N president and a former prime minister - on Monday promised an equitable development across Pakistan and again presented the proposal of signing a Charter of Economy - an idea that is based upon the Charter of Democracy (CoD) inked for two political rivals Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif back in 2006 to jointly fight for civilian supremacy in Pakistan.

Only a consensus-based national manifesto can rescue Pakistan from the prevailing quagmire, he said about the suggestion he introduced as the leader of opposition during the PTI government while noting that the entire had reached an agreement on the offer.

The former prime minister asked the people to give a clear

mandate [majority] in the February 8 elections and said they would work under the leader of Nawaz after a successful campaign as he had always delivered on the economic front.

Shehbaz mentioned that economy would be vitalised through policy actions, not political and emotional statements, as he promised that the marginalised segments of the society - workers, daily-wage labourers, women and others - were to be the PML-N focus, if voted into power.

"People want to get rid of inflation and economic progress. We will root out poverty and provide employment."

But he also stressed that economic vital to achieving enhanced foreign reserves and generating job opportunities for youth.

Election 2024: ECP summons finance secretary for non-provision of funds

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Monday took notice and summoned the Secretary of Finance for non-provision of allocated funds reserved for the general elections 2024, sources said on Monday. Sources close to the development revealed that a total of Rs 42 billion was reserved for the preparation of the general election 2024 in the financial year budget, while the Ministry of Finance has only released Rs 10 billion so far.

Sources within the ECP state that the remaining funds for the election are being interrupted without any prior justification from the ministry, as the electoral watchdog is currently in need of Rs 17 billion immediately. The ECP sources claimed to pen down a reminder and approached the Ministry of Finance repeatedly for the provision of election funds, but failed to get any positive response.



Gwadar: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar is being presented Suez by Balochistan Caretaker Chief Minister Mir Ali Mardan Khan.

Kakar urges UAE investors to explore Pakistani markets

ABU DHABI (INP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar has urged the UAE investors to explore the Pakistani market for new avenues and commercial ties with Pakistan.

The caretaker premier said in an exclusive interview with newspaper Gulf Today, he said there are numerous investment opportunities available in Pakistan for UAE investors.

The caretaker premier said Pakistan enjoys a very historic, cultural and fraternal relationship with the UAE. The two countries could further enhance this cooperation in areas such as agriculture, energy, mining, IT, logistics and defence.

He said Pakistan is planning a comprehensive investment promotion strategy in major countries including the UAE. Pa-

kistan Investment Road Show, organized by the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) in Dubai, attracted a large number of global businessmen and investors.

The officials of SIFC held extensive engagements with global investors, highlighting immense potential and investment opportunities in Pakistan, he added.

Utilizing the platform, 30 Pakistani firms presented their project proposals and growth strategies encompassing various domains including Agriculture, IT and Energy, Kakar continued.

Responding to a question, the caretaker premier said Pakistan wholeheartedly appreciates the efforts of the UAE government in hosting the COP28.

Alluding to the challenge posed by climate change, he said all affected countries urgently need to shift to Climate Adaptation.

He asserted that this decade is decisive for climate action. Failure to act immediately will lead to worse devastation on an unprecedented scale.

He said implementing the commitments is essential for which framing the means of implementation is pivotal.

"We need to adopt a framework which is based on fast track energy transition and agreement on climate finance goal," he said, adding that the developing countries require around 2.4 trillion dollars in annual investment by 2030 focusing on adaptation, resilience and mitigating loss and damage.

NAB chief confesses to slow-paced working at corruption watchdog

LAHORE (INP): National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Chairman Lieutenant General (ret'd) Nazir Ahmed has said that the perception about slow-paced working at NAB is true to some extent.

Speaking at an event here on Monday, NAB Chairman Nazir Ahmed said that 7 out of every 10 people are victims of some housing scheme fraud.

He said that the anti-graft watchdog is trying that no injustice would be done to people. We will tighten our noose around the

opportunists, he added.

He said that the purpose of starting an organized awareness campaign among the people is that the youth who will be a part of the awareness campaign, will become the ambassadors of the NAB.

Lieutenant General Nazir Ahmed said that the impression of slowness about NAB is true to some extent.

He was of the view that the watchdog should remove the impression of fear and harassment, we will have to catch the thief, not to

harass the entire neighbourhood."

He said that the word fraud has been replaced with victim, and the accused are being called as respondents instead of calling them accused.

"NAB is your protector and supporter. We will make NAB a professional institution," he added.

The NAB chairman said that no single person or institution could free the country from corruption, everyone has to work together to rid the society from corruption.



UAE: On the sidelines of COP28, Energy Minister Muhammad Ali held a meeting with Minister for Energy of Tajikistan HE Daler Juma Shofair.

New measures introduced to boost tax revenue on IMF 'pressure'

ISLAMABAD (INP): The caretaker government Monday announced a comprehensive plan, targeting an expansion of the tax net and increased filings as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) applies pressure for economic reforms.

How many registered taxpayers are in Pakistan? Only 10.18 million individuals out of a population exceeding 240 million are registered taxpayers, with a mere 3.3 actively filing returns.

The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has devised measures to encourage tax compliance to address this disparity.

Under the new plan, individuals with an annual income of Rs5.6 million or more, ownership of multiple properties, vehicles of 1000 cc or more, and frequent international travel are obligated to file income tax returns.

Disconnection of electricity and gas connections

Failure to comply will re-

sult in severe consequences, including the disconnection of electricity and gas connections, as well as the blocking of mobile phone SIM cards.

As per documents, only 3.3 million people submitted their tax returns in 2023.

The government emphasizes that tax evasion is pervasive across all sectors of the economy and insists that non-filers must transition to become filers to avoid punitive measures.

Undocumented economy major contributor. Dr. Abid Qayyum Silhary, Executive Director of the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), identifies the undocumented economy as a major contributor to tax evasion.

He stresses the need for transitioning to a documented economy, discouraging large cash transactions until that goal is achieved.

Economic affairs expert Dr. Sajid Amin, citing World

Bank data, indicates that tax reforms have the potential to double annual tax revenue from 9415 billion to 18 thousand billion rupees, equivalent to at least three percent of GDP. Dr. Amin emphasizes the importance of a proactive, politically unbiased government working in tandem with the IMF to bring every sector, including agriculture, retail, real estate, construction, and services, into the tax net.

The IMF has advocated for an increase in the tax-to-GDP ratio from 10 percent to 15 percent, urging the collection of direct taxes from the affluent.

Currently, the poor shoulder a disproportionate tax burden compared to the wealthy, with direct taxes accounting for only 46 percent of total tax revenue.

The government's initiative aims to create a fairer tax system, strengthen the economy, and meet the IMF's recommendations.



KARACHI: A Pakistani vendor sells dry fruits at his shop in Karachi, Pakistan, 04 December 2023. Since the onset of the winter season, the demand for dry fruits in the city has increased by a considerable amount as compared to the previous year.