

QUETTA VOICE

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Chinese foreign minister calls for Gaza ceasefire and Palestinian statehood

GAZA:The Lebanese group Hezbollah said that the United States was wrong if it thought the Houthis of Yemen would stop confronting Israel in the Red Sea, saying US actions there had endangered all maritime navigation, Reuters reports.

Describing US and British strikes on Yemen as an act of stupidity, Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah said the Houthis would continue targeting ships belonging to Israel and going to its ports.

"The more dangerous thing is what the Americans did in the Red Sea will harm all maritime navigation, even the ships that are not going to Palestine, even the ships which are not Israeli, even the ships that have nothing to do with the matter, because the sea has become a theatre of fighting, missiles, drones and war ships," he said.

China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi said that China called for an end to attacks on and harassment of civilian vessels in the Red Sea, Reuters reports.

Without mentioning the Houthis, Wang, speaking at a press conference in Cairo after a meeting with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, repeated a position previously stated by other Chinese diplomats earlier this month.

Pope Francis has said that war is "a crime against humanity" as he reiterated a call for peace in Ukraine and the Middle East,



Reuters reports.

"Let us not forget this [...] People need peace, the world needs peace," the pope said at the weekly Angelus prayer.

In the prayer, he urged people not to forget those suffering due to the "cruelty of war" in several parts of the world.

He has repeatedly called for peace in Ukraine and in the conflict in Gaza. Hafiz Naemur Rehman dismisses the notion of a two-state solution as a viable

resolution to the Gaza crisis, asserting that only a one-state solution can offer a way out of the turmoil. During a rally in Karachi, the JI Karachi chief reiterated the belief that Palestine stands as the sole legitimate state, labeling Israel as an "illegitimate offspring of the West".

Rehman cautioned that anyone supporting Israel would face an unfavorable public backlash. A Palestinian organisation in Lebanon, which identifies itself as

the "Alez Al-Islami" brigades, accepted responsibility for the intrusion into Israeli territory in the Mount Dov region, Haaretz reports. The organisation admitted that three of its men were killed on the spot, a what it claimed was an unmanned aerial vehicle attack.

The announcement stated that the operation in Mount Dov was a response to the assassination of senior Hamas officials in Lebanon in recent weeks. **DesK**

Achakzai Throws Support Behind Maulana Fazal On NA 265

Syed Ali Shah:



QUETTA: In a significant political maneuver, Mehmood Khan Achakzai, Chief of Pashtoonkhwa Milli Awami Party (PKMAP), extends a goodwill gesture by endorsing Maulana Fazal ur Rehman of Jamiat ul Ulema e Islam (JUI) for NA 265 Pishin. The move prompts PKMAP supporters to withdraw Achakzai's nomination papers, clearing the way for Maulana's candidacy in a strategic response to mounting pressure from PTI.

Political pundits suggest that Maulana's decision to contest from Pishin, a JUI stronghold, stems from a need to secure a parliamentary presence, considering his absence in the previous term. Other contenders, including Khushal Khan Kakar of Pakhtunkhwa National Awami Party (PNAP) and Syed Zahoor Agha, former Governor of Balochistan and a leader of PTI, vie for the NA 265 seat.

Khushal Kakar, Syed Zahoor Agha Are Also In The Run

With Achakzai's withdrawal, Maulana's path to victory in the Pishin district seems clearer, especially with indications that Khushal Kakar might garner support from the Awami National Party (ANP).

Mufti Rozi Khan Withdraws In Support Of Achakzai

In a reciprocal move, JUI announces the withdrawal of their candidate, Mufti Rozi Khan, in support of Mehmood Khan Achakzai in NA 263 Quetta. Balochistan Amir of JUI,

Maulana Abdul Wasey, cites Achakzai's earlier support for Maulana Fazal in Pishin as the basis for this strategic decision.

The political landscape intensifies with ongoing talks between PKMAP and JUI for seat-to-seat adjustments in Pashtoon-dominated areas of Balochistan, signaling a dynamic shift in alliances and strategies as the election season unfolds.

Tragedy Strikes: A Coal Miner Succumbs to Landslide in Dukki Mine

Hussain Zarkoon:

DUKKI: In a grim turn of events, a coal miner identified as Mirza Khan, hailing from Afghanistan, lost his life due to a landslide in the Dukki area of Balochistan. The incident occurred in a coal mine, highlighting the persistent dangers faced by miners working in such hazardous conditions.

Mirza Khan, the victim, was the son of Nazq. The local authorities and emergency services responded promptly, successfully extracting his body from the coal mine. Following necessary procedures, the remains were handed over to the grief-stricken family to perform the last rites.

Tragic Incident Sheds Light On Risks Faced By Miners

The tragic incident sheds light on the ongoing challenges and risks faced by miners in the region, emphasizing the need for enhanced safety measures and stringent regulations in the mining industry.

This unfortunate event also brings attention to the history of coal mine incidents in the Dukki district of Balochistan.

Over the years, several incidents have underscored the perilous nature of coal mining activities in the region, raising concerns about the safety standards in



Authorities Urged To Reevaluate Safety Protocols

In the face of such tragedies, local authorities are urged to re-evaluate and reinforce safety protocols within the coal mining industry. It is essential to conduct thorough inspections of existing mines, implement modern technology to mitigate risks, and ensure that miners are adequately trained to handle emergencies.

The community, along with relevant stakeholders, mourns the loss of Mirza Khan and calls for collective efforts to prevent such incidents in the future.

The incident serves as a somber reminder of the importance of prioritizing the safety and well-being of those working in challenging environments, such as coal mines in Balochistan.

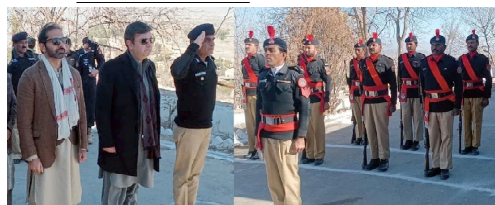
Chief Secretary Balochistan Reviews Election Readiness in Zhub Division

From Our Correspondent:

ZHOUB: Chief Secretary Balochistan, Shakeel Qadir Khan, led a high-powered delegation to Zhub Division for a one-day visit, intensifying preparations for the upcoming general elections. He underscored the commitment to ensuring free and fair elections, with all-encompassing measures taken to guarantee a transparent electoral process.

The Chief Secretary, accompanied by top officials including Additional Chief Secretary Home Zahid Saleem, IG Police Abdul Khalq Sheikh, Secretary S&GAD Syed Faisal Ahmed, and Secretary Local Government Noor Ahmed Perani, was warmly welcomed by Commissioner Zhub Division Tanqur Rahman and Deputy Commissioners.

Addressing a crucial high-level meeting, Chief Secretary Khan declared that preparations for the imminent general elections have been concluded meticulously, aligning with the Election Commission's directives. Chief Secretary Khan assured that every



facet of government machinery has been mobilized for this purpose.

Emphasizing the importance of security and voter comfort, Chief Secretary Khan directed officials to ensure the highest standards of security and the provision of essential amenities like water, electricity, and washrooms at polling stations. Furthermore, he stressed the significance of engaging tribal elders to foster an

environment conducive to peaceful elections.

During the meeting, concerned authorities provided a detailed briefing on the comprehensive preparations, covering staff deployment, availability of basic facilities, IT arrangements, and provisions for disabled persons at polling stations. The agenda also included discussions on sensitive and most sensitive polling stations, security arrangements,

installation of CCTV cameras, and transportation plans for polling staff and equipment.

The electoral landscape encompasses one seat in the National Assembly and three general seats in the Provincial Assembly in the Zhub division. The three districts collectively house more than 378,000 voters, leading to the establishment of over 300 polling stations catering to both male and female voters.

BNP and JUI Forge Alliance: Inauguration of Joint Election Office In Naal

From Our Correspondent:



KHUZDAR: In a significant move towards electoral collaboration, Sardar Akhtar Jan Mengal,

the Chief of Balochistan National Party (BNP), and Yunus Aziz Zehri, a leader of Jamiat Ulema Islam (JUI) and a candidate for the provincial assembly, joined forces to inaugurate a joint election office in Naal.

Atmosphere Of Unity And Enthusiasm

The inauguration ceremony, marked by the presence of Chief Sardar Akhtar Jan Mengal, Yunus Aziz Zehri, and prominent leaders such as Mir Jhalawan Mir Yunus Aziz Zehri and Sardar Ali Muhammad Khan Qalandrami, unfolded amidst an atmosphere of unity and enthusiasm.

The collaborative effort aims to consolidate support and pool resources for a stronger electoral presence in the upcoming elections. The Naal office, inaugu-

rated by the leaders of BNP and JUI, stands as a symbol of the alliance's commitment to working together for the betterment of the region.

The joint effort is expected to bring together diverse perspectives and expertise, offering voters a comprehensive representation of their interests and concerns.

Hundreds Of Supporters Turn Out

The ceremony witnessed a massive turnout, with thousands of party workers converging to welcome the leaders and participate in the historic event.

The leaders expressed gratitude for the warm reception from the gathering of hundreds of party workers.

They emphasized the importance of unity in achieving common goals and addressing the challenges faced by the region.

The alliance between BNP and JUI signals a strategic move to harness collective strength and present a formidable front in the political landscape of Balochistan. As the election season unfolds, the collaboration between Balochistan National Party and Jamiat Ulema Islam is poised to reshape the political dynamics of the region, promising a united front that advocates for the welfare and progress of the people.

QUETTA VOICE

Editor: Asim Khan

Environmental Samples: Urgent Call to Safeguard Balochistan's Polio-Free Status

Editorial:

In a crucial stride to fortify its polio-free status, Balochistan launched an ambitious anti-polio campaign, reaching out to over 2.5 million children below the age of five. The dedication of 11,000 teams strategically positioned across the province symbolizes a collective determination to combat the poliovirus.

However, amidst this proactive effort, unsettling news surfaces. Environmental samples from Quetta, Hub, Dera Bugti, and Chaman test positive for the virus, casting a shadow on the region's hard-won progress. This alarming development is a stark reminder that the fight against polio is far from over.

Polio-Free Balochistan, A Hard-Won Progress
Syed Zahid Shah, Chief of the Emergency Operation Cell, passionately calls upon parents to actively cooperate, underscoring the urgency of ensuring that their children receive the indispensable anti-polio drops. It is imperative for every citizen to recognize their role in this monumental endeavor.

The collaborative spirit demonstrated by the government, UNICEF, WHO, and various organizations is commendable. However, the recent environmental samples pose a looming threat, demanding intensified efforts and collaboration. It is crucial for these entities to join hands in a unified front against the crippling virus.

Govt And Orgs Should Intensify Their Efforts
This editorial urges the government and relevant organizations to intensify their efforts, pooling resources and expertise to confront and eliminate this newfound challenge. The preservation of Balochistan's polio-free legacy, meticulously upheld for over two years, demands immediate action. The time to act is now, to secure the health and future of Balochistan's children, ensuring a polio-free landscape for generations to come.

Digital policy

By Faricha Aziz:

In a recent address, caretaker Minister for IT and Telecom, Umar Saif, spoke about payment gateways for freelancers to receive payments at ease in Pakistan. He spoke of a communication world, new advancements, satellite communication and forward-looking space policy. On Jan 7, barely a week into the new year, network disruptions were reported and access to social media websites and apps throttled to thwart a PFI election fundraiser. It is not the first time this has happened and is unlikely to be the last. So what stands in our way of reaching for exacty?

The present caretaker set-up is pretending as though it has the mandate of an elected government and is introducing policies and legislation like they are here to stay. The outgoing PDM government made a mockery of parliament by bulldozing bills and laws at breakneck speed.

The PFI, when in government, thwarted the digital economy. The party already has the stain of Peca on its hands. Time and again civil society and industry have cautioned against ad hoc and regressive measures. Recently, the Telecom Operators Association wrote a letter to the PFI, underlining the adverse impact on

business caused by the disruption. When the e-safety and data protection bills were introduced by the PDM government, the Venture Capital Association of Pakistan and the Asia Internet Coalition, among others, voiced their concerns about how Pakistan would be isolated as the contents of the bills would lead to global services being withdrawn from the country.

Rights advocates emphasised the privacy and expression violations, just as they did when Peca was introduced. Losses in the billions have been reported as a result of network disruptions in an already struggling economy. But no heed is paid.

The switch-on/switch-off shenanigans, knee-jerk policy changes in Pakistan, do not have privacy legislation, a data protection law. The PML-N is touted as being "good for business" and yet leading the PDM government, it introduced a data protection bill which, had it been enacted, would have thwarted the digital economy. The party already has the stain of Peca on its hands.

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Consumer protection, online safety, connectivity in underserved areas, payment gate-

By Muna Khan:

QUARANTINING during Covid in another country without your tools of comfort is tough. Of course, I am grateful for the support system I did have, like (but not limited to) my sister's dog, the medicine and see how I feel and work with him until I felt better.

It wasn't a one-size T-shirt that fits all, he said. Often a patient doesn't see results in five days and either abandons treatment or seeks another opinion. Sometimes it is a quick fix like a hot water bottle and often the road to wellness takes time and requires patience and physical and mental help.

Many leaders speak about healing a nation but what does it actually entail? I don't imagine I'll see a greater leader than Nelson Mandela in my lifetime. His endorsement of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the work it did in investigating human rights abuses committed during the apartheid regime between 1960 and

Healing Pakistan

1994 tends to overshadow his commitment to public health. He lost a son to AIDS and talked publicly about the need to normalise the disease like TB, cancer etc, removing shame from it. Mandela's advocacy on AIDS helped save millions of lives and transformed health in Africa.

Mandela is equally known for forgiveness — of his opponents and his prisoners. In a 1998 conversation with former US president Bill Clinton he said: "You know, the oppressors already took everything. They took my freedom, my life, I didn't get to see my children grow up. They destroyed my marriage. They abused me physically and mentally. They could take everything except my mind and they chose not to give it away."

His Pakistan, our leaders have faced much injustice at the hands of the establishment but have they chosen forgiveness? The Charter of Democracy was an attempt but it stands fis-

ured today. Leaders vowed to heal the nation but then get caught up in a vortex of anger driven by revenge. I believe we're witnessing now under the guise of "making amends for past wrongs" and will probably see a new level of anger if/when Imran Khan returns to power.

Pakistan is an ailing patient who has received all sorts of treatments but it's also kept in some comatose state or life support. Press junkies to finding "media winners" to promote their plans because, let's admit, they are not qualified to treat it. They remind me of some doctors I have encountered: in it for the money, not the patient.

Pakistan is like me and the growing number of people being diagnosed with an autoimmune disorder where the body mistakenly attacks itself. I recognise I have the right doctor to guide me to my wellness but I'm unconvinced about the folks in line to treat Pakistan next.

Writers on these

pages offer sound prescriptions on how to treat the fractured economy and other matters of governance. I'm daring to offer the new government a tiny prescription for the media, which is deeply polarised and mistrusted.

I suggest the next information minister could clean and show just how much money the state has spent on nurturing relationships with journalists and media swarms — from press junkies to finding "media winners" to promote their policies rooted in declaring XYZ as unpatriotic.

The next government can lead by example and tell us what they spent when they were in power last with a vow never to do it again. This will help (re)gain the trust of people being diagnosed with an autoimmune disorder where the body mistakenly attacks itself. I recognise I have the right doctor to guide me to my wellness but I'm unconvinced about the folks in line to treat Pakistan next.

Maulana's bet

By Muhammad Amir Rana:

MAULANA Fazlur Rehman's visit to Afghanistan is a bet surrounded by controversy from the outset. His followers in Pakistan see this as an official Taliban invitation, but Taliban spokespersons denied this, stating that the visit was at his own request. Despite this, Maulana attempted to appease the Taliban leadership by drawing questionable analogies between the situation in Gaza and the Taliban's ban on girls' education in Afghanistan. Informal sources claim that Maulana might have carried a message from the Taliban establishment, but the Taliban leadership remained largely inflexible in their stance regarding the TTP. They advised him that negotiations with the TTP were the only viable option and should proceed without interference from Pakistani security agencies. Pakistani journalists and scholars who recently returned from Afghanistan reported that the Taliban leaders are paranoid about the future of their regime, and their fingers are still hovering over the trigger.

Such a distrustful relationship between the TTP, one who is unlikely to offer Pakistan genuine assistance and will ultimately remain suspicious of every initiative it undertakes, Pakistan is using all conventional channels to approach the Taliban and still believes that track two diplomacy through religious clergy can work a miracle. The belief is that if a direct communication channel with Mullah Hibatullah had been created, the state institutions would have convinced him to abandon the TTP and their vision of strategic connectivity with the region. However, Mullah Hibatullah and his close associates are being cautious and see Pakistan's insistence through the similarities of common Afghan madrasahs and clergy have come under the influence of the same perception. Using religious scholars for diplomacy would not be helpful. Pakistani scholars may have a different take on some religious and political issues, but they believe in the Taliban narrative more than in the Pakistan state narrative. Though the Deobandi madrasah and political leadership have not sworn formal allegiance to the Taliban head, in their sermons and writings, they refer to Mullah Hibatullah as "Ameeq Momin" (Leader of the faithful), and they do not waste any chance to defend Taliban policies.

Before Maulana's visit to Afghanistan, Pakistan had sent a delegation of well-respected religious scholars for confidence-building measures. They were also well-received by the Taliban, but they have yet to achieve any tangible results from their visit. Instead, the visit proved counterproductive as the Taliban and the TTP embraced them while using the Taliban

Akhundzada might deter the TTP from attacking him and his colleagues. Maulana's visit was surrounded by controversy from the outset. His followers in Pakistan see this as an official Taliban invitation, but Taliban spokespersons denied this, stating that the visit was at his own request.

Despite this, Maulana attempted to appease the Taliban leadership by drawing questionable analogies between the situation in Gaza and the Taliban's ban on girls' education in Afghanistan. Informal sources claim that Maulana might have carried a message from the Taliban establishment, but the Taliban leadership remained largely inflexible in their stance regarding the TTP. They advised him that negotiations with the TTP were the only viable option and should proceed without interference from Pakistani security agencies. Pakistani journalists and scholars who recently returned from Afghanistan reported that the Taliban leaders are paranoid about the future of their regime, and their fingers are still hovering over the trigger.

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Kulbhushan Jadhav of India, who committed espionage-age and sabotage, was also apprehended in Balochistan. Since all this can be achieved in a matter of a few misdeeds, it is important for Iran and Pakistan to enhance coordination on cross-border issues. The two countries, despite being neighbours, have not been able to boost bilateral trade. Ostensibly, the reason is the absence of payment mechanisms or regular banking channels due to US sanctions. While there is insignificant formal trade, informal trade has flourished. Two steps taken recently are likely to boost formal

Pak-Iran relations

By Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry:

IRAN is a vast country spanning an area more than twice that of Pakistan with a population nearly one-third of ours. Rich in natural resources, Iran possesses the second largest gas reserves, fourth largest crude oil reserves and significant non-fuel mineral resources. The people of Iran, known as Persians until 1935, are deeply proud of their history, culture and language.

Historically, Iran is an ancient land, with recorded history dating back to 550 BCE. Cyrus founded the first Persian empire, the Achaemenid, the fourth of which, Darius, expanded the borders of

the empire to include territories from the Tigris to the River Indus. The Sassanid empire ruled Persia for nearly two centuries from 224 BCE to 651 CE. Towards the end of this empire, Muslim Arabs and Persians came face to face in the Battle of Qadisiya, in 636 CE, germinating a lasting rivalry. Since 1979, Iran is an Islamic Republic. At no point in this historical journey of over 2,500 years, the nationalistic fervour of the Iranian people ever diminished.

In history, language, and culture, there has been considerable congruity between the Persian mainland and the province of Pakistan. The Persian language spread to India in the 10th century when the Mughals adopted it as the court language. Alama Iqbal is well known in Iran about Lahori. Much of the poetry of Ghalib and Iqbal, as indeed the national anthem of Pakistan, are in Persian.

Iran was the first country to recognise Pakistan, on Aug 14, 1947. Iran is also the country that hosted the first embassy of Pakistan abroad. Over the decades, Pakistan and Iran have maintained cordial relations. Notably, barring a few irritants, there is no major dispute between the two countries.

Despite this enormous goodwill, the tangible bilateral cooperation is far below potential. Some argue that the US sanctions imposed on Iran had undermined prospects for bilateral cooperation, while others blame the absence of political will on either side. On balance, the focus for sourcing out energy needs. The Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline agreement (IP) was signed in 2012, but fell victim to US and UN

sanctions. The successful conclusion of the Iran nuclear deal (JCPOA) in 2015 raised hopes but unilateral withdrawal of the US from the deal in 2018 kept Iran under US sanctions.

In 2022, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) also blacklisted Iran. This has often hindered Pakistan's efforts to implement the IP project.

Iran has often hinted at imposing penalties on Pakistan to implement the IP agreement. For its part, Pakistan has tried to involve Iran in operations under different names, including Jaish al-Adl. The BLA is also active in the area, possibly with foreign support.

advised to work towards some degree of circumvention US sanctions given that gas is not a sanctioned commodity. Another operational area is to better manage the border, which Pakistan calls one of "Peace, Friendship and Love". While this is certainly a border between two friends, some militant organisations who are unlikely to offer Pakistan genuine assistance and will ultimately remain suspicious of every initiative it undertakes, Pakistan is using all conventional channels to approach the Taliban and still believes that track two diplomacy through religious clergy can work a miracle. The belief is that if a direct communication channel with Mullah Hibatullah had been created, the state institutions would have convinced him to abandon the TTP and their vision of strategic connectivity with the region. However, Mullah Hibatullah and his close associates are being cautious and see Pakistan's insistence through the similarities of common Afghan madrasahs and clergy have come under the influence of the same perception. Using religious scholars for diplomacy would not be helpful. Pakistani scholars may have a different take on some religious and political issues, but they believe in the Taliban narrative more than in the Pakistan state narrative. Though the Deobandi madrasah and political leadership have not sworn formal allegiance to the Taliban head, in their sermons and writings, they refer to Mullah Hibatullah as "Ameeq Momin" (Leader of the faithful), and they do not waste any chance to defend Taliban policies.

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Yemen's Houthis vow strong response after new US strike

WASHINGTON/ADEN (INP): The Houthis have threatened a "strong and effective response" after the United States carried out another strike in Yemen overnight.

The strikes have added to concerns about the escalation of a conflict that has spread through the Middle East since the Hamas and Israel went to war, with Iran's allies also entering the fray from Lebanon, Syria and Iraq.

President Joe Biden said the United States had sent a private message to Iran

about the Houthi attacks. He did not elaborate, telling reporters, "We delivered it privately and we're confident we're well-prepared."

The latest strike, which the US said hit a radar site, came a day after dozens of American and British strikes on Houthi facilities in Yemen.

"This new strike will have a firm, strong and effective response," Houthi spokesperson Nasruddeen Amer told Al Jazeera, adding there had been no injuries nor "material damages."

Mohammed Abdulalan, another

Houthi spokesperson, told reporters the strikes, including the one overnight that hit a military base in Sanaa, had no significant impact on the group's ability to prevent Israeli-affiliated vessels from passing through the Red Sea and Arabian Sea.

The Pentagon said on Friday the US-British strikes had "good effects."

Hans Grundberg, U.N. special envoy for Yemen, called on Saturday for maximum restraint by "all involved" and warned of an increasingly precarious situation in the region. The Houthis say their maritime

campaign aims to support Palestinians under Israeli siege and attack in Gaza. Many of the vessels they have attacked had no known connection to Israel.

The group, which controls Sanaa and much of the west and north of Yemen, has also fired drones and missiles up the Red Sea at Israel itself.

The guided missile destroyer Carney used Tomahawk missiles in the follow-on strike early on Saturday local time "to degrade the Houthis' ability to attack maritime vessels, including commercial vessels," US Central Command said in a statement on X.



Quetta: Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam (S) NA263 candidate Mufi Abdul Wahid Bazai speaks during a press conference.

North Korea fires missile, minister to visit Russia as tensions rise

PYONGYANG (INP): North Korea fired an apparent intercontinental ballistic missile off its east coast on Sunday, South Korea said, as tensions run high after Pyongyang's recent launches of an intercontinental ballistic missile and its first military spy satellite.

"North Korea fired an unidentified ballistic missile towards the East Sea," Seoul's Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement, referring to the body of water also known as the Sea of Japan.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff said it detected the launch but gave no further details.

Japan's coast guard said that an "object, potentially ballistic missile, launched from North Korea," citing information from the country's defence ministry, and warning vessels to take care.

North Korea's last missile test was of a

Hwasong-18 solid-fuel intercontinental ballistic missile, which it fired into the East Sea on December 18.

The apparent test comes days after North Korea conducted a series of live-fire drills near the South, prompting counter-exercises and evacuation orders for some South Korean border islands.

Leader Kim Jong Un also earlier this week branded Seoul his "principal enemy" and warned he would not hesitate to annihilate the South, as he toured major weapons factories.

"The historic time has come at last when we should define as a state most hostile toward the Democratic People's Republic of Korea the entity called the Republic of Korea (South Korea)," Kim was reported on Wednesday as saying by the official Korean Central News Agency.

Analysts said at the

time that the shift was significant, signifying a shift in Pyongyang's approach to Seoul into "ultra-hostile mode".

Relations between the two Koreas are at one of their lowest points in decades, after Kim enshrined the country's permanent status as a nuclear power into the constitution and test-fired several advanced intercontinental ballistic missiles.

Pyongyang's isolated government is forging closer ties with Moscow, Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui will visit Russia from Monday at the invitation of her counterpart Sergei Lavrov, KCNA news agency said on Sunday.

Last year, Pyongyang also successfully put a reconnaissance satellite into orbit, after receiving what South Korea claimed was Russian assistance, in exchange for arms shipments for

Moscow's war in Ukraine.

Kim has also tested a string of advanced intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) including a purported solid fuel version.

At Pyongyang's year-end policy meetings, Kim threatened a nuclear attack on the South and called for a build-up of his country's military arsenal ahead of armed conflict that he warned could "break out any time".

Pyongyang declared itself an "irreversible" nuclear power in 2022 and has repeatedly said it will never give up its nuclear weapons programme, which the regime views as essential for its survival.

The United Nations Security Council has adopted many resolutions calling on North Korea to halt its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes since Pyongyang first conducted a nuclear test in 2006.

Pride of Pakistan Arfa Karim's 12th death anniversary today

LAHORE (INP): The 12th death anniversary of world's youngest Microsoft Certified Professional (MCP) at the age of just nine in 2004.

Karim's name roared across the entire IT world for being the youngest to pass the MCP exam and she remained talk of the town throughout her life.

The owner of

the youngest Microsoft Certified Professional (MCP) at the age of just nine in 2004.

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The owner of

Microsoft, Bill Gates invited her to visit the company's headquarter in the United States when she was only ten years old.

The genius brain won many awards and international recognitions for her brilliance in the world of Information Technology (IT). She

was awarded with the Fatima Jinnah Gold Medal in the field of Science and Technology in 2005 by the then prime minister of Pakistan. She also received the Salaam Pakistan Youth Award the same year. Arfa Karim was also decorated with the Pride of Performance award

KARACHI: A Protest arranged by the save Gaza Campaign with the solidarity of the people of Gaza at Multan Press Club.



Quetta: Workers of Muslim League (N) hold a rally to pay tribute to martyrs of the Pak Army.

PTI candidates being allotted poll symbols independently by ECP

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Sunday allotted different symbols to the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) candidates who will now contest the general elections as independents after the Supreme Court's (SC) Saturday's verdict in which it had declared the Peshawar High Court (PHC) decision by the returning officer (RO) as 'void'.

The PTI's intra-party elections case null and void, thus depriving the party of the much sought after election symbol of 'bat'.

Party Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan was allotted the election symbol of 'kettle' while party stalwart Shaukat Yousafzai 'racket'.

Similarly, PTI leader Shehryar Afridi was given the symbol of 'bottle', Shandana Gulzar 'cup', Mehr Bano Qureshi 'tong', Zain Qureshi 'shoe', Dr Riaz Lang 'rocket', Aliya Hamza Malik from Lahore 'dias', and Sanaulah Masti Khel from Bhakkar 'letterbox'.

Likewise, the symbol allotted to Qaisera Elahi, wife of Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi, was 'fridge', that allotted to Amir Dogar from Multan was 'clock', while Irfanullah Khan Niazi got the symbol of 'clock tower'.

The symbol allotted to Jamshed Dasti from NA-175, Muzaffargarh by the returning officer (RO) was 'harmonium', while the same candidate from NA-176 will contest the election with 'aeroplane' as his symbol.

PTI's Moazzam Khan Jatofirst from NA-177 was allotted the symbol of 'hubble bubble' while the party's candidate from NA-178 Daud Khan Jatofirst 'chain'.

Both Shahram Khan Tarakai and Rangaz Khan from NA-20, Swabi and PK-49, Swabi Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) respectively were allotted the symbol of 'dove'.

Similarly, Aqbul Khan from PK-50 was given the symbol of

'peacock', while Abdul Karim from PK-51 'kettle'.

According to another decision given by the RO, Faisal Tarakai from PK-52 was allotted the symbol of 'clock tower', Murtaza Tarakai from PK-53 'cup', while Muhammad Hussain Dogar, from NA-132, 'cricket stumps'.

Sardar Rashid Tufail, PTI's candidate for a Punjab Assembly seat PP-175, was also allotted the symbol of 'cricket stumps', while the party's candidate for NA-108 Sahibzada Mehboob Sultan got 'charpoy' as his symbol.

Likewise, Sheikh Waqas Akram from NA-109, Jhang was also given the symbol of 'chorpoy', Sahibzada Ameer Sultan from NA-110 'wicket', Sajid Mohmand from NA-26, Mohmand 'aeroplane', Gul Zafar Khan from NA-8 'electrow', Ajmal Khan from PK-21 'pressure cooker'.

Similarly, Gul Daud Khan from PK-22 was

given the symbol of 'pin-ner', Asad Qaiser from NA-19 'wheelchair', Muhammad Bashir Khan from NA-6 'wicket', Syed Mehboob Shah from NA-7, Lower Dir 'wall clock', Sahibzada Sibghatullah from NA-5 'bowl', while Yameen Khan from PK-12 'mirror'.

Dr Amjad Ali from NA-2, Swat was allotted the symbol of 'kettle', Salimur Rehman from NA-3, Swat 'tong', while Sohail Sultan from NA-4 'goat', Ali Shah Khan from PK-4 got the symbol of 'khussa', Akhtar Khan Advocate from PK-5 'pressure cooker', while Faisal Hakim from PK-6 was also allotted the symbol of 'pressure cooker'.

Dr Amjad Ali from PK-7 was given the symbol of 'khussa', Akhtar Khan Advocate from PK-8 'tongue', likewise, Sultan Kom, a candidate for PK-9, was allotted the symbol of 'chillie', while Muhammad Naeem from PK-10 'trypan'.

DRO assigns election symbols to 119 candidates in 3 constituencies of Capital

ISLAMABAD (INP): The District Returning Officer (DRO) Islamabad has assigned election symbols to 119 candidates contesting the general elections in three constituencies of the federal capital.

The list issued by the DRO stated that a total of 119 candidates will be vying for seats in NA-46, while 29 contenders from

NA-46 have opted to run as independents in the elections.

On the other hand, 16 candidates from various political parties will be testing their luck in NA-46.

Independent candidate competing in NA-46, Mustafiz Kazmi has been designated the election symbol of a parachute, while Shoab

Shaheen's symbol will be shoes.

NA-47 will witness the participation of 37 candidates, with 25 running independently and 12 representing different political parties. Notably, Chaudhry Ilyas Mehrban, an independent candidate, has been granted the symbol of a battery. Mustafa Nawaz Khokhar will step into

the electoral arena with the clock as his election symbol, while Nayab Ali, a transgender candidate, will be represented by the green pepper symbol. In NA-48, a total of 38 candidates will vie for seats, with 27 opting for independent candidacy. Additionally, 11 candidates from diverse political parties will enter the competition.



Quetta: Candidate for PB-42 Aslam Rind speaks during a press conference.

The first batch of Pakistani dried chili arrives in China

BEIJING (INP): The first batch of Pakistan's high-quality dried chilies, weighing 182 tonnes, has finally made its way to the Neijiang city of Sichuan Province, China.

China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Sunday.

This significant shipment marks a new chapter in the trade relations between the two nations and is expected to pave the way for increased economic cooperation, said Khalil Hashmi, Pakistan's ambassador to China.

Addressing the

ceremony for the arrival and warehousing of the dried chili under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor Agricultural Cooperation Project, Ambassador Hashmi said that Pakistan, known for its flavorful and aromatic spices, has long been recognized as a major exporter of dried chilies.

The country's unique climatic conditions and fertile soil provide the perfect environment for cultivating these fiery red peppers, which are renowned for their exceptional taste and quality.

He further said that the arrival of the first batch of dried chilies in Neijiang City is a significant milestone in the long-standing friendship between Pakistan and China.

It not only strengthens economic ties but also fosters cultural exchange, allowing Chinese consumers to experience the rich flavors of Pakistani cuisine.

The representative of the company said that the imported dried chilies have generated a buzz among local traders and spice enthusiasts.

The shipment arrived in excellent condition, showcasing the efficiency of the logistics and supply chain systems involved in the operation.

He further noted that Chinese importers and spice traders had eagerly awaited the arrival of these dried chilies, as they are highly sought after in the Chinese market.

The aromatic and spicy nature of Pakistani chilies makes them an essential ingredient in many Chinese dishes, adding a distinct flavor and enhancing the overall culinary experience.

Quetta Policeman Killed in Second Attack in Two Days

Staff Reporter:

QUETTA: A policeman was shot and killed in Quetta's Satellite Town area on Saturday, marking the second attack on police officers in just two days.

Details of the Attack: Unidentified assailants opened fire on the policeman, leaving him critically injured. He was rushed to a nearby hospital but succumbed to his wounds.

The attackers managed to flee the scene unharmed.

Investigation and Motive Unclear: Authorities have launched an investigation into the incident, but the motive behind the attack remains unclear.

No group has claimed responsibility for the shooting.

Increased Security Concerns: This attack comes just a day after another policeman was killed in a separate incident in Quetta.



The spike in violence against police raises concerns about security in the city and surrounding areas. **Call for Justice and Protection:** Local officials have condemned the attack and expressed condolences to the victim's family. They have called for swift action to identify and apprehend the attackers.

Impact on Community: These attacks have sparked fear and anxiety among residents of Quetta.

Many are calling for increased security measures to protect police officers and ensure the safety of the community.



QUETTA: Commissioner Loralai Division, Balach Aziz presenting a memorial shield to Inspector General of Police Balochistan, Abdul Khaliq Sheikh: Photo DGPR

Local hail Sibi-Harnai railway line restoration after 17 years

QUETTA (INP): A railway section between Balochistan's Sibi and Harnai districts, which was restored after 17 years in October last year, was hailed by locals as a major step towards prosperity.

The Sibi-Harnai railway track was closed in August 2006 due to terrorist activities.

While the local people were facing social, economic and other problems due to the train shutdown, there were also difficulties in religious festivals, cultural gatherings and other communications.

The local people of Harnai had to travel through 6 districts to reach Sibi which was costly and time consuming.

The closure of the train track stopped the delivery of coal by train from Harnai to other cities of Pakistan and Sibi and other areas lost fresh agricultural produce from Harnai.

Pakistan Army and FC Balochistan (North) established peace here by carrying out operations against terrorists in Sibi, Sangam, Harnai and adjoining areas.

Attempts to rehabilitate the Sibi-Harnai railway track have been made from time to time, but construction gained real momentum in 2023.

Pakistan Army and FC Balochistan (North) took over the security duties of Railway Engineers and NLC staff and thus this train maintenance work was completed within a short period of time.

The people of Sibi and Harnai hailed the train restoration as a positive step for the region's prosperity, economic development and comfortable travel facilities.

Sardar Ibrahim Khan of Sibi said, "Prior to 2006 when the track was active, trading was very common. Sugarcane, coal and other commodities were being traded."

Terrorists had destroyed this train track which caused a lot of damage to our area," Harnai, Santosh Kumar, a Hindu Community Sibi said. "People of our Hindu community live in Harnai. In 2006, they lost this connection with us due to the train shutdown."

"This train has started with the efforts of security agencies and railway administration. Our Harnai people are very happy with this," Malik Muzafer Tareen, transporter Harnai.

Harnai citizen said: "Rehabilitating the Sibi-Harnai train will provide us with employment and bring prosperity to the region." A resident Sabar Kuch said: "We are thankful to Pakistan Army and FC that now the train is running and the security agencies are standing side by side to protect the train."

He said: "With the rehabilitation of the Sibi-Harnai railway track, the delivery of coal and other agricultural commodities has started here, which will further accelerate the economic prosperity and social development of these areas."

The Sibi to Harnai train is being run under the protection of Pakistan Army and FC Balochistan (North) and providing a comfortable, cheap and safe journey to the people.

CM Naqvi okays grant of Rs90m for Punjab press clubs

LAHORE (INP): Punjab Chief Minister Syed Mohsin Naqvi on Sunday said he was proud that he belonged to the fraternity of journalists.

Addressing a function held to distribute cheques among press clubs of the province, the chief minister announced a grant of Rs90 million for the clubs.

He said that journalism was the name of 'honesty and responsibility'. "A lot of responsibility rests on our shoulders," he said, and added that he attached great importance to the provision of facilities to journalists.

He urged them to concentrate on digital media since the future belonged to this form of journalism. "Those who don't change themselves according to changing times lag behind others," the CM opined.

There were many things, he went on to say, in which Pakistan was behind other countries.

Speaking on the occasion, Caretaker Federal Minister for Information Murtaza Solangi said, "We are grateful to the chief minister for taking steps for the welfare of journalists," he added.

Punjab Minister for Information Amir Mir and others were also present on the occasion.

CM Naqvi's message on Arfa Karim's death anniversary

In his message on the death anniversary of Microsoft Certified IT Professional Arfa Karim Randhawa, the chief minister said 'daughter of the nation' still live in people's hearts. "Arfa is a torch-bearer for the future generations since at a very early age she won laurels for Pakistan in the IT sector," he added.

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JAMSHORO: Vice Chancellor LUMHS Jamshoro Prof. Dr. Ikram Din Ujan plying Chess during All Pakistan Inter-Varsity Chess (Men) Championship 2023-24 Opening ceremony at LUMHS.



Quetta: Chairman Pashtoonkhwa Milli Awami Party Mahmood Khan Achakzai is inaugurating the election office of the candidate PB-41 and NA-263.

China-Pakistan cargo route launched to facilitate air transport

ISLAMABAD (INP): A new air cargo route was launched linking Ezhou Huahu Airport in central China's Hubei Province with Lahore, said SF Airlines, China's largest air cargo carrier in fleet size.

The Ezhou-Lahore cargo route is the first international air cargo route in this year departing from Ezhou Huahu Airport, China's first cargo-focused airport, Gwadar Pro reported on Sunday.

The Ezhou-Lahore route is planned to operate three times a week, providing over 300

tons of air transport capacity from Ezhou to Lahore every week.

The transported goods mainly include textiles, 3C electronic products, electronic equipment, etc.

The opening of this international cargo route is an important measure for Huahu Airport to further increase routes to South Asia.

It will provide an efficient and stable air logistics channel for economic and trade exchanges between China and Pakistan, and provide more logistics convenience for Chinese brands to explore the Pakistani market.

Previously, SF Airlines has opened two direct cargo routes from Ezhou to South Asia, Ezhou-Delhi and Ezhou-Chennai.

The opening of the new Pakistani route will further strengthen Ezhou's South Asian air transport network.

SF Airlines, the aviation branch of China's leading courier enterprise SF Express, to date has launched a total of 11 international cargo routes from Ezhou to global destinations.

Maryam Nawaz to launch election campaign in Okara tomorrow (Monday)

LAHORE (INP): As the electioneering has failed to gain the traditional momentum with the political parties delaying campaign for the reasons not explained, Maryam Nawaz is scheduled to address a rally in Okara tomorrow (Monday) - a move that will certain boost the voters' mood.

In a post shared on X, the social media platform which was previously known as Twitter, PML-N Spokesperson Maryyum Aurangzeb said Maryam - who is the party's chief organiser and widely believed as the political scion of three-time prime minister Nawaz Sharif - would share the important points of the

manifesto to the crowd at Iqbal Stadium, Okara.

Describing the public gathering as a part of the PML-N's election campaign, she said the people would be the winner on February 8 - the day when Pakistan will go for countrywide polling.

The victory, she added, the days of progress and development would return after her party wins the much-awaited general elections.

Sheikhbaz Sharif, the PML-N president, had spoken to his supporters at Ferozqabad, Sheikhpura, on December 30 - in a National Assembly constituency from where the party has nominated Irfan Dogar as



QUETTA: Brigadier Frontier Corps, Razaq Ahmed presenting a memorial shield to the Chief Secretary Balochistan, Shakeel Qadir Khan: Photo provided by DGPR

Azan Awais gears up for his maiden U19 World Cup in South Africa

PESHAWAR (INP): The latest instalment in Sialkot's rich legacy of exciting cricket talent production, Azan Awais was all set to feature in his maiden U19 World Cup for Pakistan U19 in South Africa and he'll be the linchpin of the team's batting unit during the tournament.

As the second-leading run-scorer in ACC Men's U19 Asia Cup 2023 with 222 runs in four games, the highlight of Azan Awais career, according to him, has been the hundred against India in that tournament, where he anchored Pakistan's chase with maturity and courage.

Interacting with PCB Digital about his journey, Azan reminisced about the times when he fell in love with the game. "I started playing the game when I was just eight years old. My father took me to an academy for training. I

had to stop playing for some time due to my studies but a visit to Sialkot's Jinnah stadium reignited my hunger to play during school days. My father has sacrificed a lot for my growth as he lent time and attention and helped me excel."

Azan played U13 Inter-Regional T20 Tournament 2017 for Sialkot U13, and returned in the same tournament as the leading run-scorer in the 2018 edition.

His step up to the U16 level also yielded considerable success as he returned as the second leading run-scorer in the National U16 One Day Tournament 2019-20. In the subsequent edition of this tournament, he ended up as the third-leading run-scorer.

Azan has played nine one-day games for Pakistan U19 and will be banking on his experience of batting in Bangladesh, Pakistan, Australia and UAE in the upcoming U19 World Cup. He was part of the Pakistan Shaheens side that toured Australia last year. In the One-Day series against Bangladesh U19, he was the leading run-scorer accumulating 269 runs in five outings.

Azan said: "I follow Alastair Cook and Saeed Anwar as a left-handed batter. Cook was a run machine and he used to play marathon innings while Saeed bhai played delightful strokes."

Shedding light on Pakistan U19's preparation for the World Cup, he added, "The coaches have told us about the bounce in South African wickets and made us train in similar conditions during the camp. We have played scenario matches."

Some of the net sessions have been intense. We are a united team and will look to lift the trophy for Pakistan."