

QUETTA VOICE

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File Photo: Doctors protesting for their demands.

OGDCL Vehicle Targeted in Blast in Killa Saifullah, Balochistan

From Our Correspondent:

KILLASAIFULLAH: A vehicle belonging to the Oil and Gas Development Corporation Limited (OGDCL) was targeted in an explosion on Tuesday morning in the Bustan area of Killa Saifullah district, Balochistan.

Police sources confirmed that unidentified attackers planted an explosive device, damaging the OGDCL vehicle and injuring its driver. The injured driver was immediately shifted to a nearby hospital for medical treatment.



Law enforcement agencies, including police and Levies, arrived at the scene, and investigations into the incident are underway. No arrests had been made at the time of filing this report, and the motive behind the attack remains unknown.

The blast highlights the ongoing security risks faced by gas and oil exploration companies operating in Balochistan. Authorities are reviewing safety protocols to prevent future incidents.

26 injured in celebratory aerial firing on New Year's Eve in Karachi

KARACHI: Aerial firing during New Year's celebrations in Karachi injured 26 people who were brought to various hospitals across the metropolis, officials said on Wednesday.

On Sunday, the Karachi Commissioner issued a notification to impose Section 144 for 48 hours starting on December 31. New Year's Eve in Karachi sees citizens performing aerial gunfire and using fireworks which have caused injury in the past. On New Year's Day 2024, an infant girl died and 32 others were injured as 75 suspects were arrested and booked across Karachi for celebratory aerial firing on New Year's Eve. According to information provided by the Karachi Police and Edhi on Wednesday, the injuries were a result of stray bullets, and further investigations were underway. A total of six injured were brought to Civil Hospital. Two were residents of the Kumbharwada area of Lyari, both aged 25, one was a 23-year-old from Denso Market, a 55-year-old from Nishar Road, and an 18- and 23-year-old from Lyari's Ayesha Mastid and Ghousia Road. **NEWS DESK:**

Quetta's Air Quality: A Beacon of Hope in Pakistan's Pollution Crisis

No Strike, No Action: Balochistan High Court Resolves GHA Dispute

Syed Ali Shah:

QUETTA: The Balochistan High Court has brought an end to the ongoing dispute with the Grand Health Alliance (GHA), ensuring a cessation of strikes and protests while barring punitive measures against its officials. Justice Muhammad Kamran Khan Malakhil presided over the case, issuing critical directives to restore stability within the province's healthcare sector.

End of Strikes and Protests

During the hearing, GHA officials submitted affidavits, pledging to cancel all protests, strikes, and sit-ins.

In response, the court directed the Secretary and Director General (DG) of the Health Department to refrain from initiating any coercive actions against GHA members who adhered to the court's directives.

Justice Malakhil emphasized the importance of cooperation between the alliance and health officials to prevent further disruptions.

Support for Reinstatement and Appeals

The court provided relief to dismissed employees by advising them to file appeals with the competent authority. This directive ensures that those affected by disciplinary actions can seek redress through proper legal channels.

Financial Issues Resolved

Addressing financial concerns, the court took up matters related to stipends for Postgraduate Medical Institute (PGMI) trainees and house officers at Bolan Medical Complex Hospital (BMCH).

Pending Stipends: PGMI trainees were assured that their outstanding arrears and monthly stipends would be disbursed upon completing the necessary documentation process.

BMCH Stipend Transfer: A sum of PKR 157,689,365/- intended for BMCH house officers was verified.

This amount has been transferred to the Health Secretary and will be allocated to the Medical Superintendent of BMCH for disbursement.

Monitoring and Accountability

The court instructed the Additional Secretary of the Health Department to oversee the entire process, ensuring timely payments to trainees and house officers. Furthermore, the SSP Operations Quetta was directed to halt any actions against GHA officials following the withdrawal of their protests.

Stabilizing the Healthcare System

This ruling marks a significant step in stabilizing Balochistan's healthcare system. By addressing grievances and ensuring compliance with legal processes, the court's decision aims to foster harmony between healthcare authorities and professionals, ultimately benefiting the region's healthcare services.

Peace brokered in Kurram as warring sides sign agreement: KP govt spokesperson

NEWS DESK: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government said on Wednesday that both warring sides in Kurram districts finally signed a peace agreement after more than three weeks of efforts to broker a ceasefire amid violence in the area.

The Grand Jirga was working towards a peace accord that would lead to the reopening of roads in restive Kurram. The efforts hit a snag on Tuesday, as two representatives from Lower Kurram were not available, delaying the solemnisation of an agreement between the warring sides.

Clashes stemming from decades-old land disputes have claimed at least 130 lives since last month, with food and medicine shortages reported due to weeks-long road blockades. Residents in Upper Kurram's Parachinar have also been staging a sit-in since December 20, which a Dawn.com correspondent confirmed was continuing today, against the law and order situation there as well as road closures.

KP government spokesperson Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif announced the development in a statement issued today.

He said that one of the warring parties had signed the document a few days ago while the



other side signed it today.

He said both sides agreed to surrender their weapons and demolish their bunkers.

Barrister Saif said the peace agreement would usher the district in a "new era of peace and development", adding that calm and security would soon be restored in the restive district.

He added that convoys would leave for Parachinar on Saturday.

Malik Syed Asghar, a jirga member, told Dawn.com that both sides signed the peace document and the reservations of both sides were addressed. He said that a formal announcement of the peace agreement would be made at the Governor House Peshawar.

KP Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur praised the development, saying the provincial government's efforts for a peaceful resolution of the issue had borne fruit.

The signing of the agreement between the parties is a significant step towards a sustainable resolution of the Kurram issue. "I welcome this significant step and congratulate all the partners. I hope this agreement will provide a strong foundation for a sustainable resolution of the Kurram issue," he said in a statement, adding that the development was a "matter of joy" and would lead to the opening of land routes to the affected district.

Balochistan Launches GIS-Based Agriculture Census

Qaseem Shah:

QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfaraz Bugti inaugurated the province's seventh agriculture census integrated with Geographic Information System (GIS) technology on Wednesday. The event marked a significant step toward leveraging digital tools for precise agricultural policymaking.

The inauguration, held through a GIS dashboard, highlighted the importance of accurate and multi-dimensional data for addressing challenges in farming, resource allocation, and boosting crop production.

The Chief Minister emphasized, "Agriculture and livestock sectors are the backbone of Pakistan's and Balochistan's economy. This census is a milestone in data-driven policymaking, benefiting food security, farmers' welfare, and the agricultural sector."

The census will involve 1,004 field enumerators across Balochistan, collecting critical agricultural data, with results expected by August 2025. Chief Minister Bugti underlined the province's vast agricultural potential, spanning 7.12 million

acres, where crops like wheat, rice, and cotton significantly contribute to national production. The initiative is a collaborative effort between the Balochistan government and the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS), Secretary Agriculture Ali Akbar Baloch, Secretary Livestock Muhammad Tayyab Lehri, and other officials praised the role of GIS technology in enhancing data accuracy.

Participants:

The event was attended by Provincial Ministers Mir Ali Hasan Zehri, Mir Mohammad Sadiq Umrani, Mir Asim Kurd Gailo, Mir Salim Khan Khoso, Sardar Kohyar Khan Domki, Bakht Muhammad Kakar, Mir Shoab Noshirvani, Advisor Meena Majeed Baloch, Parliamentary Secretary Haji Wali Muhammad Noorzai, Balochistan Government Spokesperson Shahid Randi, Chief Secretary Shakeel Qadir Khan, Principal Secretary to CM Babar Khan, Balochistan Bureau of Statistics Chief Syed Rabbullah, PBS System Analyst Moina Babar, and others.



Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfaraz Bugti addressing the inauguration ceremony of GIS agriculture. Photo provided by DGPR

Deadly Land Dispute in Sotatpur: Three Farmers Killed, Five Injured

From Our Correspondent

Dera Allah Yar: A deadly land dispute erupted in Sotatpur on the first day of the new year, leaving three farmers dead and five others injured. This tragic incident highlights the persistent challenges of tribal conflicts and land disputes in Balochistan.

The violent clash took place in the Kasiani area of Sotatpur, involving the Chhatani and Manjhani factions of the Khosa tribe. The conflict over agricultural land escalated quickly, with armed individuals using modern weapons, turning the area into a battlefield.

According to police reports, the victims—Manzoor Hussain, Haq Nawaz, and Ghulam Hussain—were farmers from the Manjhani faction and are believed to belong to the Lashari tribe. Five other individuals, including Mousajuddin and Abdul Majeed Khosa, sustained injuries during the prolonged exchange of gunfire.

Sindh govt offers 'last chance' as Karachi continues to see traffic woes for 7th day due to MWM protests

NEWS DESK: The Sindh government offered a "last chance" to sit-in organisers as residents of Karachi continued to face traffic woes for a seventh day due to protests against the recent killings in Parachinar, located in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Kurram District, continuing on Wednesday.

In Kurram, a Grand Jirga succeeded in securing a peace accord today after three weeks of efforts to broker a ceasefire amid violence in the area.

Clashes stemming from decades-old land disputes have claimed at least 130 lives since last month, with food and medicine



Local authorities, led by SSP Sotatpur Muhammad Yousof Bhangar, responded swiftly, deploying a heavy police contingent to the scene. After hours of gunfire, the police successfully brought the situation under control. The deceased were transported to the Civil Hospital for postmortem, and the injured are now receiving medical treatment. This tragic incident underscores the urgent need for resolving land disputes and tribal tensions in Balochistan, which continue to claim lives and disrupt communities.

shortages reported due to weeks-long road blockades.

Residents in Upper Kurram's Parachinar have also been staging a sit-in since December 20, which a Dawn.com correspondent confirmed was continuing today, against the law and order situation there as well as road closures.

The religious-political Majlis Wahdat-i-Muslimeen (MWM) had given a country-wide call of protests to express solidarity with the people of Parachinar, following which sit-ins in Karachi began on December 24.

and expanded further last Thursday, leading to traffic disruptions.

Govt to achieve economic targets in next six months, hopes PM

Senate committee expresses concerns over connectivity issues across Pakistan

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HEALTH

Editor: Asim Khan

Quetta's Air Quality: A Beacon of Hope in Pakistan's Pollution Crisis

Editorial:

Quetta has earned recognition as the city with the best air quality in Pakistan, with an Air Quality Index (AQI) of 31, marking it as "good" and healthy, according to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Amid worsening air pollution and dense smog in urban centers like Lahore and Karachi, Quetta's clean air serves as a shining example of environmental resilience.

While Quetta's clear skies owe much to its geographical location, lower population density, and fewer industrial emissions, sustaining this air quality presents a significant challenge. Environmentalists emphasize that the focus must shift from temporary measures to sustainable strategies to preserve Quetta's atmosphere and mitigate the impacts of global warming.

Green Initiatives Must Be Long-Term

The Forest Department and local NGOs have launched tree plantation drives to beautify Quetta and improve its air quality. However, most of the saplings planted along roads have dried up within weeks due to inadequate care. This highlights the need for a sustainable approach where plants are nurtured consistently, rather than short-lived initiatives centered around photo sessions.

To Truly Maintain Quetta's Air Quality, Authorities Must Prioritize:

Sustainable afforestation: Ensure saplings are planted in suitable areas and looked after until maturity.

vehicular emission controls: Introduce stricter policies to reduce pollution from vehicles.

Community involvement: Engage citizens in green initiatives to create awareness and responsibility.

A Call to Action

Quetta's achievement is a reminder that clean air is possible, even in challenging conditions. However, it requires a committed and focused approach. Policymakers, environmentalists, and citizens must work together to implement effective green initiatives that go beyond temporary fixes. As Pakistan battles the adverse effects of climate change, Quetta's example underscores the importance of sustainable practices to ensure a healthier future for all.

Judicial integrity

By Sanaulah Abbasi:

THE

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

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

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

Moreover, international laws cannot be overlooked as Pakistan ratified various human rights conventions. The volume of pending cases in the courts proves that

Pakistan's international human rights commitments and economic obligations are being flouted, making judicial reforms imperative. The backlog of cases is also emblematic of deeper institutional challenges, which, if left unaddressed, will hinder the country's progress. In March 2024, there were 57,181 untried cases in the Supreme Court, while the Lahore High Court and Punjab's district courts reported over a million pending cases.

The Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan's report for July to December 2023 reads an unsettling increase in case pendency: 3.9 per cent, which comes to approximately 26 million cases. Alarming, 82pc of these cases are at the district judicial level, stressing the magnitude of the effort that is required to dispose of them.

Judicial autonomy is vital for democracy and the economy. Such a trial of patience — severely jeopardises the ordinary citizens' access to justice, resulting in distortions, diminished resource, loss time, and, above all, a severe lack of trust in the judicial system.

When justice is denied, particularly at the district courts level, it creates a risk of frustration and despair; people feel disenfranchised by a seemingly compromised legal framework. Mass discontentment and deprivation of justice can trigger a breakdown in the social order, which in turn deters both domestic and foreign investors from investing in the country.

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

The World Bank Enterprise Survey — described as "a firm-level survey of a representative sample of an economy's private sector" — reported that 30pc of Pakistani firms find the labyrinthine legal system a major barrier in economic collaboration and growth; the figure drops to 14pc for the rest of South Asia. Hence, the government's failure to honour the fundamental and economic rights enshrined in international treaties risks undermining the country's interests as was experienced in the Reko Diq case.

By Zahid Hussain:

THE two adversaries have finally agreed to come to the negotiating table. The ruling PML-N and the opposition PTI seem to have taken a step back from their hard-line positions. Yet the terms of engagement remain undefined.

While both sides have consented to talk, there is no clear agenda yet. The PTI is expected to present its "charter of demands" at a meeting that is due to be held on Thursday. But it's not clear what the ruling party, with its limited mandate, can offer. The real power rests somewhere else.

It seems that the powers that have already set their terms for a virtual surrender by the opposition for the talks to move ahead. That leaves no space for the two parties to walk the talk. It may just be all talk. The new year brings little hope for ending the political stand-off without confronting the elephant in the room. The democratic space in the country has shrunk drastically with the lengthening shadow of authoritarianism.

There may be a civilian façade but the power structure in the country is dominated by the security establishment. The civilian setup, with its questionable legitimacy, is beholden

By Talat Masood:

On the 27th of December 2007, Benazir Bhutto, an outstanding leader, politician and stateswoman who served as the 11th prime minister of Pakistan from 1988 to 1990 and again from 1993 to 1996, was assassinated. She had the honour and distinction of being the first woman elected to head a democratic government in a Muslim-majority country.

In a conservative Muslim society, Benazir Bhutto, a twice-elected prime minister and having the potential of making it in the long and PML-N and other parties emerged in subsequent elections to fill the void in leadership. The surge of sympathy and the support for PPP in the 2008 election, however, was not to be. Benazir Bhutto's demise was a great blow to the participation of women in politics and other fields of national activity. This continues to be reflected in several ways and needs to be addressed on priority. The percentage of women voters and candidates that are put up by the political parties or

as independents is far less than that of men. There are only few women holding ministerial posts. Besides, there are several other factors that influence their low participation in politics and other national activities. The lesson to be drawn is that women were not allowed to drive and give some-what relaxation on concerning laws. It was a substantial leap toward the emancipation of women despite the opposition of religious conservatives. Al Jazeera, the first independent satellite television station in the region, having an enormous pan-Arab and global audience — is very popular and modern and well watched in the Arab and Muslim countries. Many of its anchors are women.

The Arab media too has many women as anchors, commentators and participants and it is not surprising that this phenomenon. All these are signs that Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern Muslim countries are gradually opening up. This is happening despite the fact that

the approval of the establishment. One wonders how a political dialogue can be equated with a war situation. In the light of these remarks, one wonders how the ruling coalition can offer anything substantive to the opposition in the talks. One may not agree with the PTI's confrontational politics but the demand for a judicial inquiry into the May 9 and Nov 26 incidents is not out of place. It's necessary for the general public to know what really happened and who was responsible for the violence.

It is also a valid demand to release political leaders languishing in jail for more than a year without any charge or trial. These prior steps could provide a conducive atmosphere for the talks to continue and help ease political tensions. It may not resolve the country's basic political problem but it allows the dialogue process to move forward.

What is needed to save the democratic process in the country that has virtually become hostage to undemocratic forces. One cannot hope for any kind of stability if state and democratic institutions are undermined. Only dialogue between political forces can pull the country out of this quagmire. It's the elephant in the room that must be dealt with.

Remembering Benazir Bhutto

The constitutional chalice

By Sahibzada Riaz Noor:

A constitution is like a sure tether binding a nation together under an agreed social, economic and political compact, protecting the human, political, social and economic rights and interests of its various components, ethnicities, religions and genders, peoples and regions. While owning formidable strength, it is like a delicate chalice made of the slightest glass that constantly, actively and deliberately needs to be protected and nurtured, even if altered or improved to mutually agreed advantages.

How come there is widespread consternation over the recent national developments and concerns regarding the setting up of avoidable precedents for violations of the constitution?

Are these fears real or are exaggerated? Is the situation more alarming than it was while Pakistan was struggling to

alter or "amending" it. Under Article 63 (A), unlike in the contentious SC judgement, the votes of PML-N defecting members would have had to be counted, although subsequently they would have been unseated or disqualified on referendum to the Supreme Court, if so decided.

Had the PML-N government been dissolved on the 14th of January 2023, the PML-N government would not have been possible.

In that way, the question of a 90 days government would not have arisen — something that is at the heart of the present political and judicial crisis.

The judgement on Article 63(A) was petitioned for review in the Supreme Court. It would have been proper and had the Supreme Court had — before taking up the petition — the matter of 90 days elec-

tion — decided the Article 63(A) Review Petition since it is that which preceded, in time as well as in juridical sequence, the issue of declaring Punjab elections. (Surprisingly the issue of 90 days election to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh is hardly being pressed when it was dissolved on 18th January while the Punjab Assembly had dissolved on 14th January, 2023.)

Electons on different dates to the Provincial and Federal Assemblies could possibly, it is argued, jeopardise the issue of declaring Punjab elections. If elections to the National Assembly seats (out of 342 seats Punjab had 178 seats, any party winning a majority in Punjab will have a far greater chance of making a government at the Centre) in the Punjab held not under a caretaker government, as required by the constitution, but under a sitting provincial government

wielding responsibility for overall administrative and security during elections.

An amendment to the Constitution was instituted with the express aim and purpose to ensure that all elections, both federal and provincial, are held under caretaker, neutral governments ensuring that the results thereof are not made contentious ensuring national acceptance of their validity and the legitimacy of governments so formed.

Electons with the slightest taint or perception, real or contrived, of rigging — as witnessed in USA in its 2020 elections, or as was the case in the 1975 Pakistan elections — can have alarming consequences for political polarisation and national unity.

The wider issue of the consequence of such elections for long-term stability as well as keeping the federation united is more than per-

haps not a political dialogue can be equated with a war situation. In the light of these remarks, one wonders how the ruling coalition can offer anything substantive to the opposition in the talks. One may not agree with the PTI's confrontational politics but the demand for a judicial inquiry into the May 9 and Nov 26 incidents is not out of place. It's necessary for the general public to know what really happened and who was responsible for the violence.

It is also a valid demand to release political leaders languishing in jail for more than a year without any charge or trial. These prior steps could provide a conducive atmosphere for the talks to continue and help ease political tensions. It may not resolve the country's basic political problem but it allows the dialogue process to move forward.

What is needed to save the democratic process in the country that has virtually become hostage to undemocratic forces. One cannot hope for any kind of stability if state and democratic institutions are undermined. Only dialogue between political forces can pull the country out of this quagmire. It's the elephant in the room that must be dealt with.

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Pakistan govt to approach upcoming US admin for waiver of sanctions on Pak-Iran gas pipeline project

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Pakistan government has decided to approach the upcoming US administration for the waiver of sanctions on the Pak-Iran gas pipeline project. According to sources, Pakistan plans to seek an exemption from these sanctions to avoid potential economic repercussions.

The government is emphasizing that the gas pipeline project with Iran is a critical step toward securing affordable energy for the country, and it is therefore necessary to revisit the issue with the new US administration. Sources with the Pakistan government indicated that the project is currently facing challenges due to the imposition of sanctions, making it essential for Pakistan to negotiate carefully.

Additionally, efforts are being made to convince Iran that a middle path could be found to move forward with the project while addressing the concerns of all parties involved. The Pakistani government aims to ensure that the project proceeds without running into obstacles that could affect the country's energy security and economic interests.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman of Majlis Wahdat Muslimeen and Senator Allama Raja Nasir-Abbas addressing a press Conference in NPC.

India witnesses 84pc surge in communal riots in 2024, Maharashtra tops list

NEW DELHI (INP): Communal riots in India surged sharply in 2024, with 59 incidents reported, an 84% increase from 32 in the previous year, according to a report by the Centre for Study of Society and Secularism (CSSS), a research organization that focuses on promoting secularism, democracy and social justice in India.

Maharashtra emerged as the epicenter of these clashes, recording 12 incidents, followed by Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, with seven each.

The report, compiled by CSSS Director Irfan Engineer, highlights alarming trends in communal violence, based on news coverage from prominent Indian newspapers. Maharashtra also reported the highest

number of mob lynching incidents, with three cases out of a total of 12 recorded nationwide. These lynchings led to 10 deaths—eight Muslims, one Hindu, and one Christian.

The CSSS report reveals that most communal riots in 2024 were instigated during religious festivals or occasions, including events like Pran Pratishthan at Ayodhya Ram Mandir, Saraswati Puja immersions, Ganesh festivals, and Bakri Eid. These incidents claimed 13 lives, of which 10 were Muslims, underscoring how religious occasions are increasingly exploited to incite tensions and mobilize political support.

As regards mob lynching incidents in 2024, the persistence of such violence remains troubling. Six cases were linked to cow vigilantism, with other lynchings tied to accusations of inter-faith relationships and targeted assaults on Muslims. States like Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and Karnataka also reported lynching incidents.

The report sheds light on the institutionalisation of communal violence in 2024. Attacks on places of worship, calls for archaeological surveys of historic mosques and dargahs, and amendments to laws like the Waqf Board Act and the introduction of the Uniform Civil Code in Uttarakhnad indicate an organised effort to reshape India's socio-political landscape.

The use of bulldozers to demolish properties owned by Muslims without due legal process has become symbolic of

Minister underscores role of Sufi teachings in fostering peace, harmony, and brotherhood

ISLAMABAD (INP): Federal Minister for Housing and Works, Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada, underscored the critical role of Sufi teachings in fostering peace, harmony, and brotherhood during the launch of Kalyam Kooch-i-Ishq, a book celebrating the life and teachings of Hazrat Mian Fazluddin Kalyam.

The ceremony, held at the Pakistan Academy of Letters, marked the 133rd death anniversary of the revered mystic.

The book, co-authored by Syed

Ahmad Iqbal Timazai and Hrikhar Ahmad Hafiz Qadri, explores the biography and discourses of Hazrat Mian Fazluddin Kalyam, a spiritual disciple of Hazrat Baba Fariduddin Ganjshakar.

The event drew a distinguished audience, including former president of the Islamic International University, Sahibzada Dr. Sajid ur Rehman, who presided over the session, and Professor Dr. Abdul Aziz Sahir, Dean of Social Sciences at Allama Iqbal Open University, as the guest of honor. Professor

Dr. Najeeba Arif, President of the Pakistan Academy of Letters, also graced the occasion alongside other prominent academics and scholars.

Addressing the gathering, Minister Pirzada lauded the authors for their contribution to Sufi literature, emphasizing the timeless relevance of mystics in shaping Islamic teachings and spreading the values of humility, tolerance, and love.

"The teachings of Hazrat Mian Fazluddin Kalyam remain a beacon of hope and inspiration, especially in today's fractured world," the minister remarked.

He called for preserving and promoting Sufi literature to bridge divides and instill harmony among communities. Dr. Sajid ur Rehman elaborated on Hazrat Mian Kalyam's spiritual guidance, highlighting his role in inspiring generations through his devotion and wisdom.

"His teachings continue to offer guidance to seekers of truth, even more than a century after his passing," he stated.



HYDERABAD: Workers of Jamaat e Islami Hyderabad Protest sit in front of SSP office Hyderabad against illegal arrest of administrator and torture Latifabad no 9 AI-Khidmat Hospital Staff at SSP Office.



ISLAMABAD: Chairperson of the Benazir Income Support Program, Senator Rubina Khalid, celebrated the New Year by announcing an increase in the quarterly amount for deserving women under the Benazir Kafalat program and cutting a cake in Islamabad on January 1, 2025. Secretary Amir Ali Ahmad and Additional Secretary Dr. Tahir Noor were also present.

Senate committee expresses concerns over connectivity issues across Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (INP): A meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on Information Technology and Telecommunication, presided over by Senator Palwasha Mohammad Zai Khan, was held Wednesday at Parliament Lodges in Islamabad.

The Committee Members expressed serious concerns over connectivity issues across various regions of Pakistan and strongly disapproved of the arbitrary shutdown of internet services without justification.

The Chairperson, along with other Members, pointed out deficiencies in the monitoring mechanisms and criticized the lack of clarity surrounding internet shutdowns, despite a detailed briefing by the Chairman of PTA on the disruptions.

She noted that, despite an additional millions allocated to improve services, the quality of internet in Pakistan remains poor compared to other countries, ranking just above Myanmar. She stressed that such re-

ports likely have some basis. However, the Ministry denied the claims, with senior officials clarifying that the national outages referenced in the news occurred only during elections.

The Chairman of PTA reported that social media applications are shut down based on orders from the Supreme Court and High Court. The Committee directed that legal position on the rules framed under PECA Act 2016 specifically in the light of outage of internet may be sought from Law Division and report be shared with the committee.

The Secretary of the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication (MoITT) acknowledged that internet shutdowns have significant impacts and emphasized the

need to address public perceptions surrounding them. The Chairperson reiterated that such perceptions arise for a reason and called on the Ministry to devise policies to tackle the negative narrative effectively.

Additionally, the Committee reviewed plans to enhance the country's IT exports. The Secretary of MoITT reported aggregated growth for the year 2023-2024 and noted efforts to align the public's perception with the actual progress being made.

In attendance were Senators Kamran Muraza, Gurdasp Singh, Saifullah Sarwar Khan, Naveed, Nadeem Bhutto, Dr. Mohammad Humayun Mohmand, and Manzoor Ahmed, along with the Secretary of MoITT, the Chairman of PTA, and senior officials from relevant departments.

Hindu pilgrims from India will arrive Pakistan via Wagah Border on Jan 5

LAHORE (INP): Hindu pilgrims from India will arrive Pakistan via Wagah Border on January 5 to participate in the birth anniversary celebrations of Sant Swami Shadaram, the founder of historic Shadani Darbar Hayat Pitafi in Mirpur

Mathelo, Sindh. The pilgrims will be warmly welcomed by Additional Secretary Shrin, Saifullah Khokhar, Deputy Secretary Umer Javed Aman, and members of the Pakistan Hindu Mandir Management Committee, Amit Shadani.

Under the guidance of Federal government and Chairman Evacuee Trust Property Board, Syed Ata-ur-Rehman, comprehensive arrangements, including footlocker security, have been finalized for their visit. After their arrival, the pilgrims will head directly to Shadani Darbar



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Housing and Works Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada addressing the book launching ceremony at Pakistan Academy of Letters.

Dar reaffirms country's commitment to working constructively with all UNSC members

ISLAMABAD (INP): As Pakistan begins a two-year term as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for the years 2025-2026, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar on Wednesday reaffirmed the country's commitment to working constructively with all UNSC members and with the broader UN membership.

The deputy prime minister, addressing a reception he hosted for the heads of resident missions of the UNSC member states here at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said that Pakistan would work in all its forms and manifestations to bridge divides, foster consensus, and uphold the UNSC's mandate in accordance with the purposes and principles of the UN Charter.

He said that elected for the eighth time, Pakistan brought to the Security Council a

TENDER NOTICE

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S.No	Class of Object	Bid Security
1	Manufactured Vehicles & Accessories	2%
(Total Bidders Count: 2)		

Procurements shall be made under the Bids/contract Public Procurement Rules - 2014. Eligibility of Bidders: Assignments of Similar Nature and Complexity 5,000,000 in Previous 3 Years Turnover of at least 5,000,000 PKR in 3 Subsequent Previous Years Presence in Active Tax Payer List: Sales Tax Certificate. The bidding firm must not be currently blacklisted by any procuring agency of Pakistan. It is not permissible to submit a bid if the required Bid Security in case Bid Security is not found as required during financial evaluation the bidding firm shall be declared as ineligible and non-responsive. Submission of the required Bidding document Fee: All bidders are required to upload verified work orders and subsequent document from concerned department in response to the eligibility criteria mentioned above. The Bidder must provide dealership as well as authorization certificate from the manufacturer. The bidder must provide definite delivery period of vehicles. The Bidder or the Manufacturer of the vehicle must certify availability of spare parts for at least 10 years. Procedure of Procurement: Single Stage Two Envelope Bidding Procedure. Bid Security: The bids must accompany Bid Security in the form of Bank Guarantee. Deposit at Call of 2 % specified above in the name of the under-aided from a scheduled bank. Tender Documents: The NIT/Bidding Document can be obtained electronically from www.bppra.gov.pk Issuance of Tender Documents: Corporate Bidding Document can be viewed at www.bppra.gov.pk. Last Date of bid submission: Bid can only be submitted electronically latest by 29 January, 2025/11:00 AM through supplier dashboard. Tender opening: All tenders will be opened on same day at 11:30AM on EPPS System. Phone no: 0819203479 Email: astp@ppra.gov.pk

Assistant Director General, Contract Policy Office, Quetta

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ISSI hosts In-house Roundtable discussion on 'Pakistan-China relations'

ISLAMABAD (INP): The China-Pakistan Study Centre (CPS) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) hosted an In-house Roundtable discussion titled 'Pakistan-China relations' here on Wednesday.

Pakistan's Ambassador to China Khalil Hashmi was the Keynote Speaker.

The event brought together senior diplomats and renowned scholars to reflect on the enduring partnership between Pakistan and China and evaluate its future trajectory in the wake of the evolving bilateral, regional and global context, said a press release issued.

In his welcome remarks, DG ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood reaffirmed the Institute's commitment to fostering meaningful dialogue on

Pakistan's strategic relationships, particularly the Pakistan-China All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership.

He highlighted the steady progression of Pakistan-China relations since the founding of the People's Republic in 1949, the salience of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), and the implications of the evolving global order marked by major-power contestation and growing multipolarity.

Ambassador Khalil Hashmi provided a comprehensive analysis of China's rise, Beijing's engagement with the region and globally, and the current state of play in bilateral relations.

He also underlined the efforts of the Pakistan mission in Beijing towards imparting

greater depth and substance to the trade, investment and economic dimensions of the relationship.

The participants engaged in a wide-ranging exchange of ideas during the interactive session, emphasizing the importance of sustained collaboration, improvement of the business-to-business (B2B) interface, and enhanced people-to-people exchanges.

The participants stressed the vital importance of policy foresight and preparedness to maximize the potential of this critical partnership in a changing global order.

The event concluded with a renewed commitment to further strengthening the Pakistan-China relationship in light of contemporary challenges and opportunities.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs, Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh addressing a press conference at National Press Club.

Speakers of seminar urges KP govt to enact Child Marriage Restraint Bill

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

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

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

The event featured prominent speakers, including Allama Muhammad Raghb Hussain Naemi, Chairman of the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII), Maulana Tayyab Qureshi, Chief Khateeb of Peshawar District, Ghulam Ali, Director of the Directorate General of Human Rights, Said Rehman, Director of Local Government (KP), Imran Takkur, child rights activist, and Muhammad Rizwan, Coordinator of NCHR, among others.

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

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

Qamar Naseem, Program Manager of Blue Veins, shared said according to data collected by international organizations around 21 percent of girls in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa became married before the age of 18 years.

While three percent of girls in the province tie the marriage bond before the tender age of 15 years, Qamar added.

Quoting figures of Health and Demographic Survey Report of KP, Qamar Naseem said 15 percent girls become mothers before the age of 18. Similarly, he continued, 23 percent girls in the province cannot study till 10th grade because of getting married.

He said the colonial era Child Marriage Restraint Act (CMRA) 1929 is still in vogue

in the province which defines a child as a person, if a male, is under 18 years of age, and if a female, is under 16 years of age.

The CMRA 1929 provides punishment of simple imprisonment up to one month or fine of Rs. 1000 or both, for contracting a child marriage by a male above 18 years of age; for performing or conducting a child marriage; and for parent or guardian involved in child marriage.

He said a new law titled Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Child Marriage Restraint Bill 2021, proposing the marriage age for both male and female as 18, was submitted in KP assembly as private member bill but is not made an Act yet.

The Law department after vetting the draft legislation has announced returning it back to Social Welfare department with some recommendations.

Chief Khateeb Peshawar District, Maulana Tayyab Qureshi extended support to the demand and said religious scholars agree with the fact that a proper age be set for marriages of girls and boys.

Maulana Tayyab also proposed making Nikkah registrar accountable for registration of marriages wherein bride is underage.



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

Govt to achieve economic targets in next six months, hopes PM

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

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

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

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

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

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

He specifically appreciated the efforts of Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb and other cabinet members along with the relevant government officials.

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

The prime minister also appreciated the efforts of Deputy PM Ishaq Dar, Governor State Bank of Pakistan, Finance Minister and Chairman FBR for collecting additional Rs 72 billion under ADR (advance-to-tax ratio) due to which the government's target of tax revenue for December 2024 had almost been

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

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

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

He said during first nine months of the government, no scandal surfaced which reflected the government's commitment to ensure transparency in all sectors.

As regards, terrorism in the country, the prime minister vowed that the law enforcing agencies were fully committed to halt the nefarious designs of the enemies.

Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) claims to have arrested four miscreants

LAHORE (INP): Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Gujranwala Zone claimed on Wednesday to have arrested four criminals including a notorious human trafficker for their alleged involvement in Libya boat tragedy.

The spokesperson added that Imran extorted Rs 2.4 million from each of six victims of the Libya boat tragedy. He sent them from Pakistan to Egypt, Dubai, and then Libya on visit visas. In Libya, the victims were held in safe houses before being sent to Europe by boat. Tragically, all the victims perished in the boat accident.

Another trafficker Muhammad Ijaz extorted 900 Euros and Rs 900,000 from a citizen by promising a job in Italy.

Imran Saqib received Rs 3.7 million from the complainant, promising jobs in Germany for the victim's sons, but instead he sent them to Saudi

Arabia.

In Saudi Arabia, the victims were subjected to torture, and the traffickers continued to demand huge amount of money.

Rizwan Khadim, another trafficker extorted Rs 2.7 million from a victim to send him to Spain for employment but failed to fulfill the promise. He then went into hiding after taking the money.

The arrested individuals are under investigation. Raids were being conducted to arrest other suspects involved in the racket, he added.

Director Gujranwala Zone Abdul Qadir Qamar said that all available resources were being utilized to apprehend the suspects.

AIOU offers over 80 educational programs for Overseas Pakistanis, and international students

ISLAMABAD (INP): Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has offered over 80 educational programs for overseas Pakistanis and international students in its admissions for the Semester Spring 2025.

These programs include Matriculation, FA, I.Com, Associate Degrees in Arts, Commerce, and education, BS programs, B.Ed programs, 1, 3, 2, 5, and 4 years,

and Diploma Programs in 12 disciplines.

The university is offering these educational programs to international students through an online management system.

All academic activities, from admissions to examinations, will be conducted online. For monitoring online examinations, MS Teams or a monitoring application approved by the au-

thorities will be used.

The last date for admissions is February 10. Students can apply online through the link <http://fimp.aiou.edu.pk>.

It is noteworthy that to facilitate international students, Vice-Chancellor Professor Dr. Nasir Mahmood has activated and empowered the International Office, Collaboration and Exchange Cell at the university.



QUETTA: MPA and provincial emar of Jamaat-i-Islami Balochistan, Maulana Hidayatullah Rehman Balochi addressing on AI Parties Conference organized by Grand Health Alliance.



KARACHI: Sindh Home Minister Zia Ul Hassan addressing a press conference at Karachi Police Office.

Mercury can drop to single digit in Karachi after Jan 04: Met Office

KARACHI, Jan 01 (INP): Mercury could drop to single digit in Karachi after January 04, Chief Meteorologist Sardar Sarfaraz said.

A weather system likely to enter in country from northern Baluchistan today may influence the weather in Karachi, weather official said.

Met Office yesterday predicted rain with heavy snowfall over the hills in western and upper parts of country during first week of January 2025.

The rain spell will begin in Baluchistan's northern region from tonight," Meteorologist said. Ziarat and other ar-

reas likely to receive snowfall over hills from tonight," official said.

The Met Office forecast rain and snowfall over hills in Balochistan's Quetta, Ziarat, Chaman, Pishin, Qilla Abdullah, Qilla Saifullah, Chagai, Noushki, Kalat, Khuzdar, Harnai, Zhab and Musakhel from 01st to 04th January.

Under the influence of this weather system rain with heavy snowfall is expected in Gilgit-Baltistan and Kashmir from 01st to 06th January, while in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa from 01st to 05th January.

Rain and snowfall also expected in Punjab and Islamabad's federal territory from 01st to 06th January 2025 with occasional gaps.

Light rain expected in southern Punjab's Multan, Dera Ghazi Khan, Layyah, Muzaffargarh, Taunsa Sharif, Khanewal, Sahawal, Pakpattan, Okara and Bahawalnagar districts from tomorrow to 05th January.

While cold and dry weather is expected in most parts of Sindh and light rain in Dadu, Qamber, Shaheedkote, Shabheed Benazirabad, Sukkur and Jacobabad on 03rd and 04th January.