

# Independent

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QUETTA: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar presiding over a meeting regarding law & order and development projects in the province. Caretaker Provincial Chief Minister Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki, Caretaker Federal and Provincial Ministers are also present

## Govt taking multiple initiatives to streamline governance structure of Balochistan: PM

Govt determined to conduct free, fair polls: Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar

QUETTA (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Tuesday said that the government had taken multiple initiatives to bring about reforms in bureaucracy in order to improve overall governance structure of Balochistan province. Addressing a press conference, he said the province had some chronic and complex issues which ought to be resolved by deputing a blend of upright and hard-working bureaucrats from civil service as well as from the provincial structure. "Our issues are linked with the bad governance, that had been badly affecting the performance of the province for the last few decades," he said. On the request of the Balochistan government, he deputed a competent bureaucrat Shakeel Qadir Khan along with a team, to ensure meritocracy and to streamline the overall structure of bureaucracy. He said he specifically instructed the team to fully support the Chief Minister and the provincial government in this regard. PM Kakar said there was an axis of some corrupt bureaucrats and other stakeholders who had crumpled the whole province, thus adversely affecting the national economy. He hoped that the incoming elected government would also remain vigilant in this regard and would continue the process of reforms in future. To a question regarding reservations of the nationalist parties to hold free and fair elections in the province, the prime minister said it was just a routine matter as these parties had something to say to their voters. Reiterating the government's resolve to hold free and fair elections across the country, he said the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) would perform its duty to conduct the elections in an appropriate way. "It is our task that we run the day-to-day affairs of the government, implement the state affairs, and then conduct the election," he said.

## No delay will be accepted in election: Supreme Court

Suspends BHC verdict regarding constituencies; Delimitation cases be heard after elections

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Supreme Court (SC) on Tuesday suspended another decision of Balochistan High Court (BHC) pertaining to the delimitations and said all appeals, would be taken up again after the general elections. The court reiterated that it wouldn't spare any hindrance with regard to general polls in the country. There was no chance to delay the electoral process, it added. A three-member bench of the top court, headed by Acting Chief Justice Sardar Tariq Masood and comprising Justice Mansoor

Ali Shah and Justice Athar Minallah, heard the various appeals against the delimitations in Balochistan. Secretary ECP Umar Hameed appeared before the court. During the course of proceedings, the court said that the decision wouldn't affect the cases of all petitioners. It said that the court couldn't accept any delay in the conduct of the general elections. Justice Sardar Tariq Masood remarked that there was a bit of stability in the country after the announcement of election date. Whether the petitioners didn't want stability, he

## PM directs to accelerate rehabilitation of flood affected families in Balochistan

Anwaarul Haq Kakar directs to resolve issues of water supply in Balochistan at the earliest besides forming special patrolling force for prevention of illegal fishing in at coasts of all

Independent Report

QUETTA: The caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar has issued standing directives to the concerned authorities for expediting process of rehabilitation of the flood affected families and their houses in Balochistan. He also directed to resolve the issues of water supply in the province at the earliest. In this regard, he directed to the provincial administration to ensure water supply in all areas of the province. These directives were issued by the caretaker Prime Minister while presiding over a review meeting on the administrative matters and development here on Tuesday. The Prime Minister was briefed about different initiatives taken during the period of incumbent caretaker government in the province.



Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Asim Munir meeting with Gen Michael Erik Kurilla, the Commander of the US Central Command (CENTCOM).

## Domki meets Kakar, discusses matters about Balochistan

Independent Report QUETTA: The caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki had meeting with the caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar here on Tuesday. During the course of meeting, different matters about Balochistan were discussed.

## US supports free, fair elections in Pakistan: State Department

WASHINGTON (INP): The United States (US) reiterated its stance for free and fair elections in Pakistan. US will continue to support free and fair elections in Pakistan, said US State Department spokesperson, Matthew Miller said in a weekly press briefing.

"That is the - and engage with Pakistan on a bilateral basis to discuss our support for free and fair elections," Mathew Miller said and reiterated that the US does not take sides while speaking about Pakistan's politics and they would engage with elected representatives. "As I've said before, we don't take a position as it comes to - when it comes to political parties in Pakistan, and we will engage with the leaders that the Pakistani people select," Miller said.

## ECP orders removal of Ahad Cheema from the post

ISLAMABAD (Online): Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has ordered the immediate removal of Ahad Cheema from the post. According to the announcement issued by the ECP, Ahad Cheema can influence the elections, he has been instructed to immediately separate the post of advisor. In this regard, the Secretary Cabinet Division was ordered to remove Ahad Cheema.

It may be recalled that in the petition filed last week by Advocate Syed Azizuddin Kakakhil, it was requested to remove caretaker Prime Minister Anwarul Haq Kakar and some other members of his cabinet including Ahad Cheema, Fawad Hasan Fawad and Syed Tauqeer Hussain.

## COAS, US Centcom discuss joint training, enhance cooperation avenues

RAWALPINDI (APP): Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General Syed Asim Munir called on Commander United States Central Command (US CENTCOM), General Michael Erik Kurilla during his visit to the Headquarters Central Command at Tampa Bay, Florida. According to the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release on Tuesday, during the meeting, matters of shared interests, particularly cooperation in regional security matters came under discussion. Both the sides discussed avenues of joint training and reiterated the need for enhancing training interactions between CENTCOM and the Pakistan Army. The COAS also visited the CENTCOM Joint Operations Center during the visit.

## Process of training of ROs and DROs completes: Election Rules and Act to be implemented in true letter and spirit, maintains PEC

Independent Report QUETTA: The Provincial Election Commissioner, Balochistan, Ejaz Anwar Chohan has categorically stated that the Election related rules and Act would be implemented in true letter and spirit, and there would be no thing against the law. He pledged that all political parties would be provided level playing field and treated equally ensuring free, fair and transparent elections in the province, Miller said.



INP adds: The Pakistan Bar Council (PBC) has expressed reservations about the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) and the current Chief Election Commissioner (CEC), Sikandar Sultan Raja. In a statement, the PBC raised concerns about the fairness and transparency of the upcoming general elections, citing an imbalance in the distribution of seats, doubts about the integrity of the electoral process, and a lack of equal opportunities for all political parties. The PBC's statement specifically mentioned concerns about the distribution of seats in Jhelum, Gujranwala, and Rawalpindi districts, suggesting that these areas may be underrepresented in the upcoming elections.

## Lawyers' community demands resignation of CEC Sultan

PBC raises concerns about fairness, transparency of upcoming elections

## GoB decides to establish Skills Development Fund

QUETTA (APP): Balochistan Caretaker Chief Minister Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki on Tuesday said the provincial government has decided to establish 'Balochistan Skills Development Fund' under the supervision of Planning and Development Department to provide technical education and training to the youth of the province. He expressed his views while addressing the inauguration ceremony of the Prime Minister's Youth Skills Development Program here. The chief minister said that the existing infrastructure of the Labor and Manpower department would be utilized where the youth

will be trained in artificial intelligence, hoteling, tourism, health care, nursing, fashion designing, film making in order to produce quality technical human resource. He said that the objective of the program is to provide skills in various fields of technology to the youth of Balochistan to secure employment opportunities worldwide upon completion of their training. Domki said that the purpose of providing the training program was to equip them with much-needed valuable skills that will enable them to contribute to the economic development of the province and send remittances to family.



QUETTA: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar launches the Electronic Public Procurement System of Balochistan.

## Properly educated people can transform society: PM

QUETTA (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Tuesday pointed out the seriousness of out-of-school children issue which warranted collective efforts for its redressal as properly educated people could transform a human society. He said in the future, no society would be able to exist without education and knowledge, and stressed that students should have realization for the changes shaping the human societies. During an interaction with the students of different universities of the Balochistan province, PM Kakar said that the out-of-school children issue was a social issue which had two aspects and according to his view, they required to ponder as to what steps should be taken to make the edu-

## Bilawal calls for end to traditional politics, cites need for justice in fake cases

Lahore (INP): Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhattu Zardari urged for a shift away from traditional politics, emphasizing the need for justice in cases he believes are politically motivated. Addressing the Lahore High Court Bar on Tuesday, Bilawal reiterated his gratitude for the hearing of a graft case against him, lodged over a decade ago. "Two generations have been oppressed and victimized," Bilawal stated, expressing his appreciation for judges, including Justice Qazi Faiz Isa, who are presiding over the case. He expressed hope for a fair resolution after years of waiting, highlighting the importance of justice not just for himself and his party members, but for setting a precedent against political persecution.

## PTI won't ally any party in general elections: Gauhar

PESHAWAR (Online): Newly elected chairman of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Barrister Gohar Ali Khan, has said that he will not form an alliance with any party in the general elections. If DCs are ROs, they are part of the government which has not been transparent. Speaking to the media after appearing in the Peshawar High Court, PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan said that taking the election symbol from us would be an injustice to the people.

## ECP to start receiving nomination papers for 2024 Elections today

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) will begin receiving nomination papers from prospective National and Provincial Assembly candidates on Wednesday, (December 20), as the country gears up for a crucial general election on February 8, 2024. Detailing the oath-taking process, an ECP official explained that provincial election commissioners would administer the oath to District Returning Officers (DROs), who, in turn, would administer the oath to each Returning Officers (ROs) and Assistant Returning Officers (AROs) within their respective districts.



ISLAMABAD: Senior Member Federal Public Service Commission, Mr. Akbar Hussain Durrani presenting Annual Report-2022 of FPSC to President Dr Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

## PTV Bolan fulfills Hazara community's demand with Hazargi broadcast: Solangi

QUETTA (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi said on Tuesday that PTV Bolan has already broadcasting programs in Balochi, Pashto and Brahvi languages. PTV Bolan broadcasts were available on cable and satellite. Murtaza Solangi said adding it could also be accessed through terrestrial antennas that would help people in remote areas too. "We are grateful to Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar for encouraging us to take this initiative," Murtaza Solangi remarked.

## Govt taking multiple initiatives to streamline governance structure of Balochistan: PM

QUETTA (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar on Tuesday said that the government had taken multiple initiatives to bring about reforms in bureaucracy in order to improve overall governance structure of Balochistan province. Addressing a press conference, he said the province had some chronic and complex issues which ought to be resolved by deputing a blend of upright and hard-working bureaucrats from civil service as well as from the provincial structure. "Our issues are linked with the bad governance, that had been badly affecting the performance of the province for the last few decades," he said. On the request of the Balochistan government, he deputed a competent bureaucrat Shakeel Qadir Khan along with a team, to ensure meritocracy and to streamline the overall structure of bureaucracy. He said he specifically instructed the team to fully support the Chief Minister and the provincial government in this regard. PM Kakar said there was an axis of some corrupt bureaucrats and other stakeholders who had crumpled the whole province, thus adversely affecting the national economy. He hoped that the incoming elected government would also remain vigilant in this regard and would continue the process of reforms in future. To a question regarding reservations of the nationalist parties to hold free and fair elections in the province, the prime minister said it was just a routine matter as these parties had something to say to their voters. Reiterating the government's resolve to hold free and fair elections across the country, he said the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) would perform its duty to conduct the elections in an appropriate way. "It is our task that we run the day-to-day affairs of the government, implement the state affairs, and then conduct the election," he said.



QUETTA: Governor Balochistan Malik Abdul Wali Kakar, Principal Asif Jan, Dr. Waheed Yousaf, Madam Yasmeen Joseph and others cutting cake during anniversary of Saint Mar's School



Daily Voice of Masses  
**Independent**

**Balanced ballots**

The latest voter data by the ECP is a harbinger of progress. The electoral gender gap in Pakistan has notably shrunk to below 10m. With the overall voter count soaring beyond 128m, women now represent 46.13pc of the electorate. This shift, while heartening, underscores an ongoing challenge: the need for sustained efforts to further reduce this gap and enhance women's participation in our democratic processes.

The reduced gender gap, albeit significant, is unevenly distributed across the provinces. Punjab, with a disparity of over 5m, leads in gender disparity among voters, followed by Sindh, KP, and Balochistan. While Punjab boasts districts with more than 48pc female voters, areas like South Waziristan (Lower) in KP report considerably low female voter percentages, as little as 34.54pc.

This contrast not only reflects the varied sociopolitical landscapes of these provinces but also signals where targeted interventions are most needed. The responsibility to further narrow this gap rests significantly on the shoulders of political parties. Their role extends beyond mere competition in elections; they are, in essence, the stewards of our democracy and must lead the charge in initiatives aimed at encouraging and facilitating women's voting. This duty encompasses a range of actions, from awareness campaigns to the implementation of measures such as ensuring the availability of safe and accessible polling stations, and addressing the sociocultural barriers that impede women's political participation. In addition, the role of communities in shaping attitudes towards women's voting rights cannot be overstated. Comprehensive efforts to educate and engage communities, especially in regions marked by pronounced gender disparities, are of utmost importance. This engagement needs to transcend tokenistic approaches and strive to genuinely empower women, dismantling the entrenched patriarchal norms that restrict their political agency. Reflecting on the history of past elections, the gender gap has been a persistent issue, reaching its peak at 13.17m in 2016.

The current reduction is a clear indication of the concerted efforts by various stakeholders, including the ECP. However, the objective extends beyond merely decreasing numbers; it aims for the achievement of gender parity in voter participation. As we approach future elections, the narrowing of this gap marks an important milestone, signalling progress yet reminding us that there is a considerable journey ahead. It is crucial to recognise that the true strength of a democracy is reflected in the inclusivity of its processes. Political parties, civic groups, and communities must persist in their collaborative work to ensure that every citizen's voice, regardless of gender, is heard and valued at the ballot box. This journey towards an inclusive, equitable democracy demands unwavering commitment and concerted action from all sectors of society. Let this be the legacy we aspire to create and solidify for future generations.

**Issues with BRT**



**Dr Noman Ahmed**

While meeting an Asian Development Bank delegation earlier this month, Sindh's caretaker chief minister said that 180 solar-powered buses will be introduced to support the operations of the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system in Karachi. These imported buses are meant to provide urban commuters with a cleaner, more efficient public transport option.

However, questions arise: can these expensive buses operate as efficiently as promised, given the rundown state of our roads? Not too long ago, the government launched electric buses on three routes, most of which were out of service in less than a year. Issues of charging facilities and other operational difficulties were cited as the main reason.

In fact, one can question the financial model of the entire BRT system. Currently, the Green Line is operational. It was developed by the federal government-owned Sindh Infrastructure Development Company. Will this service continue when it has been unable to generate revenue amounting to even a fraction of the sum spent on its operations? The under-construction Red Line is a \$503 million undertaking. Life in many neighbourhoods has been adversely impacted by the slow pace of construction. Besides, work on the Yellow Line, running from Korangi to Numais, will soon start. The loan from the World Bank for this is \$382m.

Do we need the BRT system? Five arguments justify a negative answer. One, the proposed

BRT's cost and management needs serious review. According to a document prepared by the relevant authorities, the total cost of the Karachi Circular Railways and seven BRT corridors is Rs520.6 billion. An investment plan has also been prepared to justify the undertaking based on the possible enterprises evolving from the BRT. However, the performance of local and provincial bodies is at a record low, and the level of professional handling and follow-up needed for a project of such magnitude is difficult to expect from them. The BRT may also cause enormous physical displacement. Besides, capable traffic management would be necessary during its construction.

Two, the BRT will cater to only nine per cent of total passenger trips, if all seven lines become operational. Such trips are currently over 30m per day. As Karachi's population grows, the trips will expand proportionally. The net benefit to the commuter population would be minuscule.

Three, the BRT's development and operations won't reduce the existing congestion on the streets. The corridors are being built on the major arteries of the city. In many cases, exclusive right of way for BRT buses shall reduce available road space for other modes of transport. This will be a challenge for motorcycles, cars, delivery vans, water tankers, oil tankers and other vehicles, besides adding to air pollution.

Four, ordinary folk consider owning a motorcycle or a car a social attainment. Thus it is very unlikely that people will stop using cars or motorcycles once the BRT becomes functional. In North Nazim-abad and adjoining locations along the Green Line, no visible reduction in motorcycles or cars has been noticed. Perhaps the

absence of feeder services and long and inconvenient walks will leave people with little choice but to continue to use private vehicles. Many people have outdoor employment, including delivery services where possessing a vehicle is necessary. Thus the BRT offers little solace to them.

Lastly, there is little interconnectivity between the existing paratransit and the BRT system. While those managing the BRT claim that this will be ensured, there have been no indications of this so far.

One must also study other examples. For instance, the Lahore BRT runs on a huge subsidy with a limited passenger trip load. The Peshawar BRT was hit by allegations of malpractice and corruption. Several investigations were carried out by various agencies to ascertain the charges of cost overruns and operational inefficiencies. Across the border, the Delhi BRT was dismantled by the state government due to rising congestion and its own relative ineffectiveness.

From a macroeconomic perspective, the government can focus on road development and maintenance, while bus operations are left to local bus operators without any subsidy.

The people of Karachi need short-, long- and medium-term solutions to their commuting woes. The immediate increase in buses and mini buses, and removal of encroachments from roads for the smooth flow of traffic should be undertaken as a low-cost, short-term action. The revival of ordinary Karachi buses on designated routes and alignment of larger rickshaw routes to connect the modes of mass transit with neighbourhoods may be undertaken in the medium term, while the planning and development of grade-separated BRT mass transit should be started as a long-term option. -- Courtesy Dawn

**Ambitious outcome**



**Aisha Khan**

The recently concluded Conference of Parties, COP28, held in Dubai delivered a package of agreements setting out the pathway for global climate action in the years to come. The outcome of the Global Stock-Take (GST) under the UAE COP presidency, was historic in many ways. It called for action to transition away from fossil fuels for the first time, made headway in the operationalisation and initial capitalisation of the Loss and Damage Fund and saw record breaking (\$85 billion) pledges in climate action.

The narratives emerging at COP28 reflect a climate regime struggling to come to terms with the need for urgency in climate action and maturing to move to an era of 'implementation'. However, despite consensus and incremental gains, COPs remind us that negotiations are part of a broader agenda and not an endgame, with some wins, some disappointments and a few loopholes carried forward to the next meeting. The ultimate arbiter of COP's significance will be the delivery of emissions cut, adaptation action, and finance through the Dubai-Baku-Belem roadmap.

The GST has set the stage for accelerating action between now and 2025 when parties are expected to submit their next Nationally Determined Contributions. This will make finance the central focus of COP29, highlighting need for mobilising and aligning financial flows with Article 2.1c of the Paris Agreement and finding a way to

incorporate Means of Implementation in the finance package to address debt burdens and forward thinking in strengthening resilience. The seriousness of the GST decision can be seen in its call for a follow-up, including a two-year dialogue on implementing its outcomes to start at COP29 and a 'Roadmap to Mission 1.5' to enhance global cooperation under the guidance of the presidencies of COP28, COP29 and COP30. Notwithstanding the lack of detail on transitioning away from fossil fuels in energy systems, the use of 'just', 'orderly' and 'equitable' in the text language raises hope of significant emissions reductions in this decade and the beginning of the end of the fossil fuel-dominated era.

COP28 also saw many new announcements and pledges, ranging considerably in their significance and credibility. The UAE-led Finance Framework, along with record-breaking pledges to the Green Climate Fund and new finance for loss and damage of around \$655.9 million can be interpreted as a shift in politics of finance.

The UAE announced a package of finances as a contribution to delivering on the framework with a \$30bn investment fund for clean transition, \$4.5bn for energy transition investment in Africa, and a new announcement plan to re-channel \$200m equivalent in special drawing rights to the IMF Resilience and Sustainability Trust Fund. The gap between adaptation finance pledges and the need for implementing adaptation plans signal a need for heightened political attention. Significantly, COP president Sultan Al Jaber called on the need to inject more capital into multilateral development banks to support mobilising and distributing finance for transition.

Other highlights of COP28 include pathways for alignment on climate, food and nature goals ahead of Brazil's COP30 and a High Ambition Coalition to serve as the centre of gravity for pushing outcomes on fossil fuels, adaptation and finance. The US-China Sunnylands statement ensured a basis of support for the final package, but without a major shift in their pre-COP positions.

The fiercely contested negotiations went into overtime to reach consensus but successful shuttle diplomacy in the last 48 hours played a role in gaveling the agreement. For Pakistan, it's important to translate GST into NST (National Stock-take) and convene a multidisciplinary discussion on the impact of global climate agreements on the country and the region. An analytical review to assess the impact will help in setting the course for coping strategies, inclusive of economy-wide impacts and options, for increasing revenue streams to meet mitigation commitments and adaptation needs.

The climate change ministry-led delegation at COP28 marked a new start by taking a 'whole of society' approach, working closely with all relevant stakeholders to foster collective ownership in framing Pakistan's stance. The 29 events hosted at the Pakistan Pavilion included high-level segments with diverse themes that provided opportunity for expanding outreach and showcasing the impact of climate calamities, as well as networking opportunities for deepening engagement and forging new partnerships. The next steps include balancing national gaps with international obligations and moving towards a point of convergence, where complementarities create an enabling environment for long-term investments. -- Courtesy Dawn

**Commerce News**

**Pakistan exports first shipment of dried Chillies to China: Minister**

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister of Commerce and Industries Dr Gohar Ejaz, on Tuesday, announced a significant breakthrough in Pakistan's agricultural exports to China with the inaugural shipment of dried chillies.

This momentous achievement, made possible through the outstanding efforts of Litong Food Co. Ltd., marks the beginning of a new era in the trade relationship between Pakistan and China, said a

press release issued here. The minister extended best wishes to Litong Food Co. Ltd. for their extraordinary feat and expressed sincere appreciation for the unwavering support of the Chinese government in creating a substantial market for Pakistani goods within China.

"I am delighted to announce that the first-ever consignment of dried chillies is on its way to China. This achievement not only showcases the

capabilities of our exporters but also highlights the potential for further collaboration between Pakistani and Chinese businesses," the minister stated.

He emphasised that the exports of Pakistan's products to China have the potential to exceed \$20 billion in the coming years.

However, achieving this ambitious goal requires concerted efforts from Pakistani agricultural exporters.

Dr. Gohar Ejaz

encouraged the exporters to uphold high-quality standards, increase productivity, and implement effective marketing strategies to meet the expectations of the Chinese market.

Acknowledging the crucial role of the Chinese companies in the process, the minister expressed optimism about the prospects of collaboration.

"Four companies can meet the standards set by the Chinese authorities, our exports can soar.



QUETTA: A delegation of the Zamindar Action Committee of Balochistan call on caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.

**PM directs Balochistan govt to resolve farmers' issues**

QUETTA (APP): Balochistan chief secretary to ensure electricity supply for the agriculture tube wells in the province.

The delegation members apprised the prime minister of the issues confronting the agriculture sector as well as the power load-shedding in Balochistan.

Prime Minister Kakar said that the welfare of the farmers was among the state's priorities.

**AJK PM directs for focusing on reducing disparity between filers and non-filers**

MIRPUR (AJK) (APP): Azad Jammu and Kashmir Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwar ul Haq has directed the State Inland Revenue Department to pool in all its efforts to achieve the tax collection targets besides reducing the disparity between filers and non-filers.

Chairing a high level meeting of the AJK Inland Revenue Department here Tuesday, he said that the government would provide the required resources to the department but negligence in duties won't be tolerated under any

circumstances. The meeting discussed in detail the taxation related matters, setting up taxation targets and implementing fiscal policies to widen the tax base in the region.

The Commissioner of Inland Revenue (North), on the occasion, briefed the prime minister, in detail of the tax collection targets in Muzaffarabad, Neelum and Jhelum Valley and the problems faced by the department.

The prime minister further directed the IRD officials to collect the data

of all the private hospitals, hotels, tourism resorts, business centers, shops, local industries, marquees and private schools and furnish the report to the PM office within next couple of weeks.

The meeting was attended among others by senior Minister Colonel Retired Waqar Ahmed Noor, Communications Minister Azhar Sadiq, Health Minister Ansar Abdali, Special Secretary Masood-ur-Rahman and officers of the Inland Revenue Department.



ISLAMABAD: Dr. Maen Khreasat, Ambassador of Jordan to Pakistan called on the Caretaker Federal Minister for Privatisation, Fawad Hassan Fawad.

**PCJCCI suggests export of Pak honey**

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan China Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCJCCI) President Moazzam Ghurki said on Tuesday that certificated Pakistani honey could triple its value, enhancing its export to other countries.

Sharing his views in a think-tank session held here at PCJCCI Secretariat, he added, "Our honey is sold for merely USD 20 or USD 25 per kilogram but the price can rise to USD 100 per kilogram when it is packaged at other countries. The situation could improve if we establish labs and certification systems and implement management

and supervision policies."

Ghurki called for upgrading Pakistani honey industry, asserting that Pakistani honey is cheaper and tastes better than New Zealand's honey, but the latter's certification has been recognized by four international companies. "If we work to establish an internationally recognized modern laboratory, our honey will be among the best. Another way to upgrade Pakistan's honey industry is to establish large-scale honey processing plants." Although the Pakistani has a large honey market with many varieties, the honey production still follows the most traditional method.

**PSX stayed bearish, loses 2,371 more points**

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bearish trend on Tuesday, losing 2,371.64 more points, a negative change of 3.64 percent, closing at 62,833.03 points against 65,204.68 points the previous trading day. A total of 1,513,931,019 shares valuing Rs.29,099 billion were traded during the day as compared to 1,890,424,261 shares valuing Rs.24,595 billion the last day.

Some 386 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 31 of them recorded gains and 351 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 4 remained unchanged.

**Pakistan's current account deficit enters into surplus after 6 six months**

ISLAMABAD (Online): Pakistan's current account deficit entered into surplus for the first time in six months. The current account deficit narrowed to 64% in the first five months of the current financial year. In November, the first month after four months, when the current account surplus raised to \$9 million, exports rose by 12 percent.

As a result of tight monetary and fiscal policy and stringent administrative measures taken by the government, the current account balance has declined substantially in the first 5 months of FY2024. As a

result of the correct policies, the current account deficit has reduced to \$1.16 billion in July-November of fiscal year 2024, which was \$3.3 billion during the same period last fiscal year.

After four months, November is the first month in which the current account surplus remained at \$9 million. The encouraging news is that both exports and remittances showed improvement in November 2023, with Pakistan's exports at \$3.36 billion up 12 percent and remittances up 4 percent at \$2.25 billion in the month of November.

**Gold rates up by Rs 400**

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold increased by Rs 400 and was sold at Rs 217,600 on Tuesday against its sale at Rs 217,200 on the last trading day. The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs 343 to Rs 186,557 from Rs 186,214 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold went up to Rs 171,011 from Rs 170,696, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported. The price of per tola and 10 gram silver remained stagnant at Rs 2,670 and 2,289.09 respectively.

**FGEHA all set to initiate new residential projects**

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federal Government Employees Housing Authority (FGEHA) is all set to initiate new residential projects in eight major cities of the country to provide housing to government employees and the general public.

"The authority has already received several applications from land owners, companies and firms interested in the mega projects," sources in the FGEHA told APP. They said the

applications were invited from land owners, developers, firms and eligible individuals for the supply of land for housing schemes (plots, houses and apartments) projects in major cities of the country.

The procedure for applications and selection was being followed as per Joint Venture Regulations 2020, they added.

They said the authority was planning to launch new residential projects in eight major cities of the country.



## KP cabinet authorizes depts to transfer buildings for launching skill development classes

PESHAWAR (APP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Cabinet on Tuesday authorized different provincial departments to transfer their buildings in spare time for launching classes of skill development among the youth under the Khushala Pakhtunkhwa Program.

These departments include Elementary and Secondary Education, Technical Education, Industries and Labor, Health, and other line departments.

The special meeting of the provincial cabinet was held under the chairmanship of Caretaker Chief Minister Justice (Retd.) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah was also

attended by provincial ministers, Chief Secretary, and administrative secretaries.

It was revealed at the meeting that recently South Korea had demanded over one hundred thousand skilled workers in response to which Pakistan could only provide 16000 skilled workers from all over the country because the country had no skilled labor force to be employed in the outside world.

It was also learned that more than 500 thousand youth from all over the province will be imparted different trainings in information technology, computer, paramedics, nursing, trade etc. so that they could earn livelihood for their families

both inside and outside the country.

Addressing the meeting the Chief Minister said though the prime duty of the caretaker government was to facilitate fair and impartial elections but in view of the increasing unemployment and poverty in the province, the youth cannot be left to desperation to become nurseries for the terrorists. He said that the government cannot wait and has to contribute to the welfare of the people at large.

"All Mighty Allah might have provided us an opportunity to serve the people this way at this point of time therefore we must come forward to play our role" he said.



LAHORE: Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi presides over the meeting regarding Protected U-Turns Project for smooth flow of Traffic.

## DCs asked to ensure best arrangements for elections

LAHORE (APP): Chief Secretary Punjab Zahid Akhtar Zaman has directed all the deputy commissioners to ensure the best arrangements for conducting free, fair and transparent elections.

He issued this directive while presiding over a meeting of all deputy commissioners at the Civil Secretariat here on Tuesday. The secretary home, special secretary local government, all deputy commissioners and officers concerned attended the meeting. The Chief

Secretary said that the deputy commissioners as DROs must fulfill their constitutional and national responsibility in a good manner. He said that according to the guidelines of the Election Commission, all arrangements should be completed on time and a comprehensive plan should be prepared for polling stations, staff deployment, transport and security. He also issued instructions regarding the launch of an anti-encroachment operation across the province.

## LDA evacuates two plots from land grabbers

LAHORE (APP): On the direction of Commissioner Lahore and DG LDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa, LDA teams conducted an early morning operation against the mafia involved in land grabbing in Tajpura and took possession of two plots worth crores of rupees.

During the operation, LDA teams evacuated Plot No. 57 and 59 Block A situated at main road in Tajpura Scheme. The operation was supervised by Director Housing V Shahbazul Haque Ghurki.



LAHORE: Punjab Governor Muhammad Baligh-ur-Rehman and Caretaker Provincial Health Minister Dr. Javed Akram in a group photo with participants on the eve of inauguration of Society of Gynecology Oncology Pakistan.

## CM Naqvi sets deadline for protected u-turns in Lahore

LAHORE: Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Tuesday chaired a meeting focusing on addressing traffic issues in Lahore.

The meeting approved the establishment of protected U-turns at the six busiest intersections of the city to streamline traffic flow. The CM set a deadline of January 19 for the implementation of the U-turns at Qadir Topash Chowk, Gujrumatta Chowk, Nishtar Chowk, Khokhar Chowk, and

Joray Pull Chowk.

Additionally, approval was granted to relocate Babusabu Toll Plaza, and various proposals were examined to alleviate congestion at the Thokar Niaz Baig entrance on Multan Road. A consensus was reached to direct heavy traffic onto the M2 Motorway. The CM emphasized the need for sustainable measures to ensure smooth traffic flow on Multan Road.

The meeting was also attended by Inspector General of Police, Additional IG, Secretary

Communication and Works, Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, CCPO, CTO, and relevant officials. Meanwhile, Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi chaired a meeting in which an important decision was made to export high-protein fodder from Punjab to Kuwait. The meeting approved measures to enhance the cultivation of high-protein "alfalfa" fodder for livestock development, emphasizing the scientific drying and preservation of this nutrient-rich feed.

## Steps being taken for development, progress of tribal areas: Governor

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali has said that steps had been taken to usher tribal areas into new phase of progress and to address deprivations of tribal people.

He was talking to a thirty five member delegation of Mohmand tribal district led by Malik Shehryar Khan here Tuesday. Speaking on the occasion, the Governor said that provincial and federal governments have taken steps for the development and progress of merged tribal districts.

He highlighted the sacrifices of tribal people for the peace of the

country and strengthening its sovereignty. He also urged the youngsters to counter narrative of elements that are targeting state institutions and added that it was the prime responsibility of each and every citizen to join hands for protection of the motherland.

The delegation informed the Governor about their problems relating to transport, health, education and other basic amenities.

The Governor listened to their problems and assured cooperation to resolve them and stressed the use of modern technology to tap potential of tribal area.



LAHORE: Regional Commander of Anti Narcotics Punjab Brigadier Sikandar Hayat Chaudhry talking to media persons at Drug Advisory Office in provincial Capital.

## PPP always believes in power of public mandate: Kundi

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Central Information Secretary Faisal Karim Kundi on Tuesday said his party would opt to play the opposition's role during the next tenure rather than becoming 'Laadla' (favorite) or 'Selected' as it always believed in the power of public mandate.

Addressing a press conference here at Kundi Model Farm, the PPP Information Secretary said the country had faced a 'Laadla' in the recent past and borne its losses.

He said the PPP has a clear stance that the general elections must be held in time in a free, fair and transparent manner.

The different political parties, who have fear of defeat, expressed their wish to delay the elections by showing their lame excuses like bad weather conditions and demanding appointments of ROs and DROs from the judiciary, he mentioned.

Replying to a question regarding PPP candidates, Kundi said the party was in the process of finalizing its candidates.

## If we can't discuss list with Imran, where is level playing field: Shoaib Shaheen

RAWALPINDI (Online): Former Prime Minister Imran Khan's lawyer Shoaib Shaheen has raised the question that if we can't even discuss a list with Imran Khan, how did this level playing field happen? PTI's lawyer Shoaib Shaheen while talking to the media outside Adiala Jail said that the petition against the jail trial order in the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) contempt case is pending. A jail trial was ordered without any rule of law. This is an open trial case, only the venue has changed.

He said that transparency requires the presence of media. Media, public, relatives, lawyers should be present for open trial and indictment. We were not allowed to enter with complete files. For half an hour our files were checked and we stood waiting.

He said that ECP should ensure that if we cannot discuss the list with the former chairman, then where is the level playing field? The bat symbol has been withheld till date, all the other parties have received their electoral symbol.

## PDWP Punjab approves two uplift schemes

LAHORE (APP): Provincial Development Working Party (PDWP) of Punjab Tuesday approved two developmental schemes of the local government sector with an estimated cost of Rs 3436.04 million.

The schemes were approved in 35<sup>th</sup> PDWP meeting of current financial year 2023-24 chaired by Planning and development Board Chairman Iftikhar Ali Sahoo. Secretary P&D Board Muzaffar Khan Sial was also present. The approved schemes include the improvement of Sewerage System.

# International News

## At least 126 dead in northwest China earthquake

Monitoring Desk GANSU: Rescuers in remote villages of northwest China dug through the rubble of collapsed homes on Tuesday after the country's deadliest earthquake in years killed at least 126 people and injured hundreds more.

State media said the shallow tremor just before midnight had caused the deaths of at least 113 and injured more than 530 in impoverished Gansu province, as of Tuesday afternoon.

A further 13 died, 182 were injured and 20 were missing in Haidong in neighbouring Qinghai province, state broadcaster

CCTV reported.

The quake damaged more than 155,000 buildings, according to CCTV, and sent residents running into the freezing streets for safety.

At a village near the epicentre, AFP reporters saw huge cracks running through the exterior and interior walls of a brick home, and the roof of a building that had caved in completely.

"I am 70 and I have never experienced such a powerful quake in my life," resident Ma Wenchang told AFP. "I can't live (in this house) anymore because it's too dangerous. My relatives have been relocated somewhere else." At an

other location, the top of a mosque had collapsed askew, and another building was reduced to mere rubble.

The roads were full of emergency and military vehicles, and the AFP team saw trucks covered in red banners reading "earthquake relief supplies".

he quake was China's deadliest since 2014, when more than 600 people died in southwestern Yunnan province. China's western hinterland carries the scars of frequent seismic activity, and a huge quake in Sichuan province in 2008 left more than 87,000 people dead or missing, including 5,335 schoolchildren.



Residents keep warm around fires after an earthquake in Jishishan County, in northwest China's Gansu province.

## US, UAE work toward middle ground at UNSC

Monitoring Desk UNITED NATIONS: The United States and the United Arab Emirates engaged in last-minute consultations on Monday as the UN Security Council prepared to vote on a new resolution urging an "urgent and sustainable cessation of hostilities" in Gaza.

The UAE resolution responds to escalating tensions in the region and growing impatience among key allies, notably the US, with Israel's military actions.

The resolution calls for an immediate and sustainable cessation of hostilities to allow safe and unhindered humanitarian

access in Gaza and supports a two-state solution. But it does not explicitly condemn Hamas, prompting objections from Israel and the US.

The move follows the recent US rejection of a Security Council resolution proposing a "humanitarian ceasefire" in the battered Palestinian territory. The rejection raised questions about the international community's stance on the conflict.

While the General Assembly, with 193 members, overwhelmingly supported a ceasefire, the Security Council has faced challenges in passing resolutions related to Gaza.

## 12 killed in attack on party officials

Monitoring Desk SALVATIERRA: At least 12 people were killed and another dozen were wounded in an attack early Sunday on a pre-Christmas party in central Mexico, authorities in the state of Guanajuato said.

The violence occurred in the town of Salvatierra, reportedly at a hacienda, or ranch, that can be rented out for festivities.

"So far 12 people are reported dead," the state's prosecutor's office said on X, the former Twitter. Twelve others who were wounded have been taken to hospital, according to authorities.

The Tierra Negra foundation, which promotes social projects in the area, said the victims were young people participating in "posadas," religious gatherings that celebrate aspects of the story of Christmas. A person who was at the party but asked not to be identified for security reasons told AFP that about six men with long guns entered the venue.



Palestinians gather at the site of an Israeli strike on a house, amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas, in Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip.

## Putin says Russia is ready to talk on Ukraine

Monitoring Desk MOSCOW: President Vladimir Putin said on Tuesday that Russia would be prepared to talk to Ukraine, the United States and Europe about the future of Ukraine if they wanted to, but that Moscow would defend its national interests.

Putin, who sent troops into Ukraine in 2022, has repeatedly said he would be prepared to talk about peace, though Western officials say he is waiting for the U.S. presidential election in November before making a genuine effort.

"In Ukraine, those who are aggressive towards Russia, and in Europe and in the United States - do they want to negotiate? Let them. But we will do it based on our national interests," Putin told a meeting of the defence leadership in Moscow. "We will not give up what is ours." Russia controls about 17.5% of the territory that was internationally recognised as part of Ukraine as the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991. Russia annexed Crimea in 2014, and last year said the four additional regions of Ukraine that its troops partially control are part of Russia.

## UN agencies voice anger at attacks on Gaza hospitals

Monitoring Desk GENEVA: UN officials voiced anger and disbelief on Tuesday about the situation in Gaza hospitals, where injured people do not have basic supplies and children recovering from amputations are being killed in the ongoing conflict.

"I'm furious that children who are recovering from amputations in hospitals are then killed in those hospitals," said James Elder, spokesperson for the UN children's agency.

## Erdogan says signals from US, Canada may help Turkey move on Sweden NATO bid

Monitoring Desk ANKARA: Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan was quoted on Tuesday as saying that positive developments on the US sale of F-16 fighter jets to Ankara, and on Canada's arms embargo, would help Turkey's parliament move toward ratifying Sweden's NATO membership bid.

After long-time non-alignment, Sweden and Finland asked to join NATO last year after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. But NATO member Turkey raised objections over what

it said was the two countries' protection of groups that Ankara deems terrorists.

Turkey endorsed Finland's membership bid in April but, along with Hungary, it has kept Sweden waiting.

"Positive developments we expect both on (procuring US) F-16s and Canada's promises (on lifting its arms embargo) would help our parliament to have a positive approach to Sweden... All of them are linked."



French Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin and members of the French government attend the questions to the government session at the National Assembly ahead of a vote by members of parliament on immigration bill in Paris, France.

## Hundreds stranded as parts of India's Tamil Nadu flooded after heavy rain

Monitoring Desk CHENNAI: Heavy rain has paralysed several parts of India's southern state of Tamil Nadu, inundating roads, affecting train services, and leaving authorities scrambling to rescue those stranded. The deluge occurred while the state was still recovering from the damage caused by Cyclone Michaung, which lashed the coast this month, killing at least 13 people.

Tamil Nadu received almost 50 mm of rainfall between Sunday and Monday, compared with the 2.5 mm that would be normal at this time of year, the weather department said, and more rainfall is pre-

dicted on Tuesday. Local media reported at least five people died in the flooding and accidents related to the rain, which primarily affected the districts of Tuticorin, Tirunelveli, Tenkasi and Kanyakumari. Entire neighbourhoods remained submerged on Tuesday, with houses appearing like lonely islands surrounded by murky, brown water, according to footage from Indian news agency ANI, in which Reuters has a minority stake. Teams were using inflatable rafts to rescue people from houses and temples, and to distribute food packets to those they were unable to move to safety.

## Cyberattack hits Iran's petrol stations

Monitoring Desk DUBAI: Iran's Oil Minister Javad Owji on Monday confirmed that ongoing nationwide disruption to petrol stations was caused by a cyberattack.

A hacking group that Iran accuses of having links to Israel claimed it carried out the attack that disrupted services at petrol stations across the country on Monday, Iranian state TV and Israeli local media reported. Owji had earlier told Iranian state TV that services had been disrupted at about 70 per cent of Iran's petrol stations.

## Taiwan reports another suspected Chinese weather balloon crossing Taiwan Strait

Monitoring Desk TAIPEI: A suspected Chinese weather balloon flew across the sensitive Taiwan Strait on Monday but stayed well north of Taiwan, the island's defence ministry said on Tuesday, the third time this month Taipei has reported them nearby.

The potential for China to use balloons for spying became a global issue in February when the United States shot down what it said was a Chinese surveillance balloon. China

said the balloon was a civilian craft that accidentally drifted astray.

Taiwan is on high alert for Chinese activities, both military and political, ahead of Jan. 13 presidential and parliamentary elections. Taipei has warned of Beijing's efforts to interfere in the ballot to get voters to pick candidates China may prefer. Taiwan's defence ministry said the single balloon was detected at 9:09 a.m. (0109GMT).





The Ambassadors-Designate of the Arab Republic of Egypt, Sultanate of Oman, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Republic of Cyprus and the High Commissioner-Designate of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka presenting their credentials to President Dr. Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, Islamabad.

## Pakistan's cultural diversity a source of its strength as federation: PM

QUETTA (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Tuesday said Pakistan as a federation derived its strength from diversity of its cultures, traditions and languages with every ethnicity having a unique binding factor.

"Pakistan is not about monotonous or uncultured, but a blend of cultural identities that strongly hold and integrate each other," he said at the launch of a Pakistan Television's programming in Hazargi language.

PM Kakar said like other provinces, Balochistan was a rich kladioscope of ethnicities and tribes with their cultures and values imbued with Baloch values.

He lauded the Hazara community of Balochistan,

termining their contribution as significant for the development of Quetta and the province.

He mentioned the prominent figures of the Hazara community including former Governor of Balochistan General (ret) Muhammad Musa, Sardar Sadaat and Brigadier Khadim Hussain who earned respect due to their integrity.

He paid tribute to the Hazara community who demonstrated resilience while braving the challenge of terrorism, which hit all segments of the country.

He expressed the resolve that with unity, the nation could defeat the elements that created divide and differences among communities.

PM Kakar vowed to

make Balochistan and Pakistan a hub of peace, saying that peace prospers arts.

The prime minister felicitated the Hazaras on the launch of PTV's programming in their regional language and termed it as a tribute to all the martyrs of Hazara community who sacrificed their lives for the homeland.

He expressed confidence that the talented community would use the platform to highlight their beautiful culture as an important feather to the country's diversity.

PM Kakar said PTV was a historic asset that glued the nation through its outstanding programmes and vowed the government's continued assistance for the uplift of the organization.

## PM stresses effective training strategy to produce skilled human resource

QUETTA (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Tuesday termed skilled human resource the most important asset for a nation said effective training strategy was crucial to meet the needs of the contemporary world.

Addressing here at the launch of PM's Youth Skill Development Programme, he said in the era of technology and artificial intelligence, there was a need to equip the youth with necessary up-to-date knowledge. PM Kakar said imparting skills to one person did not restrict to him but the families associated with him and also the coming generations benefit from it.

He said the country was in dire need of such initiatives of social development which resulted in the overall uplift of the people.

Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Ali Mardan Domki said the provincial government was committed to providing every possible opportunity to the people of Balochistan. He said the provincial government had decided to set up the Balochistan Skilled Development Fund under the supervision of the Planning and Development Department. He said the government of China showed interest to provide a \$60 million grant for the development of Balochistan, of which the provincial government had the intention to use fifty percent on skilled development of youth. Federal Minister for Education Madad Ali Sindhi said imparting skills to youth was the main ingredient of empowering them by helping them qualify for employment.

## Repatriation of illegal Afghans continues: over 438,000 return home

ISLAMABAD (INP): The process of repatriation for irregular Afghans residing in Pakistan is ongoing, with another 1,586 individuals returning to their home country on December 18th. This brings the total number of repatriated Afghans to over 438,000 since the initiative began.

The breakdown of those who returned on December 18th highlights the family nature of the movement, with 365 men, 298 women, and 923 children crossing the border. This trend reflects broader concerns about irregular migration's impact on vulnerable populations, particularly women and children. It's important to note that even before the official repatriation process commenced, many irregular Afghans were already choosing to return home due to fears of potential arrest. This indicates a complex interplay of factors influencing migration patterns, including economic hardship, security concerns, and family reunification desires.

While the repatriation exercise is ongoing across Pakistan, Karachi stands out as a city with a historically large irregular population.



QUETTA: Members of Balochistan Union of Journalists (BUJ) are holding protest demonstration against killing of Senior Journalist Jan Muhammad Mahar and demanding to arrest his murderers, at Quetta press club.

## Gas leakage accidents to control by following winter safety measures: Anwar

QUETTA (APP): Acting General Manager (AGM) Sui Southern Gas Company (SSGC) Balochistan Anwar Baloch on Tuesday said that gas leakage accidents could be controlled only by adopting all safety measures during the winter season in respective areas of Balochistan. He expressed these views while addressing a ceremony regarding "Winter Safety Awareness 2023-24" organized by SSGC at Quetta Press Club. The ceremony was attended by scholars, Balochistan Union Journalist (BUJ) President Irfan Saeed, Quetta Press Club's President Abdul Khaliq Rind, other senior journalists and a large number of people.

Anwar Baloch said that gas pressures were improved by laying gas pipelines under the project with a cost of Rs 12030 million in contribution of SSGC and Quetta Development Package (QDP) in respective areas of Quetta city.



QUETTA: Muslim League (PML-N) Provincial President, Sheikh Jaffar Khan Mandokhail addresses to media persons during press conference held at Quetta press club.

## PHC stops EC from initiating any proceeding against PTI

PESHAWAR (Online): Peshawar High Court (PHC) has restrained election commission from initiating proceedings against PTI till December 21.

PTI petitions filed against election commission notices on the matters of election symbols and PTI intra party election came up for hearing before PHC Tuesday.

Justice Attique Shah and Justice Sahibzada Asadullah heard the petitions.

During the hearing of the case, election commission representative said we will file reply.

Upon it, the court directed EC not to initiate any proceedings against PTI till December 21.

The hearing of the case was adjourned till December 21.

## ECP announces guidelines for intending election candidates

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Tuesday announced its guidelines to the candidates intending to submit nominations for the national and provincial assemblies' seats. According to the election schedule nomination papers can be filed from Dec 20-22.

The nomination papers can be filed from 8:30 in the morning till 4:30 in the afternoon. "The nomination fees for the National Assembly candidates and provincial assemblies' candidates have been Rs 30,000 and 20,000 respectively," ECP said. The candidate can pay the fees in cash or deposit it in a branch of a bank.

"A candidate will submit his/her income tax returns of three years, annexed with nomination papers," the guidelines read. "The copies of full passport of the candidate would also require to be annexed with nomination papers". "The age of a candidate on last date of submitting the nomination papers must not be less than 25 years," ECP said. "A candidate of the National Assembly seat must be a voter of any place within Pakistan".

## Robber held with stolen bike in Kalat

QUETTA (APP): Levies Force arrested an alleged robber and recovered a stolen bike from his possession in Kalat Town on Tuesday.

According to a Levies Force source, a man informed the patrolling Levies Force that a robber snatched his bike from him and fled away.

The Levies Force chased and apprehended him along with a stolen motorbike at the police area.

The arrested robber was handed to police for further investigation.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Religious Affairs & Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed talking to media along with Caretaker Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture Jamal Shah to inaugurate two-week long "Teaching of Calligraphy to Madrasah Students as a creative segment of Curriculum" at PNCA.

## Religious minister highlights urgency of interfaith understanding

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed on Tuesday emphasized the need for understanding among different religious beliefs, asserting that the current global scenario doesn't represent a clash of civilizations but a confrontation with ignorance.

Talking to French Ambassador Nicolas Gale, the minister strongly condemns targeting of civilians, including children, in hospitals, refugee camps and schools in Palestine. These uncivilized acts require immediate global attention and intervention.

Expressing vehement disapproval, he highlighted the unprecedented and appalling targeting of innocent civilians, including children,



QUETTA: A protest of Pashtoonkhwa Milli Awami Party led by Dr. Hamid Achakzai, Abdul Rahim Zariatwal & others passing through Manan chowk.

## PML-N to emerge as largest party in general election: Sheikh Jaffar

QUETTA (APP): Former president of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Balochistan Sheikh Jaffar Khan Mandokhel on Tuesday said that PML-N would emerge as the largest party in the general elections and the next government in Balochistan could be of PML-N.

He expressed these views while addressing on the occasion of former MNA Sardar Israr Tareen joining to Pakistan Muslim League-N.

He said that the PML-N had become stronger in Balochistan with the joining of tribal elders of Harnai

in hospitals, refugee camps, schools, and places of worship. Such acts, deemed utterly uncivilized, demand swift global attention and intervention.

During the discussions, a mutual consensus emerged on the imperative of providing respect, trust, and equitable facilities to minority populations worldwide.

Ambassador Nicolas Gale stressed the pivotal role of education in fostering tolerance and love among the younger generation, transcending religious differences.

Moreover, he commended the government's scholarly circles' support for minorities post the tragic events of Jordanwala, acknowledging the clear stance against indifference to such acts.



QUETTA: A protest of Pashtoonkhwa Milli Awami Party led by Dr. Hamid Achakzai, Abdul Rahim Zariatwal & others passing through Manan chowk.

## President urges enhanced ties with Egypt, Oman, Bosnia, Sri Lanka, Cyprus

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Tuesday underscored the need for increasing cooperation with Egypt, Oman, Bosnia, Sri Lanka and Cyprus in the fields of trade, economy, and culture as their envoys-designate presented diplomatic credentials to him. The president expressed these views while talking to the envoys of the Arab Republic of Egypt, Sultanate of Oman, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Republic of Cyprus and the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.

The envoys presented their diplomatic credentials to the president and separately called on him, at the Aiwan-e-Sadr, a President House press release said.

Welcoming Egyptian

Ambassador Dr Ihab Mohamed Abdelhamid Hassan, the president highlighted the importance Pakistan attached to its bilateral relations with Egypt, reflected by shared bonds of common faith, cultural affinities and values between the people of the two brotherly countries.

He emphasized the need for increasing the trade, economic and cultural cooperation between the two countries.

The president expressed Pakistan's deep concern over the killing of innocent people and the tremendous damage done to the public property in Gaza by the Israeli security forces. The Egyptian ambassador said that his country was supporting the humanitarian aid to Gaza.

Talking to Ambassador of Oman Fahad Sulaiman Khalaf al Kharusi, President Alvi said that Pakistan and Oman enjoyed excellent relations in various fields.

He informed the ambassador that Pakistan offered investment-friendly environment to the foreign investors and had constituted, in that regard, Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) that provided one window operation for investment in IT, cooperate farming, minerals and energy sectors.

The president also highlighted the atrocities being committed by India in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IIOJ&K).



QUETTA: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar inaugurates the broadcast Hazargi language programmes on PTV Bolan.

## Caretaker CM terms historic initiative: Longstanding demand of Hazara community met with launch of transmission in Hazargi on PTV

QUETTA: The caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki said that PTV filled numerous colours in the lives of Pakistanis after it was established in 1960s, which is still imprinted in their minds and hearts.

The caretaker Chief Minister said that the news section of the state-run TV has been criticized because of the mouthpiece of the governments, but still there's no two opinions that it had been the only

authentic source of news for several decades.

Even today, the private media refers the state-run TV acknowledging it the authentic source of news, which shows its credibility, Mr. Domki maintained.

The Chief Minister expressed the hope that PTV would also maintain its uniqueness in telecasting the healthy programmes and providing the authentic news maintaining the lead in the present competitive era.

## Fawad Ch demands open trial in jail for contempt case

ISLAMABAD (INP): Imprisoned former Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry has ignited controversy by filing an application for an open trial in Adiala Jail for his ongoing contempt of court case against the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP).

Chaudhry, currently detained following his arrest in April, submitted the petition through his lawyer Faisal Chaudhry. In the application, he argues for unrestricted access to the courtroom for both local and international media, citing concerns about transparency and due process.

"The jail hearing should be opened for transparency," Chaudhry stated in the application. "I am not being allowed to meet my family and lawyers freely, and conducting the trial without media presence raises serious questions about its fairness." The petition's central demand is for the court to grant permission for journalists to cover the proceedings, which, if approved, would mark a significant departure.



QUETTA: Sui Southern Gas Company (SSGC) General Manager, Muhammad Anwar Baloch addresses during public awareness campaign for winter season.

## DC for safety arrangements in view of possible heavy rains, snowfall

PISHIN (APP): Deputy Commissioner (DC) Pishin Captain @ Juma Dad Khan Mandokhel on Tuesday chaired a meeting regarding preparations and safety arrangements of the departments concerned in view of the possible heavy rains and snowfall in winter.

The meeting was attended by Assistant Commissioners of all Tehsils and officers of other relevant departments including Irrigation Department, PDMA, Education, Health, C&W and Municipal Corpora-

tion. In the meeting, the Deputy Commissioner discussed cooperation and maintenance of storm drains under the comprehensive strategy between the concerned departments.

Directing the improvement and cleaning of the sewage system, he said that action should be taken against the encroachments on all storm drains before the rains and snowfalls, the concerned departments should ensure immediate implementation.

## Water accounting, resources assessment standards stressed to address water challenges

QUETTA (APP): Pakistan is grappling with critical water challenges that could have severe consequences for its economy and society. The urgency of the situation to this effect was recognized at a consultative workshop on water accounting and water resources assessment standards, organized by the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) Pakistan, with funding from UKaid here Tuesday to support the implementation of National Water Policy.

Following a federal-level water accounting workshop held in March this year, a series of provincial-level workshops are now being held to better assess the status of water accounting mechanisms within each province and to enhance the capacity of provincial departments in this regard. Dr. Mohsin Hafeez, Director, Water, Food and Ecosystems, IWMI through virtual interaction provided an insightful overview of the WRAP programme and its component one which focused on the climate resilient solutions for improving water governance (CRS-IWaG).

He said, "Let's pave the way for a sustainable future, identifying hotspots and solutions for better water management in Balochistan, by unveiling a game-changing water accounting framework to track water sources, consumption, and availability." He offered stakeholders to visit Okara district where most of the climate resilient solutions are being implemented that could be up-scaled to other districts of Pakistan.

Prof. Dr. Khalid Hafeez, Vice Chancellor Balochistan University of Information Technology, Engineering and Management Sciences (BUITEMS) who was the chief guest on this occasion, said that Balochistan was impacted due to acute water shortages and climate change.