

# Independent

dailyindisb@gmail.com Chief Editor: Syed Farooq Shah www.dailyindependent.com.pk Islamabad

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## 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.



QUETTA: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar alongwith Caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki and Caretaker Federal Minister for Information Murtaza Solangi addressing a Press conference



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

## Nawaz Sharif says Imran Khan teaches nation rudeness, misbehavior, hooliganism, lying

LAHORE (Online): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PMLN) leader Nawaz Sharif has said that it was not India or America that damaged the country but we ourselves. Judges themselves garlanded those who broke the constitution: Nawaz Sharif

Imran Khan taught the nation the culture of misbehavior, misbehavior, hooliganism, slander, and lies. Addressing the meeting of the Parliamentary Board of the PML-N, he said that those who never tired of saying that change will come, we will create a new Pakistan. The green passport will be honored and then everyone saw that it was all a false dream and allure.

He said that their leader led the nation to misbehavior, misbehavior, misbehavior, hooliganism, bullying, lies, rigging. He did all this in the name of change and it was named Madina State. They did not fear Allah, what they were doing and what they were talking

about. They kept shouting slogans in Madinah Sharif and Kaaba Sharif, this new Pakistan, new culture. The former prime minister said that during my time there was no room for the dollar to survive, the dollar remained at the same price for four years, the credit goes to Ishaq Dar sitting here, he called the IMF Good bye. If it continued to develop, it would become one of the most developed countries in the world. In the 2013 election, Shahbaz Sharif told me that you should say that we will end load shedding in six months, but I said that I will say what is the truth, so I said that I will end load shedding during his government. Then we have seen that we have eliminated load shedding in the country by the end of 2016. Nawaz Sharif said that the economic reforms order and policies that we made after coming to power for the first time had far-reaching results, then everyone saw the construction of motorways in the country.

## 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. After hearing the petition yesterday, the ECP said that Ahad Cheema was a part of the previous cabinet. Ahad Cheema can influence the elections. So he should be immediately removed from the post of advisor.

## 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.



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.

## 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, 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. This meeting not only underscored the urgency for interfaith dialogue but also emphasized the collective responsibility to curb extremism while nurturing an environment of understanding and tolerance among diverse religious communities globally.



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 Madrasa Students as a creative segment of Curriculum" at PNCA.

## 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 asked, adding that announcement of election schedule was not an ordinary issue. Justice Athar Minallah remarked that it was not the duty of high court to see the maps, rather it was the job of ECP. He said that it could derail the process of polls if the court allowed the changes in the delimitations at this stage. There was no chance of delay in elections, he added.

## 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.

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

LAHORE (INP): Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto 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. Bilawal criticized the trend of personal animosity in Pakistani politics, attributing its rise to the founder of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party. He challenged the rhetoric of refusing to engage with opponents, questioning the legitimacy of those who once accused others of being "thieves." "Until we make this decision," Bilawal declared, "it doesn't matter who becomes the prime minister. If we continue with the old politics, the country will not run, and we will not overcome our economic problems." His call for a shift in political culture emphasized the need for moving beyond personal attacks and focusing on issues of national concern.

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LAHORE: PML (N) Quaid Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and President Shahbaz Sharif presiding over a meeting of Parliamentary Board

## 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 long standing demand of Hazara community had been fulfilled by start of Hazargi language programmes at Pakistan Television Bolan from today. Delivering his speech at the opening ceremony of "Hazargi language" programme on PTV Bolan, he said the PTV Bolan was 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. The minister said that PTV Multan telecast's duration had been extended to 24 hours earlier this month. With the addition of Kan Maitarzi Rebroadcast Center, the number of transmitters of rebroadcast centers has increased from 22 to 23.

## PTI won't ally any party in 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.



LAHORE: Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari addressing lawyers at Lahore High Court Bar

## Lawyers' community demands resignation of CEC Sultan

ISLAMABAD (Online): Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA), the highest organization of the lawyers' community, has expressed concerns over the elections under the supervision of the Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja and demanded his resignation. In the statement issued by SCBA, it has been said that in the current situation, the CEC should go home because transparent elections are not possible under his supervision. Many questions are being raised on the transparency of the elections under the supervision of the current CEC. statement

Statement further said that even before this, valuable resources and the country were lost by conducting elections without clearing doubts. 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.



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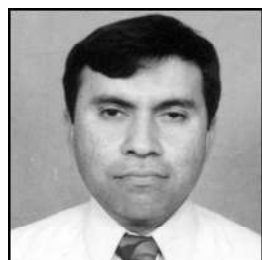
**Balanced ballots**

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.



**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

**Issues with BRT**

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 financing.

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 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 certified 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 (Rtd.) 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: 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

**Independent Report**

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, Gujumatia 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.



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.

## 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.

## 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.

# 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 another 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.

## 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.



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 to 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.





President Dr. Arif Alvi addressing the 13th convocation ceremony of Virtual University in Islamabad

## President for promoting virtual education in varsities

ISLAMABAD (INP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Tuesday stressed that every university should start virtual education to promote higher and skilled based education across the country.

Addressing the 13th convocation of Virtual University, the president said that keeping in mind the evolving technology trends, the Higher Education Commission (HEC) had also prepared a policy that was still waiting for final approval, under which all universities would be allowed to impart 30% virtual education to its students.

Dr Arif Alvi said the international educational institutions were rapidly shifting from traditional Brick and Mortar University system to the virtual education system.

In the United States, he said more than 50% of the courses in every university were now virtual and they were also improving quality.

The president said he had always been the proponent of online education

and had been stressing that the online education should be promoted to disseminate knowledge in remote areas of the country.

He said the reason behind less development in most of the Muslim countries was that there was still resistance in adopting the new technology.

"The change will be possible only after ensuring timely adoption of the evolving technology," he remarked.

Giving the regional statistics, the president said in Pakistan after only 10% students managed to enroll in higher degrees, while in India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, the ratio was at least 25%.

He regretted that around 28 million children were out of school in Pakistan. However in the regional countries, there was almost 100% enrollment in primary classes.

President Alvi maintained that the reason behind low literacy rate in Pakistan was the lack of leadership and lack of preparedness. Further, he said

role of every citizen was also important in this regard.

He said when he became the president, total annual enrollment in the virtual university was 28,000 which had increased to 55,000 this year which was quite encouraging. He pointed out that the university was running totally on its own resources and it was not seeking any financial support from the government.

The president advised the children to adopt good ethics and morality, and always advocate for love and peace in the society.

"We should always take care of the poor, down trodden and the persons with disabilities," he added.

Congratulating the degree awarding students, the president said the market needed the two-year associate degree as it takes less time to be able to start professional and technical work. Referring to the atrocities going on in Gaza, President Alvi said the ethics and morality had vanished away in the world.

## 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 monotony or uniculturalism, 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 imbibed 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'd) 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.

## Dr Nadeem for adoption of new emerging technologies

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Health Dr Nadeem Jan on Tuesday said that the timely adoption of new emerging technologies was important for the health sector.

He said this during a meeting with Federal Minister for Information Technology Dr. Umar Saif. Both discussed the ongoing reforms in the health sector. They also discussed the promotion and cooperation of IT in the health sector.

Dr. Nadeem Jan said that the ministry was working on the reforms agenda and added that the government laid the foundation of digitization in the Ministry of

Health.

The minister said that the registration and licensing system of Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) has also been digitized.

The pharmacies of government hospitals are being computerized, he added.

Dr. Nadeem said that data was also being computerized in primary health centers.

Dr. Nadeem said that the digitization of the Ministry of Health will continue under the reform agenda.

He said that innovation in the health sector is the need of the hour and IT has an important role to play.

## 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 vul-

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

## Islamabad police arrest 3,484 accused during last month

**Independent Report**

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad police arrested 3,484 accused during the last month for their alleged involvement in crime cases and recovered weapons, narcotics and other looted items worth Rs. 164.4 million from their possession.

According to a police spokesperson, Islamabad Police demonstrated their commitment to public safety by arresting 3,484 individuals in the past month. The arrests encompass a range of offenses, including cases related to weapons, narcotics, property crimes, burglaries and auto theft.

The law enforcement agency's efforts led to the recovery of stolen property worth a staggering Rs. 164.4 million, revealing the extent of criminal involvement in various illegal activities.

Among the apprehended individuals are hardened criminals engaged in dacoity, armed robbery, stabbing incidents, theft, and the theft of cars and motorcycles. Islamabad Police, in November alone, successfully seized 45 cars and 82 motorcycles, dismantling criminal operations and enhancing public safety.

The crackdown extended to dismantling criminal gangs, as 114 individuals from 45 such groups were brought to justice during the same period.

Notably, November also saw Islamabad Police making significant strides in curbing drug-related offenses. A total of 232 drug dealers were apprehended, resulting in the confiscation of 60 kilograms of hashish, 77 kilograms of heroin, 1,460 grams of ice, and 1,054 bottles of alcohol.



Engr. Aamir Hassan, Member, PMIC (Retired Federal Secretary) is chairing the meeting at NHA Headquarter on PSDP project titled "Construction of Model Prison at H-16, Islamabad" on 19-12-2023 and getting briefing from the officers of Ministry of Interior, Ministry of PD&SI, NHA and Pak PWD.

## 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.

## Paracha resigns as MD of PBM to participate in elections

ISLAMABAD (APP): Aamir Fida Paracha has stepped down as the Managing Director of Pakistan Baitul-Mal, to contest the elections as a candidate from Rawalpindi following Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's directive.

He expressed gratitude to Asif Ali Zardari and Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari for placing their trust in him. The PPP, committed to public service, has diligently served the people without discrimination.

## LNG reference case adjourns till February 13

ISLAMABAD (Online): Judge Muhammad Bashir heard the LNG reference against former Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi in the accountability court of Islamabad.

Shahid Khaqan Abbasi lawyer appeared before the court and requested to adjourn the hearing until the verdict of the intra-court appeal in the Supreme Court.

There are a total of 15 accused in the LNG reference, including former Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi.

## Mushaal lauds COAS for raising Kashmir issue dispute in US

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Human Rights and Women Empowerment Mushaal Hussein Mullick on Tuesday highly praised the successful visit of Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir to the United States during which he raised the longstanding Kashmir issue in a befitting manner.

Mushaal, in a statement, said that the COAS unequivocally conveyed to United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres that peace in South Asia would remain elusive until the resolution of Kashmir dispute in accordance with the UN Security Council resolutions and the aspirations of Kashmiri people, giving a fresh impetus to the Kashmir freedom movement and a testament that Pakistan stood firmly with the Kashmiri brothers and sisters in the struggle for right to self-determination.

The SAPM lauded the COAS for strongly taking up the unilateral, unconstitutional and illegal actions of the Narendra Modi-led Indian government to change the special status of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) at the highest level.

She said that the Indian government had crossed all limits of barbarism and terrorism to silence the dissenting voices within and outside of the country. All the minority communities in India were being subjected to brutal state terrorism and coercive actions, which was evident from its global terrorist networks targeting people in Pakistan, Canada and even in the US, she added.

The SAPM urged the UN bodies and the world powers to pay attention to the report of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) that had exposed the dirty and brutal face of India.

## Swat Darul Aman turns hotbed for rampant corruption and chaos: President SBA

By Haroon Siraj  
SWAT: President of Swat Bar Association, Saeed Khan Advocate, has asserted that the Swat Darul Aman (Women Shelter Houses and Crisis Centre) is a breeding ground for widespread corruption and disorder. He claims that corruption is escalating daily within these centers in Swat.

He accuses the staff, particularly Nusrat, in charge of Darul Aman Swat, of fueling corruption within the centers by accepting bribes from oppressed women and their families under various pretexts. He makes these allegations during a media briefing here on Monday. Darul Amans (Women Shelter Houses and Crisis Centre) are provincially operated shelter homes, overseen by a Superintendent supported by a Warden, a Vocational Teacher, and other staff. Saeed clarified that the concerned Superintendent (women in-charge) is not implicated in corrupt practices but is also neglecting human and women's rights.

According to the details, the Swat Bar Association received numerous complaints about the Superintendent (Incharge) of Darul Aman, prompting the Cabinet of the District Bar, under the supervision of President Saeed Khan Advocate, to form a panel committee. This committee, comprising three lawyers, including female Advocate Karishma Khan, Bar's General Secretary Dunya Zeb, and the bar librarian secretary, will provide free legal aid and counseling to oppressed and innocent women in Darul Aman Swat. During their investigation, the legal team discovered that the provincial government allocated 20 million in their annual fiscal budget for welfare, recreational activities, medical aid, physio support, and ensuring quality food.

Under the government's scheme, the quota for Pakistanis participating in the annual Islamic pilgrimage next year is 89,605, with an anticipated cost of Rs1,075,000 [\$3,769] per person.

## Ministry says: Nearly 60,000 apply for Govt Hajj Scheme

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony has received a total of 59,328 Hajj applications under the government scheme.

According to the ministry sources, the deadline for submitting applications for the Government Hajj Scheme has already been extended to December 22.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs extended an invitation for Hajj 2024 applications under the government's scheme starting from November 27, with the deadline earlier set on December 12.

The PMIC chairman comprising Engr. Aamir Hasan, Member and Muhammad Saleh Narejo, Director, PMIC visited the Model Prison project at sector H-16, Islamabad and inspected the ongoing construction work of the project.

The officers of Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Pak PWD, National Highway Authority, Capital Development Authority and other stakeholders of the project were present during the inspection.

## PML-N to take country out of crisis: Daniyal

ISLAMABAD (APP): A senior leader of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Barrister Daniyal Chaudhry Tuesday urged all political parties to play a proactive role in strengthening the economy, uplifting the country and underscoring the party's focus on providing relief to the public. Talking to a private news channel, he said PML-N leadership is committed to "a comprehensive, practical, and dedicated election manifesto aimed at addressing issues faced by the nation", adding that the PML-N supremo believes that his party is competent enough to take Pakistan out of the crisis after winning upcoming elections.

## KSA announces 700 scholarships for Pak students

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) has increased the number of scholarships from 600 to 700 for Pakistani students.

Official sources told on Tuesday, Pakistani students can avail these scholarships by applying through "Study in Saudi" electronic portal.

The portal provides a one-window comprehensive gateway for international students to apply and process applications for study in the Kingdom i.e., Self-financed, Partial Scholarship and Full Scholarship.



QUETTA: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar launches the Prime Minister's Youth Skill Development Program.

## Directs timely completion PMIC team inspects under construction model prison of Islamabad

ISLAMABAD (APP): A team of the Prime Minister's Inspection Commission on Tuesday inspected the under-construction Model Prison of Islamabad and directed the authorities concerned to ensure timely completion of the project.

The visit took place after PMIC Chairman Brigadier (Ret'd) Muzaffar Ali Ranjha, took cognizance of the concerns of the prime minister over the unwarranted delays in the completion of PSDP projects, said a press release.

The PMIC had shown dissatisfaction over the implementation status and also the latest progress on the decisions made in the meeting held on October 10, 2023.

The PMIC chairman

## Traffic police issue 854,135 fine tickets during 2023

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Police (Traffic Division) issued violation tickets to 854,135 individuals on traffic laws violations in the year 2023, with fines of more than Rs. 370 million.

During the enforcement of traffic laws, 16,769 vehicles and 37,225 motorcycles were impounded at various police stations, while 1,587 public service vehicle drivers had their licenses suspended. Additionally, legal actions were taken against 1,084 underage drivers.

In 2023, the issuance of 45,846 driving licenses, the renewal of 67,031 licenses, and the issuance of 90,352 learner permits were carried out. Moreover, efforts were made to ensure smooth traffic flow during

## Traffic police issue 854,135 fine tickets during 2023

road and infrastructure repairs. To safeguard the lives and property of the citizens and maintain discipline on the roads, special emphasis was placed on controlling traffic in the federal capital through effective and unbiased enforcement.

The Chief Traffic Officer of Islamabad, Muhammad Sarfarz Virk said that it our top priority to provide convenient transport facilities to citizens and take measures to prevent accidents.

According to the performance report of Islamabad Capital Police (Traffic Division) for the year 2023, a total of 854,135 individuals were issued violation tickets amounting to Rs. 370,447,800 for traffic law violations.



ISLAMABAD: A woman nominee for the National Assembly Seat of Minorities is taking nomination paper from the counter of the Election Commission of Pakistan, in Federal Capital.