

# Independent

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## SC suspends LHC order on election officers paving way for Feb 8 polls

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Supreme Court has nullified the Lahore High Court's order which suspended a notification issued by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) regarding the appointments of district returning officers (DROs) and returning officers (ROs) from within the bureaucracy, paving the way for timely general elections.

The apex court also ordered the ECP to issue the election schedule today. The ECP challenged the LHC's order in the Supreme Court Friday evening. LHC's decision could potentially cause a delay in the general elections scheduled for Feb 8 next year.

A three-member

bench, led by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa, conducted hearing of ECP's appeal, with other members including Justice Mansoor Ali Shah.

The bench took up the appeal right away. During the proceedings, CJP Isa remarked that the Supreme Court won't allow anyone to derail democracy in the country.

At one point, CJP Isa questioned if elections could be stalled across the country just on the basis of a plea filed by PTI lawyer Umair Khan Niazi.

Directing Swati, an ECP lawyer, to read out the Nov 3 order of the apex court, which stressed for conducting the general elec-

tions on Feb 8, the CJP questioned, "Should we proceed with a contempt notice? Barrister Umair Khan Niazi's [petition] constitutes a breach of the Supreme Court's directive."

The ECP, in its appeal, requested the Supreme Court to declare the Lahore High Court's order null and void.

A day prior, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) made the decision to approach the apex court in response to the Lahore High Court's suspension of its notification regarding the appointments of district returning officers (DROs) and returning officers (ROs) from the bureaucracy for the impending general elections.



RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General Asim Munir called on Antony J. Blinken, Secretary of State during his ongoing visit to US.

## Kashmir never was, nor will be part of India No one can dare cast an evil eye on Pakistan; change status of Kashmir: PM

Indian unilateral, illegal acts to further stimulate Kashmir freedom movement: Kakar

MUZAFFARABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Friday, reiterating Pakistan's principled position and support on the Kashmir issue, categorically said that no one could dare cast an evil eye on Pakistan and that its desire for peace should not be misconstrued as weakness or hesitation to face any aggression.

"Pakistan is not a war-mongering nation. But if anyone thinks that we are weak, shying away or hesitating, they should remove this misunderstanding. Muzaffarabad is not Gaza and New Delhi is not Tel Aviv...No one can dare to kill 4,000 children here," he said in an interaction with the students of different

colleges and universities of Azad Jammu and Kashmir during his two-day visit.

Expressing his confidence in Pakistan's defence capabilities in the context of the Indian aggression, he said though Narendra Modi and Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel had same attitudes, but they had different implementing capability and response mechanisms. To a question, the prime minister strongly rejected the rumours of any change in Pakistan's policy to follow suit India to merge the AJK in it, he said, "No one can think of such a stupid act. Nobody can dare."

He said that the rumours were spread by the enemies to create misunderstandings and that Pakistan had a principled journey

with the Kashmiris for decades, backed by the sacrifices of 90,000 people.

He said Pakistan had fought three wars with India on Kashmir and was ready to face any kind of aggression.

"Are we fighting the wars to make Kashmir (part of) JKP (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa)? This is out of question," he commented and reiterated Pakistan's resolve of not budging an inch from its principled position.

To a suggestion about a corridor between the AJK and the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IIOJK), he said India was not allowing the Kashmiris move freely even from their homes in Srinagar, what to talk of traveling to the AJK.

## Pak, US agree to continue exploring potential avenues of bilateral collaboration

RAWALPINDI (APP): Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General Syed Asim Munir has called on key US Government and Military officials during his ongoing visit to the US including, Secretary of State, Antony J. Blinken, Secretary of Defence, General Lloyd J. Austin, Deputy Secretary of State, Victoria Nuland, Deputy National Security Adviser, Jonathan

Finer and US Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Charles Q. Brown. According to the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release, matters of bilateral interests, global and regional security issues, and ongoing conflicts were discussed during the meetings.

Both sides agreed to continue engagement for exploring potential avenues of

bilateral collaboration in pursuit of shared interests. During the meetings with defence officials, counter terrorism cooperation and defence collaboration were identified as core areas of cooperation. Both sides reiterated the intent to increase interaction and explore ways to expand the scope of mutually beneficial engagements.

The COAS underscored the importance of understanding each other's perspectives on regional security issues and developments affecting strategic stability in South Asia.

In this context, the COAS especially highlighted the importance of resolving the Kashmir issue in accordance with international law and relevant UN resolutions.



RIYADH, SAUDI ARAB: Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCS), General Sahir Shamshad Mirza exchanging views with Maj. Gen. Mohammed Al-Moghedi, Secretary General of Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition (IMCTC) on the sidelines of the 2nd Meeting of IMCTC Chiefs of Staff of member states held in Riyadh.

## Interior Minister inaugurates ANF Forensic Lab

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Interior and Narcotics Control Sarfraz Bugti, inaugurated the ANF Forensic Lab at the Anti-Narcotics Force Academy (ANFA) on Friday in the agency's Headquarters.

Secretary Ministry of Narcotics Control, Capt. Munir Azam, and DG ANF, Major General Muhammad Aneeq Ur Rehman Malik, HI (M), warmly welcomed the chief guest, alongside the Police Liaison Officer and Police Consul from the Embassy of the People's Republic of China.

During the visit, Commandant ANFA provided insights into comprehensive counter-narcotics training programs.

Expressing gratitude, the minister thanked the Chinese delegates for their invaluable assistance in establishing the forensic lab.

He emphasized the lab's crucial role in expediting prosecutions, easing the burden on other forensic facilities, and improving drug

detection efficiency through advanced equipment.

The minister stressed the importance of maintaining the highest standards of credibility in forensic processes.

Recognizing ANF's international acclaim, Minister Bugti praised its pivotal role in combating drug trafficking at national, regional, and global levels.

He assured the force of complete support in addressing any inadequacies to more effectively combat the menace of drug trafficking.

The establishment of this lab will facilitate the issuance of various tests and reports regarding anti-narcotics, said the minister adding that this will help bring the criminals to the conclusion, and along with this, valuable time will be saved and data will be collected.

The minister said that drugs are a big challenge like terrorism and this disease is on the verge of destroying our young generation.



MUZAFFARABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar chairs a special meeting of the Cabinet of Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

## CM Baqar warns against artificial shortage of Insulin, ARV, anti-hypertensive drugs

KARACHI (APP): The Caretaker Sindh Chief Minister Justice (retd) Maqbool Baqar has said that there is no shortage of Insulin (Anti Diabetic), Anti-Rabies Vaccine (ARV) and Anti-Hypertensive Drugs in the province and directed the health department to ensure their availability in every government hospital.

"I will not tolerate if any patient suffered due to artificial shortage or black marketing of the medicines," he told the health department.

The chief minister had received a complaint that there was an acute shortage of Insulin, ARV and anti-hypertensive drugs in the government hospitals and even in the market.

The CM in the light of the complaint got a de-

tailed report about the available stock of the medicines in the government hospital and in the market.

The health department told the CM that 2,955 vials, 84,252 vials of Insulin and 2003,967 packs of anti-hypertensive were available in the government hospitals stocks and government hospitals.

The report regarding the availability of the said medicines in the open market said that 187,138 packs of anti-hypertensive drugs, 20,700 vials of Anti-Rabies Vaccine and 23,486 vials/pens of Insulin (Anti-Diabetic) were available in the open market.

The report said that two companies, M/s. Getz Pharma and M/s. Elli Lilly Pakistan were producing Insulin. One of the companies, M/s. Getz Pharma in-

formed the health department that they were producing Insulin in sufficient numbers keeping in view the market demand while the other company, M/s. Elli Lilly was of the view that the company was facing a problem relating to the import of Insulin due to a delay in the approval letter of import from DRAP Islamabad.

The CM took up the matter with DRAP authorities and urged them to ensure timely approval of import letters so that patients may not suffer.

The report said that as far as the anti-rabies vaccine (ARV) was concerned, it was an imported item, besides, the National Institute of Health (NIH) Islamabad was the only institute throughout Pakistan which was producing ARV.

## Upcoming general elections should be held on February 8: Bokhari

ISLAMABAD (APP): Secretary General of Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians (PPPP), Syed Naveer Hussain Bokhari, on Friday said that the upcoming general elections in the country should be held on February 8.

In a statement issued by the party secretariat, Bokhari emphasized that the Election Commission is obligated to implement the election date as determined by the Supreme Court.

He urged both the Supreme Court and the Election Commission to remove any ambiguity regarding the general elections, ensuring that the masses can exercise their right to vote.

Bokhari stressed the importance of the caretaker government's supervision to eradicate any potential influence that could affect the fairness of the electoral process by the civil administration.

He expressed concerns about certain elements using delaying tactics that could hinder a fair and transparent electoral process, potentially undermining the people's trust.



KARACHI: Caretaker Chief Minister Sindh Justice (retd) Maqbool Baqar presides over the meeting of Sindh Food Authority.

## Three Pak Navy officers promoted to rank of Rear Admiral

ISLAMABAD (APP): Three Commodores of the Pakistan Navy have been promoted to the rank of Rear Admiral with immediate effect on Friday.

Rear Admiral Mazhar Mahmood Malik was commissioned in Marine Engineering Branch of Pakistan Navy in 1992. The Flag Officer is a graduate of Pakistan Navy War College Lahore, National Defence University Islamabad and qualified Masters of Science in Mechanical Engineering from National University of Science and Technology (NUST), a Pakistan Navy news release said.

During his illustrious naval career, the Admiral has served on various key appointments. His prominent appointments include Fleet Marine Engineering Officer at Fleet Headquarters, Deputy MD Pakistan Navy Dockyard and Chief Staff Officer to Com-

## President appoints Justice Masood as acting CJP

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi has appointed Justice Sardar Tariq Masood, the senior-most judge of the Supreme Court of Pakistan, as the acting Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP).

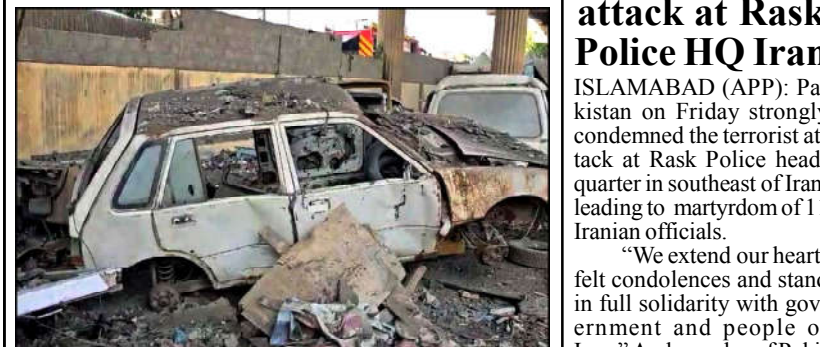
According to a notification issued by the Ministry of Law and Justice, Justice Sardar Tariq Masood would perform responsibilities as the acting chief justice during the period CJP Qazi Faez Isa remained abroad.

"The appointment has been made in exercise of the powers conferred by Article 180 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan," the notification said.

## Pakistan flays terrorist attack at Rask Police HQ Iran

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan on Friday strongly condemned the terrorist attack at Rask Police headquarter in southeast of Iran, leading to martyrdom of 11 Iranian officials.

"We extend our heartfelt condolences and stand in full solidarity with government and people of Iran," Ambassador of Pakistan to Iran Muhammad Mudassar Tipu said on X, formerly Twitter.



KARACHI: View of damages after gas pipeline blast occurred at KMC Junkyard located on Nipa Chowrangi in Karachi.



KARACHI: Inspector General (IG) Sindh Riffat Mukhtar met the parents of Syed Murtaza Hussain, a student of NED University, who was killed in a robbery in the past few days, at the Central Police Office in Karachi.

## Sindh Police chief meets slain student's family, vows justice

KARACHI (APP): The Inspector General of Police (IGP) for Sindh, Riffat Mukhtar Raja, convened with the parents of Syed Murtaza Hussain, a NED University student who tragically lost his life in a recent robbery.

The meeting took place at the Central Police Office (CPO) in Karachi, where IGP Sindh also checked on the condition of the deceased's injured brother.

Expressing deep condolences and empathy, IGP Sindh assured the grieving

parents of the police's commitment to conduct a thorough investigation, ensuring the perpetrators are brought to justice.

During the meeting, DIGP - East Ghulam Azfar Mahesar and SSP Investigation Ameer Saud Magsi updated the IGP on the ongoing progress in the case's investigation. Emphasizing the utilization of modern techniques and collected evidence, the police officials affirmed their dedication to swiftly resolving the case and bringing the culprits to account.



## Daily Voice of Masses Independent

### Weak cases

Hope dies every day in Pakistan. In 2015, Kasur's child sex scandal — a child pornography ring in Hussain Khanwala district had sexually exploited 285 minors — rocked the nation. On Wednesday — eight years after mass repulsion, protests and an HRCP fact-finding report, which stated that police inaction pointed towards collusion with criminals and found the role of political parties "very disturbing" — the Lahore High Court acquitted three convicts serving life sentences in the child abuse case. Their counsel said that out of six prime suspects, three had been released earlier and the remaining have been exonerated now. He claimed that they were not "conclusively identified" in the forensic tests of the video, the Anti-Terrorism Act sections were not applicable and medical reports did not corroborate the evidence. So, the moral of this story is an old one: the victims were betrayed by police and prosecution.

What should have happened after the horror unfolded was an immediate review of the law-enforcement plan to prevent feeble investigation and forensic inquiry by police. Moreover, prosecutors should have the legal authority to ensure that probes are executed according to the requirements of a case. And, as the agency taking the police's case to the courts, it should become mandatory for prosecutors to keep a record of their work for solid cases to be presented before lower legal fora. Ravaged by corruption and exploitation, police and prosecution, when representing the poor, either end up aiding criminals in hoodwinking the justice system or punish the innocent. To make matters dire, despite repeated incidents of monstrous abuse, the system remains untouched by any reform. The question is: as the progeny of hapless daily wagers, are Kasur's victims easier to overlook? Children, sans expression, authority and support to face abusers, form the most vulnerable section of society. For this reason, provincial and federal authorities must work harder to banish the curse of stolen innocence.

## Army Chief's USA visit: Divergence to Convergence

By Qamar Bashir

Former Press Secretary to the President; Former Press Minister to the Embassy of Pakistan to France; Former MD, SRBC



Deeply concealed within the labyrinth of the US Embassy's website lies the US Integrated Country Strategy (ICS) for Pakistan, a document unearthed by a speaker at a round table conference hosted by the Pakistan Institute of Strategic Studies. This paper, dissected during the conference, delineates the fundamental priorities and objectives of US involvement with Pakistan spanning 2023-2027. It delineates crucial areas including combatting terrorism and violent extremism, advancing regional stability, integration, and security, fostering inclusive economic growth and sustainable development, alongside strengthening civilian democratic institutions and safeguarding human rights.

The timing of this conference held significant meaning, coinciding with the visit of Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff, General Asim Munir, to the US, where he engaged in meetings with top US leadership. The visit strategically aligned with a reprimand aimed at India, reflecting US discontent regarding the killing of Sikh political activists by alleged rogue agents of India's Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), first in Canada and later in the US. The visit also resulted in an official rejection of an invitation extended by Indian Prime Minister Modi to President Biden to attend India's Republic Day, an

event that has now been diminished due to Biden's adamant refusal to participate. This development is perceived as a significant setback for India, which, without legitimate grounds, is endeavoring to position itself as a major global power.

The army chief's visit is perceived as a crucial step toward rebuilding and fortifying trust and cooperation between Pakistan and the US. However, the success of this visit hinges on tangible agreements forged and the willingness of both sides to address longstanding issues of mutual concern, which may carry different connotations for Pakistan and the US. The stated objectives of the visit encompass strengthening military ties, bilateral defense cooperation discussions, intelligence sharing on regional security threats, and exploring avenues for potential collaboration.

Pakistan seeks US support in countering threats from groups like Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in Afghanistan, while emphasizing economic cooperation and seeking assistance for its ongoing economic challenges. Urging a more constructive US role in stabilizing Afghanistan, discussions focus on countering regional threats and exploring investment and trade opportunities between both nations.

Discussions are likely to cover contentious issues straining relations between Pakistan and the USA, including the forced repatriation of Afghan refugees, Pakistan's relations with Afghan Interim Government, Kashmir issue, China Pakistan relations with emphasis on CPEC, engaging IMF, World Bank and International

Financial Institutions, Russian Ukraine conflict. The US has vehemently opposed this, citing concerns about the refugees' safety and well-being. Stressing Afghanistan's instability and potential human rights violations, the US highlights Pakistan's obligations under international law to protect those seeking asylum. It firmly opposes the forced return of refugees, citing potential violations of international commitments.

The US holds deep suspicions regarding Pakistan's alleged support for the Taliban's interim government. Moreover, the US has voiced concerns about Pakistan's perceived lack of transparency and mistrust, casting doubt on its sincerity and the effectiveness of its cooperation. Pakistan is engaging the Taliban's interim government aiming for a cooperative relationship that prioritizes mutual interests, seeking moderation from the Taliban while averting Afghanistan's transformation into an extremist breeding ground. The stance remains dynamic, navigating complexities while emphasizing stability, human rights, and bilateral concerns in this evolving Afghan landscape.

Despite varying priorities and mutual distrust, the US must rely on Pakistan's declared Afghanistan policy and seek active cooperation. This collaboration aims to prevent militant and weapon movement across the porous Pakistan-Afghanistan border, leveraging Pakistan's historical ties and economic influence to influence the Taliban positively. Additionally, the US seeks insights into Taliban activities and intentions, particularly concerning terrorist

threats, aiming to promote regional cooperation and prevent Afghanistan from becoming a source of instability in South Asia. The Kashmir issue has long been a delicate and intricate matter for the US focusing on fostering dialogue and diplomacy between India and Pakistan, advocating for peaceful resolutions of outstanding issues especially Kashmir. The stance underscores non-interference in internal affairs, recognizing Kashmir as a bilateral matter between India and Pakistan, refraining from taking a specific legal position or advocating for pre-defined solutions.

Pakistan's Kashmir expectations from the US are a mixed bag. They crave acknowledgement of the issue's international dimension, US-mediated dialogue, advocacy for Kashmiri self-determination, human rights pressure on India, and a balanced portrayal of the conflict. Neutrality, deep engagement with Pakistan, and action beyond just listening to India are also key. In essence, Pakistan wants the US to be a proactive and constructive player in resolving Kashmir peacefully, respecting Pakistani concerns, and seeking a lasting solution.

The US stance regarding Chinese involvement in Pakistan, particularly through initiatives like CPEC and military collaborations, is marked by apprehensions. It sees Chinese increasingly influence in Pakistan as challenges to US interests in the region, including Afghanistan and maritime security; worries about unsustainable debt and opaque financing within CPEC projects; unease about Pakistan's deepening military ties with China and the potential transfer of sensitive tech-

nology with potential military applications; and the perceived threat of upsetting the regional balance of power, possibly leading to instability. The US emphasizes the importance of transparency in CPEC contracts, encourages diversification of foreign partnerships to prevent overreliance on any single nation.

Pakistan's state policy toward Chinese relations and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) centers on fostering a robust strategic partnership with China while maximizing the transformative potential of CPEC for national development. This policy underscores the depth of the Pakistan-China alliance, prioritizing mutual support on core issues while harnessing CPEC's economic promise. Embracing CPEC as a game-changer, Pakistan positions it as pivotal for economic growth, job creation, and regional connectivity, emphasizing responsible management to safeguard national interests. Additionally, Pakistan aims for a balanced foreign policy, cultivating relations beyond China while nurturing cultural ties and remaining adaptable to evolving global dynamics.

The US wields significant influence over International Financial Institutions (IFIs), positioning them as potential tools to nudge Pakistan towards aligning with its strategic objectives. Through its sway over these institutions like the World Bank and IMF, the US prioritizes projects beneficial to its goals—such as regional connectivity and counterterrorism initiatives—compelling Pakistan to cooperate in securing vital funding. Furthermore, the US holds the power to im-

## Commerce News

### Governor SBP asks banks to enhance farmers' access to financial services

**Independent Report**  
KARACHI: The Governor of the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) Jameel Ahmed urged the banks to ensure easy, timely and hassle-free access of farmers to all financial services including credit, deposits and payments.

The governor SBP, while chairing the annual meeting of the Agricultural Credit Advisory Committee (ACAC), emphasized the need to strengthen and promote growth in the agriculture

sector, which is pivotal for the socioeconomic development of the country, said a statement issued here.

The ACAC meeting was attended by senior officials from federal and provincial governments, Presidents/CEOs of banks, members of provincial chambers of agriculture, representatives of regional farming communities and senior officials of SBP.

The Governor highlighted that despite various challenges

including floods, the agriculture credit disbursements reached an impressive level of Rs1,776 billion during FY23, witnessing year-on-year growth of 25.2% and achieving 97.6% of the overall target of Rs1,819 billion.

He expressed hope for a strong recovery in the agriculture sector that would pave the way for a projected real GDP growth in the range of 2 to 3% in FY24. He urged the banks to intensify their efforts to

not only meet but also surpass the target.

The disbursement target for FY24 was accordingly set at Rs2,250 billion, which was 26.7% higher than the disbursement made last year, he said adding that the stellar growth of 30% during July-Oct 23 gives optimism that we are on track to comfortably achieve the disbursement target.

Acknowledging the challenges, particularly attrition of borrowers,



ISLAMABAD: The Federal Minister for Finance, Revenue and Economic Affairs, Dr. Shamshad Akhtar presided over a meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet.



KATHMANDU: SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry delegation led by President Md. Jashim Uddin call on Prime Minister of Nepal, Mr. Pushpa Kamal Dahal.

### ADB mission chief stresses collaborative efforts to enhance agri. mechanization

FAISALABAD (APP): She discussed agricultural issues, mechanization, water and food security. Noriko Sato assured of ADB full support for the noble cause and said that the UAF was having a valuable workforce and scientists to address the issue of agricultural development. She said that the joint efforts of the different institutions would pave a way to address the issue at the national level.

She visited the University of Agriculture Faisalabad (UAF) and addressed a workshop on enhanced agricultural mechanization in Punjab, jointly arranged by the ADB, UAF, Punjab Agriculture Department and CABI [Centre for Agriculture and Bioscience

International].

She discussed agricultural issues, mechanization, water and food security. Noriko Sato assured of ADB full support for the noble cause and said that the UAF was having a valuable workforce and scientists to address the issue of agricultural development. She said that the joint efforts of the different institutions would pave a way to address the issue at the national level.

She said that the ADB had been helping the country reduce poverty and increase resilience and prosperity by supporting investments in key sectors and services.

### Hike in Customs Duty by FBR set to increase mobile phones prices

LAHORE (APP): Leading mobile phone brands in Pakistan are all set to increase the prices of their models after the FBR increased the Customs Duty on import of almost all models of mobile-phones, imported into the country.

Federal Board of Revenue sources told APP on Friday that the Directorate General of Customs Valuation had substantially increased the customs value on the import of 1,160 models of famous brands of mobile phones. The Directorate General of Customs Valuation said that used mobile-phones, imported by travelers,

### Governor assures cooperation to textile mills association in resolution of problems

PESHAWAR (APP): A delegation of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Textile Mills Association here Friday called on KP Governor, Haji Ghulam Ali and informed him about their problems and issues.

The delegation that was led by Muhammad Kamran Shah informed the governor about their reservations relating to the increase in gas prices and urged him to raise the issue with federal authorities.

The delegation said that they would be forced to stop production if their

concerns were not addressed timely and added that our province deserves adequate gas supply according to its production ratio of gas.

The governor assured to take up the matter with the caretaker prime minister and said that price increase is a matter of concern for the province as it may affect the production of industries. He said that necessary steps would be taken for the relief of the textile industry and to remove their concerns.

### CDNS realizes Rs 750 billion targets in fresh bond

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Central Directorate of National Savings (CDNS) has achieved a target of Rs 750 billion in fresh bonds in the current fiscal year, from July 1 to December 14.

The CDNS surpassed the annual target and achieved the target of Rs 1.6 trillion in fresh bonds in the current fiscal year, the senior official of CDNS told APP here on Friday.

He said this was Rs 200 billion additional annual targets than the target of Rs 1300 billion for the previous financial year

2021-22. "The CDNS has set a reviewed saving target of Rs 1.4 trillion for the current financial year (2021-22) which will promote savings culture in the country," he said.

In view of the current market trend in the country, the ambitious target had been set to further improve the savings culture, he said.

The official said that work was being done on institutional reforms in CDNS and new reforms and innovations were being introduced.

### ECC allows signing of mediation agreements b/w K-Electric and govt entities

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the cabinet here on Friday decided to approve the proposal of Power Division for signing of the draft PPA, ICA, TDA & Mediation Agreements between K-Electric and government entities. According to press statement issued by the finance ministry, Federal Minister for Finance, Revenue, and Economic Affairs, Dr. Shamshad Akhtar presided over the

ECC meeting, which among others was attended by Minister for Communication, Railways & Maritime Affairs, Shahid Ashraf Tarar; Minister for Privatization, Fawad Hasan Fawad; Minister for Power and Petroleum, Muhammad Ali; Advisor to PM on Finance, Dr. Waqar Masood; federal secretaries and other senior government officials of the relevant ministries.

On taking up the matter of approval of the draft PPA, ICA, TDA & Mediation Agreements to

be signed with K-Electric, the Ministry of Energy (Power Division) briefed the Committee on the observations made by the members of the ECC and provided the requisite additional data on the working of CPPA-G. "After detailed discussion and deliberation, ECC decided to approve the proposal of Power Division for signing of the draft PPA, ICA, TDA & Mediation Agreements between K-Electric & GoP Entities."

### Output of LCVs, Vans and jeeps down by 43.91% in five months

ISLAMABAD (APP): The production of Light Commercial Vehicles (LCVs), vans and jeeps in the country has witnessed a 43.91 per cent decrease during the first five months of the financial year 2023-24 against the output of the same period of last fiscal year. As many as 8,084 LCVs, vans and jeeps were manufactured during July-November (2023-24) as compared to the production of 14,413 LCVs.

### Weekly inflation falls slightly by 0.06 percent

ISLAMABAD (APP): The weekly inflation, measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), witnessed a slight decrease of 0.06 percent for the combined consumption groups during the week ended on December 14, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday. The SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 311.58 points as compared to 311.78 points during the past week, according to the PBS data.

As compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 43.16 percent. The weekly SPI with the base year 2015-16 = 100 covers 17 urban centers and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups. The SPI for the lowest consumption group up to Rs 17,732, decreased by 0.19 percent and went down to 306.02 points from last week's 306.59 points.



## Naqvi inaugurates 5-day International Scientific Conference at KEMU

**Independent Report**  
LAHORE: Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi inaugurated the 43rd Annual 5-Day International Scientific Conference at King Edward Medical University (KEMU), here on Friday.

He visited stalls showcasing innovations by students and teachers, including the Brain Tumour Detector OCT Python and a laparoscopy simulator, developed by the King Edward researchers. He announced dedication of Mayo Hospital's surgical tower to Prof. Dr. Faisal Masood. Additionally, he announced his intention to recommend Dr. Maqbool Ahmed for a civil award, acknowledging his role in constructing the surgical tower with one-and-a-half billion rupees.

CM Naqvi inspected a home dialysis machine and locally manufactured surgical instruments for plastic surgery. He took keen interest in a special machine designed for sciatica pain. Overseas graduates of King Edward Medical College presented him with substantial donations for the medical college and hospital. Graduating doctors contributing to the institution received shields in acknowledgment. Vice Chancellor King Edward Medical University, Professor Dr. Mahmood Ayaz, expressed gratitude to the Chief Minister on behalf of students and faculty. The CM emphasized

the noble nature of the medical profession and commended the dedication of doctors, nurses, and paramedical staff, acknowledging their sacrifices and the risks they face daily. He recounted instances of doctors sacrificing their lives, citing the example of those who succumbed to the Congo virus in Balochistan while treating patients. Naqvi outlined ongoing hospital upgrades, targeting completion by January 31. Notable hospitals like General Services, Victoria, and Holy Family are undergoing improvements mirroring the model set by Mayo Hospital. The comprehensive upgrade spans an area of 6 lakh square feet across various hospitals.



**PESHAWAR:** Khyber Pakhtunkhawa Governor, Haji Ghulam Ali in a group photo with delegation of Islamic Doctors Forum District Organization Khyber Pakhtunkhawa.

## Punjab Governor says: Permanent appointments on the statutory posts should be ensured

**Independent Report**  
LAHORE: The Punjab Governor, Muhammad Balighur Rehman has approved summaries of various universities regarding appointments, nominations, and additional charge on various administrative posts as chancellor. On this occasion, the Governor of the Punjab has specially emphasized that permanent appointments on the statutory posts of Registrar, Controller of Examinations, and Treasurer should be ensured during the period of additional charge.

According to the details, Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman has nominated Prof. Dr. Nasir Hayat, Department of Mechanical Engineering UET, as the Pro-Vice Chancellor of the University of Engineering and Technology for a period of three (3) years or till his retirement, whichever is earlier. Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman has nominated Professor Dr. Rubina Kamal, Principal Government Graduate College for Women, Margzar Colony, Lahore.

## First Lady Samina visits Shalimar Garden

**LAHORE (APP):** First Lady Begum Samina Arif Alvi visited the historic building Shalimar Garden here on Friday. Walled City of Lahore Authority (WCLA) Director General Kamran Lashari, Amateur Gardeners' Club Chairperson Nousheen Sarfraz received the distinguished guest on her arrival to the UNESCO world heritage site. Samina Alvi was briefed in detail about the recent restoration and preservation activities carried out by the WCLA and presented pictorial documentation of the restoration work.

## Governor KP agrees over forming of committee to streamline trade with Afghan

**PESHAWAR (APP):** Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor, Haji Ghulam Ali has expressed his consent over constitution of a steering committee with the task of streamlining of trade with Afghanistan both import, export and transit. The agreement was reached during a meeting of Governor KP, Haji Ghulam Ali with a delegation of businessmen dealing in trade with Afghanistan.

Coordinator Pak-Afghan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PAJCCI), Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi and Vice President PAJCCI, Shuja Muhammad were leading the delegation and other members were Engr. Manzoor Elahi, Intiaz Ahmad Ali (Director PAJCCI), Farooq Ahmad, Ammar Ansari and Mian Waheed Bacha.

During the meeting, the delegation members apprised Governor KP about the problems they face daily in trade with Afghanistan including import, export and transit trade. After discussion over the issues creating hurdles in the smooth sailing of trade, it was agreed that a steering committee be constituted under the chairmanship of private sector stakeholders with representation from Frontier Corps.



**KARACHI:** Students take keen interest in books during the 18th Karachi International Book Fair organized by the Publishers and Book Sellers Association (PPBA) held at Expo Centre in Karachi.

## PPP says standing firm on demand for polls on Feb 8

**LAHORE (APP):** The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) has made a clear announcement to stand firm on its position for ensuring certainty of elections on February 8.

In a statement issued here on Friday, PPP Parliamentarians Secretary-General Syed Nayyar Hussain Bukhari has said the party is committed to its stance on February 8 elections, and the Election Commission must adhere to the date, set for the electoral process by the Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court and the Election Commission should eliminate any ambiguity regarding utilisation of people's right to vote on the given election date. Bukhari also mentioned that the Supreme Court had declared that elections would take place on Feb 8 in any case.

He demanded that the perception of facilitation to any party of the civil administration under the supervision of the caretaker government must be removed. He said those elements want to delay elections through the delaying tactics who are not able to face people.



**LAHORE:** Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture Jamal Shah addresses the seminar of International Iqbal Conference 2023 organized by Iqbal Academy Pakistan at Aiwan Iqbal Complex.

## Jamal Shah for following Iqbal's teachings for resolving social issues

**LAHORE (APP):** Federal Caretaker Minister for National Heritage & Culture Syed Jamal Shah has said that the nation can move forward in the light of thoughts and teachings of Allama Muhammad Iqbal as creation of Pakistan was the result of his intellectual guidance which was acknowledged by the leaders of the Freedom Movement and especially by Hazrat Q u a i d - e - A z a m Muhammad Ali Jinnah. He was addressing the International Iqbal Conference organized by Iqbal Academi Pakistan with a theme "Allama Iqbal and Nesad No" here at Aiwan-e-Iqbal on Friday.

## No clue of two abducted friends

**ATTOCK (Online):** Police failed to get any clue of two friends belongs to Hazro town of Attock who fell in to honey trap and abducted by outlaws in Kachha area of Sadiqabad around one week ago.

Hassan Khan and his friend Zahid Khan, both native of Tajak village of Hazro were abducted after falling into a honey trap laid out by a Sadiqabad gang in Kachha area for sale of Suzuki van. Later on, the abductors make a call from one of the abductors to his family members and demanded a ransom money worth Rs 50 million for the safe release of the abducted persons. Although Hazro Police registered a case against the abductors but so far no clue of the abducted persons was traced despite the lapse of one week, causing unrest and fear of killing among the family members. The family of the victim maintained that the robbers were demanding a total of Rs 50 million.

## Minister appreciates educational system, quality of Dar-e-Arqam

**Independent Report**  
PESHAWAR: Caretaker Minister for Industries, Commerce, Technical Education and Tribal Affairs of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Dr. Aamer Abdullah has appreciated the educational system and quality of Dar-e-Arqam Schools System Pakistan and AL-Ghazali Trust.

He was speaking during a meeting with the Directors of the nationwide network of Dar-e-Arqam Schools Pakistan and addressed to their national convention at Abbottabad. Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Dar-e-Arqam Schools Pakistan, Syed Waqas Jafferi, Directors Dr. Ishtiaq Gondal, Aamir Cheema, Dr. Muddasir, Regional Director Mohammad Haroon and Chairman Ghazali Trust Pakistan, Aamir Mahmood Jaffer, the heads of the school also attended the convention.

## Four get death sentence, life jail in double murder case

**MULTAN (APP):** A local court awarded death sentences to four accused on charge of killing two persons after committing a robbery at a house in 2019 in Multan.

Additional District & Sessions Judge (AD&SJ), Saira Noreen, pronounced the verdict of the case after the completion of the trial in which four accused named Ghulam Shabir alias Shabu, Mureed Hussain, Ghulam Mustafa alias Musti Nadeem and Nazir Ahmad were awarded death sentence.

# International News

## Israel-Hamas fighting convulses Gaza as US seeks protection of civilians

**Monitoring Desk**  
CAIRO/GAZA: Israeli and Hamas forces battled throughout Gaza on Friday, witnesses said, suggesting Israel's ground offensive was meeting stiff resistance as the U.S. pushed its ally to alter a war strategy that has inflicted a huge civilian death toll.

Residents in the small enclave reported fighting in Shejiaia, Sheikh Radwan, Zeitoun, Tuffah, and Beit Hanoun in north Gaza, east of Maghazi in central Gaza and in the centre and northern fringes of the main southern city of Khan Younis. Hospitals in Deir al-Balah, Khan Younis and Rafah reported a new influx of dead and wounded early on Friday including two children. Four people were killed in an Israeli air strike on a house in Rafah and Israeli tanks were shelling targets just east of the city near the Egyptian border, witnesses said.

The Israeli military said in an update on Friday its forces had destroyed a Hamas command and control hub in Gaza City's Shejiaia district, conducted a "targeted raid" on militant infrastructure in Khan Younis, and bombed sites in the Rafah area that helped Hamas to smuggle weapons into Gaza. The heavy fighting, confirmed by many residents and militant sources reached by Reuters, raised questions about whether Israel's two-month-long aerial and ground blitz of Gaza has significantly weakened Hamas, which it has vowed to annihilate.

"The Gaza Strip turned into a ball of fire overnight, we could hear explosions and gunshots echoing from all directions," Ahmed, 45, an electrician and father of six, told Reuters from a shelter in a central area of the densely populated enclave. "They can destroy homes and roads and kill civilians from the air or through blind tank shelling, but when they come face to face with the resistance, they lose. We don't have anything to lose after all they had done to our Gaza," he said.

Unrelenting Israeli bombardment has laid much of the narrow coastal strip to waste over the past two months, with nearly 19,000 people confirmed dead, according to Palestinian health officials.

Unrelenting Israeli bombardment has laid much of the narrow coastal strip to waste over the past two months, with nearly 19,000 people confirmed dead, according to Palestinian health officials.



**European Council President Charles Michel delivers remarks to journalists in the European Council atrium ahead of an EU leaders' dinner at the European headquarters in Brussels.**

## Communications blackout as starving Gazans being bombed to dust

**Monitoring Desk**  
GAZA: Israel pounded the length of the Gaza Strip on Thursday, killing families in their homes, even as a US envoy told Israel Washington wanted the war to end "as soon as possible".

Internet and telephone services were cut across the war-torn Gaza Strip on Thursday, the Palestinian telecommunications company Paltel said, while the UN warned of the possibility of a "breakdown of civil order" in the Gaza Strip as aid organisations have struggled to get supplies to desperate Gazans.

Hunger and desperation are driving people to seize humanitarian aid being delivered from the sole point of entry at Rafah, while many are forced to beg for bread, paying 50 times more than usual for a single can of beans and slaughtering a donkey to feed a family.

The UN humanitarian office OCHA said on Thursday that limited aid distributions were taking place in the Rafah area, close to the border with Egypt, where almost half of Gaza's population of 2.3 million is now estimated to be living.

## Palestinian prime minister says US must seek a 2-state solution. Israel vows to fight

**Monitoring Desk**  
GAZA: The Palestinian prime minister said in an interview Thursday that the Biden administration must now "walk the walk" and take specific steps toward what has been an elusive two-state solution, including by applying pressure on Israel. But in Israel, the defense minister said destroying Hamas will take several more months.

The United States has shielded Israel against growing international calls for an immediate cease-fire.

## EU agrees to open membership talks with Ukraine

**Monitoring Desk**  
BRUSSELS: European Union leaders granted Ukraine a major political win on Thursday by agreeing to start membership negotiations at a time when its counter-offensive against Russia's invasion has failed to make major gains and US military aid has become more uncertain.

Diplomats and officials in Brussels said the unexpected green light for talks took place as Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, who had for weeks said he would block such a deal, agreed to leave the room, knowing the other leaders would go ahead and vote.

Orban confirmed that he had abstained from the vote at the EU summit on what he called a "bad decision".

It was unclear at this stage what exactly he could be getting in return.

Such an unusual way to approve a decision, especially such a major one, is unheard of in Brussels, even for a place where diplomats have long been very creative about how to strike deals. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky welcomed the decision.



**Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg attends the Future protest outside the Parliament in Stockholm, Sweden.**

## Hungarian PM Orban blocks EU aid for Ukraine after membership talks agreed

**Monitoring Desk**  
BRUSSELS: Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban on Friday blocked \$55 billion (€50 billion) in EU aid for Ukraine, after leaders side-stepped his opposition to agree to open talks with Kyiv on joining the bloc. A crunch summit in Brussels broke up after a day of wrangling as the Hungarian authoritarian leader refused to greenlight funding to help prop up Ukraine's government over the next four years.

Orban called for unblocking all of the still-frozen funds from the Euro-pan Union for his country, before considering lifting his veto on further aid to Ukraine.

"This is a great opportunity for Hungary to make it clear that it should get what it deserves. Not half, then a quarter, but it must get the whole thing," Orban said in an interview with Hungarian state radio.

"So we want to be treated fairly, and now there is a good chance that we can assert this," he added.

The wrangling injected a bitter note over the summit, a day after the leaders minus Hungary made the historic decision to open talks with Ukraine on one day joining the bloc. The second day of the summit was expected to turn to the Israeli-Hamas war in Gaza, and the search for a common EU position on it.



**Current and former members of President Biden's staff call for a ceasefire in Gaza, outside the White House.**

## Sudan's RSF advances on Wad Madani as eight month-old war spreads

**Monitoring Desk**  
DUBAI: Sudan's army was trying to hold off attacks by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) on Friday near Wad Madani, a major city that had been sheltered from fighting and taken in hundreds of thousands of civilians during eight months of war.

Clashes in the area, about 170 km (105 miles) southeast of Khartoum, threaten to open a new front in a conflict that has displaced nearly 7 million people, left the capital in ruins and triggered waves of ethnically driven killings in Darfur.

A takeover of densely populated Wad Madani, where some government and aid services have relocated, would likely trigger massive displacement and deepen a humanitarian crisis in which the United Nations is warning of famine-like conditions in areas directly affected.

## Tel Aviv not to resume Gaza prisoner talks in Qatar

**Monitoring Desk**  
TEL AVIV: Israel has canceled a planned trip to Qatar by the head of its foreign intelligence service to restart talks on a potential second prisoner release deal with Hamas, CNN reported on Thursday.

Mossad director David Barnea will not travel to Doha, where previous talks on the release of prisoners held by Hamas in Gaza have taken place, the source said.

The Israeli war cabinet, led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, decided to cancel the trip and negotiations with senior officials will not resume in Qatar.

Israel's ambassador to Britain, meanwhile, said that Israel would not accept a two-state solution with the Palestinians after the Gaza crisis ends.

Tzipi Hotovely told Sky News that she did not believe in the long-standing position of the UK government.

## 11 Iran police killed in attack claimed by militant group Jaish al-Adl

**Monitoring Desk**  
TEHRAN: At least 11 Iranian police officers were killed in an attack overnight by militant group Jaish al-Adl (Army of Justice) on a police station in the southern province of Sistan-Baluchistan, an official told state television on Friday.

A number of assailants were also killed in a shootout that ensued with the security forces, the channel reported.

"In the terrorist attack on the police headquarters in the town of Rask, 11 policemen were killed, and others were wounded," Alireza Marhamati, deputy governor of the province, told state TV. The attack, which occurred around midnight, was one of the deadliest in years for the region lying close to Iran's border with Afghanistan and Pakistan.

It was claimed by Jaish al-Adl, in a brief statement on its Telegram channel. Jaish al-Adl was formed in 2012 and is blacklisted by Iran as a "terrorist" group.





LAHORE: President Dr Arif Alvi addressing the passing out ceremony of 46th Specialized Training Program of Pakistan Administrative Service.

## Asif Durrani says Despite crises, Pakistan will continue to assist & protect Afghan refugees

GENEVA (APP): Highlighting that Pakistan is still hosting over 1.4 million Afghan refugees, a senior Pakistani diplomat has called on the world community to continue providing Islamabad with the necessary support to take care of them.

Speaking at the Global Refugee Forum (GRF), Pakistan's Special Representative for Afghanistan, Asif Durrani said that Pakistan, for over four decades, shouldered the global responsibility of hosting, protecting, and assisting Afghan refugees.

"We reaffirm this pledge to Afghan refugees, who enjoy equal access to basic facilities of life at par with Pakistani citizens," he told the Forum, the world's largest international gathering on refugees and host communities.

"This is despite the fact that like many other developing countries, Pakistan continues to grapple with the triple crises of food, fuel and inflation," Ambassador Durrani said.

"We sincerely hope that the international community will continue to demonstrate its responsibility by providing sustained and adequate support to Pakistan as a host country," he added.

In his opening speech, UN refugee agency (UNHCR) chief Filippo Grandi told delegates that a record 114 million forcibly displaced, around the world, represent a "crisis of humanity".

## PNS TUGHRIL visits Salalah Port during regional maritime security patrol

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Navy Ship TUGHRIL Friday visited Salalah Port of Oman for logistics and fueling on the return journey to Pakistan after completion of routine operational deployment at Gulf of Aden, as part of Regional Maritime Security Patrol.

During the stay at the port, the Commanding officer of the ship met with senior naval officials of Oman as part of Naval diplomacy and discussed matters of mutual interest, a Pakistan Navy news release said.

The Navies of Pakistan and Oman enjoy very close relations as both countries share the same ocean space.

## Shaukat dismissal case: SC issues notice to Faiz Hameed others

ISLAMABAD (Online): Supreme Court (SC) has issued notice to former DG ISI Gen (Retd) Faiz Hameed, Brig (Retd) Irfan Ramay, former chief justice Islamabad High Court (IHC) Anwar Kansi and former Registrar SC Arbab Arifin former judge Shaukat Aziz Siddiqui dismissal case.

A five members larger bench of SC presided over by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa took up the case for hearing Friday.

At the inception of hearing CJP inquired are the allegations of Shaukat Aziz Siddiqui correct. Shaukat Aziz Siddiqui was dismissed on the speech delivered by him on the basis of these allegations. Give reply are your allegations correct. Are those generals whom you want to make respondents wanted to come to power themselves in general election 2018.

The CJP remarked if the allegations of Shaukat Aziz Siddiqui are correct then those generals were wanting to become facilitators of some one. Who was that person for whom they were facilitating.

Counsel Hamid Khan said his allegations were correct.

The CJP remarked you are making the facilitators beneficiary. Real beneficiary is some one else. You have not mentioned real beneficiary in the petition.

You have made facilitators respondents and why you have not made beneficiary respondent.

# Serving humanity gives real happiness, Dr Alvi tells passing-out officers

LAHORE (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi urged bureaucrats on Friday to be responsible, responsive, empathetic, accountable and efficient to keep the public governance and institutional effort well-aligned with the community's welfare.

He was speaking at the passing-out ceremony of the participants who completed 46th Specialized Training Programme at the Civil Services Academy.

He said that no doubt that institutes like the Civil Services Academy impart training and give skills to the participants which help them enhance their working. He said that unity of purpose could be linked with an organisation to obtain focused goals. Giving an example of Pyramid of Giza [largest Egyptian pyramid, which served as the tomb of pharaoh Khufu], the president said it was an outcome of skills and focused goals. "Learning skills also keeps you motivated in the right direction," he added.

Arif Alvi said that balance should be maintained between needs and wants, adding that the world was confused about happiness. "Some relate happiness with wealth, but happiness is more about identifying what gives you fresh breath," he explained. He declared that serving humanity provides one with real and long-term happiness. He said looking at the downtrodden people also creates compassion. Efforts should be made to strengthen and practise morality in more appropriate manner, he advised.

President Alvi said will was required to overcome challenges, which the country was facing. He said there was love deficit in the world and unfortunately hatred was on the peak. He said it was very unfortunate that world looks at the downtrodden segments in a negative way. He emphasised eliminating hatred and added that wealth did not change fate of any country, and proper leadership was of utmost significance. He said that tools and techniques which bureaucrats learn actually help them find moral anchor.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Interior and Narcotics Control, Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti visiting the Anti-Narcotics Force Forensic Lab at ANF Academy.

## PM vows to fight against terrorism till its complete end from country's soil

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Friday vowed to continue the fight against terrorism till its complete elimination from the country.

He strongly condemned the terrorist attack at a joint check post of police and the Frontier Corps in the Tank area of Dera Ismail Khan this morning.

PM Kakar paid tribute to the security forces for foiling a big plan of terrorism in the Tank Police Lines.

"The entire nation pays tribute to the valiant security personnel who sacrificed their lives for the homeland," he said in a statement shared by the PM's Office.

## APHC acknowledges Pakistan's continued support for Kashmir cause

ISLAMABAD (APP): The All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) has said that Pakistan's continued political, diplomatic and moral support has been a source of great encouragement for the people of occupied Jammu and Kashmir in their just struggle to secure their right to self-determination.

The APHC spokesman, in a statement issued in Srinagar, hailed the Pakistan Caretaker Prime Minister, Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar, for representing the aspirations of the Kashmiri people in his address to the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly, yesterday, Kashmir Media Service reported on Friday.

He maintained that Pakistan has always advocated the resolution of the Kashmir dispute in accordance with the Kashmiris' aspirations and the relevant UN resolutions but this objective could not be achieved due to India's intransigent attitude.

The spokesman urged the international community to put pressure on India to reciprocate Pakistan's efforts to settle this lingering dispute to ensure permanent peace in the region.

Meanwhile, the occupation authorities locked the Central Jamia Masjid and Bemina Imambargah in Srinagar for the 10th consecutive week and prevented people from offering Juma prayers.



RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General Asim Munir interacted with the Pakistani overseas community in a reception hosted by Embassy of Pakistan during his ongoing visit to US.

## SC issues written order pertaining to Z.A. Bhutto reference

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Supreme Court (SC) on Friday issued a written order regarding the hearing on a presidential reference pertaining to the sentence of former prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

The order said: "The reference No. 1 of 2011 was filed by the President of Pakistan under Article 186 of the Constitution with regard to the late Mr. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's criminal trial and conviction.

A number of hearings took place till 12 November 2012, but thereafter the Presidential Reference was not fixed in Court. This Reference remains pending, therefore, it merits determination as early as possible."

It said Mr. Farooq H. Naek referred to an application filed on behalf of Mr. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, the grandson of the late Mr. Bhutto and states he wants to be represented herein. We are informed that there is only one surviving daughter of the late Mr. Bhutto and he has eight grandchildren.

The application is allowed and learned Mr. Naek may represent Mr. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and assist this Court. If Mr. Bhutto's daughter and any of his grandchildren also want to be represented, they may engage counsel, the order said.

It said the Attorney-General for Pakistan was asked whether any of the successive Presidents or the federal government sought to withdraw the Reference or wants to do so now, and the AG stated that this was not done nor is this sought to be done now.

The order said a number of amici curiae were appointed, some of whom have passed away and others we are told are indisposed.

## PTA, FIA joint operation busts illegal SIM issuance racket

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) joined forces with the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Cyber Crime Circle to conduct a successful raid on a mobile phone company franchisee in Lahore.

The operation targeted the illegal issuance of SIM cards, a practice that poses serious threats to national security said a news release.

During the raid, the PTA Zonal Office Lahore, assisted by FIA operatives, seized 13 Biometric Verification System (BVS) devices and a laptop as crucial pieces of evidence.

The joint team apprehended one individual on the premises, who is currently under investigation by the FIA.

The collaborative effort was initiated after PTA filed a complaint with FIA, providing critical information about the unauthorised sale of SIM cards through the identified channel.

## PM assures financial assistance to AJK govt for completion of road network

MUZAFFARABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Friday said the federal government would extend every possible financial assistance to Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) for completion of development works in the area.

Chairing a special meeting Azad Jammu and Kashmir cabinet, he stressed that the road network between AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) was crucial to ensure connectivity.

PM Kakar said the government would provide assistance on the construction of Shuntar Tunnel connecting AJK and GB, the Murree-Muzaffarabad Expressway, and the Mansehra-Muzaffarabad-Mangla-Mirpur Expressway.

He said the federal government would instruct its ministries to complete the projects relating to AJK on a priority basis.

The prime minister also emphasized to benefit from the tourism potential of AJK.

PM Kakar said his visit to AJK was aimed at reiterating the stance of the State of Pakistan about the internationally recognized disputed status of Jammu and Kashmir.

He said India could not escape from its oppressive designs of altering the status of the Valley.



OMAN: Officials of Oman navy visit Pakistan Navy Ship TUGHRIL at Salalah Port of Oman.

## British MPs call Indian SC's decision on Article 370 against UN resolutions

LONDON (INP): British lawmakers, activists, practitioners and peace activists held discussions on Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir in the UK Parliament.

According to Kashmir Media Service, the discussions were held to mark International Human Rights Day and the Indian Supreme Court's decision to uphold the Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party government's revocation of Article 370. The event reminded the international community of its responsibility to press for a free and fair plebiscite in Jammu and Kashmir.

Fahim Kayani commended Paul for his continued support for Kashmir and for tirelessly maintaining the importance and profile of Kashmir within the Conservative party.

"I wish the Supreme Court of India had courage to visit United Nations resolutions on Kashmir," Kayani told the conference. "No assembly has any power to decide on behalf of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. So, neither the Indian parliament nor the President of India has any sovereignty over Kashmir," he added.

Kate Hollen talked about the importance of human rights and the need to push the UK government to uphold those rights in Indian Occupied Kashmir.

## PTI escaping from elections: Ahsan Iqbal

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Muslim League-N Secretary General Ahsan Iqbal said on Friday that February-8 had been announced for holding general election in the country, and whole nation was looking forward to it.

Talking to the media here, he said that the PML-N was preparing for elections and meetings of parliamentary boards were continuing on daily basis. He regretted that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) had hatched a conspiracy and filed a petition to delay holding of elections. He said the PTI was escaping from polls process.

Ahsan Iqbal said, "We demand holding of elections on time." He said the PTI was afraid of polls and not finding candidates. He said that 90 per cent of former MNAs and MPAs of the PTI had left it.



HYDERABAD: Mayor Hyderabad, Kashif Shoro cutting inaugural ribbon during inauguration ceremony of the handicraft workshop established by Adnan Rasheed, Town Chairman, in Hyderabad.

## Indian court verdict has no legal worth in presence of UN resolutions on Kashmir: AJK LA Speaker

MIRPUR (AJK) (APP): Commenting on the Indian supreme court's verdict, Azad Jammu Kashmir Legislative Assembly Speaker Ch Latif Akbar said that the politically motivated verdict was actually a continuation of the August 5, 2019 move that led to the revocation of Kashmir's special status of the internationally disputed occupied state.

He was addressing an extraordinary session of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly the other day. The session was chaired by Speaker AJK Legislative Assembly Ch Latif Akbar and was specially attended and addressed by caretaker Prime Minister of Pakistan Anwar ul Haq Kakar, Prime Minister Azad Kashmir Chaudhry Anwarul Haq, Leader of the Opposition Khawaja Farooq Ahmed and others, said the AJK government's official statement issued here late Thursday. Pertinently, the special session of the Legislative Assembly was convened against the backdrop of the Indian Supreme Court verdict that validated key decisions the Modi government had taken on and after 5th August 2019.

In his opening remarks, the Speaker Chaudhry Latif Akbar, while welcoming the Prime Minister of Pakistan, said that his arrival in the august House has boosted the morale of Kashmiris on both sides of the ceasefire line, especially those who were engaged in a freedom struggle on the other side of dividing line.

## Funeral prayers of cops martyred in Tank police lines attack offered

TANK (APP): The funeral prayers of two police personnel who were martyred during an attack by unidentified terrorists on police lines in Tank, were offered here Friday.

According to a police spokesman, the funeral prayers of Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) Gohar Zaman and Constable Ehsan were offered with full official protocol and honour which was attended by Regional Police Officer Dera Nasir Mehmood Satti, Deputy Commissioner Tank Muhammad Shoab, serving and retired officers, relatives, journalists and a large number of people from different segments of the society.

## Registrar Accountability Court removed from post

ISLAMABAD (Online): Registrar of Accountability Court, Mohammad Imran has been removed from post due to matter of allegations of mismanagement in Judicial Complex Islamabad.

Orders have also been issued by Law Ministry in which Muhammad Imran Haider Sial of grade 17 has been instructed to report back to his department Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation. It is pertinent to say that Mohammad Imran Sial was serving as Registrar in Accountability Court Islamabad and an inquiry is also pending in FIA on Mohammad Imran Haider Sial. According to sources, Mohammad Imran Sial is also accused of obtaining a license by making a false statement from Islamabad Bar Council.



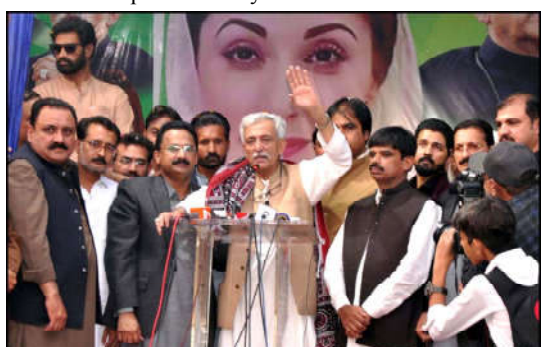
LARKANA: Members of Primary School Teachers (PST) are holding protest demonstration against non-payment of their salaries, at Jinnah Bagh in Larkana.

## 3 cops martyred, 3 injured in terrorist attack on Tank Police Lines

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): At least three police personnel were martyred and three others injured as unidentified terrorists attacked the Police Lines Tank on Friday.

According to police, a group of terrorists armed with sophisticated weapons stormed the police lines, which was retaliated by the police. A heavy exchange of fire continued for several hours.

Rescue 1122 Tank said its teams shifted the martyred cops, including Gohar Zaman (ASI), Ehsan (constable) and Abdul Rashid (constable) and the injured constables Ajmal Mukhtiyar and Shakhi Noor to the District Headquarters Hospital (DHQ) after provision of first medical aid on the spot.



HYDERABAD: Muslim League (PML-N) Sindh President, Bashir Memon addresses during workers convention held in Hyderabad.

## Dr Saif launches IRADA at NUST

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for Science and Technology, Dr Umar Saif on Friday launched the Research and Development Agency (IRADA) at the National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST).

During the launch, he highlighted the objective of IRADA, emphasizing its pivotal role in fostering collaboration between the defense sector, academia, and industry in Pakistan for technological advancement.

He noted that while linkages between these sectors have existed, IRADA aims to formalize and institutionalize these connections said a news release issued here.

Expressing his vision for IRADA during the event, Dr Saif envisioned a collaborative effort involving NUST, universities, industry, and the defense sector. He highlighted the potential for joint projects and products that can be commercialized to contribute significantly to the country's economic development. He also highlighted the success of connecting defense sector, academia, and industry, which resulted in the invention and commercialization of transformative technologies such as the Internet, GPS.