

# Independent

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

Govt determined to conduct free, fair polls: Caretaker PM

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.

Responding to a question about the projects under China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the prime minister said the caretaker setup did not have the mandate to initiate new projects, however he was trying his best to allocate funds for the Quetta-Khuzdar dual carriageway section. He hoped to get the finances for project by the next month.



KARACHI: Governor Sindh Kamran Tessori taking oath from newly appointed Chief Justice of Sindh High Court Justice Aqeel Ahmed Abbasi, in Provincial Capital.

## First shipment of dried Chilies exported from Pakistan to China: CM

KARACHI (APP): Caretaker Sindh Chief Minister Justice (Retd) Maqbool Baqar has said that Sindh is responsible for contributing approximately 80 per cent of the total national production of Chillies, which amounts to 144,000 metric tons.

This he said while speaking at the ceremony of the First Shipment of Dried Chillies Exported from Pakistan to China under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor Agricultural Project.

The program was attended by Consul General of China Mr Yang Mr Yundong, Mr Zheng Project Manager Sichuan Litong Food Co, Ltd. Federal Minister of Food Security & Research Kausar Abdullah Malik and Chinese Ambassador Jian Zaidong recorded messages were shown on the screen.

## Governor takes oath to Justice Aqeel Abbasi as CJ SHC

KARACHI (APP): An oath-taking ceremony of the Chief Justice (CJ) of the Sindh High Court (SHC) was held in the Sindh High Court here on Tuesday.

The Sindh Governor Mohammed Kamran Khan Tessori administered the oath to Justice Aqeel Ahmad Abbasi as the Chief Justice of the Sindh High Court.

The ceremony was attended by lawyers, government officials, city dignitaries and media representatives.

## Bilawal extends sympathies with China over earthquake loss

KARACHI (APP): Chairman Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has expressed his grief and sorrow over the loss of lives in an earthquake in China here on Tuesday.

He expressed his sympathies with the government and people of China for the loss.

Bilawal stood shoulder to shoulder with their great friend China in this hour of calamity.

He also prayed for the speedy recovery of the injured in the earthquake.

## Imran challenges cipher case proceedings in IHC

ISLAMABAD (INP): Former Prime Minister Imran Khan has filed a petition in the Islamabad High Court challenging the entire proceedings of the cipher case, including the indictment against him. He argues that the proceedings conducted thus far are illegal and null and void, and seeks his discharge from the case.

Khan's petition specifically targets the proceedings held since November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2023, which he claims violate legal requirements and principles of justice. He further contends that the trial court's rejection of his plea on December 12<sup>th</sup> was erroneous.

One of the key points raised in the petition is the interpretation of the word "complaint" in Section 13(2)(3) of the Official Secrets Act. Khan argues that the trial court judge misinterpreted the term, whereas it is clearly defined in Section 4(h) of the Criminal Procedure Code and further clarified by law.

## 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.



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.

## 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.



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

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

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) will begin receiving nomination papers from prospective National and Provincial Assembly candidates on Wednesday, (December 20), as the country gears up for a crucial general election on February 8, 2024.

Detailing the oath-taking process, an ECP official explained that provincial election commissioners would administer the oath to District Returning Officers (DROs), who, in turn, would administer the oath to each Returning Officers (ROs) and Assistant Returning Officers (AROs)

within their respective districts.

Likewise, the ROs would administer the oath to each presiding officer under their jurisdiction, and the presiding officer would then administer the oath to each member of the polling staff under their control before the upcoming poll. Additionally, the head of the law enforcement agency or an authorized officer would administer the oath to every official from that agency assigned to election duties.

After the oaths taking, the process is scheduled to commence, following the requirements of the Elections Act 2017.



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

## 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.



HYDERABAD: Caretaker Home Minister Sindh Brigadier (Rtd) Haris Nawaz visit staff Training Academy at Central Prison Hyderabad.

## 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 18<sup>th</sup>. This brings the total number of repatriated Afghans to over 438,000 since the initiative began.

The breakdown of those who returned on December 18<sup>th</sup> highlights the family nature of the movement, with 365 men, 298 women, and 923 children crossing the border. This trend reflects broader concerns about irregular migration's impact on vulnerable populations, particularly women and children.

It's important to note that even before the official repatriation pro-

cess 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. The presence of undocumented individuals has been linked to challenges like smuggling and extortion in the city, prompting local authorities to focus on facilitating returns and promoting border security measures.

## Iraqi Military attache calls on Caretaker Sindh Info Minister

KARACHI (APP): Military attaché of the Iraqi Embassy to Pakistan Brigadier General Salih Zakhoy called on the Sindh Caretaker Minister for Information, Minority Affairs and Social Protection Muhammad Ahmad Shah at his office here on Tuesday.

Secretary Information Sindh Nadeem ur Rehman Memon was also present on the occasion, a communique said.

They discussed issues of mutual interests, strengthening of relations between Pakistan and Iraq as well as trade, business and cultural exchanges.

## 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," Matthew Miller said and reiterated that the US does not take sides while speaking about Pakistan's politics and they would engage with elected representatives.

## 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.



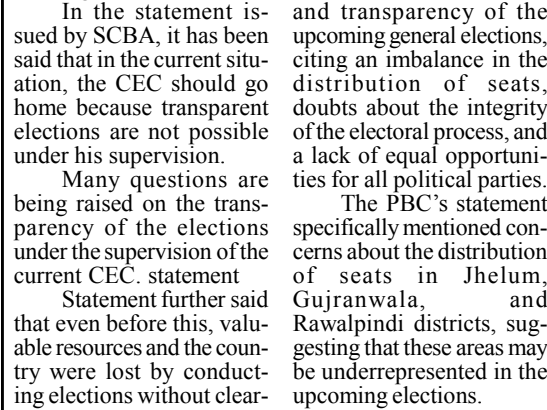
Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Asim Munir meeting with Gen Michael Erik Kurilla, the Commander of the US Central Command (CENTCOM).

## Lawyers' community demands resignation of CEC Sultan

PBC raises concerns about fairness, transparency of upcoming general elections

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 (CEC), Sikandar Sultan Raja. In a statement, the PBC raised concerns about the fairness and transparency of the upcoming general elections, citing an imbalance in the distribution of seats, doubts about the integrity of the electoral process, and a lack of equal opportunities for all political parties.

The PBC's statement specifically mentioned concerns about the distribution of seats in Jhelum, Gujranwala, and Rawalpindi districts, suggesting that these areas may be underrepresented in the upcoming elections.



KARACHI: Diplomats of different countries are participating in the event during the celebrations of the Christmas at St. Joseph's Church in Provincial Capital.



Daily Voice of Masses  
**Independent**

**Balanced ballots**

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

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

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

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



**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 Nazimabad 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, Gujjumatta 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".

The 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.



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 predicted 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.

## 12 killed in attack on party in Mexico: 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.

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

**Monitoring Desk**

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

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

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

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

## Cyberattack hits Iran's petrol stations

**Monitoring Desk**

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

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





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

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

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Tuesday underscored the need for increasing cooperation with Egypt, Oman, Bosnia, Sri Lanka and Cyprus in the fields of trade, economy, and culture as their envoys-designate presented diplomatic credentials to him.

The president expressed these views while talking to the envoys of the Arab Republic of Egypt, Sultanate of Oman, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Republic of Cyprus and the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Welcoming Egyptian



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

## 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.

## Pakistan Envoy presents letter of credence to Iranian FM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan Muhammad Mudassar Tipu on Tuesday presented a copy of his "letter of credence" to Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran Amir Abdollahian.

During the audience with the foreign minister, Ambassador Muhammad Mudassar Tipu conveyed the greetings and desire from the leadership of Pakistan to further strengthen brotherly and historic ties between the two countries and work together for regional peace and stability, a press release said.

The ambassador condemned the Rask terrorist attack and expressed condolences over the martyrdom of Iranian officials.

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

LAHORE (Online): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) 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

allured. 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.

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

PESHAWAR (Online): Newly elected chairman of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Barrister Gohar Ali Khan, has said that he will not form an alliance with any party in the general elections.

If DCs are ROs, they are part of the government which has not been transparent.

Speaking to the media after appearing in the Peshawar High Court, PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan said that taking the election symbol from us would be an injustice to the people.

Barrister Gauhar said that the case will be argued in the High Court on December 21.

## ECP announces guidelines for intending election candidates

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

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

in a branch of a bank. "A candidate will submit his/her income tax returns of three years, annexed with nomination papers," the guidelines read. "The copies of full passport of the candidate would also require to be annexed with nomination papers." "The age of a candidate on last date of submitting the nomination papers must not be lesser than 25 years," ECP said.

"A candidate of the National Assembly seat must be a voter of any place within Pakistan." "A candidate of a provincial assembly must be a native of the concerned province," ECP announced.



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

## DC Larkana visits RHC Naudero, BHU Garhi khuda bux bhutto

LARKANA (APP): Deputy Commissioner Larkana Dr Sharjeel Noor Channa on Tuesday paid a visit to Rural Health Centre (RHC) Naudero and Basic Health Unit (BHU) Garhi Khuda Bux Bhutto to review arrangements made for patients suffering from various diseases.

During his visit, the DC inquired about the problems of patients and directed the Incharge of the Hospitals to ensure the provision of proper healthcare facilities in all wards of the hospital.

He took notice of the shortage of Medicines in the hospital, poor cleanliness and security issues.

During the visit, DC Larkana and Dr Sharjeel Noor Channa said that health facilities in the hos-

pitals should be improved and the supply of food, treatment and medicines should be ensured to the patients.

He further said that the presence of doctors, para-medics and other related staff should be ensured in the hospitals so that patients can get timely treatment and their food and drink should also be taken care of. No negligence is to be tolerated in this regard, he warned.

He also said that all the sections of the RHC/BHU should be made functional and clean.

Assistant Commissioner Ratodero, Incharge of the hospital, officials of the health department, doctors and others were present on the occasion.



KARACHI: A large number of the people are waiting for their turn outside NADRA Mega Center in Provincial Capital.

## Awareness workshop on drug use, HIV held

KARACHI (APP): The Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination in collaboration with Ministry of Narcotics Control (MONC), UNODC, UNDP, UNAIDS and WHO organized an awareness workshop on "Drug Use and HIV" here on Tuesday to create awareness among health journalists on drug abuse, HIV AIDS, HIV prevention among people who inject drugs (PWIDs), harm reduction and OAMT. The one-day workshop was attended by representatives of key media houses and prominent health journalists.

Dr Farrukh Mahmood from UNODC welcomed all

the participants and said that the workshop was being organized to create awareness on drug use and drug use related HIV, the various interventions/approaches for drug dependence treatment and prevention of HIV and blood borne infections transmission among PWIDs.

Joint Secretary, Ministry of Narcotics Control Shahzad Durrani in his opening remarks, emphasized on the need of collective and coordinated efforts to deal with the menace of HIV among PWIDs. He mentioned that drug problem was emerging as a threat to health of the



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

## Water supply to Sukkur barrage's canals to remain suspended for 18 days

HYDERABAD (APP): All the canals springing from the Sukkur barrage will undergo annual closure for repair and maintenance from December 20 to January 6, 2024.

The Chief Engineer Sukkur Barrage informed here on Tuesday that the water supply from the barrage to its left and right bank canals would be suspended for maintenance and necessary repairs.

The canals include Nara, Rohri, Dadu, North West, Khairpur Feeder East and Khairpur Feeder West.

## ROs start issuing nomination papers in Larkana, Kamber-Shahdaddkot, other districts

LARKANA (APP): The election process for the forthcoming general elections 2024 started on Tuesday when the Returning Officers (ROs) started issuing nomination papers, in Larkana, Kamber-Shahdaddkot, Shikarpur, Jacobabad and Kandhkot-Kashmore districts of Larkana division.

On the first day of the election process, intending candidates from different political parties and independent candidates obtained the nomination forms, from the offices of the concerned Returning Officers, while filing of the nomination papers would continue till December 22, 2023.

There are four seats of the National Assembly in Larkana and Kamber-Shahdaddkot districts and Eight (8) seats of the provincial assembly in both

districts. Meanwhile, Political Secretary to Chairman PPP Jameel Ahmed Soomro and President PPP Larkana Khurshid Ahmed Junejo, Chairman District Council Larkana Aijaz Ahmed Leghari and other PPP workers and leaders received the Nomination forms for Chairman PPP Bilawal Bhutto Zardari for NA-194 (Larkana-Ratodero), from the office of Returning Officer and Additional Deputy Commissioner Larkana Asif Raza Chandio.

Political Secretary to Chairman PPP Jameel Ahmed Soomro reached in the office of Assistant Commissioner Larkana and Returning Officer for PS-11 Muhammad Arslan Choudhary to contest the election from Larkana PS-11 and received a nomination form for himself.



KARACHI: Commuters are passing through inundated road by overflowing drinking water after bursting drinking water lines, creating problems for commuters, showing negligence of concerned authorities, located on University road in Karachi.

## DIG East for establishing lady police officer desk in police stations

KARACHI (APP): Deputy Inspector General Police East Zone Ghulam Azfar Mahesar has said that a regular lady police officer desk should be established in the three districts dedicated to dealing with the problems of women who visit the police stations.

Talking to the media on Tuesday, he said that the women police staff will be present in three shifts in all the police stations of three districts of East Zone, Malir, Korangi and East, and they would solve the problems of visiting women.

He said that any kind of negligence would not be tolerated in the hearing of the complaints of women while their problems would be solved immediately.

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

RAWALPINDI (Online): Former Prime Minister Imran Khan's lawyer Shoab 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 Shoab 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.

He said that it is the responsibility of ECP to prevent pre-poll rigging. We can't even hold a worker convention. It is the responsibility of ECP, the administration and the courts to treat everyone equally.

## Bike lifter gang busted, 2 stolen motorcycles recovered

KARACHI (INP): The police busted three-member bike lifter gang and recovered two stolen motorcycles here on Tuesday. The police on a tip-off, launched crack down in jurisdiction of Chakiwara police station in Karachi.

During operation, three members of a bike lifter gang including Yaqoob, Muhammad Ali and Nawaz and Nawaz were arrested besides recovery of two stolen motorcycles.

The detainees were involved in stealing motorcycles from different areas of the city. The police impounded the recovered bikes and shifted the nabbed bike lifters to police station for further investigations.

## DC inspects on-going development schemes in Nawabshah city

NAWABSHAH (APP): Deputy Commissioner Zahid Hussain Rind on Tuesday visited the ongoing development schemes of Nawabshah City. He inspected ongoing pure-block work and switching over of Drainage Disposal and other schemes on the Solar system.

On the occasion XEN Public Health Engineering

Department Ahsan Ali Shah and Municipal Commissioner Abdul Razzaq Shaikh accompanied DC.

The DC emphasized that the ongoing development schemes shall be completed at the earliest to facilitate the citizens.

He also stressed the standard of work adding that no negligence would be tolerated.



KARACHI: Members of Christen Community holds rally from Trinity Church to Press Club, during the celebrations of the Christmas in Provincial Capital.

## 300 laptops distributed among SMU's students

KARACHI (APP): The Sindh HEC Chairman Dr Tariq Rafi, Vice Chancellor of Sindh Madressatul Islam University Dr Mujeeb Sahrai and Regional Director of federal HEC Javed Ali Memon distributed 300 laptops among the students of different departments of Sindh Madressatul Islam University under the Prime Minister Youth Program Laptop Scheme on Tuesday at a ceremony, which was held at the SMU's auditorium. Addressing the ceremony Dr. Tariq Rafi appreciated the federal HEC for giving laptops to the talented and deserving students of the country, which may be supportive of their academic progress. He said we are living in a digitalized world, where our students, faculty and researchers must be con-

nected with the world through gadgets because we can't live in isolation. He said unlike our generation's past today's world is connected to figure tips, hence students must benefit from modern gadgets, that would be beneficial for their academic growth.

and development of the country.

He further said today multiple challenges have emerged for faculty as well as for students, hence they must concentrate on quality education, which is necessary for national development.

He said that the federal HEC had taken a wise decision ten years ago to give laptops to deserving students, which have been a necessary tool especially for their academic and research work.