

# Independent

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Karachi

Ph: 0300-3898091 Vol: 05. No. 346 Jamadi-us-Sani 12, 1445 AH Tuesday December 26, 2023 Pages 04 Price Rs. 12.00



KARACHI: President Dr. Arif Alvi offering Fateha at the Mausoleum of Quaid-i-Azam.

## Bilawal vows to abolish 17 federal ministries if PPP voted into power

PPP chief says Rs1,500 billion subsidy given to the "elites" in various sectors including energy, fertiliser

NAWABSHAH (INP): Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari on Monday vowed to abolish 17 federal ministries if his party elected into power following general elections to save taxpayers' "Rs300 billion".

Addressing a public gathering in Nawabshah, Bilawal said the 17 federal

ministries should have been devolved to provinces after the 18th Constitutional Amendment, Geo News reported.

The PPP chief said Rs300 billion was spent on the ministries and an Rs1,500 billion subsidy was given by the government to the "elites" in various sectors including en-

ergy, fertiliser and others.

Bilawal said his party would end the subsidy for elites to provide funds to labourers and farmers through cards, he said.

The 18th Constitutional Amendment was passed on April 8, 2010. It devolved multiple federal ministries and powers to provinces. It divested the president of all his executive authority and made him a ceremonial head of the state.

Calling the youth the future of the country, the PPP chief said old politicians are a thing of the past. Bilawal said the country's issues could be resolved by burying the politics of "hatred and division".

He highlighted that the country is facing enormous challenges related to the economy and climate change.



NAWABSHAH: Chairman Pakistan People's Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari inspecting different arts and science projects prepared by students of Bakhtawar Cadet College.

## Solangi stresses on democratic means, adherence to rule of law to tackle issues

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Information & Broadcasting Murtaza Solangi Monday stressed on addressing the challenges being faced by the country through democratic means, negotiations, and adherence to the rule of law, as extra-constitutional measures could only lead to destruction.

Speaking at a speech competition organized by the Directorate of Electronic Media and Production (DEMP) among the students of model schools and colleges affiliated with the Federal Directorate of Education (FDE) to pay tribute to Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah on his birth anniversary, he underscored that the pivotal solution to the country's urgent challenges laid in upholding democratic traditions.

"Respecting the Constitution is crucial as progress rests in following the law. Deviating from this may lead to chaos and a breach of constitutional principles," the minister said. Solangi asserted that the country could overcome its prevailing challenges by wholeheartedly embracing the principles advocated by Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

The Quaid, a proponent of the rule of law, advocated for its application impartially, regardless of right or wrong, he said, emphasizing the importance of respecting diverse opinions.

The minister observed that despite acknowledging the oppressive nature of British laws, Jinnah was steadfast in preserving the integrity of the legal system.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Murtaza Solangi addressing event "Speech Competition on Quaid Day" organized by DEMPat Information Service Academy.

## Change of Guards ceremony held at mausoleum of Quaid-e-Azam

KARACHI (INP): Change of guards' ceremony held at the mausoleum of the Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah on his 147th birth anniversary on Monday.

An elegant change of guards' ceremony held at the Quaid's mausoleum in Karachi today to pay tribute to the Father of the Nation.

A smartly turned-out contingent of the Pakistan Military Academy Kakul assumed the ceremonial guards' duty.

Commandant PMA Major General Iftikhar Hassan Chaudhry was the chief guest in the change of guards' ceremony at Mazar-e-Quaid.

Commandant PMA laid floral wreath at the Mazar-e-Quaid and paid respects. The nation is celebrating Quaid's birth anniversary today across the country with enthusiasm and national spirit.

President Arif Alvi arrived at Mazar-e-Quaid and laid floral wreath and observed Fateha this morning.

## CM visits Churches to mark Christmas celebrations

KARACHI (APP): The Caretaker Sindh Chief Minister Justice (Retd), Maqbool Baqar, along with Minister for Information and Minorities Affairs Ahmad Shah, visited St. Patrick's Cathedral in Saddar, met Bishop Benny Mario Travas, and celebrated Christmas by cutting a cake.

Later, the caretaker CM visited Holy Trinity Cathedral, gave a bouquet to Reverend Frederick John, Bishop of Karachi, and presented him with a cake to mark Christmas.

## Government releases all Baloch protestors

ISLAMABAD (APP): The government has released all the remaining 290 Baloch protestors, in light of the deliberations of the committee formed by Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.

The decision to release the arrested protestors was taken in view of the directions of the honorable court, an Interior Ministry spokesperson said in a statement on Monday.

He said that peaceful protest was the right of every citizen, but no one was allowed to take the law into their hands.

## Ex MPA Nusrat Sehar Abbasi quits politics

KARACHI (INP): Three times MPA from Sindh on women seat during three consecutive general elections, Nusrat Sehar Abbasi quits politics. According to details, from 2002 to 2018, Nusrat Sehar Abbasi contested elections on PML-F ticket and elected member Sindh Assembly on special seat.

She remained top among the women participating in the Sindh Assembly's proceedings.

As an opposition member, Nusrat Sehar raised the public issues, corruption, fake appointments and problems faced by women. She quit politics and has shifted to Canada.

## Mirpurkhas first city in Sindh made load-shedding free

KARACHI (APP): Caretaker Chief Minister Sindh Justice (ret'd) Maqbool Baqar, Federal Minister for Power Muhammad Ali and Secretary Power Division Rashid Mahmood Langrial addressed the ceremony of declaring Mirpurkhas load-shedding free at Spreading Engineer HESCO office through a video link here on Monday.

According to a CM House communique, Additional Secretary of Power Division Hasan Naqvi, Chief Executive Officer Bashir Ahmed Gujjar, Chairman HESCO BOD Jamil Gul Sheikh, Divisional Commissioner Mirpurkhas Faisal Ahmed Uqeli, Deputy Commissioner Dr. Rashid Masood Khan, SSP Adil Memon HESCO officers and local citizens as well as journalists were present at the ceremony.

In his address at the ceremony, the caretaker chief minister of Sindh said that elimination of load-shedding is being done in the province and that the people should pay their bills on time as well as use minimum electricity so that along with saving electricity, the bills will be lower.

He said that the HESCO administration should work on providing an uninterrupted supply of power facilities in other big cities, and the government should establish institutions for public service.

The CM said "As you all know today 25 December is the birthday of the founder of Pakistan, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. On this important day, the government is launching the facility of load-shedding free electricity for the people of Mirpurkhas".



KARACHI: Caretaker Sindh Chief Minister Justice (Retired) Maqbool Baqir along with Provincial Minister for Information and Minorities, President Karachi Arts Council, Muhammad Ahmed Shah and Bishop Trinity Cathedral Church, Fredrik John cutting Christmas Cake at Trinity Cathedral Church.

## Faryal Talpur felicitates Christmas community on Christmas

KARACHI (APP): The Pakistan People's Party's Women Wing President Faryal Talpur has extended warm Christmas greetings to the Christian community in Pakistan, which is being celebrated worldwide today.

"The eve of Christmas brings bounties of happiness and blessings not only for Christians but to everyone, she added. She lauded the role Pakistani Christians played in all fields, especially education and the health of the country. She also lauded the role of the

Christian community, which largely supports and votes for the PPP throughout Pakistan.

"I'm sure that the Christian community will again vote for the PPP, which represents a harmonious, tolerant, and progressive Pakistan, in the general elections in Pakistan, scheduled for February 8," she said. She also reiterated the commitment of the PPP, which always advocates for the rights of the downtrodden and marginalized and stands for equal rights for all citizens of Pakistan.

## Investigation directed against ex-chairman Sindh text board for corrupt practices

KARACHI (INP): The Sindh caretaker government has directed investigations against former chairman of Sindh Text Book Board Agha Sohail Pathan for involvement in alleged financial irregularities during his tenure. According to a notification issued on Monday, the provincial government ordered to investigate corruption allegations against former chairman of Sindh Text Book Board.

During the investigation, it was revealed that a substantial amount, exceeding Rs 10,000,000, was defalcated from the transport funds.

Additionally, the former chairman reportedly hired around 70 employees - who were drawing salaries while sitting at home - without proper contractual agreements. In a related development, it has been reported that the Sindh Text Book Board attempted to invest Rs 500,000,000 in a private bank, aimed at investing public funds.

The provincial government has intervened in the matter, halting the processing of the cheque through treasury authorities.

## Interfaith harmony need of hour Nation to stand resolute & strong against enemies creating fissures: COAS

Says Pakistan's enemies hell-bent on creating fissures using religious, ethnic and political vulnerabilities; Army Chief Acknowledges contributions made by Christian community.

RAWALPINDI (APP): Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir on Monday said that the nation would have to stand resolute and strong against the country's enemies who were creating fissures using religious, ethnic and political vulnerabilities. "Enemies of Pakistan

are hell-bent towards creating fissures using religious, ethnic and political vulnerabilities. We have to stand together and united to rise as a resolute and strong nation," the Army Chief said while speaking here at the Christ Church, where he joined the Christian community in Christmas cel-

ebrations. The congregation welcomed the COAS and thanked him for sharing the true vision of Quaid-e-Azam of a united and progressive Pakistan.

He said, "Islam teaches us the lesson of peace, friendship and encourages interfaith harmony which is the need of the hour."

for promoting greater interfaith harmony in the society in order to follow the true vision of Quaid-e-Azam of a united and progressive Pakistan.

He said, "Islam teaches us the lesson of peace, friendship and encourages interfaith harmony which is the need of the hour."



RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir participates in a Christmas ceremony at Christ Church

## President Alvi visits Mazar-e-Quaid, lays floral wreath

KARACHI (INP): President Dr. Arif Alvi on Monday visited mausoleum of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah in Karachi to pay tribute to "Father of Nation" on his 147th birth anniversary.

The President was accompanied by Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori and Caretaker Chief Minister Maqbool Baqar along with cabinet members on the occasion. They laid floral wreaths at the Mazar-e-Quaid and offered fateha. They also recorded their impressions in the book of visitors.

## Official Hajj package to be made low-cost: Aneeq Ahmed

KARACHI (INP): Caretaker Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed said that the official Hajj package will be made low-cost and the price of air tickets for Hajj will also be reduced.

Addressing a conference in Karachi, he said that an app has been launched to train pilgrims from Pakistan to Baitullah and provide them guidance for every step. The Minister said a complaint management system is also part of the app to resolve the complaints of the pilgrims immediately.

## 9140 nomination papers filed in Sindh

KARACHI (APP): The Provincial Election Commission of Sindh on Monday said that a total of 9140 nomination papers had been received in the province for the upcoming general elections 2024 and the scrutiny process for the same would continue till December 30.

Out of 9140 nomination papers, 2555 forms were submitted for 61 general seats of the National Assembly and 6585 for 130 general seats of the Provincial Assembly of Sindh, the Provincial Election Commissioner Sindh Sharifullah said in a statement.

He said that the scrutiny of the nomination papers would continue till December 30.

He said directed the all candidates to strictly adhere to the code of conduct issued by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). Sharifullah said that the ECP was ready to fulfill its constitutional responsibility, and would use all resources for the conduct of fair, free and transparent elections.

## General elections to be held in time: Zardari

Says PPP to form next govt

NAWABSHAH (APP): The future of Pakistan is bright and the Prime Minister of Pakistan would be from PPP, this was stated by President PPP and former President of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari while talking to the media during the visit of Returning Officer office for scrutiny of his nomination form filed for NA-207 Nawabshah.

He was accompanied by Advocate Farooq Naik, former provincial minister of law Ziaul Hassan Lanjar and other party leaders. Later the nomination form of Asif Ali Zardari was approved by the Returning Officer after scrutiny.

Asif Zardari said that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf should work hard this time to learn as early as they came to power last time without any labour.

Zardari said the hopes of the nation are linked with PPP and the future of PPP is very bright. Zardari was confident that the general elections would be held in time.

He said that earlier all political parties were in PDM and now they are contesting in individual status but the future of PPP is bright and would form the government.

## Arts Council organizes conferences out of country besides Karachi: Minister

KARACHI (INP): Muhammad Ahmed Shah, the Provincial Minister for Information, Minority Affairs, Social Welfare, and President of Arts Council of Pakistan, Karachi, who trusted him.

Commissioner Karachi and Chairman Arts Council, Saleem Rajput, praised President Ahmed Shah's efforts, saying that the people of Pakistan appreciate his endeavors.

Saleem Rajput said that he himself is a member and came from Gilgit to cast his vote. He suggested organizing a program in Gilgit and Skardu through the Arts Council.

He mentioned that the Sindh government is working on various aspects for the convenience of city dwellers, including transportation, price control, and other areas.

During the Annual General body meeting, the activities of the past year, audit reports, and a performance report on the video screen were approved. Following the Annual Body meeting, a large number of members participated in a dinner.



SUKKUR: Peoples Party (PPP) Leader, Khurshid Ahmed Shah talking to media persons after submitting nomination papers to Returning Officer for participate in General Election, in Sukkur.



## Daily Voice of Masses Independent

### Gaza bloodbath

While other news, both domestic and foreign, compete for people's attention, we should not forget that one of the most brutal massacres of the modern age, perpetrated by one of the world's most powerful military machines, continues in the Gaza Strip against a starved and terrorised civilian population. Since Oct 7, Israel has been doing in Gaza what it has always been doing to the Palestinian people since the Nakba, but in more concentrated fashion. The torture, murder, humiliation and pillage the Arabs of Palestine have faced since 1948 — and even before, since the Zionist encroachment of Arab land began in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century — can be seen in condensed form in what the Israeli state has unleashed over the past 80 days or so in the forsaken Strip. Gaza has become an emblem for the hypocrisy of the 'international community', and the complete lack of empathy many of the self-professed global champions of human rights are capable of. They play politics to protect Israel at all costs as Palestinian children cry out in unbearable pain.

Some of this hypocrisy was on display at the UN Security Council, when the world body passed a resolution on Friday that called for the delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza, yet remained silent on stopping state-sponsored Israeli violence. As many global bodies observed, the resolution is meaningless: aid will be of little use as Tel Aviv continues to bomb Gaza. This pointless resolution is the result of much hard work by the US, which did all it could to prevent calls for a meaningful ceasefire, and abstained at the time of voting. True to form, Israel dismissed even this watered-down text, reflecting what it really thinks of world opinion. Meanwhile, famine-like conditions loom in Gaza, with the UN's World Food Programme saying the Strip faces "catastrophic conditions" as its people confront starvation. This is another war crime to be added to the many Israel has already committed against the Palestinians.

Unfortunately, those who are trying to tell Gaza's story continue to be exterminated; the Committee to Protect Journalists recently said 68 journalists and media workers have been killed since hostilities began. The vast majority of fatalities (61) are Palestinian. Moreover, Tel Aviv has told foreign wire services that it could not guarantee the safety of their journalists in Gaza. The message is clear: whoever dares to report on the misery in Gaza could themselves become a target of Israeli bombs. Yet even the death of 20,000 Palestinians — most of them women and children — has been unable to shake the world's conscience. The bravery and steadfastness of the Palestinian people can only be commended, while their killers and tormentors have shown they are capable of truly bestial violence.



Luay Shabaneh

Last summer, I had the privilege of joining a Canadian delegation on a field mission to monitor a UNFPA-Canada-supported initiative — the Sihat Mand Khaandaan (SMK) programme — focused on promoting 'healthy families'. Our journey led us to the heart of Memon Gi Wasi village in Matiari district, Sindh, where we were welcomed to an "adolescent and youth-friendly space".

A few dozen young people and some delegation members sat on the sand under an old wooden roof, where we were briefed by the youth about their hopes and challenges and how their engagement with SMK activities had improved their lives. I eagerly absorbed the valuable insights of young women who had managed to discover hope amidst adversity and daunting circumstances. They were brilliantly drawing roadmaps and shaping their dreams, while benefiting from their participation in youth activities and methods they employed to help their communities.

The presentations by these amazing young females reminded me of the UNFPA model for the trajectory of the 10-year-old girl introduced in 2014. The model assumes two trajectories for the girl; the first is what I called at the time 'shining', and the alternative is 'down-nosing'. The shining trajectory starts by keeping the girl at school, protecting her from child marriage, in fact, delaying her marriage until she completes her education and is equipped with skills and

confidence, provided a decent job opportunity and empowered to enjoy her rights. This leads to better health for the girl, a smaller family, lifelong education, and economic independence. Ultimately, she will be better equipped to make decisions about her own reproductive health and raise healthy, happy children, making her a woman leader in her family, community, and larger society, one who is fit to participate in politics and contribute to her nation's prosperity.

On the flip side, the downward trajectory starts with a 10-year-old girl discontinuing her education, leading to early or child marriage, early pregnancy, a growing number of children, health challenges, lack of skills, difficulty in securing stable employment, limited access to education, and heightened vulnerability to gender-based violence (GBV). The accelerators to lift the girl from the down-nosing to shining trajectory were identified by strengthened systems (education, sexual and reproductive health, GBV prevention and response), programmes (population and youth policies, capacity building for quality service provision, laws and policies upholding SRH rights, criminalising violence against women and ending discrimination), and individual capabilities (lifelong education, enabling work environment, knowledge, skills, opportunities and income-generating activities). Go-vernment spending on a 10-year-old on the down-nosing trajectory is far higher than the cost of investing in her education, skills, and opportunities in the shining trajectory.

Although investing in women is a human right, governments, too, can gain multiple benefits from such investment. Cultural barriers and discriminatory social norms are often guarded by commu-

nity gatekeepers, including women who enable the reinforcement of discriminatory value systems and myths within the household and family structure. Women with a high level of human capital are the natural agents of change in social norms that prevent socioeconomic progress.

Research shows that people live in cycles, and socioeconomic and demographic cycles are interlinked with strong association. Poor families are trapped because they have a bigger family size, a higher dependency on breadwinners, are uneducated and unhealthy, and have fewer chances of getting high-income jobs because of their economic burden. Breaking out of this vicious cycle and transitioning to a more prosperous path requires a change in family demographics, and this usually requires investments in women's human capital and opportunities.

Discussions at a recent population conference highlighted the experience of Bangladesh, Iran, Indonesia, Tunisia, and Turkey, which showed that investing in women's human capital, skills, rights, and opportunities comprise a multiplying factor in calibrating population with resources. Pakistan lags behind countries such as Bangladesh and Malaysia, which have achieved remarkable progress in recent years in terms of economic growth and empowering women and integrating them as productive members of society. For example, the female labour force participation rate in Pakistan is 24 per cent compared with 43pc in Bangladesh and 55pc in Malaysia. Pakistan has no choice but to allocate substantial funds and design long-term programmes to invest in women and girls to shift the nation's trajectory from 'down-nosing' to the 'shining' approach. - Courtesy Dawn

### Bits of hope



Huma Yusuf

The focus on Pakistan's upcoming elections is of an existential nature: will they take place? Will the PTI endure in any form? Can Pakistani democracy survive such blatant orchestration? The answer to the last question is: it has to. And so we must seek for shreds of hope.

Our country's democratic system is arguably facing its darkest spell yet, which may seem a dramatic assessment as the hurly burly of elections kicks off. But this is against the backdrop of a censored media, enforced disappearances, suppression of minority rights, a compromised judicial system, including a push for civilian trials in military courts, and threats to the Constitution, particularly targeting the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment. In this context, a sham election seems the least of one's problems.

The election itself, beyond the obvious puppet mastery, has more fundamental flaws, key among them the persistence of disenfranchisement. As Sarwar Bari wrote last month, up to 15 million voters across 102 (out of 134 districts) are missing from the electoral rolls.

This disenfranchisement is prevalent in Balochistan, where one-third of eligible voters in 31 districts have been excluded, but also in more developed parts of the country. The missing voters include both men and women, with poverty likely a major reason for non-registration. The Ahmadi community is also systemically denied a franchise due to require-

ments to flag voters' religious identities.

So where are those shreds of hope? The assumption is that sham elections erode a public's engagement with the democratic process. But ours is a nation accustomed to democratic perversions, and it has not yet lost the appetite for democracy (think of elections in 1988, 2008, and to some extent 2013). In dark political times, should we entertain the idea that the electoral charade itself has merit?

If nothing else, the February elections will keep the electoral machine moving. More than 128.5m voters are registered — no small feat. The election gender gap persists, with women accounting for only 46.13 per cent of registered voters. But enfranchisement is improving; the gender gap for the first time in a decade is less than 10m, and marginalised communities continue to seek representation (consider the candidacies of Nayab Ali and Sobia Khan who are championing transgender rights).

The tenuous link between polls and service delivery also endures. The powers that be acknowledge the need to mobilise 'electables' who draw votes in exchange for patronage (a road, a tube well) for their district. At a brighter moment in Pakistan's democratic trajectory, this trend must be entrenched with better local government structures to improve accountability. There's also something to be said for instilling the electoral habit. Anyone who has cast a vote recalls the thrill of it — the joy of collective participation, the fleeting euphoria of empowerment, the pride of sporting an ink-stained thumb. Voting is addictive, and one hopes that the more than 59m voters under the age of 35 will leave the polls in February with a craving for more democ-

racy.

Pakistanis will head to the polls in a big year for elections — 76 countries, including eight of the 10 most populous, will hold elections in 2024. But democracy lovers are not celebrating. Many important elections (Pakistan, Russia, Bangladesh, Mexico) will not be free or fair, and other critical ones (the US, India, Indonesia) will be deeply flawed. Quality of polling, not quantity, is the purist's call.

However, even in the global context, there is some cause for optimism. Elections that are neither free nor fair are explicitly so. The widespread acknowledgement that some elections are democratic fades erodes trust in current political stakeholders, but should not in the long run irreparably damage democratic systems. Failures in representation, service delivery and policymaking will be blamed on the real power brokers and their implicit proxies, but not on the system itself. If the arc of the moral universe bends toward less nostalgia for autocrats, martial law and hybrid regimes, that is no bad thing. Another interesting trend is the re-engagement of voters in developed democracies with the power of their vote. One example of this is pro-Palestine US voters who will struggle to vote for Joe Biden given his support for Israel. The notion of voting for Biden to keep Trump out no longer seems compelling enough. Such thinking in the short term may lead to more instability and worse political outcomes, but in the longer run would invigorate issue- and values-based politics and reinstate the integrity of the vote, strengthening democracy overall. So darkness will persist, but democracy will prevail. Any other conclusion would be too bleak as we enter an annus electorum. — Courtesy Dawn

## Commerce News

### Pak-China building materials collaboration opportunities flourish in Linqu, Shandong

BEIJING (APP): The Linqu Building Materials Special Session, as part of the 2023 Weifang International Procurement Festival, was held in Linqu, Shandong, which provided a platform for international representatives to connect.

Tahir Zaman Muhammad, the CEO of Eagle Star Supply Chain and a prominent Pakistani business representative, received significant attention during his participation in the event.

"I am honored to have been invited to participate in this prestigious event. The organization of procurement festivals within industrial clusters

provides an excellent opportunity for me to connect with outstanding and reliable suppliers," said Tahir.

He also highlighted the increasing interest and potential for collaboration between the building materials industries of China and Pakistan, China Economic Net (CEN) reported.

Linqu City is renowned for its abundant resource base, advanced manufacturing capabilities, and comprehensive supply chain. Its products, including ceramics, glass, cement, and steel, enjoy high demand both domestically and internationally.

"This event has given me valuable insights into the significant influence of Linqu and has introduced me to several high-quality building material enterprises," expressed Tahir, impressed by the thriving building materials industry in Linqu.

Pakistan is currently witnessing a growing demand for building materials due to rapid urbanization and infrastructure development initiatives.

The country's expertise in areas such as marble, granite, and textiles presents promising opportunities for collaboration with Linqu's building materials sector.

### PRGMEA, Customs hold interactive session to facilitate garment exporters

LAHORE (INP): The Pakistan Readymade Garments Manufacturers & Exporters (PRGMEA) held an interactive session on Monday in collaboration with the Model Customs Collectorate to facilitate the exporters to enhance value-added textile exports, contributing in the economic uplift of the country.

Participated by a number of PRGMEA members, during the interactive session Customs Collector Ms. Azmat Tahira along with her team including Ms. Farah Farooq, Deputy Collector Customs Ms. Syeda Sidra, ADC Additional Deputy Collector Customs, briefed the exporters about various issues including Rebate Calculations, Pending DTRE Cases, Bonded Warehouse Soft Clearance, Vender Registration for EFS, HS Code Approval, Maintenance of Customs Record in Duplicate both in manual and electronic and Access of different Analysis Certificate etc.



PESHAWAR: A delegation of Islamic Development Bank is meeting with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Integration of Districts, Industry and Crafts and Technical Education Dr. Aamir Abdullah, headed by regional operation team leader Kanamak Infrastructure Osama Trigoi.

### FBR issues stern warning to non-filers

ISLAMABAD (INP): In a bold move, the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has issued a warning to non-filers, signaling severe consequences such as bank account suspensions and travel bans for those who fail to comply with income tax return regulations.

Chief of Broadening the Tax Base (BTB) Muhammad Asif stressed the urgency for non-filers to register with the nearest tax office to avoid penalties, fines, utility disconnection, and the extreme measures of bank account suspensions and restricted travel.

FBR Chief

Broadening the Tax Base revealed that a national drive has been launched to broaden the tax base, targeting all eligible individuals and those with taxable income.

A document from the FBR official highlighted Pakistan's narrow tax base, with only around 5.2 million people registered in the tax system in 2022 out of a population of 240 million.

The country faces challenges of widespread tax evasion, a low tax-to-GDP ratio, and a shortage of tax revenues for critical public services and socioeconomic development.

### Thanks to Punjab CM, LDA City affectees to get possession of plots

LAHORE (INP): In another historic decision, Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Monday announced plan to give possession of plots to the affectees of LDA City, who were awaiting this decision from the last nine years.

Sources in Punjab government said that handing over of plots possession to the LDA City affectees will start from December 31 in Block C. Commissioner Lahore Muhammad Ali Randhawa presented the LDA City plan to the Punjab CM.

Possession of 19

plots of 2 kanals and 309 plots of one kanal, 664 plots of 10 marlas and 561 plots of 5 marlas will be given to affectees in C Block of said housing scheme.

Overall, Punjab CM will provide relief to the affectees of LDA City by giving possession of a total of 1553 plots.

Mohsin Naqvi has also barred the collection of additional development charges. He also announced that passion charges will be nominal and will be collected according to nominal DC rate.

### SAPM says: Pakistan participating in Int'l Human Resource & Labour Expo in Riyadh

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) for Human Resource Development and Overseas Pakistanis Jawad Sohrab Malik on Monday said that for the first time Pakistan was participating in the International Human Resource & Labour Expo in Riyadh, Kingdom of

Saudi Arabia.

The SAPM, in a post on the social media platform 'X', said that the main purpose of attending the expo was to highlight "our talented workforce to the global stage, and generate extensive job opportunities for Pakistanis worldwide". He urged the overseas Pakistanis to join the Pakistan delegation at the @Rals2030 Expo in Riyadh, which would continue till December 27.

To generate extensive

### Secretary Industries Punjab visits RDA to inspect under construction BFC

RAWALPINDI (APP): Secretary Industries, Commerce, Investment and Skills Development Department, Punjab Ehsan Bhatta along with Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Liaquat Ali Chatta here on Friday visited R a w a l p i n d i Development Authority (RDA) to inspect the under-construction Business Facilitation Center (BFC).

The Secretary on the occasion said that the purpose of establishing the BFC is to provide maximum facilities to the industrialists, investors and entrepreneurs for obtaining No Objection Certificate (NOC).

### Demand for 'cakes' goes up as Christian community celebrates Christmas with zeal

ISLAMABAD (APP): As the Christian community across Pakistan was celebrating their grand festival of Christmas on Sunday, the bakeries have designed and displayed a variety of 'cakes' decorated with images of Santa Clause, a Christmas tree, and other related themes to attract buyers with high demand. A huge crowd was witnessed at the sweet shops and bakeries to place orders for the customized cakes and sweets, according to a report aired by a private news channel.

"This Christmas season, people are mostly placing huge orders to send gifts as well to celebrate the occasion with zeal and enthusiasm," said a citizen.

Various cakes, cupcakes, and other delights decorated with Santa, a Christmas tree, and other Christmas themes are the favourite choice of the people, especially children and we have displayed special designs which are highly appreciated by customers, said a famous bakery. A buyer commented there was no Christmas without cakes and sweets, "For me, Christmas celebrations are synonymous with cakes and sweets."

"I am not only booking cakes for my family but also my friends and relatives, as this is our tradition to gift cakes and sweets while visiting each other on Christmas."



ISLAMABAD: A man is buying flower pot from vendor at nursery along the Park road in Federal Capital.

### RCCI celebrates Quaid's 147<sup>th</sup> birth Anniversary

RAWALPINDI (APP): A cake-cutting ceremony in connection with the 147<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah was held at Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) here on Monday.

Speaking on the occasion, RCCI President and Chairman RWMC, Saqib Rafiq said that the objective of inheriting a prosperous Pakistan to the next generation can only be possible by complying with Quaid's motto of Unity, Faith and Discipline. Saqib

Rafiq emphasized the business community, youth and members of the RCCI to adopt Quaid's attributes of honesty, hard work, perseverance and dedication. "We have to work together and give a better and prosperous Pakistan for future generations".

Group leader Sohail Altaf said that with the difficulties that Pakistan is facing today, it is the responsibility of every individual to become sincere to his country and devote his services to the building of the country.



## 'Minorities must be treated with kindness', CM Punjab

**Independent Report**  
LAHORE: Caretaker Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi said on Monday that minorities must be treated with kindness as per the teachings of our beloved Holy Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him).  
He said this while addressing a prayer ceremony held at Cathedral Church here.  
CM extended Christmas greeting to christian community.  
Mohsin Naqvi said that Churches and houses damaged in Jaranwala incident had been repaired, while houses which had been burnt were provided financial assistance.  
He further said that 'after Jaranwala incident, 'Meesaq' centres have been established in all the districts for the protection of the rights of the minorities and the

promotion of inter-faith harmony".  
CM said that today biggest 'Mesaq Centre' will be inaugurated in Lahore.  
For the first time Punjab Cabinet meeting was held in Jaranwala Church to express solidarity with christian community, he said and added that doors of Mosques were opened for Christians after Jaranwala incident.  
Mohsin Naqvi said that Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah also emphasized on protecting rights of minorities.  
He said that services of christian community in the field of education could not be denied.  
CM said, "Sacred heart, Convent and other educational institutions of christian community are source of pride for all of us." He said, "Muslims

deeply respect Hazrat Isa (AS) as one of the great messengers of Allah Almighty".  
It is pertinent to mention here that Archbishop of Lahore Sebastian Francis Shaw welcomed the CM at the Church and presented flowers to him. Christmas cake was also cut on the occasion.  
Meanwhile the Punjab government on Monday celebrated the birth anniversary of Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah in an unprecedented manner at Chief Minister's office. According to a handout issued here, Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi and members of the cabinet participated in a cake-cutting ceremony, extending heartfelt wishes to the nation on the revered occasion of the Father of the Nation's birth anniversary.



LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi cutting the cake on the occasion of Christmas Day at St. Anthony's Church, in the City.

## Quaid-e-Azam changed map of sub-continent through democratic struggle: Governor

**PESHAWAR (APP):** Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor, Haji Ghulam Ali here Monday said that the founder of Pakistan, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah had changed the map of the sub-continent and made the creation of Pakistan possible for Muslims through a democratic struggle.  
In a message on the 147th birthday anniversary of the legendary leader, Ghulam Ali said that the ideology of Pakistan for Quaid-e-Azam was not acquiring merely a piece of land but the creation of a separate and sovereign

## Fire break out due to gas leakage in Rawalpindi

**RAWALPINDI (APP):** A fire broke out due to a gas pipeline leakage in Dhamyal, Rawalpindi, on Monday. According to spokesperson Rescue 1122, six emergency vehicles, including three fire tenders, and more than a dozen personnel participated in the operation. Fortunately, there were no reported casualties, but a house was badly damaged due to the fire. Soon after the incident, Commissioner Rawalpindi Liaquat Ali Chhatta, Regional Police Officer (RPO) Rawalpindi Syed Khurram Ali.

## CM KP extends warm wishes to nation on Quaid's Day

**PESHAWAR (APP):** Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Justice ® Syed Arshad Hussain Shah, in commemoration of the birth anniversary of the founding father, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, extended warm wishes to the nation on this significant day and urged the nation to renew its commitment to making Pakistan an Islamic welfare state.  
Chief Minister Syed Arshad Hussain Shah delivered a heartfelt message, addressing the entire nation. Chief Minister Arshad Hussain Shah acknowledged the relentless efforts and visionary leadership of Quaid-e-Azam in establishing a separate state.  
He emphasized the enduring commitment and unwavering struggle that paved the way for the creation of the blessed country of Pakistan. Reflecting on the principled and scholarly leadership of Quaid-e-Azam, the Chief Minister highlighted that the nation, under his visionary guidance, emerged as the manifestation of Allah's gift. In the context of current crises, the Chief Minister stressed the need for the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to adhere to the principles of faith, unity, and discipline laid out by the founding fathers. CM Arshad Hussain urged everyone to play their role in steering the country away from prevailing crises and towards the path of progress.



PESHAWAR: Chief Traffic Police Officer Dr. Zahid Ullah distributing helmets, mugs and history books of Quaid-e-Azam to a motorcyclist on the occasion of Quaid-e-Azam day at Khyber Road.



FAISALABAD: Visitor keenly viewing the displayed portrait during an exhibition in connection with Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah's 147th birthday at Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan Auditorium of Arts Council.

## CM KP greets newly office bearers of Tank Press Club

**PESHAWAR (APP):** Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Justice Retired Arshad Hussain Shah on Monday felicitated the newly elected office bearers of Tank Press Club.  
He extended congratulations to President Rafiq Ahmed Kundi, General Secretary Sheikh Rehmatalah along with entire cabinet, on their successful election.  
In his official statement, Chief Minister Arshad Hussain Shah expressed hope that the newly elected cabinet would utilize their leadership and professional skills for the prosperity and advancement of the journalistic community in the area.  
He emphasized their responsibility in fostering a positive journalistic environment and promoting excellence in the field of journalism.

## Commissioner shares Christ joy in colourful event

**RAWALPINDI (APP):** In a heartwarming Christmas gathering, Commissioner Rawalpindi Liaquat Ali Chhatta highlighted the universal message of love for humanity preached by all religions, emphasizing the value of unity and respect for diverse beliefs.  
Speaking as the chief guest, Commissioner Chhatta said that minorities are fully protected and enjoying equal rights.  
He assured the Christian community of foolproof security measures, emphasizing that the security of Pakistan is intertwined with the collective attitude towards other religions and minorities. He called upon everyone to actively contribute to making the country a haven of peace and security.

## 37 robbers killed during 58 police encounters in Vehari district

**BUREWALA (APP):** As many as 58 police encounters were took place in which 37 robbers killed in Vehari district during last 10 months. 41 dacoits were injured while two policemen were also injured in these encounters. According to the spokesperson of Vehari district police, the criminals, proclaimed offenders and robbers left the area due to police raids under the supervision of DPO Vehari Isa Khan.

## Kashmiris remember Quaid e Azam on his 147th birth anniversary

**MIRPUR (AJK) (APP):** People across Azad Jammu Kashmir celebrated Quaid-e-Azam day marking the state-wide celebrations of 147th birth anniversary of the founder of Pakistan, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah on Monday with great enthusiasm and devotion coupled with the renewal of the pledge to continue the individual and collective role for making Pakistan progressive and prosperous in letter and spirit as envisioned by father of the nation.  
It was gazetted holiday across AJK on this occasion. The day dawned with special prayers in the mosques throughout AJK for the integrity, solidarity, progress and prosperity of Pakistan and for the early success of the Kashmir freedom movement. Special ceremonies to celebrate the birthday of Quaid-e-Azam were hosted in all ten districts, as well as the subordinate tehsil headquarters of Azad Jammu Kashmir including the state metropolis.

## 135 male, 7 female for NA, 470 male, 22 female submitted papers for PK seats in Peshawar

**PESHAWAR (APP):** As many as 135 male and seven female candidates have submitted their nomination papers for five National Assembly seats while 470 male and 22 female have submitted their nomination papers for 13 provincial assembly seats in Peshawar for General Elections 2024.  
According to a notification issued here on Sunday by the provincial election commission, said that 33 males have submitted nomination papers for NA-28 Peshawar-I, 21 males have submitted nomination papers for NA-29 Peshawar-II, 25 males and two females have submitted nomination papers for NA-30 Peshawar-III, 28 males and two females have submitted nomination papers for NA-31 Peshawar.

# International News

## Russian has the upper hand in arms race with the West, says Russian minister

**Monitoring Desk**  
MOSCOW: Russia has the upper hand in weapons production over the West and intends to keep the rate of growth high, a top Russian minister said on Monday after both the West and Russia ramped up arms production for the Ukraine war.  
Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, triggering the biggest conflict in Europe since World War Two and the deepest confrontation between Russia and the West since the depths of the Cold War. Ukraine and its West-



OCCUPIED WEST BANK: Members of the Palestinian youth scouting movement hold banners calling for an end to the conflict in the Gaza Strip during a procession to welcome the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem.

## France completes military withdrawal from Niger, leaving a gap in the terror fight in the Sahel

**Monitoring Desk**  
ABUJA: France on Friday announced the withdrawal of its troops after they were asked to leave Niger by the country's new junta, ending years of on-the-ground military support and raising concerns from analysts about a gap in the fight against jihadi violence across the Sahel region of Africa.  
The last French military aircraft and troops departed Niger by the Dec. 11 deadline set by the junta which severed ties with Paris after the coup in July, the French Army General Staff told The Associated Press by email. France already announced this week that it would close its diplomatic mission in Niger for "an indefinite period."  
However, the country would continue to be involved in the Sahel — the vast expanse south of the Sahara Desert which has been a hot spot for violent extremism — although differently, President Emmanuel Macron said Thursday during a visit to a base in Jordan.  
"I decided on some important reconfigurations," Macron said.

## Eight police injured, 38 detained in Serb opposition protest over election

**Monitoring Desk**  
BELGRADE: Eight policemen were injured and 38 people detained during and after an opposition protest over election results, Serbia's police said on Monday.  
Thousands gathered in the centre of Belgrade on Sunday to demand the annulment of parliamentary and local elections a week ago that international observers said were unfair.  
The protesters broke windows and glass at the main entrance of the town hall, before police used pepper spray to disperse them around 10 p.m. (2100 GMT).



Supporters of the opposition 'Serbia Against Violence' (SPN) protest in front of the city hall, after the SPN alleged major election law violations in the Belgrade city and parliament races, in Belgrade, Serbia.

## Drone attack damages ship off India's coast

**Monitoring Desk**  
DUBAI: A drone strike damaged a merchant ship off the coast of India on Saturday, but caused no casualties, two maritime agencies said, with one reporting the vessel was linked to Israel. The attack caused a fire on board, according to the British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations, or UKMTO. Ambrey, a maritime security firm, said the "Liberia-flagged tanker... was Israel-affiliated" and had been on its way from Saudi Arabia to India. Both agencies said the attack occurred 200 nautical miles southwest of Veraval, India.

## Afghan schoolgirls are finishing sixth grade in tears. Under Taliban rule, their education is over

**Monitoring Desk**  
KABUL: Bahara Rustam, 13, took her last class at Bibi Razia School in Kabul on Dec. 11 knowing it was the end of her education. Under Taliban rule, she is unlikely to step foot in a classroom again. In September 2021, a month after U.S. and NATO troops withdrew from Afghanistan following two decades of war, the Taliban announced that girls were barred from studying beyond sixth grade. They extended this education ban to universi-

## American military 'tracks' Santa Claus for 68th year

**Monitoring Desk**  
WASHINGTON: The joint US-Canadian military monitoring agency has continued its decades-long tradition of tracking Santa's whereabouts, helping children around the globe find out when his reindeer-powered, present-filled sleigh is coming to town. A 3-D, interactive website at [www.noradsanta.org](http://www.noradsanta.org) showed Santa and his reindeer on their imagined worldwide delivery route.

## Staff deaths in Gaza reach unprecedented levels, says UN chief

**Monitoring Desk**  
UNITED NATIONS: In a startling disclosure, UN Secretary-General António Guterres said on Sunday that 136 UN personnel had lost their lives in Gaza over the past 75 days, marking an unprecedented tragedy in UN history.  
Mr Guterres expressed deep concern over the appalling human suffering, physical destruction in Gaza, and urged Israel not to continue its 'collective punishment' against the Palestinian people.  
The secretary-general paid tribute to the UN staff, most of whom were forced from their homes, and thousands of aid workers risking their lives to support civilians in Gaza. He emphasized the international community's responsibility to leverage its influence to prevent further escalation and end the crisis, urging Israel to avoid "collective punishment."  
"The international community has a responsibility to use all its influence to prevent further escalation and end this crisis," Mr. Guterres insisted.



Pope Francis celebrates Christmas Eve mass in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican.

## Thousands join migrant caravan in Mexico ahead of Secretary of State Blinken's visit to the capital

**Monitoring Desk**  
TAPACHULA: A sprawling caravan of migrants from Central America, Venezuela, Cuba and other countries trekked through Mexico on Sunday, heading toward the U.S. border. The procession came just days before Secretary of State Antony Blinken arrives in Mexico City to hammer out new agreements to control the surge of migrants seeking entry into the United States.  
The caravan, estimated at around 6,000 people, many of them families with young children, is the largest in more than a year, a clear indication that joint efforts by the Biden administration and President Andrés Manuel López Obrador's government to deter migration are falling short.  
The Christmas Eve caravan departed from the city of Tapachula, near the country's southern border with Guatemala. Security forces looked on in what appeared to be a repeat of past tactics when authorities waited for the marchers to tire out and then offered them a form of temporary legal status that is used by many to continue their journey northward.  
"We've been waiting here for three or four months without an answer," said Cristian Rivera, traveling alone, having left his wife and child in his native Honduras. "Hopefully with this march there will be a change and we can get the permission we need to head north."

## Swedish court ruling against ex-official 'unjust': Iran

**Monitoring Desk**  
DUBAI: Iran said on Monday it would continue efforts to gain the release of a former Iranian official sentenced in Sweden to life in prison for his part in a mass execution of political prisoners in Iran.  
"This unjust and outrageous ruling does not end Iran's diplomatic efforts to repatriate and free this Iranian citizen and we will use all legal and available means," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Nasser Kanaani said, without specifying.  
Last Tuesday, a Swedish appeals court upheld the guilty verdict and life sentence for murder and serious crimes against international law for the former official Hamid Noury.  
"We seriously object to the verdict and to what has taken place during this citizen's long period of detention... and his basic rights have not been respected in Sweden's prisons," Kanaani told a weekly news conference. "We hope Sweden will take serious actions to compensate for its errors."

## Large parts of Australia endure heatwave

**Monitoring Desk**  
SYDNEY: Large parts of Australia on Sunday sweated through heatwave conditions as authorities warned of a high bushfire risk in many parts of the country's vast Western Australia state. The nation's weather forecaster on Sunday issued heatwave alerts for the western state, the neighbouring Northern Territory and the eastern Queensland state.



## President urges children to achieve high academic goals, adopt Quaid's principles

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Monday urged children to contribute to the country by achieving high standards in education and adopting the Quaid-e-Azam's principles of unity, faith, and discipline.

In an event titled 'Quaid and Children', the president said adhering to the golden values of the founder of Pakistan would make the country prosper in the comity of nations.

The colourful ceremony held here at the Presidency to celebrate the birth anniversary of the Quaid-e-Azam was attended by First Lady Samina Alvi, ministers, parliamentarians, and a large number of school children including the differently-abled ones.

President Alvi recalled that during the Pakistan Movement, children were also among the population

who loved their Quaid and steadfastly stood with him in his struggle for a separate homeland. He read out a few passionate letters written by children to the Quaid-e-Azam where they penned their support to him besides sending him the money collected after savings.

The president said Quaid-e-Azam was a strong believer in mainstreaming women and other marginalized segments of society to ensure economic prosperity.

He emphasized providing equal opportunities to women and differently-abled people in the fields of education and employment. He said the Quaid-e-Azam created this country with utmost dedication and commitment and stressed that it was the responsibility of every citizen to play a part in its development.

He said Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah was a great leader whose struggle led to bringing a change in the world.

"This homeland was created after the sacrifices of thousands of people and it needs to be strengthened with hard work and commitment," he said.

President Alvi and Samina Alvi cut the cake to celebrate the birthday of the Quaid-e-Azam among children.



ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi, First Lady Begum Samina Arif Alvi and federal ministers cutting cake to celebrate the 147th birth anniversary of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

## Muslims, minorities united for country's development: Ashrafi

KARACHI (APP): Special Representative to the Caretaker Prime Minister on Religious Harmony & Islamic Countries Hafiz Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi on Monday said that Ulema and minorities, including the Christian community, were united for the peace and development of the country.

Ashrafi, who is also Chairman of the Pakistan Ulema Council, said the PUC and churches had always stood firm for peace in the country.

He stated this during his visit to Holy Trinity Cathedral to celebrate Christmas with the Christian community.

Ashrafi, felicitating

the Christian community on the auspicious occasion, said that the Ulema believed in having respect for all religions. The minorities including Christians, Sikhs and Hindus were free to go to their worship places in the country and their protection was the State's responsibility, he added.

Referring to the Palestine situation, he said that the Christians opened doors of their Churches for the Muslims when the latter were attacked.

He stated that the Christians also being targeted in Palestine along with the Muslims. "We want peace and do not want war," he added.

Recalling the incident of Jaranwala, he said that no one had the right to destabilise peace in the country. "Islam does not allow anyone to force for marriage as well as does not allow any act with force."

Ashrafi said that due to the efforts of the caretaker prime minister and the COAS, activities had been restored in the Pakistan Stock Exchange and reduced Hajj expenses by Rs 0.1 million. He announced to hold an International Conference on Religions between January 15-20.

## Solangi for implementation of Quaid-e-Azam's principles to make Pakistan prosperous

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Monday called for the implementation of the principles of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah to make Pakistan a developed and prosperous nation.

In his message on the birth anniversary of the Father of the Nation Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, he said today the entire nation paid homage to "Mohsin-e-Pakistan" Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

Quaid-e-Azam tirelessly fought for the freedom of the Muslims of the subcontinent and the establishment of a separate independent state, Murtaza Solangi said.

He said the Quaid-e-Azam made it possible to create a state in the form of Pakistan where all citizens have equal opportunities to live and develop without any discrimination of colour, caste, religion, language.

The Quaid-e-Azam made the dream of Pakistan a reality due to his skills, determination and exceptional character. Murtaza Solangi remarked.

"To overcome the challenges, we have to adopt the golden principles of unity, faith and discipline," Murtaza Solangi added. "Today we reiterate our resolve to make Pakistan a greater and stronger country," Murtaza Solangi said.



KARACHI: Special Representative to the Caretaker Prime Minister on Religious Harmony & Islamic Countries and Chairman of Pakistan Ulema Council Hafiz Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi talking to media persons at Holy Trinity Cathedral Church.

## Safety board to consider PIA flight operations in Europe, UK next year

KARACHI (INP): In a recent development, the International Aviation Safety Assessment (IASA) on Monday sought documents related to Pakistan International Airlines (PIA's) engineering, flight services, and flight operations, sources said.

Sources stated that the European Safety Agency Board is set to make a crucial decision in its meeting related to the ban on PIA flights in Europe and the UK scheduled to be held in May 2024.

The International Aviation Safety Assessment (IASA) is expected to present its final report to the Safety Board in the said meeting scheduled for May 2024, meanwhile, the audit reports of both PIA and the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) are included in the agenda for discussion.

## President approves removal of Ahad Cheema

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi approved the removal of Ahad Khan Cheema from his post of Advisor to Prime Minister for Establishment.

On the instruction of the Election Commission of Pakistan, the caretaker prime minister sent the summary to the President for the removal of Ahad Cheema from his post.

The President approved the removal of Ahad Cheema on the advice of the prime minister under Article 48 of the constitution.

## Nomination papers scrutiny for national and provincial assemblies seats continues

LARKANA (APP): The scrutiny of the nomination papers by the respective returning officers for Four (04) National Assembly seats and eight (08) Sindh Assembly seats in Larkana and Kamber-Shahdadkot districts continued on the first day here on Monday.

The returning officers drawn from the civil administration had started the scrutiny of the nomination papers filed by the candidates for the national and provincial assembly constituencies, which will continue until December 30, 2023.

The returning officers, during the process of scrutinizing nomination papers, will examine and determine their eligibility for contesting the general elections in 2024 within the ambit of law.

## Police arrest four drug peddlers, recovered mainpuri, raw material

HYDERABAD (APP): Police in its continued drive against narcotics and criminals on Monday arrested four drug peddlers and recovered Manipuri and raw material from their possession.

SHO Pinyari police station acting on a tip-off conducted a raid on the warehouse of notorious mainpuri dealer Safer Bahlem and arrested four accused Tanveer, Shan, Jeshi and Hamza and recovered 800 packets of mainpuri and raw material while their other accomplices managed to escape.

Police have registered a case against suspects under Gutka and Manipuri Act.

## ECP introduces online facility center to check process of nomination papers

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Election Commission has introduced an online facility center to streamline the process of checking nomination papers for the upcoming general elections.

The spokesman of the Election Commission on Monday revealed that the online facility center, located in the Election Commission Secretariat, is operational 24 hours a day, supported by NADRA, NAB, FIA, FBR, and the State Bank. Information is promptly relayed to the relevant institutions for necessary actions.

The Election Commission spokesman added that directives have been issued to the Secretary of Power Division and Secretary of Petroleum Division to obtain lists of candidates from the returning officers. Similarly, the Secretary of National Telecommunication and Secretary of Housing have been instructed to collect candidate lists from returning officers. Chief Secretaries of the four provinces and the Chairman of CDA have also received orders to procure candidate lists from Returning Officers.

Furthermore, the Election Commission spokesman emphasized that defaulting candidates should approach the Returning Officer for document verification between December 25 and December 30, following the release of the candidate list.

## Christmas celebrates in Larkana division

LARKANA (APP): The Christmas festive was celebrated on Monday with religious zeal and enthusiasm in the five districts including Larkana, Kamber-Shahdadkot, Shikarpur, Jacobabad and Kashmore-Kandhkot of Larkana division.

Special services were organized at the churches in the five districts of the Larkana division, where prayers were also offered for global peace, national integrity, solidarity and prosperity.

The Christian community celebrated Christmas with wearing new dresses and the Santa Claus distributed gifts among the children. They had also decorated churches and houses. After the church services, members of the Christian community visited friends and relatives distributed sweets and cakes and held feasts.

In Larkana, Christmas Day was celebrated with religious enthusiasm by the Christian community. A ceremony was held at St. Joseph's Catholic Church in the city, in which Christian men including Father

Ashfaq George, Danish Sami, Anthony Sahotra, Sohail Jervez, Parvez Michael, Khushi Peters, Naeem Khushi, women, children and youths participated in a large numbers in the event, wearing new costumes. In the event, the children and youths of the Christian community made the event four moons by presenting tableaux on Christmas songs.

Later, the leaders of the Christian community cut the birthday cake together and offered special prayers for the country's security and prosperity. Addressing the ceremony, Father Ashfaq George and others said that today is a very holy and beneficial day for the Christian community. The leaders said that December 25 is the birth day of the Prophet Jesus Christ, and we pay great respect to this day, with respect, enthusiasm and enthusiasm by organizing events and cutting birthday cakes. They said that Christmas day is a day of Eid for us, on this day we wear new clothes prepare good food and Congratulate each other on Christmas.



KARACHI: A view of traffic jam on Shahrah-e-Faisal.

## PAF pays tribute to Quaid through video

ISLAMABAD (INP): A short video was released by Directorate of General Public Relations, Pakistan Air Force (PAF) to pay tribute to the Founder of Pakistan, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, on his birth anniversary.

The PAF video stated that Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah offered the oppressed Muslims of the Subcontinent a ray of hope and united them as one nation to achieve a separate and independent homeland for them.

## Terrorist attack on police station foiled in Lakki Marwat

LAKKI MARWAT (INP): The police foiled a terrorist attack on a police station and forcing the attackers to flee. According to a private Tv channel, armed miscreants stormed Gambella police station of Lakki Marwat on Sunday-Monday midnight.

However, the police personnel through quick response foiled the attack and assailants were forced to escape. DPO Tariq Habib said that no casualty or damage to police building occurred in the attack. He also appreciated the police forces for quick response foiled the third attack on the said police station within two days.

## Policeman die in accidental bullet fire

KARACHI (Online): One among two policemen who were accidentally shot had died in Jinnah hospital during treatment. Police said police man who died has been identified as Fahmid and the injured policeman as Gul Sher.

Police said the incident had occurred at 7.30 a.m. Constable Ali Ahmad was checking pistol of DSP traffic section Landhi and the bullet was fired by him accidentally. One bullet hit two constables who were shifted to hospital where one police man succumbed to injuries.

## Regional Transport Authority recovers excess fares from transporters

HYDERABAD (APP): The Secretary Regional Transport Authority (RTA) Hyderabad Saleem Memon here on Sunday recovered Rs 73,000 from drivers of 45 public transport vehicles and returned the amount to the passengers. The RTA informed that he also slapped Rs 110,000 fine on the transporters for charging unauthorized fares from the public. He noted that the fuel prices had kept declining over the last two months but the transporters had the tendency to charge excess fares on weekends and special occasions. According to him, the action was carried out on the directions of Deputy Commissioner Tariq Qureshi.



KARACHI: Christian community members performing religious rituals on Christmas Day at The Holy Trinity Cathedral Church.

## Provision of best Hajj facilities to pilgrims' gov't top priority: Aneeq

ISLAMABAD (INP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed Monday said that provision of best Hajj facilities to Pakistani pilgrims is top priority of the government for which the government was taking all possible steps.

Interacting with a private Tv channel here, he said that in its Hajj Policy 2024, the federal government has significantly reduced the Hajj expenses as compared to previous year.

Amee Ahmed said that the Hajj 2024 was set to embrace digitalization, providing pilgrims with a mobile application which will function without Internet connectivity. This innovative app will offer various features, including a complaint lodging option to the pilgrims this year, he added.

The government had also introduced a historic 20 to 21-day short Hajj package and was striving to make the religious obligation financially affordable to the entire nation, he said.

He said quality accommodation and meals, with improved transportation facilities would be provided to make the Hajj a more comfortable and convenient experience for the pilgrims.

## ECP establishes election appeal tribunals to review nomination paper objections

ISLAMABAD (INP): Following the conclusion of the nomination paper collection phase nationwide, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has taken a proactive step by establishing Election Appeal Tribunals to meticulously address objections raised against nomination papers.

Comprising judges from five different high courts, these tribunals are set to operate from January 3 to January 10, providing a dedicated platform for the scrutiny of objections. The distribution of judges reflects a balanced representation, with five judges from Peshawar High Court, nine from Lahore High Court, two from Islamabad, and two from Balochistan High Court, each assigned to carefully

evaluate objections in their respective jurisdictions. One notable aspect of this process is the appointment of Justice Faisal Zaman Khan, who will preside over objections related to the reserved seats for women and minorities in the Punjab National Assembly. His role signifies a specialized focus on ensuring fair representation and inclusivity in the political landscape.

In the Faisalabad and Sargodha Divisions, objections pertaining to national and provincial general seats will be heard by Justice Asjad Javed Gharal. Simultaneously, Justice Sultan Tanveer Ahmad will oversee objections from Bahawalpur Divisions and District Lodhran concerning ethnic and provincial general seats.

## Workers of PML(N) cutting the Birthday cakes of Quaid-e-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah and PML-N supreme Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif.

HYDERABAD: Workers of PML(N) cutting the Birthday cakes of Quaid-e-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah and PML-N supreme Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif.

## Met Office forecast dry weather and colder night in Karachi

KARACHI (INP): The Met Office on Monday forecast dry weather with colder night in Karachi in next 24 hours. The minimum temperature in the city was recorded 16.5 degree Celsius in the city, while maximum temperature will remain between 28 to 29-degree Celsius, weather department said.

Forty percent humidity in the air recorded in the morning. Met Office said. The northeastern winds blowing with the speed of seven nautical miles in Karachi.

The city's air quality index reading remained 171 in the hazardous zone and it ranked 8th most polluted city of the world at the index, according to the weather office.

The weather will remain cold and dry in most districts of Sindh with likely fog and smog in Jacobabad, Mohen Jo Daro, Sukkur, Larkana, Dadu, Ghotki and Padidan. Cold and frosty weather will prevail in most districts of Balochistan, while the northern districts of province will be hit by extreme cold weather. The Met Office has forecast cold and dry weather for most parts of the country with chances of light rain at some places and snowfall at mountains in GB and upper Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.