

# Independent

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### 35<sup>th</sup> Convocation ceremony of PNEC Self-sustenance inevitable for success in the world: President

KARACHI (APP): President Dr. Arif Alvi on Tuesday said that self-sustenance is inevitable for the success in the world and expressed the confidence that Pakistan would progress and develop. Addressing as chief guest on the occasion of the 35<sup>th</sup> Convocation ceremony of Pakistan Navy Engineering College (PNEC) at Baharia Auditorium here, he said that the world needed intellect at the moment and there was no dearth of it in Pakistan. Rector National University of Science and Technology (NUST) Lt General @ Mehmood and Commander Karachi Rear Admiral Muhammad Saleem were also present. During the convocation, a total of 368 graduates were awarded Bachelors' and Postgraduate degrees including the foreign students. The President also awarded 39 medals to the students on their outstanding performance.

Addressing the convocation, President Dr. Arif Alvi appreciated the efforts put in by the PNEC for maintaining high standards of education by providing quality engineers to the evolving industry of Pakistan. He emphasized that responsibility of PNEC has further increased in present realm of emerging technologies like Artificial Intelligence and Robotics. He also acknowledged that foreign students were a testimony to the College's credentials in the engineering sector. He highlighted that NUST PNEC will continue with its legacy of being the premier engineering and technology institution, fulfilling present day engineering needs of the country. The President felicitated the graduating students and their parents and advised the graduates to be active members of society in building a stronger and prosperous Pakistan.



KARACHI: The President of Pakistan, Dr. Arif Alvi addressing the Pakistan Navy Engineering College (PNEC) Convocation 2023.

### Sindh cabinet approves funds for general election expenditures, payment of govt power bill

KARACHI (APP): The Sindh cabinet on Tuesday approved several financial allocations for various development projects, including Rs. 29.379 billion for the payment of government electricity bills, Rs. 768.6 million for the operation of 50 electric buses on the city roads and a subsidy of Rs. 579.756 million for intra-district people's buses.

Additionally, the cabinet also approved Rs. 1.1 billion for the construction of a Link Road Interchange, Rs. 33.956 million for Khirthar National Park boundary demarcation and fixing of boundary pillars, Rs. 1424.720 million for the reconstruction of three West district schools, and Rs. 115 million for the restoration of the Hindu Gymkhana.

The meeting was chaired by Caretaker Chief Minister Justice @ Maqbool Baqar at CM House. Provincial caretaker ministers, Chief Secretary Dr Fakhre Alam, Chairman P&D Sakhil Mangnejo and other concerned officers attended the meeting.

Chief Secretary Dr Fakhre Alam told the cabinet that an amount of Rs 300 million (Rs10 million to each of all 30 DCs), may be provided to all the Returning Officers and Deputy Commissioners for election expenditures. In case of any shortfall, further funds may also be provided separately, on a case-to-case basis.

The cabinet also approved an amount of Rs168 million to be given to deputy commissioners to clear the old liabilities of the local bodies elections.

### Shaheed BB stands as nation's living movement, radiant torch: Bilawal

#### Benazir led nation during turbulent times, sacrificed life for country; says Bilawal

LARKANA (APP): Chairman Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Tuesday said the nation eloquently commemorates the indelible legacy of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, the first democratically elected woman prime minister of the Islamic world as well as esteemed leader of the world, saying that the "Daughter of the East" stands not only as a historical figure but as a living movement and a radiant torch. Her nationalistic spirit, enduring struggle and steadfast leadership destined to be ingrained in the hearts and minds of the Pakistani nation, he said while sharing a reflective message on the occasion of 16<sup>th</sup> martyrdom anniversary of slain Chairperson of PPP Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto to be celebrated on Wednesday. He said that her mother remained ardently dedicated he life to the noble cause of transforming the country into a genuine welfare state, guided by the visionary ideals of the nation's founding leaders.



KARACHI: Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori giving award to journalists during award distribution ceremony of Sports Journalist Association Sindh held at Governor House.

### Govt to extend all-out support for uplift of KPK merged districts: PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Tuesday said that despite the availability of limited resources, the government would extend all possible support to the provincial government for uplift and welfare of the merged districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK).

The prime minister, chairing a meeting to discuss the matters about KPK, said that being cognizant of their problems, the federal government stood with the government and people of the province.

He also instructed the authorities concerned to resolve the issues confronting the KPK province that had rendered immense sacrifices against terrorism. The prime minister instructed to form a secretarial committee to resolve the KPK's financial matters and formulate recommendations regarding the payment of net hydro profits and the royalty of oil and gas.



KARACHI: Caretaker Chief Minister Justice @ Maqbool Baqar chairing the cabinet meeting at CM House.

### Murtaza Solangi says Govt to explore legal options to redress journalist layoffs issue Workers' forced dismissal from media houses unacceptable

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Murtaza Solangi on Tuesday said the government would explore maximum options to redress the problems of journalist fraternity, and seek legal action, in accordance with the Constitution, to restrict forced job layoffs of media persons.

Talking to the media after the walkout of journalist during the 334<sup>th</sup> session of the Senate in the press gallery, he expressed full solidarity with the journalist community regarding the forced dismissal by some media houses.

Solangi said the legal provisions would be explored to take punitive action and extend support to safeguard the rights of media workers. "I stand with journalists and media workers; the issue of forced dismissals of journalists is not acceptable," he said.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information Murtaza Solangi talking with media men.

### National conference calls to promote interfaith harmony in country

KARACHI (APP): The Department of International Relations of the University of Karachi in collaboration with the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony organized a national conference on "bridging beliefs: interfaith harmony in Pakistan", at the KU Chinese Teachers Memorial Auditorium on Tuesday.

The conference called to promote the interfaith harmony culture in the country and emphasizes the importance of interfaith harmony, tolerance, love, dialogue, acceptance, and respect for all religions and faiths. Caretaker Federal Minister for Religious and Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed, in his address as the chief guest said that every person in the country condemned the incident of Jaranwala Town in Faisalabad district which

### CM Baqar invites Austrian investors to invest in Sindh

KARACHI (INP): Sindh Caretaker Chief Minister Justice (retd) Maqbool Baqar has invited the Austrian investors to come forward and invest in the province.

The chief minister extended the offer during a meeting with Ambassador of Austria Mrs. Andrea Wicke during a meeting with here in Karachi on Tuesday.

During the meeting, bilateral relations, trade and investment and climate change issues came under discussion.

Speaking on the occasion, the visiting ambassador said her country has invested in the oil industry in Pakistan. She also lauded good quality of rice product of Pakistan.

### Examination of nomination papers for women, minority seats underway

KARACHI (APP): The examination of nomination papers for women and minorities reserved seats for the upcoming general elections is continued at the Provincial Election Commission of Sindh here on Tuesday.

This was stated by a spokesman for the ECP Sindh.

**Sindh govt declares public holiday on BB's martyrdom anniversary**

KARACHI (APP): The Caretaker Sindh government on Tuesday declared December 27 (Wednesday) as a public holiday throughout the province on the occasion of the Martyrdom (Shahadat) of Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto.

According to a notification issued here, the public holiday has been announced for all the offices, autonomous, semi-autonomous bodies, corporations and local councils under the administrative control of the Sindh government, except the essential services.

### Zardari pays to tribute to Shaheed BB, vows to continue her mission

KARACHI (INP): Former President of Pakistan and President of Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians (PPP), Asif Ali Zardari paying tribute to Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto on martyrdom anniversary and reiterated to continue her mission regarding struggle for a free and independent Pakistan, empowered Parliament and the rule of the Constitution

In his message on the eve of the martyrdom anniversary of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto, he said that eliminating poverty, unemployment and economic misery from the country was the mission of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto and the completion of this mission was top priority of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP). Asif Zardari said that the martyred party chairperson was neither afraid of dictators nor did she fear the extremists.



ISLAMABAD: Newly appointed Ambassador of Pakistan to China Mr. Khalil Hashmi calls on the Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.

### Shaheed BB's sacrifice for restoration of democracy to be remembered: Raja

ISLAMABAD (INP): Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervez Ashraf on Tuesday said that the sacrifice rendered by Shaheed Benazir Bhutto for the restoration and strengthening of democracy in the country would ever be remembered in the political annals of history.

He said that Shaheed Benazir Bhutto sacrificed her life for the restoration and strengthening of democracy in the country.

He said that Shaheed Benazir Bhutto had the honour of being the first elected woman Prime Minister of the Islamic world. He expressed these views on the 16<sup>th</sup> martyrdom anniversary of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto.

He said that Shaheed Benazir Bhutto was conscious of threats and dangers posed by anti-national elements but she remained resolved to resist terrorism and extremism.

"BB had fought against terrorism for the development and prosperity of the country and the strengthening of democracy," he said.

Raja Pervez Ashraf said that Shaheed Benazir Bhutto was the pioneer of democratic struggle in Pakistan and she always stood for the protection of the downtrodden classes of the society, the rights of minorities, and the development and independence of women.

The speaker further said that Benazir Bhutto's mission was to establish a democratic system and a society based on equality. She carried forward the mission of the People's Leader Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and said that Shaheed Benazir Bhutto remained committed to her mission with patience and courage till the last breath of her life.

**Cipher case: No witness could be cross examined**

RAWALPINDI (Online): Special court has adjourned hearing of cipher case for one day.

The lawyers have requested the court to adjourn the hearing for one day due to non availability of Ali Bokhari counsel for Shah Mehmood Qureshi Tuesday.

The counsels for PTI founder and Shah Mehmood Qureshi filed two petitions to obtain verified copies.

Counsels for PTI founder requested the court to hold hearing according to rules 10 and 10-A.

The defence counsels filed plea for recording statements of the witnesses again in the presence of lawyers.



GARHI KHUDA BUX: Inspector General (IG) Sindh, Riffat Mukhtar talking to media persons after reviewing security arrangements in connection of 16th anniversary commemoration of slain PPP Chairperson Benazir Bhutto in Garhi Khuda Bux.

### PPP to unveil manifesto for general elections today

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan People's Party's (PPP) electoral manifesto has been finalised, which will likely be announced tomorrow by Bilawal Bhutto Zardari General elections are scheduled to take place on February 8.

After the end of the deadline for submission of nomination papers on December 24, the ECP is currently conducting scrutiny of the papers.

### Two killed, several injured in Karachi road mishaps

KARACHI (INP): At least two people were killed and two several injured separate road mishaps in different localities of the metropolis on Tuesday.

According to details, the first accident took place near Nooriabad area where an over speeding car collided head-on with a van.

Two people were killed in the accident while two other sustained severe injuries

A speedy bus turned turtle near Baldia Town Karachi leaving several people including women injured.

### Mayor Karachi for need to focus on basic health issues in Sindh

KARACHI (APP): Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab has said that the PPP-led Sindh government has worked on improving the National Institute of Cardiology (NIC) and Jinnah Sindh Medical University (JSMU) during the last 12 years and there was a need to focus on basic health issues in the province.

He said this while speaking as chief guest on the signing of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the NIC, JSMU and the Association of Pakistani Descent Cardiologists of North America and at the opening ceremony of the JSMU's Landhi campus for prevention and treatment of heart diseases, blood pressure and diabetes.

The Mayor said that the establishment of a health center for the treatment of heart diseases and diabetes in Landhi area was a good omen for Karachi, which would help the citizens for free medical tests like blood pressure, ECG, laboratory tests, echocardiography.



LAHORE: PML-N Quaid Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and President Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif presiding over 16th meeting of Parliamentary Board.

### Faryal Talpur paid tributes to Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto

LARKANA (APP): Central President Pakistan People's Party Women Wing (PPP), Faryal Talpur on Tuesday paid glowing tributes to Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto on her 16<sup>th</sup> death anniversary, saying her leadership was not just a political position; it was a beacon of hope for a nation yearning for progress, justice, and democratic values.

Faryal Talpur, in her message, said that as the first woman to lead

a Muslim-majority nation, Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto shattered glass ceilings and redefined societal norms, leaving an enduring legacy for aspiring women leaders in Pakistan and beyond.

"With a visionary zeal, Bibi Shaheed championed a transformative agenda, envisioning a Pakistan that embraces progress, equality, and social justice for all its citizens," she pointed out.

# Daily Voice of Masses

## Independent

### Nominations done

From a state of uncertainty only a couple of weeks ago centring on the question of whether or not the general elections would take place, the poll process is now firmly moving forward.

Nominations for both the federal and provincial legislatures wrapped up on Sunday evening, with big guns representing the mainstream political parties throwing their hats into the ring. Meanwhile, the migratory tribe of 'electables' is also present in the contest, offering their services to those believed to have the blessings of the powers that be. Nawaz Sharif, Asif Zardari, Imran Khan, Fazlur Rehman, Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari — all mainstays of the political landscape — have filed their nomination papers, though PTI hopefuls have repeatedly said obstacles are being placed in their way.

From here onwards, parties are expected to switch to election mode, and this requires them to communicate their programme for Pakistan's uplift to voters. It should be remembered that elections are not a popularity contest, as people expect solutions to their myriad problems from the parties vying for their votes.

In this regard, it is a matter of concern that most mainstream parties, with the exception of Jamaat-i-Islami, have not yet released their election manifestos. Perhaps the parties themselves were not expecting the polls to take place on Feb 8, hence their lethargy in finalising their policy proposals in the form of manifestos. But, as the Supreme Court has said, no more delays will be tolerated and the polls are to take place on schedule. Therefore, the parties need to release their manifestos soon. It is true that unlike in many mature democracies, the politics of clan and ethnicity still dominate Pakistan's political culture, meaning that a fair percentage of voters will care little about party programmes.

Yet it must also be said that younger and more tech-savvy voters will demand answers from the parties to their problems, and will be swayed less by cults of personality, or how their respective clans/tribes vote.

Parties have a moral obligation to inform the people of Pakistan — in both dusty villages and the sprawling cities — how they intend to fix the economy, improve healthcare and education, bring down crime, etc. Hollow promises should not be enough; firm policy is required.

Meanwhile, as has been mentioned in these columns, it is essential that the electoral exercise has legitimacy. And this cannot be achieved when one party is being excluded from the democratic process. The state's attempts to cancel the PTI must cease, and all parties need to have a level playing field during elections. Let the people of Pakistan decide who is to steer the ship of state for the next five years. Political manoeuvring has never worked, and will only exacerbate our multiple crises.

## Unjustified stigma



Ali Burhan Mustafa

Pakistan is grappling with the stigma surrounding mental health. A social fabric steeped in tradition often finds itself at odds with the critical need for progressive mental healthcare solutions.

This clash is exacerbated by misguided reliance on shamans and archaic spiritual rituals, propelled by misinterpreted religious doctrines, rather than scientific psychiatric intervention. This dependence on traditional healers, especially in impoverished areas, perpetuates the stigma.

Child sexual abuse in Pakistan, with its dismal conviction rates, casts a long shadow over our human rights record. Chilling statistics from organisations like Sahil, reveal thousands of cases with a conviction rate of less than two per cent. Despite initiatives like the Zainab Alert Bill and national sex offender registries, the acute scarcity of child psychiatrists and underdevelopment of specialised branches, such as forensic and community psychiatry, are a glaring oversight in addressing mental health after abuse.

Pakistan faces a dire human rights challenge, as detailed by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan. A woman is raped every two hours — a statistic that is potentially more frequent, with claims of such incidents occurring every 20 minutes by groups such as Pakistan Men Against Rape.

The distressingly low rate of cases being reported and even fewer convictions exposes deep flaws within the justice

system. A number of high-profile rape cases, including the Zainab Ansari incident and a mother abused sexually in front of her children, necessitates a demand for forensic psychiatric assessments in court proceedings.

Pakistani women are encumbered with a disproportionate share of mental health conditions compared to men. While attention has been drawn to many of the socio-cultural practices responsible, including karo kari ('honour' killings often seen in Balochistan and Sindh), watta satta and child marriages, the struggles of women in less visible rural and urban slum areas remain largely unacknowledged.

Despite Pakistan's pledge to the WHO Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan (2013-2030), women are brutally punished for perceived immorality. Such barbaric practices inflict fear and profound physical and psychological trauma, often leading to myriad mental health disorders.

This crisis is exacerbated by the lack of adequately trained healthcare providers who can recognise and assist victims and violence — a shortfall highlighted by the Unicef-initiated mental health and psychosocial support services programme in 2021. Medical studies corroborate this gap. In Pakistan, the intersection of mental health and human rights is brought into sharp relief by the impact of blasphemy laws on the mentally ill. Between 1986 and 2010, an alarming surge in blasphemy accusations resulted in over 50 extrajudicial deaths.

The existing laws, increasingly stringent and far-reaching, ensnare individuals with mental health conditions such as schizophrenia and autism, often misused to conceal abuse against them. There is a critical need for legal re-

forms that provide robust protections for those with mental health challenges, ensuring that blasphemy laws are not weaponised against them.

Pakistan stands at a critical juncture, with recent legal reforms pointing towards progress in mental health care. The decriminalisation of attempted suicide was a commendable step away from punitive measures, signalling the emerging recognition of mental illness as a public health matter and not a criminal one.

However, the realities of mental health care in Pakistan, as evidenced by high suicide rates juxtaposed with an insufficient number of mental health professionals and facilities, particularly in the rural areas, highlight a landscape in desperate need of reform. With a budget that fails to adequately address mental health and a medical community yet to fully acknowledge psychiatric specialties, Pakistan's mental health framework is alarmingly inadequate.

Forensic psychiatry in Pakistan is at a pivotal juncture, facing the challenge of reconciling its colonial legacy with contemporary human rights and psychiatric practices. Our legal system, which often places an unreasonable onus on defendants to prove mental illness with insufficient support, calls for urgent modernisation.

Pioneering decisions like the Supreme Court's ruling in the Safia Bano case are indicative of an increasing awareness of these critical issues and underscore the imperative for systemic legal reforms. Pakistan's struggle with mental health stigmatisation and human rights breaches requires a legal overhaul. The justice system, failing to shield vulnerable groups, particularly the mentally ill, highlights the need for incorporating psychiatric evaluation into judicial processes. -- Courtesy Dawn

## Plantation drive



Shahzad Sharjeel

Elections are in the air, and potted plants are being transplanted to suitable soil with the most earthworms and compost available. Sunshine is essential, but the time to make hay is later. In a no-holds-barred environment, logic is the first casualty. How does one explain a televised interview by an 'encounter specialist' accusing the leadership of a political party of all manner of crime? Some people believe he did it at the instigation of the powers that be. Fine. How do you then explain ministers resigning from the caretaker cabinet to join the same party, again, ostensibly at the same power's behest?

Electoral and constitutional democracy demands constant vigilance by 'we the people.' Stamping a ballot paper can neither be the starting nor the high point of the democratic process. Due diligence of election manifestos of political parties, their past record in delivering on their promises, and an utmost commitment to hold them accountable throughout their tenures in office is the bedrock of a functioning, representative polity. The most common refrain during the election season is 'We will turn Larkana into Paris'. While the French capital's reputation has so far not been compromised, many a chateau in the south of France routinely becomes the stomping ground for these peddlers of promises from Larkana to Raiwind.

Take Karachi and most of its iconic landmarks; for instance, Frere

Hall was built by the bad old Brits when they ruled us. How greedy, unscrupulous, shameless, and downright evil the colonisers were has been recorded quite sufficiently and is being rubbed in these days by Shashi Tharoor and many others. That we have no love lost for the colonisers and their Raj is axiomatic.

However, it is worth summarising that the British conceived and constructed most structures worth declaring as monuments or heritage sites in this metropolis. Take Denso Hall, Merewether Tower, Empress Market, Jehangir Kothari Parade, Pavilion, and Bandstand at Clifton. The Brits built them with much help from the city's Parsi and Hindu communities. Rupchand Bilaram Park, a magnificent facility, was made possible by its namesake. It has now been conveniently appropriated as Bagh Ibn-i-Qasim. Many a committee tasked to give a similar 'Islamic-touch' must have rued their inability to rename the Hindu Kush range.

One can argue that since foreign masters and conqueror-despots like the Mughals were not accountable to the populace, they could spend from the exchequer as they wished on grand schemes and fantastic monuments to themselves and their loved ones. In modern times, elected, accountable administrations can only undertake public works for the good of the populace and not for mere aesthetics and leaving a name for themselves. The problem today is that the only such 'public welfare' schemes that come to mind are overhead bridges and underpasses. While most of these are helpful to the public, they tend to crumble and flood, without any accountability and much too quickly for any chance of attaining an iconic status.

Not sure where the

'chinaman delivery' got its name. It is the same with 'china cutting.' While the former is widely known in the world of cricket as a left-arm spin delivery, the latter is restricted to Karachi, though just the name as the practice of appropriating public property for personal gain is rampant country-wide. In the spirit of fair representation, let us look at Rawalpindi. Here, the textbook practice is putting a trash dumpster on any spot with commercial potential. Rest assured, we will dump all sorts of trash everywhere but in the dumpster. Soon, the place becomes a hell of miasma for the residents and commuters.

The next step is to remove the dumpster, level the plot, and grant the prime piece of land for a nursery. The change of scene could not be more dramatic, from a mountain of trash with accompanying flies, stray dogs, feral cats, and hovering kites to pots of saplings and flowerbeds amidst rows of terracotta ornaments. Everybody breathes a sigh of relief. The civic bodies and cantonment boards are praised instead of being asked how the lease for the nursery was granted and on what terms. The grantees are kicked out after a couple of years, and a spanking cash-and-carry is built. The process has been honed to perfection. The same community that created the trash problem and was first nauseated and then relieved on its evolution now throngs the shopping centre with their trollies laden with stuff, a lot of it from China soon to be turned into trash. Another public amenity plot, another trash site, another nursery, more saplings, more transplants; the cash-and-carry business continues. -- Courtesy Dawn

# Commerce News

## IPO, PITB join hands for automation, digitalization of IPO-Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Intellectual Property Organization (IPO) and Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB) on Tuesday joined hands and signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the digitalization and automation of IPO-Pakistan. The MoU was signed by Director General, IPO Ms. Shazia Adnan and Director General, PITB Saima R. Shaikh for automation and digitalization IPO to facilitate the common masses and business in the country.

On this occasion, Chairman IPO, Ambassador Farukh Amil said that the visibility on indifferent

platforms and public awareness are the major priority of IPO at this time, which will make it accessible to the business classes and especially the youth. The Chairman IPO said that at present we were working on digitalization of IPO with the support of PITB, which was an important tool for modernizing institutions in the modern world, which provided facilities to the public and business classes.

He said that a large part of the population of Pakistan consisted of youth and the youth were currently mostly connected to IT and social media and after this facility, they would be able to make online complaints

or other facilities in IPO. Farukh said that IPO was currently making the youth aware of IPO in universities and educational institutions, which would increase the trend of financial education among them.

He said that after automation in the IPO, there would be transparency and simplification of processes in the institution. On this occasion, Director General, IPO, Shazia Adnan said that after this agreement with PITB, online payments and another documentation process would be made easy in the next two months and this would also promote Ease of Doing Business (EODB) in IPO.



KARACHI: Stockbrokers monitor the share prices during a trading session at the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) in Karachi, Pakistan, 26 December 2023. The Pakistani benchmark 100 index 59,170.97 was down 2534.12 with points during the trading session.

## Punjab shift from conventional transport to electric vehicles: Minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Provincial Minister for Transport, Livestock, and Mines & Minerals Ibrahim Hassan Murad Tuesday said that the Punjab government was making a big push for electric vehicles to provide a sustainable and eco-friendly mode of transportation to control air pollution.

"Punjab wants to become a 'global hub of manufacturing of electric

vehicles", he said while talking to a private news channel.

The government is also planning to offer incentives for manufacturing electric vehicles and batteries to boost economic growth and encourage local manufacturing, he said, adding, that other provinces should also focus on shifting their auto industry towards EV systems.

## Rupee gains 15 paise against Dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani Rupee on Tuesday witnessed the 10<sup>th</sup> consecutive recovery session as it gained 15 paise against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs282.37 against the previous day's closing of Rs282.52. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market stood at Rs282.7 and Rs285.2 respectively.

The price of the Euro increased by 47 paise to close at Rs311.27 against the last day's closing of Rs 310.80, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese Yen remained unchanged and closed at Rs1.98; whereas a decrease of Rs 17 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs358.48 compared to the last closing of Rs358.65.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal decreased by 05 and 04 paise to close at Rs 76.88 and Rs75.27 respectively.



Caretaker Federal Minister of Commerce and Industry, Dr. Gohar Ejaz interacting with the members of the Chairman Chamber of Commerce and Industry at the Commerce Ministry in Islamabad.

## 80mn commuters utilized BRT Peshawar during the year 2023

PESHAWAR (APP): Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system has achieved an impressive ridership of approximately 80 million people during the outgoing calendar year 2023, contributing to a total commuter of 215 million since its inception in August 2020, said annual report shared by the TransPeshawar operator of the urban transport system here on Tuesday.

It said that a noteworthy shift was observed in the gender dynamics of ridership, with women constituting 30% of the total

commuters—a significant surge compared to the meagre 2% estimated before the implementation of the BRT system. Due to the increasing popularity and demand, the system is constantly expanding. "Zu Peshawar is unwavering in its commitment to fostering inclusivity and embracing technological advancements. Our ongoing efforts to make the system more welcoming for specially-abled individuals reflect our dedication to ensuring that everyone can access and benefit from our services seamlessly, said the Chief Executive Officer

(CEO) of TransPeshawar, Dr. Tariq Usman Saeed. The transformative upgrades to the Zu app enhance user experience, offering features like recharging through Omni Shop, comprehensive travel histories, and NFC-supported balance uploads, he added. He said that their focus on network expansion for wider city coverage through new feeder routes aligns with our vision of creating a world-class transit system that caters to the diverse needs of our community while duly accounting for social equity.

## Modern technology can make agriculture more profitable: UAF VC

FAISALABAD (APP): Modern trends and tangible researches should be disseminated at doorsteps of farmers to make agriculture profitable in addition to achieving food security in the country, said University of Agriculture Faisalabad Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Iqra Ahmad Khan.

Chairing a meeting of the Punjab Agriculture

Strategy Plan 2023-2033, he said that agriculture was facing soil fertility, inputs, mechanizations, markets, water, seeds, fertilizers and other issues.

He said that the fertility of land was decreasing with the passage of time for which agricultural recommendations would have to be adopted.

## Growers advised to water wheat crop timely

FAISALABAD (APP): Agriculture experts have advised growers to water their wheat crops on time to get healthy and bumper production. A spokesman for the Agriculture (Extension) Department said here on Tuesday that Pakistan had to spend Rs.300 billion per annum on the import of edible oil and the amount could be saved by promoting cultivation of oil-seed crops in the

## Call to equip youths with latest technologies to root out poverty, unemployment

FAISALABAD (APP): Youths must be equipped with latest skills and technologies to root out poverty and unemployment and in this connection government institutions must play their key role, said Dr Sajjad Arshad, Acting President Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI).

In a meeting with Madam Bushra Nawaz, Senior Manager Public Relations and Marketing of the Punjab Vocational Training Council (PVTTC), Dr Sajjad Arshad said that youths are our most precious asset but we are not utilizing their capabilities for the uplift of

the country. He said that China and other countries had successfully revolutionized their economies by efficiently utilizing their youths. He said that 20 million youths were unemployed and we must devise strategies to train them in different market-driven skills.

"It will not only make them productive for themselves but also for the country", he said and added that the skilled human resource could start their own businesses instead of running after jobs. He said that Pakistanis in the world were sending hefty remittances which had saved Pakistan from bankruptcy.



ISLAMABAD: Chair-Intellectual Property Organization of Pakistan (IPO) Farukh Amil, witnesses the Signing Ceremony for the IPO-Pakistan & Punjab Information Technology (PITB) landmark agreement regarding launching of PayZen Agreement at IPO-Pakistan Headquarters.

## Hybrid seed can increase sunflower production manifold: experts

FAISALABAD (APP): Agriculture experts have advised farmers to use hybrid seed of sunflower varieties as it can increase its production manifold.

A spokesman for the Agriculture (Extension) Department said here on Tuesday that Pakistan had to spend Rs.300 billion per annum on the import of edible oil and the amount could be saved by promoting cultivation of oil-seed crops in the

country. He said that sunflower was a precious oil-seed crop as its seed had 40 to 50 percent oil and its production could play a major role in trimming down the export bill of edible oil in addition to catering to domestic needs. He said that the growers should prefer seed of hybrid varieties as it could give maximum production and help them mitigate their financial constraints.

Punjab Governor says:  
Circumstances under  
which Bangladesh separated  
reminded of a painful past

**Independent Report**  
LAHORE: High Commissioner of Bangladesh to Pakistan Ruhul Alam Siddique called on Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman and discussed promotion of bilateral cooperation in the fields of trade and education during a meeting at the Governor's House, here on Tuesday.  
The Honorary Consul General of Bangladesh Qazi Humayun Fareed was also present on the occasion, says a handout issued here by the Governor's media team.

Muhammad Balighur Rehman and Bangladesh High Commissioner expressed concern over the Israeli bombardment and atrocities on the Palestinian people. Muhammad Balighur Rehman said the circumstances under which Bangladesh was separated reminded of a painful past. He said Pakistan and Bangladesh have once been a nation and country, and both of them share common faith, history, and culture.  
The Governor Punjab said both countries can move forward as good neighbours, adding that goodwill existing between both countries needs to be

translated into even stronger economic, trade, investment, educational, and cultural linkages to the benefit of both nations.  
He said it is heartening to know that Pakistani medical and dental students are studying in Bangladesh on scholarships. He said that there should be maximum exchange of student delegations in the educational institutions of the two countries. He said that he would also talk to the Higher Education Commission for scholarships for Bangladeshi students in Pakistani educational institutions.



LAHORE: Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi inspecting the under construction work of Lahore Ring Road Southern Loop-III Project.

Naqvi reviews progress  
on Lahore Ring Road  
Southern Loop-3 project

**Independent Report**  
LAHORE: The Lahore Ring Road Southern Loop 3 project marks a significant stride towards completion, reaching the 60 percent milestone.  
Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Tuesday conducted a comprehensive review of the ongoing progress at Adda Plot Raiwind, personally inspecting the Lahore Ring Road Southern Loop 3 project.  
The chief minister examined the ongoing construction activities spanning 8 km from Adda Plot Raiwind to Maraka Multan Road. He closely observed the works on the

entire route, including the construction of bridges. In response, the CM issued directives for the expeditious completion of the project.  
During a meeting at the FWO (Frontier Works Organisation) camp office chaired by Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi, Colonel Jamal and Colonel Ahmed provided a detailed briefing on the project's progress. The meeting addressed various issues related to the project. Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi emphasized that the completion of Ring Road Southern Loop 3 would enhance transportation facilities for the public.

Governor KPK  
highlights women's  
educational achievements

**Independent Report**  
ABBOTTABAD (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali has emphasized the crucial role of education in global competitiveness.  
He said that the enrollment of female students in the province now surpassed their male counterparts in both primary and higher education. He not only highlighted the greater number of female students

Two die, jeep  
plunges into  
deep ravine

**Independent Report**  
BALAKOT (Online): A jeep is reported to have plunged into deep ravine in the area of Ghanol Thanwan in Balakot leaving two persons including a local councillor dead.  
According to Rescue authorities the accident was so fatal that two persons including local councillor who were on board the jeep died on the spot. Rescue is shifting the bodies to hospital.

but also their excellence in getting prominent educational positions.  
Addressing at the first convocation of the Government Women's College of Commerce and Management Sciences here Tuesday, the Governor urged the female students not to let their education go to waste, emphasizing the transformative impact educated women can have on societal and national development.

Minister visits MMC  
inquires health of patients

**Independent Report**  
PESHAWAR: Caretaker Minister for Industries, Technical Education, and NMDs Affairs Amir Abdullah visited Mardan Medical Complex (MTI) last night and inquired about the health of the patients and the availability of medicines and doctors.  
The provincial minister visited various wards of Mardan Medical Complex, including the OPD, Accident and Emergency Ward, Neurosurgery Ward, Orthopedic Ward, Medical Ward, and CCU (Cardiology Ward).

Transgender  
killed in firing  
incident

**Independent Report**  
PESHAWAR (APP): A transgender was killed in a firing incident by unknown assailants riding a motorcycle near Government College Chowk within the jurisdiction of Shaheed Gulfat Hussain police station on Monday.  
Upon receiving the report, Superintendent Police Faqirabad Division Osama Amin Cheema and ASP Faqirabad Muhammad Aleem promptly responded, securing the crime scene and initiating an investigation. The victim's body, lacking any identification documents, has been taken into custody and transferred for post-mortem examination.

Additional Deputy Commissioner (General), Saeedullah Jan, was accompanying him. On the arrival of the caretaker minister, Dr Azam Manan, DMS of Mardan Medical Complex, welcomed him.  
The provincial

minister visited various wards of Mardan Medical Complex, including the OPD, Accident and Emergency Ward, Neurosurgery Ward, Orthopedic Ward, Medical Ward, and CCU (Cardiology Ward).  
The provincial minister said that the provincial government has launched the Khushal Khyber Pakhtunkhwa program to improve the provision of various services, under which the ministers are going to various districts to review the facilities provided to the people to improve them further.



LAHORE: Bangladesh High Commissioner in Pakistan Ruhul Alam Siddique meeting with Punjab Governor Muhammad Baligh-ur-Rehman.

Election 2024:  
Candidates blow horns to  
attract voters after submitting  
nomination papers in KP

**Independent Report**  
PESHAWAR (APP): The candidates of all mainstream politico-religious parties and independents have expedited election campaigns and corner meetings to inform the masses about their election manifestos after submitting nomination papers for different constituencies for general election 2024.  
The scrutiny of nomination papers continued in the respective offices of returning officers in all 37 districts of KP where the process would be completed by December 30, 2023. Eying on national and provincial assemblies, the stalwarts of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N), Awami National Party (ANP), Jamiatul Ulama Islam-F (JUI-F), Jumate Islami Pakistan and Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf (PTI) have mostly fielded political heavyweights to clinch maximum seats from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and form government for next five years. On NA-28 Peshawar-1, a total of 33 candidates filed papers including former member national assembly, Noor Alam Khan of JUI-F, former minister KP, Taimur Salim Jhagra of PTI and ex-speaker KP assembly.



RAWALPINDI: Workers of Pakistan Peoples Party light up the candles in memorandum of Former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto (Shaheed), at her targeting place, Liaquat Bagh in City.

Kundi calls for free,  
fair general elections

**Independent Report**  
DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): Central Information Secretary of the Pakistan People's Party and candidate from NA-44, DI Khan-I, Faisal Karim Kundi, on Tuesday called for ensuring free and fair elections scheduled for February 8 2024, adding that it is imperative for democracy.  
While addressing the press conference in DI Khan, he demanded level playing field for all political parties in the run-up to the general elections to ensure a free, fair, and transparent electoral exercise. He asserted that

CM visits  
Bibi Pakdaman  
shrine

**Independent Report**  
LAHORE (APP): With the completion of 97 percent of the renovation and expansion works, the historic Bibi Pakdaman shrine is set to reopen its doors to pilgrims before December 31st.

Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi visited the site on Tuesday to review the progress firsthand. Accompanied by provincial ministers and officials, Chief Minister Naqvi closely inspected the ongoing finishing touches on the main shrine structure and iconic domes.  
He emphasized the importance of high-quality craftsmanship and directed officials to prioritize the completion of the widened pathway surrounding the shrine to ensure smooth movement for pilgrims.

Furthermore, Chief Minister Naqvi stressed the need for a dedicated space for lamp-lighting rituals and instructed the installation of aesthetically pleasing lighting.

International News

US carries out air strikes  
on sites used by Iran-backed  
forces in Iraq

**Monitoring Desk**  
WASHINGTON: The US military carried out strikes on three sites used by Iran-backed forces in Iraq on Monday after an attack wounded three American personnel earlier in the day, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said.

Washington has repeatedly targeted sites used by Iran and its proxy forces in Iraq and Syria in response to dozens of attacks on American and allied forces in the region since the October 7 outbreak of the Israel-Hamas war.

“US military forces conducted necessary and proportionate strikes on three facilities used by Kataeb Hezbollah and af-

filiated groups in Iraq,” Austin said in a statement. “These precision strikes are a response to a series of attacks against US personnel in Iraq and Syria by Iranian-sponsored militias, including an attack by Iran-affiliated Kataeb Hezbollah and affiliated groups on Arbil Air Base earlier today,” he said.

That attack wounded three US military personnel, one critically, US National Security Council spokesperson Adrienne Watson said in a statement.

President Joe Biden was briefed on the attack — which was carried out with a one-way attack drone — and directed the

strikes in a call with Austin and other national security officials after ordering the Defense Department to prepare a response, the statement said.  
Biden “places no higher priority than the protection of American personnel serving in harm's way. The United States will act at a time and in a manner of our choosing should these attacks continue,” the statement added.

The drone attack was claimed by the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, a loose formation of armed groups affiliated with the Hashed al-Shaabi coalition of former paramilitaries that are now integrated into Iraq's regular armed forces.



Palestinians inspect the site of an Israeli strike on a house, amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas, in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip.

Israel launches more Gaza  
strikes as Netanyahu says  
Hamas must be destroyed

**Monitoring Desk**  
CAIRO: Israeli shellfire slammed into central Gaza on Tuesday after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu pledged no respite in attacks on Hamas, as residents of the coastal enclave mourned more dead in a war that has cost more than 20,000 Palestinian lives.

Israel is determined to pursue its goal of destroying Hamas despite global calls for a ceasefire in the 11-week-old war, amid concerns the conflict could spread with U.S. and Iranian forces attacking each other elsewhere in the region. Since Hamas made the deadliest Palestinian militant attack on Israel in the country's 75-year history, Netanyahu has responded with an all-out assault on Hamas-ruled Gaza. On Tuesday, the Israeli military said 160 soldiers have so far been killed in Gaza since ground operations began on Oct 20.

“Seventy-five years of suffering, our rights taken, our country seized, and our people slaughtered.”

Indian navy to  
deploy guided  
missile destroyer  
ships after strike  
off its coast

**Monitoring Desk**  
NEW DELHI: India's navy will deploy guided missile destroyer ships in the Arabian Sea after an Israel-affiliated merchant vessel was struck off the Indian coast over the weekend, in an effort to “maintain a deterrent presence,” it said late on Monday.  
The Indian navy was investigating the nature of the attack on the vessel, MV Chem Pluto, which docked in Mumbai on Monday, and initial reports pointed to a drone attack, the statement said.

“Further forensic and technical analysis will be required to establish the vector of attack, including type and amount of explosive used,” the statement added.  
A spokesperson for Iran's foreign ministry on Monday called a US claim that Iran had attacked the ship near India “baseless”.



King Charles, Queen Camilla, Prince William, Princess Catherine, Princes George and Louis, and Princess Charlotte, arrive at St Mary Magdalene's church to attend the royal family's Christmas service.

Turkey's parliament  
set to debate Sweden  
NATO bid

**Monitoring Desk**  
ISTANBUL: The Turkish parliament was Tuesday set to resume debate on approving Sweden's bid to join NATO, a thorny issue that was further complicated after President Recep Tayyip Erdogan linked it to Ankara's request for F-16 fighter jets from its ally the United States.

Sweden and Finland dropped decades of military non-alignment and sought to join the US-led defence organisation after Russia invaded Ukraine last year.  
Their bids won fast-track approval from all

Baghdad  
condemns US  
strike on Iraqi  
military positions

**Monitoring Desk**  
BAGHDAD: Iraq's government condemned on Tuesday overnight US air strikes on Iraqi military positions that it said killed one serviceman and wounded 18 other people, calling them a “clear hostile act”.

The United States has carried out retaliatory air strikes on Monday in Iraq after a one-way drone attack earlier in the day by Iran-aligned militants that left one US service member in critical condition and wounded two others.  
The government condemned the US strikes as “an unacceptable violation of Iraqi sovereignty.”

Indonesia nickel smelter  
furnace fire kills 13  
workers, injures 46

**Monitoring Desk**  
JAKARTA: Thirteen workers were killed and 46 injured on Sunday in a fire at a nickel smelter furnace owned by Indonesia Tsingshan Stainless Steel (ITSS) on Sulawesi island, the owner of the industrial park where the smelter is located said.  
The fire occurred when workers repaired the furnace and installed plates at 5:30 am on Sunday (21:30 GMT on Saturday), killing nine Indonesian workers and four Chinese workers,

NATO members except Turkey and Hungary. The two ultimately relented and Finland was accepted as NATO's 31st member in April.  
Turkey and Hungary remain the only North Atlantic Treaty Organization members left to ratify Sweden's bid 19 months after it applied for membership.  
In November, the Turkish parliament's foreign affairs committee failed to reach agreement on a text for a full floor vote and will meet again on Tuesday afternoon.

Ukraine carries  
out air assault  
on Crimea's  
port of Feodosia

**Monitoring Desk**  
KYIV: Ukraine carried out an air attack on Feodosia in Crimea, Ukraine's air force commander said on Tuesday, after the Russian-installed governor of the Crimea said that the assault sparked a fire in the town's port area. The commander of Ukraine's air force, Mykola Oleshchuk, said on the Telegram messaging app, without providing evidence.

Philippines is not provoking  
conflict in South China  
Sea, its military says

**Monitoring Desk**  
MANILA: The Philippines is not provoking conflict in the South China Sea, its military spokesperson said on Tuesday, responding to China's accusation that Manila was encroaching on Beijing's territory.

Medel Aguilar told state broadcaster PTV. “We follow international law and we are only implementing our domestic law, meaning the limits of our territorial waters and exclusive economic zone, where we have sovereign rights.”

It was the latest salvo amid rising tension as the two have traded accusations in recent months over a series of maritime run-ins, including China allegedly ramming a ship this month carrying the Philippines' military chief.  
“The Philippines is not provoking conflict.”

The comments came a day after the People's Daily, the mouthpiece of the Chinese Communist Party, wrote that the Philippines had relied on US support to continually provoke China.

This “extremely dangerous” behaviour seriously harmed regional peace and stability, it added.



A fighter of the Iraqi Kataib Hezbollah militia group and a man inspect the site of a U.S. airstrike, in Hilla, Iraq.

Ethiopia becomes  
Africa's latest  
sovereign default

**Monitoring Desk**  
LONDON: Ethiopia became Africa's third default in as many years on Tuesday after it failed to make a \$33 million “coupon” payment on its only international government bond.  
Africa's second most populous country announced earlier this month that it intended to formally go into default, having been under severe financial strain in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and a two-year civil war that ended in November 2022.

It had been supposed to make the payment on Dec 11, but technically had up until Tuesday to provide the money due to a 14-day “grace period” clause written into the \$1 billion bond. According to two sources familiar with the situation, bondholders had not been paid the coupon as of the end of Friday, Dec. 22, the last international banking working day before the grace period expires.

Ethiopian government officials did not respond to requests for comment on Friday or over the weekend, but the widely expected default will see it join two other African nations, Zambia and Ghana.

## Progress, prosperity of people of Balochistan among priorities of government, says PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar Tuesday stressed upon focusing the climate resilience and climate finance aspects in all the water projects of Balochistan and reiterated that progress and prosperity of the people of province were among the top priorities of the government. The caretaker prime minister chaired a review meeting on the important matters pertaining to the Balochistan province. The meeting was attended by Caretaker Balochistan Chief Minister Ali Mardan Domki, Education Minister Dr Qadir Baloch and Chief Secretary Shakeel Qadir, Caretaker Federal Minister for Planning Sami Saad, Caretaker Federal Minister for Law and Water Resources Irfan Aslam, and relevant senior officials, the PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

The chief secretary gave a briefing over different projects of the province. The prime minister further directed for expediting the matters related to the construction of a two-lane highway to Karachi and observed that with its construction, the different parts of the country would get an alternate leeway, besides strengthening of the linkages. He also asked for an immediate resolution of the financial issues faced by the universities in the province.

The caretaker prime minister directed for the constitution of an inter-provincial committee with regard to the matters of Kachhi Canal project and the inclusion of caretaker minister for planning and caretaker chief ministers of Punjab and Balochistan provinces as its members.



LARKANA: Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) leader Rashid Mahmood Soomro is talking to media persons after the process of scrutiny of nomination papers for NA-194 for participate in General Election, in Larkana.

## Government to follow Senate recommendations on employees' salaries, allowances: Solangi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, and Parliamentary Affairs Muratza Solangi on Tuesday assured the Senate that the government would follow House recommendations regarding the salaries and allowances of government employees, including Balochistan.

In response to questions during the question hour regarding the less representation of officers from Balochistan at the federal level, the minister asked the lawmakers to formulate a policy and make recommendations if there was any perceived injustice.

Responding to questions from Senators Fauzia Arshad, Mohsin Aziz, and Danesh Kumar, he welcomed the suggestions from Senate members regarding the use of zig-zag technology in rural areas for making bricks.

He acknowledged that zigzag technology was effective in reducing emissions of pollutants and increasing efficiency, though it was still expensive.

Senator Irfan Siddiqui's question about the non-allotment of plots to retired employees, the minister assured that he would inform the House after obtaining information from the department.

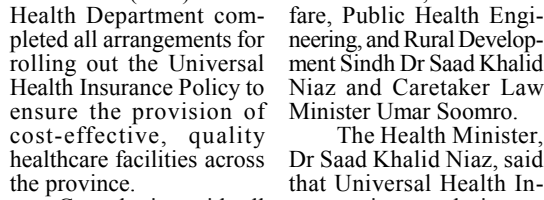
If the chair deemed it appropriate, the matter could be referred to the privilege committee, he added.

## DG Agri Extension asks officials to ensure sale of genuine inputs to farmers

HYDERABAD (APP): Director General Agriculture Extension Sindh Muneer Ahmed Jumanji has asked the officials concerned to resolve the problems affecting the farmers on a priority basis.

After assuming the charge of his office here on Tuesday, the DG warned the officials that he would not tolerate negligence or bad performance which affected the farmers.

He underlined that ensuring the sale of genuine seeds, fertilizer, urea and pesticides to growers was the responsibility of his department. "No pressure



HYDERABAD: Doctors and Health workers hold a protest rally after boycott from COVID-19 activities, at DHO office on Hyderabad.

## Sindh Health Dept all set to launch Universal Health Insurance Policy

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Health Department completed all arrangements for rolling out the Universal Health Insurance Policy to ensure the provision of cost-effective, quality healthcare facilities across the province.

Consultation with all the stakeholders has also been carried out for the launch of the Universal Health Insurance Policy, while the Sindh Health and Law departments have agreed to work together to fulfill all the legal requirements, according to a statement issued here on Tuesday.

The agreement was reached in a meeting between the Caretaker Min-

ister of Health, Social Welfare, Public Health Engineering, and Rural Development Sindh Dr Saad Khalid Niaz and Caretaker Law Minister Umar Soomro.

The Health Minister, Dr Saad Khalid Niaz, said that Universal Health Insurance is a revolutionary project that will provide affordable and quality treatment to the people of Sindh, while free treatment will be given to people living below the poverty line.

He said that health insurance will not only provide quality healthcare facilities to people, but it will also help improve the condition of hospitals and benefit medical staff.



BANGKOK: Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf in group photo with participants of 8th Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) Conclave in Thailand.

## Caretaker CM warns civic agencies to work for betterment of Karachi

KARACHI (APP): Caretaker Sindh Chief Minister Justice (Retd) Maqbool Baqar on Tuesday directed the transport department to pursue the federal government to construct the Green Line Corridor from Numash to Radio Pakistan.

The contract of the firm working on the corridor has been cancelled, therefore it must be re-tendered so that the important project of Green Line could be extended to the Old Radio Pakistan building on M.A. Jinnah Road.

He issued these directives while presiding over a meeting to review the civic issues here at CM House.

The meeting was attended by Minister of Local Government Mubin Jumani, Mayor Karachi Muratza Wahab, Chairman P&D

Shakil Mangnejo, Secretary Finance, Secretary Local Government, DGs of development authorities, MD SSWMB, all DCs, and all municipal commissioners of all the towns.

The CM said the Civic Centre was a unique and beautiful building but these days it was looking being neglected. Its wash-rooms are so dirty and dilapidated that nobody would bother to use them, the CM said.

When a development authority could not keep its own offices how it would undertake the development of the city, he questioned.

The CM directed DG KDA to improve the over-look and interior of the civic centre. The CM was told that the officers of provincial and federal government

housed in the Civic Centre were not paying rent. At this, the CM directed the Secretary of Local Government to start at source rent deduction from the provincial government offices housed in the Civic Centre and take strict against the federal government offices working there.

The chief minister directed the Sindh Building Control Authority (SBCA) DG to conduct an audit of all the dangerous buildings and report the actions taken to prevent the loss of lives in such buildings.

He also directed the DG to SBCA to report him about the action taken by him against the illegal constructions. "I want a comprehensive report of the builders whose buildings were seeping and were not

interested in improving them," he said and directed the DG to cancel their construction licenses if they failed to improve their buildings.

Discussing the condition of JPMC and Civil Hospital buildings, the CM directed Secretary Works to visit there and ensure their repair. He added that these two hospitals were most important and needed the proper attention of all the concerned agencies.

He also directed Mayor Karachi to visit Abbasi Shaheed Hospital and prepare a detailed plan for its improvement and share the same with him. The CM said that during the transition period, various ghost employees have been put on the payroll of local bodies such as Towns, Union Councils/ Committees.

## ECP rejects claims of influence on nomination paper decisions

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Tuesday firmly denied claims that decisions on accepting or rejecting nomination papers are influenced by reports from FBR, NAB and others.

The Commission's spokesperson strongly refuted a news item attributed to the spokesperson of the Punjab Election Commission (PEC), that the Election Commission had purportedly made decisions on accepting or rejecting candidate nomination papers upon receiving reports from institutions like NAB, FBR and others.

He stated that the Commission had not taken any such decision, emphasizing that the news was entirely false and fabricated, lacking any basis.

## Two die, 7 injured in separate accidents in Jamshoro

HYDERABAD (APP): The road accidents on the highways in Jamshoro district on Tuesday claimed 2 lives and left 7 others injured including 4 policemen in separate incidents.

According to the police, a car traveling from Karachi to Jamshoro overturned on the M9 Motorway near Nooriabad, leaving 2 men dead and a woman and her daughter injured.

The police identified the deceased as Haji Gulzar Arain, owner of a travel agency, and Abdul Rehman. Arain's wife Razia and daughter Hifza were injured in the accident and they were shifted to Liaquat University Hospital.

In another accident of a car on the Indus highway near Petaro toll plaza, 4 policemen and a boy were injured.

The injured include ASI Malook Brohi, constables Ali Akbar Panhwar, Ghulam Hussain Panhwar, Perviz Khoso and 12 years old Hasnain.

The water supply to Hyderabad to remain curtailed for 15 days due to canals closure

HYDERABAD (APP): The Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) has appealed the consumers to use water sparingly because the agency's water supply will remain curtailed during the next 15 days. In a statement issued here on Tuesday, the consumers were informed that the Sindh Irrigation Department had closed the canals of Kotri Barrage which supply water to WASA for the annual repair and maintenance. He added that that closure started on December 25 and that it would end on January 10, 2024, during which WASA would supply water from the storage ponds.

housed in the Civic Centre

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## Mandviwalla, Iranian Counsel General for promoting business, trade ties

KARACHI (INP): Chief Whip in Senate of Pakistan, Senator Saleem Mandviwalla on Tuesday visited the Turkish Consulate General in Karachi and called on Counsel General Mr. Cemal Sangul.

On the occasion, companies were keen on investing in Pakistan to establish solar systems near Islamabad and Karachi.

Senator Mandviwalla, declaring Turkey as their second home, pledged support and encouragement for Turkish companies.

Following the Consul General's advice, Senator Mandviwalla expressed intent to meet with Kalyon in Karachi and also showed interest in meeting the representative of Aysis company involved in cleaning work in the southern areas of Karachi.

In a friendly gesture, Senator Mandviwalla extended an invitation to Mr. Cemal to attend his son's wedding, concluding the meeting with a reaffirmation of the enduring friendship between Pakistan and Turkey.

The Consul General shared that two Turkish

Highlighting the desire to strengthen ties, Senator Mandviwalla called for exploring more investment opportunities and multifaceted collaboration.

Emphasizing the importance of bilateral relations, both sides expressed mutual support for promoting business and trade ties.

The Consul General shared that two Turkish

Members of Hyderabad Union of Journalists (HUJ) are holding protest demonstration against attack on private news channel, at Hyderabad press club.

KARACHI (INP): Fire broke out in Karachi's Saddar mobile market has been doused after hours of struggle, ARY News reported, quoting fire brigade authorities.

As per details, the blaze erupted at Saddar Shah Jahan mobile market, in the early morning and quickly spread to numerous shops, creating a challenging situation for the authorities. Promptly re-

sponding to the emergency, five fire tenders and two water bowers combated the fire.

According to Saddar Electronics Dealers Association President, Rizwan Irfan, more than 100 shops in the market were damaged and the trades suffered the loss of millions of rupees. Irfan said a fire safety system is present in the market, but the blaze quickly engulfed shops.

Volunteers conducted Search and rescue works after a fire broke out in Saddar's mobile market as more than 100 shops in the market were damaged and the trades suffered the loss of millions of rupees, in Provincial Capital.

He said that Chaang later led the police to the places from where 2 motor-bikes were recovered.

The spokesman claimed that Chaang was already booked in 11 FIRs which were registered at different times since 2021 at Hatri and Baldia police stations in Hyderabad. The City police also booked him in a new FIR. Separately, the Market police in a raid near the Veterinary hospital in Heerabad area apprehended Gulzar Shah and Sona Fakher Brohi.

Police arrest suspects involved in motorbike lifting, recover 4 bikes

HYDERABAD (APP): The Hyderabad police arrested 4 suspected motorbike lifters and recovered as many vehicles from their possession in separate raids in the limits of City and Market police stations.

The police spokesman informed here on Tuesday that the City police arrested Adil Shaikh and Zohaib Chaang in a raid.

He said that Chaang later led the police to the places from where 2 motor-bikes were recovered.

The spokesman claimed that Chaang was already booked in 11 FIRs which were registered at different times since 2021 at Hatri and Baldia police stations in Hyderabad. The City police also booked him in a new FIR. Separately, the Market police in a raid near the Veterinary hospital in Heerabad area apprehended Gulzar Shah and Sona Fakher Brohi.

## CNS emphasizes collaboration among regional navies for maritime security

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chief of the Naval Staff (CNS) Admiral Naveed Ashraf visited Thailand to attend eighth Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) Conclave of Chiefs at Bangkok.

The event involved panel discussions on issues related to cooperation in maritime security of Indian Ocean and Blue Economy ways forward for sustainable development of IONS members, a Pakistan Navy news release said on Tuesday.

During the IONS Conclave of Chiefs, bilateral meetings between Chief of the Naval Staff and naval leadership of IONS member states were also held.

The CNS called on Commander of Qatar Emiri Naval Forces, C-in-C of Royal Thai Navy, Deputy

C-in-C of Russian Navy, Commander of Royal Navy of Oman, CNS of French Navy, Commander of Iranian Navy, Fleet Commander of Royal Navy, UK and Vice Chief of Japan Maritime Self Defence Force and discussed matters of mutual interest. Admiral Naveed Ashraf focused on PN contributions to regional maritime security and emphasized on collaboration between the regional navies to enhance maritime security of the region.

He also stressed upon greater collaboration between Indian Ocean countries to exploit potentials of blue economy.

Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) is an initiative to formalise a regional maritime collaboration forum.

Garhi Khuda Bux: Peoples Party (PPP) senior leader, Waqar Mehdi along with others are offering Fataha at the grave of Martyred Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto during her death anniversary celebrations ceremony held at Bhutto Family Mausoleum in Garhi Khuda Bux.

Government officials seeking leave must obtain approval from Returning Officers (ROs), while district officers are obligated to seek permission from the District Returning Officers (DRO) for their leaves.

According to the ECP advisory, federal government employees up to grade 19 can have their leave sanctioned by DROs.

## ECP warns government employees against political involvement

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Tuesday has issued a pre-general election advisory, instructing government officers and employees to refrain from participating in political activities.

The advisory specifies that government officials and employees were prohibited from taking part in election activities.

According to the issued circular, the govern-

## Shaheed BB was voice of the downtrodden: Mayor Sukkur

SUKKUR (APP): Mayor Sukkur Barrister Arslan Sheikh on Tuesday said that the PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari had taken remarkable steps for empowering women in Pakistan according to the vision of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto.

Talking to APP here, he paid rich tribute to Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto on the occasion of her death anniversary.

Arslan said, Shaheed BB had dedicated her life to the service of the nation and never bowed before any anti-democratic power, adding a quote of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto from her last speech: "I put my life in danger and came here be-

cause I feel this country is in danger. I want to see a prosperous, progressive and developed Pakistan."

These words of Ms Bhutto reflect her vision and dream of Pakistan, although she is no more among us, her vision is alive, Arslan observed. He said that history would always remember her for standing up against dictators, adding that she was the voice of the downtrodden.

He further said that among her many achievements for Pakistan is the missile technology for the country. Agosta submarine for the Navy, women banks and women police stations are among her achievements, he said.



HYDERABAD: Residents of Kotri are holding protest demonstration for acceptance of their demands, at Hyderabad press club.

## Letters arrived from the world of soul A unique featured literary session in Ayaz Melo

HYDERABAD (APP): A unique feature literary session titled 'aalam-e-Awaah man aayaal khat' ( Letters arrived from the world of soul) was held on the last day of Ayaz Melo at Khana Badosh writer's cafe on 25th December.

Eminent writer Zahida Abro hosted the session while famous writer Zaib Sindh and Deputy Director Besant Haal Sobia Shaikh were speakers.

Author of the book Niaz Panhwar introducing the book said that the book the imaginary combination of my thinking in which I have narrated imaginary feelings of our legend departed souls like Allama I I Qazi, Shaukat Hussain Shoro, Mushtaq Changezi, Abdul Wahid aaresar, Fauzia Soomro, Gobind

Malhi and Tariq Alam Abro who proved their mettle in different fields of artistic segments. Niaz Panhwar said that those letters were being sent to me by such artists in which they have expressed their feelings of the time they spent in the world as well after death (in world of spirits)

On a query of Moderator to include such imaginary letters in curriculums eminent writer Zaib Sindh said that such books could be included in curriculums, but for this purpose thinking should be changed as these letters are beyond the reality and reflect the creativity of the writer and narrated various problems of Sindh and their solutions systematically.