

# Independent

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Anti-Pakistan rumour mill in full gear on social media

## COAS vows to eliminate mafias with support of nation

Social media is being used to create an environment of chaos, despair, and panic; Fake news being used to portray state in decline; Says provinces major beneficiary of Green Initiative, farmers & agri research to also benefit

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir has said that social media is rife with fabricated claims against the state of Pakistan as he came down hard on anti-national elements.

"Social media is being used to create an environment of chaos, despair, and panic. Through fake news, an impression is being created that the state is losing its [writ]," the army chief said in an address to the National Farmers Convention in Islamabad on Friday.

In his address to the farmers, the army chief further said that "rumours" and "negative impressions" were being spread about Pakistan.

"But you should know that only two states were established on the bases of the Kalima: the state of Madina and Pakistan," COAS Munir said,

emphasising divine backing to the country.

APP adds: Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir on Friday said that a major part of the income of Green Pakistan Initiative would go to the provinces, while the rest would be kept for farmers and agricultural research.

The role of the Pakistan Army in it was only to serve the people and farmers, he said while addressing the National Farmers Convention, according to official sources.

The Army Chief said that agriculture and cattle rearing was the occupation of almost every Prophet, for it involved discipline, suffering, growth, and patience, resulting in immense rewards.

"Rumours and negative things are being said about Pakistan, but you should know that two states were

established in the name of Kalma, State of Tayyaba and State of Pakistan, this is not a coincidence," the COAS said.

Pakistan, he said, was rich in resources. "It has glaciers, rivers, mountains, and fertile land from which the world's best rice, fruits like mandarin orange and mango, granite, gold and copper are produced."

In the sixties, the COAS said, Pakistan was the fastest growing country in Asia, "but we forgot the three golden principles of Quaid-i-Azam - faith, unity, discipline, due to which it suffered degradation."

The Army Chief added that the aim of the Green Pakistan Initiative was to work on agriculture first on a priority basis. Agriculture would be organized in all districts where all kinds of agricultural facilities would be available to the farmers, the COAS said.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar and Chief of the Army Staff, Syed Asim Munir participating in the National Farmer's Convention

## CM launches SPPRA's e-procurement system

KARACHI (APP): Disposal System (EPDS) at a local hotel here Friday. The program was attended by Minister for Law and Chairman Sindh Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (SPPRA) Omar Soomro, DG Federal PPRM Maqbool Gondal, DG SPPRA Zubair Parvez, Director SPPRA Shadiya Jaffer and secretaries of various departments.

He said that the provincial government's top hierarchy and people from the civil society had come together to celebrate an important milestone in our quest for efficiency, transparency and innovation.

"Today marks the beginning of a new chapter as we have unveiled our e-procurement system, an advanced platform that will revolutionize the way we manage our public procurement procedures. As the world rapidly evolves, technology

continues to reshape various industries, therefore, embracing innovation is not just an option, but a necessity, the CM said and added our decision to implement e-procurement demonstrated our commitment to staying ahead of the curve, leveraging technology to improve our operations and ultimately delivering better outcomes for our stakeholders.

The chief minister lauded the initiative undertaken by the SPPRA, supported by the World Bank and Federal PPRM. "This initiative aims to enhance transparency, equity, and competitiveness in public procurement processes."

The Sindh Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (SPPRA) successfully launched its state-of-the-art Electronic Procurement System (e-procurement).

## Pakistan Navy conducts fleet annual efficiency competition parade

KARACHI (APP): Pakistan Navy Fleet Annual Efficiency Competition Parade was held here at Pakistan Navy Dockyard upon the culmination of the operational year.

Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf graced the occasion as Chief Guest that marked the culmination of a rewarding and eventful operational year for Pakistan Navy ships, submarines and aircrafts, a Pakistan Navy news release said.

Upon arrival at the venue, the chief guest was received by Commander Pakistan Fleet Vice Admiral Muhammad Faisal Abbasi and a smartly turned-out contingent presented the Guard of Honour.

The Chief of the Naval Staff expressed complete satisfaction and confidence over the operational prepared-



ness of the Pakistan Navy Fleet. He acknowledged and praised the dedication and professionalism of officers and men in successfully achieving operational objectives and milestones for the year 2023.

The Admiral commended PN Fleet's efforts and contributions towards maritime security. The chief guest also mentioned the modernization plan of the Pakistan Navy wherein various platforms are being inducted in the Fleet. He underscored that induction of these platforms will immensely contribute towards capability enhancement of the Fleet.

## Bilawal visits Bhutto Family martyrs' mausoleum

LARKANA (APP): Pakistan Peoples Party Chairman (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Friday visited the mausoleum of the martyrs of Bhutto Family in Garhi Khuda Bakhsh on Friday to pay respects to the martyrs who had sacrificed their lives for democracy, and also prayed for national security, supremacy of democracy and economic stability. Former Sindh minister Sardar Muhammad Bux Khan Mahar, Ghulam Mustafa Leghari and others were present on the occasion.

He laid a wreath at the grave of slain PPP chairperson and former prime minister, offered Fateha, and recited verses from the Holy Quran.

He also laid wreaths at the graves of PPP's founder



LARKANA: Chairman PPP Bilawal Bhutto Zardari showering flowers at the grave of Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto at Garhi Khuda Bakhsh.

## Quaid Azam's legacy is to serve the nation with honesty: Ahmed Shah

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Caretaker Minister for Information, Minorities Affairs and Social Protection Muhammad Ahmed Shah has said the legacy of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah was to serve the nation with honesty and sincerity as he had emerged as the great leader of Muslims in the entire subcontinent with honesty, determination, dedication, passion and commitment.

He said this while addressing a seminar titled "Jinnah: A Timeless Legacy," organised by Sindh Madressatul Islam

University in connection with the 147th birth anniversary of the Founder of Pakistan at SMUI's auditorium on Friday.

The minister said our younger generation must follow the thoughts of Quaid-e-Azam, in which he has addressed poverty, hunger, education, health and social issues. He maintained that whatsoever our youth play their role in society, that must be co-related to the thoughts of Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah because he guided us in every sphere of life.



KARACHI: Caretaker Sindh Chief Minister Justice (Retd) Maqbool Bqar meets with Federal Minister for Commerce, Production & Board of Investment Mr Gohar Ejaz Khan at the CM House.

## CM Sindh, Federal minister discuss establishment of more industrial park

KARACHI (APP): Caretaker Sindh Chief Minister Justice (Retd) Maqbool Bqar and Federal Minister for Commerce, Industries & Board of Investment Gohar Ejaz discussed the need for the establishment of more Industrial Parks in Karachi during a meeting at CM House on Friday.

The CM said that industrialization was the only solution to develop the economy and create employment opportunities and of course, it opened new vistas of prosperity and uplift.

The meeting was attended by Chief Secretary

Dr Fakhre Alam, Federal Commerce Secretary Sualah Farooqi, Secretary Federal BOI Sohail Rajput and others.

The federal minister told the CM that 1500 acres of land at Steel Mill was allocated for an Industrial Park and its development was assigned to Chinese authorities under CPEC.

He added that the federal government has prepared a plan to hand it over to Chinese authorities to establish their industrial units.

The chief minister said that the provincial government has started the devel-

opment of the Dhabaji Industrial Zone and the development of another Industrial Park at Steel Mills would be a great move.

Baqar said that the country needed such industrial units which produce goods only for export. "We need export to earn foreign exchange, otherwise the country would lag in the ongoing industrial developments," he said.

The CM was told that the Industrial Park at Steel Mill would create more than one million direct and indirect job opportunities apart from giving a boost to the export of finished goods.



KARACHI: Former Prime Minister and Muslim League (PML-N) President, Shehbaz Sharif along with Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, Convener Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM-P) talking to media persons at MQM-P Bahadurabad Head Office

## Shehbaz conveys Nawaz Sharif's 'important' message to MQM-P

KARACHI (INP): In a much-anticipated meeting, the president of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Shehbaz Sharif, conveyed the 'important' message of Nawaz Sharif to the Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM-P) leadership in Karachi on Friday.

According to the details, the PML-N president, Shehbaz Sharif, along with other party leaders reached the Markaz of MQM-P in Bahadurabad, Karachi.

The MQM-P leadership including Khalid

Maqbool, Farooq Sattar, Mustafa Kamal, Aminul Haque, and others welcomed the PML-N leaders in Karachi.

The meeting was attended by prominent leaders of both political parties including Mustafa Kamal, Dr. Farooq Sattar, Aminul Haque, Nasreen Jalil, Javed Hanif, Anees Qaim Khani, and other provincial committee members.

Sources claimed that the former PM will also hold a separate meeting with the Convener, Deputy Convener, and Senior Deputy Convener later

## Saeed Ghani says: PPP not forming any alliance with PTI, national unity must on 'CoE'

KARACHI (APP): Sindh former minister Saeed Ghani Friday made it clear that Pakistan People's Party is not forming any political alliance with the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) in coming elections and urged political parties for unity on the 'Charter of Economy' to take the country out of current crisis.

Talking to a Private news channel, PPP leader said his party did not believe in politics of hate, ego, and division, adding, that we will participate in the coming election in line with its manifesto outlined.

"PPP leadership does not believe in the politics of confrontation rather it is pursuing the politics of reconciliation", adding, that seat adjustment is a routine matter of elections.

He recalled that Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto always advocated to take for politics of friendship and reconciliation.

Replying to a query, he stressed that the upcoming generations need a better economy and Pakistan still can prosper, adding, that participating in elections is the right of every political party equally.

## FO spox confirms India's request to extradite Hafiz Saeed

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan has received a request from the Indian authorities, seeking extradition of Lashkar-e-Taiba founder Hafiz Saeed, the Foreign Office spokesperson said Friday.

Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch stated this in response to media queries regarding India's request to extradite Hafiz Saeed.

The spokesperson said the request had been made by India in a so-called money laundering case.

"It is pertinent to note that no bilateral extradition treaty exists between Pakistan and India," she added.

## Nomination papers of Murad rejected

PESHAWAR (APP): The nomination papers of former communication minister and PTI leader, Murad Saeed for constituency NA-4 Swat have been rejected by the Returning Officer on Friday.

Local leader of PTI, Suhail Sultan Advocate while confirming the rejection of Murad Saeed's nomination papers, said the reason behind the denial of the nomination paper would soon be made public. Murad Saeed was earlier elected as MNA from the same constituency in 2018 and later performed as federal minister for communication.

## Banks to remain open on Saturday, Sunday for tax collection

KARACHI (APP): The State Bank of Pakistan on Friday directed all banks to keep their branches open on Saturday and Sunday for collection of taxes, duties and other government receipts. "The branches of all banks that are open on Saturday shall observe extended working hours till 5:00 p.m. Saturday, December 30, 2023 and till 8:00 p.m. on Sunday, December 31, 2023 for collection of taxes through alternate delivery channels and over-the-counter facilities," an SBP press release said.



KARACHI: Peoples Party (PPP) Co-Chairman, Asif Ali Zardari wraps PPP Muffler on Raza Haroon and Anees Advocate after they joined the PPP along with their colleagues, at Bilawal House

Daily Voice of Masses  
**Independent**

**Wasted harvests**

That an agricultural country is facing food shortages sounds almost like an oxymoron. But Pakistan is a country where truth is stranger than fiction. In our truth, the world's eighth largest producer of agricultural output is failing to achieve food security. On Wednesday, medical experts came together to attend the 26th Annual Sustainable Development Conference organized by the SDPI, and suggested that a change in dietary preferences and reduction in food waste can help the country reduce its ever-evolving problems of food insecurity and malnutrition. On the 2023 Global Hunger Index, Pakistan ranks 102 out of 125 countries and has a level of hunger that is 'serious'. And it is rather alarming that the country has done nothing to improve its situation. While it is true that Pakistan is a poor country that relies mostly on food imports to meet the basic needs and that after the 2022 floods the country faced multifaceted challenges including the loss of crop and the financial inability to have a smooth flow of imports, policymakers show a complete lack of will when it comes to doing something on our own to meet the targets of food security. Pakistan needs external financing to rebuild the areas destroyed by the floods, but nothing in the world encourages the country to sacrifice its green, fertile lands for housing schemes, allowing power-hungry capitalists to increase their assets. Cutting down mango orchards to develop posh housing societies, for example, is clearly in the hands of the Pakistan government, and policymakers here willingly approve such plans, with complete disregard to the ecological impacts such projects may have. It is extremely shocking that a year after the floods, a 50 per cent increase in the child undernutrition rate has been reported, which means that around 44 per cent of children under five are now stunted. Post the floods, unbridled inflation snatched away the little purchasing power that most people had. Not only did price hikes affect the poor, but the well-off also started feeling the pinch of inflation and ultimately watered down their donation activities, hitting the poor and the working class hard.

**Elections and elitism**

By Hussain H Zaidi

As the nation gears up for national elections, the question that dominates media and political discourse is: which party will carry the day? Will it be the current favourites – the PML-N? Or will the PTI, which is currently under a cloud, have the last laugh? Or will master politician Asif Zardari pull a rabbit out of the hat? While this question is important, particularly for the political parties, their supporters, movers and shakers (both actual and self-styled) and bookmakers, it boils down to answering which among the elite will rule 240 million plus people. A more fundamental question for the people at large is whether the forthcoming elections usher in an improved lot for them. The fact that the country has remained in the grip of hyperinflation over the past two years, which has put both low- and middle-income households in a spot, will make the state of the economy a major contributor to the electoral outcome. That said, the economic question is much wider – the price spiral being only part of it – and pertains to moving towards a more egalitarian, or let's dispense with euphemism, a less elitist society. As a rule, the leading political parties in Pakistan have their heads in the cloud when facing the problem of egalitarianism or elitism. Yes, in manifestos and speeches, they do virulently attack elitism. Yet, while in the saddle, they do little to attenuate it, as their economic policies aim at making the affluent better off through tax relief and subsidies. Since democracy is a people-centred political system, one would expect that in a democracy elitism would be conspicuous by its absence. However, in both theory and practice, democracy and elitism are not mutually exclusive. The elite theory popularized by Italian social scientists Pareto and Mosca argues that all societies, regardless of the form of government, are governed by one or more political elites. Pakistan has often been

described as an elitist state. The essential narrative is that the national economy was captured by a small elite, which both manipulated the market and controlled the state. The result was a vicious combination of inefficient resource allocation (market failure) and inequitable income distribution (government failure). The elite has been so powerful that a change in government, or even a transition from despotism to democracy and vice versa, failed to hold it in check. Instead, successive governments strengthened, as well as in return benefited, from elite capture. Their policies on the one hand promoted cronyism and rent seeking and on the other neglected social sector and human resource development so that the elite's preeminent position remained unchallenged. The already scarce resources were allocated primarily to grand infrastructure-related projects in the name of development. Such projects served as a source of rent for the businesses and commissions and kickbacks for the people in power. The PTI has been a strong exponent of this narrative. However, during its four years in power, its support for the elite wasn't any less. The bottles might have changed but the wine was the same. Even if successive governments didn't by design promote elitism, it can't be denied that for one reason or another, social welfare has taken a backseat in public policies. Besides, welfare policies have had a very narrow focus – viz income transfer to the people at the bottom of the economic heap. A case in point is the Benazir Income Support Programme. While cash transfers may help the recipients survive another day, they are an extremely weak instrument for promoting public welfare or even poverty alleviation. The ultimate test of a poverty alleviation programme is that the number of its beneficiaries shrinks over the years and the programme eventually phases out. Cash transfers serve elitism in that they perpetuate the culture of

dependence on the elite, as the recipients by and large have neither the incentive nor the opportunity to become socially useful economic agents. Though in normal circumstances cash transfers make little economic sense, these are an important means of garnering political support and winning elections. Human resource development (HRD) is an important means of increasing public welfare in the long run. This is especially true of a labour-abundant country like Pakistan, which will always find it tough to realize its growth potential without adequate HRD. However, HRD has remained a neglected area in Pakistan. Not surprisingly, Pakistan is presently ranked 161 among 191 nations on the UNDP's Human Development Index (HDI), which comprises three broad indicators: life expectancy at birth, expected and mean years of schooling, and per capita national income. The country is placed under the 'Low Human Development' category, the lowest category. Although between 1990 and 2021, Pakistan's HDI value has gone up from 0.400 to 0.544, it is still well behind the average score for the world (0.732), developing countries (0.685) and South Asia (0.632). The HDI doesn't directly take into account income distribution. However, countries' HDI performance is adjusted for inequality in income distribution and other relevant indicators. Pakistan's current inequality-adjusted HDI value is 0.380 compared with the world average of 0.590, developing countries' average of 0.538, and the South Asian average of 0.476. Pakistan's coefficient of human inequality is 29.2 compared with the world average of 19.4, developing countries' average of 21.4, and South Asian nations' average of 24.3. The coefficient is measured on a scale of 0-100. Zero means perfect equality, while 100 means perfect inequality. Courtesy The News

**Why the silence?**

By Zubeida Mustafa

Recently, at a history conference on academic freedom held at SZABIST, a session was devoted to analysing the culture of silence that has come to prevail in our academia. It was attributed to the penchant of the powers that be to clamp down on the free expression of opinion by scholars who want to expose the unpleasant truths of our history. If they choose to defy censorship guidelines, the consequences can be dire for them. It was also pointed out correctly by a speaker that traditionally our society silences children; they are discouraged from asking questions and are not permitted to speak up before their elders. Another panellist blamed the teachers for failing to create interest in the students in what was being taught in the classroom. As a result, the students had no desire to acquire knowledge. Unfortunately, no one spoke of the self-imposed culture of silence created by the government's language policy in the education system. There is overemphasis on the use of the English language, despite the teachers' lack of proficiency in it. The government's decision to make English compulsory for all schoolchildren and also allow its use as the medium of instruction in private schools has created a dichotomy. Worse is the recent — not publicly announced — move of the Sindh government to introduce English as the medium of instruction in all public-sector schools in Karachi's District South. These unwise policies are destroying education in Pakistan while creating fissures in our already class-ridden soci-

ety. Inequality and injustice are on the rise driven by a fractured education system. All this is shaping social attitudes. English is 'good'. Urdu (or any local language) is 'bad'. Those who study in 'English-medium schools' are good and get jobs. Those who go to a school that does not claim to use English as the medium of instruction are scum of the earth, worthy of marginalisation. Is it then surprising that all are now chasing English for their survival and, paradoxically, self-destruction? How does this phenomenon create a culture of silence? It robs the youth of their confidence. I experienced this a fortnight ago when invited by the Urban Resource Centre to distribute certificates to some students who had completed the 18th Community Architect Training Course. This is a valuable service the URC renders to communities by training young men and women to map their dwellings and improve ventilation and sanitation, while arranging their visits to various localities where they meet the denizens of the real Pakistan. Nearly 292 people have been trained so far. I was asked to give a lecture on double standards in education. Instead, I decided to have a discourse based on the participants' own school experiences. Each of them gave an identical account of their school education. They had all studied in a school that claimed to be 'English medium'. The teachers spoke in Urdu but the students had to read, write and learn from textbooks that were in English. After they had introduced themselves they fell silent. They appeared smart but no one questioned this hybrid

style of pedagogy that is accepted by all concerned with education in Pakistan. This bizarre pedagogy produces tragic results. The children do not learn English. Neither do they learn the subjects they are taught in it. Yet it is foolishly believed that a dual purpose is served. This absurd pedagogy, a post-colonial product, has five results. 1) It does not teach a student how to express his own thoughts in any language. 2) The child resorts to rote learning. 3) The concept-pts are not clearly understood by the child. 4) In the process, the children forget their own language and 5) they are dumbed. When they see children from elite schools speaking "fur fur in English" (the dream of a child from Lyari in Karachi, herself struggling with the language), they internalise the loss of self-esteem they suffer. A few days later, I telephoned a number of these certificate holders to ask them why they didn't speak up when I had wanted them to. It was then — after they had listened to my talk — that they became vocal. One said that the silence I witnessed was a normal pattern at such events. Another said that once she had an argument with someone on the language issue and had been humiliated by the speaker (not at the URC). As a result, she chooses silence. The culture of silence is so deeply ingrained in children that even in the comfort zone of the URC, where there are no language restrictions, students fail to shed the inhibitions they imbibed in early childhood. It actually affects their psyche. Their sense of dignity is violated and they develop an inferiority complex. Should good education be doing that?—Courtesy Dawn

**Commerce News**

**SBP emphasizes on role of fiscal policy, effective administration for price, financial stability**

**Independent Report**  
KARACHI: The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), on Friday, emphasized the role of fiscal policy and effective administration for price and financial stability, particularly rationalization of government spending, increasing revenue collection, strengthening food and energy supply chains, and enhancing productivity. The central bank, in its Governor's Annual

Report (GAR) for the fiscal year 2022-23 issued here, also vowed to continue taking decisions to prevent high inflation from becoming entrenched and keep inflation expectations anchored to achieve the medium-term target of 5-7% by the end of FY25, with FY24 inflation moderating to 20-22 per cent on account of the impact of contractionary monetary policy, improvements in

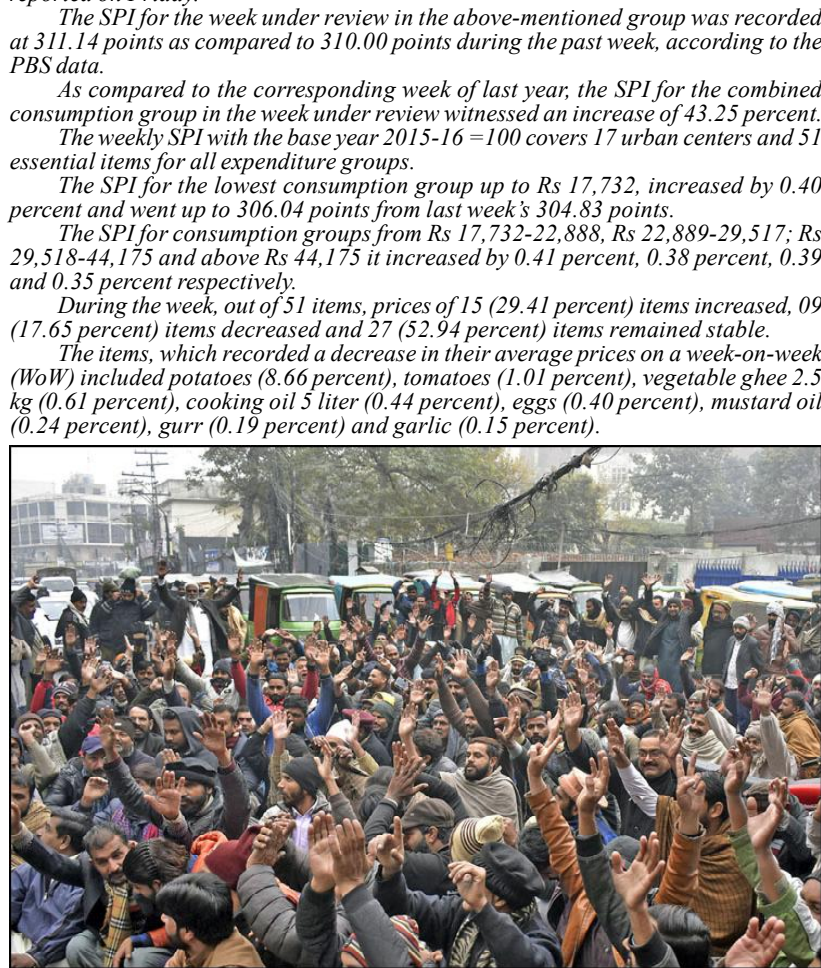
domestic supplies, softer non-energy global commodity prices, and the high base effect. However, the Report added that "this outlook hinges on the absence of adverse shocks stemming from geopolitical tensions and unforeseen climate events, and unfavourable movements in global commodity prices." The GAR 2022-23 is published Under Section 39 (1) of the State Bank of

Pakistan Act, 1956 which requires the governor to submit to the Parliament an annual report regarding the Bank's objectives, the conduct of monetary policy, the state of the economy and the financial system. The GAR stated that fiscal year 2023 was extraordinarily challenging, with a host of external and domestic shocks, amplified by lingering structural weaknesses.



KARACHI: Deputy Governor SBP calls on Caretaker Federal Minister for Commerce and Industries & Production Dr. Gohar Ejaz at Governor House.

**Weekly inflation up by 0.37 percent**  
ISLAMABAD (APP): The weekly inflation, measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), witnessed an increase of 0.37 percent for the combined consumption groups during the week ended on December 28, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday. The SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 311.14 points as compared to 310.00 points during the past week, according to the PBS data. As compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 43.25 percent. The weekly SPI with the base year 2015-16=100 covers 17 urban centers and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups. The SPI for the lowest consumption group up to Rs 17,732, increased by 0.40 percent and went up to 306.04 points from last week's 304.83 points. The SPI for consumption groups from Rs 17,732-22,888, Rs 22,889-29,517, Rs 29,518-44,175 and above Rs 44,175 it increased by 0.41 percent, 0.38 percent, 0.39 and 0.35 percent respectively. During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 15 (29.41 percent) items increased, 09 (17.65 percent) items decreased and 27 (52.94 percent) items remained stable. The items, which recorded a decrease in their average prices on a week-on-week (WoW) included potatoes (8.66 percent), tomatoes (1.01 percent), vegetable ghee 2.5 kg (0.61 percent), cooking oil 5 liter (0.44 percent), eggs (0.40 percent), mustard oil (0.24 percent), gurr (0.19 percent) and garlic (0.15 percent).



LAHORE: Activists of Rickshaw Union holds protest in the favor of their demands outside press club in Provincial Capital.

**WAPDA generates 34 bln units hydel electricity in 2023**  
ISLAMABAD (APP): The outgoing year 2023 has been a satisfying year for hydropower and water sectors in Pakistan as WAPDA generated about 34 billion units of low-cost, clean and green hydel electricity, which is 2.2 billion units more than that of the last year. The country witnessed increased generation of hydel electricity, while under-construction WAPDA projects in water and hydropower sectors also achieved major milestones in 2023, according to a press release on Friday. This increased hydel generation helped national exchequer save about Rs. 106 billion, if same quantum of electricity was to be generated through expensive, imported fossil fuels. Most importantly, WAPDA hydel electricity costs only Rs. 3.51 per unit; and it constitutes about 30% of the total electricity provided to the National Grid. WAPDA owns and operates 22 hydel

power stations including Neelum Jhelum with cumulative generation capacity of 9459 Megawatt (MW). According to the generation details of 2023, Tarbela generated 12.9 billion units, Tarbela 4th Extension 4.4 billion units, Ghazi Barotha 6.8 billion units, Mangla 4.7 billion units, Neelum Jhelum 1 billion units, Warsak 0.8 billion units, Chashma 0.9 billion units, and rest of WAPDA hydel power stations cumulatively generated 2.5 billion units. Year 2023 also augured well for under-construction WAPDA projects. Despite the the cosmic crunch, construction work on eight WAPDA projects continued unabated. WAPDA achieved the landmark of river diversion at Dasu Hydropower Project in February 2023, while diverted River Indus at Diamer-Basha Dam through test-run. WAPDA is likely to achieve the milestone of river.

**Senate body on petroleum discusses suspension of gas supply of Sindh industrial sector**  
ISLAMABAD: The Senate Standing Committee on Petroleum, chaired by Senator Mohammad Abdul Qadir, on Friday discussed the issue regarding the suspension of gas supply of Sindh industrial sector, resulting in a substantial 28% production loss. Officials from the Ministry for Energy (Petroleum Division) while briefing the committee said that each year the country was witnessing a depletion of more than 10% of gas reserves at various gas fields, with a simultaneous increase in its demand. This year, Sui Southern Gas Limited (SSGL) was grappling with a reduction of approximately 90 MMCFD compared to the previous year. Secretary of the Ministry for Energy (Petroleum Division), Mohsin Agha, highlighted the sustained decline over the past 8 to 10 years, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive plan to scrutinize the policymaking. The committee members conducted an in-depth analysis of supply statistics and gas depletion

over the years, urging Ministry for Energy officers (Petroleum Division) to address discrepancies for conclusive results. Furthermore, ministry officials provided insights into LPG rates, clarifying that OGRA (Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority) determines prices for producers, the margin of Marketing Companies (MCs), and consumers. Pricing is based on various parameters, including the monthly determination of the producers' price per metric ton according to the Saudi Aramco Contract Price (40% Propane; 60% Butane). The distribution margin is fixed at Rs. 35,000 per metric ton, equivalent to Rs. 413 per cylinder. Additionally, a petroleum levy on indigenous production stands at Rs. 4,669 per metric ton, translating to Rs. 55 per cylinder. The officers explained that GST, previously at 17% and now increased to 18% since February 2023, applies to these parameters.

Table with 2 columns: Item Name and Price/Rate. Includes items like Wheat, Rice, and various oils.

## CM expresses dissatisfaction at poor condition in Jallo Park, Botanical Garden

**Independent Report**  
LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi undertook comprehensive visits to three hospitals, as many park, and the CTD headquarters.

In his visit to Jallo Park and Botanical Garden Jallo, Mohsin Naqvi expressed dissatisfaction at broken roads and poor conditions in Jallo Park, demanding a plan for its upgrade. He directed the immediate transfer of park management from the Forest Department to the PHA, emphasizing the need for improvements.

Expressing keen interest in the welfare of children, he inquired about the treatment facilities provided in the Children's Hospital emergency and

directed immediate enhancements, including fixing new tiles on the main corridor floor. He sought new counters' designs from IDAP within 24 hours adding that new tiles and counters fixing should be completed within ten days. Furthermore, he inspected ongoing construction at the Punjab Institute of Cardiology, issuing directives to expedite the laying of biogas pipes underground within 24 hours. He also emphasized the need for optimal arrangements in the waiting area for attendants and ordered the relocation of the generator to a suitable place.

Turning his attention to the General Hospital, CM reviewed the

upgradation work on all four floors of the Emergency Block. He emphasized the importance of safe and standard wiring for biogas and AC pipes, as well as infection-free operation theatres. Noting some sluggishness in construction activities, he ordered to accelerate the pace of work.

CM Naqvi's visit to Shalimar Garden involved a detailed review of its overall condition. Riding a rickshaw, he affirmed his commitment to restoring the garden to its original historical state. The CM ordered the removal of illegal constructions around the garden, tasking the deputy commissioner Lahore with the responsibility.



LAHORE: Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi holding hand of child in a pleasant mood after reviewing upgradation project during his visit to Children Hospital.

## Minister says: Education networking system to be improved in merged tribal area

**Independent Report**  
PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister for Newly Merged Districts Affairs, Industries, Commerce and Technical Education, Dr. Aamer Abdullah has said that private education system and the government educational institutions would be improved to impart quality education to the tribal youth in the merged areas.

He said this while holding a meeting with the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the network of private educational institutions "Dar Arqam Schools System Pakistan" and Chairman of Al-Ghazali Education Foundation, Waqas Jafari who called on him at his office in the Civil Secretariat here on Friday.

The meeting discussed in detail ways and means for the improvement of the education systems in the merged tribal areas. The

caretaker minister along with the delegation discussed various proposals regarding the improvement of the education system in the province, especially in the merged districts. Provincial President of Al-Khidmat Foundation Pakistan Khalid Waqas Chamkani was also present.

The minister and the head of private educational institutions deliberated on the possibilities of expanding the network of the above-mentioned schools in the merged districts and also discussed the matters of public-private partnership proposal for some government educational institutions in the same districts. In the meeting, the minister said that the provincial government was considering several useful proposals to maintain the high quality of 10 governor model schools, established in the merged districts and to run them in a better manner.



GARHI KHUDBUX: Peoples Party (PPP) Leader, Aseefa Bhutto Zardari is laying floral wreaths and offers Fateha for the peace of departed soul of the PPP Founder, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and Benazir Bhutto, at Bhutto Mausoleums in Garhi Khuda Bux.

## DIG Sukkur vows to improve traffic situation

**SUKKUR (APP):** Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Police, Sukkur, Abdul Hameed Khoso on Friday issued instructions to immediately improve upon the traffic situation in the district on an emergency basis following

days of traffic congestion which has created severe issues for commuters. In this connection, the DIG has asked the SSP Sukkur to submit a detailed report on the reasons and solutions for improving the flow of traffic on the main roads of the town,

and those routes which are frequently used by commuters.

He also instructed the traffic police incharge on turns and all other roads of the city's congested traffic zones to improve the flow of traffic.

## Minister inaugurates vehicle inspection and licensing App

**LAHORE (APP):** Provincial Minister for Transport Ibrahim Hassan Murad on Friday inaugurated the Vehicle Inspection and Licensing App in a ceremony held here at the Punjab Transport Company's office. The ceremony was attended by Secretary Transport Ahmad Javed Qazi, CEO Punjab Transport Company Faiq Ahmed, enforcement inspectors and officers from the transport department. Ibrahim Murad congratulated the IT and the transport department teams, expressing optimism that the app would lead to a 90% reduction in axle-load traffic violations. The minister highlighted the

department's goal to eliminate paper-based challans, stating that with the efficient team, the journey towards e-challans had begun. The Vehicle Inspection and Licensing App aims to curb fake and bogus challans complaints, marking a significant step towards digital transformation. The minister emphasized real-time information retrieval had become possible, heralding a new era in transportation. Secretary Transport Ahmad Javed Qazi said that the app would also facilitate savings in challans printing and enhance transparency in the inspection process.

## KP decides to open bank accounts for prisoners

**PESHAWAR (APP):** The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) government has made the decision to open bank accounts for prisoners across the province.

According to official sources on Friday, the recently released Welfare Fund Rules 2023 by the KP home ministry stated that prisoners will now have their own personal bank accounts to support their families.

Negotiations are currently in progress with the Bank of Khyber (BoK) for the establishment of these accounts, as mentioned in the official statement. The government outlined a distribution plan where 10% of the prisoners' income will go to the government, 30% to the prisoners themselves, and 60% to the Welfare Fund. Additionally, prisoners will be permitted to engage in various activities.

## Sec Health describes year accomplishments of Health Dept

**PESHAWAR (APP):** Health Secretary Mehmood Aslam Wazir on Friday in his annual performance message said the Health Department has achieved many accomplishments in the year 2023. He said that this year, the department has effectively contained the dengue cases to 747 without any fatalities.

He said by activating seven closed hospitals, medical services are now provided on a double shift basis, both in the morning and evening, compared to the previous practice of offering services only during daytime hours.

Speaking about the impediments related to fake, unregistered, and spurious drugs, Health Secretary Mehmood Aslam Wazir revealed the establishment of the province's first mobile drug lab in Pakistan.

## Jameel elected as the new Chairman KDA

**ABBOTTABAD (APP):** The Kagan Development Authority (KDA) marked a significant milestone as the newly constituted board on Friday convened its inaugural meeting at the Commissioner's Office in Abbottabad and elected its new chairman.

In the online session members of the board including Lieutenant General @ Ayaz Saleem Rana, Masroor Ahmed, Arif Islam Khan, Senior Bureaucrat Jameel Ahmed, Commissioner Hazara Division Syed Zahir-ul-Islam, Director General Shabir Khan, and Raqeeb Khan were present. Senior retired Bureaucrat Jameel Ahmed was unanimously elected as the new Chairman of the KDA during the proceedings. Shabir Khan, Director General KDA welcomed the newly appointed members, expressing confidence in Chairman Jameel Ahmed and assured cooperation.



TANDO ADAM: Grooms and brides during a mass marriage ceremony held in a local garden, organized by the Odera Lal Welfare Association. A total of 250 couples participated, including 125 Muslims and 125 Non-Muslims.

## International News

## Russia launches massive missile attack on Ukraine, 12 dead

**Monitoring Desk**  
RUSSIA: Russia on Friday unleashed one of its biggest missile attacks on Ukraine of the war so far, killing 12 civilians, wounding dozens more and hitting residential buildings in Kyiv, the south and west of the country, officials said.

Ten people in Kyiv were trapped under rubble at a warehouse damaged by falling debris, the city's military administration said. A maternity ward was damaged in the city of Dnipro, but no casualties were reported, the governor said.

"Today, millions of Ukrainians awoke to the loud sound of explosions. I wish those sounds of explosions in Ukraine could be heard all around the world," Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said, calling for Kyiv's allies to step up their support.

The vast end-of-year aerial assault comes as uncertainty is swirling over the scale and staying power of future Western military and financial support for Kyiv nearly two years into the war with Russia.

"Russia attacked with everything it has in its arsenal... Approximately 110 missiles were fired, most of which were shot down," President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on Telegram messenger.

Air Force Commander Mykola Oleshchuk suggested the strike was Russia's largest aerial barrage since the February 2022 invasion, describing it on Telegram messenger as "the most massive attack from the air".

Army chief General Valeriy Zaluzhnyi said the attack targeted critical infrastructure and industrial and military facilities. There was no immediate comment from Russia.

The energy ministry reported power outages in the regions of southern Odesa, northeastern Kharkiv, central Dnipropetrovsk and central Kyiv.

Ukraine has been warning for weeks that Russia could be stockpiling missiles to launch a major air attack on the energy system. Last year millions of people were plunged into darkness when Russian strikes pounded the power grid.

Five people were killed in the central region of Dnipropetrovsk where missiles hit a shopping centre, a privately-held home and a six-storey residential building.

One person was confirmed dead at a warehouse in Kyiv, Mayor Vitali Klitschko said, revising down an earlier toll of two. Residential buildings and an uninhabited building were also hit, a senior military official said.



Rescuers work at the site where a residential building was damaged during a Russian missile and drone strike, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, in Odesa, Ukraine



RAFAH: An injured Palestinian man comforts a relative outside the Kuwait hospital, in the southern Gaza Strip, following an Israeli army strike that left at least 20 dead and 55 wounded

## Maine elections official disqualifies Trump from presidential primary ballot

**Monitoring Desk**  
WASHINGTON: Maine disqualified Donald Trump from the state ballot in next year's U.S. presidential primary election, becoming the second state to bar the former president for his role in the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol.

Maine Secretary of State Shenna Bellows, a Democrat, concluded that Trump, the front-runner for the Republican presidential nomination, incited an insurrection when he spread false claims about voter fraud in the 2020 election and then urged his supporters to march on the Capitol to stop lawmakers from certifying the vote.

"The U.S. Constitution does not tolerate an assault on the foundations of our government," Bellows wrote in a 34-page ruling.

The decision can be appealed to a state Superior Court, and Bellows suspended her ruling until the court rules on the matter.

Trump's campaign said it would quickly file an objection to the "atrocious" decision.

Lawyers for Trump

have disputed that he engaged in insurrection and argued that his remarks to supporters on the day of the 2021 riot were protected by his right to free speech.

The decision came after a group of former Maine lawmakers said that Trump should be disqualified based on a provision of the U.S. Constitution that bars people from holding office if they engaged in "insurrection or rebellion" after previously swearing an oath to the United States.

The former lawmakers—Kimberley Rosen, Thomas Saviello and Ethan Strimling—said in a statement that Bellows "stood on the side of democracy and our constitution in her decision to bar former President Donald Trump from Maine's ballot."

Rosen and Saviello are both former Republican state senators. Strimling is a former Democratic state senator.

The ruling applies only to Maine's March primary election, but it could affect Trump's status for the November general election.

## North Korea's new reactor at nuclear site likely to be operational next summer

**Monitoring Desk**  
SEOUL: A light-water reactor at North Korea's main nuclear complex will likely be formally operational by next summer, South Korea's defense minister said, amid suspicions that the North may use it as a new source of fissile materials for nuclear weapons.

Concerns about North Korea's nuclear program deepened recently as the UN atomic agency and foreign experts said they've detected signs indicating that North Korea had begun operating its light-water reactor at the Yongbyon nuclear complex.

IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi said last week that his agency had observed increased levels of activity at and near the reactor and since mid-October, a strong water outflow from its cooling system. He said the reactor is "a cause for concern" because it can produce plutonium—one of the two key ingredients used to manufacture nuclear weapons, along with highly enriched uranium.

The South Korean Defense Ministry said Friday

that Defense Minister Shin Wonsik told local reporters a day before that his country had also spotted similar light-water system-related activities associated with the reactor last summer.

Shin said the reactor appears to be in the stage of a trial operation and that it's expected to be officially operational around next summer.

North Korea has long produced weapons-grade plutonium from its widely known 5-megawatt reactor at Yongbyon. The light-water reactor would be an additional source of bomb fuels, and observers say its bigger capacity could allow it to produce more plutonium. Yongbyon has a uranium enrichment facility as well.

There are questions about the reactor's reported operation, as light-water reactors are best-suited for electricity generation. Shin noted there has been no country that has used light-water reactors to produce weapons-grade plutonium. However, many observers say North Korea could adapt one at Yongbyon to

produce weapons-grade plutonium.

"(North Korea's) commissioning of a new light water nuclear power plant raises serious concerns, including safety," the US Mission to the UN in Vienna said Saturday in a message posted on X, formerly known as Twitter. "(North Korea's) unlawful nuclear & ballistic missile programs continue to pose a grave threat to international peace & security."

Grossi also noted the North's operation of the light-water reactor violates UN Security Council resolutions.

The IAEA and foreign governments rely on satellite imagery and other methods to monitor activities at Yongbyon and other suspected nuclear facilities in North Korea. The North kicked out IAEA inspectors from the country in 2009.

Outside estimates on the size of North Korea's nuclear arsenal vary, ranging from 20-60 to more than 100. Experts say North Korea can add six to 18 bombs each year.

Dr. Umar Saif says

## Scope of national roaming facility to be extended to National Highways, Motorways

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication, Dr Umar Saif, said on Friday that the national roaming facility's scope would be extended to motorways and national highways to facilitate travellers. During his visit to the headquarters of the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA), Dr Umar Saif said, "The government is taking all possible steps to promote the telecom sector in the country." Chairman PTA, Major General @ Hafeezur Rehman, Member Compliance & Enforcement PTA, Dr Khawar Sidique Khokhar, and senior officers of MoIT&T and PTA were present on the occasion.

Senior officers briefed the minister about the functions of PTA, regulatory initiatives, and the overall performance of the telecom sector.

The minister was informed that the PTA has consistently facilitated the thriving telecom industry in Pakistan, providing state-of-the-art telecom, broadband, and ICT services. The challenges faced by the sector and the regulator's ongoing efforts to address them were also discussed.

Meanwhile Caretaker IT and Telecommunication Minister Dr Umar Saif Friday disclosed that his ministry with the coordination of all other stakeholders of telecom companies from January 15, 2024 will launch a 'Contract based smart phone policy' in which people travelling to other countries will get latest model phones on easy installments, which will benefit economy.

Talking to a private news channel, IT minister said that our aim to incentive responsible financial behavior and ensure that smart phone accessibility continues to expand, adding, we need a robust mechanism to protect investors from defaults, suggesting measures such as blocking mobile phones and, potentially, national identity cards of defaulters.

Minister said that under this policy, telecom companies will have the opportunity to directly offer smartphones to customers through installment plans, thereby expanding the benefits of mobile broadband, especially among low-income segments in Pakistan.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Minister for IT and Telecommunications Dr Umar Saif is being briefed by Chairman PTA Major General (Retd) Hafeez-ur-Rehman on the affairs of the department at PTA headquarters.



KARACHI: Caretaker Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed visiting Gurdwara Guru Nanak Darbar Swami Narain Mandir Light House.

## PML-N takes GDA along to form four-party alliance against PPP in Sindh

KARACHI (INP): The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and the Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA) have reached an agreement to collaborate and support each other in the upcoming general elections.

This development came during a meeting between PML-N President Shehbaz Sharif and GDA chief Pir Pagara, with PML-N leaders Khawaja Saad Rafique and Ayaz Sadiq also in attendance.

During the meeting, the two sides reached an agreement on a four-party seat adjustment formula.

This four-party alliance, according to sources, comprises the Muttahida

Qaumi Movement (MQM), Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA), Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F).

The primary objective of this electoral alliance was to challenge the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) in its political stronghold of Sindh, reportedly.

Former prime minister Shehbaz Sharif is currently leading a PML-N delegation to Sindh to form electoral alliances.

During the meeting, Shehbaz Sharif and Pir Pagara affirmed their commitment to collaboration, pledging to jointly participate in the forthcoming elections and extend mutual support as necessary.

The PML-N president noted that a single party held sway in the province for the past many years.

Interacting with media after the meeting, PML-N leader and GDA leaders announced their consensus on a four-party seat-adjustment formula.

They revealed that the GDA harboured reservations regarding the upcoming elections, and acknowledged the presence of PPP candidates in almost every constituency. The leaders stated that they did not dissuade anyone from participating in the elections, admitting that contesting election was the right of every individual.

## Does caretaker govt wants to derail election: IHC

ISLAMABAD (Online): Islamabad High Court (IHC) has allowed meeting between PTI founder and PTI chairman under the supervision of Superintendent Adiala Jail.

The court remarked permission for consultation in connection with the general election is basic right. The caretaker government should be impartial in the election. Opposing consultation between PTI chairman and PTI founder by the caretaker government raises question on its neutrality.

Additional Attorney General (AAG) and Superintendent Adiala jail appeared in the court. Counsel Shoaib Shaheen took the plea in the court consultation is needed for distribution of 700 tickets of PTI. The court expressed annoyance over opposing the maintainability of the petition by AAG remarking was the additional note issued by Supreme Court not enough for you. Do you want to get write a note by me too against you after SC.

It has been requested in the petition that permission be given to chairman PTI Gauhara Khan to make consultation with PTI founder. The court ordered that meeting between chairman

PTI and founder PTI be arranged under supervision of superintendent Adiala jail.

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## Caretaker Minister presides meeting on TDAP, Steel Mills

KARACHI (APP): Federal Minister for Commerce, Industries & Production Dr. Gohar Ejaz on Friday presided over meeting to discuss matters relating to Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) and Pakistan Steel Mills here at Governor House.

The meeting was attended by Federal Secretary Commerce Saleh Farooqi, TDAP Chief Executive Zubair Motiwala and other officials of PSM and TDAP.

During the meeting, Dr. Gohar Ejaz was briefed about circumstances which led to the destruction and closure of the Mill.

The caretaker minister said that PSM could be revived if government and SIFC play their responsible

and lawful role keeping in view, the PSM's "Key Performance Indicators" (KPI) audited from 1982 to 2023.

TDAP officials under the leadership of C. E TDAP Zubair Motiwala briefed the caretaker minister about "4th Pak-Africa Trade Development Conference" (PATDC) and Single Country Exhibition (SCE) in Cairo, Egypt to be held next month.

The 4th edition of PATDC & SCE will see participation from MENA region including Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Burkina Faso, Mali & Mauritania. A delegation of more than 100 business owners & traders from Pakistan will travel to Cairo for the exhibition.

## Multi-storey towel factory gutted by fire in Karachi

ISLAMABAD (APP): A big fire broke out in a multi-storey towel factory in Korangi industrial area in Karachi on early hours of Friday, no casualty was reported so far.

According to details, rescue 1122 said that four fire tenders took part in the firefighting operation in reaching the place where the blaze had erupted due to lack of proper access and the building being full of smoke, private news channels reported.

The primary focus of this probe will be to identify the root causes of the

fire, which remained unknown so far, rescue sources added.

A contingent of law enforcers also reached the site to help the fire brigade put out the flames.

The blaze caused loss of millions of rupees as equipments, towels and cloth in the factory were reduced to ashes.

However, police officials claimed that no deaths were reported in the fire as only a watchman was present in the factory when the fire broke out, who informed the authorities about the incident.

## Free medical camp held in Khan Ghot

By Tanveer Ahmed Soomro

MIRPUR MATHELO: With the efforts of Brigadier Muhammad Salim Cheema, Resident Manager of Fauji Fertilizer Company Mirpur Mathelo, a free medical camp was established in Khan Ghot for the treatment of various diseases including jaundice, hepatitis B and C. Appreciation of the best initiatives of the FFC administration on behalf of the residents of the area.

According to the details, the relief to the people from the industrial organization FFC Mirpur Mathelo of District Ghotki is continuing in this regard, the Resident Manager of FFC With the efforts of Brigadier Muhammad Saleem Cheema, a free medical camp was established in Khan Ghot for various diseases including jaundice, hepatitis B and C, in which the expert surgeons, including the expert doctors of SONA Welfare Hospital, provided free medicines after examining hundreds of patients for free. Residents of the area thanked the FFC administration.



On this occasion Resident Manager Brigadier Muhammad Saleem Cheema said that our commitment is to serve humanity because serving humanity is the best practice today for the convenience of the people. A free medical camp has been set up in which hundreds of patients have been examined by doctors specializing in various diseases and free laboratory tests have been done along with vaccinations and free medicines have been provided.

All possible relief should be provided to the people of Ghotki district. On this occasion, Colonel Shakeel Chatta, PRO Amanullah Shar and Ahmed Ali Soomro said that FFC has always worked for social welfare, the aim of establishing medical camp is to provide treatment facilities to people at their doorstep. To be provided

## PM Kakar says Agriculture holds immense importance for socio-economic dev. at grassroots level

Media Wing.

Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir was the Guest of Honour on the occasion.

The event was attended by federal ministers, agricultural experts and senior government officials.

The COAS, in his address, emphasised that the farmers were the backbone of the country's agriculture sector.

"It's your untiring hard work, toil and determination that plays a pivotal role in ensuring food security for millions of Pakistanis. You make us and the entire nation proud," he added.

He said that the climate

change and water scarcity were realities that challenged Pakistan's food security and necessitated use of technology and close government-public collaboration as being done under SIFC.

"Pakistan is endowed with immense potential and abundant resources. Together, we will navigate through these challenging times, by the grace of Allah, and attain our goals across every sector, InshaAllah," he added.

The COAS said that the dividends of all initiatives by SIFC would help Pakistan come out of the economic crisis.



RAWALPINDI: Inter Ministerial Committee on AJ&K being chaired by Minister for Defence, Lt. Gen (Retd) Anwar Ali Hyder co-chaired by Prime Minister Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), Chaudhary Anwar-ul-Haq held at Ministry of Defence in Rawalpindi.

## Mayor Sukkur for timely completion of development projects

SUKKUR (INP): Mayor Sukkur, Barrister Arslan Sheikh on Friday emphasized that the timetable of completion of development projects be strictly maintained besides taking due care of the quality of work.

He was presiding over a meeting held at his office, which reviewed the on-going development work.

Barrister Arslan Sheikh also warned that any kind of negligence or delay of work in this regard would not be tolerated. He directed the officials concerned to maintain effective financial discipline.

The Mayor stressed that the allocated budget should be effectively utilized and it should be ensured that the funds do not lapse. He said that delay in development projects caused inconveniences to the people which would not be tolerated.

Barrister Arslan stressed that the projects should be completed at the earliest.

## Inter-Ministerial Committee meeting reviews AJK-based mega development projects

MIRPUR (AJK): (APP): A meeting of the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Friday discussed issues related to the AJK-based mega projects Neelum Jhelum Hydropower Agreement, Mangala Dam Up-Raising project, Production Cost of Electricity, Reconstruction of Rathoa Hariyam Bridge and other matters were discussed thereabout.

The meeting, held in the federal metropolis, was jointly chaired by Prime Minister Azad Jammu Kashmir Chaudhary Anwar ul Haq and Federal Defense Minister Gen. (retd) Anwar Haider Ali,

was attended, among others, by senior minister Col. (Retd) Waqar Ahmad Noor, minister for Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Mian Abdul Waheed, Finance Minister Abdul Majid Khan. The meeting participants expressed their resolve to solve all the issues amicably. The committee headed by Federal caretaker Defense Minister General (retd) Anwar Haider Ali, decided to form working groups on all the issues, which would submit the report to the central committee after completing the recommendations as per ToR.



KARACHI: Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP) Sindh President, Mehmood Molvi along with Shaikh Firoz, Candidate for PS-116 cutting inaugural ribbon during the inauguration of Election Office, at Mehmoodabad

## KU conference illuminates best practices in biological research

KARACHI (APP): The National Biosafety Framework (NBF) serves as the cornerstone for effective bioterrorism management in any country, ensuring the safe handling, transport and use of biological materials.

These views were expressed by the Chairperson of the Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine, Aga Khan University Hospital, Professor Dr Erum Khan during her scientific talk at the inaugural session of the two-day conference on "National Biosafety Framework: The Missing Link in Biorisk Management in Pakistan" held at the Jinnah Auditorium of Dr A. Q. Khan Institute of Biotechnology and Genetic Engineering of the

University here Friday. The conference was organized by the Organization for Women in Science for the Developing World (OWSD) Pakistan National Chapter and KU-KIBGE in collaboration with the Pakistan Biological Safety Association (PBSA) and Pakistan Academy of Sciences. She said that biorisk management encompassed a spectrum of activities aimed at preventing accidental or intentional release of biological agents that could pose a threat to human health, agriculture and the environment. Professor Dr Erum Khan mentioned that a robust NBF would facilitate compliance with international standards, fostering collaboration and information exchange with the global scientific community.



KARACHI: Huge smoke and fire flames rising from burning Agha Steel Mills after fire eruption incident, as rescue operation is underway, at Bin Qasim Town in Karachi

## Scholarship cheques distributed among SAU flood affected students

HYDERABAD (INP): Scholarship cheques were distributed by Dean Faculty of Agricultural Engineering Dr. Altaf Ali Siyal distributed cheques among 70 male and female students, hailing from various flood-hit areas of Sindh.

Addressing on the occasion, Dr. Siyal said that merit and need-based scholarship program is operational for the last many years with the support of higher education commission (HEC), and the financial assistance of USAID.

Prof. Dr. Muhammad Ismail Kumbhar, Director of university advancement and financial assistance said that human resource development division of HEC was working to develop trained and skilled human resources.

In this regard, an event was organized at Dr. AM Shaikh auditorium hall of the University.

## Car plunges into Gujjar drain after driver loses control

KARACHI (INP): A speeding car veered out of control in front of Gulberg Cafe Piala in the Timuriya area of Karachi, ultimately plunging into the Gujjar drain.

According to rescue authorities on Friday, the young driver lost control of the speeding car, leading to its descent into the Gujjar canal. Quick response from bystanders at the cafe, as well as other individuals nearby, resulted in the immediate rescue of the driver. Fortunately, the young boy behind the wheel suffered only minor injuries.

Eyewitnesses reported the incident to Assistant 15, prompting a swift response from the police. Upon arrival, the authorities called for a crane to extract the submerged car from the Gujjar drain.

Concerns were raised by citizens at the scene, highlighting the absence of a protective wall along the Gujjar canal.

They emphasized that this lack of infrastructure has contributed to a rising number of accidents, with several motorcyclists losing their lives in such incidents. The citizens called for urgent attention to address this safety issue and prevent further accidents in the future.

## Protesters urge Sindh govt against to protect Karoonjhar mountain

HYDERABAD (APP): The Jamshoro chapter of Sindh Adabi Sangat and Sindh Graduate Association held a protest in Jamshoro district on Friday against the anticipated lease of Karoonjhar mountain for extraction of mineral resources and stones.

Zahid Murtaza, N B Khoso and other speakers who addressed the protest said in the Karoonjhar mountain in Tharparkar holds historic, religious, cultural

and heritage significance. They added that the importance of the environment, wildlife and livelihood connected to the mountain could also not be ignored.

They said around 40 dams had been built in Nangarparkar taluka whose sole source of water were the streams of Karoonjhar.

They urged the government not to consider the auction of the mountain.