

# Independent

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## Nawaz vows to bring country back on dev. track if voted to power

MANSEHRA (APP): Pakistan Muslim League-N Quaid Nawaz Sharif on Monday vowed that he would bring back the country on the track of development after his party was voted to power on February 8 along with removing the 10 years long sense of deprivation of people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Addressing a big public gathering in connection of 2024 election, Nawaz said the time had come to restart the development works from where the same were left uncompleted in 2017.

Nawaz Sharif said that a network of motorways including Hazara Motorway were built by his government that promoted tourism and opened the entire Hazara Division for investment.

Besides construction of the motorways, he said, load-shedding was eliminated with gas and electricity provided to domestic and industrial consumers at affordable rates.

He said that a large number of people were provided jobs during the tenure of last PML-N government.

He criticized the poor performance of the party that came into power with the slogan of 'change in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa', which had done nothing for the people of the province during its 10-year rule.

The three times prime minister said putting the country again on the path to progress and prosperity would be a difficult challenge, but the PML-N had the ability to put it on road to progress and development.



MANSEHRA: Quaid PML (N) Muhammad Nawaz Sharif waiving toward crowd during a public meeting in connection with general elections

## Peaceful elections to be ensured under comprehensive strategy, says caretaker Minister Home

QUETTA: The interim government is paying special attention on establishing peace under comprehensive strategy so as to conduct the upcoming general elections in peaceful manner in the province.

For the purpose, high level official visits are being paid by the caretaker Chief Minister Mir Ali Mardan Domki and Chief Secretary Shakeel Qadir Khan at the division level.

This was stated by the caretaker Provincial Minister for Home, Mir Zubair Jamali while speaking to the local media persons after offering fataha for the departed soul of wife of Syed

Khurshid Shah Dopasi and mother of Zia Khurshid Dopasi in Dhadhar on Monday.

The caretaker Minister said that the polling stations have been divided in three categories in view of the security situation on the orders of Chief Election Commissioner.

Out of total 5067 polling stations, 2055 have been declared most sensitive while 2280 and 832 polling stations have been declared as sensitive and normal respectively, he added.

The police force would be deployed in the urban areas while Levies would be deployed in the rural areas of the province.



DHADHAR: Caretaker Home Minister Captain (Retd) Mir Zubair Jamali talking with mediamen

## NP President slams bid on life of party's senior leaders in Kech

Dr. Abdul Malik Baloch says elements involved in terrorist act wants to sabotage democratic process

QUETTA: The President National Party, Dr. Abdul Malik Baloch has strongly condemned the terrorist act of attacking senior leaders of the party in Kech district and said that the elements involved in it want to sabotage the democratic process, however, we would not be pressurized through such subversive acts. The President of NP was addressing a press conference in Turbat on Monday.

He was flanked by the party's leaders Senator Kohda Muhammad Akram Baloch, Lala Abdul Rasheed, Shakeel Baloch, besides oth-

ers. Dr. Abdul Malik Baloch said that the party's senior leaders including Akram Baloch, Abdul Rasheed and others were attacked by unknown terrorists in Dasht Khudan area of Kech on Sunday.

He said that we condemn the cowardly terrorist attack on our party leaders and want to give message to the terrorists to stop such acts. He said that National Party is a democratic party and believes in non-violence.

He said that we can't be impressed by such acts, nor we would be scared of them.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister, Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar exchanging views with Sun Weidong, Vice Foreign Minister of the Peoples Republic of China during meeting held in Islamabad.

## Solangi warns of strict action against those targeting SC via social media

Culprits involved in malicious campaign against judiciary to be taken to task, nobody will be victimised

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Monday said that elements involved in the malicious campaign against the superior judiciary would be taken to task but no group or person would be victimised.

He was addressing a press conference flanked by Director General Pakistan Telecommunication Authority Ahmed Shamim Pirzada and Director General Operations Federal Investigation Agency Waqar uddin.

The minister said that judicial decisions were in the public domain and as per the Constitution and the masses could comment on them.

Condemning the malicious campaign against the superior judiciary and judges on social media, he said that character assassination of someone was a serious violation of the law and the Constitution. He underlined the need to discourage the culture of deceit and intolerance from society.

He said a joint investigation team had been formed to probe the anti-

judiciary campaign and the relevant institutions including FIA and PTA were investigating the ongoing propaganda. He said that Article 19 of the Constitution defines freedom of expression with certain restrictions. The minister said that the caretaker government was set up under a constitutional process and it was written in the preamble of the Constitution that the country will be run by representatives of the people.

He said that elections will be held across the country on February 8 and there should be no doubt about it.

He said that the operation also speaks high about the professional expertise and performance of the FC North.

The caretaker Minister said that the importance of such activities has been recognized in order to maintain peace and stability in the region.

Jan Achakzai appreciated the whole team, who was part of the operation, for its unwavering resolve and courage for stability of the country and security of the nation.

## Achakzai extends congratulation to FC on successful operation in Zhob

QUETTA: The caretaker Provincial Minister for Information, Jan Achakzai has congratulated the Frontier Corps (FC) North Balochistan on the successful operation carried out in Zhob area in midnight 21 and 22 January.

In an official statement issued here on Monday, the Information Minister said that the dedication and bravery showed by the FC North Balochistan is really appreciable.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Murtaza Solangi addressing a press conference along with the officials of Pakistan Telecommunication Authority and Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) at PTV Headquarters.

## CS reiterates interim Govt's resolve to conduct free and fair elections

QUETTA: The Chief Secretary Balochistan, Shakeel Qadir Khan has reiterated the interim government's resolve to take all possible steps for conducting free and fair elections in the province.

He said that directives have been issued to provide security as well as other facilities including water, electricity and washrooms in the polling stations.

He on the occasion asked the concerned high ups to take tribal elders into confidence so as to ensure peaceful elections.

The Chief Secretary also directed to the district administration to cooperate with the teams visiting districts for installation of CCTV cameras there.

Earlier, the Chief Secretary was briefed about the arrangements made for elections in Kalat division.

The Commissioner Kalat, Ali Akbar Baloch, Deputy Commissioners of all districts and other concerned high ups were also in attendance at the meeting.

conducting free and fair elections in the province.

He said that the basic purpose behind visits to the divisions is to ensure provision of necessary facilities, transport and security in the polling stations.

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## Pak-Iran envoys to return by 26 January

ISLAMABAD: Following the telephone conversation between the Foreign Ministers of Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran, it has been mutually agreed that ambassadors of both countries may return to their respective posts by 26 January 2024. At the invitation of Foreign Minister Jilani, Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Hossein Amir Abdollahian, will undertake a visit to Pakistan on 29 January 2024.



KHUZDAR: Balochistan Chief Secretary Shakeel Qadir Khan being briefed by Commissioner Kalat Division Ali Akbar Baloch and DC Khuzdar Muhammad Arif Zarkoon regarding preparation of general elections. IG Police Abdul Khaliq Sheikh, ACS Home Zahid Saleem and Secretary Local Government Noor Ahmed Pirkani are also present

## Pakistan fully committed to success of CPEC: PM

Chinese Vice FM calls on COAS, conveys China's satisfaction on CPEC projects' security; Commends Pakistan's peace efforts

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar Monday said that Pakistan was fully committed to the success of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and stressed the need for both sides to continue to work closely to ensure timely completion of the ongoing projects.

He was talking to Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Sun Weidong who paid a courtesy call on him.

The prime minister welcomed the Chinese vice foreign minister as well as members of his delegation and said Pakistan deeply valued its all-weather, strategic, cooperative partnership with China.

Recalling his visit to Beijing for the 3rd Belt and Road Forum in October 2023, he said that he was deeply touched by the

warm sentiments of President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang towards Pakistan. He also conveyed his best wishes for the Chinese leadership.

In addition to Pakistan-China relations, the regional situation also came under discussion during the meeting.

The Chinese vice foreign minister thanked the prime minister for the courtesy call and briefed him regarding various meetings held during the visit.

He conveyed special greetings of the Chinese leadership to the prime minister. He said China and Pakistan were "iron-brothers". He assured that China would always remain a reliable partner in Pakistan's socio-economic progress.

Meanwhile Vice Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of China, Sun Weidong Monday

called on Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General Syed Asim Munir here at General Headquarters and conveyed China's satisfaction on security arrangements for CPEC projects.

According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release, during the meeting matters of mutual interest and measures to further enhance bilateral defence cooperation were discussed. The Chinese Vice Foreign Minister said that Pakistan and China are all-weather strategic partners. He acknowledged Pakistan's efforts towards regional peace and stability. The COAS thanked the visiting dignitary for his warm remarks and said that relations between Pakistan and China are founded on a common understanding of regional peace, stability and prosperity for the people of both countries.

## Security forces killed seven terrorists in Zhob operation

RAWALPINDI: The security forces on Monday killed at least seven terrorists involved in hostile activities against the armed forces and innocent civilians during a fire exchange that took place during an intelligence-based operation in Sambaza Sector area of Zhob District, near the Pakistan-Afghan border.

According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release, the Army troops effectively surrounded and engaged the fleeing terrorists.

The seven killed terrorists remained actively involved in terrorist activities against security forces as well as the killing of innocent civilians. Arms, ammunition, and explosives were also recovered from the killed terrorists.



RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General Asim Munir exchanging views with Sun Weidong, Vice Foreign Minister of the Peoples Republic of China during meeting held at General Headquarters in Rawalpindi.

## Hamza for more efforts to ensure free, transparent polls

QUETTA (APP): Commissioner Quetta Division Muhammad Hamza Shafiqat said that all possible efforts would be taken to ensure the conduct of general elections is free, fair, and transparent.

A meeting was held here under the chairmanship of Commissioner Quetta Division Hamza Shafiqat regarding the conduct of the general election in the division. In the meeting, decisions were taken regarding the conduct of general elections and the implementation of the election code of conduct.

The monitoring officers deployed in Quetta Division were directed to implement the election code of conduct in every way and to take action against those who violated it. Hamza ordered that notices should be issued to candidates and political parties in cases of violation of the code of conduct.

The security advisory issued by the Deputy Commissioners of Balochistan to all contesting candidates of national and provincial assemblies.

According to the official sources, the security advisory/threat alert has been issued by the Deputy Commissioners of Kachhi, Kohlu, Mastung and Khuzdar to the election contesting candidates in their respective constituencies.

At the outset, the Deputy Commissioners have advised the candidates to refrain from unnecessary movement and avoid participation in the public gathering especially being held in open / vulnerable locations to avert any untoward incident.

## Bilawal says he only needs one term 'not four' to turn around Pakistan

SAHIWAL (INP): With the election fever reaching its zenith, Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari said Monday he did not need four but only a one-term government to change the fate of the crisis-hit country.

The PPP chairman — an aspirant for the prime minister's slot — took the veiled dig at Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supremo Nawaz Sharif, who is taking a fourth shot at power after being granted relief from the judiciary, during a power show in Sahiwal.

Addressing the public meeting, Bilawal said: "I do not want four but one

chance. If you give me a chance, I will change the fate of the country and solve all the problems [being faced by the country]."

Referring to the skyrocketing inflation, unemployment, and poverty, the PPP leader claimed that his party was the sole solution to these problems.

"Pakistan is going through a default time," Bilawal said, adding that there was a "division" in the society.

The former foreign minister warned that hostile forces could use the "division" to fulfil their nefarious designs. "I am contesting election to bury the politics of hatred and division."



SAHIWAL: Chairman Pakistan People's Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari addressing to public gathering during Election Campaign at Hockey Ground.

## Security advisory issued to contesting candidates by DCs in various districts

QUETTA: The security advisory has been issued by the Deputy Commissioners of Balochistan to all contesting candidates of national and provincial assemblies.

According to the official sources, the security advisory/threat alert has been issued by the Deputy Commissioners of Kachhi, Kohlu, Mastung and Khuzdar to the election contesting candidates in their respective constituencies.

At the outset, the Deputy Commissioners have advised the candidates to refrain from unnecessary movement and avoid participation in the public gathering especially being held in open / vulnerable locations to avert any untoward incident.

As there is possibility of terrorist, subversive activities from anti-social elements / banned organizations to disrupt election process or create law and order situation.

In the security advisory issued by the Deputy Commissioner Kachhi, it was stated that a female suicide bomber has been tasked to attack political leaders / public gatherings during the election campaign-2024.

Similarly, the DC Mastung in the security advisory mentioned that apropos the security threat perceptions in the region and the reports from the law enforcement agencies, the terrorists may target political leaders / public gatherings during the election campaigns going on in the district Mastung.



## Daily Voice of Masses Independent

### Subdued polls

The extent of the damage that has been wrought on the credibility of the upcoming polls is evident in how muted electoral activities have been.

Barely three weeks before the day millions of Pakistanis are expected to head to polling stations to cast votes for parties of their choice, one still cannot tell that a general election is about to take place.

Two of the three major contenders, the PML-N and PPP, have been out canvassing in recent days, yet it seems as if their campaigns are travelling roadshows that pack up and leave with their leaders once the speeches are done and the loud-speakers fall silent.

Among the key leaders, Nawaz Sharif has appeared only briefly before the public for a short address, while Imran Khan remains confined away from the public's eye. Only Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari has been travelling from city to city to shore up votes for the PPP.

It is a shame that a nation of 240m seems tuned out of the democratic process. Elections in Pakistan have traditionally been a riot of party colours and blaring anthems, raucous rallies and jumbo jalsas. Despite all the unpleasantness so far, one had still hoped that we would see a celebration of the country's rich social and political diversity as election day neared.

Instead, with the state constantly spoiling the mood with its ongoing, violent crackdown on one of the country's most popular parties, the citizenry is withdrawing from the process and appears comparably less enthusiastic than in previous years.

It also bears mentioning that the youth, who are at the forefront of ground-level campaigns run by parties, appear to be missing from the picture. Many likely do not want to risk the state's wrath, and their rivals have no real competition to fight against.

The weeks leading to elections are usually a busy time for printing presses, which produce the posters, pamphlets, flags, banners and all manner of related election paraphernalia that make Pakistani elections such a colourful affair.

Event management companies and smaller enterprises that rent out tents, chairs and sound systems also see a boost in business as political activities pick up and parties start rallying their supporters. However, anecdotal accounts and media reports corroborate that these industries are experiencing much less than expected demand. Meanwhile, many are turning to outlets that still offer them an opportunity to express themselves creatively and without restrictions. Social media platforms like X and TikTok have become new fronts in the war of political narratives. Given the trend, there are now fears that they, too, may be restricted closer to the polls.

All in all, it is a rather depressing state of affairs, attributable to the ECP's failure to discharge its duties according to their intended spirit.

### 'Managing' polls

Huma Yusuf

The year 2024 is the year of elections. That means it's also the year of corruption. Around the world, corruption and elections go hand in hand, with research showing that corruption soars in the run-up to polls. In Pakistan, electoral corruption is perceived as necessary to maintaining a perverse form of political stability; a way of 'managing' democracy to ensure that the institutional status quo is not upended. Despite the orchestration of this year's election, there are signs this tactic may be fraying.

Narratives of corruption are inevitably tied up with Pakistan's electoral process. One candidate is cleared of corruption charges, seemingly to come to power, another faces corruption charges to quash his political potential. Ironically, the perversion of justice, intimidation and censorship required to manage the corruption status of political actors are themselves a form of corruption, executed in the name of eradicating that very evil.

In fragile states like ours, corruption is not only the means to an end, but is also believed to contribute to some modicum of ongoing stability. Back-channel corruption in the run-up to elections is a form of consensus-building around one candidate, and is widespread to ensure there are no challenges to the carefully brokered power equation extending across law enforcement, the judiciary, bureaucracy, 'electables', the business community, etc.

To be clear, corruption does not take the form of bribery only, though our electoral history is littered with suitcases stuffed with cash. As Transparency Inter-

national puts it, corruption also includes the abuse or manipulation of state resources, which includes court rulings and electoral policies that favour certain candidates, gerrymandering, vote-buying in the context of patronage politics, media gagging, strategic deployment of security forces on election day, and so on.

It is a familiar story. But it is helpful to go further and recast electoral corruption in the context of 'buying the peace'. Peace buying typically occurs in post-conflict situations; for example, after civil wars. In these contexts, peace builders (global institutions and NGOs) buy off violent actors (ethnic militias, organised criminal groups) in exchange for ending the conflict. This can be through outright payment or through soft agreements about which groups can control certain resources (think of ministries being handed to different factions in a post-conflict scenario). This tactic was used by the US in Afghanistan, with that country's ethno-linguistic groups plundering different state coffers and diverting development aid while Washington turned a blind eye.

For earnest peace builders, a bought peace is at best a short-term arrangement during a transition period, with hopes of ultimately shifting incentives and normalising democratic practice. The tactic fails when stakeholders perceive they are not benefiting equally. Those grievances descend into conflict because the affected group has lost the incentive to remain non-violent.

Applying this frame to Pakistan's poll landscape is helpful. For decades, electoral corruption has worked because all elite stakeholders have benefited from the system. Even those who

lose out in one election bid their time knowing they will enjoy favours the next time polling occurs.

But one key stakeholder has historically been sidelined in these negotiations: the public. At most, they are seen as recipients of patronage — transactional service delivery in exchange for complicity — doled out in the form of subsidies, patchy infrastructure development, tolerance for tax evasion. However, in times of economic and climate crises, resources for distribution through patronage are increasingly scarce. Corruption is breeding competition, not consensus; grievances are mounting.

We can see this in protests across the country: Baloch women demanding the return of their disappeared loved ones, hundreds demanding wheat subsidies in Gilgit-Baltistan, traders protesting in Chaman, fisherfolk rising against Chinese trawlers along the coastline, farmers unionising in Okara, city dwellers burning soaring electricity bills on the streets. It is getting harder to buy the peace now that the public is demanding its share.

It is only by recognising that old tactics cannot work and genuinely transitioning to inclusive democracy that Pakistan can move forward. It seems elections will take place this year, and all is likely to go to plan. A 2016 study by Stefan Dahlberg and Maria Solevid found that voter turnout is not materially affected by perceptions of corruption, particularly where vote-buying is rampant. The day after polls, it may seem as if all is in control, the status quo well preserved. But we should all beware what comes after. -- Courtesy Dawn

### Al Shabaab threat

Mohammad Ali Babakhel

Al Shabaab ('the youth') is Al Qaeda's subsidiary in East Africa. It is active in much of southern Somalia and a few pockets in Kenya and Ethiopia. Since 2007, Al Shabaab has been fighting the Somali government and the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia. It is believed to be responsible for a surge in attacks since the 2022 re-election of Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, who has declared an "all-out war" on Al-Shabaab. Al-Itihad al-Islami, Al-Shabaab's predecessor, was the incubator for many of its leaders. A younger, hard-line group later split from the elder AIAL, wanting to establish a 'Greater Somalia' ruled under the Sharia. This younger group joined forces with the Islamic Courts Union. In 2006, US-backed Ethiopian forces invaded Somalia and pushed the ICU out of the capital. The majority of ICU fighters fled to neighbouring countries, but others retreated southwards, re-emerging later as a guerrilla group against the Ethiopian forces and seizing territory in central and southern Somalia. By 2008, Al Shabaab had grown from a small-sized group to an organisation of about 9,000.

Al Shabaab developed ties with Al Qaeda in 2008, but formally pledged allegiance in 2012. Onwards, it carried out a few high-profile violent attacks in Somalia's neighbouring countries, including the September 2013 Westgate Mall attacks in Nairobi, in which 68 people were killed, and the Garissa University attack in April 2015, resulting in 148 deaths. In October 2017, Al

Shabaab carried out another deadly truck attack on the busiest intersection of Mogadishu, resulting in 587 deaths. Owing to its capability for lethal attacks, it has been described by the media as the deadliest terror group in Africa.

Al Shabaab dreams of a fundamentalist Islamic state which would include Somalia, Djibouti, Kenya, and Ethiopia. According to its narrative, democracy is a religion for non-Muslims, hence it must be opposed and rejected. It recruits online and attracts youth from Somalia and Kenya. In 2017, the UN secretary general stated that over half of Al Shabaab's fighters may be children, reflecting the group's strategy to replace ageing fighters with younger 'talent'. It is to Al Shabaab's benefit that the majority of fighters are ethnic Somali and from the Sunni sect, which lets it take advantage of both Somalia's nationalism and religion.

Its pledge of allegiance brought Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and Al Shabaab closer. The US became their common enemy. Proximity to Al Qaeda provided an opportunity for Al Shabaab to be trained in Afghanistan. Some master trainers moved to Somalia and trained Al Shabaab fighters. Both collaborated on matters ranging from indoctrination and basic infantry skills, to making IEDs, conducting suicide bombings, taking hostages, and assassinations. During this partnership, Al Shabaab also developed skills to use laptop explosives and car bombs.

The group collects tax on transport vehicles and constructs dispensaries in areas under its control. To prove it is environment-friendly, plastic bags have been banned. It encourages feedback from citizens

by placing complaint boxes outside offices to improve administration within its controlled areas. By distributing food, banning drugs, and reducing crime, the group tries to project itself as a welfare organisation to win public trust. Listening to music or shaving beards is also prohibited in areas under its control.

Since its inception, Al Shabaab has been dependent on multiple sources of funding, which includes support from the Somali diaspora. After seizing the port city of Kismayo in 2008, the group earned a hefty amount from exports of charcoal. To dry up this source of income, the UN banned charcoal exports from Somalia in 2012. Reportedly, Al Shabaab also made its expenditure from investments in gold. According to the UN, Al Shabaab has generated up to \$100 million a year from different sources, including fees levied at ports of entry, taxes on goods, checkpoint fees, and extortion.

According to the Global Terrorism Index 2022, 315 attacks that resulted in 784 deaths made Al Shabaab the second-deadliest group in the world.

The deaths attributed to it in Somalia increased by 23 per cent, and the highest proportion of its attacks were directed against the military, followed by civilians. Al Shabaab was held responsible for 97pc (733 deaths) of all terror-related deaths in 2022.

The war against Al Shabaab has dragged on for 17 years. History and ground realities suggest that it cannot be defeated with kinetic options alone. The Somali government needs to explore peaceful options, including negotiations; but the real question is whether Al Shabaab is interested in talks. -- Courtesy Dawn

## Commerce News

### Shamshad Akhtar, WB Country Director discuss financing operations in Pak

ISLAMABAD (APP): Income Support Programme (BISP), said a news release here.

The program aims to support the development of a more adaptive social protection system that will contribute to any future crisis resilience among poor and vulnerable households. The second WB-funded operation in Pakistan includes Pakistan: "Resilient and Accessible Microfinance (RAM) Program" worth US\$175.0 million to help enhance access to microcredit and support the resilience of the microfinance sector and its borrowers.

Considering the importance of interventions planned under the CRISP program, Dr Shamshad Akhtar gave go-ahead signal to engage the World Bank additional financing of US\$250 million for the program in principle.

She, however, desired to convene another meeting next week to formalize the program contours. She also desired to invite the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) and Security and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) in the next meeting to finalize the program modalities.



FAISALABAD: Farmers are busy harvesting raddish crop at their field.

### Trade and Investment Officers' delegation visits FPCCI

LAHORE: A 40-member delegation of newly appointed Trade and Investment Officers (TIOs) visited Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) Regional Office here Monday.

Sharing his views regarding the ways and means to enhance country's exports with the TIOs, the FPCCI Regional Chairman and Vice President Zaki Ejaz said that in order to increase Pakistan's exports, the Trade and Investment Officers should play their role in organizing joint ventures, business-to-business meetings, exchange of trade

delegations and single country exhibitions between the Pakistani business community and other countries, besides ensuring timely sharing of information on required certification and value addition with the respective exporters. He suggested that TIOs should also provide quarterly trade data including Pakistan's imports/exports with other countries of the world, arguing that it would enable the Pakistani business community to take advantage of the available trade opportunities by introducing new products and technologies there. Zaki Ejaz added that business community,

### PSX turns to bullish trend, gains 657 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) turned around to bullish trend on Monday, gaining 657.19 points, a positive change of 1.04 percent, closing at 63,939.41 points against 63,282.23 points the previous trading day.

A total of 298,699,061 shares valuing Rs.12,515 billion were traded during the day as compared to 287,310,860 shares valuing Rs.9,320 billion the last day.

Some 335 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 140 of them recorded gains and 171 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 24 remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were K-Electric Ltd with 97,700,790 shares at Rs.5.57 per share, Pak Petroleum with 23,338,496 shares at Rs.131.01 per share and PIAC(A) with 21,105,500 shares at Rs.12.07 per share. Nestle Pakistan Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs.70.00 per share price, closing at Rs.8,270.00, whereas the runner-up was Mari Petroleum Company Limited with its per share price to Rs.2,428.65.



DOHA: SAPM, Jawad Sohrab Malik signs agreements with Qatar's top companies.

### Pak-Qatar agreements to boost job prospects, SAPM meets separately with Qatari Ministers

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development (SAPM OP&HRD), Jawad Sohrab Malik, led a successful official visit to Qatar, culminating in the signing of several Agreements & Letter's of Intent (LOIs) with top Qatari companies intended to significantly enhance employment opportunities for the Pakistani workforce in Qatar. The signing of these agreements with renowned Qatari firms, including

Qatari Diyar-Saudi Bin Laden Group Construction (QD-SBG), Hamad Bin Khaled Contracting Company W.L.L (HBK), Ali Bin Ali Holding W.L.L, Sheikh Jabor Bin Mansour Bin Jabor Bin Jassim Al Thani (JM) Holding, Tabeeb Care Medical Services, and Al Rawnaq International Commercial Projects, marks a crucial step in strengthening bilateral relations between Pakistan and Qatar in the field of human resource development, a news release said.

In addition to these agreements, the Special

Assistant to the Prime Minister, Jawad Sohrab Malik held a significant meeting with Hamad Saleh Al Qamra, Chairman of Al Qamra Holding, focusing on the recruitment of Pakistani manpower for various company projects. The visit also included a tour of the View Hospital, a part of Elegancia Health Care, where the recruitment of Pakistani health professionals is underway following a recent MoU between Elegancia Health Care and the Overseas Employment Corporation (OEC) of Pakistan.

### Exports increase by 35.33% to Rs 4.3 trillion in 1st half

ISLAMABAD (APP): The exports from the country in the rupee term witnessed an increase of 35.33 percent during the first half of the current fiscal year as compared to the corresponding period of last year, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported.

Exports during July-December (2023-24) were recorded at Rs.4,300,752 million as against Rs.3,177,893 million during the corresponding period of last year, showing an increase of 35.33 percent, according to the provisional data released by PBS.

On a year-on-month basis, the exports increased by 8.86 percent when compared to the exports of Rs. 734,541 million in November 2023. The main commodities of exports during December, 2023 were rice other than Basmati (Rs.124,040 million), knitwear (Rs. 103,898 million), readymade garments (Rs. 84,569 million), bed wear (Rs. 64,119 million).

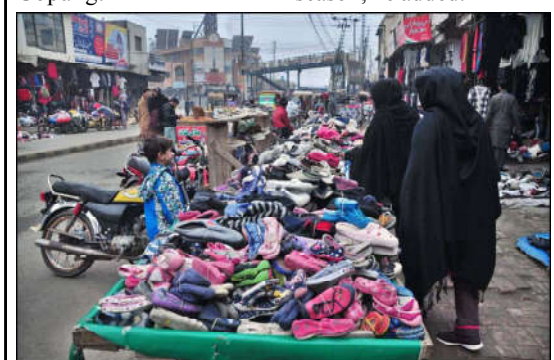
### Wheat cultivation grew by 7 % during current Rabi season

ISLAMABAD (INP): Owing to the incentives introduced by the government, wheat sowing in the country during the current season (Rabi 2023-24) increased by 7.5 per cent as compared to the crop sowing of the corresponding period of the last year.

During the period under review, wheat sowing had been completed over 23.69 million acres as against the set targets of 22.22 million acres, said Food Security Commissioner In the Ministry of National Food Security and Research Imtiaz Ali Gopang.

The wheat crop has been sown across more than 23.69 million acres of land in various crop-growing regions during the current season to meet local staple food requirements and maintain strategic reserves throughout the year, he told APP here on Monday.

The wheat cultivation targets fixed for the period under review were achieved by 107 per cent as crop sowing in two major grain-producing provinces Sindh and Punjab gained momentum as both the provinces surpassed their assigned targets for the current season, he added.



SARGODHA: Vendors displaying old shoes to attract the customers at his roadside setup.

### SCCI chief demands compensation for affected traders' of Saddar fire

PESHAWAR (APP): Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry president, Fuad Ishaq was highly saddened over the horrific fire that broke out at Peshawar's Time Centre and demanded that the provincial government immediately announce compensation for the affected traders' community.

In a joint statement issued here on Monday, Fuad Ishaq, president, Sanallah Khan, senior vice president and Ijaz Khan Afridi, vice president of the Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry and members of the chamber's executive committee said that this

horrific fire in Time Centre Peshawar quickly engulfed 200 shops and small counters of mobiles, accessories and batteries, which completely gutted.

They expressed high grief and sorrow over monetary loss, worth millions of rupees to the trader's community and asked the present interim provincial government to immediately announce special financial assistance.

The SCCI chief Fuad Ishaq and members of his cabinet praised the efforts of rescue teams of Pak-Army, Air Force, Cantonment Board and Rescue 1122 in timely conducting operations.



## Govt committed to support pharma sector: Nadeem Jan

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Health Dr. Nadeem Jan has emphasized the government's proactive efforts to enhance support for the pharmaceutical industry, marking the commencement of a new phase with the establishment of a Pharma Park in Pakistan.

Dr. Nadeem Jan highlighted the initiation of a new era with the Pharma Park in Pakistan, emphasizing that these units are set to commence Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs) production within the next six months. He articulated that these initiatives aim to bolster local production, ensuring a steady supply of essential ingredients for pharmaceuticals within the country.

The minister emphasized that local production is poised to not only fulfill the country's needs but also drive exports, anticipating a reduction in medicine prices. He highlighted the government's comprehensive strategy to enhance the permanent supply of medicines, emphasizing the imperative to boost the productive efficiency of pharmaceutical units through the adoption of modern technologies.

## Traders announce to support JUI-F candidate in elections on PK-113

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): A traders union has announced support for Jamiat Ulema Islam Fazl-u-rehman (JUI-F) candidate for provincial assembly seat PK-113 in the upcoming general elections scheduled to be held on February 08, 2024.

The Markazi Anjuman Tajran made this announcement during a public meeting held here at a local hotel and vowed to support the JUI-F candidate for PK-113 Kafeel Ahmad Nizami besides running door to door campaign for him.

## LDA demolishes illegal constructions

LAHORE (APP): On directions of Commissioner Lahore and DG LDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa, LDA teams demolished and sealed more than a dozen illegal constructions and commercial buildings in Johar Town, BOR Society, Wapda Town, Lahore Avenue and OPF Housing schemes on Monday.



LARKANA: Regional Director Colleges Larkana Region, Professor Bashir Ahmed Rajpar presides over the meeting regarding 6th Sindh College Games 2024, at his office in Larkana.



PESHAWAR: Chairperson, National Commission on Status of Women presenting shield to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor, Haji Ghulam during a function organized by the National Commission on Status of Women.

## Women's socioeconomic development guarantee for country progress: Governor

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor, Haji Ghulam Ali here Monday said that the share of women in Pakistan was about 52 percent in the country's population and their socioeconomic development was guaranteed for speedy progress and prosperity of the nation.

Addressing a function organized by the National Commission on Status of Women held at a local hotel here as a chief guest, the Governor said the increase of girls students compared to boys students in educational institutions of KP was a solid proof of women's education development.

The Governor said the status of women in Islam was very high, adding our religion has given the right of property to them and nobody could change it.

Haji Ghulam Ali said that women were given highest respect by our society being a mother, sister, wife and daughter and it was the responsibility of the government to ensure provision of all rights to them.

He said close liaison with politicians for enactment of legislation for protection of rights of women was imperative for safeguarding their rights legally and constitutionally.

The governor assured full support to the national commission on status of women for progress, autonomy and development of women besides other organizations in this regard.

## Kristin Hawkins praises Naqvi's work ethics

LAHORE (APP): The United States (US) Consul General to Lahore Kristin K. Hawkins has praised work ethics, hard work and dynamism of Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi. In a meeting with the Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi at the latter's office here on Monday, Ms. Hawkins lauded the people friendly initiatives of Mohsin Naqvi, adding that Mohsin Naqvi's omnipresence is felt everywhere and all are awed by his work and dedication to service.

Hailing the caretaker provincial cabinet, she said the caretaker government under the dynamic leadership of Mohsin Naqvi has set new standards of public service, adding that he is seen working round the clock. Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi, speaking on the occasion, said that the Punjab government wishes to benefit from the expertise of the Americans in the agriculture sector especially in the methods to get more wheat yield.

## 5420 Itr illegal Diesel seized in DI Khan

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): The district police have recovered 5420 litres of Diesel during the ongoing crackdown against illegal fuel agencies across the district, said a police spokesman on Monday.

## Sindh wins title of 2nd Essa lab Sindh-Balochistan bilateral men softball series in style

KARACHI (APP): The Sindh men's softball team won the title of the 2nd Essa Laboratories Sindh Balochistan bilateral softball series in style.

In the third and decisive match of the series played at the KMC Sports Complex Kashmir Road, Sindh scored 10 runs in their allotted 5 innings. Faraz Aijaz, Samir Zulfiqar and Arbaza Ijaz scored 2 runs each. Balochistan team managed to score 5 runs in five innings. Captain Ahmed Yar Khan and Osama bin Shuja scored 2 runs.

During different operations conducted in this regard, the police recovered 5420 liters of illegal Diesel.

Sindh won the series 2-1 in style. In the prize distribution ceremony, chief guest Commissioner Karachi Muhammad Saleem Rajput along with Sindh Softball Association President Dr. Farhan Essa and Secretary General of Softball Federation of Pakistan Asif Azeem distributed trophies, awards and certificates to the players of both teams.

Shiraz Asif was the best catcher of the series, Osama bin Shuja, was the best batter, Faraz Ijaz, the pitcher and Osama bin Shuja scored 2 runs.

## International News

## Israeli plan to destroy Hamas not working, peace talks needed - EU's Borrell

BRUSSELS (Internews): Israel's plan to destroy Islamist Palestinian group Hamas in Gaza is not working and the European Union must pursue efforts to create a "two-state solution" despite Israeli opposition, EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said on Monday.

Israeli Prime Minister had on Sunday reaffirmed a hard line against any Palestinian state as it would pose "an existential danger" to Israel. He said Israel would keep insisting on full security control over all territory west of the Jordan River, which would include Gaza and the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

Borrell said he wanted to press ahead with international efforts to create a process that would lead to a Palestinian state co-existing alongside Israel. The last talks to that end collapsed a decade ago amid mutual mistrust and intransigence.

Israeli Prime Minister had on Sunday reaffirmed a hard line against any Palestinian state as it would pose "an existential danger" to Israel. He said Israel would keep insisting on full security control over all territory west of the Jordan River, which would include Gaza and the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

Alluding to Israel's stated objective of annihilating Hamas in its devastating three-month-old war in the Gaza Strip, Borrell told reporters: "What are the other solutions they have in mind. Make all the Palestinians leave? Kill all of them? The way they are destroying Hamas is not the way to do it. They are sealing the hate for generations."

Israel has said the war could go on for "many months" and it would not rest until Hamas was eradicated, all Israeli hostages freed and the Gaza Strip posed no more security threat.

Borrell spoke at the monthly gathering of EU foreign ministers, attended this time by counterparts from Saudi Arabia, Egypt



Displaced Palestinians use a donkey cart for transportation at a camp in Rafah near the border with Egypt in the southern Gaza Strip.

## Dozens buried, 8 killed in southwest China landslide

BEIJING: Dozens of people were buried and eight confirmed killed when a landslide struck a remote and mountainous part of southwestern China on Monday.

The pre-dawn landslide buried 18 homes and sparked the evacuation of more than 200 people when it struck in Zhenxiang County, Yunnan province, state media said.

Eight people are confirmed dead and rescuers have extracted four, according to a report by state broadcaster CCTV at around 5:30pm (0930 GMT), though the condition of the four was not immediately clear.



Liberia's president-elect Joseph Boakai, who defeated President George Weah in a runoff election gives a speech after he was sworn in as president during the inauguration ceremony in Monrovia, Liberia.

## Gaza deaths top 25,000 as Israel pushes offensive

GAZA STRIP: Gaza's Hamas-run health ministry on Sunday said the death toll in the war-torn Palestinian territory breached 25,000 as Israel pushed its southward offensive and renewed bombardment in the north. Israel is pressing its push against Hamas in southern Gaza as it seeks to destroy the group responsible for the deadliest attack in the country's history. In early January, Israel's military said the

Hamas command structure in northern Gaza had been dismantled, leaving only isolated fighters. But witnesses told AFP that Israeli boats were bombarding Gaza City and other areas in the north early Sunday. Hamas has also reported heavy combat in the north. "Dozens are still under the rubble," the Hamas government's media office said, adding that the dead and injured "could not be transferred to hospitals due to the continued artillery shelling on."

## US Navy declares two SEALs missing in Gulf of Aden as deceased

FLORIDA (INP): Two U.S. Navy SEALs who went missing in the Gulf of Aden earlier this month during a raid on a boat carrying Iranian weapons have not been located following an exhaustive search and their status has been changed to deceased, military officials said on Sunday.

## Strike on busy market kills 25 in eastern Ukraine

MOSCOW: A strike on a crowded market in the Russian-occupied city of Donetsk in eastern Ukraine left at least 25 people dead and 20 wounded on Sunday, Moscow-backed officials said.

Both Moscow and Kyiv have accused each other of a sharp escalation in attacks on civilian areas in the past two months. Shattered storefronts and broken glass could be seen in videos shared by Russian state media, along with what appeared to be bodies lying on the ground nearby.

"At the moment, information about 25 dead has been confirmed. At least 20 more people have been injured," said Denis Pushilin, head of the region's Russian-controlled administration. He blamed Ukraine for the strike, calling it a "horrific" attack on a civilian area. Ukraine did not immediately comment. Officials said the strike hit a southwestern suburb of the city, less than 15 kilometres from the eastern front. Local resident Tatiana said she heard an incoming projectile overhead, and hid under her market stall.

"I saw smoke, people screamed, a woman was crying," she told a local media outlet. "Where is there anything military here? It's just a market," another resident named Tatiana told the same outlet. "This is one of the strongest blows in recent times," she said. The toll marks one of the deadliest in Donetsk since Moscow launched full-scale hostilities against Ukraine in February 2022. Donetsk, occupied by Russia and its proxy forces since 2014, has been repeatedly targeted by what Moscow has called indiscriminate Ukrainian shelling. Moscow called Sunday's attack a "barbaric terrorist attack" that showed the need for its "special military operation" in Ukraine.

## Germans protest against 'mass deportation' plan of far right

MUNICH: Tens of thousands gathered across Germany again on Sunday to protest the far-right AfD, after it emerged that party members discussed mass deportation plans at a meeting of extremists.

The influx of demonstrators was so large in Munich that organisers were forced to cancel a planned march and ask people to disperse for safety reasons. Organisers said some 50,000 people had turned up to the demonstration, twice as many as were registered for the event. An earlier estimate announced to the crowd had put the figure at 200,000, according to a journalist. Police estimated a figure somewhere in the middle, around 100,000, according to the German daily Sueddeutsche Zeitung. Those who made it to the site of the planned protest carried signs saying "Nazis out" and "never again is now".

Some 250,000 people had already gathered in cities across the country on Saturday, according to AfD estimates. Demonstrations were called in some 100 locations across Germany from Friday through the weekend, including in Munich, Berlin and cities in the east of the country where the AfD has its strongholds.

The wave of mobilisation against the far-right party was sparked by a Jan 10 report by investigative outlet Correctiv, which revealed that AfD members had discussed the expulsion of immigrants and "non-assimilated citizens" at a meeting with extremists.

## Zelenskiy counts on more Western defense aid for Ukraine in next two months

KYIV: President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said on Saturday that he expected a number of new Western defence packages for Ukraine to be signed this and next month.

"We are preparing new agreements with partners - strong bilateral agreements," Zelenskiy said in his nightly video address. "January and February should bring corresponding results. There are already specific dates when new and strong documents can be expected."

## UK taking election threats 'very seriously'

LONDON: The UK is taking threats of foreign interference elections expected later this year "very seriously", the defence minister said on Sunday, after a warning from a counter-terrorism official. "Obviously, that's something that we take very seriously," Shapps told the Sky News channel. Counter-terrorism bodies and other institutions would "be looking very carefully at that", he said.



## Maryam Nawaz says Politicians must give off considering KP an experiment station

MANSEHRA (INP): Chief Organizer Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Maryam Nawaz has said that the politicians must give off considering Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) an experiment station for them.

While addressing a public gathering in Mansehra on Monday, she said that the former PTI government made tall claims and promised the people of five million homes and billion tree Tsunami but didn't fulfill any of their promise.

Maryam Nawaz said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was land of sensible people and people keeping in view that performance of former rules should elect right people in the upcoming general elections.

She said that the incarceration of PTI leaders was the outcome of their own

wrongdoings.

Speaking on the occasion, former prime minister and the PMLN supreme Nawaz Sharif also criticized former government for ruining the country's economy and depriving Khyber Pakhtunkhwa of development projects. "Nawaz Sharif left better Pakistan but now it is detracted", the PML-N supreme said while addressing a public gathering in Mansehra, KP ahead of the February 8 general elections. The ex-prime minister said that he not been removed from power in 2017, the people of Mansehra would have been gifted an airport and a metro project. He regretted that development work on the Sukkur-Hyderabad Motorway was stopped by the past government of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate, Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani inaugurating the Wall of Federation, at Parliament House in Islamabad.

## PEC takes serious notice of absentee polling staff at trainings

**Independent Report**

QUETTA: The Provincial Election Commissioner (PEC) Balochistan, Muhammad Farid Afridi has taken serious notice of the polling staff found absent during the training sessions in Quetta.

The PEC took notice of the absentee staff during his visits to different training sessions to review the process of training in Quetta.

The training is being imparted to the male and female presiding and senior assistant presiding officers

at the sessions.

The Provincial Election Commissioner said that it has been decided to take stern departmental action against the absentee polling staff during the training sessions.

He said that all the district returning officers have been issued directives to ensure presence of the polling stations in their respective districts.

He also directed to take stern action against those polling staff who were found absent from the training sessions.

## PPP believes serving of people: Rozi Khan

**Independent Report**

QUETTA: Provincial General Secretary of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Rozi Khan Kakar, candidate for Constituency NA 263 and Syed Hasnain Hashmi, candidate for Constituency PB 43 said that the PPP P was always fighting for the rights of the people because serving of masses was mission of the party.

They expressed these views while talking to the media on the occasion of the inauguration of the election office of Pakistan People's Party on Spiny Road Quetta. Qasim Khan Achakzai, Safiullah

Mengal, Qazi Qahir Achakzai and others also spoke on this occasion. Rozi Khan Kakar and Hasnain Hashmi said that during his tenure, the party launched projects like Aghaz-e-Haqooq-e-Balochistan Package, 18th Amendment, Benazir Income Support Program, which not only provided employment to thousands of people of Balochistan but also gave financial autonomy to the province.

They said the Pakistan People's Party is not fighting against any party or candidate, but against inflation, unemployment,

## Civil Hospital, Taraqee, Bank Al-Falah: MoU signed for increasing capacity of Cardiac Surgery Dept.

**Independent Report**

QUETTA: The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed for increasing the capacity of Cardiac Surgery Department of the Civil Sandeman Provincial Hospital, here on Monday.

The MoU was signed among the Civil Hospital, Taraqee Foundation and Bank Al-Falah.

The Medical Superintendent of the Hospital, Dr. Muhammad Ishaq Panezai, Director Finance, Taraqee Foundation, Jahanzaib and Regional Head of the Bank Al-Falah, Sanaullah signed the MoU on behalf of their respective organizations.

The caretaker Minis-

ter Finance, Amjad Rasheed, Secretary Health, Abdullah Khan, Additional Secretary, Arif Khan, Chief Planning Officer Health, Abdul Rasool Zehri and Section Officer, Riasat witnessed the signing ceremony.

Under the MoU, the Bank Al-Falah would provide beds, medical equipment and machinery and surgery kits for the cardiac patients at the Cardiac Surgery department of the Civil Hospital, as informed on the occasion of MoU signing. In addition to this, the repair and renovation of the Cardiac Surgery department would also be done under the MoU.



QUETTA: Medical Superintendent of the Hospital, Dr. Muhammad Ishaq Panezai, Director Finance, Taraqee Foundation, Jahanzaib and Regional Head of the Bank Al-Falah, Sanaullah signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for increasing the capacity of Cardiac Surgery Department of the Civil Sandeman Provincial Hospital



ISLAMABAD: President, Dr. Arif Alvi exchanging views with Sun Weidong, Vice Foreign Minister of the Peoples Republic of China during meeting held at Aiwan-e-Sadr in Islamabad.

## Pak foreign policy played crucial role in defusing tension with Iran: Solangi

**Independent Report**

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Monday said the foreign policy pursued by Pakistan post-January 16 had played a crucial role in de-escalating the tension with Iran.

role played by brotherly countries, including Turkiye and China, for defusing the tension.

He said Pakistan greatly valued Turkiye's goodwill for it and its people. Both countries enjoyed all-weather relations that were a "precious asset of Pakistan".

The minister, in an interview with a Turkish broadcaster, TRT, the minister said that the whole region was concerned by tension between Pakistan and Iran that had significantly been reduced.

He said Pakistan's leadership had overcome the issue to a greater extent, and lauded the constructive

performing its duties under a legal cover. It would extend all-out support to the ECP for holding the elections, he added.

To a question, the minister said that it was a political culture that some political parties were airing complaints regarding the level-playing field.

There was no restriction on politics in the country and measures were taken to ensure a level-playing field for political parties, he emphasized.

Solangi said that the caretaker government had no favourites and none of the family members of its ministers was taking part in the elections.

## Five killed as vehicle falls into ravine in Dir Upper

**Independent Report**

PESHAWAR (APP): At least five individuals were killed, and fifteen others were injured when a vehicle, enroute to a wedding ceremony, plunged into a ravine in Dir Upper.

According to Rescue 1122 and the police, the incident occurred in the Badali area when the driver of the double-cabin vehicle lost control, leading to a deep fall in the mountains.

Police reported that the injured and deceased have been transported to Wari Hospital.

## FM Jilani, Chinese Vice FM discuss bilateral ties

**Independent Report**

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani and Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Sun Weidong on Monday here reaffirmed the All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership and held an in-depth discussion on the entire gamut of bilateral relations including CPEC and bilateral economic and financial cooperation.

The Foreign Minister appreciated the contributions of the Chinese Vice Foreign Minister in deepening Pakistan-China friendship and commended

China's unflinching support to Pakistan on all issues.

Expressing satisfaction at the steady development of CPEC, Foreign Minister Jilani emphasized the significance of CPEC for Pakistan. He said that Pakistan would continue making efforts for the realization of CPEC's full potential for shared benefits. He appreciated China's readiness and support for all CPEC projects in Pakistan.

Thanking the Foreign Minister for the generous hospitality,



QUETTA: Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) Central General Secretary, Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haideri addressing ceremony on occasion of resignation of Bilal Khan Kakar in favor of Maulana Fazal-ur-Rehman, in Quetta.

## Election oversight body head briefs CEC on polls preparations

**Independent Report**

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for Communications, Railways, and Maritime Affairs Shahid Ashraf Tarar, serving as the convener of the Election Oversight Committee, discussed election preparations with Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikandar Sultan and briefed him about upcoming polls arrangements of both federal and provincial governments. In the meeting held at the Election Commission Secretariat, Ashraf Tarar emphasized that the committee's primary goal is to oversee election security, address obstacles in arrangements, and ensure measures for peace, additional security.

## Commissioner chairs meeting regarding Quetta City App for facilitating people

**Independent Report**

QUETTA (APP): Commissioner Quetta Division Hamza Shafqaat chaired a meeting regarding the release of Quetta City App and other matters for the convenience of the public on Monday.

Deputy Commissioner Quetta Lt. Ret. Saad Bin Asad participated in the meeting through video link while Focal Person Assistant Director IT Muhibullah and Representative Excise and Taxation were also present.

Various important issues related to Quetta City App were discussed in detail for the convenience of the people in the meeting.

In the meeting, a briefing was given about the services, data entry, motor vehicle registration, local domicile certificate and arms license facility regarding the city app. Addressing the meeting, Commissioner Quetta Division Hamza Shafqaat said that an app called Quetta City would be created for the needs and convenience of the citizens in which people could easily get local domicile certificates, arms licenses, motor vehicle registration and other facilities. City App for Public Convenience is an initiative that aims to help citizens solve the problems they face in their daily life, apart from this, citizens can avail various information.

## Toshakhana, 190m pounds references IHC rejects plea for issuing stay order

**Independent Report**

ISLAMABAD (Online): Islamabad High Court (IHC) has rejected the plea for issuing stay order in Toshakhana and 190 million pounds references.

The petitions seeking cancellation of jail trials of Toshakhana and 190 million pounds references came up for hearing before a division bench of IHC comprising Chief Justice (CJ) Aamir Farooq and justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri Monday.

Prosecutor General NAB presented the report on documents related to

notification on jail trial and court's order.

A copy of report was provided to Shoaib Shaheen counsel for PTI founder under court's order. Court rejected plea from Shoaib Shaheen for issuing stay order in NAB references.

Shoaib Shaheen had requested the court during the hearing of the case to give stay order for two days saying it makes no difference.

The CJ IHC Aamer Farooq remarked case is not going to end or complete. We see it on next hearing.

## Pakistan, China for enhanced cooperation in IT, agriculture, HR development

**Independent Report**

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and China on Monday reiterated their desire for enhanced cooperation in the areas of economy, information technology, agriculture, and human resource development for the mutual benefit of the two friendly countries.

This was discussed in a meeting between the visiting Vice Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of China Sun Weidong, who along with his delegation called on President Dr Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Jiang Zaidong, was also present during the meeting, a President House press release said.

Welcoming the delegation, the president said that China was a very dear friend that had always supported Pakistan during difficult times.

He highlighted that CPEC projects had contributed to the economic development of Pakistan, be-

sides helping meet its energy needs.

The president stated that Pakistan was fully committed to the high-quality development of CPEC, adding that the Chinese support in the next phase of CPEC would be crucial for Pakistan's industrial development.

He remarked that economic cooperation between the two friendly countries would further cement bilateral ties. He appreciated the Chinese support in stabilising Pakistan's economy.

The president said that Pakistan wanted to learn from the Chinese experience in IT, education, health, agriculture, and poverty alleviation for its socio-economic development.

He remarked that Pakistan and China held similar views on various regional and international issues and cooperated at different fora.

He reiterated that Pa-

kistan would continue to support China on all core issues, including the "One China" Policy, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Tibet, Xinjiang, and the South China Sea.

He said that Pakistan was grateful to China for supporting Pakistan's national development and its principled stance on the Jammu and Kashmir dispute.

The visiting Vice Foreign Minister of China said that Pakistan and China had a long history of friendly relations which would continue to grow stronger.

He said that CPEC had yielded fruitful results and that both countries had huge potential for increasing cooperation in various fields.

He also thanked the president for visiting China during the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, saying that his support to express solidarity with China would always be remembered.



A Belarus delegation headed by Mr. Rassalai Viachaslau, Deputy Minister SAMI, held a meeting in Ministry of Defence Production with Pakistan delegation headed by Secretary Defence Production, Lt Gen (Redt) humayun Aziz HI(M).

## Wang says: China supports Pakistan, Iran to bridge differences thru dialogue

**Independent Report**

BEIJING (APP): China on Monday said it supported Pakistan and Iran in bridging differences through dialogue and consultations, as both countries were friendly neighbors and its good friends.

Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Wang Wenbin during his regular briefing said, "I want to stress that Pakistan and Iran are friendly neighbors, and both are good friends of China. China is committed to upholding regional and international peace and stability and supports Iran and Pakistan in continuing to bridge differences through dialogue and consultation."

## Pak-Belarus inter-govt commission on defence meets at MoDP

**Independent Report**

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Pakistan and Belarus "Inter-Governmental Commission on Military and Technical Cooperation", established since 2015, met at the Ministry of Defence Production on Monday.

Three sessions of the Commission have been conducted so far, including the last held in Minsk, Belarus in April, 2021, while the fourth one was being held in Pakistan from January 22-24, a news release said.

Rassalai Viachaslau, Deputy Minister SAMI, is heading the Belarus delegation while the Pakistan side is led by Secretary Defence Production Lt Gen @ Humayun Aziz.

During the meeting, progress on previous agenda points was reviewed. Both sides agreed that there exists a potential for Pakistan and Belarus to increase their collaboration in the relevant areas of mutual interest.

## Security concerns Bahria, Air, National Defense universities close for an indefinite period

**Independent Report**

ISLAMABAD (Online): Three universities of Islamabad have been closed for an indefinite period due to security concerns.

According to sources, the directives to close Bahria, Air and National Defense universities have been issued on Monday. Final examinations of students have also effected due to closure of universities.

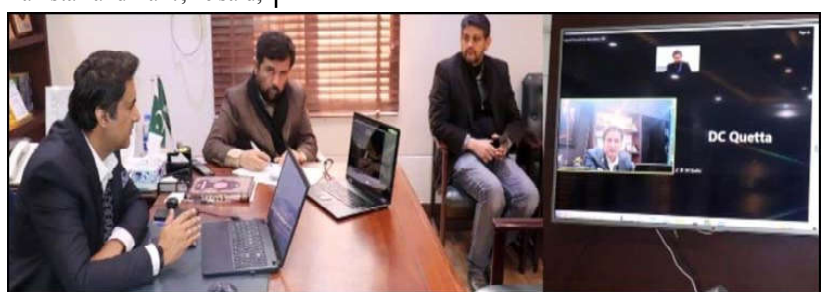
Several educational institutions have also been

closed in areas of these universities in Islamabad.

Sources of university administration said that students were notified late night about the indefinite closure of universities.

Islamabad Police said that security is already tight due to elections and sit-ins in Press Club, Islamabad.

Security agencies have also conducted search operations in suburban areas of Islamabad.



QUETTA: Commissioner Quetta Division Hamza Shafqaat presiding over a meeting regarding Quetta City App for facilitation of people.

## Entrepreneurship stimulates employment growth, creates job opportunities for rural communities: Speakers

**By Rafiullah Mandokhail**

ZHOB: "Although unemployment is considered to be the most challenging social problem in poverty-hit Balochistan, but "Balochistan Livelihoods and Entrepreneurship Program" financed by the World Bank to promote enterprise development and livelihoods supports the local entrepreneurs and individuals to enhance profitability, job creation and income is a blessing for the province", said the speakers at a seminar entitled "Citizen Engagement and Awareness Seminar" held at the Cultural hall here. The seminar was attended by male and female community members, journalist Rafiullah Mandokhail and people from different walks of life.

District Coordinator BLEP Afzal Khan in his

keynote speech said that organizing the seminar was aimed at creating awareness and providing information to the youth on employment opportunities through entrepreneurship. "In order to promote livelihoods through enterprise development and job creation, BLEP has been implemented in eight targeted districts in Balochistan including Zhob and neighboring Sherani districts. The project is financed by the World Bank and executed by the Planning and Development (P&D) department Balochistan," he said.

Speaking at the event, Deputy Director Mines and Minerals department Balochistan Abdul Razaq Kakar and Director Awar-Balochistan Muhammad Abid Sherani said that the five-year project has a significant role in poverty

evaluation that aims at promoting agriculture and livestock sectors and equips the youth with vocational skills.

BLEP officials, forestry expert Haji Abdul Wahid, livestock expert Dr Iqbal, community development experts Kalamullah and Najibullah also spoke on the occasion and said that BLEP program works on different sectors including livestock, mining, tourism, small industries and forestry. Around 10,000 male and female unemployed youths have been imparted vocational training in electrical, plumbing, car-motorcycle repairing, carpentry, welding and IT sectors, along with the provision of tool kits. Moreover, tuck shops, Zaran rickshaws and cattle have also been provided for the livelihood to thousands from the rural communities.