

# Independent

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## Cricketer Shahzad promises to establish cricket Academy in Quetta

**Caretaker Provincial Minister for Information praises Ahmed Shahzad for raising voice for inclusion of Quetta players in PSL**

**Independent Report**  
QUETTA: The former international cricketer and member of national squad, Ahmed Shahzad has announced to establish his cricket academy in Quetta for nurturing young cricket talent for the national and international level matches.



ence along with the caretaker Provincial Minister for Information, Jan Achakzai here at the Sikandar Jamali Auditorium in Civil Secretariat on Sunday.

He said that he got lot of love and affection from Quetta, and he would remain connected with it for rest of his life. He said that the manner he was welcomed and treated is really memorable for him. He went on to say that the love he got from people of Quetta, he did not get anywhere, so he wants to do much for the people of Balochistan. Ahmed Shahzad also mentioned that there is a great potential of cricket among youngsters of the province, what had been lacking the desired opportunities for them to prove it.



QUETTA: Caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki in a group photo with Caretaker Provincial Ministers and Advisors to luncheon hosted by Chief Minister.

## Perpetrators of May 9 incidents facing judicial process: PM

**Says ECP would ensure that nobody should get the impression that any person was made a target for his political affiliation**

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Sunday said the incidents of May 9 were still being investigated and action should be taken against those involved in them. Speaking in a private television channel programme, he said those who perpetrated the incidents on May 9 were facing the judicial process. Many persons were still avoiding the courts and were in hiding, he said adding they should have surrendered before the law to avail their legal rights but now they would face obstacles in carrying out their political activities related to the elections. He said the Election Commission would ensure that nobody should get the impression that any person was made a target for his political affiliation. To a question, he said the leader of the house and leader of the opposition in the National Assembly agreed to his name and he was appointed as the caretaker prime minister. He said he was supported by many people including his teachers to reach the level of attainment in his life. The prime minister

they would have to lay down their arms, the problems would be settled. PM Kakar was of the view that the sanctity of the state should be observed as it was above any individual. He said Pakistan lost 90,000 of its citizens in the war against terrorism but not even nine persons were convicted in courts for the deaths. The issue of terrorism could not be addressed, he said adding that horrific incident like an attack on the Army Public School occurred and personnel of law enforcement agencies, citizens and politicians had been martyred since 2008. He mentioned that the caretaker provincial government launched the Health Card programme in the province under which more than 2.2 million families got the quality facilities in 1200 hospitals of the country.

## Govt playing effective role to restore peace & resolve public issues as per mandate, Domki

**Independent Report**  
Moreover, the Sibi-Harnai railway section and Bolan Mail were restored while on the other hand, the computerized local and domicile certificates, heirs certificates and arms licenses were issued. These details were shared by the caretaker Chief Minister while speaking on occasion of the luncheon hosted for the caretaker provincial ministers and Advisors here on Sunday. Mir Ali Mardan Domki said it has been our priority to complete collective nature projects for restoring law and order and resolving the issues of masses. The Chief Minister vowed that we would continue to bring improvement in the governance and serve the masses with sincerity whatever possible in the available time.

## ECP secretary to resume duties after recovery

**Spokesman says:**  
ISLAMABAD (APP): The Secretary of Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) Omar Hamid Khan, currently on medical leave due to health issues, will come back to his duties once he gets better. In response to rumours surrounding the resignation of the ECP secretary, the ECP spokesman clarified that the Election Commission's work is being efficiently handled by the two Special Secretaries during the Secretary's absence. Secretary Omar Hamid Khan is an intelligent and hardworking officer who has fulfilled his responsibilities admirably, the spokesman added. He mentioned that the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) is operating seamlessly, ensuring continuous functioning even on holidays, with its offices diligently engaged in their tasks.



KABUL: Ameer Jamiat-e-Ulema Islam (JUI) Maulana Fazlur Rehman along with delegation meeting with Vice Prime Minister Afghanistan Maulvi Abdul Kabeer.

## Don't pay attention to rumours, ECP fully functional: Solangi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan (ECP), said that the Secretary Election Commission was facing some health issues for sometime. "We pray to Allah for his complete and speedy recovery", the Federal Minister of Information said. The minister said that ECP was fully functional and there was no crisis of any kind.



QUETTA: Senior Politician, Nawabzada Haji Lashkari Raisani cutting ribbon during the inauguration ceremony of Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA) Election Office, in Quetta.

## Preliminary lists of polling stations published by ROs in Balochistan

**Independent Report**  
QUETTA: The preliminary lists of the polling stations of respective election constituencies have been published by all Returning Officers in Balochistan on Sunday. This was announced by the Provincial Election Commissioner of Balochistan, Ejaz Anwar Chohan in an official statement issued here on Sunday. The PEC said that any voter or candidate can submit the objection on the preliminary lists of polling stations to the District Returning Officers by January 11, 2024. The DROs would give judgments on the objections or suggestions by January 17, 2024. According to the PEC, the final lists of polling stations would be displayed before 15 days of the general elections.

## Five killed in firing incident on passenger bus in Parachinar

ISLAMABAD (APP): At least four people, including a woman, lost their lives and three others were injured in a firing incident on a passenger bus in Parachinar, the Kurram District in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. According to the police spokesman, on Sunday, a passenger bus was heading from Parachinar to Kohat when unknown assailants carried out the attack, resulting in the killing of four people and injuring three others. The injured were promptly transported to a nearby hospital for medical assistance. This was not the first incident of gunfire on a passenger bus in Parachinar.

## 200% increase in bill but gas missing still

RAWALPINDI (Online): Despite the 200% increase in the price of gas for domestic consumers, the worst load shedding of gas continues in most parts of the country. Government has increased the gas prices by almost 200% from November 1, 2023. After the implementation of this increase, consumers are now holding their hearts with heavy gas bills. The recent increase in gas prices has badly affected the budget of the citizens. Consumers said that earlier the electricity prices made life difficult, but now the gas bills have made up for it and gas is becoming more expensive.

## Fazal in Afghanistan to discuss regional security issues

KABUL (INP): Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman on Sunday reached Kabul, Afghanistan to hold talks on regional and security issues amid a spike in cross-border attacks. According to party spokesperson, the JUI-F chief - who is on maiden visit to Afghanistan in nearly 10 years - was welcomed by interim Afghan Foreign Minister Ameer Khan. Fazl last visited Afghanistan in 2013 and met then-president Hamid Karzai. In a post on X (formerly Twitter), the JUI-F said Fazlur Rehman departed for Afghanistan with a high-level delegation of party leaders, including Maulana Abdul Wasi, Maulana Salahuddin, Maulana Jamaluddin, Maulana Salimuddin Shamzai, Aslam Ghauri and others. During the visit, Fazlur Rehman will hold meetings with the Afghan Taliban leaders and discuss the regional and security situation, the statement noted. It is pertinent to mention here that the representative of the Taliban government and Afghan envoy in Islamabad had officially invited Maulana Fazlur Rehman a few days ago to visit Afghanistan on behalf of his government.

## Political parties urged to make efforts to address issues related to minorities' rights

QUETTA (APP): Center for Social Justice (CSJ) and Minority Forum Pakistan organized a public assembly titled "Effective Representation of Minorities in Elections" organized in Quetta as part of the mobilization and advocacy campaign launched in connection with the elections 2024. The event was joined by representatives of the political parties including Rauf Lala from Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party, Agha Gul from National Party, Anita Irfan from Pakistan Muslim League-N and representative from Jamiat Ulema Islam-F who presented the position of their political parties regarding minorities rights and agreed to take practical steps to address the outstanding issues faced by minorities. Executive Director of CSJ Peter Jacob stated that public representatives associated with political parties required public opinion and support to introduce legislation regarding any matter concerning human rights, so that the public could keep an eye on the progress of political representatives and convince them to take steps to address the human rights challenges, said a news release issued here the other day. Suneel Malik presented the findings of the manifest assessment report "Promises to Keep and Miles to Go" regarding the assessment of the Delivery of the Pledges about Minorities' Rights.



QUETTA: Provincial General Secretary Mulum League (N) Jamal Shah Kakar along with other leaders lead the rally to launch of the Balochistan Election campaign.

## Social media giants, services face disruptions as internet disrupted across Pak

ISLAMABAD (INP): Internet services were disrupted across Pakistan as users reported difficulties accessing popular social media platforms, including X, Facebook and YouTube on Sunday, Internet Monitor Downdetector said. According to Downdetector, the social media platforms, especially the website versions have been down shortly after 5pm local time. Users in major cities such as Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad began experiencing difficulties accessing social media sites shortly after 4pm. Additionally, users also complained about sluggish internet services. A sharp rise in connection outages on YouTube, X and Facebook was seen in downdetector's graphs. The reason behind the widespread disruption is yet not clear as the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) has not issued any statement.

## Bilawal says we will take back Lahore of Bhuttos from Patwaris

LAHORE (INP): Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said he will take back Lahore of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto to old politicians and Patwaris with the support of poor people of the city. Bilawal addressed a gathering of party workers in the National Assembly constituency NA-127. K Ghar Main Ghus K Marain Gey" (Now we will punish them after entering their house). He said he wanted to tell the old politicians that the victory in the elections was for Shaheed Benazir Bhutto and the people of Lahore only.



Bilawal said the city of Lahore is not the Lahore of any businessman or a cricket player, it is the Lahore of Shaheed Bhutto and it is everyone's misunderstanding to scare the PPP [leadership and workers] by martyring its Jialas (workers) and Bibi Benazir Bhutto.

## 11,000 teams formed to achieve target of immunization: Balochistan set to initiate seven-day anti-polio campaign to vaccinate around 2.6 million children

**Independent Report**  
QUETTA: Ali is set to initiate seven-day anti-polio campaign in Balochistan from today (Monday). The Coordinator Emergency Operation Center (EOC) for Eradication of Polio in Balochistan, Syed Zahid Shah told that all the necessary arrangements have been finalized for the polio immunization campaign in the province. According to the EOC Coordinator, approximately 2.596 million children below five years of age would be administered anti-polio vaccine in all districts of the province. In all 11,399 teams have been formed to achieve the target of immunization in the province. These are included 9,116 mobile teams, 958 fixed site teams and 630 transit points teams. The EOC Coordinator mentioned that all the anti-polio teams participating in the elections would be provided wholehearted security during the campaign. He informed that no fresh polio case been reported since January 2021. However, it is a matter of concern that the polio virus has been detected in the environmental samples of five districts including Quetta, Hub, Pishin, Chaman and Dera Bugti. Syed Zahid Shah said that all available resources are being mobilized to eradicate the polio virus from the province. He mentioned that Balochistan has been polio free province for last two years. In this regard, the sincere efforts made by the polio workers and other concerned have been remarkable, adding he commended. However, he urged the parents to ensure vaccination of their children against the virus in the upcoming campaign. Undoubtedly the absence of any reported polio cases in the province since January 2021 indicates the effectiveness of previous vaccination efforts and surveillance systems. Continuous vaccination campaigns and surveillance are vital in maintaining this disease-free status and working towards the ultimate goal of complete polio eradication. Therefore, it's important to continue such campaigns, raise awareness, and ensure that every child receives polio drops to sustain this positive trend and prevent any resurgence of polio in Balochistan.

Daily Voice of Masses Independent

Commendable work

Thankfully, at least some of the checks and balances safeguarding the electoral process appear to be working as intended.

Through the process is still ongoing, the tribunals have already cleared the path for scores of candidates who had previously been disbarred from participating in elections on various grounds.

It now appears that many of those affected may have been right about being wronged. At least one judge hearing the appeals, Justice Arbab Muhammad Tahir, is reported to have made remarks to the effect that the ROs in Islamabad and Rawalpindi had, in the majority of cases, rejected papers over petty issues which could have been resolved within five to 10 minutes in their offices.

The work of the appellate tribunals is commendable as it has restored a sense of fairness after the ugliness that marred the formal start of the electoral process.

From snatching of papers to abductions of candidates, instances of state interference had been widely documented, casting a dark shadow on the legitimacy of the upcoming polls.

With the tribunals acting sensibly, a significant portion of the controversies surrounding the pending election will now die down, allowing parties and candidates to focus on their campaigns and strategise for their wins.

Not a new normal



Muna Khan

I tested positive for Covid on the first day of the new year in New York. It is not an ideal start to the year, or holiday, but the period of isolation so far has brought many reflections.

The most obvious is that the pandemic is not over.

Last Sunday, the technical leader to the World Health Organisation's Covid-19 response, Dr Maria Van Kerkhove, reaffirmed on X that Covid remains a global health threat.

[This new phase] is marked by reduced impact compared to the peak of Covid 19 a few years ago, but it's still a global health threat and it's still a pandemic causing far too many (re)infections, hospitalisations, deaths and long covid when tools exist to prevent them.

Yet this has not received the media attention it deserves.

At the time of my writing, the United States is facing the second biggest surge of the pandemic according to data from the Centres for Disease Control.

The surge is expected to peak next week with an estimated two million infections per day and estimates that one in three people will get Covid. People must take precautions, especially masking, but masks alone have become a divisive issue here.

This is why the media's role in public messaging is critical right now, yet its focus is on other issues.

Professor Eric Topol's op-ed in The Los Angeles Times on Thursday should sound alarm bells for policymakers, certainly in the US, who "are still playing make-believe" about the current wave atop of high cases of the flu and respiratory virus.

The current JN.1 variant "has continued its evolution with mutations adapted for infecting or re-infecting us," writes Topol. But, he offers some good news: the latest booster in the US "provided protection from hospitalisation in the range of about 60 per cent against JN.1 and other recently circulating variants."

The bad news is that only 19pc of Americans have received the latest booster, so far. This is the tragic face of health inequities.

The United States isn't alone in its "state of denialism and general refusal to take simple steps to reduce the risk of infection," writes Topol. Countries all over the world are not acting on Covid mitigation strategies.

We know masks, air filtration and proper ventilation work against variants. When combined with vaccinations and testing, "we have layers of defense that work effectively together, no matter how the virus evolves. The key is to do it all, not rely on only one," writes molecular biologist Dr Lucky Tran.

In fact, he recently posted an image of a rapid test that checks for SARS-CoV-2, RSV, Adenovirus, M.pneumoniae, and influenza. It isn't approved in most countries but "imagine if governments provided this for free to the people!"

Complex conflict



Aizzah Ahmad Chaudhry

Three months into the war in Gaza, thousands of Palestinians, including a large number of children, have been martyred by the Israeli Defence Forces. What is the end goal of Israel for which it has unleashed unprecedented death and destruction?

Israel's stated objective is that it wants to destroy Hamas. This is not credible because Israel is meting out genocide-like collective punishment to all Palestinians, and not just Hamas. Is Israel's goal, then, to create a 'greater Israel' by forcibly pushing the Palestinians into neighbouring Arab countries or elsewhere?

The Palestine-Israel conflict is a complex issue. One land, two claimants: Jews and Palestinians.

Both cite history to consolidate their claim to the land. The roots of this conflict lie in the decision of the British in 1917, called Balfour Declaration, to settle the Jews of Europe in Palestine. Once a sufficient number of Jews had reached Palestine and displaced the local Arab population, the British took the matter to the UN in 1947, where it was agreed to have two separate states, Palestine and Israel.

The issue also has an ideological dimension. The state of Israel was created for the Jews of the world.

The name itself comes from Hazrat Yaquob (Jacob), the son of Hazrat Ishaq, and grandson of Hazrat Ibra-him. Hazrat Yaquob was also called Israel, and his descendants as Bani Israel.

Nevertheless, pressure is now mounting on Israel. The US cannot continue to ignore the loud calls of the international community for an immediate and permanent ceasefire. Some European countries, like the UK, stand with Israel, but their people are agitating against the relentless bombardment of civilians in Gaza.

The US influence in the Middle East has also received a setback. The Arab world, including the Gulf countries, are now looking ever more inclined to explore other options for their security needs.

Israel continues to justify its atrocities in the name of "self-defence". The Hamas action of October 7, 2023 did not take place in a vacuum as the UN secretary general had rightly remarked. The Palestinians are under brutal occupation. The Hamas action was an act of resistance against the occupying force, which is permissible under international law.

Israel's indiscriminate firing on Palestinian houses, schools, and hospitals has elicited massive protests not only in Arab or Muslim countries, but all across, including in the United States. Yet, Israel is not ready to listen to these voices. One reason for such a ferocious Israeli response could be that there is domestic criticism for not anticipating the Hamas attack.

Commerce News

VP PBF says: Regional Trade Agreements vital to reinvigorate growth

LAHORE (INP): Vice President, Pakistan Business Forum (PBF), Chaudhry Ahmad Jawad has said that devising regional trade agreements among South Asian countries was need of the hour to improve the economic well beings of billions of people.

replaced, ideally a state should enjoy at least cordial relations with its surrounding states if not the best relations".

Talking to the members of FPCCI here on Sunday, Chaudhry Ahmad Jawad said that Pakistan must start putting sustainable and inclusive economic growth, above all we must create a cycle of profligacy and austerity.

He said, "In international relations it is a common axiom that a state can change its friends but it cannot replace its neighbours due to geographical compulsions. If neighbours cannot be

As the average annual economic growth between 2010 and 2023 has been lackluster, around 4 percent, and has been accompanied by a rise in Pakistan's total debt as a share of its GDP, from 55 percent to 76 percent.



GILGIT: A vendor selling a traditional steel fire stove to the customer at his work place.

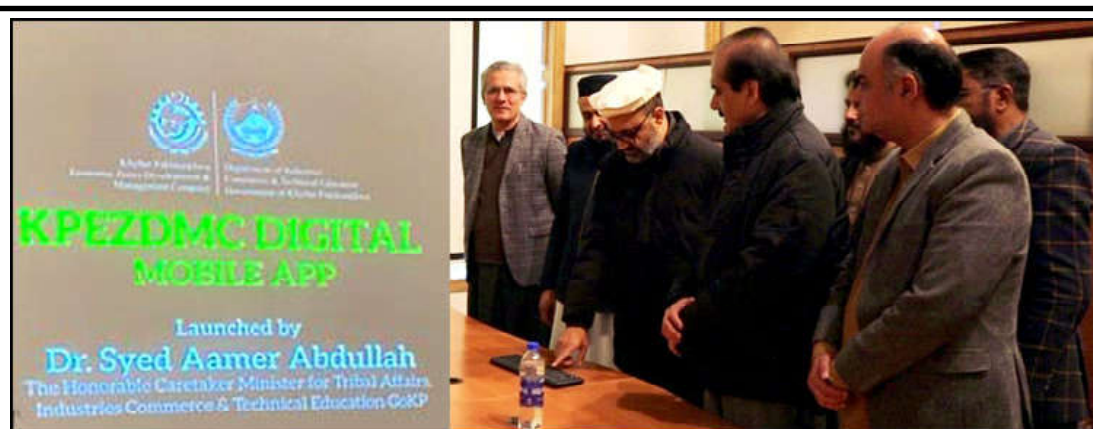
Shahid Rasheed says: Pakistani businessmen milking masses against developed countries

ISLAMABAD (INP): Former President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt has said that exploitation of rights of citizens was not allowed in developed countries but business in Pakistan was unthinkable without exploitation.

masses and promote poverty in the country.

In a statement issued here on Sunday, he said that key sectors and industries were operated without any regulatory oversight in Pakistan, allowing businessmen to rob the

Shahid Rasheed Butt said that in developed countries, no business was allowed to exploit the people and if it was done, it was made an example but the majority of businesses in Pakistan were milking the masses. Irresponsible and greedy people, whose only aim was to make money, exploit people in the name of business, as most of the big businesses were in their hands, he added.



KP Caretaker Minister for Industries, Commerce, Technical Education and Newly Merged Districts Affairs Dr. Aamer Abdullah formally launching Economic Zones Development and Management Company (KP-EZDMC) digital mobile app.

Freelancers to now receive their payments through PayPal: Minister

ISLAMABAD (Online): The Caretaker Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Dr Umar Saif on Sunday announced that freelancers would now receive their payments through PayPal.

PayPal via a third party." "Under the newly devised program, freelancers will not need to open a PayPal account. Instead, individuals outside the country will make payments from their PayPal accounts, and the funds will be promptly deposited into the freelancers' accounts," the minister explained.

The minister clarified, "While PayPal itself is not coming to Pakistan, an agreement has been reached where remittances would be channeled through

He said that under the nation's first space policy approved by the federal cabinet, international companies would be allowed to provide communication services through low-orbit communication

Saif said that satellite communication technology was advancing rapidly and many private companies in the world wanted to provide communication services through low-orbit satellites.

"Satellites used to be geostationary, far away from the land. They are useful for broadcasting TV signals but communicating is difficult because there is latency," he said.

Saif said that communication services and internet services could be offered through low-

orbit satellites, which were relatively closer.

He said that there had been a lot of development in this regard in the private sector.

"So now it has become possible for communication services in Pakistan to be provided through satellites and the private sector has this technology," he said.

He said the National Space Policy would enable private sector companies to "offer affordable internet services in Pakistan while enabling increased investment in our national space program".

Silwat says: Business Facilitation Centre to be functional soon

FAISALABAD (APP): Divisional Commissioner Madam Silwat Saeed said on Sunday the Business Facilitation Centre would be made functional soon to facilitate the business community of Faisalabad.

Addressing an online meeting with caretaker Provincial Minister for Industries SM Tanveer, she said a state-of-the-art business facilitation centre was established at Commissioner's Complex to resolve business related issues speedily.

KP-EZDMC launches mobile app to facilitate investors

Independent Report PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zones Development and Management Company (KP-EZDMC) has launched a digital mobile app to make the services of the company easily accessible to investors and industrialists.

The launching of the digital mobile app is being considered a milestone towards the facilitation of investors and industrialists as the required services, facilities and information of the company would now be available on it. With this initiative, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has become

the first province in the country, to introduce such a unique kind of comprehensive and useful app for industrialization in the public sector. The app was formally launched by the KP Caretaker Minister for Industries, Commerce and Technical Education, Dr Aamer Abdullah at the headquarters of KP-EZDMC, the other day, said an official press release issued here on Sunday. Besides, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) KP-EZDMC, Javed Iqbal Khattak, and other senior management of the company were also present on the occasion.

It is worth to mention here that the Provincial Caretaker Minister for Industries, Commerce and Technical Education, Dr Aamer Abdullah had assigned this task of online availability of the services to the company, which has been achieved by the IT section of the company within a short period of two weeks. Addressing the launching ceremony of the app, the provincial minister appreciated the performance of the management and whole team of the company and termed it a visible step towards the facilitation of industrialists and investors of the industrial sector in the province.

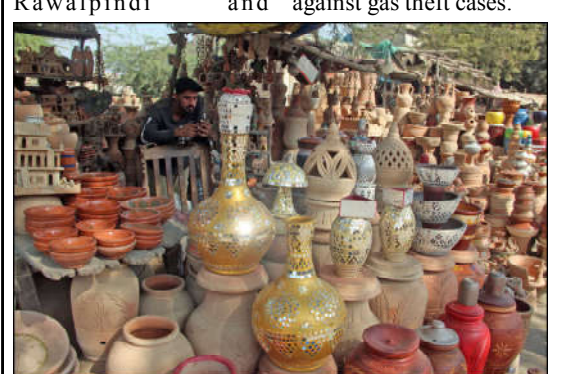
SNGPL cuts off another 347 connections for gas theft

LAHORE (APP): In a relentless effort to curb gas theft, Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL) conducted a series of targeted raids in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), and Islamabad.

Islamabad the team disconnected 98 connections on illegal use of gas and amount of Rs 0.30 million have been booked against gas theft cases. In Multan 25 connections were disconnected on illegal use of gas while another 25 on use of compressor. The team also imposed fine of Rs 0.050 million against gas theft cases.

During the crackdown, around 347 unauthorised connections were disconnected, and fine of Rs 3.47 million were imposed. SNGPL's spokesperson told media here on Sunday, in Lahore, the regional team disconnected 13 connections on illegal use of gas while another 23 on use of compressor. In Rawalpindi and

In Peshawar and Karak, the company disconnected 93 connections on account of direct use of gas and illegal use of gas and also imposed fine of Rs 3.05 million against gas theft cases.



KARACHI: A vendor is displayed fancy plants pots attraction for customers at his roadside setup Kumhar Wara area in Provincial Capital.

PIEDMC directed to submit report on 5000 acres Rwp Economic Zone

RAWALPINDI (APP): Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, Liaquat Ali Chhatta has directed the Punjab Industrial Estate Development and Management Company (PIEDMC) authorities to complete the survey of the 5000 acres Economic Zone site on the Rawalpindi Ring Road and submit a report next week.

presentation on the proposed site at Rawalpindi Ring Road Economic Zones and the facilities to be provided to the businessmen.

The task of site survey for establishing an economic zone on 5000 acres land along the Rawalpindi Ring Road had been given to PIEDMC Lahore, the Commissioner informed. The officers concerned were also instructed to arrange a visit of the PIEDMC delegation immediately to the site and provide them with all the necessary information and support.

## Governor KP underlines important role of graduates in healthcare development

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali on Sunday recognized the important role of graduates in the ongoing development of healthcare and emphasized the importance of their contribution to the wider healthcare landscape.

He said this while addressing the first annual convocation 2024 of Khyber Medical University (KMU)-IMS and Kohat Institute of Dental Sciences (KIDS).

He said that the role of medical and dental graduates play in shaping the wider healthcare landscape is commendable.

Chief Guest Governor Haji Ghulam Ali congratulated the graduates of Medical and Dental

Colleges and Gold Medalists. He appreciated their unwavering dedication to medical knowledge and their outstanding efforts.

Highlighting the importance of the convocation, the Governor thanked VC KMU Prof. Dr. Ziaul Haq, Principals and all the attendees for making the event a memorable gathering for teachers, proud graduates, parents and distinguished guests.

During the ceremony, Governor Haji Ghulam Ali announced that 286 students were awarded MBBS and BDS degrees.

He termed awarding gold medals to 200 students as a great honor for colleges, KMU, and their parents.

The Governor

praised the important role of KIMS, KIDS, and KMU in shaping the future healthcare workforce.

He said that these graduates will use their tireless efforts and ability to raise the quality of healthcare not only in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa but in the whole of Pakistan.

Vice Chancellor KMU Prof. Dr. Zia ul Haq, in his welcome speech, described the participation of Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and other distinguished guests in this convocation ceremony as wonderful.

He also deeply acknowledged the continuous support from the parents and congratulated the all medical and dental graduates.



PESHAWAR: A delegation of 30-members tribal elites of merged District Mhmand meeting with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Haji Ghulam Ali.

## Feroze Shah pays homage to Kargil Hero Captain Karnel Sher Shaheed

**Independent Report**  
PESHAWAR: In a solemn and respectful visit, Barrister Feroze Jamal Shah Kakakhel, the Caretaker Minister of Information and Public Relations of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, undertook a detailed visit to the shrine of the revered Kargil war hero, Captain Karnel Sher Khan Shaheed Nishan-e-Haider.

During the visit, Barrister Feroze Jamal Shah Kakakhel laid wreaths, recited Fatiha, and documented his reflections in a commemorative book. Expressing gratitude for

the opportunity, he conveyed, "It is my good fortune to recite Fatiha at the martyr's grave. Such brave individuals bring immense joy to the lives of nations."

The caretaker minister also extended condolences to the family of Captain Karnel Sher Khan, emphasizing the profound significance of the sacrifices made by the martyrs.

He remarked, "Captain Colonel Sher Khan Shaheed is the pride of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the only son who courageously earned Nishan Haider.

## CM orders early completion of Children Hospital upgrade

**Independent Report**  
LAHORE: Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi paid a detailed visit to the Children Hospital and reviewed progress on the upgradation work of the medical facility.

On the direction of the CM, upgradation work in the emergency, main corridor and other wards of the hospital has been expedited. The chief minister inspected the main corridor, reception counter and checked the quality of work and directed to ensure quality along with undertaking preventive measures in the electricity and air conditioning wiring work. He directed to

complete the wiring work in three days and early completion of tiles installation work in the main corridor.

Mohsin Naqvi lauded the performance of the Secretary Communication & Works, Secretary Health and their team on undertaking swift work in the main corridor. He met with the labourers working late night and commended them for working with diligence. He issued directions for early completion of the ongoing upgradation work.

Mohsin Naqvi said that task for the provision of better facilities in more than 100 hospitals of Punjab would be

completed by 31<sup>st</sup> January. "The whole team is striving day and night to accomplish this task. The fruit of hard work with a noble intention would definitely be passed on to the people," he maintained. The Secretary C&W and Secretary Health gave a briefing about the work being done under the upgradation project. He said that installation of tiles and finishing work had been started.

Provincial Minister for Information Amir Mir, Secretary C&W, Secretary Health, Commissioner Lahore, Deputy Commissioner and officials concerned were also present.

## Secretary of Relief pays visit to Rescue 1122 office in Abbottabad

ABBOTTABAD (APP): Relief, Rehabilitation, and Settlement Department KPK Anayatullah Waseem paid a visit to the Rescue 1122 district office in Abbottabad on Sunday. District Emergency Officer Arif Khatak gave a detailed overview of the emergency services offered and the collaborative efforts with various departments to ensure effective service delivery.

In discussions with the Rescue 1122 personnel, Secretary Relief Anayatullah Waseem highlighted that Rescue 1122 stands as a formidable force equipped with modern technology and a dedicated team.

The organization is committed to providing equal and efficient emergency services to the residents of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Rescue personnel, possessing extensive practical knowledge, strive to deliver

timely and optimal assistance during emergencies.

Anayatullah Waseem emphasized the active involvement of Rescue 1122 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa under the leadership of Director General Rescue 1122, Dr. Khateer Ahmad.

The organization operates tirelessly, ensuring the provision of services around the clock in a manner that reflects a well-organized daily routine.

Moreover, Rescue 1122 collaborates with security forces, district administration, and other institutions to implement a comprehensive policy aimed at delivering services to the public.

The administration of Rescue 1122 is also taking diverse measures to enhance the welfare and well-being of its personnel, ensuring a promising and secure future for them.

## 29 cases referred to drug court

FAISALABAD (APP): The District Quality Control Board (DQCB) has referred cases of 29 clinics to drug courts for further proceedings.

During its meeting held with Deputy Commissioner (DC) Abdullah Nayyar Sheikh in the chair, the Board heard 56 cases and issued warnings to owners of 18 medical clinics whereas cases of nine clinics were adjourned to the next meeting as record of these cases was not completed yet.

## 5 children hospitalized for suffocation

FAISALABAD (APP): Five children of a family were hospitalized due to suffocation in the Samundri police limits.

A Rescue 1122 spokesman said here on Sunday that a family had lighted a fire in their house to beat the cold but the fire caused suffocation.

## Breaking shackles of poverty through welfare projects

PESHAWAR (APP): In a foggy morning, Zakir Khan, an impoverished fruit seller, starts his rickshaw journey from his mud house in the outskirts of the provincial metropolitan to Peshawar's fruit market hoping to purchase apples, guavas, bananas, and other fruits on reasonable rate to support his eight-member family.

Assisted by his son Asadullah Khan, the 65-year-old vendor, donned in traditional attire - woolen Chadar and Chitraili cap, starts his day with Fajr prayer and after having breakfast, rushes to Chamkani fruit market in Peshawar expecting to get fresh fruits through open auction on reasonable prices and anticipates a profitable sale in the local

market.

After purchasing fruits, he unloads his fruits-packed rickshaw at his hand cart in Pabbi fruits market at Nowshera after covering 15-kilometer distance from Peshawar and working till night. "I have been associated with the painstaking fruit seller business since my childhood and recently my two sons Arifullah Khan and Asadullah Khan have started assisting me to sell all stock before night," he said.

"It is an extremely challenging business and sometimes he suffers financial losses in case fruits are not sold on time," he said, adding that due to exorbitant prices of the fruits many customers just ask about prices of different fruits and return

empty handed.

"Last year, citrus of Khanpur tehsil of Haripur and Manki Sharif of Nowshera districts was available at Rs180 per dozen that has now jumped to Rs 250 per dozen in local market with start of new year while apples per kg were sold at Rs200 per last year against Rs250 this year making difficult to continue this hard earned business due to discouraging response of consumers and poverty," he said.

"I have come to purchase fruits for birthday party of my granddaughter, but the prices were sky-high this morning and will come again at night hoping for reduction of prices of apple, guava and banana to celebrate the event with

great pomp and show," said Riazul Haq, a retired teacher while talking to APP at Pabbi fruit market.

Complaining about soaring prices of fruits and vegetables with the start of the new year in the local market, he said that district administration failed to regularly check fruits prices at market and take strict action against price hikers and hoarders.

"Poverty is the mother of all social ills including illiteracy, corruption, street crimes, drugs addiction and unemployment besides creating socio-economic imbalances in the society," said Professor Dr Muhammad Naem, former Chairman Economics Department, University of Peshawar.

He said that

thousands of youth were being graduated by the public and private sectors universities every year and could not find suitable jobs due to our outdated education system and lack of coordination between government departments, educational institutions and industries in terms of jobs creations, as result, increase in poverty ratio in recent years.

Professor Naem while quoting a World Bank report said that the poverty ratio has raised from 34.21 per cent in 2022 to 39.41 per cent in 2023, pushing 12.5 million people below poverty line. He said that Pakistan labour market was yet to recover fully from the 2022 devastated floods, COVID-19 pandemic and shabby economic situation.

## International News

## On Orthodox Christmas Putin vows to back soldiers who 'defend' Russia

**Monitoring Desk**  
MOSCOW: President Vladimir Putin vowed on the eve of Orthodox Christmas to back soldiers who "with arms in hands" defend Russia's interests, ordering his government greater support of those who fight and calling on his people to be merciful and just.

"Many of our men, our courageous, heroic guys, Russian warriors, even now, on this holiday, defend the interests of our country with arms in hand," Putin said at a late Saturday meeting with

families of Russian soldiers who have died in Ukraine.

Russia lunched its full-scale invasion on Ukraine in February 2022, in what Kyiv and its Western allies said was an unprovoked imperialist land grab.

Nearly two years later, the war, which has killed thousands and displaced millions, has shifted to increased air strikes at each other's territories as both sides have struggled to make significant gains along the frontline.

State television footage showed the Russian leader attending with a small group of families of soldiers killed an intimate mid-night service, known as the Divine Liturgy, later on Saturday at a chapel at his residence in Novo-Ogaryovo outside Moscow.

There was no call from Putin this year for a ceasefire in Ukraine to coincide with the holiday, which many Orthodox Christians celebrate on Jan. 6-7 - as was the case a year ago.



Russia's President Vladimir Putin attends the Orthodox Christmas liturgy at a cathedral on the territory of the Novo-Ogaryovo state residence outside Moscow, Russia.

## Americans divided on US role in Mideast crisis

**Monitoring Desk**  
WASHINGTON: A recent Gallup survey shows that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is rapidly becoming unpopular in the United States, so is the war he has unleashed on Palestinian civilians in Gaza.

The survey's assessment of Americans' views on Netanyahu, who faces charges of fraud, bribery, and breach of trust are getting increasingly unpopular. Netanyahu's unfavourable rating of 47 per cent surpasses his favorable rating of 33pc, marking a significant reversal in trend since 2019.

Republicans continue to view him more favorably (55pc), while Democrats (14pc) and independents (30pc) show lower favourability.

The poll, conducted from Dec 1 to Dec 20, 2023, provides insights into public opinions on the level of US engagement, approval of Israel's military actions, and perceptions of support for Israel and the Palestinians.

## Global food prices eased 10pc in 2023, says Food and Agriculture Organisation

**Monitoring Desk**  
UNITED NATIONS: Global food prices experienced a notable decline in 2023, further easing concerns over food inflation worldwide.

The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) reported on Friday that its Food Price Index (FFPI) concluded the year over 10 per cent below its December 2022 level.

The index fell to 118.5, the lowest since February 2021, down 1.5pc from November and 10.1pc from December 2022. The overall in-

## Gaza has simply become 'uninhabitable', says UN

**Monitoring Desk**  
GAZA STRIP: Israel bombed southern Gaza on Saturday as the UN warned that the besieged Palestinian territory has been rendered "uninhabitable" by three months of war.

Top Western diplomats were in the region as part of a fresh push to boost the flow of aid into Gaza and address mounting fears of a wider conflict.

The Egyptian Red Cr-scent on Friday said 1,200 water purifiers, 100 oxygen cylinders, one oxygen generator, 1,000 solar-powered items, 24 power generators and 418 medical supplies had been blocked by Israel from reaching Gaza since the conflict started. The fighting, triggered by the October 7 attacks on southern Israel by Hamas, has sent tensions soaring across the region, and shows no signs of abating with the conflict entering its fourth month.

Civilians in the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip have borne the brunt of the violence as the scale of the destruction has triggered mass displacement and a deepening humanitarian crisis.

## Jordanian army says it killed 5 drug smugglers in clashes on the Syrian border

**Monitoring Desk**  
AMMAN: The Jordanian army said Saturday that it killed five drug and weapon smugglers and arrested 15 in a day of clashes with armed groups of smugglers attempting to cross into Jordan from Syria. The army statement said the clashes broke out before dawn between Jordanian border guards and armed organizations "that practice smuggling and rely on systematic infiltration operations."

## EU Council President Michel says to step down in July

**Monitoring Desk**  
BRUSSELS: Belgian politician Charles Michel has announced he will step down as European Council president after running in the European Parliament elections set for June. The surprise move will heighten speculation about who will be the next EU leaders as negotiations begin for a new round of top jobs in November. EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen of Germany, who like Michel was appointed to her post in 2019.

## North Korea's Kim Jong Un sends sympathy messages to Iran, Japan: KCNA

**Monitoring Desk**  
SEOUL: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un sent messages of sympathy to the leaders of Iran and Japan on Saturday, state media said, after the countries were hit with deadly bombings and earthquake respectively this week.

Two bomb blasts in Iran claimed by Islamic State killed nearly 100 people on Wednesday, while the death toll in Japan's devastating earthquake on New Year's Day is nearing 100.

Kim expressed condolences to Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida with the hope that affected areas would be restored to stability soon, according to state media KCNA.

He also expressed sympathy to Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and reaffirmed North Korea's stand in "opposing all sorts of terrorism", KCNA said.

## US regulator orders inspections on some Boeing 737 MAX 9 planes after panel blows out mid-flight

**Monitoring Desk**  
WASHINGTON: The US air safety regulator said on Saturday that it had grounded some versions of Boeing's 737 Max 9 jets pending inspections, causing dozens of flight cancellations a day after a panel blew out of one of the planes over the western US state of Oregon.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) "is requiring immediate inspections of certain Boeing 737 Max 9 planes before they can return to flight", the agency said on X.

It added that around 171 aircraft worldwide would be affected, with each inspection taking four to eight hours.

Alaska and United Airlines fly the largest number of Max 9 planes, while Turkish Airlines has a smaller fleet.

As of Sunday, all three airlines had grounded their jets for inspection.

Boeing has so far delivered about 218 of the 737 Max planes worldwide, the company told AFP.

US-based Alaska Airlines grounded all 65 of its Boeing 737 Max 9 planes on Friday after a flight carrying 171 passengers and six crew was forced to make an emergency landing.

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) said a sealed-over door panel had opened and come off mid-flight.

Alaska Flight 1282 had departed from Portland International Airport and was still gaining altitude when the cabin crew reported a "pressurisation issue", according to the FAA.

The plane quickly returned to Portland and there were no major injuries.

Images posted on social media showed a side panel of the plane blown out, with emergency oxygen masks hanging from the ceiling.

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## Italian foreign minister calls for formation of EU army

**Monitoring Desk**  
ROME: The European Union should form its own combined army that could play a role in peacekeeping and preventing conflict, Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani said.

In an interview with the Italian newspaper La Stampa, Tajani said that closer European cooperation on defence was a priority for the Forza Italia party that he leads.

"If we want to be peacekeepers in the world, we need a European military. And this is a fundamental precondition to be able to have an effective European foreign policy," he said in an interview published on Sunday.

"In a world with powerful players like the United States, China, India, Russia - with crises from the Middle East to

the Indo-Pacific - Italian, German, French or Slovenian citizens can only be protected by something that already exists, namely the European Union," he added.

European defence cooperation has risen up the political agenda since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine almost two years ago.

However, efforts have been more focused on NATO expansion, with EU nation Finland joining the alliance last year and Sweden also on track to become a member.

Tajani also said the 27-nation EU should streamline its leadership and have a single presidency, rather than the current structure of a European Council president and a European Commission president.

