

# Independent

dailyindisb@gmail.com

Chief Editor: Syed Farooq Shah

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DAVOS: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar addressing the Pathfinder's Pakistan Breakfast meeting held on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum.

## PM optimistic about political, economic stability after Feb 8 general election

DAVOS (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Wednesday expressed confidence that a stable government would be formed after forthcoming general elections, scheduled for February 8, eventually leading to sustainable economic stability in the country.

"I do see and project that there will be great growth in Pakistan. There will be a sense of stability. The growth will be slow but it will be sustainable," the prime minister said in an interview with CNBC on the sidelines of the 54th annual meeting of World Economic Forum (WEF).

He said that the speculation regarding holding the elections, had been addressed and everyone was certain about the election date of 8th of February. PM Kakar said it was the top priority of the caretaker setup to bring economic revival and to focus on growth and other economic indicators.

He said the next government had to follow a clear principle of spending less and earning more to achieve economic stability. "We need to bring back the non-documented economy into the documented economy and transform our state to a more viable economic entity," he added.

He highlighted that the caretaker government would publish a white paper on its 4.5 months performance. "We did introduce and revamp the programme within taxation system, we brought structural changes that would be passed through the Cabinet formerly by the end of the month, after that it would be in place as policy." Further, he said the caretaker government opted for aggressive privatization, it cut its expenditures at the federal level and it was also carrying out talks with the provinces so they could rationalize their expenditures.



ISLAMABAD: Chief Election Commissioner, Mr. Sultan Raja, presiding over a meeting on General Elections at ECP Secretariat.

## Governor stresses need to fully benefit from blue economy for ending economic crisis

Independent Report  
QUETTA: The Governor Balochistan, Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar has stressed the need to fully benefit from blue economy and marine resources for ending economic crisis and restoring economy.

He also called for holding a grand seminar on the blue economy at the national level. He was of the view that Pakistan can meet the requirements of sea food of Japan by exporting the same there. He said that the public sector universities can play important role in making research and wise planning based on the modern

knowledge besides getting the necessary information in this regard. The Governor was speaking to the Vice Chancellor of Gwadar University, Professor Dr. Abdul Razaq Sabir who called on him here at the Governor House on Wednesday.

He believed that there are bright chances of Gwadar's becoming a prominent trade center soon because of the ongoing development process in the coastal areas of Balochistan especially Gwadar.

However, there's a need to inform the world about the profitable prospects of trade development in the

coastal areas so as to attract the international community towards the best opportunities and prospects available in the province, adding he stressed.

For the purpose, a grand national seminar should be organized seeking guidance and support of the concerned experts regarding trade and commerce activities. He noted with contentment that it is our good luck that high ups and experts of Pak Navy are already performing in this connection. Therefore, we should benefit from their knowledge, observations and expertise.



QUETTA: Vice Chancellor Gwadar University Prof. Dr. Abdul Razaq Sabir meeting with Governor Balochistan Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar

## 4 children among 11 people injured in hang grenade explosion in Quetta

Independent Report

QUETTA: As many as 11 persons including four children and a traffic police constable were injured in a hand grenade explosion took place at Zarghoon road here on Wednesday.

According to the police sources, the local made explosive device was planted in the garbage dumped at the Zarghoon road near bridge. As the device went off with a big bang, it caused injuries to some 11 persons.

four children aged between 10-14 besides a traffic police personal.

The police and rescue teams reached the spot of explosion and cordoned off the area.

The injured of blast were removed to the Trauma center of Sandeman Provincial Headquarter Hospital for treatment.

According to the Managing Director Trauma Center, Dr. Arbab Kamran, the necessary medical assistance is being provided to all injured of the blast.

## China urges Iran, Pakistan to 'exercise restraint' following air strike

BEIJING (INP): China on Wednesday urged Pakistan and Iran to show "restraint", after Islamabad denounced what it described as the "unprovoked violation of its airspace by Iran".

According to a statement released by the Foreign Office (FO) after midnight, strikes in Pakistani territory resulted in "deaths of two innocent children while injuring three girls".

Speaking at a regular briefing on Wednesday, China Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Mao Ning said: "We call on both sides to exercise restraint, avoid actions that would lead to an escalation of tension and work together to maintain peace and stability."

"We consider both Iran and Pakistan as close neighbours and major Islamic countries," she added.

## Expels Iranian ambassador; Recalls envoy from Tehran Pakistan suspends diplomatic ties with Iran over completely unacceptable airstrike

Pakistan reserves right to respond, FM warns Iranian counterpart

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan on Wednesday decided to recall its ambassador from Iran and suspend all high-level visits following the unprovoked violation of its airspace by Iran on Tuesday night.

Foreign Office spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch, in a televised press statement, said that Pakistan had also conveyed that the Iranian ambassador to Pakistan who was currently visiting Iran might not return for the time being. "We have conveyed this message to the Iranian Government. We have also informed them that Pakistan has decided to recall its ambassador from Iran and that the Iranian Ambassador to Pakistan who is currently

visiting Iran may not return for the time being," the spokesperson remarked. She said that the unprovoked and blatant breach of Pakistan's sovereignty by Iran was a violation of international law and the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. She said that the said illegal act was completely unacceptable and had no justification whatsoever. "Pakistan reserves the right to respond to this illegal act. The responsibility for the consequences will lie squarely with Iran," she said. The spokesperson said that Pakistan had also decided to suspend all high-level visits which were ongoing or were planned between Pa-

kistan and Iran in the coming days.

Earlier, warning Tehran of "serious consequences", the FO had lamented that the "unacceptable violation" of Pakistani sovereignty took place despite the existence of several channels of communication between the two neighbouring countries.

Islamabad has already communicated strong condemnation of Tehran's move to the Iranian Charge d'affaires who was told that the consequences of such an unprovoked move lie squarely with Iran.

Reiterating Pakistan's stance on coordinated action against the scourge of terrorism, the spokesperson had underscored that

such unilateral acts are not in conformity with good neighbourly relations and can seriously undermine bilateral trust and confidence.

Online adds: Foreign Minister, Jalil Abbas Jilani, who is currently leading the Pakistan delegation to the Ministerial Meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement in Kampala, Uganda, received a telephone call from the Foreign Minister of Iran, Hossein Amir Abdollahian, today. The Foreign Minister firmly underscored that the attack conducted by Iran inside Pakistani territory, on 16 January 2024, was not only a serious breach of Pakistan's sovereignty but was also an egregious violation of international law and the spirit of

bilateral relations between Pakistan and Iran.

Expressing Pakistan's unreserved condemnation of the attack, the Foreign Minister added that the incident has caused serious damage to bilateral ties between Pakistan and Iran. The Foreign Minister reserved the right to respond to this provocative act.

Stressing that terrorism was a common threat to the region and required concerted and coordinated efforts to combat this menace, the Foreign Minister underlined that unilateral actions could seriously undermine regional peace and stability. No country in the region should tread this perilous path.

Preparations in full swing for 8 Feb general elections:

## Govt & security institutions fully prepared to establish peace in Balochistan: Jan

Independent Report

QUETTA: The caretaker Provincial Minister for Information, Jan Achakzai has stated that the interim government is fully prepared to establish peace in Balochistan as the preparations are in full swing for the upcoming general elections in the country on February 8, 2024.

He asserted that the enemy forces are making attempts of the foreign interference in the country especially in Balochistan, but these enemy forces would never succeed in their nefarious designs. He said that we have the capability to face the enemy forces befittingly everywhere.

The caretaker Minister Information was addressing a hurriedly called press conference at the Sikandar Jamali Auditorium of Civil Secretariat here on Wednesday.

Referring the air strike from Iran in Pakistan's border area and jurisdiction

in Makran, Jan Achakzai maintained that the Foreign Office has already declared that the terrorism is a combined threat for all countries of the region, and there is a need to take coordinated action against it.

He said that the violation of sovereignty of Pakistan from Iran side harms the mutual neighborhood relations, trust and trade relations. About the protest dharna being staged by Baloch Yekjehti Committee led by Dr. Mah Rang Baloch in Islamabad, Jan Achakzai said that she (Mah Rang) and her companions have been exposed further. Their pro-Indian agenda has exposed their real face before the masses, the Minister Information maintained.

He also referred to the dharna being staged by the heirs of martyrs who embraced martyrdom for the cause of country in Islamabad and said that he witnessed lot of love for people of Balochistan and Balochs in Islamabad.



QUETTA: Caretaker Information Minister of Balochistan Jan Achakzai addresses press conference.

## Elected govt will have to work seriously to cope with challenges: Solangi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Wednesday expressed the hope that the government coming to power after the February 8 elections would work for the betterment of the country and its people.

The country was facing economic difficulties, coupled with political polarization and the next elected government would have to work seriously to cope with the challenges, Solangi said during an informal conversation with journalists covering the activities of Election Commission of Pakistan at a luncheon. The minister said it was

the people's responsibility to elect a leadership who could amicably tackle the challenges being faced by Pakistan. "We need national consensus to solve the country's problems," Solangi remarked.

The minister said that the caretaker government was working under the Constitution. "We are trying to fulfill our responsibilities in a better way."

He said that many political parties had complaints about the level playing field. The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz was complaining of a lack of level playing field in Sindh and the Pakistan Peoples Party had same complaints in Punjab.



QUETTA: Security personal examine blast site. Nine people, including a traffic policeman and three children, were injured in a blast on Quetta's Zarghoon Road. Explosive material was planted in a heap of trash that had been lying for some time.



SANGHAR: Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari addresses to his supporters during public gathering meeting in connection of General Election 2024 coming ahead, in Sanghar.

## GoB announces compensation for victims of Iranian raid at Panjgur

Independent Report

QUETTA: The Government of Balochistan has announced financial assistance for bereaved families of those dead and injured in the missile strike of Iran in Panjgur area of the province.

According to the official sources, the caretaker Chief Minister Mir Ali Mardan Dombki has issued directives to the concerned authorities for payment of the financial assistance to the heirs of two women died in the missile attack carried out from Iranian territory in Panjgur.

Similarly, the financial compensation would also be given to the girl children injured in the strike.

The high ups of Chief Minister secretariat informed that the Deputy Commissioner Panjgur has been issued orders for payment of the financial assistance to the heirs of deceased women and other injured. It may be mentioned here that two women were killed and three girls were injured in the missile strike carried out by Iranian forces in Panjgur.

## Kalashnikov culture will have to be eliminated from country: CJP

ISLAMABAD (Online):

The Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa has issued a big order for elimination of Kalashnikov culture from Pakistan.

The court has sought all details from concerned authorities on how many arms licenses of prohibited arms were issued all over the country.

Supreme Court (SC) has issued notice to interior secretary, all provincial home secretaries and inspectors general police.

While issuing notice to Attorney General (AG) the court has directed to send copy of the order.

This order was issued on Wednesday.

The SC approved bail against surety bonds of Rs 50000 in respect of accused Kashif nominated in theft case.

A three member bench of SC presided over by the CJP Qazi Faez Isa took up

the case for hearing Wednesday.

The CJP remarked the police have not even asked about license from the person from whose home the arms were stolen. The owner is pleading the guilty himself that two Kalashnikovs, one pistol and other valuable things were stolen. I have been offered that I should get license of Kalashnikov. Drugs and Kalashnikov ruined Pakistan. Likewise no one wanders in the world by holding Kalashnikov in large vehicles with black glasses. He asked the petitioner from where Kalashnikov reached him.

The CJP remarked If IG is giving papers of Kalashnikov this way then as to why action should not be taken against him. We write to interior secretary all should return Kalashnikov and their licenses.



QUETTA: Commissioner Quetta Division Hamza Shahtaq inspecting Safe City Command and Control Center

## PTI founder among other PTI leaders out of election race

LAHORE (INP): The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Wednesday upheld the election Appellate Tribunal's decision that dismissed the appeals of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan and other party leaders regarding the rejection of nomination papers by the returning officers (ROs) for upcoming general elections.

The former prime minister had submitted his nomination papers from NA-122 Lahore and NA-89 Mianwali for the general elections scheduled for Feb 8, both of which were rejected by the respective ROs. Subsequently, he contested these decisions before the election appellate tribunals, where his appeals were also dismissed.

In response, PTI founder Imran Khan filed a writ petition with the larger LHC bench against the tribunal's decision. Similarly, 60 other PTI leaders had submitted petitions in the LHC against the rejection of their nomination papers. Wednesday was the last day to file petitions against the decisions of the election tribunals.

## 'Lion wants someone else to hunt for him', Bilawal takes dig at PML-N

SHAHADAPUR (INP):

Amid rising political temperatures ahead of the February 8 general elections, Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari has thrown shade on Nawaz-led Pakistan Muslim League-

Nawaz (PML-N) once again.

Political parties are expediting their electioneering with a series of manifestos, new vows, and past performances. Besides, PML-N and PPP are eyeing the premier's office and des-

perately swaying voters to elect them to power.

"Only jiyalas are present in the electoral field and fully ready to contest [general polls]," said the PPP chairman while addressing a public meeting in Shahdadpur.



Daily Voice of Masses  
**Independent**

### Iran's unprovoked airspace violation of Pakistan - a heinous crime

Iran has carried out missile strike violating the Pakistan's airspace in Panjur area of Balochistan the other day. Undoubtedly, the Iran's unprovoked airspace violation is a heinous attack on Pakistan's sovereignty and integrity, which can have serious consequences in future.

The otherwise unexpected strike has claimed lives of two innocent children and left three girls injured. While Iran is claiming that the missile strike was carried out against a terrorist organization, but death of innocent children in the unprovoked strike is sheer denial of Iran's claim.

There's no denying the fact that the entire responsibility of this attack rests with the Iranian government, IRGC and Iranian intelligence. Despite existence of multiple channels of communication between the two countries, the operation was carried out contrary to international law, which clearly violated Pakistan's airspace. It is also a mockery that a fake press release was also issued from an organization called Jaish-ul-Adl to justify this incident. Seeing Pakistan's reaction, Iran realized its wrong and foolish action.

Matter of fact remains that the organization namely Jaish-ul-Adl, is being run by the IRGC itself. Now they want to get rid of this problem, that's why a false statement was issued from Jaish-ul-Adl again that these rockets went across the border by mistake and actually the target was Jaish al-Adl camp inside Sistan, Iran.

It is very ridiculous that a terrorist organization itself is giving explanations for rockets fired by the IRGC, accidentally crossing the border. This clearly shows that the accounts attributed to Jaish-ul-Adl are being operated by IRGC and Iranian intelligence itself. While on the other hand, there is great anger in Pakistan over this action by Iran.

It is also a reality that the banned militant organizations including Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) and Baloch Liberation Front (BLF) have camps inside Iran. The world knows that the Indian spy Kaloboshan Yadav had also been operating from Iran. This unprovoked airspace violation of Pakistan by Iran is a great mistake and no doubt, this incident can never be ignored. As a result of this action, the entire Pakistani nation is now demanding a strong and similar response from the state. Pakistan reserves the right to respond in any way. Foreign office has summoned the Iranian Charge d'affaires and a strong protest has been recorded. The announcement for Iranian ambassador not to return and the recalling of the Pakistani ambassador from Iran came as a very strong response from Pakistan. Even before this incident, infiltration and terrorist activities took place from the territory of Iran. In January 2023, in Panjur District, four security personnel were martyred in terrorist activities from inside the Iranian border, while in April 2023, terrorists from Iranian territory attacked Pakistani forces in Kech. It is worth mentioning here that Iran's security agencies are not on the same page due to which the Iranian government is facing serious challenges at the diplomatic level.



Touqir Hussain

Nearly three years have passed since the announcement regarding Pakistan's pivot from geopolitics to geo-economics. So far, this policy shift has proved nothing more than rhetoric.

A country's geopolitical value signifies its relevance in international relations beyond its own region, especially its capability as an ally or partner in Great Power rivalry. The country has a place in geo-economics if, by virtue of its geopolitical location, infrastructure, or resources, it can play a meaningful role in the global economy — perhaps as a manufacturing base or a link in supply chains. Or it could be a source of energy, or serve as a hub for transit trade or energy flows. Pakistan is relevant to both geopolitics and geo-economics. But its policy planners should ask themselves if they really have to choose between the two. Or whether such choice is indeed possible. Also, is geopolitics the problem and geo-economics the solution to Pakistan's economic woes? The truth is, Pakistan did not prioritise its people's socioeconomic well-being. Its governance model preferred the elite over the people, security over development, dependence over self-reliance, and status quo over progress. The system is now damaging more than the economy. Pakistan may be eligible for geo-economics but is not yet qualified for it.

Geopolitics is only partly to blame. It remains important to Pakistan's foreign policy, though the extent of its relevance has

### Ready to shift?

changed. Situated between South Asia, Central Asia, Iran and the Middle East, and living in the strategic shadow of China and Russia, Pakistan has geopolitical salience, putting it at the crossroads of geopolitical rivalries and ambitions it can take advantage of. But geopolitics can only be an asset if Pakistan is stable. For an unstable country, it is a liability and poses risks. For instance, if a big power loses, its ally loses too, as has happened to Pakistan in America's wars.

Washington's war aims have always been different from Pakistan's, and its strategy often flawed. If the pivot to geo-economics means Pakistan would no longer be part of such high-risk geopolitics, this is to be welcomed. America's wars also incited Pakistan's own geostrategic ambitions, that brought it as much harm as did US policies. If Pakistan has relinquished this policy, it is a good step.

Geopolitics remains a guiding principle for US-Pakistan ties except that it now provokes conflict in the context of US-China rivalry. Pakistan is seen as advancing China's geopolitical aims. It will have to re-ach some understanding with Washington on strategic and security issues, otherwise these will keep colliding with prospects of cooperation with the US, a crucial economic partner, and thus limit Pakistan's geo-economic role. Even in the Gulf countries, Pakistan's traditional friends, economics now beats to the rhythm of geopolitics as these states navigate between the US-Europe-India axis and China's geopolitical outreach. Geopolitics will figure in Pakistan's relations with them, too. Pakistan must rethink not only geopolitics but also geo-economics. The fact is, its real value in geo-economics won't be evident until Afghanistan stabilises, ties with India improve, and it becomes a hub for pipelines and trade with Central Asia. However, given its structural economic weaknesses, poor governance, and lack of political stability, Pakistan's economy is not quite prepared for geo-economics. The change will not come easily, as there is a clash between elite interests and sound economic policies.

Pakistan's poor economic policies have been a way to safeguard its elite-led system. Policies, especially those related to taxes, subsidies, tariff--fs, and exports, were designed so as not to lead to the erosion of the social structure that maintains the feudal system, or collide with the financial interests of the business/industrial elite, not to mention the extraordinary allocation of resources to the defence sector. The system must reform. Pakistan must be able to improve the economy on the margins without systemic changes, and have a higher growth rate. But what good is the growth rate if it makes little difference to poverty, social indicators and human security? A population with poor education and healthcare is hardly producing economically. Martin Raiser, World Bank regional vice president for South Asia, recently spoke of Pakistan's "poor human development outcomes and increasing poverty", and underlined the necessity of addressing the "acute human capital crisis".

Pakistan cannot abandon or escape geopolitics. And geo-economics will remain beyond its grasp if it fails to make the necessary reforms. The alternative: Pakistan will be stuck where it is, at best. -- Courtesy Dawn



Mahir Ali

An intriguing triptych included in Iqbal's second volume of verse, Baal-i-Jibreel, envisages Vladimir Lenin in the presence of God, explaining why the state of the world prompted his disbelief and wondering when divine intervention would rectify global ills. In rhythmic verse, the angels sent to investigate report back, corroborating the Russian revolutionary's narrative.

In the last and best known of the three poems, the angels are commanded to investigate the overthrow of the existing order, kicking off with a verse that echoes The Internationale — in Victor Kiernan's translation, "Rise, and from their slumber wake the poor ones of my world! Shake the walls and windows of the mansions of the great..."

That's a reflection of the extent to which the Russian upheavals of 1917 affected the rest of the world, not least the vast expanse of the colonised Global South. The direction Russia took towards the end of World War I inspired shock and awe. The overthrow of the tsar and the prospect of replacing absolutism with bourgeois democracy was dramatic enough, but by the time Lenin returned in April from his exile in Switzerland, he realised the meagre gains were unsustainable.

Even some of Lenin's closest comrades were taken aback by his enthusiasm for a takeover, but the pros-

### Lenin's legacy

pect of 'all power to the soviets' — the elected bodies of workers', soldiers' and eventually peasants' representatives that shared power with the post-tsarist government — and the promise of land, bread and peace — resonated with the proletariat of Petrograd (as St Petersburg had been renamed to banish the German influence).

The takeover was eventually almost painless, but the survival of the new regime was unlikely. The tsarist White Army, assisted by American, French and British forces (among others), joined hands to bury the Bolsheviks. But a late recruit to the Bolshevik cause, Leon Trotsky, turned out to be a formidable commander despite his military inexperience and, after much death and destruction on both sides, the nascent Red Army ultimately triumphed.

The Russia that emerged from this maelstrom was a far cry from what Lenin had envisaged, and he set about trying to rectify its wayward course. And he made no secret of it. Laid low by an assassination attempt in 1918 and subsequently stricken by strokes that led to bouts of paralysis, Lenin was just about well enough to speak at the fourth congress of the Communist International in November 1922, in what turned out to be his last public speech, acknowledging that "we have done, and will still do, a host of foolish things".

He knew by then that his days were numbered, but from his sick bed later that year he still sought to alter the revolution's trajectory with a series of dictated notes that focused on reorganising both the Communist Party and the economy, banishing the tsarist bureaucracy that had survived the

revolution, and sidelining Joseph Stalin, who had acquired too much power within the party and could not be trusted to use it wisely. He obviously could not have known at that stage that Stalin's absolute power would lead in the 1930s to the execution of Lenin's closest comrades.

The common misperception shared by both friends and foes of the transformative Bolshevik endeavour is that Stalinism flowed seamlessly out of Leninism. There can be little doubt, though, that the Soviet Union would have emerged as a rather different entity if Lenin had survived for another decade, or been succeeded by a collective leadership. Lenin was adamant that accession to the USSR must be voluntary.

It didn't quite work out that way, but the relatively peaceful dissolution of the Soviet Union nearly seven decades later testified to his reluctant opposition to the 'great Russian chauvinism', epitomised by Vladimir Putin's stupid invasion of Ukraine. Mikhail Gorbachev remained an admirer of Lenin, and his glasnost and perestroika in the 1980s-1990s were partly echoes of what Lenin sought to achieve in the 1920s.

Even the most strident enemies of Bolshevism acknowledged that Lenin's death on Jan 21, 1924, stripped the Soviet Union of an invaluable guide. The worship of Lenin thereafter, with little understanding of what he stood for, was a travesty he would have detested. Notwithstanding the USSR's fate, if a different world is to emerge in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the triumphs and tragedies that embellished or thwarted Lenin's audacious project cannot be ignored. -- Courtesy Dawn

## Commerce News

### PM Kakar for equitable chances to all to benefit from modern technology

DAVOS (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Wednesday called for providing equitable opportunities to all nations and regions to grab the fruits of modern technology. Speaking at a forum titled "Trade Tech's Trillion-Dollar Promise" on the sidelines of the 54<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF), the prime minister said utilizing the state of the art technology was vital to achieve the targets of fast development.

Stressing the need to ensure equitable opportunities to all to secure the technology, the prime minister said equitable opportunities was key to ensure

sustainable global development. Keeping in view the development of technology, PM Kakar maintained that the digital economy would attain more importance in the days to come. He said every region of the world should be benefited from the development being made in the technology sector.

As regards the issues of trade and business, he said the private sector should be encouraged to boost investment. Further he added that the private sector should take a lead to help the government resolving the challenges of trade and business. "The government do think in a

different way and manner when it approaches towards challenges of trade and business, while the private entities and the business people have different opinion," he said adding the private entities should become the opinion maker and influencing and contributing more towards it. Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar ul Haq Kakar held a meeting with Chief Executive Officer of CocaCola Company, James Quincey on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos today.

In the meeting, the Prime Minister highlighted the steps taken by the government to facilitate business and investment in Pakistan.



CEO of CocaCola Company, James Quincey calls on Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos.

### Senate body seeks details of budget, following austerity measures

**Independent Report**  
LAHORE: The Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Revenue on Wednesday directed the Finance Division to provide details of the budget saved following the issuance of austerity measures notification, issued by the Finance Division. The Secretary of the Finance Division stated that the Government was complying with austerity measures, resulting in government spending for the current fiscal year, staying within the budget.

A meeting of the Committee was held at Parliament House on Wednesday with Senator Saleem Mandviwalla in the Chair. The Senate deliberated on the Bill titled "State Owned Enterprises (Governance and Operations) (Amendment) Bill, 2023." Senator Bahramand Khan Tangi, the bill's mover, stated that the primary objective was to restrain the Board of Directors and Chief Executive Officers of the state owned enterprises from using company assets for political and monetary purposes, proposing disqualification for such actions.

### Shipping activity at Port Qasim

**KARACHI (APP):** Shipping activity reported at the Port where three ships namely, MSC United VII, High Challenge and Poly World carrying containers, palm oil and coal, berthed at container Terminal, Liquid Terminal and Bulk Cargo Terminal respectively on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> January, 2024. Meanwhile another containership 'Maersk Cape Town' also arrived at outer-anchorage of the Port Qasim on today January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

### Gold rates down by Rs.3,600

**ISLAMABAD (APP):** The per tola price of 24 karat gold decreased by Rs.3,600 and was sold at Rs.213,700 on Wednesday compared to its sale at Rs.217,300 on last trading day. The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs.3,087 to Rs.183,213 from Rs.186,300 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold went down to Rs.167,945 from Rs.170,775 the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported. The price of per tola silver decreased by Rs.50 to Rs.2,600 whereas that of ten gram silver declined by Rs.42.86 to Rs.2,229.08.

### Dr Saif says: ICT exports increased by 22.67% in Dec 2023

**ISLAMABAD (APP):** Caretaker Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Dr Umar Saif on Wednesday said that the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) export remittances had increased by 22.67 percent in the month of December 2023. A total of \$303 million ITC exports proceeds were received in December, following a 13% increase in November 2023, the minister said in statement. Dr Umar Saif said that facilitative measures, such as allowing to retain 50%

of the dollars, digital payment systems, and initiatives for freelancers had played a crucial role in boosting ICT exports growth. Expressing gratitude to Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar and the Special Investment Facilitation Council for their efforts in providing facilities for the IT industry, he said that the objective behind the policies was to bolster the national economy and advance the IT and telecom sectors in the country. Dr Saif said it was a beginning, which would usher in significant industry's growth.



DOHA: SAPM, Jawad Sohrab Malik meets Dr. Ali bin Samikh Al Marri, Labour Minister of the State of Qatar.

### Punjab Green wheels program to provide E-bikes, E-rickshaws

**LAHORE:** Caretaker provincial minister for transport of Punjab Ibrahim Hasan Murad on Wednesday marked a pivotal moment in Punjab's history by integrating 26,000 electric vehicles into its urban fabric. Talking to a private news channel, he said the initiative caters to students, low-income citizens, women, and people with disabilities. Through this program, the government has decided to give the university students 10,000 electric bikes on a subsidy, he added. The major announcements were interest-free e-bikes for women, three-wheeler

bikes for the disabled and also interest-free e-rickshaws for deserving people. Recognizing the pressing need to combat pollution, the Punjab government's program addresses the root cause by targeting the 70-80% pollution contribution from the transportation sector, he added. He said, "Punjab's commitment to sustainable transportation is not just a step forward; it's a leap into a greener, cleaner future." The minister said that another historic milestone was achieved with the issuance of electric vehicle (EV) licenses for the first time in Pakistan.



LAHORE: Regional Chairman FPCCI Zaki Ejaz in a group photo with participants during round table discussion on packaging sector in his visit to Regional Office Lahore.

### Pakistan secures second LNG cargo from SOCAR

**ISLAMABAD (APP):** The government on Wednesday announced securing the second LNG cargo from the State Oil Company of the Azerbaijan Republic (SOCAR) under the Government-to-Government Framework Agreement between Pakistan LNG Limited (PLL) and SOCAR. "The cargo is scheduled for delivery in February 2024, further

strengthening the energy partnership between Pakistan and Azerbaijan" the Ministry of Petroleum said in a news release. PLL and SOCAR signed a landmark Framework Agreement under the Government-to-Government arrangement, marking a significant milestone in the bilateral energy cooperation between the two countries.

### FBR denies reports of protest by IRS officers

**ISLAMABAD (APP):** The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) on Wednesday has rebutted the baseless news circulating in certain sections of the media regarding a planned protest by IRS officers. According to the FBR's official Twitter handle, the FBR clarified that no such protest was taking place and assured that its offices would continue to function as per routine.

### FPCCI seeks industry status for packaging sector

**Independent Report**  
LAHORE: Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) Regional Chairman and Vice President Zaki Ajiz on Wednesday demanded the government grant industry status to the packaging sector. He expressed these views while addressing the FPCCI's Round Table Discussion on the 'Packaging sector: Challenges and opportunities', here at FPCCI Regional Office. Managing Director and CEO of Packages Limited, Syed

Hyder Ali, Director & CEO of Century Paper & Board Mills Limited Aflab Ahmed, Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) Vice President Adnan Khalid Butt, Chairman Pakistan Association of Printing And Graphic Arts Industry Saad Hafeem Khan, Senior Vice Chairman of All Pakistan Corrugated Cartons Manufacturers Association (APCCMA) Khawaja Tariq Mehmood, Chairman of Flexible Packaging Association of Converters of Pakistan Mujahid Ali Shaikh.



## Naqvi visits Ring Road Southern Loop-3 project, inspects construction work

**Independent Report**  
LAHORE: Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi paid a detailed visit to the Lahore Ring Road Southern Loop 3-project, here on Wednesday.

He inspected the 8-km long whole route from Maraka Multan Road up to Adda Plot and reviewed asphalt laying work and shook hands with the labourers. Mohsin Naqvi also checked the temperature of asphalt along with construction of the walls. He while ordering to expedite asphalt laying work directed to increase the resources so that the project could be completed

within the stipulated time frame. "The support of the whole Punjab government's team stands with you," the CM said that hopefully, this project would be completed at the earliest. Mohsin Naqvi in order to accelerate pace of work on the project, issued directions to the Provincial Minister Bilal Afzal and Secretary Communication & Works in this regard. He inspected ongoing construction activities on the project. FWO officials gave a briefing about progress being made on the project. The CM underscored that people would be provided excellent transportation facilities with the completion of Ring Road Southern Loop-3 Project, adding that 8-km long Southern Loop-3 project would be opened for traffic soon. It was informed during the briefing that 6 out of 8 main structures have been completed while 20 small structures have also been completed. Approximately, 70 per cent work of the project has been completed. Provincial ministers Azfar Ali Nasir, Bilal Afzal, Secretary C&W, Commissioner Lahore/DG LDA, Chairman Lahore Ring Road Authority, MD NESPAK, Project Director LESCO and FWO officials were also present.



LAHORE: Special Assistant to Prime Minister and Chairman Pakistan Ulema-e-Islam Council, Allama Tahir Ashrafi is presenting shield to Saudi Arabia's ambassador Noor Al Lamki during Haramain al-Shareefain conference at local hotel.

## Govt making efforts to facilitate pilgrims: Tahir Ashrafi

LAHORE (APP): Special Representative to the Prime Minister on Interfaith Harmony and Middle East Hafiz Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi said on Wednesday the government was making efforts to provide optimal facilities to prospective pilgrims. Addressing the Tazeem-e-Haramain Al-Sharifain Conference, organised by Hajj Organisers Association of Pakistan (HOAP) Punjab zone, at a hotel here, he said

Saudi Arabia was dedicated to enhancing facilities for the Hajj and Umrah pilgrims. He said that an effective system had been put in place to ensure effective monitoring of facilities to be provided to Hajj pilgrims. Under the system, Hajj pilgrims' complaints would be resolved speedily. Ashrafi, who is also the chairman of Pakistan Ulema Council, said the relationship between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia is strong.

## UAE artificial rain experts calls on CM

LAHORE (APP): Members of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) team, who orchestrated artificial rainfall in Lahore recently, called on Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi at his office on Wednesday. The CM greeted the team members, expressing gratitude individually during the meeting. Among those present were Ahmed Al Kamal, Head of Cloud Seeding for the UAE NCM Team, Pilot Col. Obaid Halaf, Pilot Michael Anstis, Head of Cloud Seeding Department Abdullah Al Haman, Arnold Ningala and Verglottedoloto.

## May-9: ATC issues arrest warrants of 24 accused

LAHORE (APP): An anti-terrorism court (ATC) on Wednesday issued non-bailable arrest warrants of 24 accused, including leaders of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), in a case of torching a container in front of National Park Gulberg. The court issued the arrest warrants of Shah Mehmood Qureshi, his son, Zain Qureshi, Farukh Habib, Dr Azeemud Din, Shakil Ahmad Niazi, Khawar Shahzad and Rana Bilal Ijaz.

## KP CM chairs meeting to discuss traffic issues of Abbottabad

PESHAWAR (APP): Caretaker Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah on Wednesday chaired a meeting to discuss traffic issues of divisional headquarter Abbottabad. Spokesperson to Chief Minister Brigadier (R) Syed Mujtaba Tirmizi and high ups of the transport department and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Urban Mobility Authority (KPUMA) attended the meeting. The meeting was briefed about the proposed Urban Mobility Plan for Abbottabad and, it was told

that under the Urban Transport Package-II, consultancy services are under process to develop Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMPS) for three major cities of the province including Peshawar, Abbottabad and Mingora. Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMPS) will have concept designs of priority urban mobility projects for aforementioned cities. The participants were also informed about different options for Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service in Abbottabad on the model of BRT project of Peshawar.



LARKANA: Women and girls on the way back to their homes after filling water in pots.

## QWP flays social media campaign against SC

PESHAWAR (APP): Qaumi Watan Party (QWP) Chairman Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao on Wednesday condemned the malicious social media campaign against the judges of the Supreme Court. Addressing a gathering at Mandani area in Charsadda district, he said the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) lost its electoral symbol but due to its own follies. He said that PTI founding chairman Imran Khan was responsible for the situation his party was facing. The QWP chief said that the recent decision of the Supreme Court upholding the ruling of the

Election Commission of Pakistan about the intra-party election of the PTI was based on merit and in accordance with the law. However, he expressed resentment over the launching of the smear campaign against the judiciary. He said that the country was already facing a host of issues and it could not afford confrontation and unrest. Aftab Sherpao said that some elements were out to create disturbance for their vested interests. The QWP leader said that holding a free, fair and transparent election was the only way to take the country towards economic and political stability.



PESHAWAR: Peoples Party (PPP) Leader, Asma Alamgir along with Syed Zahir Ali Shah and others addressing a press conference, in Peshawar.

## Govt to start rehabilitation center for women drug addicts soon

**Independent Report**  
PESHAWAR: Provincial Caretaker Minister for Social Welfare, Justice Retired Irshad Qaisar has said that very soon government would start a rehabilitation center in Peshawar for women drug addicts. She was chairing a meeting being convened to discuss progress on projects of social welfare department under annual development program. The meeting was attended by Additional

Secretary Social Welfare Farooq Khan, Senior Planning Officer and the relevant officials of the department. Secretary Social Welfare Anela Durrani participated in the meeting through video link. The minister said that the facility would be first government level rehabilitation center where only women suffering from drug abuse would be rehabilitated and treated.

## ACS South Punjab visits BVH to inspect ongoing work

BAHAWALPUR (APP): Additional Chief Secretary South Punjab Captain (ret) Saqib Zafar visited the under-construction Outdoor Department of Bahawal Victoria Hospital.

He inspected the ongoing upgradation works in various wards of the hospital. Secretary of Communication and Works South Punjab Jawad Akram was also present with him. He inspected the revamping and renovation work of the outdoor department of Bahawal Victoria Hospital. He directed that officers of the Buildings Department should complete the construction works within a specific period. Secretary Communication and Works Department Jawad Akram briefed ACS South Punjab about the degradation work. He said that various wards including TB Ward, Medical Ward, Surgery Ward, Emergency Block, and Old CCU are being renovated. He informed ACS about the details of ongoing construction works in CU and other wards.

## KP HCIP conducts workshop to upgrade primary healthcare services

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Human Capital Investment Project (KP HCIP) Health Department here Wednesday conducted a day long workshop to upgrade Primary Healthcare Services (PHS) in selected districts of the province. The workshop focused on the assessment of stakeholder needs for development of training modules improving the availability, utilization and quality of healthcare services. The workshop

aimed to gather crucial information about existing training manuals or modules, evaluating their strengths and weaknesses, aligning them with on-ground needs and identifying potential improvements in a clear and concise manner. Advisor to Caretaker Chief Minister for Health, Dr. Riaz Anwar commended KP HCIP and said that the initiative would play pivotal role in fostering positive changes within the health system.

# International News

## Cease fire in Gaza or risk 'greater war', warns UN chief

**Monitoring Desk**  
UNITED NATIONS: UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres has emphasised the urgent need for a humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza after more than 100 days of escalating violence. "Tamp down the flames of wider war because the longer the conflict in Gaza continues, the greater the risk of escalation and miscalculation," he warned in a statement issued on Monday evening. He stated that "an immediate humanitarian ceasefire" was necessary to ensure an uninterrupted supply of emergency aid and to facilitate the release of prisoners.

Guterres noted that the onslaught on Gaza by Israeli forces over these 100 days "has unleashed wholesale destruction and levels of civilian killings at a rate that is unprecedented during my years as Secretary General". He pointed out that "the vast majority of those killed are women and children, adding that "nothing can justify the collective punishment of the Palestinian people". Stressing the need to end the hostilities, he said: "The humanitarian situation in Gaza is beyond words. Nowhere and no one is safe." Guterres expressed serious concern about the daily exchanges of fire

across the Blue Line as well, warning of potential broader escalation affecting regional stability. "Stop playing with fire across the Blue Line, de-escalate, and bring hostilities to an end in accordance with (relevant) Security Council resolutions," he said. The Blue Line refers to the border demarcation between Israel and Lebanon, established by the United Nations in 2000 following the withdrawal of Israeli forces from southern Lebanon. Earlier this month, Israel carried out a drone strike across the Blue Line to kill Hamas's deputy chief Saleh Al Arouri, leading to regular clashes across the border.



UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres attends the 54th annual meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

## Chinese PM sees trade barriers as a threat to global economy

**Monitoring Desk**  
DAVOS: Chinese Prime Minister Li Qiang told the world's political and business elites in Davos on Tuesday that "discriminatory" trade barriers were a threat to the global economy, in a not-so-subtle dig at the United States. Li's remarks came as the World Economic Forum's (WEF) 54th annual conference is preoccupied with a slew of global risks, including war in Ukraine and bombardment in Gaza, climate change and the rapid

rise of artificial intelligence. Li shared the spotlight with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy, who attended the forum in person for the first time in an effort to maintain military support from Kyiv's allies after nearly two years of war with Russia. Li spoke just days after a tense presidential election in Taiwan, the democratic island that Beijing claims as part of China. But the most senior Chinese official to attend the WEF since 2017.

## UK PM Sunak faces major test in showdown over Rwanda asylum plan

LONDON (Internews): British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak faces a major parliamentary showdown on Wednesday over his plan to send asylum seekers to Rwanda, with many of his own lawmakers threatening to rebel after they lost an initial bid to toughen his proposed law. The government comfortably defeated attempts to strengthen the bill late on Tuesday that had been backed by almost a fifth of lawmakers from Sunak's Conservative Party in what was the biggest rebellion yet against the British prime minister.

## Muslim youth stabbed to death in Delhi

NEW DELHI (INP): A 19-year-old Muslim youth was stabbed to death by three individuals in New Delhi. The incident took place in the Jamia Masjid area of the Indian capital. The deceased was identified as Armaan alias Kasim, a resident of Loni area of Ghaziabad city of the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. As per reports, the deceased and his father used to work as street vendors in Meena Bazar area of New Delhi.

## Nazis, no thank you'; Germans take to streets to call for AfD ban

BERLIN/COLOGNE (Internews): Protests against the far-right Alternative for Germany party are gaining momentum in the wake of a report that two senior party members joined a meeting to discuss plans for the mass deportation of citizens of foreign origin. While the party has long railed against immigrants, the proposals for "unassimilated citizens" to be deported to "a model state in North Africa", reported by outlet Corrective, has struck a nerve in Germany. Some have compared them to the Nazis' initial plan to deport European Jews to Madagascar.

The line has long since been crossed," protester Stephan Kalsh said at a demonstration in Cologne on Tuesday evening, where many protesters called for the party to be banned. It was the latest in a wave of protests around the country that have attracted tens of thousands since the story broke last week. Some have been attended by high-ranking officials like Chancellor Olaf Scholz and Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock. The AfD, which is polling second in nationwide surveys, has denied the plans are party policy. Co-leader Alice Weidel parted ways with one of her advisers who participated in the talks. Still, Germany's domestic spy chief Thomas Haldenwang has warned of extremist movements within the AfD, which is under security surveillance. The reports of the plans have drawn widespread condemnation from political and security leaders. Scholz urged democrats to stand against far-right "fanatics" while Haldenwang called for the "silent majority" to wake up.

## Trump attends rape defamation case in New York

NEW YORK (INP): Donald Trump went straight from his victory in the Republican Iowa caucuses to a New York courtroom Tuesday for the start of a defamation trial brought by writer E. Jean Carroll after an earlier jury found he had sexually assaulted her in the 1990s. In court, the former US president did not make any statements, and he and Carroll avoided looking at each other while jurors were being selected, according to reporters allowed inside the courtroom. But Trump continued attacking Carroll on his Truth Social platform, reposting a clip from an interview she gave to CNN and writing, "Can you believe I have to defend myself against this woman's fake story?!" Addressing supporters at a rally in New Hamp-

shire later in the day, Trump said he planned to attend daily court proceedings in the "phony" case in New York over the next several days, while continuing campaigning. "Early in the morning I go to a Biden witch hunt," Trump said in the northeastern state, which will hold the nation's second presidential nomination contest next Tuesday. "And then I come here in the afternoon, and I stop, we make speeches and we get the votes." The shocking defamation case, which would likely once have been enough to wreck any politician's career, has had no visible impact on Trump's bid to retake the White House—and if anything is boosting his standing with his party's right wing. Carroll, 80, is seeking more than \$10 million in damages in the civil trial.



Chinese Premier Li Qiang and Ireland's Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar meet at Farnleigh House, in Phoenix Park, Dublin, Ireland.

## Russia is developing ties with North Korea in all areas: Kremlin

MOSCOW (Internews): Russia is developing its relations with North Korea in all areas, including "sensitive" ones, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Wednesday. North Korea's foreign minister lauded comradeship ties with Russia on Tuesday and then held rare talks in the Kremlin with President Vladimir Putin, who has been invited by Kim Jong Un to visit the reclusive nuclear-

armed country. Asked about the talks in Moscow, Peskov said the situation on the Korean peninsula was discussed, but that the main focus was on developing bilateral relations. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea is our very important partner, and we are focused on the further development of our relations in all areas, including in sensitive areas," Peskov told reporters.

## Lithuania found guilty in CIA torture case

**Monitoring Desk**  
STRASBOURG: The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) on Tuesday condemned Lithuania over the torture of a Saudi man in a secret CIA prison, the second case to target the Baltic nation. Judges found that Lithuania had violated several provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights, which it upholds, especially articles 2 (right to life) and 3 (prohibition of inhuman or degrading treatment), the court said. Lithuania must also pay Mustafa Al Hawasbi 100,000 euros (\$109,000) in damages for "blinding or hooding, solitary confinement, the continuous use of leg shackles, and exposure to noise and light". Such techniques were "standard CIA practice under the secret detainee programme at the time", although not "the harshest" applied in Lithuania, the court added. Al Hawasbi, born in 1968, was captured in Pakistan in 2003 and suspected by US authorities of involvement in the Sept 11.



## PM says: Pakistan needs to be more competitive, attractive to benefit from industrialisation

DAVOS (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Wednesday said that Pakistan needed to be more competitive and attractive to facilitate the journey of industrialisation in the region.

The prime minister, addressing an event titled "20th Pakistan Breakfast at Davos 2024" held by Pathfinders Group on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum, said a trading activity of around \$336 trillion trade was happening in China, and GCC countries were also entering into the manufacturing industry. He said China had acquired the transformation stage to relocate some of its industry and Pakistan could be one of those destinations.

Similarly, the GCC countries were rich with capital but had geographical disadvantages with the options of either importing the manpower or taking their capital to countries with a conducive environment and cheap energy and labour.

He told the gathering of intellectuals, writers and representatives of welfare organisations, that Pakistan was a unique place owing to its diversified culture, geography and topography with the eight highest peaks, deserts of Thar and Balochistan and the plains of Punjab. Calling human resources the biggest asset of Pakistan, he said 60 per cent of its 240 million population was under 30 years of age which meant whole of energy and required direction.

Highlighting the achievements of his government, Prime Minister Kakar said the governance structure was improving and that the government would leave behind a blueprint for the next government enabling it to respond to the challenges.

"I am quite sanguine that people are feeling a deep sense of positivity," he said and mentioned the structural changes and re-vamping of the taxation system.

He said "spend less on government and earn more" were the two lessons or takeaways of the incumbent government which was also facilitating the private sector to earn money and pay taxes.

Referring to Pakistan's ideal geographical situation, he said the whole of Central Asia was looking to have connectivity through Pakistan which had the highest population in the ECO region.



DAVOS: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar meets the Prime Minister of Belgium Alexander De Croo on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum.

## WMFP strongly condemns assault on Kosovo journalist

ISLAMABAD (PR): The Women's Media Forum Pakistan (WMFP) stands in solidarity with a Kosovo journalist who was assaulted by the Prime Minister's security team. WMFP is concerned about the increasing attacks on women in media around the world.

WMFP strongly condemns the assault, pressing media rights organisations to take steps to help train women journalists against such attacks and demand that authorities ensure journalists, especially women journalists are safe in the field.

On December 28, 2023, journalist Blerta Dalloshi-Berisha from TV Klan was attacked when she attempted to ask Kosovo Prime Minister Albin Kurti a question.

Blerta hurt her right hand after the PM's security used needless force on her and snatched her microphone which also disrupted the filming.

Later, Blerta elaborated on the incident, condemning the attack on her Facebook calling it a "shame."

Media reported there has been tension between PM Kurti's government and the media outlet TV Klan that Blerta works for. In June 2023, the government tried to close the channel by stripping it of its license. Fortunately, the courts did not allow this to happen.

## Taraqee Foundation organizes Hackathon in Balochistan's six districts

QUETTA: A hackathon was organized in six districts of Balochistan, Quetta, Pashin, Kharan, Nushki, Musa Khel and Zhoib, under the auspices of Taraqee Foundation, to promote better coordination for entrepreneurs.

The Hackathon organized for Farmers, FAO, Livestock, BRSP, Banks, Livestock Department, Agriculture Council Balochistan, Commission Agents, Input Suppliers, PPAF and Agriculture Departments. The focus was on increasing connectivity and facilitation between these stakeholders.



President Quetta Chamber of Commerce Abdullah Achakzai attending a meeting of 11th Joint Border Trade Committee held in Charbahar, Iran

## DC and REC inspect Monitoring Control Room

QUETTA (APP): Deputy Commissioner (DC) Naseer Batul Asadi along with Regional Election Commissioner (REC) Abdullah, Election Commissioner Tariq and all other focal persons inspected the District Monitoring Control Room.

They also expressed satisfaction over the measures during visit.

While giving a briefing, Focal Person Manzoor Ahmed said that close attention would be focused on all the issues on the occasion of the election through the control room and it could also be the center of measures for immediate redressal of complaints made by the public, many other important aspects were also highlighted.

The DC gave orders that the officers who have been assigned the responsibilities in the control room should perform their duties in the true sense, so that this phase of the election could also be completed in a clean and transparent manner. All facilities including wireless system are provided in the control room so that the focal persons do not face any kind of difficulties.

## Panjgur additional DC injured in Kalat road mishap

KALAT (INP): Panjgur additional deputy commissioner and his driver sustained injuries in a road mishap on the Quetta-Karachi National Highway in Kalat on Wednesday.

According to sources in the police, a Zamyad vehicle crashed into the car of Panjgur Additional Deputy Commissioner Khurram Khalid on the Quetta-Karachi National Highway. As a result, the ADC and his driver sustained injuries.

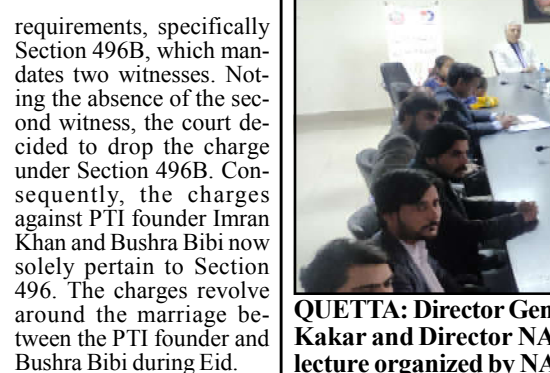
The injured were shifted to a hospital in Quetta after administering first aid.

Police have also arrested the driver of Zamyad.

## Islamabad Court drops charges against PTI founder and wife

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Islamabad court has dismissed the case alleging an illicit relationship against the founder of PTI, Imran Khan, and his wife Bushra Bibi. The District and Sessions Court in Islamabad presided over the hearing on the marriage case between Imran Khan and Bushra Bibi, ultimately rejecting the accusations of improper relations.

The court cited legal requirements, specifically Section 496B, which mandates two witnesses. Noting the absence of the second witness, the court decided to drop the charge under Section 496B. Consequently, the charges against PTI founder Imran Khan and Bushra Bibi now solely pertain to Section 496. The charges revolve around the marriage between the PTI founder and Bushra Bibi during Eid.



QUETTA: Director General NAB Zafar Iqbal Khan, Vice Chancellor University of Loralai Ehsanullah Kakar and Director NAB Balochistan Dr. Muhammad Rashid addressing students participated in a lecture organized by NAB Balochistan in connection with Awareness Campaign against Corruption

## Quran, Seerah solution to all contemporary issues of world: Aneeq Ahmed

KARACHI (INP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Aneeq Ahmed has said that Quran and Sirat e Tayyaba provide us guidance and set basic principles concerning to every field of life urging students to develop comprehension of religion as well as contemporary issues. While addressing a conference on "Sirat e Nabi (SAW) and contemporary challenges and their solutions" jointly organized by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Iqra University here on Wednesday, he said that it had been imperative that students not only understand the religion of Islam but also comprehend requirements of the contemporary era as well as economic, social and other issues in the light of teachings of Islam and keep themselves abreast of developing global situation.

Aneeq Ahmed said that religious obligations (Deen) and demands of worldly pursuits (Duniya) are intertwined and we have to search the solution of contemporary issues in the light of Quran and Sirat e Tayyaba adding that true comprehension of religion could not be achieved without understanding the worldly affairs.

Islam emphasizes on practical action and application of knowledge and life of Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) is a guiding example for every human being, he noted and added that Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) set standards for individuals, society and state and those must be followed.

While referring to his recent visit to Saudi Arabia, the federal minister informed that Hajj agreement was signed in Hajj Conference in Madina Munawarah which was attended by delegates from 80 countries. "I have floated an idea at the conference that all the rulers of Muslim countries should gather in Makkah Mukarama on the occasion of Hajj to discuss the issues being faced by Muslims across the world and come up with a unanimous agenda to deal with them."

## Fake news - a biggest threat to democracy & journalism: Solangi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Wednesday said that the fake news had become the biggest threat to democracy and journalism. Highlighting the issue of fake news, disinformation and misinformation on the social media platform 'X', the minister referred to the doctored notifications and statements of institutions being circulated on social media regarding elections.

Condemning a fake press release issued in the name of the Election Commission of Pakistan, he said such unethical moves were on the rise as the date of elections was nearing in.

"Today, a fake directive was forged and circulated in the name of Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister. Now the Chief Election Commissioner is being targeted. Today fake news is the biggest threat to democracy and journalism," the minister remarked.



RAWALPINDI: H.E. Dr. Maen Khreasat, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Jordan called on Minister for Defence, Lt. Gen. (Retd) Anwar Ali Hyder at Ministry of Defence.

## In support of its demand AZU decides to block Pak-Iran national highway of Dalbandin

QUETTA: Vehicles have been verified by the district administration for bringing diesel from the Rotuk crossing points, but permission was not even granted to the verified vehicles to bring diesel from Rotuk crossing points along Pak-Iran border, therefore, All Zambad Union decided to block Pak-Iran national highway of Dalbandin in support of its demand.

These views were expressed by speakers on Wednesday while addressing the protestors who had staged protest sit-in at Pak-Iran national highway in Dalbandin on the call of All Zambad Union.

They said ban imposed on bringing diesel from Rotuk crossing point along Pak-Iran border left owners of Zambad vehicles jobless, adding that district administration Chagai had been paying lip service for the last two years instead of addressing the issue. They said that highway would remain closed for all kinds of vehicular traffic till the acceptance of the demands of All Zambad Union.

## Pak China Institute enrolls 366 students

GWADAR (INP): Pakistan-China Technical and Vocational Institute (PCT&VI) has admitted 366 students from Gwadar and other parts of Balochistan in various programs. Around 500 students made their appearance in entry test to get admitted in many areas of study including Tourism, English language, Maritime and Port Management, Software Technology, Chinese Language and Culture, 5 were given admission in Mechatronics and 25 were enrolled in E-Commerce. All vocational and training programs and courses are designed in collaboration with Shandong Institute of Commerce and Technology (SICT), China, and relevant accredited institutions. Pakistan-China Technical and Vocational Institute (PCT&VI) aims to enhance skills of active population in the growth of the Port City. The institute was completed at a cost of \$10 million in only 20 months.

PCT & VI official told Gwadar Pro that classes will commence on January 22 as per schedule already conveyed to admit students in their relevant subjects.

He said that 15 students were admitted in Tourism Management, 127 were enrolled in English Language, 59 were admitted in Maritime and Port Management. Meanwhile, he said that 100 students were enrolled in Software Technology, 35 were admitted in Chinese Language and Culture, 5 were given admission in Mechatronics and 25 were enrolled in E-Commerce. All vocational and training programs and courses are designed in collaboration with Shandong Institute of Commerce and Technology (SICT), China, and relevant accredited institutions. Pakistan-China Technical and Vocational Institute (PCT&VI) aims to enhance skills of active population in the growth of the Port City. The institute was completed at a cost of \$10 million in only 20 months.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination, Dr. Nadeem Jan witnesses the grant signing ceremony between Pakistan and Japan to support Pakistan's Polio Programme.

## Japan announces \$3.62m grant to support Pakistan's polio programme

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Government of Japan has announced a new US\$ 3.62 million grant to procure essential oral polio vaccines as part of its continued support to polio eradication efforts in Pakistan. Pakistan Polio Programme will use these funds to procure more than 21 million doses of vaccines to support polio campaigns in 2024, said a news release.

Pakistan is one of only two countries globally that has yet to stop polio. In 2023, Pakistan reported a total of 6 cases of polio. With polio cases cornered to only a few locations in the country, the Government of Pakistan and partners are preparing to launch an aggressive plan of activities in 2024 to stop this life altering disease for children. Each national immunization drive targets over 44 million children under the age of five, with more than 370,000 frontline workers, predominantly women, playing a crucial role to ensure the Polio Programme's outreach. "Despite the challenges, Pakistan will remain relentless in our drive to put an end to polio in the next year," said Dr. Nadeem Jan, caretaker Federal Health Minister. He said, "As we prepare to launch polio campaigns in 2024, together with our partners we will maintain an emergency focus towards resolving the remaining challenges that stand in our way to reach all children." The minister said, "The unwavering support of the Government of Japan has been instrumental in helping us get closer to reaching zero cases. We are thankful to the Government and people of Japan for their continued support towards polio eradication in Pakistan." ITO Takeshi, Charge d' Affaires ad interim of Japan to Pakistan, appreciated the significant gains made last year in controlling the spread of poliovirus. "I would like to express my sincere respect to polio workers and law enforcement agencies for their dedicated mission for humanity," said Mr. ITO.

Noting the importance of a clear and strong commitment by the Pakistani leadership to end polio, he said, "Japan would like to renew its commitment to continuing its efforts toward the ultimate goal of polio eradication by promoting routine immunization" he added. The new funding is part of the continuous support from the Government of Japan to the Polio Eradication programme.

lion children under the age of five, with more than 370,000 frontline workers, predominantly women, playing a crucial role to ensure the Polio Programme's outreach. "Despite the challenges, Pakistan will remain relentless in our drive to put an end to polio in the next year," said Dr. Nadeem Jan, caretaker Federal Health Minister. He said, "As we prepare to launch polio campaigns in 2024, together with our partners we will maintain an emergency focus towards resolving the remaining challenges that stand in our way to reach all children." The minister said, "The unwavering support of the Government of Japan has been instrumental in helping us get closer to reaching zero cases. We are thankful to the Government and people of Japan for their continued support towards polio eradication in Pakistan." ITO Takeshi, Charge d' Affaires ad interim of Japan to Pakistan, appreciated the significant gains made last year in controlling the spread of poliovirus. "I would like to express my sincere respect to polio workers and law enforcement agencies for their dedicated mission for humanity," said Mr. ITO.

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## Balochistan Law Minister slams Iranian missile strike in Panjgur

QUETTA: The caretaker Provincial Minister for Law, Parliamentary Affairs and Prosecution, Amanullah Kanrani has condemned the Iranian missile strike in Panjgur area of the province.

In a condemnation statement issued here on Wednesday, the Minister for Law and Prosecution said that the Iranian missile strike is just sorrowful and disturbing.

Amanullah Kanrani stressed that Iran should refrain from such action by clearing its position before Pakistan.

He said that the impermissible Missile attack is not only interference in the internal sovereignty, but is also equal to harm the unity and solidarity among the Muslim world and indirectly benefit Israel.

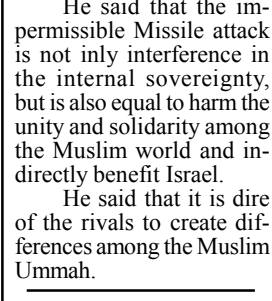
He said that it is dire of the rivals to create differences among the Muslim Ummah.

## First Lady calls for universal access to assistive technology

DAVOS (APP): First Lady Begum Samina Alvi on Wednesday called for ensuring universal access to assistive technology for persons with disabilities, the aging population and those suffering from non-communicable diseases.

The first lady, in her keynote address at an event themed "Unlock the Everyday: Advancing the SDGs through the power of Assistive Technology" on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum 2024, urged global leaders to prioritize the integration of assistive technology in their national plans and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) strategies.

"Unlock the Everyday" is the first-ever global campaign on assistive technology (AT) that has been launched to raise awareness about everyone's right to AT - such as wheelchairs, glasses, hearing aids, prostheses and digital devices - regardless of their geographic and socio-economic background. The event, organized by Devex and ATScale at the SDG Tent in Davos, was attended by high-level leaders specializing in disability inclusion, technology and impact investment, and aimed to explore the transformative power of AT in revolutionizing the lives of millions of people who have special needs.



QUETTA: Former Provincial Advisor Malik Naeem Bazai meeting with Governor Balochistan Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar

## Bilawal flays attack on PPP candidate's house in Turbat

KARACHI (INP): Pakistan People's Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari strongly condemned the grenade attack on the house of the party's candidate, contesting the general election from Turbat, Balochistan.

Asghar Rind is contesting elections for the provincial assembly seat in the Kech district of Balochistan.

Unknown men attacked PPP leader Mir Asghar Rind's house in Turbat with hand grenade.

The brother of Asghar Rind was injured in the attack, while the outlaws escaped unhurt from the spot. The injured brother of the PPP leader was rushed to the hospital for medical treatment.

Following the hand grenade attack on Mr Rind's residence, law enforcement agencies initiated a search operation in the area. No group has claimed responsibility for the assault on Mr Rind's home.

## Secretary C&W says Timely completion of dev. projects in Nasirabad, Sibi our top priority

QUETTA (APP): Provincial Secretary, Communications and Works (C&W) Kamber Dashti on Wednesday said that the improvement of infrastructure and timely completion of development projects in Naseerabad and Sibi divisions was our top priority.

He expressed these views while chairing a meeting regarding the progress of the ongoing development projects in the Sibi Zone Road Sector fiscal year 2023-24. The meeting was attended by Engineer Officers of Sibi and Naseerabad Divisions, Chief Engineer Sibi Zone Mir Ahmed Mengal, Chief Engineer Design Dr. Sajjad Baloch and Technical Advisor Mukhtiar Kakar.

The meeting was briefed in detail regarding the progress on the ongoing development projects in Sibi and Naseerabad divisions. On this occasion, the Secretary said that these two divisions of the province were agriculturally prosperous and fertile areas and the connecting roads of these areas were playing a very important role in timely delivery of agricultural produce to the market. The development and prosperity of these areas depend on these highways, so try to complete the ongoing projects as soon as possible, he mentioned.

## Zardari addresses election office inaugural ceremony in NA-127

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians (PPPP) President Asif Ali Zardari declared the party's unwavering dedication to the will of workers while addressing the inaugural ceremony of an election office in NA-127 constituency. He claimed that PPP Chairman Bilawal-Bhutto Zardari would secure victory in NA-127, with Faisal Mir as the candidate from PP-161, and form the government after elections. He highlighted the enduring nature of the PPP's political journey and related his encounters with the inmates during his incarceration. He emphasised the resilience of the PPP party's system, driven by workers' aspirations. He claimed that Bilawal-Bhutto Zardari would eventually become the prime minister.