

# Independent

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## PM for rejecting, collectively fighting enemies' propaganda against Pakistan

*Pakistan's successes in the war against terrorism would not have been possible without the participation and support of the youth*

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Wednesday affirmed that as responsible citizens, the people of Pakistan must reject and collectively fight the vicious propaganda onslaught unleashed by the enemies against Pakistan in the recent past.

The prime minister, addressing the Pakistan National Youth Convention 2024 as the chief guest, said the youth could play a constructive role in dealing with this emerging national security challenge provided they remained focused, and fact checked all details through authentic information from the state institutions rather than falling prey to the propaganda.

(COAS) General Asim Munir, NI (M), was the guest of honour. "We, as a nation, have fought the menace of terrorism most valiantly, offering unparalleled sacrifices," he said.

Prime Minister Kakar appreciated the role of armed forces in the fight against the menace of terrorism with full commitment and professional excellence.

"Pakistan's successes in the war against terrorism would not have been possible without the participation and support of the youth who make 65% of our population," he added.

Addressing the conference, the COAS underscored that the youth were Pakistan's biggest asset, and all optimism of a brighter

future was associated with them. Conveying the message of hope, the COAS asked the youth to shun dependency. He referred to the historic role played by the youth in creation and development of Pakistan and exhorted them to partake in building the nation through discipline, honest toil and a genuine quest for knowledge. He highlighted the power potential of Pakistan, the demographic dividend, immense mineral wealth, a creative corpus of IT literate workforce, and great prospects in agriculture.

The COAS emphasized upon the importance of national unity and harmony to overcome multifarious challenges confronted by the country.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar and Chief of the Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir addressing the participants of Pakistan National Youth Conference.

## Domki reaches Kech, reviews election arrangements Caretaker Chief Minister pledges to conduct free & fair general elections in peaceful manner

*Preparations made for general elections 2024 satisfactory; security arrangements being improved further in Balochistan*

**Independent Report**  
QUETTA: The caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Ali Mardan Khan has reiterated the government's resolve to conduct free and fair elections in peaceful environment.

He said that all the resources are being mobilized for the general elections in Balochistan, and it would be ensured that the elections are conducted peacefully.

The Chief Minister was chairing a high level meeting held to review the election arrangements in Makran Division, at the Commissioner's office, Turbat on Wednesday.

The caretaker Provincial Minister for Home and Tribal Affairs, Captain (Retd) Mir Muhammad

Zubair Jamali, Inspector General of Police, Abdul Khaliq Sheikh, Additional Chief Secretary Home, Zahid Saleem, besides other concerned high ups.

The Chief Minister was briefed about the preparations made for general elections to be held in Makran Division as elsewhere in the province and country on February 8, 2024.

It was informed that all the necessary preparations have been finalized for conducting the elections in Makran Division.

The Chief Minister on the occasion directed to the concerned to make it sure that free and fair elections are conducted in the Division peacefully.

He said that we are firm to conduct the general elections in the province in peaceful and transparent manner.

He said that the security of all election contesting candidates is being ensured in the province.

He also said that the law and order situation is better than past in the province. However, the security arrangements are being improved further, he added.

Meanwhile, while talking to media in Turbat, the Chief Minister said that all preparations are complete regarding elections in the province.

He also expressed satisfaction over the arrangements made for elections.

## COAS says Purpose of social media, propaganda is to spread uncertainty, chaos, despair

*Pakistan's forces always ready to tackle any kind of threat and conspiracy; Youth, guardians of the bright and sublime traditions of the nation and country*

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General Syed Asim Munir on Wednesday said youth were the guardians of the bright and sublime traditions of the nation and country, the epitome of Allama Iqbal and Quaid-e-Azam's visionary leadership.

Addressing 'Pakistan National Youth Conference' at Jinnah Convention Center, he said: "It gives me great pleasure to address the future builders of Pakistan and Shaheen of Iqbal."

The Army Chief said the establishment of Pakistan highlighted the core issue that Islamic culture and civilization were different from Hindus in all respects and Muslims might not adopt Western civilization and culture.

The youth, he said should have immense confidence in their country, nation, culture, civilization and themselves. "The youth should be sure that they are scion of a great homeland and nation," he added.

He said Pakistan Army could fight against terrorists, but the cooperation of the entire nation was imperative in that regard.

The COAS said that the main objective of social media and propaganda was to spread uncertainty, chaos and despair, whereas social media news verification was critical as without research and positive thinking, society remained chaotic.

Citing verses of the Holy Quran on disinformation, he said: "O believers! If a transgressor brings news, you should firstly confirm it."

The establishment of Pakistan was just like the Tayyaba state (referring to Islamic State of Medina), that were founded under the sublime banner of Kalima-e-Tayyaba, the Army Chief said. "Allah Almighty has blessed Pakistan with abundant natural resources, agriculture and young manpower," he added.



TURBAT: Caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki talking with mediemen regarding preparation of general elections

## Solangi for improving fact check mechanism to counter misinformation

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi Wednesday said that the mechanism for fact-checking will have to be improved in the arena of digital media to counter fake news and misinformation.

Delivering his speech at the 2nd International Media and Communication Conference here, he said that the year 2024 was the year of elections in different countries including Pakistan, India, Indonesia, United States of America.

He urged the media industry to play a responsible role as its responsibility was to protect the public interest. "Journalism is primarily about defending the public's right to know," Murtaza Solangi main-

ained. The minister said the challenges of the digital age were also great as artificial intelligence, deep fake, voice cloning and misinformation factories have made it difficult to sift fact from fiction.

He said that besides the benefits of modern technology in media, there were many risks also involved. He said that many tasks are being done by using artificial intelligence and voice cloning.

The fundamental principle of journalism was the gatekeeper system to verify the facts but the new media had ignored "the gatekeeper".

In the era of artificial intelligence, deep fake, cyber cloning, he said it had become difficult to bring the truth to people, Murtaza Solangi opined.



LAHORE: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Murtaza Solangi addressing the Second International Media and Communication Conference at University of Management and Technology.

## Dr. Gohar Ejaz assumes charge of caretaker Interior Minister



ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Industries and Production Division Dr. Gohar Ejaz HI, SI on Wednesday assumed the charge of caretaker Federal Minister for Interior.

Senior officials of the Ministry welcomed Dr.

Gohar Ejaz on this arrival in the Ministry of Interior.

The Interior Minister was given a detailed briefing regarding the Ministry of Interior and its subsidiaries in the Introductory meeting with senior officers of the ministry.

The important portfolio was vacated after the resignation of Sarfraz Bugti as caretaker minister for interior.

Sarfraz Bugti had resigned from the portfolio for taking part in the general elections of 2024.

## 66 kids die of pneumonia across Punjab in current month

MULTAN (APP): A total of 66 kids died of pneumonia in public hospitals across South Punjab in the current month while 2,847 patients reported to health facilities.

Health Department South Punjab Spokesperson Assad Ullah Shahzad told APP on Wednesday that 41 deaths were reported from Children Complex Multan, nine from Bahawal Victoria Hospital Bahawalpur, 14 from Allama Iqbal Teaching Hospital D G Khan, and one each from Sheikh Zayed Hospital Rahim Yar Khan and Sir Sadiq Abbasi Hospital Bahawalpur while no death was reported from Nishtar Hospital Multan by January 23.

He stated that as many as 556 pneumonia patients visited out patient departments and 2,291 admitted to Accident & Emergency wards, with 2,207 of them recovered.

It may be mentioned that pneumonia is an infection that inflames the air sacs in one or both lungs. The air sacs may fill with fluid or pus (purulent material), causing cough with phlegm or pus, fever, chills, and difficulty breathing. A variety of organisms, including bacteria, viruses and fungi, can cause pneumonia.

NANKANA SAHIB (INP): PML-N Quaid, Muhammad Nawaz Sharif has assured to generate employment opportunities for youth after coming into power.

Addressing at a public gathering in Nankana Sahib today, he said PML-N aims at undertaking historical development work with a commitment to rebuild the country.

Nawaz Sharif said serving the public is the manifesto of PML-N.

Nawaz Sharif on Wednesday asserted that Pakistan plunged into crises after he was unjustly removed as the prime minister on false charges.

The former prime minister questioned why he was ousted on false charges when he had no enmity with anyone. "I was not an imported prime minister."

Nawaz further questioned why a prime minister, who played a key role in making Pakistan a nuclear power, found him-

## PMLN will generate employment opportunities for youth after coming into power: Nawaz



self handcuffed, jailed and convicted. He deplored that five judges had deposed him from the PM's Office for not taking a salary from his son.

The former premier wondered why the people of Pakistan faced distress after his removal, expressing his deep concern for their plight.

Nawaz stated that his heart would be at peace only if the people of Pakistan found relief from the prevailing crises of inflation, unemployment, energy shortfall and terrorism.

The venue of the PML-N rally reverberated with the chants of "Mian Saab, We love you. Mian Saab, We love you", as the former three-time premier walked up to the stage.

Nawaz Sharif appreciated the enthusiasm of the party workers, supporters and constituents, saying that he had never seen such a sight on a very cold day.

IMF to 'send' review mission to Pakistan after elections 2024

ISLAMABAD (INP): Following Pakistan's assurance to impose new taxes, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on Wednesday 'decided' to send its review mission to Pakistan after election 2024, sources said.

IMF will continue further talks on the Standby Arrangement (SBA) programme with the newly elected government of Pakistan after highly anticipated general elections.

However, the "IMF has not confirmed the schedule for conducting the second review". The last confirmation was made by the monetary fund in July 2023 which stated that the talks on the 2nd review will be held with the new government.

## 124 candidates in run for 17 seats: Final list of candidates contesting election on reserve seats issued

**Independent Report**  
QUETTA: The final list of candidates contesting elections on the reserve seats of women and minorities in the national and Balochistan assemblies has been issued on Wednesday.

According to the Provincial Election Commissioner (PEC) Balochistan, Muhammad Farid Afridi, in all 28 candidates have been finalized for three seats reserved for women in the National Assembly from Balochistan.

Similarly, 63 candidates have been declared eligible for 11 seats reserved for women in Balochistan's provincial assembly while 33 candidates' papers finalized for three seats reserved for non-Muslims in the provincial assembly.

## HC reserves verdict on PTI founder's plea against jail trial

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday reserved its verdict on Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder's plea challenging his jail trial in the Toshakhana and Al-Qadir Trust cases, following the completion of arguments.

## Would prefer to form govt with independent candidates if elected: Bilawal

LAHORE (INP): In an interview with Reuters in Larkana, Bilawal said, "You know, lots of independent politicians, probably the highest (number) in our history, are taking part in the coming elections."

It should be noted that after the PTI was stripped of its iconic 'bat' symbol, most of the independents would comprise PTI leaders who are contesting the upcoming elections as independent candidates. Party leader Gohar Khan has also expressed fears of horse-trading and floor crossing.



Positioning himself as an alternate to the PML-N and PTI, Bilawal had recently called on supporters of ex-PM Imran Khan to vote for him while their leader is in jail. In the 2013 elections, the PPP came second after PML-N, garnering 42 of the 342 seats up for grabs. In 2018, with 54 seats, it was runner-up to the parties of both Nawaz and Imran.

However, Bilawal ruled out joining hands with either contender saying he preferred to form a government with independent candidates. The PPP chairman spoke to Reuters in an interview during a gruelling four-week campaign that took him to more than 33 towns, while other parties began canvassing just last week.

## Election preparations reviewed in Rakhshan: Govt. machinery being mobilized for general elections, says CS

**Independent Report**  
QUETTA: The Chief Secretary Balochistan, Shakeel Qadir Khan has stated that the government machinery is being mobilized for conducting free and fair elections in the province.

He said that every possible measures would be taken so as to conduct the elections in peaceful manner. The Chief Secretary was presiding over a meeting held to review the arrangements for elections in Rakhshan Division, in Kharan on Wednesday. Those who were in

present at the meeting were the caretaker Provincial Minister for Home, Mir Zubair Jamali, Additional Chief Secretary Home, Zahid Saleem, Inspector General of Police, Abdul Khaliq Sheikh, Secretary Local Government, Noor Ahmed Pirani, Commissioner Rakhshan, Shah Irfan Gharshoon, besides other concerned high ups. Addressing the meeting, the Chief Secretary said that all preparations have been finalized for the elections in light of directives of the Election Commission of Pakistan.



ISLAMABAD: Relatives of Baluchistan missing persons stands in a queue waiting for boarding in a bus after the finish Sitting protest (Dharna) in front of National Press Club in Federal Capital.

Daily Voice of Masses  
**Independent**

**Political hustle bustle ahead of elections**

As February 8 upcoming poll season approaches fast in the country, political hustle and bustle is seen in every nook and cranny of the country, including Quetta and different other parts of Balochistan, where almost every constituency is being festooned with colorful party flags and posters displaying according to code of conduct. What's important regarding the elections is that the interim government is firm to conduct the vital exercise on the given schedule despite some quarters had raised concerns about security matters, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. The caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar has already formed a high-level committee to ensure smooth conduct of general elections in the country. The seven-member committee, notified last week, will be led by the caretaker minister for maritime affairs and will include chief secretaries from all four provinces as well as the federal interior secretary.

The primary objective of the committee is to ensure the conduct of the 2024 general elections in a secure and peaceful environment. While nomination papers of candidates have already been filed and symbols allotted, the final lists of the candidates contesting elections on the national and provincial assemblies' seats have also been issued with the list of candidates in the election run on different seats reserved for women and non-Muslims in the assemblies. In this regard, all the necessary arrangements have been made especially to ensure the free, fair and transparent elections in peaceful and conducive environment, all over the country and so in Balochistan. An Election Cell has also been established within the Federal Interior Ministry for monitoring of security arrangements and law and order situation during the general election 2024 with representation from all law enforcement agencies. While on the other hand, social media during the current election atmosphere in the country was playing an important role in enabling the country's politicians to reach out to the voters and provide them with a platform to connect easily, according to a report aired by a private news channel. With passage of time, the printing and selling of election-related items has also picked momentum, and wholesalers and vendors have expressed happiness over the increasing demand and sales of party posters. As time passes and the general elections are drawing near, the political parties will continue their political wars on social media grounds.

As per the election drive, various corner meetings, political camps, and rallies have become routine matters in Quetta and different other parts of the province as elsewhere in the country. One can easily notice the portraits and stickers of different political leaders on rickshaws, wagons, Suzuki pickups, cars, and private buses.

These electioneering processes have seen widespread use among social media users, where enthusiastic youth are also campaigning for their preferred candidates. According to the political analysts, the upcoming general elections would be unique due to the increased number of young and female voters in the electoral list. The total registered voters in Pakistan are: 128,585,760. They are included: 73,207,896 voters in Punjab, 26,994,769 voters in Sindh, 21,928,119 voters in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 5,371,947 voters in Balochistan. While everything is in place, what's most important now is that the voters may come out in large number from their homes and vote for the country on February 8, 2024. It is significant to adhering to the directives of the ECP for ensuring free, fair and transparent polls in a secure and organized manner.

**Human smuggling**

**Azwar Shakeel**

Though rampant, human smuggling in Pakistan remains poorly documented. Only when a tragedy occurs does the issue take centre stage. A nationwide crackdown was announced after a fishing boat carrying hundreds of Pakistani migrants capsized off the southern coast of Greece last June. Yet, interest in the issue and sympathy with the victims waned just as fast as it rose.

Lack of sympathy stems from lack of awareness, particularly of the human rights violations that take place during a migrant's journey. Human smuggling is considered consensual, as opposed to human trafficking, which features coercive practices such as bonded labour and sexual exploitation. Here, we endeavour to explain the factors driving irregular migration, the annual number of migrants, popular routes, operations of smuggling networks, and the Federal Investigation Agency's (FIA) role. We also identify human rights violations, and the reforms required to address them.

According to estimates, over one million irregular migrants cross international borders annually. In Pakistan, the figure varies between 80,000 to 100,000. Most migrants are from Punjab. Cities such as Gujrat, Gujranwala, Phalia, Mandi Bahauddin, Kharian, Jhelum, Mirpur, and Sialkot serve as major catchment areas. Due to its low cost and ease of movement, the Balochistan-Iran-Turkiye route, with onwards travel to Europe via the Mediterranean Sea, is the most popular. Other routes include sea travel from Gwadar to Iran through the Arabian Sea, and onwards to Turkiye and Europe. On the pricier side, there's legal air travel from Karachi to

Dubai, followed by irregular migration to Turkiye or Libya, and onwards to Italy or Greece.

Unemployment, lack of opportunity, poverty, and insecurity remain the primary drivers pushing people out. Pressures of traditional masculinity is another prominent push factor. Many young men leave to be able to earn more and support their families. It is established that factors driving irregular migration are not just absolute deprivation, but also relative deprivation. The sense that one would be better off in some other country serves as a pull factor. Migrants also leave because they see countries like Turkiye or Libya as stepping stones to Europe.

Smugglers operate on the basis of an organised network model. Each smuggling ring comprises a series of sub-networks; each sub-network consists of agents and sub-agents. The sub-networks are co-dependent. A typical smuggling network operates as follows: sub-agents in Gujrat recruit migrants, and bring them to the agent, who will stipulate the conditions of travel and the costs involved. The agent from Gujrat contacts an agent from Multan and shares the names of the migrants via a text message. All agents operate under an alias. The Multan agent receives the migrants at a designated spot and facilitates onwards movement to Quetta, from where they are sent to Iran, Turkiye, and Europe by other agents along the way. The operations remain seamless, with each agent responsible for the operations of the smuggling ring within their own territory.

The journey can cost anywhere from Rs100,000 to Rs1,500,000 per migrant depending on the terms of the deal,

mode of travel, comfort of travel (front seat or trunk of the car, below or above the deck on a ship, etc), number of attempts, and documentation.

The FIA is the law-enforcement agency tasked by law to crack down on smugglers and safeguard the rights of migrants. But it is seen as complicit in the entire process. Officials ignore the actions of smugglers in return for kickbacks. Considering the complexities involved, transnational operations of this magnitude would not be possible without the knowledge of the FIA. Corruption among law-enforcement officials is common to all countries where human smuggling rackets thrive. Smuggled Somalis, Ethiopians, and Kenyans, have all recounted witnessing public officials accepting bribes from smugglers.

Smugglers exploit desperate and vulnerable individuals. The migrants are misinformed and deceived about the dangers and actual costs involved. They are also abused, beaten, and robbed along the way. Those who are unable to pay are tortured. The houses in which they are kept along the way are overcrowded and unhygienic. Law-enforcement agencies do not protect them and the states through which they pass shirk their responsibilities, disregarding international humanitarian laws.

To address these rights violations, we must first reframe the narrative. Migrants must be treated as victims, and not in a manner that implies criminality. International and domestic anti-smuggling laws must be made human rights-centric. But most importantly, we must address the state's failure to protect and provide for its citizens, compelling migrants to leave. -- Courtesy Dawn

**Genocidal collusion**

**Mahir Ali**

Whether he's trying to crack a joke or pretending to be serious, Joe Biden's octogenarian visage is permanently contorted into a grimace. That may have something to do with all the lies he has felt obliged to spout since Oct 7; from the nonsense about having seen pictures of beheaded babies to the recent assurance that the Israeli prime minister does not reject every variant of a two-state solution.

Benjamin Netanyahu has clearly telegraphed the opposite, knowing full well that the official narrative of his neo-fascist state's Western supporters will not interrupt the steady supply of lethal weaponry and blood money. The US has lately sought to give the impression that it is advising restraint, but that alleged advice goes unheeded.

Biden has stood out as an unequivocal pro-Zionist since he entered the US Congress more than 50 years ago, and serving as an accessory to genocide won't shift his dial. It's equally clear that this stance is steadily diminishing his chances of re-election in November. Donald Trump, arguably an even bigger fan of Israel, holds a personal grudge against Netan-yahu. He may not get many votes from disenchanted Democrats, but his opponents may well opt for third-party candidates.

The liberal American intelligentsia deems a second Trump presidency to be detrimental to the prospects of the American empire. Since the Korean War in the 1950s and Vietnam in the next decade, the US has stood out as what Martin Luther King described as the paramount perpetrator of violence in the world.

That verdict is reflected in Gaza, where the extermination campaign would be virtually impossible for Israel to continue without the steady supply of US weaponry and largesse. America could halt the genocide at a stroke. But neither the White House nor much of the Congress seems to have any interest in pushing for peace.

The mealy-mouthed rhetoric from the US and its acolytes about a two-state solution conveys a whiff of absurdity after decades of sponsoring Zionist designs on Palestinian territories. The 'antisemitism' slogan that greets any suggestion that anyone other than a Zionist is also a human being worthy of the same rights and protections is beginning to lose its sting.

This phenomenon stretches back decades, and it should have been laughed out of existence when the Israeli embassy and its devotees successfully strove to demolish the socialist leadership of the British Labour Party under Jeremy Corbyn. His wretched successor, likely to be the next prime minister of Britain, hasn't uttered a word that could conceivably be construed as critical of Israel.

The relentless destruction of Gaza and the mass murder of its inhabitants has expanded to the Red Sea and beyond. Biden says the attacks on Yemen will carry on, even though they aren't deterring Houthi efforts to halt Israeli-aligned shipping in solidarity with Gaza. Iran, meanwhile, has lashed out militarily at targets in Iraq, Syria and Pakistan, ostensibly to demonstrate its challenged regional clout.

Disinclined to hold back, Israel has carried out assassinations against Hamas and Hezbollah targets in Lebanon, and murdered

a bunch of Iranian Revolutionary Guard advisers in Damascus. Iran has vowed to retaliate against the outrage in Syria, but is disinclined to directly take on Israel or the US — there have been reports of back-channel contacts with the latter.

Hopefully, the de-escalation following the Balochistan stoush will avert future belligerence. Tehran purportedly attacked a 'takfiri' outfit that had claimed credit for terrorist activity in Iran; Islamabad hit back. But even a limited exchange of fire serves as an unfortunate distraction from the genocide unfolding in real time in the Gaza Strip, announced in advance by the Israeli leadership and telegraphed by the victims, which is being resisted in international forums by South Africa, Chile and Mexico rather than any Arab or Muslim states.

Israel can be guaranteed to ignore any interim advice on a cessation of its brutality from the International Court of Justice, and it could take years for the ICJ to pronounce a verdict on Johannesburg's charge.

There have been other genocides since the UN convention against them was established in 1948, the same year that Israel came into existence and apartheid was formalised in South Africa. But perhaps the worse aspect of the current outrage is the blind refusal of the perpetrators to recognise that, for more than 70 years, they have sought to recreate for the Palestinians, in superficially different ways, the experience of the European Jews in the 1930s-40; from the ubermensch mentality to lebensraum. The pattern of humanity's reluctance to acknowledge remains rich in barely challenged reprobates. - Courtesy Dawn

**Commerce News**

**Effective implementation of bold reforms imperative to usher new era of development: Dr. Shamshad**

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Finance, Revenue and Economic Affairs, Dr. Shamshad Akhtar Wednesday said that effective implementation of bold and ambitious reforms was imperative to usher in a new era of development and prosperity in the country. The accomplishment of this goal, however, is contingent upon addressing critical underlying

institutional, governance, and structural constraints, he said during a seminar on "Pakistan's Economic Crisis: Challenges and the Way Forward," organized by NUST Institute of Policy Studies (NIPS) at the University's main campus here.

Dr. Shamshad Akhtar highlighted five key areas that have increased the vulnerability of Pakistan's economy to domestic and global shocks.

The first area, he mentioned is unsustainable fiscal policy due to revenue gaps and unproductive expenditure; second, fiscal non-sustainability has enhanced government recourse to public debt which has increased; third, climate shocks as the global warming model predicts that Pakistan's weather patterns would become even more volatile and extreme in the decades ahead, with an average

increase in temperatures by 1.3 to 4.9 percent by 2090; fourth, the lack of innovation and diversity in the structure of the economy; and fifth, the failure to integrate Pakistan's economy with the rest of the world.

Dr. Shamshad further stressed five critical areas of reforms essential to reducing Pakistan's vulnerabilities and fostering sustainable growth that included:



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar chairs a review meeting on reduction of the energy sector's circular debt.



Federal Minister MNFS&R Dr. Kausar Abdullah Malik along with Ms. Jessica Mudjitaba-Fernandez, Program Manager USDA, Mr. Keith Metzner, USAID, Chairman PARC, Dr. Ghulam Muhammad Ali & Mr. Babar Ehsan Bajwa, CABI's Senior Regional Director, Asia, presiding a dialogue on regulatory harmonization in Pakistan for Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) and Bio-pesticides.

**FPCCI & EFP meet GSP+ compliance and SDGs discussed: Saquib**

**Independent Report** KARACHI: Mr. Saquib Fayyaz Magoon, Acting President FPCCI, has said that the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI) and Employers' Federation of Pakistan (EFP) have agreed, in principle, to converge their policy advocacy; skills development & awareness and research & development resources to enable Pakistan to continue to capitalize on its GSP+ status with the European Union (EU) as new EU parliament and EU

Commission will be in place by June 2024; and, there might be some review or policy changes in rules framework for Pakistan's GSP+ status. Mr. Saquib Fayyaz Magoon, Acting President FPCCI, explained that Pakistan should remain on course on EU requirements on human rights; labor rights; environmental standards and good governance. These are principally the four areas where Pakistan's performance comes under review.

**Rupee gains 12 paise against dollar**

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistani Rupee on Wednesday witnessed an appreciation of 12 paise against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs279.67 against the previous day's closing of Rs279.79. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market stood at Rs278.9 and Rs280.9 respectively. The price of the Euro decreased by 83 paise to close at Rs304.20 against the last day's closing of Rs305.03, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

**PM for effective, durable strategy to do away with circular debt energy sector**

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Wednesday directed the Ministry of Energy to formulate an effective and durable strategy to do away with the circular debt of the energy sector.

The prime minister, chairing a meeting to discuss the strategy to reduce circular debt of the energy sector, said all the stakeholders would have to put in collective efforts for

reduction in the circular debt.

He told the participants of the meeting that soon after coming to the power, the caretaker government took measures for economic revival and was taking all-out steps to reduce the circular debt.

He said the anti-power theft operation had led to an enhanced recovery of the electricity dues of the power distribution companies.

**SBP Multan chief says: SBP software application prepared to receive account holders complaints**

**Independent Report** MULTAN: Chief Manager State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), Multan, Javed Iqbal Marth has said that the central bank has prepared a software application to enable account holders to file complaints against banks.

He was speaking at a ceremony organized by the Multan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) with industrialists notably MCCI president Mian Rashid Iqbal, former president Khawaja Muhammad Hussain,

Naveed Ahmad Chughtai, Saleha Hassan, and others were present, according to a release issued by MCCI on Wednesday.

The SBP Multan chief said that account holders mostly do not speak against banks despite having complaints, however, added that the new software application would facilitate them to do so whenever they have any problem relating to the bank and it would trigger a process to resolve their grievances.

**Draft regulations of bio-pesticide policy to be submitted before cabinet**

**Independent Report**

ISLAMABAD: Minister for National Food Security and Research, Dr. Kausar Abdulla Malik on Wednesday said that draft regulations of bio-pesticides policy had been finalized and would be submitted before the federal cabinet for approval to promote the use of bio-pesticides in the country.

Addressing a high-level "dialogue on regulatory harmonization in Pakistan for MRLs and bio-

pesticides", the minister said that the use of bio-pesticides would help mitigate the issues related to aflatoxin and make the local agriculture commodities more resilient to capture the international market.

The event was organized by the Pakistan Agriculture Research Council (PARC) in collaboration with USID, USDA and CABI to share the outcome of joint collaboration to mitigate the adverse impact of aflatoxin in local agriculture products,

besides measures taken to mitigate its negative impact on exports of rice, maize, wheat and fruits.

The minister said that due to the presence of micro-toxin elements, the exports from the country remained under regulatory pressure and expressed the hope that the promotion of bio-pesticides would help to overcome such challenges besides reducing reliance on costly fertilizers, which consume costly inputs like electricity and gas.

**PSX stays bullish, gains 368 points**

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bullish trend on Wednesday, gaining 368.21 points, a positive change of 0.57 percent, closing at 64,822.43 points against 64,454.22 points the previous trading day. A total of 479,982,148 shares valuing Rs.22,501 billion were traded during the day as compared to 425,709,896 shares valuing Rs.24,995 billion.

**APTMA chairman briefs US consul general on Pakistan's textile sector**

LAHORE (APP): All Pakistan Textile Mills Association (APTMA) Chairman (Northern Zone) Kamran Arshad briefed Ms. Kristin K. Hawkins, United States consul general in Lahore, on the prospects and needs of Pakistan's textile sector so as to find more ways and means to foster bilateral trade and economic relations between the two countries. APTMA Vice

Chairman Ahmad Shafi, former chairman Adil Bashir and Hamid Zaman, and Secretary General Raza Baqir, along with senior members of APTMA representing leading textile groups, were also present.

They discussed the enormous potential to work together in the field of cotton and textile, besides expanding trade and investment relations in other focused areas.

## Punjab Governor says: Automotive industry long been important part of the global economy

**Independent Report**  
LAHORE: Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman/Chancellor attended the opening ceremony of 1<sup>st</sup> Automotive Engineering Conference at University of Engineering and Technology Lahore today as Chief Guest.

Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman, while addressing the ceremony, stated that it is very important to embrace technology in the modern era. He said that he truly appreciates Vice Chancellor UET Lahore, Professor Dr. Nasir Hayat, Professor Dr. Naveed

Ramzan, Dean Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, Dr. Ali Hussain Kazim, Director of Automotive Engineering Center, and organizers whose tireless efforts have brought together experts and researchers in the field of automotive engineering.

"I hope that thoughts and research shared in this conference will have a positive impact on the future of the automotive industry," he said. Governor Punjab said that the automotive industry has long been an important part of the global economy, and is also a symbol of modern lifestyle.

He said that automotive industry is a flourishing industry in the world, which is providing employment opportunities to millions of people. Governor Punjab further said that electric vehicles are one of the important elements in shaping the future of the automotive sector. He said that in view of the challenges of climate change, the world is moving towards eco-friendly transport, and Pakistan is not an exception. Governor Punjab expressed hope that the researchers and experts involved in this conference will find different ways.



LAHORE: Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman/Chancellor in a group photo with participants during the opening ceremony of 1<sup>st</sup> Automotive Engineering Conference at University of Engineering and Technology.

## Governor KP for ensuring compliance of 2% admission quota for minorities in varsities

**PESHAWAR (APP):** Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali has said that compliance over two percent minority quota for minorities in public sector universities of the province will be ensured.

He expressed these views during a meeting recently held at Governor House with a delegation of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) representatives under the chairmanship of Qamar Naseem, Programme Manager of Blue Veins organization.

Other members of the delegation included Muhammad Rizwan, Provincial Coordinator

National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) and Sana Ahmad, Programme Coordinator, Blue Veins.

During the meeting, Governor Haji Ghulam Ali was informed that in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa there are 27 public sector universities whose administration is bound to abide by the decision taken by the government of providing two percent quota to minorities in admission for different courses and degrees. Similarly, all the government colleges offering Associate Degree Programme are bound to provide one percent quota for minorities in all these courses.

## Punjab govt pledges full support to GCT trust expansion to deprived areas

**Independent Report**  
LAHORE: Punjab Health Minister Professor Dr Javed Akram Wednesday announced unwavering support for the renowned Sindh-based non-profit Green Crescent Trust (GCT) to extend its educational services to Punjab.

Speaking at an event on the International Day of Education here, he emphasised the government's commitment to providing land, funding, and trained teachers for GCT's schools

in rural and deprived areas. The ceremony saw Lahore-based businessmen and industrialists endorsing GCT's initiative to enroll 100,000 out-of-school children in Sindh by constructing 250 schools in remote regions.

Dr Akram praised GCT's 29-year journey, acknowledging the establishment of 166 charitable schools in underprivileged areas of Sindh with an enrollment of over 31,000 children.

## 3 die, van carrying laborers met accident

**UPPER KOHISTAN (Online):** As many as 3 people died when a van carrying laborers met an accident in upper Kohistan.

The tragic incident took place at Uchhar Nullah. Three persons died on the spot while seven were injured critically.

The police and rescue teams rushed to the scene on information and started rescue activities.

The dead bodies and injured have been shifted to district headquarters hospital Dasu.

## ATC moved for shifting Sheikh Rashid to hospital

**RAWALPINDI (Online):** Petition has been filed in Anti Terrorism Court (ATC) seeking court's order to shift former interior minister Sheikh Rashid to hospital being indisposed.

Petition said Sheikh Rashid be shifted to government hospital. He is indisposed and no one is allowed to meet him. It has been requested in the petition court should order for medical check up of Sheikh Rashid due to his sickness besides summoning report in this regard.

The petition has been filed in ATC led by Judge Ijaz Asif.

## CM Punjab chairs 37<sup>th</sup> cabinet meeting

**Independent Report**  
LAHORE: The 37<sup>th</sup> Punjab cabinet meeting, which was held under the chairmanship of Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi on Wednesday, approved special allowance for doctors of Dera Ghazi Khan Institute of Cardiology and dissolution of board of directors of the Bank of Punjab.

It sanctioned release of funds to widen the road leading to Bibi Pak Daman shrine and decided that widow of former Punjab chief secretary Abdullah Sumbal should be given possession of allotted house at GOR-1 immediately.

Re-issuance of Punjab Healthcare Commission (Amended) Ordinance, 2023 and approval of appointment to the posts

of presiding officers in Punjab Labour Courts in Sahiwal and Faisalabad were granted along with nomination of presiding officer for District Consumer Court Lahore and constitution of Punjab Wildlife Management Committee. Amendments to Punjab Delegation of Financial Powers Rules, 2016 were approved as well. Provincial ministers, advisers, chief secretary, IGP, Advocate General Punjab and administrative secretaries attended the meeting.

Meanwhile, Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi visited the head office of Punjab Safe Cities Authority (PSCA) at Qurban Lines late at Tuesday night where he chaired an important meeting regarding law and order situation.



LAHORE: Inspector General Police Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar presenting keys of home to relatives of police martyred.

## World Bank country director calls on CM KP

**PESHAWAR (APP):** A delegation headed by Country Director World Bank Najay Benhassaine called on caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Justice @ Syed Arshad Hussain Shah here at Chief Minister's House on Wednesday and discussed with him matters of mutual interest with special focus on development projects being executed in the province with the financial assistance of the World Bank. Caretaker cabinet members Barrister Feroz Jamal Shah Kakakel, Syed Masood Shah, Engineer Ahmed Jan, Engineer Aamir

Nadeem Durrani, Dr. Najeeb Ullah, Dr. Syed Sarfaraz Ali Shah, spokesperson to Chief Minister Brigadier @ Syed Mujtaba Firmizi and Additional Chief Secretary P&D Syed Imtiaz Hussain Shah were also present on the occasion. The meeting discussed the matters related to timely completion of ongoing development projects being implemented with the assistance of World Bank. Prospects of mutual cooperation in the near future especially development projects for merged districts were also discussed on the occasion.

## KP govt for special focus on merged districts in five year plan

**Independent Report**  
PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has urged the federation to give special attention to the newly merged districts (NMDs) of the province in the upcoming 13<sup>th</sup> national five-year plan (2024-29).

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister for Newly Merged Districts Affairs, Industries, Commerce and Technical Education, Dr. Aamer Abdullah in this regard, has forwarded suggested projects to the Planning Commission Islamabad pertaining to communication and works,

trade and IT sector, industrial development, energy, agriculture, irrigation, health, education and other sectors in NMDs that will be included in PSDP under five years new plan, says a handout.

In proposed communication projects construction of Peshawar, Mohmand, Bajaur and Timergara's four-line Motorway has been included.

Similarly, maintenance and rehabilitation of existing trade corridors in NMDs, at a cost of 10 billion rupees is also included in these proposals.

## Training session held to combat dengue

**RAWALPINDI (APP):** Chief Executive Officer of the District Health Authority Dr Ijaz Ahmed Khan Wednesday said that the best anti-dengue measures were taken by the administration last year to control the spread of the fatal virus.

He expressed these views while addressing the pre-dengue season refresher training session of the field staff of the Metropolitan Corporation Rawalpindi area.

The CEO said that the purpose of conducting pre-dengue season refresher training was to prepare oneself for anti-dengue measures.



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Haji Ghulam Ali addressing the ceremony on the eve of World Education Day at Peshawar University.

# International News

## Russia accuses Ukraine of killing 65 of its own POWs by shooting down plane

**Monitoring Desk**  
MOSCOW: Russia accused Ukraine on Wednesday of deliberately shooting down a Russian military transport plane carrying 65 captured Ukrainian soldiers to a prisoner exchange in what it called a barbaric act of terrorism that had killed a total of 74 people. The Russian defence ministry said six Russian crew members and three Russian soldiers had been on the Ilyushin Il-76 military transport plane shot down near the Russian city of Belgorod near the Ukrainian border.

"The Ukrainian leadership was well aware that, in accordance with established practice, Ukrainian servicemen would be transported by military transport aircraft to the Belgorod airfield today to be exchanged," a ministry statement said.

"According to an earlier agreement, this event was to take place in the afternoon at the Kolotilovka checkpoint on the Russian-Ukrainian border," it said.

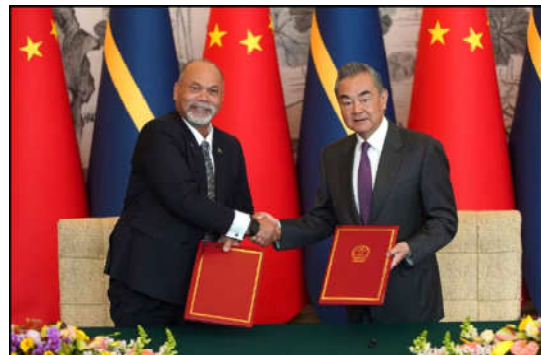
"By committing this terrorist act, the Ukrainian leadership has shown its true face. It disregarded the lives of its own citizens." Russia's foreign ministry called the shooting down "a barbaric act."

Mykhailo Podolyak, a Ukrainian presidential ad-

viser, told Reuters: "Comments will come a little later. Time is needed to clarify all the data."

Video posted on the Telegram messaging app by Baza, a channel linked to Russian security services, and verified by Reuters, showed a large aircraft falling towards the ground near the village of Yablonovo in the Belgorod region and exploding in a vast fireball.

Ukraine's GUR military intelligence spokesperson Andriy Yusov told the Radio Svoboda outlet that a prisoner exchange had been planned for Wednesday, adding: "It's not taking place at the moment."



Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Nauru Lionel Aingimea shake hands after signing a Joint Communique on the Resumption of Diplomatic Relations between China and Nauru, at Diaoyutai State Guesthouse, in Beijing, China.

## Donald Trump closes in on Biden rematch after New Hampshire win

**Monitoring Desk**  
NASHUA: Donald Trump won the key New Hampshire primary on Tuesday, moving him ever closer to locking in the Republican presidential nomination and securing an extraordinary White House rematch with US President Joe Biden.

With around 80 per cent of votes counted, Trump's winning margin hovered at about 11 percentage points, but his sole remaining challenger Nikki Haley vowed to fight on.

Trump, 77, attacked Haley in a rambling victory speech and said that when the primary contest reaches her home state of South Carolina, "we're going to win easily."

Trump's address was loaded with his trademark ominous warnings about immigration as he continued to lie about winning the 2020 election.

In her speech, Haley insisted the race was "far from over" and told supporters that Democrats actually want to run against her former boss.



Russia's President Vladimir Putin and Chad's interim President Mahamat Idriss Deby attend a meeting at the Kremlin in Moscow, Russia.

## Former Taiwan ally Nauru re-establishes diplomatic ties with China

**Monitoring Desk**  
BEIJING: China and Nauru re-established diplomatic ties on Wednesday, after the tiny Pacific island nation unexpectedly severed relations with its now former ally Taiwan in a move the United States described as "unfortunate".

The Pacific has become a source of intense competition for influence between Washington which has traditionally viewed it as its backyard, and Beijing, which has targeted Taiwanese diplomatic allies there.

During a ceremony in Beijing, China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi and his Nauru counterpart Lionel Aingimea formally signed a document to restore bilateral relations, with ties at the ambassadorial level resuming with immediate effect.

According to the document Nauru recognises that there is "only one China in the world" governed by the People's Republic of China and that Taiwan is an inalienable part of China.

## Fire in China's Jiangxi province kills 39

**Monitoring Desk**  
BEIJING: A fire at a street shop in Xinyu City of Jiangxi Province has killed 39 people and injured nine, Chinese state media and the local government said on Wednesday, adding that some people were still trapped.

The fire broke out in the afternoon on an underground floor of the shop on Tiangongnan Avenue in the Yushui district, said the local fire-response emergency headquarters, according to the China Daily media outlet.

The injured were taken to hospital, a government statement said, with-

out disclosing how many. Thick, black smoke could be seen spewing from shops on the street level and engulfing surrounding buildings in video footage on the social media platform Weibo.

According to state broadcaster CCTV News, there was an Internet cafe located below ground level and a training institution upstairs in the building where the fire broke out.

After the latest deadly fire in the country, China's President Xi Jinping demanded that all efforts be made to curb accidents and ensure people's safety.

## US Navy says USS John Finn conducted transit in Taiwan Strait

**Monitoring Desk**  
BEIJING: The United States Navy said its USS John Finn destroyer transited through a corridor in the Taiwan Strait on Wednesday that was "beyond the territorial sea of any coastal state," according to a statement.

"John Finn's transit through the Taiwan Strait demonstrates the United States' commitment to upholding freedom of navigation for all nations as a principle," the U.S. Navy said in its statement.

## Russian missile barrage kills eight, sows panic in Ukraine

**Monitoring Desk**  
KYIV: A wave of Russian missiles hit Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities on Tuesday, killing eight people and wounding dozens as new panic spread among exhausted residents.

Rescue workers in Khar-kiv — Ukraine's second city that is near Russia's border — hauled survivors from smouldering piles of rubble as apartment blocks were set ablaze and toppled by the strikes, journalists reported.

## UN chief warns that Israel's rejection of a two-state solution threatens global peace

**Monitoring Desk**  
UNITED NATIONS: The United Nations chief warned Israel on Tuesday that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's rejection of a two-state solution will indefinitely prolong a conflict that is threatening global peace and emboldening extremists everywhere.

In his toughest language yet on the Israeli-Hamas war, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told a ministerial meeting of the U.N. Security Council that "the right of the Palestinian people to build their own fully independent state must be recognized by all, and a refusal to accept the two-state solution by any party must be firmly rejected."

The alternative of a one-state solution "with

such a large number of Palestinians inside without any real sense of freedom, rights and dignity... will be inconceivable," he said. Guterres also warned that the risks of regional escalation of the conflict "are now becoming a reality," pointing to Lebanon, Yemen, Syria, Iraq and Pakistan. He urged all parties "to step back from the brink and to consider the horrendous costs" of a wider war. Netanyahu's rejection of a Palestinian state in any postwar scenario opened a wide rift with Israel's closest ally, the United States, which says the war must lead to negotiations for a two-state solution where Israel and the Palestinians can live side-by-side in peace.

## North Korea fires cruise missiles off west coast, Seoul says

**Monitoring Desk**  
SEOUL: North Korea fired multiple cruise missiles towards the sea off its west coast on Wednesday, South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said, in the latest sign of heightened tensions on the Korean peninsula.

The missiles were fired at around 7 am (2200 GMT on Tuesday) and the launches were being analysed by South Korean and US intelligence, the JCS said in a statement.

Further activities by the North were being monitored, the JCS said. The latest firing of missiles by Pyongyang comes as the South Korean Navy's special warfare unit was taking part in training along the east coast in Gangwon Province bordering the North for 10 days.

The training was aimed at strengthening operational readiness following North Korea's recent artillery firing near a disputed maritime border and weapons tests, the JCS

stated. Pyongyang said it tested a solid-fuel hypersonic missile with intermediate-range earlier this month in a move that was condemned by the United States, South Korea and Japan.

The isolated North has also demolished a major monument in its capital that symbolized the goal of reconciliation with South Korea on the orders of leader Kim Jong Un, who last week called the rival a "primary foe" and said unification was no longer possible.

Satellite imagery of Pyongyang on Tuesday showed that the monument, an arch symbolizing hopes for Korean reunification which was completed after a landmark inter-Korea summit in 2000, was no longer there, according to a report by NK News, an online outlet that monitors North Korea. Reuters could not independently confirm that the monument, known informally as the Arch of Reunification, had been demolished.



ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi addressing a ceremony to commemorate the International Day of Education.

## Pak urges 'concrete' UN steps to end Israeli Gaza slaughter; pushes for 2-state solution

UNITED NATIONS (APP): A senior Pakistani diplomat has called for "concrete steps" by the United Nations to stop the Israeli slaughter of the people in Gaza, as he underscored that a lasting end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can only come through a two-state solution.

"It is now time for the Security Council, for the entire membership of the United Nations, to consider measures by which to reverse this wanton rejection of peace," Ambassador Munir Akram told the 15-member body on Tuesday, referring to the repudiation of the two-state formula by Israel.

"We hope the Council will be able, finally, to adopt a resolution demanding a

complete cessation of hostilities, full access to humanitarian assistance for the besieged population of Gaza, and international protection for the Palestinian people," he said in a high-level Council debate on the Middle East crisis.

Tuesday's meeting featured more than 60 speakers, including many ministers, who discussed the need for a humanitarian ceasefire, the urgency with which to scale up aid, the importance of pursuing a two-State solution and the imperative to avoid further regional escalation.

Deploing Israel's defiance of world opinion, Ambassador Akram said, "If the Israeli leadership persists in refusing peace, the Security Council, the General Assembly.

## Baseless things are threat for freedom of expression, journalism: Solangi

ISLAMABAD (Online): Caretaker federal information minister Murtaza Solangi has said baseless things are threat for freedom of expression and journalism.

He said this while talking to media men here Wednesday.

He indicated that 2024 is year of election in different countries. The elections are taking place in Pakistan, India, US and Indonesia.

General election is going to be held on February 8 in Pakistan while elections are taking place in Indonesia after one week. Election in US will be held in November.

He held the threat of evening Vloggers has come fore due to different reason in Pakistan. Millions of views come on their baseless things. This is serious threat to freedom of expression and freedom of media.

we talked of propaganda of Hitler era and today we are talking of this as well.

News room will have to make fact check departments.

Mobile are in the hands of 150 million people in our country. It has become hard to bring truth before the people.

## Pakistan benefiting from first CPEC phase; engaged with China for next one: PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Wednesday said that having achieved the first phase of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Pakistan was benefiting from its early harvest projects while remaining engaged with China to execute the next phase. "We have already achieved the CPEC's first phase and we are benefiting from its early harvest projects. We are entering the second phase. We do need more deliberations when it comes to the second phase," he said in an interview with China Global Television Network (CGTN) during his visit to Davos to attend the World Economic Forum.

He said CPEC's second phase required road and air connectivity around the industrialisation projects.

"Both sides are engaged and we have developed a lot of connectivity - road, air and rest of connectivity corridor. We are benefiting from the ecosystem of doing trade with one another," he remarked.

Asked how he articulated the Chinese economy, Prime Minister Kakar said, "I am always sanguine about it. There are 1.5 billion consumers and 1.5 billion producers... How can you divorce 1.5 billion people from 8 billion people? It has to remain connected."

He said being a huge marketplace, both China and the world were interested in each other.

Questioned about his government's priorities, the prime minister highlighted the economic revival, the transformation of technology and taxation reforms.

He said Pakistan was on the middle ground amidst the discourse between Global North and South, and other conflicts in the region.

Domestically, he said, the government needed to earn more and spend less.

The prime minister said that Pakistan should remain focused on taking the advantage of opportunities in the region, including the Belt and Road Initiative and the relocation of Chinese industry.

He advocated the policy envisaging to encourage business and provide them electricity on competitive price to help the businesses produce competitive goods for export to the international market.

## Pak, Russia sign MoU on cooperation in sports, physical culture

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and Russia on Wednesday signed a Memorandum of Understanding aimed at enhancing bilateral cooperation in the fields of sports and physical culture.

The MoU was signed between Pakistan's Ministry of Inter-Provincial Coordination and Sports Ministry of Russia, Pakistan's Embassy in Moscow said on its X account.



## President calls for education emergency to enroll 26m out-of-school children

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Wednesday called for the enrollment of around 26 million out-of-school children in the country through drastic measures including education emergency, double shifts in educational institutes and utilizing the mosque for teaching purposes.

The president, addressing an event in connection with the World Education Day, also suggested a mechanism to engage the newly graduated and intermediate students for teaching the out-of-school children, offering them a stipend.

Additionally, he also advocated the promotion of online education, besides extending the facilities to doctors, engineers, and trained workforce in the country to discourage the trend of moving abroad.

He said the alarming figure of 26 million out-of-school children was worrisome for the country and exemplified other countries including Sri Lanka and Bangladesh where children enrollment was around 98 to 100 percent.

He said the educating the children was of paramount importance to produce a skilled and qualified workforce, not merely the laborers. Lauding the contribution of the partner organisations, the president said the country should take advantage of their services for benefit of the future generations.

He informed the gathering that since Pakistan's inception, around 55,000 schools were built and the enrolment of out-of-school children required another 50,000 schools which was extremely difficult, considering educational budget of the provinces. In such a scenario, the out-of-box solutions were a must to cope with the challenge, he added.

Reiterating his suggestion to use the mosque platform as a centre of learning, he said the worship places were equipped with all basic facilities including electricity and clean drinking water. The platform can be used to teach out-of-school children in alternative timings including both boys and girls at separate mosques, he added.

President Alvi lauded the Benazir Income Support Program for its contributions to child and mother's health and suggested to link financial assistance with the enrollment of out-of-school children.

Highlighting the ratio of 15-20 percent of Dyslexia disease in the country, he appreciated the measures taken for the suffering children.

The president also said the enrollment in higher education after intermediate was around 10-12 percent in Pakistan as compared to 24 percent in neighboring countries.



LAHORE: Caretaker Federal Minister for Communications, Shahid Ashraf Chaudhry, chairing the meeting at Chief Secretary Office.

## DG PDMA calls on Chinese CG in Karachi

QUETTA: The Director General Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Jahanzaib Khan called on the Chinese Consul General, Mr Yang Yungdang in Chinese Consulate, Karachi on Wednesday.

During the course of meeting, DG PDMA briefed the Chinese diplomat about the overall functioning of the Authority in detail.

Speaking to the DG PDMA assured every possible cooperation to DG PDMA for enhancing capacity of the Authority besides putting it on modern lines.

## Caretaker Minister for Finance says: Govt taking measures for promotion of technical education in Balochistan

QUETTA: The caretaker Provincial Minister for Finance and Revenue, Amjad Rasheed has stated that the interim provincial government is taking measures for promotion of technical education in the province.

He exhorted the youngsters to learn skills along with education.

He hailed the establishment of sub office of the Overseas Employment Corporation and believed that it would have far reaching results in time to come.

Amjad Rasheed was speaking on occasion of the visit of Technical Training Center here on Wednesday.

The Principal TTC Shoaib Anwar Shirazi briefed the visiting Minister about overall functioning of the Center.

Meanwhile, he also visited different sections of the Center and reviewed its functioning.

Expressing satisfaction over the performance of TTC, the Minister said that technical education happens to be surety of educational and economic stability of any society.

He said that the pace of development is faster in the countries which paid attention towards the technical education by making it part of its routine and generalized education.

He strongly believed that not only the issue of unemployment can be overcome but the country can also be put on path of development and prosperity by decorating the younger generation with the technical education.

He pledged to utilize all available resources for promotion of technical education in the province.

He said that there is need of skilled human resource in different countries of the world.



QUETTA: Principal Technical Training Center Shoaib Anwar Sherazi briefed caretaker Provincial Finance Minister Amjad Rasheed during his visit of center.

## Crackdown against defaulters & electricity pilferers continues

QUETTA: The Quetta Electric Supply Company (QESCO) continued its crackdown against the defaulters of electricity utility bills and those involved in the pilferage of electricity all over the province.

According to the spokesman of QESCO, at least 321 power connections of the defaulters were disconnected on non-payment in different circles of Quetta, Pishin, Loralai, Sibi, Khuzdar and Makran.

Moreover, 59 shunt and tempered meters were also removed and replaced with the new ones in Quetta city. The spokesman of QESCO informed that Rs. 2.656 billion have so far been recovered from the defaulters of utility bills in the province.

The hefty amount has been recovered from over 161,319 defaulting consumers during the special ongoing campaign of QESCO.

In addition to this, a total of 556 FIRs have so far been registered against the power pilferers in the province.

## Afridi gets protective bail in 2 cases

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday granted protective bail to PTI leader Shehryar Khan Afridi in two cases and stopped the police from arresting him till February 6. Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani heard the case of Afridi seeking protective bail in two FIR registered in Kohat against him. The court accepted the bail against surety bonds worth Rs 20,000 and stopped the police from arresting the petitioner. The court also instructed the petitioner to approach the relevant court for relief during the period.

## Farooq urges people to make successful to NP on Feb, 8 by votes

QUETTA (APP): National Party (NP)'s candidate from PB-46 Haji Farooq Shahwani on Wednesday said that people should make successful to the National Party on February 8 through their votes for wider interest of Balochistan. He expressed these views while addressing at corner meeting at Hazargaji area. A large number of people including party workers attended the meeting. A member of Provincial Working Committee of National Party and a nominated candidate from PB-46 Haji Farooq Shahwani said that the National Party was a party that was politically serious and upholds Balochi traditions. The vision of the National Party is an educated Balochistan. During the last five years, the members of the Nationalist Political Party elected from the areas received development funds worth billions of rupees, which instead of being spent for the development and prosperity of the people of the respective areas were used for their interest, he claimed.

He said that the people of Saryab today were deprived of all basic facilities, people should make Dr. Abdul Malik Baloch and National Party successful to end the deprivations of Balochistan.



QUETTA: Commissioner Quetta Division Hamza Shafiqat and Executive Director Forum for Dignity Initiatives Uzma Yaqoob signing a MoU.

## Health Secretary directs to take action against unregistered & substandard private hospitals

QUETTA (APP): Balochistan Health Secretary Abdullah Khan on Wednesday directed the Healthcare Commission to take strict action against unregistered hospitals and substandard private hospitals to improve and regulate services of private hospitals.

The Secretary instructed the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Healthcare Commission to take steps to meet the standards of the hospitals for the interest of patients, said a press release issued here.

He said that measures were being taken to improve treatment quality in hospitals of the province saying that no compromise would be made on the standard of the hospitals. The secretary said that the Health Department was taking steps to regularize the sale of medicines which would be regularly monitored by drug inspectors.

## China ready to work with Pak to upgrade CPEC: Wang

BEIJING (APP): China on Wednesday said it was ready to work with Pakistan to upgrade the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and accelerate the building of an even closer China-Pakistan community with a shared future in the new era.

"China stands ready to work with Pakistan to deliver on the important common understandings between the leaders of the two countries, deepen political mutual trust, and expand practical cooperation," Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Wang Wenbin said during his regular briefing on a question by APP correspondent.



QUETTA: Needy people are taking warm clothes from Wall of Kindness (Divar-e-Meharabani), near Commissioner office in Quetta.

## BBISE finalize arrangements for annual matric exams on Feb 20

QUETTA (APP): Balochistan Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BBISE) Controller, Abida Kakar on Wednesday said that matric exams would start from February 20 and in this regard, all necessary preparation has been made to conduct the exam in a peaceful environment.

Talking to media here, she said that during the examination, if any supervisory staff tried to sabotage the examination process, strict action would be taken against him.

During the exams, she said that all the photostat shops will remain closed and mobile phones would not be allowed in and around the exams centers. She said, if any student is found cheating, his result would be cancelled.

If any class IV staff is found assisting the student during exams, the disciplinary action would be taken against him, she warned.

Abida Kakar said that BBISE has gradually shifted from a manual system to digitalization and the people would get better facilities in future. Balochistan government was leaving no stone unturned to end menace of cheating being reported during exams, she said.

"We will have to fight together to discourage copying system for the bright future of the students," she said.

## FDI ED meeting with Commissioner: Special measures stressed for making easy access of female voters to polling stations

### Commissioner office, FDI ink MoU to conduct awareness session in educational institutions

QUETTA: The Executive Director of Forum for Dignity Initiative (FDI) Ms Uzma Yaqoob along with Ms Shayan Imran had meeting with the Commissioner Quetta, Muhammad Hamza Shafiqat here on Wednesday.

During the course of meeting, the matters about preparations of the upcoming general elections, women representation in the voting process were discussed.

They also discussed the accessibility of women, disabled persons and transgenders to the polling stations.

The meeting stressed maximum participation of women voters in the polling stations.

For the purpose, easy access of women should be ensured, it was further stressed.

APP adds: The Office of Commissioner Quetta Division has inked a Memorandum of Understanding with Forum for Dignity Initiatives to conduct awareness sessions in educational institutions of Quetta Division regarding the kind treatment and attitudes towards persons with disabilities, transgender and women.

Commissioner Quetta Division Muhammad Hamza Shafiqat and Executive Director Forum for Dignity Initiatives (FDI)



KHARAN: Chief Secretary Balochistan Shakeel Qadir Khan and Caretaker Home Minister Captain (retd) Mir Muhammad Zubair Khan Jamali presiding over a meeting regarding preparation for upcoming general elections.