

# Independent

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## Senate adopts resolution calling to postpone general elections

Non-binding resolution moved by Senator Dilawar Khan highlights concerns over security situation, cold weather; Caretaker government, PML-N oppose the move; Political parties slam resolution

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Senate on Friday adopted a resolution calling for the postponement of general elections scheduled for February 8 in order to facilitate the effective participation of people across the country in the electioneering process in view of security and harsh weather conditions. The resolution, moved by independent Senator Dilawar Khan, was passed by the House with a majority vote. However, there was low attendance. Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi and Senator Afnan Ullah Khan of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz

(PML-N) opposed the resolution. Senator Dilawar, while presenting the resolution, urged the chair to postpone the agenda for taking up the matter of serious concern. He read out the resolution, which maintained that the Constitution of Pakistan "upholds the right to vote for every citizen of Pakistan." The resolution read: "The constitutional duty assigned to the Election Commission of Pakistan to conduct free and fair elections is contingent upon inclusivity and ensuring the participation of all regions and people. "The voter turnout in colder areas remains notably high during mod-

erate weather conditions; January and February are recognized as the coldest months in a majority of the areas of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. "Various groups and political parties have expressed significant reservations regarding anticipated difficulties in ensuring the participation of residents in cold areas during the electioneering process." It noted that the recent incidents, including the foiled attempts on the lives of Jamiaat Ulama-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman and former MNA Mohsin Dawar, as well as threatening calls targeting Awami National Party's Provincial Chief

Aimal Wali Khan and other political figures, had raised concerns about the safety of political leaders. "The Ministry of Interior has conveyed serious threats to the lives of prominent politicians, further exacerbating the challenges faced by political parties in exercising their right to free and fair election campaigning," the resolution added. There had been a marked increase in attacks on security forces and citizens claiming precious lives particularly in northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces, it further said. The resolution read: "The intelligence agencies have warned of militant at-

tack threats on election rallies in the two provinces; increase in attacks targeting both security forces and civilians, resulting in the loss of valuable lives, particularly in the northwestern region of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces; "Alerts issued by intelligence agencies, indicating imminent threats of militant attacks on election rallies within the aforementioned provinces may have potential impact on the safety of citizens and the democratic electoral process; "Cognizant of the resurgence of the Covid-19 virus in the country and health sector's concerns about potential further spread;



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Permanent Representative in UN Mr. Munir Akram calls on caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.

## PM asks envoys to identify avenues for Pakistan's int'l economic collaborations

Reiterates Pakistan's continued support for Kashmiris' right to self determination

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Friday asked Pakistan's envoys in the United States and the United Kingdom to identify the new avenues for Pakistan's economic collaborations at international level. The prime minister, in a meeting with Pakistan's Ambassador in the US Masood Khan and Ambassador in the UK Dr Muhammad Faisal, instructed them to constantly highlight the Kashmir cause as well as Pakistan's stance on Palestine issue. The envoys briefed the prime minister about the performance of their respective missions and also got the prime minister's instructions on Pakistan's

foreign policy. The prime minister also directed the envoys to hold road shows for attracting foreign investment to the projects initiated under the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC). Calling the overseas Pakistanis a national asset, Prime Minister Kakar asked the Pakistani missions to address the problems faced by the expatriates on priority basis. He also called for persuading the Pakistani diaspora to invest their capital in Pakistan. Meanwhile Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Friday reiterated that Pakistan would continue to extend its full political, diplomatic, and

moral support to the valiant Kashmiri people in their just struggle for their rights including the inalienable right to self-determination, by the relevant resolutions of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). "Today, Kashmiris around the world are observing the 75th anniversary of the Resolution adopted by the United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan (UNCIP), providing that the Jammu and Kashmir dispute will be decided through the democratic method of a free and impartial plebiscite under the UN auspices, the prime minister said in a message on the occasion of Self-Determination Day.



KARACHI: President Dr Arif Alvi chairing a meeting on Inclusive Education for Persons with Disabilities.

## President for inclusive education for children with disabilities in schools

**Independent Report** KARACHI: President Dr Arif Alvi has called for providing equal educational opportunities to all children, regardless of physical ability or socio-economic background, by promoting inclusive education in the country. He urged private schools and welfare organizations to support the government in making education accessible for all children, especially children with Disabilities (CWDs). The President expressed these views during a meeting with the representatives of private schools and schools run by NGOs in Karachi, at Governor House, today. Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training, Madad Ali Sindhi, Sindh's Minister for Education and Literacy, Mrs Rana Hussain, Secretary Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPD), Secretary School Education & Literacy Department (SELD), and representatives of schools in Karachi attended the meeting.

Addressing the meeting, the President emphasised the need for the development and implementation of an inclusive curriculum that accommodated diverse learning styles and catered to the needs of students with different abilities (SWDs). He said that educational institutions should be made physically accessible for SWDs by ensuring the availability of ramps, elevators, and other necessary facilities. The President further underscored the need for drafting a basic chart on Inclusive Education by all the

stakeholders, which should include fundamental aspects of inclusive education, including easy access for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in schools, and training of private school teachers on special education tools. The President also called for building a consensus on the facilitation of PWDs through inclusive education in Pakistan with the help of government, private sector and NGOs. He said that Sindh's School Education Department and the Department of Empowerment of PWDs should constantly engage with private schools and NGOs on Inclusive Education. He urged private schools to also share their vision and best practices on Inclusive Education with the Government of Sindh.



LAHORE: Chairman Pakistan People's Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari cutting the 96th birthday cake of Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto at NA 127 Kot Lakhpat Pindi Rajputan.

## PPP doesn't believe in hate & anarchy: Bilawal

LAHORE (INP): Pakistan Peoples Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Friday expressed his wholehearted desire to serve the common Pakistanis and announced a range of initiatives that his party plans to undertake once in power. During an address in Lahore's NA-127 constituency, Bilawal voiced his joy at celebrating the birth anniversary of party founder Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto in Lahore. He emphasised that ZABhutto had represented the common people of Pakistan, and reiterated that there was only one political party truly representing the nation. Bilawal repeated his commitment to doubling salaries once in power, not-

ing the current inadequacy of wages for survival in Pakistan. He promised to provide free electricity up to 300 units to the general populace. Encouraging those present to become his ambassadors, Bilawal urged them to visit every household and inform people about his ten promises. He underscored the significance of the financial assistance provided through the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), asserting that the PPP was the sole party responsible for its initiation. Bilawal pledged to provide Benazir cards to labourers, Kisan cards to farmers, and Jawan cards to the youth, directly addressing the prevailing issues of poverty, inflation and unemployment.

## SC reserves judgment regarding interpretation of Article 62 (1)(f)

ISLAMABAD (APP): A seven-member larger bench of the Supreme Court on Friday reserved its judgment in the case pertaining to the interpretation of Article 62(1)(f) of the Constitution and disqualification tenure. The bench headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa and comprising Justice Mansoor Ali Shah, Justice Yahya Afridi, Justice Amin Ud Din Khan, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar and Justice Musarrat Hilali heard the case. The bench reserved the

verdict after all the respondents concluded their arguments. During the course of proceedings, the CJP observed that the court would announce the short order soon. Attorney General for Pakistan Mansoor Usman Awan and Jahangir Tareen's lawyer Makhdoom Ali Khan gave arguments before the bench. The apex court had taken notice of the lifetime disqualification under Article 62(1)(f) in the appeal of former MPA Mir Badshah Qaisrani against his disqualification.

## No directives from PM, cabinet for delay in elections: Solangi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs, Murtaza Solangi on Friday said that there was no directives from the Prime Minister or the federal cabinet for delay in general elections. Talking to the media outside the Parliament House, the minister said that he did not get a chance to give arguments in the resolution on the postponement of the elections in the upper house. According to Article 218(3) of the Constitution, it was the power of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), to conduct elections, give a date or change the date for elections, he said. "We cannot interfere

in the affairs of a constitutional body," Murtaza Solangi said. Acknowledging the problems mentioned in the resolution were the real problems, he said adding that these problems had existed before in the history of Pakistan's Parliamentary politics and elections. The minister maintained that it was the government's responsibility to look into the issues of harsh weather and other matters including providing security. "So far, no signal has been received from any quarters regarding postponement of elections," he said. Only the ECP, he said had the constitutional authority to postpone the elections.

## Aneeq urges youth to help promote interfaith harmony

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed on Friday urged the young generation to play their due role in the promotion of service to humanity and brotherhood by following the teachings of Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him). Pursuing the values of tolerance, respect and peace was imperative for religious and interfaith har-

mony, he said addressing a seminar on "The Importance and Necessity of Promoting Inter-faith Harmony" at the Iqra University Islamabad, organized in collaboration with the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Inter-Religious Harmony. The minister underscored the need of taking a united and collective stance to counter anti-national forces and those fostering religious divisions.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Aneeq Ahmed addressing a seminar on Interfaith Harmony at IQRA University H-9.



COLOMBO: Secretary Defence Lt Gen (Retired) Hamood Uz Zaman Khan calls on President of Sri Lanka, Ranil Wickremesinghe at Presidential Secretariat Sri Lanka.

## President approves reconstitution of CCI

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr. Arif Alvi on Friday approved reconstitution of the Council of Common Interests (CCI) on the advice of the prime minister. The president gave the approval under Article 153 of the Constitution. The CCI would be headed by the Prime Minister of Pakistan while the chief ministers of the four provinces and three federal ministers would be members of the council. The three federal cabinet members include Federal Minister of Finance and Revenue, Minister of Privatization, and Minister of Law and Justice.

## Zulfiqar Bhutto remembered on his 96th birth anniversary

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 96th birth anniversary of former Prime Minister and founder of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto (ZAB) was observed on Friday. The PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and PPP Co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari paid tribute to the former premier Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto. Bilawal Bhutto in a message on X on the birth anniversary of his grandfather said ZAB gave the Constitution and the nuclear program to the country. He paid rich tributes to the Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto for his political vision and wisdom for the country.

## FM calls for immediate cessation of human rights violation in IIOJK

From Czechangez Khan Jadoon ISLAMABAD: The Foreign Minister, Jaiil Abbas Jilani, on the Occasion of Right to Self-Determination Day said that the fifth of January is annually observed as the Right to Self-Determination Day for the people of Jammu and Kashmir. On this day in 1949, the United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan (UNCIP) adopted a resolution that guarantees a free and fair plebiscite in Jammu and Kashmir, to enable the Kashmiri people to realize their right to self-determination. The right to self-determination is a fundamental principle of international law. Every year, the UN General Assembly adopts a resolution that re-

affirms the legal right of people to decide their own destiny. It expresses unequivocal support for the realization of the right to self-determination for people under foreign occupation. Regrettably, the Kashmiri people have not been able to exercise this inalienable right. He added that the India is taking a number of steps to consolidate its occupation of the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), which is an internationally-recognized disputed territory. Following its illegal and unilateral actions of 5 August 2019, India's efforts have been aimed at engineering demographic and political changes so that the Kashmiris are reduced to a disempowered community in their own land.

## Two terrorists killed in IBO by forces

RAWALPINDI/TANK (Online): Two terrorists were killed by Security forces in an intelligence-based security operation in Tank. According to Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR), security forces conducted intelligence based operation in district Tank and two terrorists were killed in a fierce exchange of fire. The ISPR said that Gul Yusuf aka Toor, was involved in various terror acts against the security forces in Dera Ismail Khan and

The terrorist commander was also involved in the targeted killing of civilians. According to ISPR, the terrorist commander Gul Yusuf was the most wanted with a bounty of Rs 2.5 million on his head. The ISPR said the local people had appreciated efforts of the security forces for peace and stability. The media wing added that the security forces were determined to eradicate the scourge of terrorism from the country with the support of the nation.

## Daily Voice of Masses Independent

### Gathering storm?

Any hopes that the new year would bring some stability to the Middle East have been quickly dashed. Instead, fears are growing that the volatile region's intertwined conflicts will explode into something much larger — and uglier.

The first week of 2024 has been marked by two pivotal acts of violence linked to the ongoing Israeli slaughter in Gaza, as well as the larger confrontation between Iran and the US-Israeli combine. On Wednesday, the Iranian city of Kerman witnessed two bomb blasts near the tomb of Iranian general Qassem Soleimani.

Over 80 mourners who had gathered to mark the anniversary of Soleimani's assassination by the US in 2020 were killed in the Kerman atrocity. The bombings are amongst the highest mass-casualty attacks Iran has suffered in many years.

Only a day earlier, top Hamas leader Saleh Al Arouri, along with other colleagues, was assassinated in a missile strike in Beirut's Dahiyeh neighbourhood — a stronghold of Iran-backed Hezbollah.

It is unclear who is responsible for the Kerman blasts; terrorists belonging to the self-styled Islamic State group have struck Iranian targets in the past, while Israel has also carried out assassination campaigns against Iranian military and government figures.

Amongst these was the murder of a top Pasdaran commander in Syria late last year. With regard to the Arouri assassination, there is little doubt that Tel Aviv is responsible.

Israel usually maintains an air of ambiguity about its murderous foreign operations. But in the current circumstances, it would be playing with fire by trying to provoke its adversaries in Iran, Lebanon and elsewhere in the region into striking back.

If the Iranians or Hezbollah were to react to these attacks, Israel could play the victim card and draw its American protectors deeper into the Middle East quagmire.

The resultant conflict would shake the international order to its core. So far, both Tehran and Hezbollah have marked their responses with restraint. But it will be hard for them to maintain this posture if Israel continues with its provocative behaviour. Though logic would dictate that de-confliction mechanisms be deployed immediately to bring down the temperature, the reality is that a larger conflict may not be a matter of 'if' but 'when'.

Of course, if Israel were to stop its genocidal campaign in the Gaza Strip, things could be controlled. But the extremists at the helm in Tel Aviv do not appear to be interested in this option, while Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has a vested interest in prolonging the conflict to escape domestic censure.

Washington's policymakers must explain if they are okay with their Israeli allies setting the Middle East on fire; there are no signs yet they would rather work towards reining in Tel Aviv.



Amin Valliani

Presently, many countries are going through a painful cost-of-living crisis. A few years ago, the world faced the Covid-19 pandemic, which affected millions across the globe. Many lost their lives, while others suffered huge economic losses. The global economy has not been able to fully recover from these shocks. In such a situation, families need to be vigilant, especially about how to surmount day-to-day economic challenges.

Economic stability is essential for any family to survive and prosper. Therefore, every family should try and improve its economic status while abiding by the ethics of Islam such as hard work, saving, sharing, and gratitude to Allah, etc.

The economy depends on earthly resources. Islam says: "He it is Who created for you all that is in the earth..." (2:29). This means that there is no dearth of resources on earth. Allah is the Creator and continues to create resources for humanity. The science of economics helps guide us on how resources are to be used. Islam enjoins Muslims to practise moderation, instead of being miserly or becoming spendthrifts. Allah says: "And let not your hand be tied (like a miser) to your neck, nor stretch it forth to its utmost reach (like a spendthrift), so that you become blameworthy and in severe poverty (17:29)." Similarly, Islam does not like wastage of resources (7:31) but emphasises prudent living, so that every individual can achieve the goal of quality life. But what is prudent living? It means making wise decisions based on principles and managing practical affairs in an effective manner. Studies have shown that people who lead prudent, conscientious lives can also end up having a longer, healthier life. In other words, families have to look carefully at the economic context which is around them.

Pakistan's economy is currently going through severe uncertainty, facing numerous economic hardships including inflation, high cost of day-to-day needs, severe climate shocks and insufficient public funds to finance development programmes. There will be no surprise if, in the coming months, we see more difficult situations causing further instability and uncertainty in many sectors. Therefore, every family must be prudent in daily spending because it is the right way to prepare for the future. In crisis situations, people are always left to fend for themselves; very few helping hands come forth. Therefore, families should tighten their belts, strive to live within their means, contain their expenditure, enhance their income and minimise the use of utilities such as electricity, gas and water etc. Above all, families must be disciplined in financial matters.

### Prudent living

'keep up with the Joneses' and get trapped into constantly buying more. This is a time of hard work, earning more and reducing the overall cost of living and trying utmost to save money for the future. In a nutshell, every middle-class family has to make plans for careful spending and stop buying that which is not needed. Families have to evaluate their lifestyle and be prudent while spending money on day-to-day commodities. For example, consuming more locally grown vegetables or locally manufactured goods, instead of costly imported items or processed food, can help save money while being good for one's health. In frugality, one has to avoid expenditure on fast food, drinking sugary beverages, smoking, betel nuts, paan and other harmful things.

The condition of those families who have only one breadwinner is more precarious, therefore, they have to be extra vigilant. Similarly, the middle- and working-class households should focus on their health as any health issue at the time of financial crisis can make the situation more cumbersome and unbearable. Moreover, in these difficult times, the government should improve health services at public facilities as lower middle-class people cannot afford costly private healthcare. Without health, no one can visualise a happy and prosperous life. In other words, life becomes extremely difficult if one's health deteriorates.

An unhealthy person remains dependent on others. His mind remains obsessed with his constant pain and agony. Therefore, each one of us needs to monitor and nourish our health throughout life. As the Holy Quran says: "O you who believe! Take care of your own selves" (5:105). — Courtesy Dawn

### Punjab must decide



Aasim Sajjad Akhtar

Election season is when the bourgeois political class makes all sorts of promises and at the same time says nothing at all. Take, for example, the complete neglect by mainstream politicians of Baloch protesters in Islamabad. They are sitting in front of the National Press Club in the federal capital.

Even if the bigwigs can't make time to visit, there's no obvious reason they cannot release a statement of support. Maryam Nawaz had no problem doing photo shoots with missing persons' loved ones a couple of years ago, but being anti-establishment was in fashion back then.

The ethnic peripheries — Baloch, Pakhtun, Sindhi, Seraiki, Gilgit-Baltistani, Kashmiri — have been treated this way for as long as one can remember. The establishment and most mainstream politicians evince much interest in the lands, scenic highlands, minerals, coastlines, and freshwater lakes of the peripheries, but couldn't care less for the teeming millions that live there. In fact, the more politically conscious you are and demand access to your own resources, you are considered a threat to development, security, and the state itself.

What about the Punjabi heartland? It is here that consent has been cultivated to sustain Pakistan's militarised structure of power. The PTI's rise and fall suggests that this consent has fractured to some extent at least. But our bourgeois political class, or at least those who are now

the incumbents, are not going out of their way to build on this.

For as far as the eye can see, most bourgeois politicians in Punjab offer to reproduce everyday life for the vast majority — a life mediated by state institutions like the thana, katcheri and patwari, and dictated by high-caste, moneyed classes who own land, business and peddle social influence. They all claim to be better than their competitor, while throwing in 'ideological' rhetoric about religion for good measure.

This is how elections are fought and won, especially one that is shaping up to be as rigged (primarily against the PTI) as this one. But social, economic and political life will change little after Feb 8. And the political and intellectual mainstream will acknowledge our deep, structural crises in knee-jerk fashion only when necessary.

The burning of the ethnic peripheries will represent the most acute form of these interrelated crises and will be forced into the public eye again and again, largely because of politically conscious youth that refuse to stay silent about their plight. But what can we expect from the majority of this country's young people who reside in the Punjabi heartland?

It is true that to be young and from the Punjab means that one has better chances at social mobility than if one is young and hails from virtually any other ethnic-national community in Pakistan. But class war plays out in Punjab too, where millions of children are out of school, workers and peasants face dispossession and live in semi-serfdom, and all sorts of health problems play out alongside environmental despoliation.

Other than the very well-off, most Punjabi youth — many who have been taken by the PTI and

Imran Khan — continue to suffer the cumulative economic effects of the pandemic and IMF-imposed austerity, as well as the hyper-financialised and consumption-based economic model that prevails in Pakistan today.

In short, that there is simply not enough gainful and dignified employment available for the number of young people seeking jobs, let alone housing, health, education and recreation. The most coveted option is to leave the country by hook or crook, but even that is an option for a very small percentage of the population.

I believe that a growing number of young people in Punjab do understand that the establishment-centric system offers them only hateful rhetoric, and in fact, subjects many to military-led dispossession. It is also noteworthy that more are speaking about deep injustices in faraway places like Palestine as well as the ethnic peripheries in Pakistan.

The next step is to understand that political commitment is not about following a Pied Piper to the ends of the earth. It is about coming to terms with the causes (rather than the symptoms) of the predicament one faces, and then having the wisdom to make common cause with all others concerned with building a different future.

The future for Punjabi youth — especially those lower down the class ladder — is not as bleak as some others but it certainly is not great. The young Baloch women protesting peacefully in Islamabad for their loved ones have said they seek to make common cause with the ordinary people of Punjab. Our collective future will be shaped by how Punjab's increasingly politically conscious young people respond in the due course of time. — Courtesy Dawn

## Commerce News

### Ample stock of fertilizer available to meet domestic demand: Murtaza Solangi

ISLAMABAD (INP): Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs, Murtaza Solangi, Friday informed the Senate that there is an ample stock of fertilizer available in the country to meet the domestic demand.

In response to a calling attention notice moved by Zeeshan Khanzada regarding the problems being faced by the farmers due to the

shortage of urea fertilizer and its soaring rates, he expressed hope that, due to steps taken by the caretaker government in the coming days, there would be a further noticeable reduction in urea prices in the country.

The minister said that urea prices, which had previously exceeded Rs. 5,000 per bag, have now decreased to Rs. 4,451 per bag due to the government's

interventions. Emphasizing the significance of agriculture in the country, Murtaza Solangi highlighted that approximately one-fourth of Pakistan's GDP is attributed to agriculture, with 40% of the labor force linked to this vital sector.

Regarding the steps taken by the government, he informed that around 220,000 tons of urea had been recently imported by the government.



ISLAMABAD : A Chinese business delegation led by Zhang Yang, Chairman, Chang Jiang Industrial Company (Pakistan) Co., Ltd, and Director Chongqing Federation of Industry and Commerce visited the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) and explored the possibilities of joint ventures and investment in Pakistan. The representatives of Li Ting International China and Yihai Culture Communication Co., Ltd of China were also in the delegation.



ISLAMABAD: Workers loading onion on delivery rickshaw at vegetable market.

### Business facilitation centres being set up in five big cities: Minister

LAHORE: Caretaker Punjab Minister for Trade and Industry SM Taveer has said that business facilitation centres are being established in five big cities of Punjab after Lahore.

He was presiding over a meeting of the Punjab Small Industries Corporation here on Friday, which reviewed performance of the business facilitation centre. Secretary for Industry and Trade Eshaan Bhutta briefed the minister about progress on business facilitation centres in Faisalabad, Sialkot, Multan, Gujranwala and Rawalpindi. The meeting was told that the business facilitation centre had changed the investment culture in Punjab and now no-objection certificates

(NOCs) were being issued in 10 to 15 days for setting up new factory. Till now, 161 NOCs had been issued from the business facilitation centre, while 86 more were in process.

SM Taveer said that during the current month, caretaker Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi would inaugurate five more business facilitation centres. He said that business facilitation centre was a revolutionary step to facilitate the business community and added that officers of 20 departments of federal and provincial governments were performing their duties at the business facilitation centre. He said 106 different NOCs were being provided in the business facilitation centre under one roof.

### Gold rates decline by Rs1,200

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold decreased by Rs.1,200 and was sold at Rs.217,000 on Friday compared to its sale at Rs.218,200 on last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs.1,028 to Rs.186,043 from Rs.187,071 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold went down to Rs.170,539 from Rs.171,482, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola and ten gram Silver remained stagnant at Rs.2,660 and 2,280.52 respectively.

### PSX loses 124 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed a bearish trend on Friday, losing 124.26, a negative change of 0.19 percent, closing at 64,514.90 points against 64,639.16 points the previous trading day.

A total of 949,559,318 shares valuing Rs.19,355 billion were traded during the day as compared to 548,989,972 shares valuing Rs. 15,395 billion the last day.

### Karim urges significant cut in policy interest rate to help to revive economy

Independent Report

ISLAMABAD: Mr. Karim Aziz Malik, Chairman Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), Capital Office, Islamabad said that the record high interest rate has made it very difficult for the private sector to get credit from banks for the expansion of existing businesses and make new investments due to which the business activities are suffering badly. He further said that rising interest rates make your business debt more expensive which means

more cash required to cover interest costs. Kareem Aziz Malik urged a significant cut



in the policy interest rate to help to revive the economy. He said that current 22% interest rate has severely damaged the business environment without achieving its intended objective of controlling inflation.

### Trade deficit shrinks by 34.29%, export grow by 5.17% in 1st half

ISLAMABAD (APP): The country's merchandise trade deficit contracted by 34.29 per cent during the first half of the current fiscal year compared to the corresponding period of last year, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported.

The Trade deficit from July-December (2023-24) was recorded at \$11.148 billion as against the deficit of \$16.965 billion in July-December

(2022-23), showing negative growth of 34.29 per cent. During the period under review, the exports increased by 5.17 per cent to \$14.981 billion compared to the exports of \$14.244 billion during the corresponding period of last year, according to the latest PBS data.

On the other hand, the imports narrowed by 16.28 per cent and were recorded at \$26.129 billion compared to \$31.209 billion last year.

### Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Three ships namely, lanthe, FSM and Bolan scheduled to load/offload Bitumen, LPG and Gas oil, berthed at Multi-Purpose Terminal, Engro Terminal and Oil Terminal respectively on Thursday.

Meanwhile two more ships, Athenian and AnanyaNaree also arrived at outer-anchorage of the Port Qasim on during last 24 hours load/unload Containers and Rice respectively. A total of eleven ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours.

### CNG closed till Jan 31 to ensure uninterrupted gas supply

PESHAWAR (APP): The Deputy Commissioner Peshawar Afaq Wazir on Friday imposed a ban on the operation of CNG pumps till January 31 to ensure uninterrupted gas supply to domestic consumers. A notification issued here said that the DC has imposed section 144 and ordered the closure of CNG pumps within the premises of district Peshawar with immediate effect, adding that anyone to be found violating this order would proceed under section 188 P.P.C.

### Emirates celebrates 25years of success serving Islamabad and Lahore

Independent Report  
LAHORE: Emirates, the world's largest international airline, proudly commemorates its 25th anniversary of operations at Islamabad and Lahore airports. Since its inaugural flights to both cities in January 1999, Emirates has played a crucial role in connecting Islamabad and Lahore to the world via Dubai, while fostering economic growth and cultural exchange.

In its pivotal role, Emirates ensured seamless journeys for millions of passengers on its routes

and significantly contributed to the development of the country and region through tourism and trade. The airline's strong presence in Islamabad and Lahore underscores its position as a leading and reliable carrier which is committed to excellence and innovation in the aviation sector.

Emirates ensures seamless journeys for millions of passengers on its routes



Over the past quarter of a century, Emirates has been a reliable partner facilitating seamless passenger and cargo

from the key points in Pakistan, with the airline operating a robust schedule of ten weekly flights from each of the two cities.

### Chinese companies increase investment in Pakistan for copper production

ISLAMABAD (Online): Chinese companies in collaboration with their local partners in Pakistan have increased investment for copper production in the recent years.

Copper and articles thereof have seen an increase in export to China from Pakistan as well. In the first eleven months of 2023 increased by 9%, crossed one billion dollars mark, sources from Commerce Ministry told China Economic Net.

Ghulam Qadir, Commercial Counsellor at the Pakistan Embassy in Beijing, told CEN that the Pakistani government is keen to boost copper and associated product

exports to China. He also mentioned that Pakistan's exports of copper to China have increased recently, and he anticipated that the value of these exports will rise as a result of refined copper products.

"Pakistan has been actively seeking foreign investments, particularly from big Chinese companies, to bring in value addition and produce more valuable products for the global market.

Having Chinese companies invest in Pakistan would not only provide a boost to the country's economy but also open doors for advanced technologies and expertise.

## Faculty members of Afghan varsities call on Governor, discuss promotion of education

PESHAWAR (APP): Higher Education Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali has urged the faculty members of Afghan universities to focus on intellectual orientation of students and divert their attention towards research and modern technology.

He was talking to a delegation of faculty members of Afghan universities, which called on him at the Governor House here on Friday. The delegation was comprised of 38 faculty members of Afghan universities who are getting training in IM Sciences Hayatabad with the financial assistance of

Higher Education Commission (HEC). The Governor welcomed the delegation and discussed matters relating to promotion of contemporary education and capacity building of students.

He said that capacity building of Afghan youth would further strengthen peace and led the country on course of progress and prosperity.

He also stressed upon faculty members to provide students with knowledge and education enabling them to tap potential of Afghan natural resources.

Haji Ghulam Ali said that Afghan students should be provided education and technology to remove backwardness and induce development. He also highlighted significance of higher education institutions for development of a nation.

On the occasion, governor was told that one month capacity building course is underway in IM Sciences for Afghan professors, assistant professors and lecturers. He was informed that various courses would be arranged for Afghan professionals in second phase.



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Haji Ghulam Ali in a group photo with delegation of faculty members of Afghanistan Universities during their visit to Peshawar.

## CM inaugurates Special Initiative Police Stations of Cantt & Saddar Baroni

**Independent Report**  
RAWALPINDI: Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi here on Friday inaugurated the Special Initiative Police Stations of Cantt and Saddar Baroni.

Inspector General of Police (IGP) Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar, Regional Police Officer, Rawalpindi Syed Khurram Ali, Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, Liaquat Ali Chhatta, City Police Officer, Rawalpindi Syed Khalid Hamdani and other senior officers were present on the occasion.

Talking to the media, the chief minister said that police stations across Punjab were being renovated under the Special Initiative Police Station program.

Two days ago, 36 police stations of 36 districts were inaugurated, he said adding, today, in the second phase, 36 more police stations were inaugurated.

The objective of the initiative is to provide the best service delivery in the best environment to the citizens, the CM added.

Mohsin Naqvi appreciated the RPO, CPO Rawalpindi and their team for the excellent work under Special Initiative Police Stations of Cantt and Saddar Baroni.

He directed the authorities to complete the Safe City project and CPO office in one month. The CM also announced to provide Rs 180 million for the completion of the CPO office project.

He instructed to complete the Safe City Project and CPO Office Rawalpindi by January 30.

## Punjab Governor says: Book exhibition is good effort to develop habit of reading books among people

**Independent Report**  
LAHORE: Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman today inaugurated the 4th Education Expo and Book Fair organized by Idara e Nazria Pakistan at Aiwan Quaid-e-Azam, Lahore.

Speaking to the media after inaugurating the exhibition, Punjab Governor, Muhammad Balighur Rehman said that this book exhibition is a good effort to develop the habit of reading books among people.

Governor Punjab lauded the efforts of officials of Idara e Nazria Pakistan for organizing the

education expo. He said that the young generation is the valuable asset of the country, adding that it is important to provide them with proper guidance in the field of education.

He said that the purpose of education is to impart knowledge to the youth and make them life-long learner. He said that it is very important to inculcate the habit of reading books among the students. He said that in this age of technology, e-books are also available, but there is no substitute for the satisfaction of reading books traditionally.



LAHORE: Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi cutting a ribbon of Police Station (Saddar) under Police Station up gradation project.

## Govt of Sindh 'first time initiative to provide 55 electric bikes' to female vaccinators

ISLAMABAD (APP): private news channel. While acknowledging the importance of empowering these vaccinators women in their roles, the government of Sindh would provide training sessions to recipients of the electric bikes, said a female vaccinator who hailed the groundbreaking step of the government.

The provision of specific uniforms for these women will also foster a sense of identity but also contribute to a more professional and organized approach to vaccine distribution, said another lady health worker.

This strategic decision aims to overcome logistical challenges, ensuring timely and widespread vaccination coverage throughout the province, said a report aired by a

## ANF recovers over 243 kg drugs in six operations

**Independent Report**  
RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) in its crackdown against drug traffickers conducted six operations across the country and managed to recover over 243 kg drugs and arrested six accused including a foreigner, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Friday.

He informed that 220 kg hashish was recovered from a trailer near Indus Chowrangi, Karachi area and an accused was arrested. 10 kg hashish was recovered from the bag of an accused rounded up near Zero Point, Gwadar. 8 kg hashish and 4 kg ice were recovered in two operations near Chongli No. 26 Islamabad while two accused were arrested. In fifth operation, 1 kg hashish was recovered near Shershah Toll Plaza Multan and an accused was arrested.

In sixth operation, a capsule containing 17 grams cocaine was recovered from the stomach of an accused, a Nigerian national arrested from Lahore. Cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused and further investigations are underway.

## Dr. Riaz inaugurates new year's maiden anti-polio drive

**Independent Report**  
PESHAWAR: Advisor to the caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Health, Dr. Riaz Anwar inaugurated the current year's first polio vaccination campaign by administering drops to two children at Police Services Hospital, Civil Secretariat here Friday, with a target of making 2024 as 'year of complete eradication' of the crippling disease from the country.

Officials of Health Department including Deputy Coordinator EOC,

## Two killed in jeep-motorcycle collision in Kahota

**Independent Report**  
KAHOTA (APP): Two people lost their lives when a jeep collided with a motorcycle near Kanil, Kahota on Friday here.

According to Police, The incident occurred in the jurisdiction of Kahota police station, two lives were tragically lost as a jeep and a motorcycle collided.

The collision occurred in the Kanil area, sending shock waves through the community and prompting swift action from the local police.

## Punjab health minister announces crackdown on harmful beauty products

**Independent Report**  
LAHORE: Caretaker Punjab Minister for Primary and Secondary Health, Dr. Jamal Nasir has announced a crackdown on harmful beauty creams and cosmetics. Operations will be conducted against unqualified individuals administering beauty injections or performing any kind of surgery. Joint teams from the Punjab Healthcare Commission (PHC) and the Drug Control Directorate are being formed for this purpose. The Drug Control will determine the registration status of



LAHORE: Activists of Youth Forum for Kashmir holds placards and shouting slogans during protest against the Indian oppression, to mark the Self-Determination Day, in Provincial Capital.

## Punjab health minister announces crackdown on harmful beauty products

beauty creams and cosmetics, while experts from the PHC will assess clinical practices.

This information was shared by the minister in a press conference held here on Friday. He stated that non-standard creams claiming to lighten skin are causing diseases, adding that the use of substandard beauty creams is causing severe damage to the skin of hundreds of individuals. He said that some cosmetics contain dangerous amounts of lead, toxins, and other harmful chemicals, leading to life-threatening diseases such as liver and kidney cancer.

# International News

## Russia used missiles from North Korea to strike Ukraine: White House

**Monitoring Desk**  
WASHINGTON: Russia recently used short-range ballistic missiles (SRBMs) sourced from North Korea to conduct multiple strikes against Ukraine, the White House said on Thursday, citing newly declassified intelligence.

National security spokesperson John Kirby told reporters the United States will raise the development with the United Nations Security Council.

Kirby called North Korea's arms transfer to Russia a "significant and concerning escalation" and said the United States

would impose additional sanctions against those facilitating the arms deals.

Both Moscow and Pyongyang have denied conducting any arms deals, but vowed last year to deepen military relations.

The use of the missiles drew condemnation from Britain, as well as South Korea, which had reported in November that North Korea may have supplied SRBMs to Russia as part of a larger arms deal that also included anti-tank and anti-air missiles, artillery and mortar shells, and rifles.

"Our information indicates that the Democratic

People's Republic of Korea recently provided Russia with ballistic missile launchers and several ballistic missiles," said Kirby, using the official name of North Korea.

On Dec. 30, he said, "Russian forces launched at least one of these North Korean ballistic missiles into Ukraine," adding that it appeared to have landed in open field. Then on Tuesday Russia launched "multiple" North Korean missiles as part of a broader wave of heavy air strikes, Kirby said. Washington was still assessing the impact of those missiles.



Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi speaks during a funeral ceremony in Kerman, Iran.

## Red Sea attacks are not isolated incidents, UNSC told

**Monitoring Desk**  
UNITED NATIONS: During a UN Security Council briefing on Wednesday afternoon, some member states emphasised the need to address attacks on ships in the Red Sea.

Some states also called for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, urging caution to prevent an escalation in tensions.

US ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative, Christopher Lu, however, called on member states to "speak with one voice and demand that the Houthis stop their attacks".

He said the threat to

navigation rights and freedom in the Red Sea was a global challenge that necessitated "a global response".

He accused Iran of providing financial and material support to the Houthis and called it "the root of the problem".

The US diplomat called on the Council to speak with one voice and demand that the Houthis stop their attacks on ships.

"We call for a global response from this Council to this global challenge, and we are ready to discuss the situation further with other member states," he said.

## Macron pays tribute to Delors

**Monitoring Desk**  
PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron praised the late Jacques Delors at a service of national tribute on Friday for giving European Union integration some of its greatest leaps forward during his time as European Commission president.

Delors, an ardent advocate of post-war European integration, died on Dec. 27 at the age of 98. He served as president of the European Commission, the EU executive, for three terms - longer than any other holder of the office - from January 1985 until the end of 1994.

## 9 children among 14 killed in Israeli attack on Gaza camp

**Monitoring Desk**  
BEIRUT: Israeli shelling killed 14 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip's south, packed with people who had fled attacks in other parts of the besieged enclave, on Thursday. The dead included nine children, an official said.

All the 14 Palestinians were killed in a strike at Al Mawasi camp, to the west of Khan Yunis.

Gaza residents said Israeli planes and tanks bombed three refugee camps in the centre of the shattered enclave, prompting many civilians to head south.

Israeli shells had landed near tents erected in the area by displaced people, they said.

Footage on Palestinian media showed several bod-

ies wrapped in blankets inside a hospital morgue in Khan Yunis.

The Palestinian Red Crescent said its headquarters in Khan Yunis was hit, killing one person and wounding others.

The Israeli military reported several clashes in Khan Yunis, where it has said previously that it is trying to capture "Hamas leaders hiding there".

In its daily briefing, it said Israeli warplanes killed three Hamas members who had tried to detonate explosives next to ground troops, and Israeli soldiers killed two more. Five Palestinians were killed in an Israeli air strike on a car in Al Nusseirat refugee camp on Wednesday, health officials said.



A general view of a tent camp sheltering displaced Palestinians, who fled their homes due to Israeli strikes, amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas, in Rafah, southern Gaza Strip.

## Armed men kidnapped 32 migrants in Mexico for extortion, president says

**Monitoring Desk**  
MONTERREY: The armed men who kidnapped 32 migrants in northern Mexico over the weekend aimed to extort money from them and their families in the United States, Mexico's president said on Thursday, one day after the migrants were released from captivity.

He said that the migrants, who were found on Wednesday, were abandoned by their kidnapers in a shopping center in the northern city of Reynosa in the state

of Tamaulipas.

"Because there was a strong deployment (from Mexican authorities), they decided to free them, safe and sound," President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador said in his morning press conference.

The case has highlighted the risks faced by the hundreds of thousands of migrants who cross through Mexico en route to the US border each year, who are targets of extortion and kidnapping by powerful criminal groups.

## India sends warship after hijacking of Liberian-flagged vessel in Arabian Sea

**Monitoring Desk**  
NEW DELHI: An Indian Navy warship was moving towards a hijacked Liberian-flagged vessel in the Arabian Sea, and aircraft were closely monitoring the situation, the Indian navy said on Friday.

At least 15 Indian crew members were on board the MV Lila Norfolk, which was hijacked near Somalia's coast and the navy received information about it on Thursday evening, Indian news agency ANI, in which Reuters has a minority stake, reported earlier, citing military officials.

The ship sent a message on the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations portal saying five to six unknown armed personnel had boarded on the evening of Jan 4, the Indian navy statement said.

An Indian warship, the INS Chennai, was diverted and deployed to assist the vessel, the statement said, adding that a naval aircraft overflew the hijacked vessel.

## Sister of North Korean leader derides South Korea's president but praises his predecessor

**Monitoring Desk**  
SEOUL: The powerful sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has derided South Korea's conservative president for being "foolishly brave" but called his liberal predecessor "very smart" — rhetoric likely meant to help stoke domestic divisions in South Korea.

Her statement Tuesday came as a response to South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol's New Year's Day address, in which he said he would bolster South Korea's military capability

and enhance its alliance with the United States to cope with North Korea's evolving nuclear threats.

Since taking office in 2022, Yoon has made such comments numerous times. Kim's sister, Kim Yo Jong, used Yoon's latest remarks as an opportunity to fire off derisive rhetoric against him.

"This person ... has persistently called for 'peace by force' and got hell-bent on the beefing up of the extended deterrence and the South Korea-U.S.

## India's foreign minister signs a deal to increase imports of electricity from Nepal

**Monitoring Desk**  
KATHMANDU: India's foreign minister concluded a two-day trip to Nepal on Friday, during which he signed an agreement to increase the amount of electricity India imports from its neighbor. "I assure you we are committed to extending our steadfast support and work with same earnestness to further realize the potential of the relationship for the full benefit of the people of the two countries."

## Dr Nadeem Jan says: Capital's public hospitals bear liabilities of Rs12 b impacting quality of health facilities

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for National Health Services, Dr Nadeem Jan on Friday told the Upper House of the Parliament that there was no severe shortage of medicines in the public hospitals of the federal capital, however, due to their liabilities of Rs12 billion a decline in healthcare facilities and quality of services was witnessed.

The minister was responding to the queries of the Senators during the question hour session at the commencement of the 334th Session of the Senate chaired by Chairman Senate, Sadiq Sanjrani.

Earlier, the Chairman Senate at the commencement of the proceedings, extended his regards and greetings on Jumma to the members.

Upon the request of Senator Sadia Abbasi, the Chairman Senate urged the House to hold fatha (prayer) on the demise of the late former senator, fi-

nance minister and national security advisor Sartaj Aziz who had passed away on January 2, 2024 at the age of 94.

Senator Mushtaq Ahmed on his directive led the prayer and urged the members to also recite fatha for the six labourers killed by the terrorists in North Waziristan.

Senator Sadia Abbasi of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) while paying tribute to the former Senator Sartaj Aziz said he was a towering personality of the country who served for many international organizations, remained general secretary of Muslim League, remained general senator, and finance minister.

He had rendered great services in education sector and promoted Beaconhouse School System which was acknowledged by the latter. He wrote many books on the politics, and economics of Pakistan and was an expert

in agriculture.

Senator Mushtaq Ahmed of Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan (JIP) said the caretaker government had denied an increase in the prices of medicines which was regrettable as only 300% increase alone in anti-epileptic drug was noticed.

Responding to the Senator's query, Caretaker Health Minister Nadeem Jan said there was no increase in medicines during the interim government's tenure.

He said the policy on this matter was formed in 2018 that stated that pharmaceutical companies under CPI can raise 7 percent increase on essential and 10 percent on non-essential medicines. However, in 2022 the policy was reviewed and it was recommended that 20 percent non-essential and 14 percent on essential can be increased by the pharmaceutical companies under CPI, he added.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture Jamal Shah visits Rawat Fort to revive conservation work.

## Jamal Shah directs to accelerate conservation work during Rawat Fort visit

**Our correspondent** ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture Jamal Shah on Friday visited Rawat Fort and give instruction to complete the conservation work speedily.

Federal Secretary National Heritage & Culture Ms. Humaira Ahmad, Director General Department of Archaeology and Museum (DOAM) Dr Abdul Azeem and other senior officers were also present on the occasion.

The senior officials or DOAM briefed the Minister and Secretary National Heritage and Culture Divi-

sion regarding a project for preservation, restoration, and preservation and development of Rawat Fort.

Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture Jamal Shah said that the main objectives of the project is to conserve, develop and exhibit our cultural heritage through scientific and traditional techniques. The project will not only prevent the site from further decay, but will pre-

serve them for coming generations and will also enhance tourism in the country as well as in the area, he said.

The Minister said that archaeological excavation, conservation and restoration work is intensive and will provide short-term employment to the people in the project area. Rawat, an ancient Sarai is situated about 25 miles from Rawalpindi towards Jhelum close to the GT road.

The present small fortress Sarai appears to have been built during the sultanate period in early 15th century A.D.



ISLAMABAD: Power Division and K-Electric ink landmark agreements, in the presence of Minister for Energy Muhammad Ali, providing energy security for Karachi at Power Division.

## Federal government, KE ink agreements to ensure energy security for Karachi

**Our Correspondent** ISLAMABAD: The Federal government and Karachi Electric (KE) signed various agreements on Friday, aimed at ensuring energy security for Karachi.

The agreements were signed at the Energy Division through representative bodies in the presence of Muhammad Ali, Minister of Energy, Power and Petroleum, and Dr Shamsah Akhtar, Minister of Finance while KE was represented by CEO, Moonis Alvi and CFO, Muhammad Amir Ghaziani.

These agreements address longstanding disputes between the government and KE, particularly in formalizing and securing a stable power supply from the National Grid to Karachi, up to the interconnection capacity.

Resolving these legacy matters is crucial for

both Karachi's energy security and the sustainability of KE as a company. The agreements include the Tariff Differential Subsidy Agreement (TDA) and Power Purchase Agency Agreement (PPAA), marking a significant milestone for the power sector. The Interconnection Agreement (ICA) is expected to be signed after approval from NEPRA.

The firm supply of energy from the National Grid is anticipated to provide affordable power to KE customers. The signing of a Mediation Agreement (MA) is also essential for reconciling legacy contentions on payables and receivables between KE and government entities.

Caretaker Minister for Power and Petroleum Muhammad Ali said, "We are tackling a Gordian knot in the power sector with a

vision to bring efficiency and long-term stability. Today's signing is one facet of this, where we have addressed legacy bottlenecks. It demonstrates the willpower and commitment of our institutions towards Pakistan."

The minister said the Ministry is working hard to provide an enabling environment for the power sector to thrive because the ultimate beneficiary of our interventions is the customer. Muhammad Ali thanked the Finance Minister Dr. Shamsah Akhtar for her involvement and support.

"This is the best news to the Karachi consumers as power issues will be much more stabilized now. KE has always been treated by the government as a

### ET directs PTI leader

Zafar Ali clear property tax dues till Monday

ISLAMABAD (Online): Election Tribunal (ET) has directed PTI leader syed Zafar Ali Shah to clear property tax dues till Monday.

The petition filed against rejection of nomination papers of PTI leader Syed Zafar Ali Shah came up for hearing before Justice Arbab Muhammad Tahir of ET Friday.

The court remarked it is matter of property tax and two vehicles. Zafar Ali will hear it on Monday. Zafar Sabh you have to pay some dues of CDA.

Zafar Ali Shah said he have not been issued any notice. The department should tell us at least. It was not in our knowledge that some dues were payable by us. It was said at the time of scrutiny that your dues are clear. It was informed by the Election Commission that there were some outstanding dues of property tax against Zafar Ali Shah.

## Education development is vital for poverty alleviation in Pakistan: Madad Ali

KARACHI (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training Madad Ali Sindhi on Friday education development is vital for poverty alleviation in Pakistan that is the reason we are paying attention to education and skill development.

He was addressing as chief guest on the occasion of 20th Annual Convocation-2023 of SZABIST University - Karachi Campus held at Expo Center here. Madad Ali Sindhi said that educated and skilled manpower are imperative for growth of any society. He said that the large

proportion of the population get education from the public sector education system, therefore there is a need to impart training to teachers of the public sector schools. The Federal Education Minister called upon the political parties to give priority to education development in the next five years. He recalled that the Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto Institute of Science and Technology (SZABIST) was founded by former prime minister, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto in 1995 and now SZABIST is established as a well-reputed education institute.



ISLAMABAD: Chief Gilgit-Baltistan Haji Gulbar Khan is meeting Vice Chancellor Karakoram International University Dr. Attaullah Shah. Provincial Minister for Food Ghulam Muhammad is also present.

## Senate Committee deliberates on Bill titled "The Cutting of Trees (Prohibition) (Amendment) Bill, 2023"

**Special Correspondent** ISLAMABAD: A Meeting of Senate Standing Committee on Interior was held at Parliament House on Friday with Senator Mohsin Aziz in Chair.

The Senate Committee deliberated on the Bill titled "The Cutting of Trees (Prohibition) (Amendment) Bill, 2023." Senator Palwasha Muhammad Zai Khan, the bill's mover, stated that the aim of the bill is to protect the environment of the city, given the country's current climate crisis.

She emphasized that the bill serves as an epitome for the provinces. She added that centuries-old trees have been cut down to meet the housing needs of the city, and such practices should be stopped once and for all. Officials informed the committee that certain provisions in the CDA exclusively deal with the protection of trees, and the CDA is also empowered to impose fines on wrongdoers.

The committee deferred the deliberations on the bill until the next meeting. Furthermore, the committee discussed the Bill titled "The Rehriban (Street Vendors) Livelihood Protection Bill, 2023."

Senator Sania Nishtar, the bill's mover, explained that there are approximately one million street vendors in the country, generating Rs. 900 Billion in annual sales. Unfortunately, there is no legal framework in place to regulate these street vendors. She stated that the purpose of the bill is to protect street vendors from the vandalism of municipal staff and shopkeepers and to provide a secure livelihood for street vendors.

Officials apprised the committee that the bill is in conflict with the Local Government Act, and certain by-laws are already in place for the regulation of street vendors. The committee deferred the deliberations on the bill until the next meeting. Moreover, the Senate body deliberated on the Bill titled "The National Database and Registration Authority Bill, 2023."

Senator Fawzia Arshad, the bill's mover, stated that the primary objective of the bill is to make it mandatory for NADRA to provide registration facilitation to persons with disabilities, prisoners, transgender persons, and religious minorities.

## ECP completes training of electoral staff

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has completed priority-based training for election supervisory staff appointed for the smooth conduct of the 2024 general elections. According to the electoral body, the training of 579,191 people has been completed, while the remaining 406,222 people will complete training by February 1.

ECP spokesman said on Thursday that the Commission had initiated training for nearly one million election staff during the last week of November, 2023, which would conclude by February 1, 2024.

The remaining 406,222 election supervisory staff, including District Returning Officers, Returning Officers, Presiding Officers, Assistant Presiding Officers, and others would be imparted training before the deadline, he added.

Strict disciplinary action was being taken against the staff who remained absent during the training programme, the ECP spokesman said.

## Tax clearance certificate issued to Sanjrani

ISLAMABAD (Online): Tax clearance certificate has been issued to chairman Senate Sadiq Sanjrani.

Tax clearance certificate has been issued by FBR. The candidates will take part in the election easily due to issuance of tax clearance certificate.

## Grant approved for PTV Quetta's cameramen died in road accident

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Television (PTV) Managing Director Sayyed Mubashar Tausiq Shah on Friday approved financial assistance for the families of PTV Quetta Center's Chief Cameraman Ahmed Khan Solangi and Cameraman Zafar Ali, who died in a road crash the other day.

The decision was taken in line with the directives of Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi and Secretary Information Shahera Shahid, said a news release.

The grant of Rs 2.4 million was approved for the family of Chief Cameraman Ahmed Khan Solangi and Rs 1.5 million for the family of Cameraman Zafar Ali.

## Govt taking up issue of 'ghost article' with The Economist: Solangi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Friday said that the government would take up the issue of a "ghost article", published in the name of a jailed politician, with the foreign media outlet 'The Economist'.

"Today, we are writing to the Editor of The Economist about an article purportedly written by Mr Imran Khan," the minister said in a long thread posted on the social media platform 'X'. He said it was "puzzling and disconcert-

ing" that such an esteemed media outlet published an article in the name of an individual who was in jail and had been convicted.

The caretaker government, he said, believed that it was critically essential to uphold ethical standards and promote responsible journalism.

"We would like to know how the editorial decision was made, and what considerations were taken into account regarding the legitimacy and credibility of the content by The Economist," Solangi said while referring to the article.



ISLAMABAD: Pakistani High Commissioner in the UK Dr. Muhammad Faisal calls on Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.

## Nadeem urges society to play role in polio eradication, importance of family planning

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Health Dr Nadeem Jan Friday emphasized the necessity of raising awareness about family planning-related myths among the rural population and called upon every section of society to play its due role in the complete eradication of polio.

Talking to a private news channel, he said that every government was playing its top-level commitment and thoroughly engaged in various national polio drives where it is immunizing children under five in the country against the paralyzing poliovirus.

"Every child has the right to live life free from

the threat of disability caused by polio and we will not rest until all children are safe from it," Dr Jan said.

Minister also urged that scholars, educators, media, and civil society should create more awareness for importance of family planning, adding, government needs the help of Islamic scholars to convince the public. Replying to a query about the upcoming 'Global Health Security Summit in Islamabad' which will officially be inaugurated from January 10th to 11th said that moot would serve as a great opportunity of bringing together international and national experts to share expertise and knowledge.

## NUST, NADRATL join hands for promoting indigenous R&D initiatives in biometric technologies

ISLAMABAD (INP): National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST) and NADRA Technologies Limited (NTL) have formalized a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), facilitating collaboration in research, development and innovation of biometric technologies. This meeting held at NADRA Headquarters today, marks the commencement of a strategic partnership aimed at strengthening industry-academia linkages as well.

NTL, specializes in

digital identity solutions through its flagship Pakistan ID stack which has led to its recognition as a preeminent system integrator. With a successful track record spanning nearly two decades, NTL has consistently provided trustworthy services in the fields of e-Governance, e-Passport, smart identity cards, and civil registration. NTL's noteworthy accomplishments have earned it recognition as a leader in digital transformation, both on a national and global scale.



ISLAMABAD: National University of Sciences and Technology and NADRA Technologies Limited have formalized a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), facilitating collaboration in research, development and innovation of biometric technologies.

## DC Islamabad kicks off anti-polio drive targeting 400,000 children

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Commissioner Islamabad Irfan Nawaz Memon has inaugurated an extensive anti-polio campaign aiming to vaccinate 400,000 children under the age of five years.

Accompanied by a dedicated team, including Additional Deputy Commissioners, District Health Officer and Assistant Commissioners, the Deputy Commissioner personally administered polio drops, setting a determined tone for the initiative, ICT spokesman Dr Abdullah Tabasum told on Friday.

The week long drive involves a comprehensive strategy to reach and every household and street in the federal capital. The polio workers and teams are diligently going door-to-door, ensuring that no child is left without the vital vaccine to guarantee

effective coverage. Assistant Commissioners will supervise the teams in their respective jurisdictions.

Highlighting the importance of the campaign, the DC emphasized the presence of positive polio cases in nearby areas. With Islamabad being a hub of nationwide movement, he urged the citizens to exercise heightened caution.

The Deputy Commissioner's call for vigilance underscores the need for a collective effort to maintain the capital's polio-free status.

The DC urged the parents to ensure their children receive two doses of polio drops. The emphasis on the dual doses aligns with the global strategy to eradicate polio and underscores the community's role in achieving a polio-free Pakistan.

## Capital Police ensuring foolproof security measures in High Security Zone



### Independent Report

ISLAMABAD: Following the special directions of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad Capital Police is actively engaged in ensuring effective security arrangements during the hearings of significant cases in the superior courts situated in high-security zone, a public relations officer said.

He said that, the Islamabad Capital Police teams in the high-security zone are diligently fulfilling their duties to ensure the effective security arrangements during the hearings of crucial cases in the superior courts.

Senior police officers have directed the officers and personnel on duty to

ensure the security of important government offices, superior courts, and embassies located in the high-security zone.

All officers and personnel were also directed to perform their duties with utmost dedication to uphold peace and security, with no room for negligence or complacency during duty hours.

The Islamabad Capital Police is taking all possible measures to safeguard the lives and property of the citizens. Any disturbance to the public peace will not be tolerated.

Citizens are urged to cooperate with the police and report any suspicious activities or objects to their respective police station or dial emergency helpline "Pucar-15" or "ICT-15" application.



ISLAMABAD: Senator Mohsin Aziz, Chairman Senate Standing Committee on Interior presiding over a meeting of the committee at Parliament House.