

# Independent

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Vol. XIV No. 05 Reg. mails-B / ID-445 Monday January 08, 2024, Jamadi-us-Sani 25, 1445 A.H. Ph: 2158688, 2158997 Pages 4: Rs. 12

## Fazal in Afghanistan to discuss regional security issues

KABUL (INP): Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman on Sunday reached Kabul, Afghanistan to hold talks on regional and security issues amid a spike in cross-border attacks.

According to party spokesperson, the JUI-F chief - who is on maiden visit to Afghanistan in nearly 10 years - was welcomed by interim Afghan Foreign Minister Ameer Khan.

Fazl last visited Afghanistan in 2013 and met then-president Hamid Karzai.

In a post on X (formerly Twitter), the JUI-F said Fazlur Rehman departed for Afghanistan with

a high-level delegation of party leaders, including Maulana Abdul Wasi, Maulana Salahuddin, Maulana Jamaluddin, Maulana Salimuddin Shamzai, Aslam Ghauri and others.

During the visit, Fazlur Rehman will hold meetings with the Afghan Taliban leaders and discuss the regional and security situation, the statement noted.

It is pertinent to mention here that the representative of the Taliban government and Afghan envoy in Islamabad had officially invited Maulana Fazlur Rehman a few days ago to visit Afghanistan on behalf of his government.



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

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

LAHORE (INP): Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said he will take back Lahore of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto to old politicians and Patwaris with the support of poor people of the city.

Bilawal addressed a gathering of party workers in the National Assembly constituency NA-127.

PPP Chairman Bilawal said they were doing politics only for PPP's Jialas, the white-clad class of the city, and the poor people.

Bilawal said Lahore don't need Patwaris and he just wants the support of the poor classes of the city to quench their hunger. Bilawal also enthusiastically added, "Ab Hum Un



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

K Ghar Main Ghus K Marain Gey" (Now we will punish them after entering their house). He said he wanted to tell the old politicians that the victory in the elections was for Shaheed Benazir Bhutto and the people of Lahore only.

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

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

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Sunday said the incidents of May 9 were still being investigated and action should be taken against those involved in them.

Speaking in a private television channel programme, he said those who perpetrated the incidents on May 9 were facing the judicial process.

Many persons were still avoiding the courts and were in hiding, he said adding

ing they should have surrendered before the law to avail their legal rights but now they would face obstacles in carrying out their political activities related to the elections.

He said the Election Commission would ensure that nobody should get the impression that any person was made a target for his political affiliation.

To a question, he said the leader of the house and leader of the opposition in the National Assembly

agreed to his name and he was appointed as the caretaker prime minister.

He said he was supported by many people including his teachers to reach the level of attainment in his life.

The prime minister said the people of Pakistan would elect their representatives on February 8 and his government would carry out a peaceful transfer of power to them.

By the morning of February 9, it would be

known whom the people had elected, he observed.

He said the government of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) failed to resolve problems of governance during its tenure as it lacked political maturity and got involved in confrontation with the institutions.

Talking about the issues of Balochistan, he said once militants realized that they would have to lay down their arms, the problems would be settled.



LAHORE: President PML-N Lahore Saif-ul-Malook meeting with President PML-N and former Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif.

## Shehbaz resolves to restore masses and investors' confidence

LAHORE (INP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President Shehbaz Sharif said on Sunday that his party will take all-out steps in a bid to control ballooning inflation.

The former prime minister held a meeting with the party leaders separately. Prominent among those who met Shehbaz Sharif were Khawaja Saad Rafique, Khawaja Salman Rafique, Mian Javed Latif, Atta Manika, Afzal Khokhar, Mohsin Ranjha, Zulfiqar Bhatti, Sardar Irfan Dogar, Malik Saif ul Malook, Khokhar, Chaudhry Tufail Jutt, and

Ashraf Jutt. On this occasion, matters pertaining to the party and the upcoming elections were discussed.

Expressing his thoughts, Shehbaz Sharif said, "We will take revolutionary steps to address the masses' problems."

"Only Nawaz Sharif had fulfilled the promises with the masses. With the exception of the PML-N, all the political parties had deceived the masses," Shehbaz Sharif said. He expressed his resolve to restore the confidence of the masses and investors. "We will come up with a balanced economic policy," he added.

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

ISLAMABAD (INP): Internet services were disrupted across Pakistan as users reported difficulties accessing popular social media platforms, including X, Facebook and YouTube on Sunday, Internet Monitor Downdetector said.

According to Downdetector, the social media platforms, especially the website versions have been down shortly after 5pm local time.

Users in major cities such as Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad began experiencing difficulties accessing social media sites shortly after 4pm.

## Spokesman says: ECP secretary to resume duties after recovery

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Secretary of Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) Omar Hamid Khan, currently on medical leave due to health issues, will come back to his duties once he gets better.

In response to rumours surrounding the resignation of the ECP secretary, the ECP spokesman clarified that the Election Commission's work is being efficiently handled by the two Special Secretaries during the Secretary's absence.

Secretary Omar Hamid Khan is an intelligent and hardworking officer who has fulfilled his responsibilities admirably, the spokesman added.

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

ISLAMABAD (APP): At least four people, including a woman, lost their lives and three others were injured in a firing incident on a passenger bus in Parachinar, the Kurram District in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, according to the police spokesman, on Sunday, a passenger bus was heading from Parachinar to Kohat when unknown assailants carried out the attack, resulting in the killing of four people and injuring three others.

## Pak Navy deploys warships in Arabian Sea to ward off attacks by Houthi rebels

KARACHI (INP): Pakistan Navy, after recent incidents of breach of maritime security in the Arabian Sea, have deployed their warships.

According to the spokesman for the Pakistan Navy, these ships are constantly patrolling in order to ensure the protection of Pakistan's trade routes.

He has informed that the navy is also conducting aerial surveillance of these routes. "The purpose of patrolling is not only to ensure the safety of Pakistani ships but also those belonging to other coun-

tries," the spokesman has elaborated.

Last month, Yemen-based Houthi rebels had also claimed an attack on a Pakistan-bound ship from Saudi Arabia in the Red Sea.

"Pakistan Navy is well aware of its national responsibility in maintaining maritime peace and order in the region," the statement noted.

Last week India announced it had deployed three warships in the Arabian Sea after a drone hit an "Israel-affiliated" merchant vessel about 200 nautical miles (370km) off the coast

of the western state of Gujarat. No casualties were, however, reported in the attack, which the US blamed on Iran, which the latter dismissed.

Exporters from around the world are in trouble these days because of a spate of attacks on commercial vessels by Houthi rebels in the Red Sea.

The rebels who have vowed to avenge the massacre of Palestinians at the hands of Israeli forces, have said they will target any ship passing through the Red Sea that are bound for the Jewish state.



Pakistan Navy Ship escorting merchant vessel in Arabian Sea.

## Govt not using available legal, political options for Aafia release: Dr Fowzia

ISLAMABAD (INP): There are many political and legal options for seeking early release of Dr Aafia Siddiqui from the US prison, but sadly the government of Pakistan is simply not utilizing these options for the reasons better known to it, said Aafia Movement leader and noted neurophysician of the country Dr Fowzia Siddiqui, addressing an Aafia Siddiqui Conference here, organized by Team Aafia Pakistan.

She said that the nations that don't respect their daughters would never grow and prosper. She said Pakistan is facing problems because our rulers sold the daughters of the nation. She said that the lawyer of Aafia Clive Smith was shocked

to know about torture and sexual abuse meted out to Aafia. She asked the Pakistani youth if they would remain silent over these atrocities.

Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) KP chapter ameer Senator Mushtaq Ahmed Khan said that Aafia is the most oppressed woman of this century. She is innocent and never ever involved in terrorism or money laundering. He said due to the laudable role of the Islamabad High Court there are some developments in the Aafia Siddiqui case.

Jl Azad Kashmir chapter ameer Dr Mushtaq Ahmed said that the illegal detention of Aafia Siddiqui is a great test for the Pakistani nation.

## 3 more judges LHC included in ET

ISLAMABAD (Online): Election Commission of Pakistan has added 3 more judges from Lahore High Court (LHC) in the Election Tribunal, the notification of which has also been issued.

According to the notification, Justice Shakeel Ahmed, Justice Ahmad Nadeem Arshad and Justice Tariq Nadeem have been included in the Election Tribunal. Three judges will hear the appeals against the decisions of the RO to reject or approve the nomination papers.

It should be noted that elections will be held across the country on February 8, nomination papers have been submitted by the candidates for the general elections.

Various political parties are also continuing to issue party tickets to their candidates.

## ECP releases list of preliminary polling stations for constituencies

ISLAMABAD (Online): Election Commission of Pakistan has released the preliminary list of polling stations for casting public votes in constituencies across the country.

According to Election Commission of Pakistan's spokesperson, the list of preliminary polling stations according to constituencies has been published, voters and candidates of the con-

stituency can submit objections or suggestions on the preliminary polling list till January 11. DROs will give verdict on these objections and proposals during January 12 to 17. Election Commission spokesman said that after the decisions on the objections filed on the preliminary lists, the final list of polling stations will be issued 15 days before the general elections.



SHIKARPUR: Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Shikarpur, Dr. Muhammad Imran Khan along with Rangers Colonel visiting Kacha area where they started search and targeted operation against the criminals.

## ECP rebuts PTI claims of deprivation of level-playing field

ISLAMABAD (INP): Refuting all the allegations levelled by the PTI that the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) had kept the party deprived of a level-playing field in a run-up to the general elections scheduled to be held on February 8, 2024, the ECP on Sunday prayed to the Supreme Court of Pakistan to reject the PTI's petition with fine.

In its reply submitted to the apex court in the level-playing field case, the election commission said that

on the SC's order, its officials had a meeting with the PTI leaders at which they assured the latter that there would be no discrimination against them and that the party would be treated at par with other parties.

"In this connection, the ECP also issued instructions to the IGBs of all the four provinces," the commission said in its reply.

It further said that by December 26, 2023, PTI had filed 33 complaints from across the country.

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

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Sunday urged

the people not to pay attention to rumours.

In a post on his social media platform X, the minister while sharing a press release of the Election Commission of

Pakistan (ECP), said that the Secretary Election Commission was facing some health issues for sometime.

"We pray to Allah for his complete and speedy recovery", the Federal Minister of Information said.

The minister said that ECP was fully functional and there was no crisis of any kind.

## Nawaz Sharif should vie for presidency not premiership: Mushahid

ISLAMABAD (INP): Senator Mushahid Hussain has advised Nawaz Sharif to become president instead of vying for the prime minister's office.

Chairman Senate standing committee for defence Mushahid Hussain was talking to a private television channel in an exclusive interview. "In view of ground realities and knowing Mian Nawaz Sharif, I will tell him to shun the premiership. It will be better for the country and the democracy that he becomes the head of state," Mushahid said.

"I don't want him to be expelled from office fourth time. Now it is a hybrid-plus system, not conducive for Nawaz Sharif, as three among six prime ministers have been

jailed," he added. "Nawaz Sharif is a king, he makes strong decisions like nuclear and CPEC," Senator Mushahid said.

"He has become prime minister of the country thrice, and mother of all deals is that no big distance would remain between the 'elite' and the 'street' any long. This distance should be ended, and I think it will happen," Senator Syed said. Mushahid Hussain Syed said that the Army Chief's US visit was very pleasant, "see those that were more favourites, have now become favourites to a lesser extent". "It is fighting between 'dear ones', in which it used to be said that 'return back' you would not be said anything, he said.

## SIFC efforts to boost economic stability in Pakistan: Nauman

LAHORE (INP): Appreciating the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) efforts, the business community said on Sunday that the revolutionary measures in the Information Technology field could stabilise the economy of the country in a befitting manner.

The initiatives and steps taken by the SIFC in its recent meeting, especially in the field of Information Technology will enhance exports from 40 to 50 percent exports.

The se were the views expressed by renowned chief of Leading Technol-

ogy Company of Pakistan—Pakistan Tech Entrepreneurs Investor and Information Technology Startups—Nauman Saeed while talking to a delegation of Pakistani investors Sunday.

He said Pakistan's IT industry has great potential to expand their business and our startups need to be able to attract bigger investments. Offering his services, Nauman Saeed said that his forum is ready to submit suggestions and ideas in the field of Information Technology to boost country's exports.



CHARSADA: President Awami National Party (ANP) Aimal Wali Khan addressing public those who joined party at NA-125 during election campaign.

Daily Voice of Masses  
**Independent**

**Commendable work**

Thankfully, at least some of the checks and balances safeguarding the electoral process appear to be working as intended. There have been encouraging updates from all over the country about appellate tribunals reviewing and, in most cases, overturning the rejection of nomination papers by various returning officers.

Though the process is still ongoing, the tribunals have already cleared the path for scores of candidates who had previously been disbarred from participating in elections on various grounds. The rejection of papers, described in some contexts as 'wholesale' and 'based on flimsy reasoning' by observers, had disproportionately affected those who have been critical of the state, especially the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf. By the time the initial scrutiny was completed, most of the PTI's strongest candidates had been knocked out. This was followed by complaints that ROs in some constituencies had also withheld copies of their decisions, allegedly to prevent them from being appealed on time.

It now appears that many of those affected may have been right about being wronged. At least one judge hearing the appeals, Justice Arbab Muhammad Tahir, is reported to have made remarks to the effect that the ROs in Islamabad and Rawalpindi had, in the majority of cases, rejected papers over petty issues which could have been resolved within five to 10 minutes in their offices. The question does arise as to why such hasty decisions were taken in the first place, but the affected candidates may take heart knowing that the appellate tribunals seem to be working independently and without fear or favour. As a result of the tribunals' decisions, many from PTI's top-tier leadership — what remains of it — are now back in the running. They include well-known names like Hammad Azhar, Atif Khan, Firdous Shamim Naqvi and Zulfi Bukhari, as well as other, less-prominent ones. Though appeals filed by some other big names have been turned down, the party remains committed to participating in the elections, and it seems it will find a way to make do.

The work of the appellate tribunals is commendable as it has restored a sense of fairness after the ugliness that marred the formal start of the electoral process. From snatching of papers to abductions of candidates, instances of state interference had been widely documented, casting a dark shadow on the legitimacy of the upcoming polls.

With the tribunals acting sensibly, a significant portion of the controversies surrounding the pending election will now die down, allowing parties and candidates to focus on their campaigns and strategise for their wins. With both local and international analysts repeatedly underscoring that a free and fair election is the only way out of the crises Pakistan is mired in, any effort to ensure that the exercise remains free of controversy should be encouraged and celebrated.

**Not a new normal**



**Muna Khan**

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

The most obvious is that the pandemic is not over.

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

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

Yet this has not received the media attention it deserves.

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

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

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

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

The current JN.1 variant "has continued its evolution with mutations adapted for infecting or re-infecting us," writes Topol. But, he offers some good news: the latest booster in the US "provided protection from hospitalisation in the range of about 60 per cent against JN.1 and other recently circulating variants." Even those who had not gotten this booster were protected from hospitalisations or visits to the ER.

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

The United States isn't alone in its "state of denialism and general refusal to take simple steps to reduce the risk of infection," writes Topol. Countries all over the world are not acting on Covid mitigation strategies. There's a need to resume testing, data collection and public guidelines (like masking) backed by trusted science sources.

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

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

provided this for free to the people!"

But governments like Joe Biden's are more interested in securing a second term and giving their ally Israel a free pass to co-mit more atrocities. "This passivity re-infuses the illusion that the pandemic is be-hi-i-nd us when it's actually raging," writes Topol.

Since isolating, Topol's piece is one of the few I've come across on a mainstream media outlet about the dangers this wave poses. Friends in Karachi say they're hearing about a rise in cases there, too. My chacha called a public hospital in Karachi to ask about boosters but was told there are none and no plans afoot to get them either.

At least protect the most vulnerable — the elderly, the poor, the immunocompromised. Relaunch the NCOG and resume data collection so it can be used to understand the virus and prepare strategies to combat it.

The journalist Ed Yong, who covered the pandemic in 2020, wrote about watching publications he once respected "become complicit in normalising a level of death once billed as incalculable."

In a piece for The New York Times last month he wrote: "In this status quo, people are expected to ignore the threat of infection, pay through the nose if they get sick and face stigma and ridicule if they become disabled. Journalism can and should repudiate that bargain." Yong reminds us that Covid isn't just a health problem, it is a social one. Journalists must ensure this story is told and let people feel everyone's health matters. Until those that matter take note and take action. -- Courtesy Dawn

**Complex conflict**



**Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry**

Three months into the war in Gaza, thousands of Palestinians, including a large number of children, have been martyred by the Israeli Defence Forces. What is the end goal of Israel for which it has unleashed unprecedented death and destruction? Israel's stated objective is that it wants to destroy Hamas. This is not credible because Israel is meting out genocide-like collective punishment to all Palestinians, and not just Hamas. Is Israel's goal, then, to create a 'greater Israel' by forcibly pushing the Palestinians into neighbouring Arab countries or elsewhere? If that be the objective, Israel has certainly overestimated what its brutal force can achieve, and underestimated the resilience of Palestinians, who seem determined not to leave the land on which their ancestors had lived for millennia.

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

Both cite history to consolidate their claim to the land. The roots of this conflict lie in the decision of the British in 1917, called Balfour Declaration, to settle the Jews of Europe in Palestine. Once a sufficient number of Jews had reached Palestine and displaced the local Arab population, the British took the matter to the UN in 1947, where it was agreed to have two separate states, Palestine and Israel. However, Israel has never allowed the two-state solution to work. Instead, it has imposed an apartheid-like occupation on the helpless Palestinians.

The issue also has an

ideological dimension. The state of Israel was created for the Jews of the world. The name itself comes from Hazrat Ya'qoob (Jacob), the son of Hazrat Ishaq, and grandson of Hazrat Ibrahim. Hazrat Ya'qoob was also called Israel, and his descendants as Bani Israel. His successors included Hazrat Daud (David) and his son Hazrat Suleiman, both of whom built large kingdoms in this territory. Prophet Moses rescued the Bani Israel and brought them to this land from Egypt. All these Prophets are equally sacred for Muslims. Add to that the Masjid al-Aqsa, which was the Qibla-i-Awwal. Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) ascended to Heaven (Mairaj) from this mosque.

Israel has no right to deny Muslim Palestinians the right to live in the lands which they hold in such holy esteem. Israel continues to justify its atrocities in the name of "self-defence". The Hamas action of October 7, 2023 did not take place in a vacuum as the UN secretary general had rightly remarked. The Palestinians are under brutal occupation. The Hamas action was an act of resistance against the occupying force, which is permissible under international law.

Israel's indiscriminate firing on Palestinian houses, schools, and hospitals has elicited massive protests not only in Arab or Muslim countries, but all across, including in the United States. Yet, Israel is not ready to listen to these voices. One reason for such a ferocious Israeli response could be that there is domestic criticism for not anticipating the Hamas attack. Further, Netanyahu wants to look strong as his domestic popularity is declining. The firm support of the US may have also emboldened the Israeli leadership. Another reason could be that Arabs and Muslims could not

display enough unity to take tangible actions against Israel, such as boycotting Israeli products or even cutting off diplomatic ties.

Nevertheless, pressure is now mounting on Israel. The US cannot continue to ignore the loud calls of the international community for an immediate and permanent ceasefire. Some European countries, like the UK, stand with Israel, but their people are agitating against the relentless bombardment of civilians in Gaza. Israel is also suffering a heavy financial cost of the war. Many businesses have closed down in Israel. A major setback for Israel is that the Arab-Israeli normalisation process has halted.

The US influence in the Middle East has also received a setback. The Arab world, including the Gulf countries, are now looking ever more inclined to explore other options for their security needs. The US has also been widely criticised for casting its veto, thus paralyzing the United Nations from playing a role in stopping the war in Gaza, an objective supported by 153 countries of the world. It is high time for the Biden administration to revisit its unqualified support to Israel. Given the unwavering resolve of the Palestinians, Netanyahu's dream of creating a greater Israel is not likely to succeed, but he and his right-wingers are surely destined to go into history books as the most ruthless and heartless regime. Pakistan has consistently supported the right of Palestinians to self-determination. Pakistan has also not formally recognised the state of Israel. There have been some voices in the country for doing so. However, after the recent war in Gaza, there is even less likelihood that Pakistan would recognise Israel. -- Courtesy Dawn

**Commerce News**

**VP PBF says: Regional Trade Agreements vital to reinvigorate growth**

LAHORE (INP): Vice President, Pakistan Business Forum (PBF), Chaudhry Ahmad Jawad has said that devising regional trade agreements among South Asian countries was need of the hour to improve the economic well beings of billions of people; though Pakistan's regional trade was below the desired level which needs to be seen in whole prospective before SIFC.

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

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

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

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



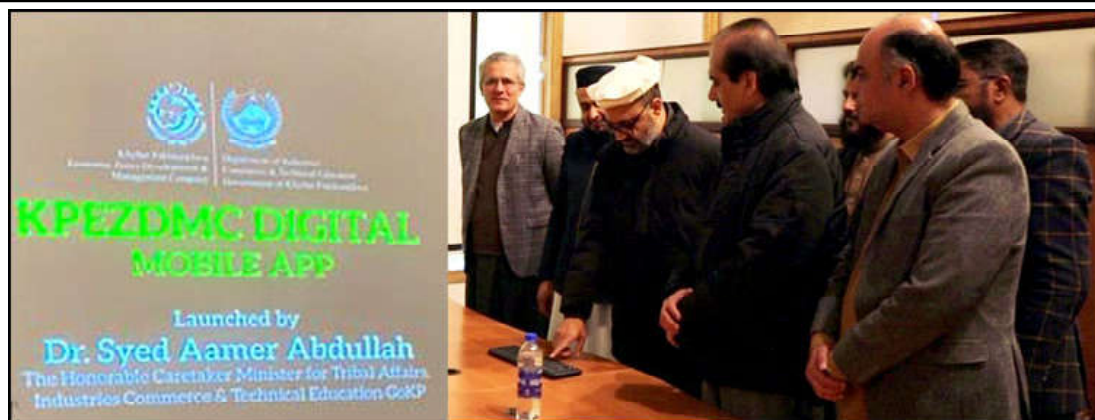
GILGIT: A vendor selling a traditional steel fire stove to the customer at his work place.

**Shahid Rasheed says: Pakistani businessmen milking masses against developed countries**

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

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

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



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

**Freelancers to now receive their payments through PayPal: Minister**

ISLAMABAD (Online): The Caretaker Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Dr Umar Saif on Sunday announced that freelancers would now receive their payments through PayPal. In a video message, he said that it had been a longstanding demand of freelancers to have access to PayPal for easier payment receipt in Pakistan.

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

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

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

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

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

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

orbit satellites, which were relatively closer. He said that there had been a lot of development in this regard in the private sector.

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

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

**Silwat says: Business Facilitation Centre to be functional soon**

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

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

**KP-EZDMC launches mobile app to facilitate investors**

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

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

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

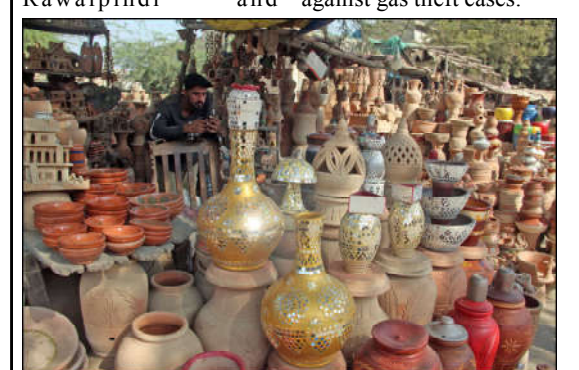
here that the Provincial Caretaker Minister for Industries, Commerce and Technical Education, Dr Aamer Abdullah had assigned this task of online availability of the services to the company, which has been achieved by the IT section of the company within a short period of two weeks. Addressing the launching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

**SNGPL cuts off another 347 connections for gas theft**

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

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

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



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

**PIEDMC directed to submit report on 5000 acres Rwp Economic Zone**

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

According to a Commissioner's office spokesperson, a delegation of PIEDMC during a meeting with Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Liaquat Ali Chhatta gave a detailed

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Governor

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## CM orders early completion of Children Hospital upgrade

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

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

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

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

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

completed by 31<sup>st</sup> January. "The whole team is striving day and night to accomplish this task. The fruit of hard work with a noble intention would definitely be passed on to the people," he maintained.

The Secretary C&W and Secretary Health gave a briefing about the work being done under the upgradation project. He said that installation of tiles and finishing work had been started.

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

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

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

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

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

timely and optimal assistance during emergencies.

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

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

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

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

## 29 cases referred to drug court

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

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

## 5 children hospitalized for suffocation

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

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

## Breaking shackles of poverty through welfare projects

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

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

market.

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

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

empty handed.

"Last year, citrus of Khanpur tehsil of Haripur and Manki Sharif of Nowshera districts was available at Rs180 per dozen that has now jumped to Rs 250 per dozen in local market with start of new year while apples per kg were sold at Rs 200 per last year against Rs 250 this year making difficult to continue this hard earned business due to discouraging response of consumers and poverty," he said.

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

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

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

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

He said that

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

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

## International News

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

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

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

families of Russian soldiers who have died in Ukraine.

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

The Egyptian Red Cr-c-scent on Friday said 1,200 water purifiers, 100 oxygen cylinders, one oxygen generator, 1,000 solar-powered items, 24 power

generators and 418 medical supplies had been blocked by Israel from reaching Gaza since the conflict started. The fighting, triggered by the October 7 attacks on southern Israel by Hamas, has sent tensions soaring across the region, and shows no signs of abating with the conflict entering its fourth month.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Boeing has so far de-

livered about 218 of the 737 Max planes worldwide, the company told AFP.

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

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

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

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

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



An elderly woman puts ballot paper inside a ballot box after casting her vote in the morning during the 12th general election in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

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

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

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

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

dex for 2023 was 13.7pc lower than the average value for 2022. Notably, the international sugar price index was the only one higher over the year, despite experiencing a significant drop of 16.6pc in December due to increased sugar production in Brazil and reduced use of sugarcane for ethanol production in India.

The Cereal Price Index saw a 1.5pc increase in December 2023, driven by rising prices of wheat, maize, rice, and barley, primarily due to shipment limitations faced by exporters.

### Americans divided on US role in Mideast crisis

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Year's Day is nearing 100.

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

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

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

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

### Italian foreign minister calls for formation of EU army

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# Govt is committed to provide all fundamental rights to trans community: Mushaal Mullick

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Assistant to Prime Minister for Human Rights and Women Empowerment, Mushaal Hussain Mullick here on Sunday said that the government was committed to provide all fundamental rights to the transgender community across the country at gross root level.

She was addressing at the concluding ceremony at a workshop on wellness and communication development for non-binary and transgender persons, orga-

nized by AQ Khan Foundation. She said that over 0.3 million transgenders were registered with concerned government department and the government was planning to a mass campaign with the name of "Dukhtar" rest of the country for the protection, jobs and skilled programs for trans community.

Transgender persons are guaranteed all fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution of Pakistan. In addition, the Act recognises transgender per-

sons' right to property inheritance, voting, education, employment, healthcare, assembly, access to public places and to hold public office, she said.

Mushaal underlined that trans community was playing its vital role for the development of the country and they were contributing at every level with their sincere efforts and hard working.

She said that the government would constitute committees at district level for collecting the proper

data of transgenders, to provide the education, health care, jobs, social security, social media trainings, vocational trainings and other opportunities to make them a productive and economically independent citizens. "We all are human beings and have the rights to do every positive act for the development and promotion of the society and state", she added. The SAPM also appreciated the best efforts of Dareecha organization for the development of trans community.



ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to Prime Minister for Human Rights and Women Empowerment, Mushaal Hussain Mullick, is being presented a shield at the conclusion of the workshop on "Wellness and Communication Development for non-binary and transgender individuals".



ISLAMABAD: Additional Chief Secretary, Gilgit-Baltistan Captain Retd Mushtaq Ahmed addressing a press conference at a local hotel.

## Change in lifestyle crucial in managing stomach diseases; Dr. Hyder

ISLAMABAD (APP): Renowned consultant Gastroenterologist and Hepatologist Dr. Hyder Abbasi emphasized the pivotal role of lifestyle changes in effectively managing stomach diseases.

Addressing the interconnected nature of mental and physical health, Dr. Hyder underscored its significance in comprehensively addressing stomach-related health issues. Abdominal discomfort, a commonly experienced ailment, becomes a matter of concern when it is persistent and accompanied by alarming symptoms, he said in an interview with Pakistan Television News on Sunday.

He identified red flags such as unexplained weight loss, chronic constipation, or traces of blood in urine, indicating the need for a more in-depth investigation into the underlying causes.

Dr. Hyder recommended undergoing a colonoscopy test as part of a comprehensive examination of the intestines for individuals aged 50 and

above.

However, he acknowledged that barriers such as carelessness and a lack of resources often deter many from pursuing necessary diagnostic procedures.

Dr. Hyder expressed concern over the premature attribution of urinary issues to hemorrhoids, leading individuals to self-medicate without a proper diagnosis.

He highlighted the unfortunate realization that individuals often become aware of the true underlying problem, such as colorectal cancer, only when the condition exacerbates.

Dr. Hyder also shed light on inflammatory bowel syndromes (IBS), presenting a unique challenge in diagnosis. Symptoms like abdominal pain, changes in bowel habits, and constipation can point to IBS, he added.

Unlike other conditions, IBS often doesn't present clear signs on medical scans. Counseling and a holistic approach to diagnosis and treatment are effective in managing IBS.

## KCEU flays Indian blames against Raja, Farooq

ISLAMABAD (APP): Belgium-based Kashmir Council European Union (KCEU) Chairman Ali Raza Syed has strongly condemned the Indian allegations levelled against Farooq Siddiqi alias Farooq Papa and Raja Muzaffar Khan, the prominent Kashmiri figures based in North America.

In a statement issued on Saturday, Chair of KCEU Ali Raza Syed said that Indian allegations against Farooq Siddiqi and Raja Muzaffar of Kashmir Global Council (KGC) are totally baseless and fabricated as they are out of Jammu and Kashmir for a long time and just focusing on the legitimate rights of the people of Kashmir.

He said, they are not involved in any illegal activities against the Indian government and the allegations against them are untrue and lack credible evidence.

## Dr Fazal appointed as Dean Faculty of Education AIOU

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr. Arif Alvi has appointed Prof. Dr. Fazal-Ur-Rahman as the Dean of the Faculty of Education at Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) for the next three years.

The Ministry for Federal Education and Professional Training notified the university of his appointment, and the university has issued an official notification in this regard.

It is pertinent to mention here that according to the Act of AIOU, the President of Pakistan serves as the Chancellor of Allama Iqbal Open University. Vice Chancellor, AIOU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood, congratulated Dr. Fazal on his appointment and expressed his hope that the faculty members under his guidance would work even harder towards the development of the university and aligning the curriculum with contemporary requirements. Deans, faculty members and principal officers also congratulated Dr. Fazal and considered his appointment a positive omen for the prosperity and progress.

## Int'l workshop on 'Ethical Research in Clinical Trials' to be held next month

ISLAMABAD (APP): Two-day International workshop on 'Ethical Research in Clinical Trials' will be held under the auspices of COMSTech and UARS in February to address the challenges of research integrity in clinical trials in low-middle-income countries and propose the best suitable guidelines to improve the quality of research in this domain.

The workshop, scheduled to be held from February 07-09 in Cairo, Egypt, is aimed at imparting knowledge and training about research integrity and creating a network of professionals working in the field for continuous learning and exchanges.

According to an official of COMSTech, the meeting and its workshop will help devise solutions for the challenges faced in clinical trials by low-middle income country.

Students, scientists, researchers, experts, healthcare managers, gov-

ernment officials, think tanks, health NGO's, policy makers from the domain of multicenter clinical trials research from across the world and global south countries can register for the workshop for physical or virtual participation.

Globally the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge enjoys a place of distinction, and the public expects to reap considerable benefit from the creative and innovative contributions of scientists. As science becomes increasingly tangled with major social, philosophical, economic, and political issues, scientists become more accountable to the larger society of which they are a part.

Therefore, it is more important than ever that those individual scientists and their institutions periodically reassess the values, and professional practices that guide their research as well as their efforts to perform their research work with integrity.

## Contempt petition on resolution to postpone polls is likely to be held this week

ISLAMABAD (Online): The hearing on the petition filed for contempt of court on the resolution to postpone the general elections in the Senate is likely to be held this week.

It can also be objected to by the Supreme Court because the proceedings of the Senate cannot be challenged in any court.

Sources have said that the application filed against the decision to postpone the general elections in the Senate is likely to be processed this week. Objection can also be raised on the application and it is possible that it may be ap-

pointed to the bench and dismissed after a regular hearing because no court including Supreme Court of Pakistan has jurisdiction to issue any order against the internal proceedings of senate, all proceedings are protected by law.

It should be noted that a petition for contempt of court has been filed in the Supreme Court against the chairman of the Senate and members of the Senate. A resolution was passed in the Senate to postpone the elections. The petition was filed in the Supreme Court on behalf of lawyer Ishtiaq Ahmed Mirza.

## Petition to remove Imran from party chairmanship likely to be heard Tuesday

ISLAMABAD (Online): There is a strong possibility that the Supreme Court will hear the petition filed by PTI founder Imran Khan against the decision of the Islamabad High Court on the issue of removal from the party chairmanship this week.

The application may be fixed for hearing tomorrow (Tuesday) or the day after tomorrow (Wednesday).

It should be noted that

the Election Commission's decision to remove him from the Assembly membership and party chairmanship was challenged in the petition. In the petition, the Election Commission and the Speaker of the National Assembly have been made parties.

It was opined in application that application was filed in Islamabad High Court (IHC) during the hearing in Lahore High Court (LHC).

## Attaching Kashmiris' properties by Indian NIA has become a new normal practice in IIOJK

ISLAMABAD (APP): Attaching Kashmiris' properties on one pretext or the other by the Indian dreaded probe agency, National Investigation Agency (NIA), has become a new normal in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK).

According to a report released by Kashmir Media Service on Sunday, the NIA attached property of a civilian, Mushtaq Ahmad, in Chanapora area of Srinagar yesterday.

It said NIA has already confiscated the office of All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) for spearheading the movement for peaceful resolution of the Kashmir dispute.

The IIOJK authorities have already seized scores of properties worth crores belonging to pro-freedom Kashmiris and Jamaat-Islami of the territory, it lamented. The report said the Indian authorities have also identified hundreds of properties belonging to pro-freedom people in the occupied territory to be attached which is a sheer political vendetta on part of the Modi regime.

It said Indian troops are regularly destroying the Kashmiris' houses during violent cordon and search operations CASOs, adding the RSS-backed Modi regime is hell bent on depriving Kashmiris of their land, properties and jobs.

The report deplored that demolition of properties and illegal confiscations are part of India's systematic settler colonialism campaign in the IIOJK.

The Modi regime, it said, is using every brutal tactic to muzzle the freedom voice of the Kashmiris but its nefarious tactics will not deter IIOJK people from pursuing the freedom cause and the freedom movement will be taken to its logical conclusion at all costs. The report also urged the world community and international human rights organizations to take notice of the Modi regime's brutal actions in IIOJK and help resolve the long-pending Kashmir dispute.

## 02 injured in firing incident in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD (APP): Two people were injured in a firing incident on Sunday when an unidentified motorcycle opened fire on Dolphin Police personnel near PIMS Hospital in Islamabad. According to police spokesman, the assailants fired upon Dolphin Police, prompting a retaliatory response. In the exchange of gunfire, two suspects were injured and subsequently apprehended.



ISLAMABAD: Children are enjoying swings at Sukh Chayn Park in the Federal Capital.

## APHC expresses concern over continued illegal detention Hurriyat leaders

ISLAMABAD (APP): The All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) has expressed serious concern over the continued illegal detention of thousands of Kashmiris, including Hurriyat leaders and activists languishing in different jails in India Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). According to Kashmir Media Service, the APHC spokesman, in a statement issued in Srinagar, said that the freedom-loving people of Kashmir had been facing the worst type of Indian state terrorism for demanding their inalienable right to self-determination.

He said that despite the Indian suppression and repression, the exemplary steadfastness displayed by the people of Kashmir had jolted Indian military arro-

gance and utterly bulldozed its nefarious designs to break the will of the Kashmiri people.

The spokesman, denouncing the confiscation of properties and houses of the people of Kashmir by the Indian Bharatiya Janata Party regime with the help of Indian armed forces, urged the United Nations Human Rights Council and other rights organizations to visit IIOJK and monitor the worst situation where people were being imprisoned in their houses, having no right to talk and walk freely in the territory. He also urged the international community to support the Kashmiris' just struggle for the right to self-determination, help stop the massive human rights abuses perpetrated by Indian forces.



ISLAMABAD: A board displayed for people parked their cycles alongside a road outside super market in the Federal Capital.

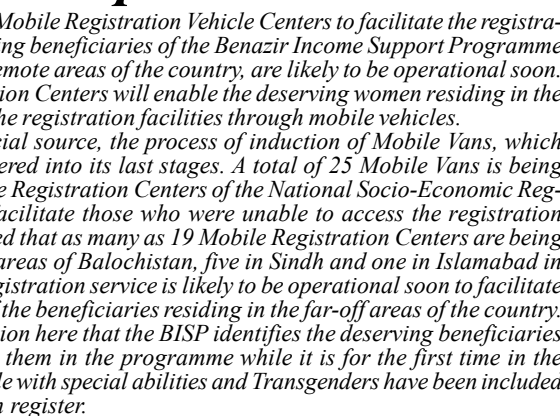
## Mobile Registration Centers of BISP to be operational soon

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Mobile Registration Vehicle Centers to facilitate the registration process for the intending beneficiaries of the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), belonging to the remote areas of the country, are likely to be operational soon.

The Mobile Registration Centers will enable the deserving women residing in the far-flung areas to access the registration facilities through mobile vehicles.

According to an official source, the process of induction of Mobile Vans, which started in August, has entered into its last stages. A total of 25 Mobile Vans is being included to serve as Mobile Registration Centers of the National Socio-Economic Registry (NSER) which will facilitate those who were unable to access the registration facility. The source revealed that as many as 19 Mobile Registration Centers are being established in the remote areas of Balochistan, five in Sindh and one in Islamabad in this phase. The Mobile Registration service is likely to be operational soon to facilitate the registration process of the beneficiaries residing in the far-off areas of the country.

It is pertinent to mention here that the BISP identifies the deserving beneficiaries through NSER and enroll them in the programme while it is for the first time in the country's history that people with special abilities and Transgenders have been included in the programme and can register.



ISLAMABAD: A view of dense fog covering surrounding Margalla hills areas in the Federal Capital.

## Taobat – A nature lovers' paradise

ISLAMABAD (APP): Nature has bestowed Pakistan with countless bounties figuring mesmerizing views, tall pines, snow covered peaks, gushing brooks and rivers, green plains and hilly terrains. These matchless gifts of Nature from coasts of Karachi to towering peaks of Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan amalgamate to present glamorous and enthralling views for visitors.

Standing tall among them is Taobat – a unique destination with its picturesque and captivating scenic beauty, nestled on the banks of River Neelum, in Gurez Valley of Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

Neelum valley, one of three regions of Gurez valley and the last station in Pakistani controlled AJK along Line of Control is some 200 kilometers from Muzaffarabad and 39 kilometers from Kel valley.

Having the history of centuries, this land was also explained as "one of the most beautiful scenes in Kashmir" by a British author Sir Roper Walter Lawrence who visited the region in 1895.

"It is the most beautiful scenes in all of Kashmir, where the tourmaline waters of the Kishenganga River are framed by mountain scarps of indescribable grandeur."

Walter Lawrence had written in his book 'The Valley of Kashmir.' Even after a vast time span of 13 decades, this place is as beautiful today as it was at the time of Walter Lawrence's visit.

Drive from Kel to Taobat is surely a mesmerizing journey leaving tourists in awe when they pass through beautiful villages of Machhal, Phulwai, Halmat, Janawai, Sardari and Makroon falling on way from Dawarian to Taobat.

Wooden cottages, enchanting waterfalls, flower-covered meadows, heavily forested mountains and a roaring river – all join together to present the look of 'Heaven on Earth,' for tourists travelling to Taobat on a road snaking through these small localities.

Sharda is the most picturesque spot on way to Taobat with its captivating landscape, springs and tree-covered hillsides and the houses built on steep slopes having their roofs partly stuck into mountain.

Being an ancient seat of knowledge and wisdom, the ruins of an old Buddhist University can still be found in Sharda.

"Visiting here is a real pleasure. Once you move towards Neelum valley, your eyes remain stuck to beautiful views," said Rashid Mahmood, a tourist from Islamabad. "Travelling on bumpy

roads is really thrilling. It is Nature all around on way to Taobat. This heavenly beauty leaves indelible prints on your mind."

As the tourists had to travel by jeeps from Kel to Taobat, they enjoy a thrilling journey and captivating views. Men grazing cattle and farming next to their wood houses and women strolling around wearing long black velvet gowns to arrange food and wood stock for winter, present a real primitive look.

At Taobat, Krishanganga enters into Pakistani side Kashmir becoming the Neelum river and making the region awe inspiring where tourists even forget to wink their eyes. Taobat receives heavy snowfall during its six months long winter season from October to April.

"We face harsh winter. Snow engulfs our houses and pavements from December to

March," remarked Nasir Ali, a resident of the area. "Our people have to gather ration and wood during summers and lock inside their houses during peak winter season."

Nasir informed that majority of local people work at corn, beans, potato and vegetable farms to earn their living. "Survive here commonly survive on farming and income from tourists with some opting for other professions."

Being in far flung region, the area lacks some most essential amenities like well equipped hospitals, paved roads, gas and higher education institutes.

"Although 60% tourists coming to Kashmir visit Taobat, yet the area still lacks basic amenities," Nasir said. "Even for communication, the tourists have to purchase special Scam SIMs as other networks do not operate here."



ISLAMABAD: A view of people on outing during dense fog covering surrounding areas of the Federal Capital.