

# Independent

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ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar chairs a meeting of the Caretaker Federal Cabinet.

## Elections 2024: Cabinet approves deployment of Pak army, civil armed forces

Forces will perform duties at sensitive constituencies and polling stations, and will also act as a rapid response force

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federal Cabinet on Tuesday approved the deployment of Pakistan army and the civil armed forces to ensure the peaceful conduct of general elections across the country.

These forces will perform duties at sensitive constituencies and polling stations, and will also act as a rapid response force.

The decision came following the submission of a summary by the federal Interior Ministry in the meeting.

The cabinet which met here under the chairmanship of Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar, also discussed in detail the recommendation with respect to the digitization and restructuring of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR).

After a thorough discussion of the proposals made in light of the opinions of the cabinet members regarding the restructuring and digitization of the FBR, the prime minister directed to establish an inter-ministerial committee under the supervision of the caretaker finance minister.

Other members of the committee will include federal ministers for privatisation, foreign affairs, commerce, energy, law and justice and information technology.

The committee will present its recommendations regarding these proposals in the next meeting of the federal cabinet.

The cabinet appreciated the efforts of Finance Minister Dr. Shamsad Akhtar in increasing the tax revenue and improving the tax-GDP ratio.

## 49 foreign journalists issued visas so far for coverage of upcoming elections: Solangi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi said on Tuesday that certain elements were just harping on the rumours that "no foreign journalists and observers would be arriving Pakistan for coverage of upcoming general elections" which was contrary to facts.

He was addressing a press conference flanked by Secretary Information and Broadcasting Shahera Shahid, Executive Director General External Publicity Wing Ambreen Jan, Principal Information Officer Dr Tariq Mehmood and

Director General Radio Pakistan Saeed Sheikh. Many international media persons had applied for visas to cover the elections, Murtaza Solangi said adding that 49 visas (for Islamabad Lahore and Karachi) had been issued as of today while 32 requests were under process with many other requests were still being received from different stations of the world.

He said that these 32 visa applications for coverage of elections were under process which had been received in Pakistan High Commission New Delhi and were being processed due to manual visa

system in India for issuing visas.

He said that so far 174 requests for ECP Accreditation Cards had been received and processed for foreign media representatives and their associated Pakistani staff who were based in Pakistan.

Responding to a question by media, he said so far 25 applications were under process from the UK alone, 08 from Russian Federation, 13 from Japan, 02 from South Africa while 05 from Commonwealth under the category of International Observers.

Accreditation Cards had also been processed for local Pakistani media houses, Murtaza Solangi said and added so far 6,065 journalists had been processed including 1200 from Lahore, 1470 from Karachi, 1050 from Peshawar, 600 from Quetta, 355 from Hyderabad, 250 from Faisalabad and 290 from Multan.

The cases where the media intends to go and cover other cities, besides Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi, would be examined on case-to-case basis, in consultation with relevant ministries, he said.

## Modern agri technology, effective decision making vital to cope with climate change challenge: President

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Tuesday citing the abundance of natural resources, said that adopting modern agricultural technology and effective decision-making were inevitable for Pakistan to cope with the challenge of climate change.

The president, in his inaugural address at the Regional Dialogue 2024 on "Climate Crisis: Shaping South Asia's Resilience" arranged by the Institute of Regional Studies, said that Pakistan was rich in water, renewable energy potential and other resources but it directly needed a driving force to implement the decisions and make it compete with the world.

He told the gathering of former diplomats, academicians and researchers that Pakistan had around 150 million acre-feet of water which was sufficient to meet its needs if modern agriculture techniques like

spray and drip irrigation were adopted and flood irrigation was done away with.

Emphasising the implementation of national water policy and other relevant legislation, he said a pricing mechanism could also lead to water conservation. He said around 400 million gallons per day of water in Karachi was drained into the sea through sewerage which was a criminality.

He also highlighted the use of prohibited nets by the fishermen which also swept small fish resulting in a huge loss of marine life. He said due to the very reasons, Europe was not allowing fish import from Pakistan.

The president exemplified the Netherlands which was the second largest food supplier on earth despite being 19 times smaller in size than Pakistan and not having such an abundance of water similar to Pakista



ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi in a group photo with the participants of the inaugural session of the Regional Dialogue 2024 on "Climate Crisis: Shaping South Asia's Resilience" organized by the Institute of Regional Studies.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Murtaza Solangi addressing a press conference at PTV Headquarters.

## Seerat Conference for promotion of values of forgiveness, tolerance

BAHAWALPUR (APP): Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Aneeq Ahmed has stressed the need to promote Islamic teachings of forgiveness and tolerance to make society beautiful and peaceful.

He said this while ad-

presided over by the Vice Chancellor of the Islamia University of Bahawalpur Prof. Dr. Naveed Akhtar.

Prof. Dr. Saleem Tariq Khan, former Vice Chancellor of the Islamia University of Bahawalpur was the guest of honour. Prof. Dr. Ahmed Mohammad



ressing the 10th International Seerat-ul-Nabi Conference that was organized by Seerat Chair Faculty of Islamic and Arabic Studies at the Islamia University of Bahawalpur at Baghdad-ul-Jadeed Campus here on Tuesday.

The conference focused on human values and their impact on societies in the light of Seerat ul Nabi (Peace Be Upon Him) was inaugurated by the Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed, while

Al-Sharkavi Salem, Chairman of the Department of Quranic Studies, Jamia Azhar Egypt and Prof. Dr. Muhammad Saad Siddiqui, Jamia Punjab also addressed it.

Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Aneeq Ahmed said that values are a very important subject in Islam. "The last Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) said that the religion was complete and final guidance for the whole of humanity," he said.

## Shehbaz declares Nawaz as guarantee for economic revival, development

AHMEDPUR SHARQIA (INP): President Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) has declared party supremo Nawaz Sharif as guarantee for economic revival and development of country if voted to power on February 8.

While addressing an election campaign related

public gathering in Ahmedpur Sharqia on Tuesday, he said that three-time prime minister Nawaz Sharif has served South Punjab while being in power and he would continue the journey of bringing prosperity to Pakistan including South Punjab after coming into power.

## Pakistan is brother, friend and neighboring country: Iranian envoy

ISLAMABAD (Online): Iranian Ambassador to Pakistan Reza Amiri Moghaddam said that Pakistan and Iran are two brother, friend and neighboring countries. Both have supported each other in difficult and difficult situations.

In a statement on X, Iranian Ambassador said that historical and deep rooted relations between the brotherly countries provide a basis for resolving the issues that plague the relationship.

The friendship between the two countries deepened due to the recent shared threat of terrorism. Hopefully we will fight terrorism with mutual cooperation.

## EC freezes dev. funds of local bodies, cantonment boards

ISLAMABAD (Online): Election Commission (EC) has frozen development funds of local bodies and cantonment boards all over the country. Development Funds of local bodies and cantonment boards of Sindh, KP and Balochistan will remain frozen till elections are held.

According to notification issued by EC the development funds of local bodies and cantonment boards have been frozen and the local bodies will do cleanliness and sanitation work and daily routine matters. They will not be authorized to launch new scheme or offer tenders.



CHINIOT: Chairman PPP Bilawal Bhutto Zardari addressing a public gathering at Hockey Stadium.

## PPP to end politics of hatred: Bilawal

CHINIOT/FAISALABAD (APP): Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that his party has jumped into the political arena to weed out the politics of hatred and division of the masses.

Addressing a public gathering in Chiniot on Tuesday, he said, "We are not interested in aggravating the political and economic situation while promoting political differences into political enmity. The PPP has never been involved in the politics of victimization rather we want to live and let others live."

He said that the PPP had floated a unique manifesto of 10 points for eradication of poverty and improve lifestyle of the masses. He said that provision of free electricity up to 300 units was the top priority of the PPP after coming to power whereas the people belonging to the low strata of life would also be facilitated with 3 million houses along with their ownership rights.

## Ministry establishes control room for Elections 2024

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister of Communications Shahid Ashraf Tarar on Tuesday visited the control room established in the Ministry of Interior for monitoring of security arrangements and law and order situation during the general election 2024.

The caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar appointed Shahid Ashraf Tarar as the Chairman of the Committee for the Security and Administrative Affairs of General



Elections 2024. The coordinator National Action Plan briefed the minister in detail about the functioning of the control room on behalf of the Secretary of Interior Aftab Akbar Durrani, who was also present in the meeting.

The minister appreciated the efforts of the officials of the interior ministry while expressing satisfaction with the functioning of the control room and said that the security and law and order situation will be monitored during the elections in the country through the control room.

## BYC calls off Islamabad sit-in

ISLAMABAD (INP) - The Baloch protesters, who had been staging a sit-in outside Islamabad's National Press Club (NPC) since December, called off their demonstration on Tuesday.

This decision followed a letter from the NPC to Islamabad police requesting the removal of the Baloch rights camp, a request that was retracted after facing widespread criticism, including from journalists.

The protesters, organised by the Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC), had initiated the sit-in on December 22, persisting despite adverse weather conditions. Additionally, they accused the police of harassing their supporters, profiling them, and filing First Information Reports against them.

Dr Mahrang Baloch expressed disappointment, emphasizing the media community's responsibility to support those whose voices are marginalised. She reported harassment, threats, and the spread of false information, stating that there was a supposed threat around the press club area.

## Firing near check post, 2 laborers killed, 2 injured in DI Khan

DI KHAN (Online): 2 laborers were gunned down and 2 were injured near police check post in Dera Ismail Khan (DI Khan).

As soon as the incident was reported, a large number of rescue officers and police reached the scene.

The injured and dead bodies have been shifted to DHQ hospital Dera. According to media reports, it has been revealed in the initial reports that 4 persons who were killed and injured were laborers who were working in the fields when unidentified persons opened fire.

Police said in this regard that incident took place near police check post in Garah Hayat. Further investigation is underway and search for terrorists has been started. It is pertinent to say that earlier 3 FC officials were injured in an attack on security vehicle of Oil and Gas Company.

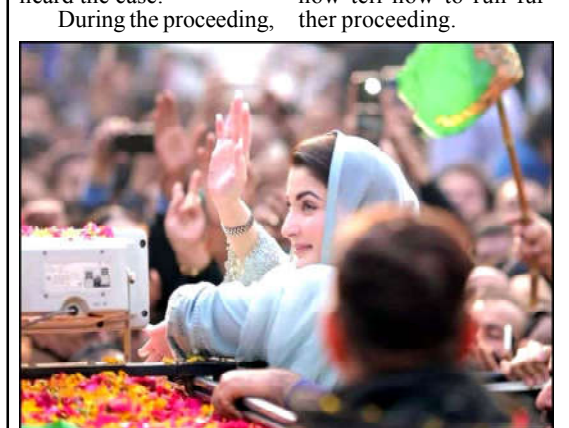
According to police, unidentified person attacked the security vehicle of the Oil and Gas Company in Darzanda area. The vehicle was detonated by remote control bomb, injuring 3 FC officials.

## SC reserves verdict in appeal against termination of Shaukat Saddiqui

ISLAMABAD (APP): Advocate Khawaja Haris, the counsel for Lt. Gen (retired) Faiz Hameed and Irfan Ramay, denied the allegations levelled in the petition against his clients.

The CJ noted that former registrar of SC had also submitted his comments in the case.

CJ Qazi Faiz Isa said that Attorney General has already stated that facts were not investigated after the speech of Shaukat Aziz Saddiqui. He asked that lawyers now tell how to run further proceeding.



LAHORE: Muslim League (PML-N) Leader, Maryam Nawaz Sharif waving hand to her supporters during rally as a part of Election Campaign for the upcoming General Election 2024, in Lahore.

## Evidences, sources prove India supports terrorism in Balochistan: Global Times

BEIJING (APP): There are "solid bits of evidence" proving that India supports terrorist forces in some Pakistani areas like Balochistan province, providing them with money, weapons, and training, some sources close to the matter told the Global Times.

While continually suppressing some of its rivals and neighbours in the international community with the excuse of anti-terrorism, India has secretly funded terrorist forces in Pakistan, in various parts of the South Asian country, such as Balochistan, inciting local secessionists to undermine regional stability through terrorist attacks, they revealed.

Through looking into historical materials and related news reports from both Pakistani and Indian media sources, as well as speaking with sources and observers who are familiar with the situation in Balochistan, the Global Times found that India has

a long history of backing terrorism in Pakistan.

"Concrete evidence" In December 2023, a commander of the Baloch National Army (BNA) separatist militant group, who had surrendered himself to the Pakistani government, disclosed that India has been secretly supporting terrorist activities in Balochistan and financing separatist forces in the region.

According to media sources, Sarfraz Ahmed Bungulzai made the announcement at a press conference in Quetta. Bungulzai said that he thought his armed struggle was for Baloch rights, but later he realized that "India is involved in all these conspiracies."

"And after taking money from India, they shed the blood of their own Baloch," said Bungulzai, according to media reports. A Pakistani source told the Global Times that once again, it shone a light on India's behind-the-scenes villainy.



## Daily Voice of Masses Independent

### Our 'free' media

Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar told a CNBC interviewer during his recent trip to Davos that the media in Pakistan was "freer than in the West", while arguing that Western media operates under far more regulations compared to the media in Pakistan.

Mr Kakar's words brought to mind a similar statement made by former prime minister Imran Khan during his tenure, when he had made the same appraisal of press freedoms in Pakistan in response to a probing question by a foreign interviewer.

The answer had been as scandalising to practising journalists then as it is now. Taken without context, their words seemed to suggest that the relative lack of formal regulatory oversight gives Pakistani media some sort of qualitative edge. Anyone familiar with the country and its media landscape knows that this is clearly not the case.

The truth is that whenever the Pakistani media and working journalists have attempted to assert their freedoms in recent years, they have invariably been made to pay a very heavy price for it.

Starting from the days when Nawaz Sharif last fell out of favour with the establishment, powerful operators acting behind the scenes have used progressively coercive means to whip the media into lining up with their narratives. This publication is among those that were made to suffer the worst of such practices.

So weary have media practitioners now become of the sword constantly hanging above their necks that various journalists' and media workers' representative bodies resolved this past weekend to begin pushing back against it.

The Coalition for Free Media, as it is being called, is a welcome effort that had been long awaited. It is hoped it will be able to wrest back a modicum of the independence Pakistani media has been gradually deprived of over the last decade.

From high-profile abductions that have gone unquestioned to unresolved murders of journalists, the Pakistani media fraternity has suffered much in silence, while being forced to cede more and more control over editorial decision-making to unaccountable individuals.

Press 'advisories', a relic of the Zia era, now seem to be issued every week. Both overt and veiled threats are issued periodically, ensuring that few dare question the state's diktats.

There is a growing realisation that protecting press freedoms is no longer a question of self-preservation or interest: it is clear that the Fourth Estate cannot continue to watch out for the public interest and fulfil its duty to speak truth to power if it allows itself to continue to be divided and exploited by a predatory state.

In this suffocating environment, more and more journalists and media practitioners are realising that their safety is in presenting a united front. More power to those leading the change.

## Winners and losers

Dr Niaz Murtaza

Who will the winners and losers be in the 2024 polls? Some jokingly say that even though the polls themselves are not certain, the winner is.

But if a (favourable) winner is certain, why would anyone try to delay them, especially as the US may link a critical new IMF loan to polls? So, barring a national calamity, polls on Feb 8 look certain, still months late constitutionally. And yet there is doubt.

There is often uncertainty even in the US despite credible opinion and actual polls. In our context, a recent poll shows the PTI and PML-N close in Punjab. But are our opinion polls reliable? The 2013 and 2018 ones were reasonably so. Such polls take national or provincial samples and not constituency ones. So, they predict the vote ratios of parties overall but not their number of seats.

The average of four polls (Gallup, Pulse, IPOR and SDPI) completed within two months of the 2018 polls had the PTI, PML-N and the PPP getting 28.3 per cent, 27.5pc and 16.5pc votes respectively. They actually got 31.8pc, 24.4pc and 13pc. So, they erred from the actual ratios by less than 4pc, which is common even in the US.

In 2013, the average of two polls (Gallup and IRI) showed the PML-N, PPP and the PTI getting 36pc, 15.5pc and 16pc of the votes, even closer to the 33pc, 15pc and 17pc actual ratios. So, the polls of such firms can't be rejected outright as biased or unscientific, despite the many constraints in carrying out accurate surveys in Pakistan.

But how did the vote ratios translate into

seats? The party with the highest actual vote ratio got 10-15pc more seats: the PTI 43pc seats in 2018 and PML-N 46pc in 2013 but the PPP got only 2pc more in 2008.

What can we expect in 2024? Gallup has withheld national results this time. But its recent poll shows the PTI at 34pc and PML-N at 32pc in all-crucial Punjab, ie, close as in 2018 nationally. Given the 2013 and 2018 trends, the PTI may win 40-45pc of seats there.

The PTI got 45pc support in KP (the PML-N and JUI-F together got 24pc) and 19pc in Sindh (PPP got 42pc) in this poll. It would suggest a PTI set-up nationally and in Punjab and KP, a PPP one in Sindh, with Balochistan unclear.

There are two big caveats though. Polling over the months in 2018 had shown the PTI's vote ratio increasing but PML-N's falling. Gallup polls over the months in Punjab now show the reverse. This momentum may mean a PML-N win. But both trends are odd. In 2017-18, the PML-N had given 6pc growth, low inflation, CPEC and a cut in terrorism and power outages. In 2022-23, it gave near-zero growth and record inflation. So, neither trend reflects party outcomes. But the commonality is that in 2018, the PML-N faced the establishment's wrath which now PTI faces even more. This may have played a key role in changing the choices of voter blocs watching for such signals.

The bigger caveat is there is no PTI in the polls, unfairly removed by the party symbol case verdict. No law allows the Election Commission of Pakistan to reject party poll results. But it did so twice with the PTI. Laws allow the ECP to handle national

polls disputes via tribunals run by judges, as it isn't a judicial body. Arguably, the ECP nixed the PTI's party polls without law and capacity. PTI horses must run as independents though it's unclear if any law says so.

Party symbols don't represent their registration but are given in elections due to illiteracy. The ECP says PTI is still registered with it. So, its winners must be treated as its assembly representatives, subject to party loyalty laws, even if the PTI's symbol doesn't appear on ballots. Forcing them to run as independents may confuse voters, and more critically, make PTI winners open to poaching by others waiting with their nets. It all appears designed. It follows the imprisonment of the PTI's top leaders, forced desertion and rally bans. More novel ploys may emerge to undercut the party until and after polls.

All this may make 2024 polls more rigged than the 2018 and 1990s ones and on a par with those held in 1985 and 2002 by unconstitutional regimes. Similar rigging can apparently happen even under constitutional rule.

This may usher in an inept and weak PML-N regime reliant on small parties, more so than the PTI in 2018. Even if the PTI wins by magic, we will still have an inept set-up with uneasy ties with all key internal and external forces.

The only (tiny) hope is if the winner is allowed to appoint a competent cabinet, letting the Sharifs or Imran Khan run the parties, as Congress did after Rajiv Gandhi's death to usher in India's progress under Manmohan Singh. Otherwise, even if the winners are not certain, the losers are the masses. -- Courtesy Dawn

## Blinding rage

Shahzad Sharjeel

Blinding pretenders to the throne has been an age-old favourite in our part of the world. In addition to making the aspirant an example for other external adventurists and curbing in-house ambition, the injury also added to the challenge of running chaotic kingdoms that frequently experienced uprisings the monarch usually had to quell, leading the forces at the empire's disposal personally in the battlefield.

Lest anyone assume that the despicable practice was limited to kings and their sons or brothers, in the 16th century, Mallu Adil Shah of Bijapur was blinded on his Maratha grandmother's orders to promote another brother in the line of succession.

In an age when physical prowess was at least as much, if not more, important than the intellectual capacity to mount a credible challenge, blinding an opponent must have appeared as sufficient a minimisation of future risk as possible, short of outright extermination. Maybe, in their sick minds, they occupied a status one rung higher than those of murderers.

In the Bhagalpur district of Bihar in 1980, police officials, with the knowledge of at least one minister and active indifference of officers as senior as DIG and IG, went about blinding as many as 87 suspects in custody over a nine-month period. They claimed this was the only way to stem the tide of criminal activities in the area. The readers shall be spared the gruesome details of how these protectors of life and honour went about their gory business. It

took some brilliant and courageous investigative reporting to expose the case. Inquiries were initiated, and 15 police officials, including the superintendent of Bhagalpur Central Prison, were suspended.

The superintendent, who had forwarded the victims' petitions for relief to the chief judicial magistrate, along with his forwarding letter, was accused of failing to record and report the undertrials' condition upon receiving their custody at the jail. The paity bhais (people wearing the same belt/badge) closed ranks and claimed that enraged mobs handled all the victims and that they were brought to the police stations already blinded.

The Indian supreme court heard the matter for three years. It used 'grandiloquent' language to express its anguish, as Arun Shourie, former editor of the Indian Express, puts it in his book The Commissioner For Lost Causes. However, the court did little by way of punishing the policemen whose suspensions were, one by one, revoked, and some were even promoted to more important positions.

Those victims who survived the ordeal got Rs30,000 deposited in their bank accounts as compensation to live off its interest, a grand amount of Rs750 a month at its highest point before it was discontinued altogether in 2019.

Recently, the caretaker chief minister of Punjab approved action against 18 Directorate of Drug Control officials in the Avastin eye injection case. More than 60 people have lost their vision completely or partially

because of the administration, without consent, of apparently contaminated supplies of the drug. The inspectors were responsible for ensuring safety standards.

Some people would consider it unfair to equate the Bhagalpur atrocity with Punjab officialdom's failure. Consider that expired stents were put in people's hearts not too long ago. Technicians and, in one case, a security guard were found to be performing surgeries. According to media reports, a doctor and a motor mechanic were running a kidney transplant racket. Inquiries and 'action' will be initiated; however, 'gown brothers,' too, have each other's back. Even if the culprits are apprehended, tried, and punished, how do you bring back the dead or compensate for a limb or an organ?

The days of absolute monarchs and tyrants may have been over, and the modern state guarantees rights and protections to its citizens. However, in the absence of constant vigilance, accountability, and timely justice, tiny state officials and common criminals can turn diabolical. One is reminded of Iqbal's poem Ghulam Qadir Rohilla, in which he laments the brutality of the invader who gouged out Mughal emperor Shah Alam II's eyes upon overthrowing him. The Rohilla at least had an old grouse to hide behind, as his erstwhile retainer had purportedly gotten him castrated in childhood to serve inside the royal harem. What harm did Punjab's hapless citizens bring the health officials to deprive them of their sight? -- Courtesy Dawn

## Commerce News

### BOI assures support for transferring of 'Nantong HiTide Biotechnology'

ISLAMABAD (APP): Secretary Board of Investment, Dr. Muhammad Sohail Rajput on Tuesday assured full support for the establishment and transfer of Nantong HiTide Biotechnology's to Pakistan.

Secretary Board of Investment, Dr. Muhammad Sohail Rajput, hosted a distinguished delegation led by Lin Xuyue, President of Nantong HiTide Biotechnology, in a productive meeting at his office, said a press release issued here.

Nantong HiTide, Biotechnology is engaged in Veterinary bio-product manufacturing and supply. There is an emphasis on innovation and R&D other than production, sales, technology consultation, and service of biological solutions for

animal disease control. Their commitment to providing safe and high-quality products aligns with their dedication to serving farmers in addressing animal health challenges.

The discussions during the meeting centered around a potential collaboration for the development of a foot and mouth disease vaccine in Pakistan.

The proposed collaboration includes potential avenues such as establishing a lab in Pakistan, joint ventures, and research and development partnerships. Nantong HiTide Biotechnology aims to bring its advanced technology and personalized support to Pakistan's agriculture and livestock sector.

Chen Shang, a Board

Member of HiTide Biotechnology, highlighted the effectiveness and affordability of their vaccines, aiming to enhance animal health for farmers in Pakistan.

The company plans to establish a new facility in Pakistan, focusing on the development and production of high-quality vaccines for cattle, pigs, poultry, and other animals.

The company will establish its lab in Pakistan and transfer technology. Nantong HiTide Biotechnology was established in 2017 by Dr. Lin Xuyue, the company stands as a leading private high-tech enterprise, specializing in animal vaccines and adjuvants. Notably, some of the company's products have outperformed industry giants like Pfizer and Boehringer Ingelheim.

### Sargodha Citrus Fest kicks off in Federal capital

ISLAMABAD (APP): The first-ever two-day 'Sargodha Citrus Fest' kicked off at COMSTECH on Tuesday displaying around 45 varieties of citrus fruit and its products attracting a large number of visitors.

The fest is being organized by the University of Sargodha and COMSTECH jointly where the visitors enjoy the products, especially citrus fruit-made cakes, juices, desserts, candies and green tea besides a variety of citrus fruit.

The varieties of citrus fruit including Rangpur Lime, Carrizo Citrange, Gada Dahi, Rangpur, Gilgil, Miha, Pishawari Mittha, Kinnow, Seedless Lemon, Jati Khathi, Bara Masii, Ornad Blood, Mosambi, Murcott and many others were exhibited through several stalls.

The citrus fest is set

to captivate visitors especially fruit enthusiasts of all ages on Wednesday too offering citrus-infused culinary delights and interactive exhibits.

The staff of the University of Sargodha briefed the visitors about the products made from citrus fruit and offered them to taste.

Speaking on the occasion, the Vice Chancellor of the University of Sargodha, Prof. Dr. Qaisar Abbas welcomed the participants of the inaugural ceremony and said that this is a first-ever citrus exhibition being organized in Islamabad.

Prof. Qaisar Abbas shed light on the brief history of the University of Sargodha and said that the uniqueness of this university is that it has faculties of both medical and agriculture.

### PSX stays bullish, gains 514 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bullish trend on Tuesday, gaining 514.81 points, a positive change of 0.81 percent, closing at 64,454.22 points against 63,939.41 points the previous trading day.

A total of 425,709,896 shares valuing Rs.24,995 billion were traded during the day as compared to 298,699,061 shares valuing Rs.12,515 billion the last day.

Some 354 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 209 of them recorded gains and 127 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 18 remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were Oil and Gas Development with 52,947,125 shares at Rs.136.50 per share, Fauji Foods Ltd with 44,935,382 shares.



ISLAMABAD: CEO Ener Tech Abdullah al-Mutairi called on Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.

### Pakistan to facilitate Chinese companies in field of smart city construction

BEIJING (APP): Pakistan is actively promoting digitization and embracing new technologies and industries to foster comprehensive economic and social development.

"The Pakistan Embassy in China will continue to provide comprehensive support and assistance to Chinese companies, including Beijing Urban Construction Intelligent Control (BUCIC), in facilitating the implementation of big data projects in Pakistan and promoting cooperation

between China and Pakistan in the field of smart city construction," said Aslam Chaudhary, Economic Minister in Pakistan Embassy in Beijing.

Aslam Chaudhary led a delegation to BUCIC to enhance bilateral cooperation in the field of digital city development. During the visit, the delegation toured BUCIC's state-of-the-art facilities, which encompassed the Digital Experience Center and the Urban Rail Transit Cloud Intelligent IoT

Laboratory. They were highly impressed by the digital transportation and smart city-related products, with a special focus on the integrated intelligent control center.

The integrated control center incorporates a range of facilities and functions, such as station control rooms, customer service centers, fire control rooms and ticket booths, contributing to intelligent operation and maintenance. China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Tuesday.

### Vegetable dehydration initiative can help generate handsome income

MULTAN (APP): The National Productivity Organization (NPO) arranged an awareness session on vegetable dehydration to improve farmers' income and improve exports.

General Manager NPO Wajeeha Ahmed Abbasi while addressing the participants at Multan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) remarked that NPO was

imparting information about vegetable dehydration across the country.

The government is committed to enhancing vegetable exports, she added.

President Multan Chamber of Commerce and Industry Mian Rashid Iqbal stated that there were immense opportunities in foreign markets for vegetable export.

### Gold up by Rs.500

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold increased by Rs.500 and was sold at Rs.215,200 on Tuesday compared to its sale at Rs.214,700 on last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs. 429 to Rs.184,500 from Rs.184,071 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold went down to Rs.169,124 from Rs.168,731, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

### Sauqib Fayyaz says: FPCCI to support look Africa initiative & FTAs

ISLAMABAD (APP): Mr. Saqib Fayyaz Magoon, Acting President FPCCI, stressed that the absence of free trade agreements (FTAs) with the African nations should be addressed; which, in turn, has limited our trade volume with a huge continent comprising of 54 countries. There are significant economies in Africa with whom we can multiply our trade volumes within years - both bilaterally & exports to the region cumulatively, he added.

Mr. Saqib Fayyaz



trade promotion activities; chamber-to-chamber linkages; investments & JVs; business tourism and economic cooperation.

Mr. Saqib Fayyaz Magoon, Acting President FPCCI, apprised that Pakistan's exports to Africa, as a whole, demonstrated stagnation at around \$1,500 million in 2022.

### POL import bill declines by 13.78% in 1st half of FY 2023-24

ISLAMABAD (APP): The imports of the overall petroleum group contracted by 13.78 per cent during the first six months of the current fiscal year (2023-24) compared to the corresponding period of the last year, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported. The total imports of the petroleum group during July-December (2023-24) stood at \$ 8,005.784 million against the imports of \$9,285.522 million during the same

period of last year. Among petroleum commodities, the import of petroleum products declined by 24 per cent, from \$ 4,202.185 million last year to \$3,193,849 million during the period under review. Likewise, the imports of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) declined by 4.96 per cent from \$1,949.704 million last year to \$ 1,852.996 million this year whereas petroleum crude dipped by 5.94 per cent from \$ 2,776.186 million.



## Governor emphasizes importance of alternative medicine in Punjab

**Independent Report**  
LAHORE: Federal Health Minister Nadeem Jan called on Punjab Governor Muhammad Balighur Rehman at Governor House Lahore. During the meeting, a detailed discussion was held about the measures taken in the health sector. Punjab Governor appreciated the services rendered by Federal Health Minister and gave suggestions for reforming the system in view of misuse of health card in the past. Governor Punjab also emphasized the importance of alternative medicine.

due to the measures taken in the health sector. He said that Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PMDC) should also pay special attention to the cleanliness of infrastructure, kitchens, and washrooms of medical colleges, hospitals and student hostels.

On this occasion, Federal Health Minister Nadeem Jan informed Governor Punjab about the measures taken in the health sector. He said that revolutionary measures are being taken along with the policy of producing the basic ingredients of medicines at the local level in Pakistan.

**Later,** Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman/Chancellor presided over the 19<sup>th</sup> Convocation of Lahore College for Women University. Speaking on this

occasion, Punjab Governor Muhammad Balighur Rehman said that our religion has laid great emphasis on education. The first word revealed to our last Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) from Allah Almighty was Iqra, which means to read, to seek knowledge. Governor Punjab urged the students to develop a penchant for knowledge.

Governor Punjab said that education provides opportunities to get a job, but the real success is one's character that guarantees success in life and hereafter. He said that the students should develop qualities like truthfulness, honesty, and tolerance in their character. Governor Punjab said that there are many positive things in our, we should look at the positive aspects of society.



LAHORE: Federal Health Minister Nadeem Jan called on Punjab Governor Muhammad Balighur Rehman at Governor House.

## KP Governor writes to caretaker CM for provision of medicines to hospitals

**Independent Report**  
PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Ghulam Ali has written a letter to the interim Chief Minister Arshad Hussain Shah here urging immediate provision of essential and emergency medicines to government hospitals.

Drawing the attention of the KP CM to the issue, the Governor said that the shortage of emergency medicines including life-saving drugs, anti-rabies vaccines and immunoglobulins in the government hospitals was a matter

of grave concern and posing a threat to the poor and vulnerable population of the province.

He said the issue was also highlighted by the leading newspapers and needed decisive action and intervention of the interim CM as the issue was tarnishing the public image of the caretaker set up.

The Governor urged the caretaker CM to take prompt action and ensure the provision of emergency and essential medicines in the government hospitals.

## ANF seizes 190 kg drugs in six operations

**RAWALPINDI (APP):** Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) in its crackdown against drug traffickers managed to recover over 190 kg drugs and arrested seven accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Tuesday.

He informed that 3 kg Ice drug was recovered from three Doha-bound passengers in two different operations at Islamabad Airport. 500 grams heroin was recovered from a passenger going to Bahrain at Bacha Khan Airport.

52 heroin-filled capsules were recovered from the stomach of a passenger going to Doha at Allama Iqbal Airport.

## Launches Bannu Economic Zone Caretaker CM vows zero tolerance for corruption

**PESHAWAR (APP):** Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Justice (Retd) Arshad Hussain Shah, has taken notice of complaints regarding undue problems in the Inteqal of land (land transfer deeds).

He has directed the Board of Revenue Land to obtain records of land Inteqal deeds from the last four months.

The Chief Minister has instructed the records to be scrutinized in the CM Complaint Cell, and individuals should be contacted by telephone to ensure that no additional amounts were wrongfully taken from them during the Inteqal of land process.

He announced a zero-

tolerance policy of the government against corruption and warned of strict action against officials involved in corrupt practices.

Meanwhile, Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Justice (Retd) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah formally launched the Bannu Economic Zone here on Tuesday.

The launching ceremony was held here in the Chief Minister's Secretariat wherein the Caretaker Chief Minister also distributed plot allotment letters among intending investors. Bannu Economic Zone is 14<sup>th</sup> zone of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.



LAHORE: Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Raza Naqvi along with Inspector General Police Punjab inspecting latest Security Cameras after inaugurating Special Protection Unit (Special Operation Room) at city traffic Police Lines Manawa.

## Naqvi inspects public welfare projects

**Independent Report**  
LAHORE: Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi inspected Lahore Ring Road's southern loop-III, Babu Sabu toll plaza, Liberty's Capri cinema and inaugurated the SPU's operations room at city traffic police lines at Manawan.

The CM conducted a detailed visit of 8-KM long LRR's SL-III from Maraka to Adda Plot to check the progress, said a handout issued here on Tuesday.

He checked the quality of asphalt work at various locations. Expressing optimism, he anticipated the project's swift completion, ensuring seamless traffic flow, given the accomplishment of both major and minor structures.

In a related development, the Babu Sabu toll plaza is set to undergo enhancements aimed at improving accessibility and minimizing vehicle queues.

## Ombudsman Punjab takes 26 notices, resolves public issues

**LAHORE (APP):** In response to 126 notices taken by Ombudsman Punjab Maj (retd) Azam Suleman Khan in December to provide relief to the general public by resolving collective public problems at the grassroots, the administration of respective districts spent a total of Rs 257.3 million to resolve 26 problems.

However, 100 other public issues did not incur any government expenditures for the actions taken by the relevant departments.

The spokesman of the office of the Ombudsman Punjab shared the financial breakdown of the actions taken. Rs 339,500 were spent to address three complaints related to sewerage lines repair, Rs 5,722,500 were spent to address four complaints

related to cover open manholes.

A significant amount of Rs 60,000 was invested in resolving three complaints regarding waste disposal and Rs 247,769,000 was spent in resolving ten complaints regarding repair and cleanliness of streets and roads across different districts.

Additionally, Rs 3,465,180 was utilized to attend six complaints, linked to the repair of street lights and maintenance of water filtration plants, ensuring access to clean drinking water for the public, the spokesman stated.

Notably, the concerned administration and government departments also successfully addressed 26 notices for the restoration of sewerage lines.

## Efforts to be made to regularize slums: Alwari

**BAHAWALPUR (APP):** Renowned intellectual, parliamentarian and candidate for NA-168, Syed Tabish Alwari has said that he would make serious efforts for the regularization of slums in Bahawalpur.

He said this during his meeting with the Christian community in Islami Colony Bahawalpur here. He said that tens of thousands of poor people used to live in slums. He emphasized the need for practical measures should be taken to regularize slums.

He said that if he won the general elections from NA-168, he would make serious efforts for the regularization of slums. He further said that people should vote for honest candidates who were sincere to resolve their issues.

## Work is in progress on Orange train to solar power: Hasan Murad

**Independent Report**  
LAHORE: Provincial Transport Minister Ibrahim Hasan Murad said in a statement that on the instructions of the Chief Minister of Punjab, the work on the project to shift the Orange train to solar in Lahore in the first phase is going on rapidly.

The provincial minister said that on the recommendation of the Energy Department, the talks with NESPAK have entered the final stages, but after signing the agreement with NESPAK, the study

will be completed within 3 months and after the study, the solarization project will be started.

The provincial minister further said that solar panels will be installed at Depots, stabling yards and stations of Orange train while solar grid stations will be constructed at stabling yards and orange train Depots.

Ibrahim Hasan Murad said that along with the Orange train, the stations will also be transferred to solar energy.

## Interim bail of PTI leaders extended

**PESHAWAR (APP):** The interim bail of PTI's former Deputy Speaker Mehmood Jan, cabinet members and MPAs in corruption and illegal appointments cases was extended till February 13.

PTI's former Deputy Speaker Mehmood Jan, Taimur Saleem Jhagra, Fazal Elahi, Kamran Bangash and Muhammad Asif, MPAs Ajmal Khan, Guldad Khan and Aftab Alam were having allegations of corruption and illegal appointments in different districts.

# International News

## At least 50 injured in major earthquake on China-Kyrgyzstan border

**ALMATY (AFP/APP):** At least fifty people were injured after a 7.0-magnitude earthquake struck along the mountainous China-Kyrgyzstan border on Tuesday, authorities said.

The major quake was registered just after 2:00 am (1800 GMT Monday) at a depth of 13 kilometres in China's Xinjiang region, about 140 kilometres (85 miles) west of the city of Aksu.

Local authorities dispatched a team to the quake's epicentre, Beijing's Xinhua state news agency said, while around 800 people were on standby for any large disaster relief mission.

The health ministry

in Kazakhstan said that 44 people suffering "various" injuries had sought medical help in the city of Almaty, the country's largest city.

Images posted on social media and by local news outlets showed citizens streaming outside following the quake.

In China's Akqi County, six people suffered injuries—two of which were "serious"—according to a Weibo post by a Xinjiang government media account.

A total of 47 buildings in the county collapsed, while a further 78 were damaged, the post said.

Two residential houses and livestock sheds

collapsed in the area near the epicentre, in rural Wushi County, Xinhua reported, while electricity was temporarily knocked out.

Video circulating on Chinese social media showed household appliances crashing to the floor as wild shaking rocked homes.

More footage shared by state broadcaster CCTV showed firemen entering a damaged building with cracked walls and police helping an injured local.

Local TV channels in the Indian capital New Delhi reported strong tremors in the city, about 1,400 kilometres away.



Russian President Vladimir Putin takes part in the official ceremony for pouring the first concrete into the foundation of power unit 4 at Egypt's El-Dabaa Nuclear Power Plant with the participation of Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, via video link at the Kremlin in Moscow, Russia.

## US, Britain hit targets in Yemen as Huthis vow to strike back

**SANAA (AFP/APP):** The United States and Britain launched a second round of joint military strikes on Yemen's Huthis on Tuesday over their attacks on Red Sea shipping, as the rebels vowed to hit back.

The latest raids, heard by residents of the rebel-held capital Sanaa around midnight (2100 GMT), hit eight Huthi targets, a joint US-UK statement said, while the Huthis listed 18 strikes across their territory.

US and British forces carried out a first wave of strikes against the rebel group earlier this month, and the United States launched further air raids against missiles that Washington said posed imminent threats to both civilian and military vessels.

The latest US-UK strikes were against "eight Huthi targets in Yemen in response to the Huthis' continued attacks against international and commercial shipping as well as naval vessels transiting the Red Sea".

## Russian strikes kill four, wound dozens across Ukraine

**KYIV (AFP/APP):** Dozens of people were injured and at least four killed after a wave of Russian missiles targeted Kyiv and other cities across Ukraine, setting residential buildings ablaze and reducing others to rubble. Rescue workers in Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city near Russia's border, hauled injured residents from the scene of an attack where smoke rose from smouldering piles of rubble, AFP journalists reported.

The regional governor said three residents were killed in the overnight barrage.

## Biden, Harris blast 'extremist' Republicans in abortion vote battle

**BIG BEND (AFP/APP):** US President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris put abortion rights at the center of their reelection campaign Monday, attacking Republicans over an issue that Democrats see as a powerful vote winner against Donald Trump.

"How dare he?" Harris said of former president Trump—who has boasted of his role in overturning the constitutional, federal right to abortion—as she traveled to Wisconsin at the start of a nationwide tour on the issue.

Biden meanwhile railed at "extremist" and "cruel" Republicans in a speech at the White House marking the 51<sup>st</sup> anniversary of Roe v Wade, the landmark judgment legalizing abortion that the conservative-leaning US Supreme Court then stunningly overturned in 2022.

Harris and Biden warned that Republicans will impose a nationwide abortion ban if the party wins the November presidential election.

Already, 21 states have brought in full or partial bans since the Supreme Court—where three Trump-appointed justices tilted the balance sharply to the right—issued its ruling.

"These extremists are trying to take us backwards. We are not having it," Harris, 51, said to a cheering crowd in Big Bend in Wisconsin, which is expected to be one of the most closely fought states in this year's election.

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## WHO chief warns pandemic accord hangs in the balance

**Monitoring Desk**  
GENEVA: The World Health Organisation chief fears plans for a global pandemic preparedness agreement will fall apart amid wrangling and disinformation, warning on Monday that future generations "may not forgive us".

Shaken by the Covid-19 pandemic, the WHO's 194 member states decided more than two years ago to start negotiating an international accord aimed at ensuring countries are better equipped to deal with the next health catastrophe, or to prevent it altogether.

The plan was to seal the agreement at the 2024 World Health Assembly, the WHO's decision-making body, which convenes on May 27. But WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said the momentum had been slowed down by entrenched positions and "a torrent of fake news, lies, and conspiracy theories".

And he warned that if nobody is prepared to seize the initiative or give

ground, the whole project risks going nowhere. "Time is very short. And there are several outstanding issues that remain to be resolved," Tedros told the WHO's executive board in Geneva.

Failure to strike an agreement would be "a missed opportunity for which future generations may not forgive us," he said. Tedros said all countries needed the capacity to detect and share pathogens presenting a risk, and timely access to tests, treatments and vaccines.

He called for a "strong agreement that will help to protect our children and grandchildren from future pandemics".

Tedros said claims that the accord would cede sovereignty to the WHO or give it the power to impose lockdowns and vaccine mandates were "completely false". "We cannot allow this historic agreement, this milestone in global health, to be sabotaged."

## Yemen's Huthis say hit US ship, Washington denies attack

**SANAA (AFP/APP):** Britain and the United States have carried out strikes on the Yemeni capital Sanaa, the news agency of the Huthi rebels said Tuesday, after the group claimed to have hit a US military cargo ship. The official Saba news agency said that "American-British forces are launching raids on the capital of Sanaa" and several other parts of Yemen, while Huthi TV outlet al-Masirah said four strikes targeted the Al-Dailami military base north of the capital, which is under rebel control.

Earlier on Monday, Huthi rebels claimed they had hit a US military cargo ship off the coast of Yemen—although the United States denied an attack had taken place.

The Yemeni rebels began striking Red Sea shipping in November, saying they were hitting Israeli-linked vessels in support of Palestinians in Gaza, which has been ravaged by fighting amid the Hamas-Israeli war.

## 12 injured as Myanmar military plane overshoots India runway

**Monitoring Desk**  
NEW DELHI: Twelve people were injured on Tuesday when a Myanmar military plane overshoot a runway while landing in India to collect soldiers who had fled armed insurgents fighting their country's junta.

The Chinese-made Shaanxi Y-8 turboprop skidded off the tarmac shortly before midday at Lengpui, the main airport of India's Mizoram state.

An Airport Authority of India (AAI) official at

Lengpui told AFP that the flight was collecting 92 soldiers who had crossed into India from neighbouring Myanmar last week. Of the 12 injured, "four are stated to be serious," added the official, who requested anonymity as they were not authorised to speak to the media.

Footage of the crash's aftermath aired by local broadcasters showed the bent fuselage of the transport plane, which had cut a swath through tall grass after sliding down an embankment.

## New ambassadors present credentials to Turkish President Erdogan

**WASHINGTON (AA/APP):** Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan received letters of credentials on Tuesday from the new ambassadors of four countries.

At the presidential complex in the capital Ankara, Erdogan separately welcomed Gabriele Jen of Austria, Ahmed Ben Sghaier of Tunisia, Kok Li Peng of Singapore, and Maria Virginia Mendes Da Silva Pina of Portugal.

## Blinken sees Ivory Coast model on extremism on Africa tour

**ABIDJAN (AFP/APP):** US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Tuesday praised Ivory Coast for choosing a less militarised approach to security, on a tour to rally African democracies as crises engulf the region and world.

Blinken was meeting separately with two key leaders on the same day—Ivorian President Alassane Ouattara, a veteran leader who has won US praise for consolidating democracy, before heading to Abuja to see Nigerian President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, elected last year on a platform of economic reforms.

In Abidjan, Blinken hailed Ivory Coast's stand against last year's coup in Niger and its approach of "building security together" by investing economically to combat extremism in northern areas bordering Mali and Burkina Faso.

"I have to applaud the approach that's been taken by Cote d'Ivoire—working with communities, listening to commu-

nities, making sure that their security forces understand the needs, the concerns of communities," Blinken said alongside Ouattara. "I think that can serve as a very powerful model for other countries," he said.

Ivory Coast has not experienced a major terrorist attack for some two years, despite its troubled neighbourhood. Blinken nonetheless promised to boost cooperation on the ground with Ivory Coast, largely training of security forces.

He said that the United States would provide an additional \$45 million to West African nations as part of a plan to battle instability, bringing total funding under the year-old programme to nearly \$300 million.

Ouattara expressed appreciation for the US assistance and voiced alarm over a spate of coups in West Africa.

"Like the United States, we are very committed to democracy and justice."



## Wafaqi Mohtasib successfully addressed grievances from almost 2.1 mln households

### Independent Report

ISLAMABAD: Since its establishment, the Wafaqi Mohtasib has successfully addressed grievances from almost 2.1 million households, with 193,028 complaints resolved in 2023 alone. January 24 holds special significance in the history of the Wafaqi Mohtasib, as it came into existence on this day 41 years ago in 1983. To commemorate the 41st year of the Wafaqi Mohtasib's existence, simple yet impressive ceremonies will be held in all regional offices to observe this momentous occasion, said a news release.

In a message on the occasion, Wafaqi Mohtasib Ejaz Ahmed Qureshi said that the increasing number of complaints reflects the trust and confidence the general public has in the institution, which is strengthening day by day.

He expressed confidence in achieving the core values of Ombudsmanship, including the elimination of maladministration and the promotion of good governance to pave the way for the rule of law and the protection of human rights.

He said that January 24 holds special significance in the history of the Wafaqi Mohtasib, as it came into existence on this day 41 years ago in 1983.

The institution, he mentioned, has followed a positive trajectory and provided speedy and free administrative justice to millions of households, particularly the disadvantaged and marginalized segments of society.

The increasing number of complaints received by the offices, he said, is a clear indication of the people's trust in the institution's capacity to

address issues of maladministration, inefficiency, neglect, and discrimination.

Looking ahead to the New Year, he said that enhancing the institution's outreach and accessibility will continue to receive special attention. This involves opening regional offices and sub-offices, conducting open forums in remote areas, and inspection visits to improve service delivery for agencies generating persistent complaints. Raising awareness among the general public about the mandate and scope of the institution's work through regular interaction with electronic, print media and periodic awareness lectures will add value to these efforts. He renewed the commitment to the cause of ombudsmanship, particularly the steadfast adherence to its core values of promoting and protecting human rights.



ISLAMABAD: Convener, World Minorities Alliance (WMA) Julius Saiki addressing during protest of Capital Development Authority (CDA) Sanitary workers, in favor of their demands at sector G-7 in the Federal Capital.

## Sherry says: PPP's 10-point election agenda road-map to public prosperity

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) senior leader Sherry Rehman on Tuesday described the 10-point election agenda of her party to address the concerns of the working class and marginalized communities in the country.

The PPP leader, in an interview with a private news channel, emphasized that her party chairman, Bilawal Bhutto, in his recent address at a public rally in Sahiwal, focused on end-

ing the politics of hatred and division and advocated for solutions to economic crises. Rehman highlighted that Bilawal was committed to addressing the issues faced by the public rather than engaging in divisive politics. She emphasized that the PPP was dedicated to resolving the problems of the people through hard work and dedication. "We are not pursuing a politics of hatred or division; instead, we are striving to solve the problems of the people."

## ICCPO inaugurates Pakistan's first women driving school & test centre

Independent Report ISLAMABAD: According to the details, Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCPO) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan has formally inaugurated Pakistan's first women's driving school and

test centre at the Police Lines Headquarters Islamabad, a public relations officer said. He said that, the driving school was completed in collaboration with Islamic Relief Organization. The school aims to provide specialized training to women under the guidance of experienced instructors. The inauguration cer-



emony was attended by ICCPO Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan as chief guest, while Islamic Relief Organization's Country Director, CPO Safe City/Traffic, Chief Traffic Officer Islamabad, under training women participants, and a large number of police officials were also present on the occasion.

ICCPO Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan emphasized the crucial role women play in society, stating that the positive role of women is very important in society and that they are the key contributors to the progress of any community.

## CPDI condemns unlawful removal of Punjab Information Commission's members

### Independent Report

ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives (CPDI) strongly condemned the unlawful removal of Chief Information Commissioner Mehboob Qadir Shah and Information Commissioners Dr Arif Mushtaq and Chaudhary Shaikat Ali from their positions within the Punjab Information Commission.

The removal, executed under section 5(8) of the Punjab Transparency and Right to Information Act 2013, through a notification by the Punjab Information and Culture Department is a matter of grave concern for the pro-

motion of transparency and citizens' right to access information.

In a press statement, Mukhtar Ahmad Ali, Executive Director of CPDI, emphasized that the removal of commissioners without providing a reasonable opportunity to explain any alleged misconduct is a direct violation of the provisions outlined in section 8 (sub-sections 9, 10, and 11) of the Punjab Transparency and Right to Information Act 2013.

These sections clearly stipulate that the government must provide commissioners the chance to present their positions, and if unsatisfied, may refer the case to the Provin-

cial Assembly of Punjab for an open inquiry by a Special Committee. As the Punjab Assembly is dissolved, in case of such matter the Speaker of the Punjab Assembly shall constitute a special committee and such special committee may exercise the powers of a special committee of the Provincial Assembly until the election of the new Provincial Assembly, as mentioned in Section 8 (12) of the Act, he further added. The Punjab Information Commission plays a crucial role as a statutory and independent body responsible for implementing the Punjab Transparency and Right to Information Act 2013.

## Four killed in accident

ISLAMABAD (APP): Four women were killed and two others, including a young girl, sustained injuries when an over-speeding Mazda van collided with a rickshaw on the National Highway in Shikarpur Tuesday morning.

According to Rescue 1122 sources, the accident took place near Achi Masjid area of Town Madeji due to dense fog and poor visibility, a Private News channel reported.

The police said that the bodies and injured were shifted to a hospital. Three of the four women were identified as Farida, Hajira and Najma.

## Foggy, cold wave envelop various parts of country

ISLAMABAD (APP): Citizens in various cities including the capital are facing almost freezing temperatures due to dense fog that engulfs in the morning and stays on for hours after daybreak where health experts asked people to remain vigilant while maintaining a healthy diet and using face masks.

A thick layer of fog has enveloped many cities in Punjab including Lahore, paralyzing routine life and disrupting road traffic, a private news channel reported. The recent cold wave and foggy conditions have already made living conditions difficult with people already suffering due to power load shedding and low pressure of gas.

In these circumstances, the number of people complaining of cold-related ailments has also shot up over the last few days.



ISLAMABAD: The outgoing Ambassador of Tajikistan in Pakistan, Ismatullo Naserdin calls on Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.

## Jamal Shah shares plan of 2nd CPEC Cultural Caravan with envoys of Central Asian States

### By Muhammad Ilyas

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture, Jamal Shah, on Tuesday held a meeting with Ambassadors of Central Asian States Russia and China to discuss the initial plan of second 'CPEC Cultural Caravan 2024', aimed at strengthening cultural bonds between Pakistan, China, Russia and Central Asian States.

The high level meeting held here at Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) attended by Ambassador of Russia to Pakistan His Excellency Albert Khorev, Ambassador of China Counselor Bao Zhong, Ambassador of Turkmenistan to Pakistan H.E. Mr. Atajan Movlamov, Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Pakistan H.E. Yerzhan Kistafin, Ambassador of Kyrgyzstan H.E. Totuiev Ulanbek Asankulovich, Ambassador of Uzbekistan H.E. Aybek Arif Usmanov and Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Pakistan H.E. Khazar Farhadov.

Federal Secretary National Heritage and Culture Humaira Ahmed, Advisor National Heritage and Culture Muhammad Kashif Irshad, Director General PNCA Ayub Jamali, Executive Director Lok Virsa Uzair Khan and Chairperson Pakistan Academy of Letters (PAL) Dr Najeba Arif were also present on the occasion.

Addressing the diplomats, Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture Humaira Ahmed, Advisor National Heritage and Culture Muhammad Kashif Irshad, Director General PNCA Ayub Jamali, Executive Director Lok Virsa Uzair Khan and Chairperson Pakistan Academy of Letters (PAL) Dr Najeba Arif were also present on the occasion.

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## TikTok shares election integrity measures on platform ahead of poll

ISLAMABAD (APP): TikTok on Tuesday shared its approach to upholding and protecting election integrity on its platform ahead of the Pakistan parliamentary elections slated for February 2024.

The initiative underscores TikTok's commitment to being a responsible and reliable source of information, especially during critical civic events said a news release.

TikTok has robust measures in place to combat misinformation, violence, and hate speech in line with its Community Guidelines, available both in English and Urdu.

The platform is dedicated to removing misleading information about civic processes, including voter registration, candidate eligibility, ballot counting, and election results.

TikTok's policies strictly prohibit content that intimidates voters, suppresses voting, or incites violence.

Over 40,000 personnel globally, in conjunction with advanced technology, are deployed to ensure user



ISLAMABAD: Artists performing traditional dance during TDCP 19th International Cholistan Desert Rally and Culture Festival, at a local hotel in the Federal Capital.

organize a second China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) Cultural Caravan aimed at promoting economic ties and strengthening cultural bonds between Pakistan, China and the Central Asian States.

Jamal Shah said that CPEC Cultural Caravan will commence its journey from Xi'an, China, and traverse through Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Iran, UAE, Gwadar, Karachi, ultimately concluding in Islamabad.

"Cultural Caravan to Document Diverse Lives on CPEC, Silk Route" he added. This cultural excursion will document the experiences and stories of the people along the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and the Silk Route, covering Central Asian countries.

He said that the Cultural Caravan will be composed of diverse groups of Pakistani, Chinese and Central Asian artists, musicians, photographers, anthropologists, writers and filmmakers.

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## NIH confirms nine new Corona cases in last week

ISLAMABAD (APP): Health officials on Tuesday said that nine new coronavirus cases were reported during the last week across the country.

As per data shared by the National Institute of Health (NIH), the case positivity ratio was 0.33 percent while no patient was in critical condition. No death was reported from the coronavirus while 2,694 Corona tests were conducted.

Meanwhile, the official of the Ministry for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed said on Tuesday that the butcher of Gujarat's inauguration of a temple on the ruins of Babri Masjid once again exposed the claim of India being the world's largest democracy. In a statement, he said that religious polarisation is Indian state policy that destabilises regional peace.

## Butcher of Gujarat again exposed India's claim of democracy

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed said on Tuesday that the butcher of Gujarat's inauguration of a temple on the ruins of Babri Masjid once again exposed the claim of India being the world's largest democracy. In a statement, he said that religious polarisation is Indian state policy that destabilises regional peace.

This hub will direct users to authoritative information on the election, including voting procedures and locations. Enhanced by advanced technology and local language support, the platform is poised to ensure a safe environment free from violations of its Community Guidelines.

## Senate hosts Parliamentary Interface for learning experience of Provincial Assemblies

### ISLAMABAD (APP):

The Parliamentary Interface regarding learning experience of the Provincial Assemblies Secretariat with Senate Secretariat of Pakistan was held on Monday here at the Parliament House, jointly organized by the Senate of Pakistan and Mustehkam Parliament.

The event focused on providing an overview of the Senate's structure, legislative processes, parliamentary research and overall work of the Senate of Pakistan Secretary Senate, Mohammad Qasim Samad Khan, welcomed the delegation and received a brief introduction from the members of the provincial assemblies accompanying the delegation.

Haris Rehman, Principal Secretary, delivered a comprehensive presentation on the structure, electoral college, and functions of the Senate of Pakistan. Muhammad Zubair Thaheem, Joint Secretary briefed the delegation about the reforms and key initiatives undertaken by the Senate to equip itself for modern challenges, a news release said.

Joint Secretary of Legislation in the Senate, Rafi Ullah briefed participants from the Parliamentary Interface on International best

practices in the working of the Upper House of the Parliament. He also covered topics such as Senate House proceeding, Senate powers, its legislative role, accountability, and policy guidance. During the session, members stressed upon ways to enhance the Senate's relevance in terms of powers to money bills. Muhammad Azam, Deputy Secretary Legislation also briefed on new Senate practices, including public petitions, PAC, Senate assistance in International Parliamentary Congress and Women Parliamentarian Congress.

Additionally, Iffat Mustapha, Director Research in the Senate, inquired about participants' research scope in their provinces and provided insights into parliamentary research. She outlined the background of research, mentioning the creation of different specializations in the Senate over time. Mustafa emphasized that research not only assists the parliamentarians during their foreign visits but also benefits various departments as well. The participants also visited the Senate Museum, Senate Library, Senate Hall, Data Center and received an informative briefings about them.



ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervaiz Ashraf addressing press conference in the Federal Capital.

## Strong institutions, competent teachers play crucial role in overall national progress: Sadiq

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Senate Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani on Tuesday underscored the crucial role of strong institutions and competent teachers in expediting national progress and prosperity. Speaking at the convention "Youth — Pivot of National Integration" organized by the Higher Education Commission (HEC), he urged the nation to work diligently and said hard work would eventually be rewarded.

Drawing on his global perspective due to travels worldwide, the Chairman Senate emphasized the value of Pakistan's skilled and hardworking population, as compared to the nations with profound resources, but lacking similar human capital.

## PRCS, OGDCL forge strategic partnership to advance humanitarian initiatives

Independent Report ISLAMABAD: In a dedicated effort to elevate collaboration in humanitarian endeavors and fortify mu-

Abdul Hadi, Managing Body Member, Muhammad Abidullah Khan, Secretary General, and representatives from



tual relations, the Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) and Oil & Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL) officially signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). The signing ceremony took place at the OGDCL central office in Islamabad on Tuesday. Attendees at the signing ceremony included Chairman of the Pakistan Red Crescent Society, Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari, Brigadier (Retd)

OGDCL, including Abdul Razzaq Khattak, Shahzad Saif, and Amir Salim. The MoU symbolizes the unwavering commitment to strengthen collaborative efforts between OGDCL and PRCS. Ahmed Hayat Lakh, Managing Director/CEO of OGDCL, and Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari signed the document, highlighting the shared dedication to advancing humanitarian causes.

## ISSI holds Round Table discussion: False flag operations and electoral politics of India

### Independent Report

ISLAMABAD: As the general elections in India draw nearer, the India Study Centre at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) organized a Round Table discussion on "Unravelling the Nexus: False Flag Operations and Electoral Politics of India." The participants of the Round Table included eminent former diplomats, defence practitioners, think-tank representatives, and members of the media and

academic community. The event aimed at assessing potential implications of such incidents on regional stability as well as underscoring the imperative of responsible actions in the South Asian geopolitical landscape. The deliberations delved into the possibilities of another false flag operation in the run-up to Indian elections, the historical precedents, the modus operandi in previous instances, and the effect of such occurrences on public perceptions relating to issues of peace and security, bilateral relations, and national security. Experts analysed the events surrounding the Pulwama incident, Pakistan's swift response after Balakot strike, and the country's simultaneous engagement in the strategic, diplomatic and information arenas. The participants highlighted both Pakistan's firm resolve as well as measured, timely and effective response, consistent with its commitment to ensuring regional stability.