

# Independent

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## No one has impunity to spread violence; State to ensure law & order: PM Kakar

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Tuesday reiterated that the State would not allow anyone to unleash violence and kill people in the name of political, ethnic and religious divides as it was its responsibility to ensure law and order. The prime minister, in a lengthy interaction with the students of the Beaconhouse National University, said that no one could be given a licence to kill and eliminate others on the basis of political, ethnic and religious differences. "To maintain law and order is the responsibility of the State, and I assure you that such elements will never prevail on the State of Pakistan," he asserted.

The prime minister, elaborating his viewpoint while responding to a question, said that the one who reverted to fighting with the State and the countrymen would get the befitting response. He said that the government would not allow terrorists and militants to kill people with impunity as they had openly declared fight against the State and the civilians in the country. "We have accepted their challenge," he said and expressed the resolve to fully respond to all threats with full force. To another query, he said that the government functioned primarily on revenue generation system. The country had a tax collection of over Rs 9,000 billion, but there was tax evasion of more than almost Rs

10,000 billion. The lack of effective revenue system had been a persistent problem which required effective steps to rectify. He said that it was a consistent story with different past political set-ups and military dictators. For strengthening of economy, it was the first and foremost requirement to develop a robust tax system, he added, citing the Scandinavian countries with the highest tax revenue figures to their GDP (Gross Domestic Product). The caretaker prime minister said that if the interim set-up in the country could achieve the tax target, then why not an elected government! If they were not able to achieve such, then there was a serious flaw in the governance system, he opined.



LAHORE: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar in an interactive session with the students of Beaconhouse National University.

## We cannot order Parliament to legislate: Chief Justice

Says every institution should remain within its limits; Matter of missing persons is of serious nature

ISLAMABAD (Online): Supreme Court (SC) while adjourning hearing of enforced disappearances and missing persons case till today (Wednesday) has sought reply from Attorney General (AG). Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa has remarked we cannot order parliament to legislate. Every institution should remain within its limits. The matter be not politicized. Senate is there at present too. The CJP while moving to Shoaib Shaheen remarked Farrukh Habib, Sadaqat Abbasi and Usman Dar, who are these persons. Are you grieved over it that these people have quit the party. Should we say this to them to return to party. A 3-member bench of

SC presided over by CJP Qazi Faez Isa took up the case for hearing Tuesday. Khushdil Khan Malik petitioner for missing persons came on rostrum at the inception of hearing. He requested that the judiciary should order parliament to legislate for enforced disappearances. Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar remarked a commission has been constituted already in connection with enforced disappearances. The CJP inquired which commission has been constituted. Khushdil Khan Malik said commission on enforced disappearances was constituted under Justice (Retd) Javed Iqbal. But it has done nothing so far. The court should issue notice to government and inquire

why the legislation has not been enacted about missing persons since the last 50 years. Justice Qazi Faez Isa inquired how can the court order parliament to make such and legislation. SC practice and procedure law-2023 has been made. Please bother to read it. Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar remarked the court is not authorized to legislate. Shoaib Shaheen counsel for Aitzaz Ahsan came on rostrum. He said son of Latif Khosa has been arrested and he has been power of attorney. Objections were raised on our petition. The CJP remarked we are hearing the petitions by dismissing the objections. Because it is matter of public interest.

## COAS lauds operational preparedness of PAF

RAWALPINDI (Online): An Induction and Operationalization Ceremony was held at an operational base of Pakistan Air Force, today. General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M) Chief of Army Staff, attended the distinguished ceremony as the Chief Guest. Upon his arrival at the base, Chief of Army Staff was received by Air Chief Marshal Zaher Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force. The ceremony showcased the newly inducted weapon systems and defence assets of PAF. Upon his arrival, a smartly turned-out contingent of Pakistan Air Force presented Guard of Honour to the COAS. During his speech CAS highlighted the latest inductions in the PAF's arsenal comprising of J-10C fighter jets, air mobility platforms, modern Radars, Unmanned Aerial Systems, Loitering munition capabilities and Long Range Vectors which have significantly bolstered the aerial defence capabilities of the country. CAS also mentioned that Center of Excellence for Air Mobility & Aviation Safety, College of Air Defence and reinvigoration of Air Power Centre of Excellence alongside



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## Exercise BARRACUDA-XII commences at Karachi

KARACHI (APP): International Exercise BARRACUDA-XII formally commences here at Headquarters Pakistan Maritime Security Agency (PMSA), on Tuesday. The event started with an impressive flag hoisting ceremony followed by wreath laying on Shuhada (martyrs) monument, a Pakistan Navy news release said. The ceremony was attended by observers from 13 friendly countries and officers of Pakistan Navy and PMSA. Exercise BARRACUDA-XII is scheduled from January 02-04 and comprising Harbour and Sea phases. The opening brief of the exercise was held at Karachi. Federal Minister for Climate Change Ahmed Irfan Aslam graced the occasion as Chief Guest. Foreign Observers and delegations from relevant stakeholders also attended the brief wherein the aims and objectives of exercise BARRACUDA-XII were highlighted. Moreover, scholarly papers on the response of Oil Spill and Search and Rescue at sea were presented by both National and International speakers. During his address, Chief Guest thanked all foreign delegates for their participation in the event. He further added that the exercise will continue to crystallise our preparedness for maritime disasters management. Pakistan has always been and will continue to be an ardent advocate of safe & secure seas for the well-being of the region and the world.

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KARACHI: Caretaker Sindh Information Minister, Ahmad Shah along with Inspector General Police (IGP) Sindh, Dr. Riffat Mukhtar Raja addresses to media persons during press conference held at Sindh Assembly building in Karachi.

## ECP enforces conduct rules, removes candidates' ads above prescribed limits

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) monitoring teams have started removing the illegal advertisement hoardings of the candidates aspiring to participate in the elections of National and Provincial assemblies. The specified dimensions are as follows: posters should measure 18 inches by 23 inches, pamphlets, leaflets, banners, or portraits larger than the specified sizes outlined by the ECP. The specified dimensions are as follows: posters should measure 18 inches by 23 inches, pamphlets, leaflets, banners, or portraits larger than the specified sizes outlined by the ECP. Monitoring teams deployed nationwide are currently removing advertisement hoardings that exceed prescribed limits, stated an official of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). According to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), the monitoring teams in Multan and Sialkot are removing promotional materials of candidates who have erected advertisement hoardings in contravention of the code of conduct. In accordance with the Election Commission of Pakistan's Code of Conduct issued on December 20, 2023, individuals and political parties

are prohibited from affixing or distributing posters, handbills, pamphlets, leaflets, banners, or portraits larger than the specified sizes outlined by the ECP. The specified dimensions are as follows: posters should measure 18 inches by 23 inches, pamphlets, leaflets, banners, or portraits larger than the specified sizes outlined by the ECP. Monitoring teams deployed nationwide are currently removing advertisement hoardings that exceed prescribed limits, stated an official of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). According to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), the monitoring teams in Multan and Sialkot are removing promotional materials of candidates who have erected advertisement hoardings in contravention of the code of conduct. In accordance with the Election Commission of Pakistan's Code of Conduct issued on December 20, 2023, individuals and political parties



KARACHI: Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari exchanges views with Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) Sindh General Secretary, Maulana Rashid Mahmood Soomro during condolence meeting on the death of his young daughter, held at his residency located on Model Colony area in Karachi.

## The first lady for integrated efforts to ensure child protection

KARACHI (APP): The First Lady Samina Arif Alvi, Tuesday, stressed the need for effective implementation of Zainab Alert Act, an integrated single helpline, and close coordination among all the relevant organizations and stakeholders for speedy recovery of missing children. The first lady, while chairing a meeting during visit of Roshni Helpline—a non-governmental organization working for recovery of missing children—emphasized that a universal helpline for receiving public complaints and joint and coordinated efforts through a single platform would result into more effective and timely outcomes. There were several organizations both in public as well as private sector working separately to provide relief to citizens and they have different

helplines to receive grievances, she noted adding that however it might confuse the aggrieved citizens about who should be contacted with in a certain situation. Begum Alvi suggested that there should be a single and integrated helpline to receive the public complaints and calls for emergency assistance and all the organizations working in different domains should work under one umbrella so that citizens could access the helpline easily and the matter could be referred to the most relevant organization for prompt and effective action. Founder of Roshni Helpline Muhammad Ali and other board members briefed the First Lady about vision, performance and initiatives of the organization for protection of children particularly recovery of missing children.



KARACHI: Begum Samina Arif Alvi being briefed during her visit to Roshni Helpline office.

## PPP against postponement of elections: Nisar Khuhro

KARACHI (APP): Provincial President Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Sindh chapter, Senator Nisar Khuhro Tuesday said that the PPP wanted general elections in the country and would not support any move aimed at postponing polls beyond announced date of February 8 in any case. He was addressing a press conference along with General Secretary PPP Sindh Senator Waqar Mehdi and President Karachi division Saeed Ghani at Bilawal House. On the occasion, Vice President Muslim League-N Sindh advocate Sheikh Javed Mir also announced joining PPP. Nisar Khuhro said that

the narrative of postponing general election beyond the scheduled date would tantamount to "Delaying democracy and denying democracy". "According to the constitution, term of the caretaker government was only three months, so we demand conduct of free, fair and transparent elections on February 8, 2024 so that power could be transferred to elected representatives of the people," he reiterated. The people should be given an opportunity to elect their representatives having affiliation with any political party and their mandate must be accepted and respected, Khuhro maintained.

## U.S. Ambassador calls on FM Jilani

ISLAMABAD (Online): U.S. Ambassador Donald Blome met today with Caretaker Foreign Minister Jilani to discuss a wide range of important bilateral issues, including expanded diplomatic engagement, the safe and efficient processing of Afghan citizens eligible for resettlement to the United States, as well as other issues of mutual interest. The US Ambassador to Pakistan, Donald Bloom, called on Foreign Minister today. Discussions focused on some major aspects of bilateral relations including the recent visit of the Chief of Army Staff to the United States. The Foreign Minister underlined that in 2024, the two sides should continue to build on the recent exchanges and the momentum gained in bilateral ties.

## CAA 'takes' major step to enhance security at major airports

KARACHI (INP): The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has taken major steps to enhance security measures at the major airports and decided to install 28 modern baggage scanning machines. According to media reports, CAA is importing state-of-the-art baggage scanning machines at major airports in Pakistan. The latest machines will be handed over to the Air Security Force (ASF) in February 2024. The sources further said, the older baggage machines will be replaced gradually. On August 31, 2023, the state-of-the-art baggage scanning machine was installed at the Jinnah International Airport in Karachi.

## Six out of 266 buildings on Karachi's three main corridors got fire safety facilities: Mayor

KARACHI (APP): Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab has said that only six out of 266 buildings on the city's three main corridors, I.I Chandrigar Road, Sharea Faisal and Shahrah e Quaiden have fire safety facilities, while more than 200 buildings do not have fire extinguishers. He said this while reviewing the fire safety au-



KARACHI: Caretaker Federal Minister for Climate Change, Ahmed Irfan Aslam addresses to participants during opening ceremony of the BARRACUDA-XII Exercise, held at Headquarters Pakistan Maritime Security Agency (PMSA) in Karachi.

## Human trafficking menace insurmountable sans improved economic situation: Solangi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for Information and Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Tuesday said that the issue of human trafficking would remain an insurmountable menace unless the overall economic situation of the country was improved benefiting the downtrodden masses who risk their lives for pursuing better future abroad through illicit means. The minister was responding to various queries raised by the Senators during the fourth meeting of the 334th Session of the Senate held here under a limited presence of the members of the Upper House. The questions pertaining to the government measures and their outcomes to curb the human of human trafficking were put to the floor by Senator Kamran Murtaza of Jamaat Ulema-i-Islam Pakistan (JUI-P), Senator Mushtaq Ahmed Khan of Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan (JIP) and independent Senator Nuzhat Sadiq.

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## Rangers, SIU arrest Lyari gangster

KARACHI (APP): The Pakistan Rangers Sindh, in collaboration with the Special Investigation Unit (SIU), utilized advanced technological methods during a joint operation that led to the apprehension of Anas Aftab Baloch, a notorious member of a Lyari gang involved in extortion. The arrest took place in Mureed Goth, Liaqtabad area of the city. As per a statement by a Rangers spokesperson on Tuesday, Anas, along with his associate Hassan, made extortion demands of 0.1 million rupees from a builder in Karachi on May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2023, using various mobile numbers.

## Body recovers from train at Karachi Railway Station

KARACHI (INP): The body of an unidentified individual has been recovered from the stationary train compartment of Karachi Cantt Station. According to the rescue sources, the body has been shifted to the hospital, meanwhile, efforts are underway to identify the deceased individual.



KARACHI: Commissioner Karachi Mohammad Saleem Rajput presides over the meeting of Union Council Medical Officers, at DC South Office in Karachi.



## Daily Voice of Masses Independent

### SBP's projections

The State Bank Governor's Annual Report for FY2023 is "cautiously optimistic" about the economy. It projects headline price inflation to drop, the current account deficit to narrow, and GDP to expand during the ongoing fiscal year.

However, the report warns, this outlook hinges on the absence of adverse shocks stemming from geopolitical tensions, unforeseen climate events and unfavourable movements in global commodity prices. That aside, the bank expects inflation to slow down to 20pc-22pc, the current account gap to narrow to 0.5pc-1.5pc of GDP, and the economy to grow by 2pc-3pc. The projected recovery is modest but still a source of comfort after a tumultuous year in which Pakistan barely avoided default.

"The economic landscape of Pakistan has faced unprecedented challenges throughout the fiscal year," the report notes, highlighting that political uncertainty was another factor impacting business and consumer sentiments, thus affecting economic activity. The report asserts the "SBP's commitment to maintain price stability", highlighting the "crucial role of fiscal policy and effective administration in supporting stability". But, such assertions have featured in most previous SBP reports, including the bank's monetary policy statements, in the last few years.

There is no doubt about the core role of fiscal policy in our balance-of-payments crisis as well as escalating inflation — the bank cannot absolve itself of its own part. Its past projections have often proved wrong, and the SBP has been behind the curve when it comes to taming inflation and checking the dollar's flight.

It may be impossible to undo the past but with 2023 behind us, many want to know if our rulers have learnt their lesson and are prepared to meet the upcoming challenges. This year should see stabilisation. The new government, which will take office after the February polls, will have its work cut out.

The first and most crucial challenge for it would be to negotiate a bigger, medium-term IMF loan to stabilise the external sector and raise funds from other bilateral, multilateral and commercial creditors in order to build the country's foreign exchange reserves. Such a deal will entail a series of difficult fiscal, governance and structural reforms. The question is: will a government taking office as a result of a tainted election and questionable mandate be able to execute the required reforms and make tough decisions? This year is going to be a defining one for Pakistan's future trajectory. Many countries have managed to turn their crises into opportunities for fixing their respective economies.

All our economic challenges, including the ongoing balance-of-payment crisis and shortage of foreign currency, can be fixed. We are at a crucial juncture from where we can turn either way: towards a brighter and prosperous future or total collapse. It is all in our own hands.

### Fertiliser subsidy



Aijaz A. Nizamani

Wheat is the most important dietary component in food consumed in Pakistan. The same is reflected in Pakistan's cultivation trends, with over 22 million acres of farmland — more than 50 per cent of the cropped area — allocated to wheat crops in the winter. The winter season is when fertiliser requirements peak, and fertiliser plants have to compete with power plants for natural gas in order to produce nitrogenous fertiliser.

However, dwindling domestic supplies and increased competition in the international market for natural gas have made these competing demands nearly impossible for Pakistani policymakers to manage. Invariably, bureaucrats and politicians make a mess of the situation, and the high cost of their mess is passed on to consumers and producers alike. It is no surprise that the country imports millions of tonnes of wheat worth hundreds of millions of dollars every year.

The current year's budget has allocated Rs30 billion for fertiliser subsidies. This subsidy is used to pay for cheap gas to fertiliser plants, which, in return, are supposed to provide their urea and phosphatic fertiliser products at administered rates to farmers through their distribution networks. The list of ministries and bureaucracies involved in the disbursement of this subsidy is mind-boggling.

For a comparatively low figure of Rs30bn, the list of ministries involved includes the Ministry of Industries and Production,

the Ministry of Petroleum, the Oil & Gas Regulatory Authority, the Cabinet Division, the Ministry of Food Security and Research and the Ministry of Finance.

Since their bureaucrats get caught up in turf wars, making timely decisions is not possible. Each year, delayed government decisions on setting gas prices for fertiliser plants also result in bottlenecks in the value chain. Gas supply bottlenecks give rise to discrimination: the Competition Commission of Pakistan is often approached by plants that do not receive enough supply of gas, while others are reportedly favoured.

The impact of this mismanagement is seen in the small-town markets of rural Pakistan, where farmers are paying between Rs5,000 and Rs5,500 for a bag of urea in the black market, which is supposed to be sold at Rs3,250 this season. The situation was no different under the PTI government when farmers queued all day to receive just two bags of fertiliser.

Industry sources say the country has enough plant capacity to produce more fertiliser than needed by local farmers. So, why are wheat farmers forced to buy from the black market each year in winter, especially for a crop as important as wheat? The price differential is not the only issue: producers also suffer from what economists call high transaction costs, as well as the loss of valuable time. They are unable to provide crops with vital plant nutrients when they are critically needed, resulting in loss of production, which is ultimately met through wheat imports.

The fertiliser subsidy is not provided to farmers but to fertiliser plants — in other words, to industrialists. The rationale provided for this arrangement is that it ul-

timately helps farmers. However, as the experience every year shows, it does not work that way, as farmers invariably pay more than administered prices for their requirements. Some studies done by the Pakistan Institute for Development Economics also show that the fertiliser subsidy does not significantly impact food costs for the poor. The logical question is: why not do away with the subsidy altogether when both consumers and producers (farmers) do not get the value it is paid for?

Since farmers are net losers in this subsidy regime, it is they who should demand a liberal fertiliser import and export mechanism. It looks like even fertiliser manufacturers are not averse to a market-based mechanism: they believe they can export fertiliser under such a regime, bringing in as much as \$500m in foreign exchange. Free imports and an export facilitation policy would go a long way towards improving food security while cutting out meddling bureaucrats.

This will, undoubtedly, require government regulation, but this must be light and enable activity, instead of stifling it. The next question would be how to incentivise the wheat crop in case the fertiliser subsidy is done away with. The solution lies in direct fiscal transfers to farmers, as is done in all OECD countries. The government may support a certain amount, like Rs5,000 per acre, with a ceiling of 10 acres per farmer. This will be a targeted production subsidy for small and medium farmers. It can easily be put into practice using satellite and technology, and disbursed directly to farmers' bank accounts with minimum involvement of bureaucratic personnel. — Courtesy Dawn

### Mass extinction



Aisha Khan

The end of the 28th session of the Conference of Parties in December 2023 moved the needle forward on climate action but not at the pace needed to avert the sixth mass extinction. As eco-anxiety grows and optimists try to rationalise slow progress, with the inherent constraints of multilateral processes, the clock keeps ticking, reminding us of the perils and predilections of change and the timescale for keeping life systems alive.

The conversation on climate has become so jargon filled and technical in its approach that at times it loses sight of the here and now, becoming occasionally delusional and sometimes capricious.

Anatomically, modern humans emerged around 200,000 years ago in a process of evolution from ancestral Homo sapiens dating back six million years. Civilisation as we know it started around 6,000 years back and the advent of the industrial age began in 1850.

In the span of 173 years, humans have successfully landed on the moon but degraded ecosystems and destroyed the environment on planet Earth. Today, with advancements in science and technology, life expectancy has increased, progress in communication has transformed connectivity and creature comforts have enhanced life quality beyond imagination.

Ironically, all this has come at the cost of development that has turned into an existential threat. The main culprit for disrupting planetary balance are greenhouse gases.

As we enter 2024, it is important to put some things in perspective. The blame game at negotiations has gone on for 28 years. Perhaps it is time to take more individual responsibility and combine the two to save our species. A change in perspective may also alter thinking and help in finding solutions faster.

The dilemma facing the world is not only about how to reduce carbon emissions; in fact, it is more about how to retain existing lifestyles without compromising on quality or changing consumption patterns.

At COP28 Sultan al-Jaber earned flak for his statement that was interpreted to mean that giving up fossil fuels is tantamount to going back to the cave age. Seen in a broader perspective, perhaps it suggests that no one is quite ready yet to give up on lifestyles supported by fossil fuel. This applies to people from all tiers of society, across sectors, institutions and affiliations.

The outcry every year at climate summits is on the ascendant, and disappointment outshines hope. However, the fundamental question that holds the key to the climate conundrum remains unanswered. How much are we willing as citizens and societies to give up on current consumption patterns to embrace a low-carbon footprint lifestyle? After all, it is possible to curtail supply by reducing demand.

Data demonstrates that modern food systems drive 90 per cent of deforestation and 60pc of biodiversity loss, and account for 70pc of the world's use of freshwater. Overall, food systems alone contribute to over one-third of global greenhouse emissions. By going vegan the global population could reduce greenhouse gas emissions from food production by 28pc. And yet

only 1-2pc of the world population is vegan.

The list of possible individual actions is as long as the list of commitments made by nations at climate summits.

Extinction is not a new phenomenon on planet Earth. There have been five previous mass extinctions. Many researchers argue that we are in the middle of a sixth mass extinction. The common denominator in all previous extinctions was a drastic change in the carbon cycle. The Permian-Triassic Extinction that took place 250m years ago was the largest mass extinction event in Earth's history, affecting a range of species. The loss of biodiversity ended all life.

Today, the overgrowth and transformative behaviour of a single species is destroying habitats and unleashing a crisis. A European Commission modelling study shows likely extinction of 27pc of plants and animals by 2100. This continued disruption in the biosphere poses an extinction threat to one-half of Earth's higher life forms by the turn of the century.

From all evidence, it seems that human beings are an aberration in the evolutionary process. They show scant respect for nature, are wasteful in their use of natural resources, degrade the environment,

harm biodiversity, destroy the ecosystems that support them, and kill their own species. Rich, developing and poor nations all follow the same exploitative pattern of human behaviour.

The home truth is that the battle for human survival will not be won at the negotiating tables but by solutions provided by science and technology. Evolution will not stop with Homo sapiens. We might even be taken over by other forms of life in a new world order governed by artificial intelligence. — Courtesy Dawn

## Commerce News

### High-profile Chinese business delegation meets Planning Minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): A high-profile business delegation of China, led by the Chairman of Chang Chinag Chamber of Commerce Li Ting, met with Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Muhammad Sami Saeed on Tuesday.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed potential collaboration opportunities between Pakistan and China in various sectors, fostering business expansion and

exploring new investment avenues, a news release said.

Comprising eight members, the delegation represented diverse industries such as import and export, technology, electronics, machinery, office supplies, apparel, and building materials. The discussions centred on strengthening bilateral ties and identifying strategic areas for mutually beneficial partnerships.

Minister Sami Saeed emphasized key sectors for investment, including Agriculture, Information Technology & Telecommunications, Mines & Minerals and Energy sectors.

He highlighted the opportunities to utilize Special Economic Zones (SEZs), stating that Pakistan encourages foreign investment, especially Chinese investors for the joint ventures and relocation of industries to Pakistan.



ISLAMABAD: A high-profile business delegation, led by Mr. Li Ting, Chairman of the Chang Chinag Chamber of Commerce, China met with Federal Minister for Planning, Development & Special Initiatives, Muhammad Sami Saeed.

### New FPCCI Regional Chairman, VPs assume offices

LAHORE: Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry's (FPCCI) newly elected Regional Chairman and Vice President Zaki Aijaz Qureshi and Vice President Zain Iftikhar Chaudhry assumed the charge of their offices in a ceremony held here at FPCCI Regional Office on Tuesday.

A special ceremony was held in honor of the newly elected officials in which Punjab's Minister for Industries and Commerce and Patron in Chief of United Business Group (UBG) SM Tanveer, former President FPCCI Zubair

Tufail, former Senior Vice President FPCCI Aamir Atta Bajwa, former LCCI President Almas Hyder, Momin Ali Malik, Ali Hussam Asghar, Ahmed Chennai, Mian Zahid Hussain, Muhammad Sohail, Zafar Mahmood Chaudhry, Malik Tahir Javed, Mian Shafiqat, Sohail Lashari, Mahmood Ghaznavi, Khawaja Shahzad Nasir and a large number of businessmen participated in the ceremony and congratulated to the newly-elected office-bearers on their historic success in the FPCCI elections.

### Export set to reach the targeted capacity of \$3bn per month soon

ISLAMABAD (Online): Dr. Gohar Ejaz, the Minister for Commerce, Industries and Investment announced today that exports in December 2023 increased by 22.2% to USD 2.812 billion from USD 2.301 billion in December 2022. He said that the increase is 9.3% with USD 2.573 billion exports in November 2023.

He also said that the said positive trend extends to imports as well which decreased by 12.25% in December 2023 to USD 4.514 billion compared to USD 5.144 billion in December 2022.

Looking at the broader picture, the exports in Jul-Dec 2023 witnessed continued export growth and increased by 5.2% to USD 14.981 billion from USD 14.244 billion during the same period in preceding year. Notably, imports during this period saw a significant 16.28% reduction compared to the same period in 2022, falling from USD 31.209 billion to a much lower USD 26.129 billion.

These developments translate to a substantial narrowing of the trade deficit. In December 2023 alone, the deficit shrank by a significant 40% to USD 1.7 billion, representing a decrease of USD 1.141 billion compared to the previous year.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Three ships namely, MSC Jemima, Luna Rossa and IVS Crimson Creek carrying Container, Wheat and Coal, berthed at Container Terminal, Grain Terminal and Bulk Terminal respectively on Monday.

Meanwhile four more ships, Maersk Kensington, Rich Rainbow, FSM and Limra also arrived at outer-anchorage of the Port Qasim during last 24 hours to load/unload Containers, Palm oil and LPGs respectively.

A total of ten ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them two ships, Ullswater and Sunray are left the port on today morning and three more ships, MSC Jemima, Leila Confidence and Al-Bidda are expected.

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Tax Ombudsman (FTO) on Tuesday released its three years performance report from 2021 to 2023, during which the department disposed of around 17,101 complaints.

Addressing a press conference, FTO Registrar Muhammad Majid Qureshi along with Advisor Media Nazim Saleem and Advisor Customs Dr Arslan Subcutageen highlighted performance of the FTO year by year.

The performance report covered three major aspects of the organization including registration of complaints, disposal of complaints, and implementation of the recommendations.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for IT and Telecommunication Dr. Umar Saif in a meeting with British High Commissioner to Pakistan Ms. Jane Marriott.



LAHORE: A delegation of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry led by Federal Minister of Commerce and Industry, Gohar Ejaz, Federal Minister of Finance, Dr. Shamshad Akhtar and Provincial Minister of Industry and Commerce, S. M. Tanveer in a group photo with Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman at Governor House.

### BISP Savings Scheme Landmark step to instill financial independence among vulnerable sections

ISLAMABAD (APP): The newly launched 'Savings Scheme' by the internationally acclaimed Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) will prove as a landmark step towards instilling financial independence and promoting a savings culture among the vulnerable sections of society.

The BISP Saving Scheme is aimed at providing a financial buffer to the piece-rate workers for unexpected expenses

and emergencies, making them self-reliant. According to the Director General National Socio Economic Registry (NSER) BISP, Naveed Akbar, the piece rate workers were the biggest affectedes during the COVID-19 who found it hard to earn their livelihood as they lacked savings. Therefore to mitigate their sufferings, the government provided one-time financial assistance to them of Rs. 12,000 during that difficult time.

### Gold rates up by Rs.1,600

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold increased by Rs.1,600 and was sold at Rs.221,300 on Tuesday compared to its sale at Rs.219,700 on the last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs.1,372 to Rs.189,729 from Rs.188,357 whereas the price of 10 grams 22 karat gold went up to Rs.173,918 from Rs.172,661, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola and ten-gram silver remained unchanged at Rs2,680 and Rs.2,297.66 respectively.

### Railways staff' efforts for record revenue earning of Rs. 41.b acknowledged

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Federal Minister for Communication, Railways and Maritime Affairs, Shahid Ashraf Tarar has commended the efforts of Railways Staff and management for record revenue earning of 41 billion rupees during the first half of the fiscal year 2023-24.

There is a 46 percent increase in revenue of Pakistan Railways in comparison to the same period of last year, said a

news release.

Pakistan Railways earned revenue of 24 billion rupees from passenger trains and 11.5 billion from freight trains in the first six months. Income from other sectors was about five billion rupees. The increase in revenue is the result of effective and efficient reforms introduced by Pakistan Railways management and the tireless work and dedication of railway employees.



# KP govt invests in youth prosperity: CM

## Inaugurates technical training under 'Khushal KP Programme'

PESHAWAR (APP): Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Justice (Retd) Arshad Hussain Shah said on Tuesday that youth are our assets, and the KP government is investing in them to build prosperity.

He addressed the inaugural ceremony of the Khushal Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Program, which aims to create technical training and employment opportunities for the youth.

He expressed concern over the longstanding issue of unemployment in the country, emphasizing the distress caused by witnessing the youth facing joblessness.

"We have implemented a program prioritizing the training of the youth on preferential grounds," he said.

He highlighted that this training program is a crucial component of the Khushal Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Program, describing it as a comprehensive initiative that will have lasting effects.

He stated that this is a program for the welfare of humanity, and its success requires collective efforts. In the first phase, over one hundred thousand young individuals will undergo vocational courses, aimed at equipping them with skills beyond just information technology.

Chief Minister outlined the program's definitive goal of providing training to at least five hundred thousand youth, ultimately facilitating their employment.

He emphasized the clear roadmap established for the welfare of the youth, which will also serve as a helpful guide for the incoming government. As part of the programme, initially, over 0.1 million young individuals will undergo various courses, including IT, in addition to other fields.



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Haji Ghulam Ali inaugurates academic block for Bachelors Degree Programme Paramedics at Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto Postgraduate Paramedical Institute.

# Punjab CM says: Efforts would be made to induce artificial rainfall with assistance of the UAE team

**Independent Report**  
LAHORE: Ahmed Al-Kamal, head of the cloud-seeding team from the United Arab Emirates' meteorology department, chief pilot Michael Anstis and pilot Col Ubaid called on Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi at his office on Tuesday.

The CM thanked the team members for their endeavors to induce artificial rainfall to reduce smog and expressed gratitude for the UAE's cooperation, acknowledging it as the first-ever successful attempt at artificial rainfall in Lahore's history.

Chief Minister Naqvi stated that the Punjab government appreciates the collaboration with the UAE, and reiterated the need for artificial rainfall to combat smog. He assured that further efforts would be made to induce artificial rainfall, once again, when the required atmospheric conditions are met, with the assistance of the UAE team. Highlighting the success of the first-ever artificial rainfall in Lahore.

# Governor requested to play role in preventing use of e-cigarettes among youth

PESHAWAR (APP): Blue Veins and the Provincial Alliance for Sustainable Tobacco Control, a CSOs led alliance working to lead tobacco control initiatives, has requested Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali to play his effective role in preventing use of e-cigarettes and vapes among young population.

In a letter to Governor KP Haji Ghulam Ali, both Blue Veins and Provincial Alliance for Sustainable Tobacco Control brought his attention to a pressing issue that is affecting the youth of the province.

"The leadership of Governor, Haji Ghulam Ali can set a precedent for other provinces of Pakistan, showcasing Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as role model for proactive and preventive health governance," reads the letter. A concerning rise in use of e-cigarettes and vapes has been observed among youngsters in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, adds the letter.

# Former CJ PHC, Qaisar Rasheed passes away

PESHAWAR (APP): Former Chief Justice Peshawar High Court (PHC), Justice Qaisar Rasheed breathed his last at a local hospital here on Tuesday.

Hospital sources said, Justice Qaisar Rasheed was admitted at the hospital for the last many days. Justice Rasheed was on a ventilator for the last three days and today he left this mortal world.



HYDERABAD: People warm their hands on bonfire to save themselves from cold waves during the winter season, in Hyderabad.

# One killed, another injured

FAISALABAD (APP): A woman was killed in an accident while a youth was injured during a robbery near here on Tuesday.

According to the Rescue 1122, a woman was hit to death by a rashly driven car near Kohistan express service. The victim was later identified as Zahra Kalsoom of Muzaffar Colony Saman Abad. The body was handed over to police while the driver fled away.

# Certificate of Sadiq, Ameen being maintained for play boy: Mian Latif

LAHORE (Online): PML-N leader Mian Javed Latif has said certificate of Sadiq and Ameen is being maintained for play boy.

"The country is undergoing uncertain situation at economic, political level, he said this while talking to media men here Tuesday.

He went on to say those who are making policies are not accepting their mistakes.

He held millions of rupees were spent on those who made narrative on social media. Had some one investigated then it would have come to surface the links of May 9 and 10 incidents go to which countries.

He questioned can the armed forces of the country be threatened.

He remarked May 9, 10 attack is matter of grave concern for the institutions. No one is there to ask from those who were schemers of 2017-18.

He added 7 to 8 months have passed and now mitti pao program cannot work.

Had Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif attacked defence institutions.

Today much cry is raised on the matter of election symbol but no one had spoken in our case, he observed.

The sword of disqualification is being hung on the head of the person who has been acquitted.

# ANF recovers 214 kg drugs in nine operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting nine operations across the country managed to recover over 214 kg drugs and arrested six accused including a woman, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Tuesday.

He informed that 2.4 kg heroin was recovered from the possession of a passenger, going to Doha on Qatar Airways at Lahore Airport.

100 grams heroin was recovered from a parcel booked for Sri Lanka at a courier office on Shahrah-e-Faisal, Karachi.

209 kg hashish was recovered in four operations conducted near Morgah border area.

# Minister Murad reviews PUNJMIN performance

LAHORE (APP): Provincial Minister for Mines and Minerals Ibrahim Hassan Murad, during a meeting held here on Tuesday, reviewed the performance of Punjab Minerals Development Corporation (PUNJMIN) and advocated its digital transformation.

PUNJMIN Managing Director presented updates on salt projects, coal projects, and the Mianwali project, emphasizing progress through a detailed presentation.

During the briefing, it was revealed that PUNJMIN is set to digitize its operations, adopting Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP). However, the initiative requires skilled professionals in IT, mining engineering, and accounting. A request for relaxation in new recruitment has been sent to the Chief Minister's office.

The minister highlighted the importance of digitalization for enhancing the corporation's efficiency, citing its profitability due to effective government strategies. He noted the positive impact of increased industrial salt prices on government revenue. Stressing the need for continued improvement, the minister instructed PUNJMIN to implement e-bidding and e-auction systems to curb corruption.



HYDERABAD: Residents of Gul Goth Muhammad Jakro are holding protest demonstration for acceptance of their demands, at Hyderabad press club.

# World-class sports complex, universities to be built in Zafarwal: Ahsan Iqbal

ZAFARWAL (APP): Senior Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader and candidate for NA-76 Narowal and PP-54 Zafarwal constituencies, Prof. Ahsan Iqbal announced building a world-class sports complex for the youth of Zafarwal, so that they could participate in sports activities and bring laurels to the country.

He expressed these views at the closing ceremony of the All Punjab Shah Faisal Shaheed Football Tournament here on Tuesday. The former federal minister said, "I promise to the youth of Zafarwal that I will soon build a sports complex in Zafarwal like the Narowal Sports Complex, where world-class sports and coaches are available."

He said that the future of Pakistan was linked to the youth and for their bright future, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) had taken practical steps. "More steps will be taken for their welfare in the future. More than 7,000 youths are studying in three universities in Narowal and world-class universities will also be set up in Zafarwal soon," he added.

# International News

# China willing to work with US for stable relationship: Xi

**Monitoring Desk**  
BEIJING: China's President Xi Jinping on Monday said he was willing to work with the United States to promote stable bilateral ties, exchanging congratulations with his US counterpart Joe Biden on the 45th anniversary of diplomatic relations, state media said.

Xi, in his message, said both countries have "weathered the storms and moved forward in general", which has enhanced the well-being of their peoples and contributed to world peace, stability and prosperity, according to the ministry statement.

Xi called China and US forming ties "a major event" in the history of bilateral relations and in international relations.

China-US ties have been frosty but Biden administration officials have visited Beijing and met with their counterparts to rebuild communications and trust in the months leading up to a high-stakes summit between Xi and Biden in San Francisco in November, deemed an opportunity to cool tensions between the world's two largest economies.

Xi said the summit has pointed out the direction for both nations' ties, under a future-oriented vision.

"I am willing to work with President Biden to continue to steer and navigate the China-US relationship for the benefit of China and the US and the two peoples, and to promote the cause of world peace and development," Xi said.

The US is due its presidential election in November, in which former president and outspoken critic of China Donald Trump is campaigning against Biden to come back for a second term.

Xi also exchanged New Year's messages with North Korea leader Kim Jong Un, and both announced 2024 to be a "friendship year" for both countries, launching a series of activities for that, the Chinese foreign ministry said separately. Xi said China is willing to work with North Korea to deepen strategic mutual trust, enhance exchanges and cooperation, promote greater bilateral ties and make new contributions to the maintenance of peace and stability in the region. On New Year's Eve, the Chinese leader exchanged greetings with Russian President Vladimir Putin as well.



ISTANBUL: Tens of thousands of people demonstrate to show solidarity with the Palestinian people amid the Gaza crisis, at the Galata Bridge.

# Gaza war to continue through 2024, warns Tel Aviv

**Monitoring Desk**  
GAZA STRIP: Israel warned on Wednesday that its war in Gaza would continue throughout 2024 as unrelenting strikes killed at least 25 people in the besieged enclave on New Year's Day.

Israel's military spokesman Daniel Hagari said in a New Year's message that some of the 300,000 army reservists would get a break in order to prepare for the "prolonged fighting" ahead.

"The army must plan ahead, understanding that we will be required for additional tasks and warfare throughout this year," Hagari said.

"We are also currently adapting the planning of the force deployment in Gaza and the reserve system. Some of the reservists will return to their families and employment this week.

"This will significantly ease the burden on the economy and allow them to gather strength for the upcoming activities in the next year, as the fighting will continue and they will still be required," Hagari added.

# Five dead as planes catch fire after collision at Japan's Haneda airport

**Monitoring Desk**  
TOKYO: A passenger plane and a Japanese coast guard aircraft collided on the runway at Tokyo's Haneda Airport on Tuesday which claimed five lives.

Transport Minister Tetsuo Saito confirmed that all 379 occupants of Japan Airlines flight JAL-516 got out safely before the plane was entirely engulfed in flames. The pilot of the coast guard plane also escaped, but five crewmembers died, Saito said.

# Japan quake toll nears 50 with many feared trapped in freezing cold

**Monitoring Desk**  
TOKYO: A powerful earthquake that hit Japan on New Year's Day killed at least 48 people, with rescue teams struggling in freezing temperatures on Tuesday to reach isolated areas where many people are feared trapped under toppled buildings.

In Suzu, a coastal town of just over 5,000 households near the quake's epicentre, 90 per cent of houses may have been destroyed, according to its mayor Masuhiro Izumiya.

"The situation is catastrophic," he said.

The quake with a preliminary magnitude of 7.6 struck on Monday afternoon, prompting people in western coastal areas to flee to higher ground as tsunami waves swept cars and houses into the water.

Around 200 tremors were detected since the quake first hit on Monday, according to the Japan Meteorological Agency, which warned more strong shocks could hit in the coming days.

A Coast Guard aircraft en route to deliver aid to the quake-hit region collided with a commercial aeroplane in Tokyo's Haneda airport on Tuesday, killing five Coast Guard crew while all 379 on board the Japan Airlines flight miraculously escaped a fire.



Palestinians protest in solidarity with Gaza in Ramallah, in the occupied West Bank.

# Somalia to hold emergency meeting on Somaliland-Ethiopia deal

**Monitoring Desk**  
MOGADISHU: Somalia will hold an emergency cabinet meeting on Tuesday, state media said, after the breakaway region of Somaliland struck a controversial deal with Ethiopia giving Addis Ababa access to the Red Sea.

Monday's surprise pact has triggered fury in Mogadishu, which considers it a violation of its sovereignty. It was announced only days after Somalia's central government had agreed to resume dialogue with the separatist northern region after years of stalemate. Somaliland has been seeking full statehood since claiming independence from Somalia in 1991, a move fiercely opposed by Mogadishu and not recognised internationally.

The Addis Ababa agreement gives landlocked Ethiopia long-desired access to the Red Sea, a key waterway for global trade.

"This historic agreement ensures Ethiopia's access to the Red Sea for their naval forces, reciprocated by formal recognition of the Republic of Somaliland, marking this as a significant diplomatic milestone for our country," Somaliland's foreign ministry said in a statement on X, formerly Twitter, that there would be an emergency cabinet meeting on Tuesday to discuss the agreement.



South Korean opposition party leader Lee Jae-myung, who was attacked in Busan, gets off from a helicopter on a stretcher to be transported to Seoul National University Hospital, at a heliport in Seoul.

# Ukraine's Zelenskiy says Russia suffering heavy losses

**Monitoring Desk**  
KYIV: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said Russian forces are suffering heavy losses and the notion that Moscow is winning the nearly two-year-old war is only a "feeling" not based on reality.

"Thousands, thousands of killed Russian soldiers, nobody even took them away," he told The Economist magazine in an interview published on Monday, referring to fighting around the besieged eastern town of Avdiivka which he visited last week.

He provided no evidence to back up his assertion but Western military analysts agree Russia is paying a heavy price in men and equipment for relatively minor gains in eastern and southern Ukraine. There was no response to a request for comment from Russian officials on Zelenskiy's remarks. Russian officials have said Western estimates of Russian death tolls are vastly exaggerated and almost always underestimate Ukrainian losses.

# UN to boost food ration for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh

**Monitoring Desk**  
DHAKA: The United Nations will increase the food ration for each Rohingya refugee in Bangladesh by \$2 a month, to \$10 from Jan. 1, the World Food Programme (WFP) said on Tuesday, as it thanked donors for coming to the rescue of a cash-strapped effort.

The United Nations had cut food aid last year to the refugees by a third, to \$8 each every month, as it had raised less than half of the \$876 million required to support them.

Nearly a million members of the Muslim minority from Myanmar live in bamboo-and-plastic camps in Bangladesh's border district of Cox's Bazar, most of them having fled a military crackdown in 2017.

The WFP cut the refugees' food entitlement to \$10 from \$12 in March, and further in June, to stand at \$8 each a month, in the wake of a severe funding crunch.

# South Korean opposition leader in intensive care after being stabbed in the neck

**Monitoring Desk**  
SEOUL: South Korean opposition leader Lee Jae-myung was recovering in intensive care after he was stabbed in the neck on Tuesday by a man who pushed through a crowd pretending to be his supporter, his party said.

Lee was surrounded by journalists when a man lunged and struck him on the left side of his neck, Busan police official Son Je-han said at a press briefing.

Lee was first taken to a hospital in Busan, then flown to the capital Seoul where he underwent a two-hour surgery, Kwon Chil-seung of Lee's Democratic Party told reporters. "Damage to the internal jugular vein was confirmed," Kwon said.

Lee was conscious after the surgery and is "currently admitted to the intensive care unit and is recovering", Kwon added. The attacker was arrested at the scene.

# Bangladeshi Nobel winner convicted of violating labour laws

**Monitoring Desk**  
DHAKA: Nobel peace laureate Muhammad Yunus was convicted on Monday of violating Bangladesh's labour laws in a case decried by his supporters as politically motivated.

Yunus, 83, is credited with lifting millions out of poverty with his pioneering microfinance bank but has earned the enmity of longtime Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who has accused him of "sucking blood" from the poor.



# Exports surge, trade deficit narrows significantly in December 2023: Dr. Gohar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister of Commerce Dr Gohar Ejaz on Tuesday said that exports in December 2023 increased by 22.2% to USD 2.812 billion from USD 2.301 billion in December 2022.

He said that the increase is 9.3% with USD 2.573 billion exports in November 2023, said a press release issued here.

Ejaz also said that the positive trend extends to imports as well which decreased by 12.25% in December 2023 to USD 4.514 billion compared to USD 5.144 billion in December 2022.

Looking at the broader picture, the exports in Jul-Dec 2023 witnessed continued export growth and increased by 5.2% to USD 14.981 billion from USD 14.244 billion during the

same period in the preceding year, he said.

The minister said that notably, imports during this period saw a significant 16.28% reduction compared to the same period in 2022, falling from USD 31.209 billion to a much lower USD 26.129 billion.

These developments translate to a substantial narrowing of the trade deficit, he added.

He said in December 2023 alone, the deficit shrank by a significant 40% to USD 1.7 billion, representing a decrease of USD 1.141 billion compared to the previous year.

Ejaz said the Jul-Dec 2023 period saw an even more impressive trend, with the trade deficit shrinking by 34% to USD 11.148 billion, down from USD 16.965 billion in the same period last year (a decrease

of \$5.817 billion).

Commenting on these achievements, Dr. Gohar Ejaz expressed optimism, stating, "This is the record growth in past four months. When the caretaker government took over, the last month's exports were USD 2.07 billion.

He said these now stand at USD 2.81 billion. Pakistan's exports have recovered and are on a clear upward trajectory, reaching an impressive USD 2.8 billion in December 2023."

"We will reach our targeted capacity of USD 3 billion per month soon. Our ultimate goal remains to achieve export-led growth to the tune of USD 8 billion per month, a target that we will pursue through the implementation of the new Industry Policy under the SIFC framework."



ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi chairing a meeting during his visit to the Federal Ombudsman Secretariat for Protection Against Harassment at Workplace (FOSPAH) Head Office.

## ECP 'reviews' security measures ahead of general elections 2024

ISLAMABAD (INP): An important meeting of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) was held on Tuesday to review security measures ahead of the general elections 2024, scheduled to take place next month.

The meeting chaired by Chief Election Commissioner (CEC), Sikandar Sultan Raja was attended by its members, the secretary and Secretary of Interior, Aftab Akbar Durrani. According to media reports, meeting discussed the matters related to security dur-

## Caretaker PM meets Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain

LAHORE (Online): Caretaker Prime Minister (PM) Anwaar ul Haq reached residence of PML-Q president Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain and inquired about his welfare.

Sources told Online Care taker PM met Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain at his residence. The two exchanged views on overall political and economic situation of the country.

Sources said Caretaker PM inquired about welfare of Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain.

Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi also accompanied caretaker PM.

## No case of JN.1 Corona variant reported in Pakistan: Health Ministry

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Health on Tuesday said that so far, no case of the JN.1 variant of Corona has been reported in any part of the country.

According to the spokesperson of the ministry, a new variant of Corona, JN1, Omicron, has been reported in some countries as per media reports, which is a matter of concern.

Meanwhile, caretaker federal Minister for Health Dr Nadeem Jan said that the government is continuously monitoring the situation as this subvirus of Omicron was found in some countries.

He said that the risk of this variant spreading in Pakistan is very low, but caution is necessary.

The minister assured to proper implementation of the recommendations of international health regulations.

Dr Nadeem Jan said that there is an effective screening system at international airports at entry and exit routes of the country.

He said that the Ministry of Health has advised provincial and regional health institutions to increase testing. He advised citizens to use masks to prevent the spread of diseases like COVID-19 or flu in winter.



LAHORE: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar meets with the President of Pakistan Muslim League (Q).

## PML-N's final candidate list expected to unveil on January 10

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Dr. Nisar Ahmad Cheema on Tuesday revealed that the party's candidate list would be finalized by January 10th.

Talking to a private news channel, Dr. Cheema said that Nawaz Sharif was personally conducting interviews with potential candidates who will represent PML-N in the upcoming elections.

Dr. Cheema further said, "Once the candidate announcements are made, we anticipate a surge in the election campaign, reaching every corner of the country." He emphasized Nawaz Sharif's unparalleled commitment to the political landscape, citing it as a manifestation of seriousness rarely seen in Pakistan's political history.

## Ashfaq Yusuf Tola honored as Vice President of the South Asian Federation of Accountants

KARACHI (APP): Ashfaq Yusuf Tola has been elected as the Vice President of the South Asian Federation of Accountants (SAFA) in its annual elections, which include member countries such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Maldives, and Afghanistan.

Previously, Ashfaq Yusuf Tola served as the Minister of State on Revenue and Chairman of the Tax Reforms and Resources Mobilization Commission in the federal government.

Ashfaq Yousuf Tola is a Fellow member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Pakistan and the Institute of Cost and Management Accountants of Pakistan, besides Former President ICAP for the term 2022-2023.

## All KMC hospitals being made functional in the public interest: Mayor Karachi

KARACHI (APP): Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab on Tuesday said that all the hospitals of KMC are being made functional in the public interest.

He said this on Tuesday during a visit to the Sarfaraz Rafique Shaheed Hospital and while inspecting the ongoing development works on various roads of district South.

He said that he is also meeting with the people related to the medical department, doctors and other people so that KMC hospitals can be run under public-private partnership and good quality treatment facilities can be made available to the citizens, along with improving the medical facilities.

He said that the basic infrastructure of the city is also being improved and after cleaning the sewage line on Musham Ali Road and Nishtar Road near the Garden Police Headquarters, its maintenance and repair work will be completed so that the citizens can get convenience in transportation.

Barrister Murtaza Wahab inspected various parts of Sarfaraz Rafique Shaheed Hospital managed by KMC located at New Chali and after meeting the management and staff of the hospital directed to make the hospital fully operational.

Talking about the problems faced by the hospital management, the Mayor Karachi said that all possible measures will be taken to provide better diagnosis and treatment facilities to the patients in Sarfaraz Rafique Shaheed Hospital.



KARACHI: Inspector General Police (IG) Sindh, Riffat Mukhtar chairing a meeting on human trafficking, at CPO Headquarters in Karachi.

## PPP to clinch majority in upcoming general elections: Kundi

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): Pakistan Peoples Party Information Secretary Faisal Karim Kundi expressed optimism that his party will clinch a majority in the upcoming general elections.

Speaking to a press conference in Dera Ismail Khan he said: "The formation of an alliance against our party is not a new thing. The time will tell who is going to be the country's

## Election Commission conducts one-day National Media training

KARACHI (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan organized a one-day training session for the national media at a local hotel here on Tuesday.

A large number of journalists actively participated in the training. A presentation was given on the Code of Conduct for National Media. They were informed about electoral laws, the electoral cycle and the legal framework.

Deputy Director Law gave a presentation while Spokesperson Provincial Election Commission Sindh Nabeel Abaro moderated the session.

On the occasion, Joint Provincial Election Commissioner (Elections) Sindh urged the journalists to adhere to the code of conduct of the Election Commission and said that the media was like eyes and ears for them.

## Fly Jinnah and 1-Link collaborates to enhance Customer Experience

Independent Report

KARACHI: Fly Jinnah, Pakistan's low-cost airline, has partnered with 1-Link to streamline payments for flight bookings. Under this innovative collaboration, passengers will have a dedicated time window to

## Fault in Guddu Power Plant's transmission line yet to be fixed

HYDERABAD (INP): Despite the passage of three days, Guddu Power Plant's management is yet to fix the technical fault in the 500 KV high transmission line that had led to a fire yesterday. According to media reports, on the other hand, the plant's management has refused to comment on the issue.

Sources in the National Transmission and Despatch Company (NTDC) Limited have told that it might take 14 days to buy a new breaker.

They have added that four high transmission lines are connected to the plant.

## Mayor says criticism over solid waste disposal aimed at political score settling

HYDERABAD (APP): The Mayor of Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (HMC) Kashif Ali Shoro has said some political opponents are finding fault with the city's solid waste disposal mechanism as the election day draws near.

In a statement issued here on Tuesday the Mayor said Sindh Solid Waste Management Board (SSWMB) and its private contractor were responsible for the collection and disposal of solid waste from Hyderabad.

He added that the citizens could also register their complaints with the regard

## Polio prevention campaign launched in Mirpurkhas Division

MIRPURKHAS (APP): The Commissioner Mirpurkhas on Tuesday launched a preventive polio campaign in the division, aiming to save children from permanent disability.

According to Commissioner Office, Mirpurkhas Divisional Commissioner Faisal Ahmad Uqeli called for a strategy to make the anti-polio campaign successful, with a view towards preventing permanent disabilities in children.

In a meeting held via

## Mirpurkhas Police take action against traffic violators

MIRPURKHAS (APP): Mirpurkhas district police on Tuesday took a strong stance against traffic rule violators and collecting fines amounting to Rs. 322,900 in month of December 2023.

According to a police spokesperson, in December 2023, the Mirpurkhas Police, acting on the directives of Senior Superintendent of Police Adil Memon, took decisive action against traffic violations in the district. 595 different vehicles were challaned and a total of Rs. 322,900 was collected in fines, which were deposited into the national treasury.

The police issued challans to a variety of vehicles for violations. 20 challans were given to tractors and jeeps, 16 were given to tractors and dumpers, 21 to trucks and cargo vehicles for riding on rooftops, and 30 to vans.



confirm their bookings by completing the payment process, offering unmatched flexibility and convenience.

1-Link, which is Pakistan's largest payment gateway and switch system will enable customers with any bank account to easily complete their bookings by making payments from their phone or laptop, eliminating the need to visit a physical Fly Jinnah office for the

## 'Fake video created by using technology' says SALU VC

SUKKUR (APP): Vice Chancellor (VC), Shah Abdul Latif University (SALU), Prof Dr Khalil Ahmed Ibpoto on Tuesday said that the circulating video is fake and it was created by using technology.

Talking to APP, he said that some subordinate officials from inside the university and some from outside were blackmailing him since five months. In this regard he had already filed an application in the cyber crime wing of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) on September 9, 2023, accusing the Network Operator Rashdi, Administrative Officer Tahir Abbas Khaskheli.



JAMSHORO: Chairman Sindh HEC Dr S.M. Tariq, VC SABS Dr Arabella Bhutto visit during annual 18th degree show at SABS University of Art, Design and Heritages Jamshoro.

## SABS University organizes 18th annual thesis display, exhibition

HYDERABAD (APP): The Shaheed Allah Bukh Soomro (SABS) University of Art, Design and Heritages Jamshoro organized the 18th annual thesis display and exhibition in its premises here Tuesday. The event was inaugurated by Chairman Higher Education Commission (HEC) Sindh Dr. S. M. Tariq Rafi. Secretary HEC Sindh Moinuddin Siddiqui, Vice-chancellor SABS Prof. Dr. Arabella Bhutto, Vice-Chancellor SUFI University Bhitshah Prof. Dr. Parveen Munshi and others were also present on the occasion.

According to the University spokesman, the exhibition included display of paintings, sculptures, fabric designs, ceramics pottery, building models, advertisement concepts and much more.

Talking to the media persons, the Chairman HEC Sindh said that the exhibition reflected creativity of students which would help them to become entrepreneur in future. He said that the art work of students was not only beneficial for the students but was also important for soft image of the nation and country. Replying to a question, he said that the fees structure of universities throughout the province was lesser than all other provinces but yet Sindh provides 23 billion rupees to universities.



MOHENJO DARO: A tourist delegation from Hungary are visiting and expressed keen interest in the historical ruins of the World Heritage Monuments of Mohenjo Daro during foggy weather of winter season, in Mohenjo Daro.

## Regional and District Election Commissioners supervised officer training

MIRPURKHAS (APP): Regional Election Commissioner (REC) Imtiaz Ali Kalhoro along with District Election Commissioner (DEC) Khalid Hussain supervised the training session of presiding officers in Mirpurkhas on Tuesday.

According to detail, under the directives of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), the REC, DEC and Returning Officer (RO) PS 47 visited the training grounds, specifically Government Higher Secondary School Mirwah Gorchani, to assess preparations for the

## Culture Day Malakhra event takes place at HBA

HYDERABAD (APP): An event of 'Malakhra' (traditional wrestling) as part of Sindh Culture Day will be held at Hyderabad District Bar Association on January 3.

President HBA advocate KB Lutuf Ali Laghari on Tuesday approved an application of advocate Waheed Karan Shoro, organizer of the event, in that regard.

The bar's president also requested the lawyers to participate in the event.



KARACHI: Transgender Community Social and Political Rights leader, Shehzadi Rai along with others addresses to media persons during press conference held at Karachi.