

# Independent

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## SC seeks 'comprehensive report' from commission on enforced disappearances

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Supreme Court (SC) of Pakistan has directed the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances to submit 'comprehensive report' on missing persons' case.

A three-member bench led by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa and comprising Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar and Justice Musarrat Hilali, heard a set of petitions, including the Barrister Aitzaz Ahsan's one, on the "un-

lawful practice" of enforced disappearances.

During the hearing, the apex court instructed the commission — established in 2011 to trace missing persons and fix responsibility on the individuals — to prepare a 'comprehensive report' on all the missing persons cases and provide production orders also to the Attorney General for Pakistan (AGP) within 10 days.

Aitzaz Ahsan, in his petition, had prayed the court to declare that en-

forced disappearances are violative of Articles 4, 9, 10, 14, 19, and 25 of the Constitution besides declaring that the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances does not adequately comply with legal and international standards.

Similarly, he asked the apex court to set up an effective and purposeful commission. He prayed the apex court that a judge of the Supreme Court should head the commission while members of the commission

should be from bar councils, and other institutions.

At the outset of hearing, Aitzaz Ahsan counsel Shoaib Shaheen read out loud previous judgments issued on the matter in court and also mentioned the Faizabad sit-in case. However, the CJP asked how the case was linked to enforced disappearances.

CJP Qazi Isa inquired how the Faizabad sit-in verdict is related to enforced disappearances.



LAHORE: Peoples Party (PPP) Co-Chairman, Asif Ali Zardari and PPP Chairman, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari preside over Central Executive Committee (CEC) meeting of the party held at Bilawal House in Lahore.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar chairs a meeting of 8th meeting of Apex Committee of Special Investment Facilitation Council.

## Blow for PTI as PHC restores ECP order stripping party of 'bat' electoral symbol

PTI says it will approach Supreme Court against verdict

PESHAWAR (INP): The Peshawar High Court (PHC) on Wednesday revoked the stay order and restored the ECP decision to declare PTI intra-party polls null and void and stripping it of its election symbol — bat.

On December 26, the high court announced the verdict on PTI's petition challenging the ECP's verdict, which had stripped PTI of using the 'bat' symbol.

A single-member bench comprising Justice Ejaz Khan announced the reserved verdict on a review plea filed by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) against the January 26 single-member bench order.

Meanwhile the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on Wednesday announced to approach Supreme Court (SC) against the Peshawar High Court (PHC) verdict, restoring Election Commis-

sion of Pakistan's (ECP) order which had stripped the party of its electoral symbol 'bat'.

Talking to journalists, PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Khan dubbed the PHC's verdict "biggest reflection of the ECP's biasness", saying that it has decided to approach Supreme Court (SC) against the today's order.

Gohar Khan questioned over the "legitimacy of election" after the ECP deemed the PTI's intra-party polls "unconstitutional" and revoked the party's iconic 'bat' electoral symbol.

"If you take away the 'bat', the world will not recognise your election," he said.

He said that the electoral watchdog was "chasing the case" like it had never done so in the past, urging the Supreme Court (SC) to "do us this kindness and listen to us".



ISLAMABAD: Kandahar Governor Mullah Shirin in a meeting with Caretaker Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani during his visit to Islamabad.

## Pakistan to continue engaging with Afghanistan: FM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani on Wednesday reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to continued engagement and mutually beneficial ties with Afghanistan. He also underscored the importance of addressing all issues of concern to harness the full potential for regional trade and connectivity.

The foreign minister received a delegation led by Haji Mullah Shirin, Governor of Kandahar and Deputy Head of Military Intelligence and Strategy of Afghanistan, Foreign Office Spokesperson said in a press release. They exchanged views on key issues of mutual concern, including peace and security, as well as people-to-people contacts.

The visiting dignitary appreciated Pakistan for the generous support extended to millions of Afghans for over four decades and agreed to continue high-level engagement and dialogue to further strengthen bilateral relations. Earlier, the Afghan delegation led by Haji Mullah Shirin also participated in the 6th session of Pakistan-Afghanistan Joint Coordination Committee (JCC).

In the JCC meeting, the two sides discussed coordination mechanisms to facilitate cross border movement with a view to promoting people-to-people contacts. Separately, on X, the foreign minister posted that he had a productive meeting with Mullah Shirin, Governor of Kandahar.

## Pakistan strongly condemns terrorist attack in Kerman, Iran

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan on Wednesday strongly condemned a dastardly terrorist attack that took place earlier today in the Martyrs Cemetery of the provincial capital of Kerman, Iran, resulting in large number of deaths and injuries.

"Pakistan stands in full solidarity with the Government and brotherly people of Iran in this hour of grief and tragedy," Foreign Office Spokesperson said in a press statement.

Pakistan believed that terrorism was a menace and threat to regional and global peace and security that needed to be confronted through bilateral and regional cooperation, it was added. "We extend heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims and pray for the swift recovery of the injured," the spokesperson said.

## NEPRA approves hike in electricity tariff

KARACHI (INP): The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) on Wednesday approved the K-electricity tariff for Karachi by Rs 2.87 per unit. According to the power regulatory authority, NEPRA approved the hike in electricity in the wake of the quarterly fuel adjustment for second time.

With this hike, the burden on Karachi power consumers in the wake of quarterly fuel adjustments will reach Rs 4.12. The hike was approved under the adjustment period from January to March 2023. The power regulatory authority has sent the decision to federal government to notify the hike. Earlier, at the request of the caretaker government, the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA).



QUETTA: Caretaker Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed talking to media persons after visiting Hajji Camp.

## Courts standing with every political party regarding elections: CJP Isa.

Court directs Punjab IG, others to submit report on implementation of its directives on PTI plea; hearing adjourned till Jan 8

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa has said that courts are standing with every political party regarding the elections.

On Wednesday, a three-member bench, headed by CJP Isa and comprising Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar and Justice Musarrat Hilali, heard the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) petition regarding the level playing field in elections.

The Supreme Court later adjourned the hearing in the case till January 8.

At the outset of the hearing, the PTI's lawyers submitted additional documents to the Supreme Court stating that the nomination papers of 668 key PTI leaders, as well as around 2,000 proposers and seconders have been rejected. According to the additional documents, 56 cases of snatching of nomination papers of PTI leaders took place, while proposers and seconders were also arrested, and it was decided to place video evidence in this regard in the Supreme Court.

## SIFC Committee reviews progress to further improve investment climate

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Apex Committee of Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) chaired by Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Wednesday reviewed progress on various measures being undertaken to improve the investment climate.

The Committee approved various policy level interventions to further facilitate the investors including strengthening of domestic dispute resolution mechanism.

The committee also reviewed various projects

and initiatives being pursued through the platform of SIFC.

It reviewed progress on privatization and appreciated the collaborative approach of various stakeholders in timely completion of various critical benchmarks and gave directions to maintain the momentum, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

The meeting was attended by Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir, members of the caretaker federal cabinet, caretaker provincial chief ministers and high level officials.

## IHC bars police, admin from using force against Baloch protesters

ISLAMABAD (INP): Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday barred the authorities in the federal capital from removing the Baloch protesters sitting outside the National Press Club, ARY News reported.

The Baloch protesters filed a petition in the IHC against the 'harassing' of Islamabad police with the protesters.

The IHC, responding to the plea, issued an order and barred the police from removing Baloch Family members who were sitting outside the National Press Club.

The court emphasized the importance of safeguarding the rights of indi-

viduals engaged in peaceful protests and directed the police authorities not to 'harass' the people sitting outside the National Press Club.

The court adjourned the hearing till January 05 and directed the Deputy Commissioner and SSP Operations to appear personally in court on January 5, addressing the matter in their individual capacities.

During a press conference, the Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar said that the issue of Baloch families from Balochistan was being projected in negative and in sharp contrast to realities as Balochs were standing with the state of Pakistan.

## ECP sets Jan 22 as deadline for postal ballot applications

ISLAMABAD (APP) Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has fixed 22nd January as the last date for receipt of applications for postal ballot papers for general elections to the national and four provincial assemblies.

This facility, under the law, has been extended to the persons in government service, members of armed forces, their wives and children who are registered voters but are stationed at a place other than the one in which their constituency is situated. Persons with any physical disability who are unable to travel as well as those in prison or custody are also entitled to vote by postal ballot.

The application forms for postal ballot can be obtained from the returning officers concerned.

## PPP core committee picks Bilawal as prime ministerial candidate

LAHORE (INP): Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Central Executive Committee (CEC) on Wednesday endorsed Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari as the party's official candidate for the position of Prime Minister.

The decision was met with unanimous approval during the hybrid meeting held at Bilawal House, where key party members gathered to deliberate on key matters.

Chaired jointly by Asif Zardari and Bilawal Bhutto, the meeting addressed pivotal issues such as the upcoming general elections, the party's election campaign, and the formulation of the party mani-

festos.

Meanwhile, the participants also engaged in comprehensive discussions regarding the current political landscape of the country and its diplomatic relationships.

President Asif Ali Zardari formally proposed Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari as the prime ministerial candidate on behalf of the PPP, a proposal that received unanimous approval from the CEC.

Expressing unwavering confidence in the leadership of Asif Ali Zardari and Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, the members of the CEC acknowledged their pivotal roles in steering the party towards its goals.



KARACHI: Pakistan Association of Press Photographers (PAPP) President, Muhammad Jameel along with others are presenting the shield to Caretaker Sindh Interior Minister, Brigadier (Retd) Haris Nawaz during meeting held at his office in Karachi.

## Imran, Fawad indicted in contempt of EC case

ISLAMABAD (Online): PTI founder Imran Khan and former federal minister Fawad Chaudhry have been indicted in contempt of Election Commission (EC) case.

Both the accused pleaded not guilty.

The contempt of EC case came up for hearing in Adiala jail Wednesday.

Members of EC heard the case.

During the course of hearing EC indicted Imran Khan and Fawad Chaudhry and read out charge sheet.

Imran Khan and Fawad Chaudhry pleaded not guilty.

## Jl worker gunned down in Karachi

KARACHI (Online): One Wasim Siddiqui, worker of JI has been killed in firing by unknown persons in the area of Orangi Town near No 1 Jamia Masjid Musalim here. SHO Ali Raza said the victim has been identified as Wasim Siddiqui, 42.

As per preliminary information the deceased was called by some one from his home and he was a travel agent by profession. It is suspected he has been killed by some one due to personal grudge.

A large number of JI leaders and workers assembled on the scene where JI worker Wasim Siddiqui was gunned down.

## Sindh Govt introduces teaching licenses for first time in country's history

KARACHI (INP): The Sindh Government has introduced teaching licenses for the first time in the history of the country.

Addressing launching ceremony of teaching licenses in Karachi today, Sindh Caretaker Minister for Education Raana Hussain said that the step would ensure culture of teaching excellence in Sindh. She said that the provin-

cial government would only entertain those applicants for the post of Junior Elementary School Teachers who will pass the licensing examination.

The Minister said that this landmark reform was aimed at bringing the same respect to the teaching profession as enjoyed by other skill-based professions, including medicine, law and engineering.

## EAT clubs appeal against rejection of nomination papers of PTI candidates

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election Appellant Tribunal of Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday clubbed appeals against rejection of nominations papers of Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf (PTI), candidates and sought answer from Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP).

The Tribunal, however, reserved its judgment on appeal of Shoaib Shaheen Advocate against rejection of his nomination papers.

The appellant tribunal's Justice Arbab

Muhammad Tahir heard the appeals of Shoaib Shaheen, Niazullah Niazi and Sayed Zafar Ali Shah.

The court clubbed the appeals and instructed the respondents to submit para-wise comments on next hearing.

The court inquired that why the returning officer didn't grant appropriate time to the candidates for removal of objections against them. The court adjourned further hearing of the case till January 5.

## Daily Voice of Masses Independent

### Terrorism surge

While Pakistan's leadership remains almost exclusively occupied in political machinations, militants and terrorist outfits have been spreading their vicious tentacles. Violence-related deaths, according to recently released statistics from two major security think tanks, shot to a six-year high in 2023 as the country lost hard-earned ground to inimical forces. Some 789 terror attacks and counter-terrorism operations resulted in more than 1,500 deaths in 2023, including close to 1,000 civilian and security forces lives lost. There were around as many injuries as the total number of fatalities. The state's failures seem particularly damning, considering that the trends had shown a persistent increase in violent incidents in the preceding two years as well. Despite the warning signs, the year 2023 saw a staggering 69pc increase in militant attacks over the previous year. The enemies of Pakistan operated with near impunity, striking 53 times per month on average in 2023, compared to 32 times per month a year earlier.

Among the provinces, KP and Balochistan were the hardest hit, with 84pc of the attacks taking place on their soil and accounting for 90pc of all deaths. Yet, considering the state's recent actions, one would be hard-pressed to find any intent to put out the fires raging there. Indeed, the state only seems to be stirring the pot further with its short-sighted refusal to deal patiently and amicably with two long-running protest campaigns in the two provinces — the Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement in KP and protests by relatives of missing persons in Balochistan — even though they have merely been demanding basic rights. Another deeply concerning fact that emerged from one of the reports was that banned terrorist outfits accounted for only 17pc of all terrorist attacks, which suggests that the spectrum of threats to Pakistani interests present on its soil is growing and needs to be mapped more thoroughly.

The released data shows that the target of militant and terrorist outfits' activities has remained focused on security forces, with the overwhelming proportion of deaths recorded being those of front-line security personnel. This should be a cause for great worry for decision-makers responsible for security, as the deepening fissures between the citizenry and the state owing to the sociopolitical instability roiling the country are ripe to be exploited by hostile elements. They must not be allowed to take advantage of it — but for that, the country's security apparatus will need to reprioritise and focus its energies on countering this grave threat. This will necessarily entail putting out the fires raging through the country amidst widespread public dissatisfaction with state policies, and resisting the urge to exert control with force. We seem to be passing through a sensitive period where any misstep may trigger long-lasting repercussions that could haunt us for years.

## SC's Response to Level Playing Concerns

By Qamar Bashir

Former Press Secretary to the President; Former Press Minister to the Embassy of Pakistan to France; Former MD, SRBC



Witnessing the live streaming of the Supreme Court's proceedings to ensure a level playing field for all political parties, notably PTI, was an exhilarating and rare opportunity for me and indeed a rewarding experience for the entire nation. The courtroom drama unfolded as a battle of wits, with arguments scoring points and constitutional provisions being quoted. The determined Chief Justice persistently opposed the contempt of court proceedings against the Election Commission, Chief Secretary, and IG Police of Punjab. This was based on the contention that the Election Commission had complied with the Supreme Court's directives by issuing letters to all provincial election commissioners and the government, emphasizing the need for a fair electoral landscape.

Amidst this intense debate, Mr. Sardar Latif Khosa emerged as a persistent voice, asserting that the Election Commission's responsibility extended beyond mere letters; it was also tasked with ensuring the actual implementation of the Supreme Court's directives in both letter and spirit. He argued that the Punjab provincial administration's disregard for these instructions amounted to a violation of the court's order, constituting contempt.

Just as Mr. Khosa's argument seemed to be faltering, an unexpected turn occurred. He drew attention to a paragraph in the Election Commission's report, revealing widespread allegations of abductions, constraints on PTI candidates and their supporters, and incidents where the RO of office was inaccessible due to

police cordoning, preventing PTI candidates from filing nomination papers. This revelation inadvertently bolstered Mr. Khosa's case, providing the Chief Justice with convincing evidence to admit the petition and issue notices to the Punjab advocate general, inspector general, and chief secretary. The Supreme Court sought explanations regarding the alleged lack of a level-playing field in the upcoming general elections.

This pivotal moment led the court to also direct a report from officials concerning the implementation of its order, specifically addressing the party's concerns. The proceedings were adjourned till January 8, signaling the gravity and importance of the case and its potential implications for ensuring fair and transparent elections.

It goes without saying that a fair and equitable political landscape in nascent democracies like Pakistan necessitates certain critical conditions. This includes equal access to resources, transparent electoral processes, freedom of expression, impartial institutions, and fair media coverage. These conditions foster a democratic environment where all political entities have an equal chance to present their policies, ensuring a level playing field. Such fairness isn't just a democratic ideal but a necessity for the country's stability and legitimacy. It encourages trust among citizens in the democratic system, promoting active participation and ensuring that the voices of all segments of society are heard and valued.

The responsibility for creating and maintaining a level playing field is shared among various stakeholders. Government institutions such as the election commission, judiciary, and law enforcement agencies play a pivotal role in ensuring fair elections and opportunities for all parties. Political entities themselves bear the responsibility of upholding democratic principles and advocating for equitable com-

petition. Civil society groups, along with the media, serve as watchdogs, monitoring and highlighting any biases or discrepancies in the electoral process.

The absence of a level playing field during elections reverberates across multiple fronts, amplifying negative repercussions. Political parties suffer from eroded trust and diminished legitimacy, directly impacting their ability to govern effectively and gain public confidence. Societal repercussions include unrest and disenfranchisement, eroding social cohesion. Countrywide, political instability disrupts policymaking and governance, affecting economic stability and deterring both foreign and domestic investment. Businesses grapple with uncertainty, impacting long-term planning and market stability. Internationally, a compromised electoral environment tarnishes a country's reputation, weakening diplomatic relations and eroding confidence in its commitment to democratic principles. Collectively, these consequences compromise long-term growth, stability, and global standing.

The systematic targeting and imprisonment of a major political party's leadership severely disrupt the foundational principles of fair competition in elections. Such actions not only impede the functioning of the targeted party but also undermine the democratic ethos of the nation. Similarly, when another political faction faces harassment and violent obstructions to their activities, it exacerbates the lack of fairness and safety in the electoral arena. These instances paint a troubling picture of an imbalanced and unjust political landscape, challenging the very essence of a level playing field in democratic processes. The pathways for redressal and seeking justice amidst such allegations and injustices are entrenched within established institutional mechanisms. The Election Commission stands as a pivotal entity responsible for overseeing fair elections; thus, parties encountering

discrimination or hindrances in the electoral process can formally report grievances to this body. Additionally, judicial avenues serve as vital forums for challenging unjust detentions, harassment, or violations of political rights, providing a means for legal recourse. Human rights commissions, both domestic and international, offer platforms to investigate and address such violations, safeguarding democratic principles. Yet, navigating these institutional channels might encounter obstacles when institutions themselves face compromise or influence. In such complex scenarios, mobilizing civil society becomes imperative, leveraging public support to advocate for fairness and justice. Engaging with international organizations, leveraging diplomatic channels, and bringing global attention to these violations serve as alternate avenues to spotlight injustices, applying external pressure to restore democratic norms. Effectively addressing these challenges requires a multi-pronged approach, combining institutional redressal with public mobilization and international advocacy to safeguard the integrity of the democratic process. When a major political party approaches the Supreme Court of Pakistan seeking redressal for a lack of a level playing field, the court encounters certain limitations. Upholding political neutrality while addressing constitutional rights is paramount. However, the court's jurisdiction might be confined when matters directly fall under the purview of other institutions like the Election Commission or the government's executive actions. Operating within legal frameworks and past precedents, the court must tread cautiously, ensuring its interventions align with existing laws and constitutional provisions.

The court's role mandates upholding the rule of law while respecting constitutional boundaries. It should safeguard constitutional rights without overstepping its jurisdiction. While intervening to uphold democratic

principles is permissible, the court must refrain from excessive interference with the functioning of other branches of government or independent bodies, unless absolutely necessary. Many courts around the world were confronted with similar situations. In the United States, the pivotal case of **Citizens United v. FEC** marked a watershed moment in the U.S. Supreme Court's rulings on elections. The decision, affirming corporations' and unions' rights to unlimited independent political spending under the protection of the First Amendment, reshaped campaign finance regulations.

Within India's legal landscape, **Kuldip Nayyar v. Union of India** exemplified the Supreme Court's commitment to fostering free and fair elections. The petition challenged the existing electoral framework, arguing that voters should have the option to reject all candidates contesting in an election if they found none of them suitable or deserving of their vote. The Supreme Court, acknowledging the importance of voters' rights and the need for electoral reforms, ruled in favor of introducing the NOTA option on ballot papers, allowing voters to express their dissatisfaction with contesting candidates effectively.

Kenya's Supreme Court made history with its ruling in **Raila Odinga v. IEC & others**, where the court nullified presidential election results due to irregularities. This landmark decision emphasized the critical importance of conducting transparent and fair elections, showcasing the judiciary's intervention to safeguard democratic principles and electoral integrity. The lack of level playing field will not only mar the result of the elections but also prompt the prolonged litigation in the post election scenario. The aggrieved parties are most likely to approach the Supreme Court to nullify election results due to concrete evidence of rigging will involve various potential outcomes.

The Supreme court is playing a proactive role to ensure that elections are held in a free and fair manner. There are two possible and expected decisions by the supreme court. In one scenario the SC despite compelling arguments from PTI's legal counsel court may observe procedural limitations in directly attributing contempt. After thorough scrutiny and hearing the responses from the officials, the Supreme Court might issue directives for better implementation of Election Commission orders but refrains from labeling the actions as contempt due to lack of conclusive

In an alternate scenario, the Supreme Court may take a stern stance against the alleged disregard of Election Commission directives by the Punjab administration and police. Despite the administration's counter-arguments and explanations, the court finds substantial evidence suggesting deliberate actions hindering PTI's participation, thus constituting contempt. The Chief Justice may express strong displeasure over the reported incidents of hindrance faced by PTI candidates during the electoral process, highlighting the criticality of ensuring a level playing field for all political parties. The court, after careful consideration and thorough examination of the evidence presented, holds the IG Police and Chief Secretary accountable for failing to uphold the Election Commission's directives. The Supreme Court may reprimand, possibly imposing fines or penalties, and issue stringent directives to ensure strict adherence to Election Commission orders in future elections. However, the final verdict of the Supreme Court in such scenarios would largely hinge on the evidence presented, the court's interpretation of contempt in this context, and the extent of the officials' compliance or disregard for the Election Commission's directives. It would aim to reinforce the sanctity of fair electoral processes while balancing accountability with procedural considerations.

## Commerce News

### Pakistani traders ride county's booming economy

BEIJING (APP): More Pakistani traders are settling in the Tashikurgan Tajik autonomous county of Kashgar, China's Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, to tap the strong business potential. As the county is close to their homes, they said it's easy to commute and fit into the local community. Booming tourism also brings more tourists, which benefits their businesses.

Murad Shah, a Pakistani jeweler, said his gemstone store in the county has welcomed about 100 to 200 tourists a

diverse culture and landscape, and so many good attractions to see," he said, adding he is hopeful about the future. China Daily reported. One good reason for him to open a store in the county is that his hometown, a small village in Pakistan, is just 200 kilometers away, which can be reached in only three hours by car. Another reason is that China is developing very fast with a sound economy, he said. "Many Pakistanis prefer to do business here because there is money here," Shah said.



LAHORE: President Fish Market Chaudry Muhammad Aslam addressing press conference at press club in Provincial Capital.

### 8.17 million cotton bales reach ginneries across Pak, 77% increase recorded

MULTAN (APP): Seed cotton (Phutti) equivalent to 8.17 million or 81,71,082 bales have reached ginneries across Pakistan till Dec 31, 2023 recording an increase in arrivals by 77.14 per cent compared to corresponding period of the year 2022.

According to a fortnightly report issued by Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association (PCGA) here Wednesday, arrivals to factories increased by over 3.5 million bales, hence the 77.14 per cent increase recorded in 2023 till Dec 31 compared to 2022.

Over 4 million or 40,78,769 bales' arrival was recorded at ginning

factories in Punjab, showing a surge by over 1.3 million bales compared to the year 2022 calculated at 47.66 per cent. In Sindh, arrivals were recorded at over 4 million or 40,92,313 bales, showing a jump by 2.24 million bales, recording a whopping 121.16 per cent increase compared to corresponding period of 2022.

Over 8 million or 80,82,744 bales were converted into bales at ginning factories. Textile sector continued to maintain its position as the biggest buyer with a figure of over 7.3 million or 73,14,127 bales bought while exporters and traders bought 2,92,126 bales.



LAHORE: Punjab Governor Muhammad Baligh-ur-Rehman in a group photo with delegation of Anjuman-e-Tajiran led by Waqar Ahmed Mian.

### Fiscal deficit curtailed at 0.8% of GDP, primary surplus improves

ISLAMABAD (APP): Update and Outlook for December 2023.

Consequently, the fiscal deficit has been curtailed to 0.8 percent of GDP, the report says, adding the primary surplus continued to improve owing to contained growth in non-markup spending and was recorded at Rs.1429.7 billion (1.4 percent of GDP) during July-October FY2024 from Rs.136.2 billion, 0.2 percent of GDP last year.

The breakup data shows that the fiscal deficit was recorded at Rs.861.7 billion during the period

under review compared to deficit of Rs.1265.8 billion during the same period of last year, which was 1.5 percent of GDP. Meanwhile, the net federal revenue receipts increased to Rs.2806.6 billion in July-October FY2024 from Rs.1316.8 billion last year.

The sharp rise in revenues has been largely attributed to considerable improvement in non-tax revenues that grew by more than 300 percent during the period under review.

In absolute terms, it increased to Rs. 1586.5

billion against Rs. 346.4 billion last year. This growth in non-tax collection has been observed across all major heads, indicating a broad-based increase.

Similarly, receipts from FBR tax collections grew by 29 percent to Rs.2748.4 billion against Rs.2138.7 billion last year. The net provisional FBR tax collection maintained its momentum with 29.6 percent growth to reach Rs.3484.7 billion during July-November FY2024 from Rs.2688.4 billion last year.

### Rupee gains 17 paise against Dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistani Rupee on Wednesday witnessed appreciation of 17 paise against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs281.72 against the previous day's closing of Rs281.89. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market stood at Rs 280.5 and Rs283 respectively.

The price of the Euro decreased by Rs 2.19 to close at Rs308.62 against the last day's closing of Rs310.81.

### Punjab Governor says:

### Business community playing key role in the socio-economic development of the country

**Independent Report** LAHORE: The delegation of Anjuman e Tajiran Lahore led by Waqar Ahmed Mian called on Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman at Governor House Lahore, here today.

Speaking on the occasion, Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman said that the business community is playing a key role in the socio-economic development of the

country. He said that he has been frequently meeting the delegations belonging to the business community. Governor Punjab said that the strengthening of the business community in the country creates employment opportunities in the country. He said businessmen not only feed their families but also become a source of employment for many families. Governor Punjab said that it is commendable

that the businessmen are active in philanthropic work and are lending helping hands to the people who need support in the society. He said that the business community came forward and helped people during earthquake, covid epidemic, and floods. On this occasion, the delegation of the traders' body informed the Punjab Governor about various problems including law and order, parking, electric wires, street lights,

### Atif Ikram says: FPCCI will devise charter of economy to meet the economic challenges

**Independent Report** ISLAMABAD: Newly elected President FPCCI Atif Ikram Sheikh arrives in the FPCCI Capital Office Islamabad with a big crowd consisting of the members of business community of Islamabad

was arranged to congratulate him and celebrated his historic victory in FPCCI's election. Earlier the crowd escorted him from his residence to FPCCI Capital House Islamabad. Various business



and adjacent areas. The Chairman Capital Office Karim Aziz Malik and Chairman Coordination Malik Sohail Hussain and Vice Presidents of FPCCI namely Ashfaq Ahmed and Tariq Jadoon, warmly welcomed him and showered flower leaves on him. On this occasion, on a festive event, special band

leaders of UBG and Founder Group of Islamabad CCI prominently Zubair Malik, Tariq Sadiq, Former Presidents FPCCI Rauf Alam, Zubair Ahmed Malik, former Vice President PCCI and General Secretary UBG Zafar Bakhtawari, Chairman Founder Group ICCI Khalid Iqbal Malik, Mian Akram Farid.

### KTH chief calls for exploiting all resources to attract FDI

LAHORE (APP): Coordinator to Minister of State and Federal Tax Ombudsman and Kyrgyzstan Trade House (KTH) Chairman Meher Kashif Younis said on Wednesday the government should fully exploit an ideal geographical location of the country, which has abundance of natural and human resources, to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) and boost exports to deal with the economic challenges.

Talking to a delegation of industrialists, led by Chaudhry Faran Shahid here, he said there was pressing need for making

policies that facilitate development and implementation of quality technological infrastructure.

A small and medium enterprises policy, with orientation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) that underscores importance of technology in creating value within businesses is essential for fostering economic growth. He said despite Pakistan's aspirations to become a digital economy, its existing digital infrastructure requires significant improvements to fully realize its potential.

## Doctor posted at newly created post of paediatric gastroenterologist at LGH

**Independent Report**  
LAHORE: Punjab Government has created a new post of Associate Professor of Gastroenterology for the Department of Pediatrics in Lahore General Hospital. According to the details Associate Professor Dr. Hassan Suleman Malik has been posted on this new vacancy and he has assumed his responsibilities as well. Principal Ameer Uddin Medical College Prof. Dr. Al Farid Zafar welcomed this appointment of Associate Professor Dr. Hasan

Suleman Malik on the new post in the Department of Pediatrics and said that this step taken by the Punjab Government for Lahore General Hospital will certainly help to improve medical facilities for children's health. Moreover, it will be helpful for children to deal with diseases of stomach, intestines and there will be a significant increase in the treatment for better diagnostic, tests as endoscopy facilities will be available to them, which will make it easier for the children and their parents.



LAHORE: Deputy Commissioner Rafia Haider along with Secretary Auqaf Dr. Syed Tahir Raza Bukhari being briefed during their visits to the site of under construction Shrine of Bibi Pak Daman, in Provincial Capital.

## KU Computational Chemistry Scientist elected as PAS fellow

KARACHI (INP): The Pakistan Academy of Sciences (PAS) has elected Dr. Zaheer-Ul-Haq, a Professor at the Dr. Panjwani Center for Molecular Medicine and Drug Research (PCMD), University of Karachi, as a fellow of the Pakistan Academy of Sciences (PAS).

According to the spokesman of the International Center for Chemical and Biological Sciences (ICCBS), University of Karachi, only scientists of the highest merit, who have made outstanding contributions to advancing

scientific knowledge, are elected fellows. PAS promotes higher studies and research on pure and applied sciences in Pakistan and disseminates scientific knowledge.

Prof. Dr. Farzana Shaheen, the Director of the ICCBS, University of Karachi, congratulated Prof. Zaheer-Ul-Haq for his achievement.

It is pertinent to mention here that Prof. Zaheer-Ul-Haq is a distinguished scientist renowned for his exceptional contributions to the field of Computational Chemistry.



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Haji Ghulam Ali presides over the meeting to review financial issues of Universities of Province.

## Good conduct towards citizens, effective policing hallmarks of successful police officer: Naqvi

**Independent Report**  
LAHORE: 34 under-training ASPs of the 50th common training program at the Pakistan Police Academy called on Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi at his office. Addressing them, CM Naqvi emphasized the need to abandon the archaic policing system and embrace the new era of policing to serve the public better. He highlighted that good conduct towards citizens and effective policing are the hallmarks

of a successful police officer, making their tasks easier. He emphasized that Islamic teachings and basic human values encourage positive interactions with the public. The CM stressed the importance of maintaining a positive reputation and building a successful career through improved public handling and effective policing.

Mohsin Naqvi urged police and administrative officers to pay attention to resolving the issues faced by citizens. He encouraged young police officers to engage in positive interactions with the public, demonstrating good behavior and dedication to problem-solving. He emphasized that both public handling and policing skills are equally essential, with a 50% focus on each. Furthermore, he advised police officers to exhibit good behavior towards citizens, seniors, and visitors, and to handle situations that cannot be resolved according to the law with patience and empathy.

## 11.5 million new licenses issued to citizens in a short span of time

**Independent Report**  
LAHORE: As a result of prompt steps taken by Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi to ease the driving license issuance to the public, 11.5 million new driving licenses have been issued in a short span of time. Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi visited police khidmat markaz at liberty late at night and inspected online tests conducted. He directed to change broken tiles without delay and appreciated the facilities provided at the khidmat markaz.

## KP Govt initiated economic plan to bring merged districts at par with other regions

**Independent Report**  
PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government has initiated a comprehensive economic plan "High Impact Economic Plan" with the purpose of bringing the Newly Merged Districts of the province on at par with other regions of the country and province, in the process of development. In view of the abundance of natural resources in the merged districts, have been prioritized in the above mentioned development plan so that to make maximum utilization of them, while 10 important sectors included industry, commerce and technical education, mines and mineral development, agriculture, energy and power, livestock, forestry and environment, irrigation and water, sports, tourism and youth affairs, roads & communication and border economy have been declared as important targets for the development process.

## Even UC chairman 'can deliver more than' PTI founder: Ahsan Iqbal

NAROWAL (INP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) senior leader Ahsan Iqbal said on Wednesday that even the UC chairman could deliver better than the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder.

Addressing the workers' convention in Narowal, the former planning minister said, "Four out of the five years had been wasted by the PTI. Few persons were involved in orchestrating the conspiracy to impose the PTI founder in 2018."

"The PTI founder had harmed the country," Iqbal said. Speaking about the forthcoming elections,



HYDERABAD: Milli Yakjehti Council Central President, Sahibzada Dr. AbulKhair Muhammad Zubair addresses during Khatoon-e-Jannat O Mushaikh Seminar organized by Paigham-e-Hussain International in Hyderabad.

## 8500 POs arrested, challan tickets issued to 1.75m drivers in 2023

FAISALABAD (INP): The Punjab Highway Patrol (PHP) arrested 8,500 proclaimed offenders (POs) and issued challan tickets to 1.75 million drivers over violation of traffic rules and regulations during 2023.

A PHP spokesman for Faisalabad region said here on Wednesday that patrolling police checked 17.6 million people and 9.4 million vehicles on highways and main roads of the province through e-police post app during 2023, which helped in

decreasing crimes on roads up to 45 per cent, compared to the crime ratio during 2022. During this period, the PHP jaws succeeded in arresting 500 POs of category-A and 8,000 of category-B, besides nabbing 1,300 illicit weapons-holders. The teams recovered 970 pistols, 138 rifles and 91 Kalashnikovs from the arrested people. The PHP police also seized 3,559 stolen vehicles including 190 stolen cars, 3,184 motorcycles and 185 other vehicles.

## International News

## US warns Israel, clarifies Gaza belongs to Palestinians

WASHINGTON (INP): The United States rejected the inflammatory and irresponsible statements from Israeli Ministers Smotrich and Ben Gvir and clarified there should be no mass displacement of Palestinians from Gaza. Far-right Israeli ministers Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich said this week that Israel should "encourage emigration" from the coastal enclave, home to an estimated 2.3 million Palestinians.

"If there are 100,000 or 200,000 Arabs in Gaza and not two million Arabs, the entire discussion on the day after [the war ends] will be totally different," Smotrich said on Sunday, calling for the "voluntary

migration" of Palestinians. The Israeli army has said it is "prepared for any scenario" after a strike in Beirut that killed Hamas's deputy chief, stoking fears the war in the Gaza Strip could boil over into wider regional conflict.

A high-level security official in Lebanon told foreign news agency that Saleh al-Aruri was killed along with his bodyguards in a strike by Israel, which has vowed to destroy Hamas after the movement's shock October 7 attacks.

A second security official confirmed the information, while Hamas TV also reported Israel had killed Aruri in Lebanon. Israeli army spokes-

man Daniel Hagari did not directly comment on the killing, but said afterwards that the military was in "very high state of readiness in all arenas, in defence and offence. We are highly prepared for any scenario."

Israel has previously announced the deaths in Gaza of Hamas commanders and officials during the war, but Aruri is the most high-profile figure to be killed, and his death came in the first strike on the Lebanese capital since hostilities began.

The strike adds to widespread fears that the nearly three-month-old Israel-Hamas war could become a wider regional conflagration.



People gather at the scene of explosions during a ceremony held to mark the death of late Iranian General Qassem Soleimani, in Kerman, Iran.

## Killing of Hamas deputy leader in Beirut raises risk of Gaza war spreading

**Monitoring Desk**  
BEIRUT: Israel killed Hamas deputy leader Saleh al-Aruri in a drone strike in Lebanon's capital Beirut on Tuesday, Lebanese and Palestinian security sources said, raising the potential risk of war in Gaza spreading well beyond the Palestinian enclave.

Arouri, 57, was the first senior Hamas political leader to be assassinated since Israel launched a shattering air and ground offensive against the group almost three months ago after its shock assault and

## US reaches deal to extend military presence at Qatar base

**Monitoring Desk**  
WASHINGTON: The United States has reached a deal to extend its military presence at a base in Qatar for another 10 years, a source familiar with the matter told Reuters on Tuesday.

The base in question is the Al Udeid Air Base, which is located in the desert southwest of Doha and hosts the largest U.S. military facility in the Middle East, the source said, asking to not be identified.

The development was reported first by CNN. The U.S. Department of Defense did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Tuesday.

## S.Korea opposition leader in ICU after knife attack amid calls for stronger security

**Monitoring Desk**  
SEOUL: South Korea's opposition Democratic Party leader Lee Jae-myung remained hospitalised in intensive care on Wednesday, a day after a knife attack on him shocked political leaders who were vying for the upper hand in a major election three months away.

## Putin says Russia will 'intensify' attacks on Ukraine

**Monitoring Desk**  
KYIV: President Vladimir Putin said Monday that Moscow would intensify strikes on military targets in Ukraine, after an unprecedented Ukrainian attack over the weekend on the Russian city of Belgorod.

The Ukrainian attack on Saturday, which killed 25 people including five children, came after Moscow launched a large-scale attack on Ukrainian cities. Meanwhile, Kyiv said Russia had targeted the country with a "record" number of drones on New Year's Day.

"We're going to intensify the strikes. No crime against civilians will rest

unpunished, that's for certain," Putin said during a visit to a military hospital. His comments came at the end of a deadly week in Ukraine, with both sides hitting each other with large-scale attacks.

Putin said Russia would continue to hit what he called "military installations". "We are doing that today and tomorrow we will continue doing it," Putin announced, speaking almost two years into Moscow's military offensive in Ukraine. "What happened in Belgorod is a terrorist act," Putin told wounded Russian soldiers sitting near him in hospital pyjamas and sanitary masks.



Governor of the Belgorod region, shows aftermath of a missile strike on the region as Moscow said it had downed nine missiles fired by Kyiv.

## Overseas figures refute allegations in Hong Kong security trial for Jimmy Lai

**Monitoring Desk**  
HONG KONG: Several overseas activists, right campaigners and politicians named in a national security trial for Hong Kong democrat Jimmy Lai refuted allegations levelled by a government prosecutor in court that they colluded with him.

Lai, 76, founder of now-shuttered pro-democracy newspaper Apple Daily and a leading critic of the Chinese Communist Party, faces two counts of conspiracy to collude with foreign forces - including calling for sanctions against Hong Kong and Chinese officials - under a China-

## Philippine military says second joint patrol with US underway in South China Sea

**Monitoring Desk**  
MANILA: The Philippines and the United States began a two-day joint patrol in the South China Sea on Wednesday, the Philippine military said in a statement, a move that would likely irk China. Security engagements between the treaty allies soared last year amid growing tensions in the South China Sea, where the Philippines and China have traded blame over a spate of run-ins.

The Philippines and the US first launched joint patrols in November, holding military drills for three days in waters near Taiwan and in the West Philippine Sea, Manila's term for South China Sea waters within its exclusive economic zone.

The Philippine military said their second joint patrol this week involved four vessels from the Philippine navy and four ships from the US Indo-Pacific command that include an aircraft carrier, a

## China conducts patrols in South China Sea amid ongoing run-ins

**Monitoring Desk**  
BEIJING: China's military will conduct routine patrols with its naval and air forces in the South China Sea from Wednesday to Thursday, the military's Southern Theater Command said, as ongoing tensions simmer in the region over disputed territories.

It said troops in the area will be on high alert at all times, and will defend national sovereignty, security and maritime rights.

The patrols also aim to deter activities that disrupt the South China Sea and create "hot spots," the military said on its Southern Theater Command's Wechat account.

The maneuvers come as China faces rising tensions in the region, especially with the Philippines. Both countries have recently traded numerous accusations over high-profile maritime confrontations.

Last week, the Philippines said it was not provoking conflict in the South China Sea.

## Tens of thousands hold anti-Israeli protest in Istanbul

**Monitoring Desk**  
ISTANBUL: Tens of thousands marched in Istanbul Monday to protest "murderer" Israel's war in Gaza and the killing of Turkish soldiers by outlawed Kurdish militants in Iraq.

The rally, called by a foundation which counts Bilal Erdogan, the son of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, among its members started after crowds performed morning prayers at Istanbul's

iconic mosques, including Hagia Sophia and the Blue Mosque.

Protesters waving Turkish and Palestinian flags rallied to the Galata Bridge on the Bosphorus chanting: "Murderer Israel, get out of Palestine" and "Allahu Akbar" (God is the greatest).

Tens of thousands of people joined the rally "Mercy for our martyrs and a curse on Israel", the official Anadolu news agency reported.

# More than 100 killed in terrorist attacks near tomb of Iranian Guards' Soleimani

## Monitoring Desk

DUBAI: Two explosions caused by terrorist attacks killed more than 100 people and wounded scores at a ceremony in Iran to commemorate top commander Qasem Soleimani who was killed by a US drone in 2020, Iranian officials said on Wednesday.

Iranian state television reported a first and then a second blast during an anniversary event at the cen-

etry where Soleimani is buried in the southeastern city of Kerman.

An unnamed official told the state news agency IRNA that "Two explosive devices planted along the road leading to Kerman's Martyrs' Cemetery were detonated remotely by terrorists".

Babak Yektaparast, a spokesperson for Iran's emergency services, was reported as saying 73

people had been killed and 170 injured. State television said later that at least 100 people had been killed.

No group has yet claimed responsibility for the attacks.

Videos aired by Iranian media showed dozens of bodies strewn around with some bystanders trying to attend to survivors and others hurrying to leave the blast area.

"A terrible sound was

heard there, despite all the security and safety measures.

We are still investigating," Reza Fallah, head of the Kerman Red Crescent Society, told state television.

Red Crescent rescuers tended to wounded people at the ceremony, where hundreds of Iranians had gathered to mark the anniversary of Soleimani's death.



ISLAMABAD: President, Dr. Arif Alvi being briefed about the role and performance of National Book Foundation held at Aiwan-e-Sadr in Islamabad.



## FM Jilani, Rwandan defence chief discuss strengthening bilateral ties

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chief of Defence Staff of Rwanda Lt General Mubarakh Muganaga on Wednesday called on Caretaker Foreign Minister Jilani Abbas Jilani.

In the meeting, they discussed strengthening of bilateral ties, capacity building and fostering increased collaboration in trade, a Foreign Office statement said.

They also emphasized the significant contribution of the Pakistani diaspora in Rwanda's development.

## Pakistan-China Friendship Hospital in Gwadar prepares for first patients

BEIJING (APP): The Pakistan-China Friendship Hospital in the port city of Gwadar is preparing to admit its first patients.

The foundation stone for the hospital was laid in 2020. It's part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and it's been called a symbol of the two countries' deep-rooted friendship.

Zhou Wenwei, Chief Consultant, Pakistan-China Friendship Hospital told CGTN, "China and Pakistan have a long history of friendship, and in the course of the Belt and Road

Initiative, China wanted to invest in this hospital in Gwadar to benefit the local people." Just days before its formal inauguration, I was given exclusive access to the 150-bed facility.

"The Pak-China Friendship Hospital is equipped with modern facilities and advanced medical technology, ensuring that residents of Gwadar and the surrounding areas have access to high-quality healthcare. Essential healthcare services were previously limited in the region.

## Daniyal Aziz rejects party's show-cause notice over disciplinary violation

LAHORE (INP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz senior leader Daniyal Aziz has rejected the show-cause notice given to him by the party.

On a three-page long response by Aziz to the party, he mentioned that he has not violated the party's code of conduct and policy.

For the clearance of any misunderstanding, he also requested a meeting with the party's leadership.

He said he only highlighted the discrepancies in various projects started by former minister Ahsan Iqbal that created economic issues in the constituency.

Earlier, on December 2, PML-N Punjab president Rana Sanaullah issued

a show-cause notice to Aziz stating that the politician violated the party rules by making a 'rhetorical statement' against the PML-N leadership and damaged the reputation of the party.

Aziz was directed to submit the response to the show-cause notice within seven days.

"Daniyal Aziz has been told to be cautious while giving such statement to media," the president of PML-N Punjab Rana Sanaullah stated during a press conference.

It is pertinent to mention here that the PML-N leader Daniyal Aziz held his own party leader Ahsan Iqbal responsible for the price control in a post on X.



KARACHI: Motorists are facing trouble in maneuvering at maripur road due to the protest of the relatives of Baloch missing persons, in Provincial Capital.

## Not holding election tantamount to surrender before terrorists: Siraj

ISLAMABAD (Online): JI Amir Siraj ul Haq has said election should be held in time and on February 8.

"Not holding election is tantamount to surrender before the terrorists and enemies of Pakistan," he said this in an interview with a private TV channel here Wednesday.

He held establishment had hand in bringing PML-N, PPP and PTI. The way one comes is ousted in the same way. Then they say "why I was ousted. Who pushed me."

He went on to say "I want to say to establishment, judiciary and Election Commission (EC) that they should re-

main neutral now. JI will not forge alliance or seat to seat adjustment with any one for the sake of power."

He underlined the law and order situation in KP and Balochistan is worse. But elections can be held. Elections have taken place in state of war. We cannot agree with Maulana Fazlur Rehman on his plea.

He remarked elections were held during Iran-Iraq war. "I don't deem it proper to reject nomination papers of PTI candidates. All should be provided opportunity."

"We were asked to join PDM that ministries will be given to us but we refused, he observed.

## President makes condolatory phone calls to families of 20 martyred soldiers

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Wednesday telephoned the families of 20 soldiers who were martyred in a terrorist attack in Dera Ismail Khan on December 12 and conveyed his condolences. During the telephonic interaction, the president paid tribute to the martyred soldiers and expressed sympathies for the grieved families.

He held telephonic interaction with the family members of havaladars Imran Khan, Muhammad Jamil, Muhammad Shahab, Fazal Subhan, Daud Shah and Riasat Khan.

## Shehbaz Sharif skips Faizabad commission probe

RAWALPINDI (INP): PML-N president Shehbaz Sharif fails to appear before the Faizabad Dharna Commission.

Shehbaz Sharif was the chief minister of Punjab when the infamous Faizabad dharna (sit-out) took place near Rawalpindi.

The commission is probing the case and will submit a report to the Supreme Court on whose order it was formed. Former IGP Akhtar Ali Shah heads the commission which has summoned Sharif and a former ISI chief who also failed to show up despite three notices.

The commission has already recorded the statements of former prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, ex-interior minister Ahsan Iqbal, Fawad Hasan Fawad and several bureaucrats and police officers.

## Hearing of cipher case against PTI founder, Qurshi adjourned

ISLAMABAD (Online): Special court established under official secret act has adjourned hearing of cipher case against PTI founder and former foreign minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi till January 8 without any proceeding.

The hearing of the case was adjourned being Judge Abul Hasnat Zulqarnain of the court unwell.

The court staff put the new date and returned.

The counsels for the accused were to cross question the witnesses of prosecution on Wednesday and copies of the case were to be provided to the counsels of the accused.

But hearing could not take place being the judge unwell.

It is pertinent to mention here Islamabad High Court has ordered to stop the hearing of cipher case till January 11.

## Bomb blast targets JUI candidate in Bajaur

BAJAUR (INP): Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) candidate Qari Khairullah was targeted by a bomb blast in Tehsil Mamond of Bajaur district. As per details, the bomb blast occurred near the vehicle of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) candidate Qari Khairullah in Bajaur district.

The JUI candidate survived the blast and remained safe however his vehicle was badly damaged.

Earlier, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Fazal (JUI-F) head Maulana Fazlur Rehman's convoy came under gun attack in DI Khan.

According to sources, the convoy of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Fazal (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman was attacked near DI Khan Yarik interchange however he remained safe with no loss of life reported so far.

## Global Health Security Summit to explore opportunities of joint working: Dr Nadeem

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Global Health Security Summit will serve as a great opportunity of bringing together, international and national experts in the concerned field and learning by sharing of expertise and knowledge for a safer world. In a media briefing, Caretaker Federal Minister for Health, Dr. Nadeem Jan said that the Global Health Security Summit is being held on January 10, 11 here in the federal capital.

He said that the strategic objectives of the conference are to collaborate with global leaders in order to ensure equity-based pandemic preparedness financing for low and middle-income countries and mutual exchange of knowledge and rich experience with member states and experts around summit thematic areas which focuses on vaccine equity, patent deregulation and transfer of technology.

## Caretaker PM expresses grief over loss of lives in Kerman terrorist attack

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Wednesday expressed his deep grief over the loss of lives in terrorist attacks in Kerman an area located in Iran.

On X, the prime minister said that Pakistan condemned this heinous act and stood in solidarity with Iran.

"Our thoughts and prayers are with the Iranian government and the people at this difficult time," he

further posted. According to global media outlets and Iranian state media reports, at least 103 people were killed by two bomb explosions near the tomb of Iranian General Qasem Soleimani on his 4th anniversary.

A large number of people were also wounded when the blasts hit a procession near the Saheb al-Zaman mosque located in the southern city of Kerman.



HYDERABAD: Deserving people sits with food Roshan packs after receive from workers of Jamat-e-Islami, donated by International NGO in City.

## Sindh launches maternal and child welfare program

HYDERABAD (INP): The Deputy Commissioner Sanghar Dr. Imran-ul-Hasan KHowaja has said that the Sindh government has launched a program for better health of pregnant women and newborn babies with the aim of encouraging pregnant women to give birth in hospitals instead of at home. He expressed this while addressing the district coordination committee.

Dr. Khowaja stated PPHI Sindh under Sindh social security authority has launched the "Mother and Child Welfare Programme" through its 750 hospitals in 15 districts of Sindh in which Sanghar district has also been included in the third phase.

The Program Manager of Social Security Hafiz Zafaruddin Qazi, while briefing the meeting through video link, informed that

the total cost of this program is around 50 billion rupees, for which the main financial support has been provided by the world bank and the objective of this program is to improve maternal and child health including implementation of social security system in the province so that the backward segments can be provided social security by the state.

Under the program, 1.3 million women giving birth in hospitals in 15 districts of Sindh will be paid 30,000 rupees in installments, including basic health facilities, medicines, laboratory tests and check-up facilities upon arrival at the hospital, he said and added that 40 to 50 percent of women in Sindh give birth at home instead of hospitals, which puts the health of mother and child at risk.



HYDERABAD: Residents of Qasimabad are holding protest demonstration against high handedness of police, at Hyderabad press club.

## President for increasing access of visually impaired to books, education

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Wednesday directed to take necessary actions aimed at greater access of the visually impaired to books and knowledge. Chairing a meeting to review the role and performance of National Book Foundation at Aiwan-e-Sadr, the president said that the intellectual and individual development was possible by promoting the culture of book reading in the country.

He said availability of books and knowledge in Braille for the visually impaired was a welcome move.

During the meeting, Managing Director NBF Dr Raja Mazhar Hameed briefed the president about role and performance of the Foundation. He said the National Book Foundation was taking measures for the people affected by dyslexia.

The meeting was told that the Foundation was preparing books for the dyslexic children from class prep to 8th that would be available during the academic year 2024-25. It was informed that the Foundation's Braille Press in Karachi was providing the books to the visually impaired for Rs 10 only.

The books would help increasing the access of the visually impaired children to education.

"The Foundation would issue the books for the visually impaired children of class prep to 8th of 431 schools of Islamabad."

It was further informed in the meeting that the NBF was publishing books in Braille on a range of topics and it was also ensuring the availability of books in Pakistan and abroad. President Alvi appreciated the role of the Foundation in promoting literacy and book reading culture in the country.

## Justice Naqvi files reply against second show cause notice issued by SJC

ISLAMABAD (Online): Supreme Court (SC) Judge Justice Mazhar Ali Akbar Naqvi has filed reply against second show cause notice issued by Supreme Judicial Council (SJC).

Justice Mazhar Ali Akbar Naqvi has said in his reply the complaints against him are baseless.

He took the plea SJC proceeding was unjustified after hearing constitutional petitions in open court.

SJC had given last chance to Justice Mazhar Ali Akbar Naqvi to file reply. SJC will hold its next hearing on January 11 against Justice Mazhar Ali Akbar Naqvi.



ISLAMABAD: Senator Mushahid Syed addressing in a ceremony held in honor of CDA sanitary workers on their retirement at E-7 Park. Senator Fozia Arshad, Chaudry Yaseen, and others also sitting on stage.

## Mushahid hosts Christmas-cum-New Year's party

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Senate's Standing Committee on Defence Chairman Mushahid Hussain Sayed, who represents the Federal Capital in the Senate, held a Christmas-cum-New Year's Party in honour of sanitation workers at the E-7 Park on Wednesday, which was attended by about 150 persons.

Lauding the hard work, role and contribution of sanitary workers to keep Islamabad 'clean and green', he said: "You are the

real VIPs. Given your honesty, dedication and hardwork, we are proud of you."

He also awarded shields of appreciation to two retiring sanitary workers - Yaqoob Masih, who served for 42 years, and Saifur Rahman, who served for 38 years. Talking to the media, Senator Mushahid said that Islamabad was a city of the elites, where the 'VIP culture' was prevalent and only VIPs were acknowledged or honoured.

## Court dismisses bail plea of accused involved in forging contacts with RAW

RAWALPINDI (Online): Anti Terrorism Court (ATC) Islamabad has dismissed the bail pleas of the accused involved in forging contacts with Indian secret agency RAW.

Judge Abul Hasnat Zulqarnain heard the bail pleas of the accused including Arsalan Wajid and Muhammad Din Wednesday.

Prosecutor Rana Navid said in the court the

accused persons received money from RAW agents for committing the acts of sabotage in Pakistan. Police have recovered the money from the accused which was given by RAW agents to them.

He said arms and ammunition have also been recovered from the accused. The evidence against the two accused reflect their intent to commit acts of sabotage in Pakistan.



HYDERABAD: Residents of Qasimabad Citizen Colony are holding protest demonstration against Dr. Imran Khuwaja, at Hyderabad press club.

## NIH issues advisory on JN.1 sub-variant of COVID-19

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Institute of Health (NIH) has issued an advisory for the prevention and control of JN.1 Sub-variant of the COVID-19 virus. According to NIH, the objective of the advisory was to alert and facilitate the health authorities and other stakeholders for ensuring timely prevention and control measures encompassing preparedness to deal with such patients in future.

The advisory said that JN.1 is classified as a Variant of Interest (VOI) and fundamentally an offshoot of BA.2.86 sub-variant omicron variant.

The COVID-19 virus, very first reported in August 2023 by US-CDC. However, in recent weeks, JN.1 has been reported in many countries, and its prevalence is rapidly increasing globally.

This rapid growth is observed across the three WHO regions with consistent sharing of SARS-CoV-2 sequences, like the region of the Americas.