

# Independent

Member APNS & CPNE

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

## Cabinet approves reconstitution of committee on missing persons

Approves regularisation of 227 daily-wage teachers; PM vows to continue anti-polio mission till its complete eradication

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federal Cabinet on Wednesday approved the reconstitution of its committee on missing persons headed by the law minister. The reconstitution is being done on the recommendation of the Ministry of Interior. The position became vacant after the resignation of the previous head of the committee, Sarfraz Bugti. The cabinet meeting, chaired by Caretaker Prime

Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar, also approved regularisation of 227 daily-wage teachers as proposed by the Federal Directorate of Education and recommended by the Federal Public Service Commission in line with the Islamabad High Court's decision of 2018. For the construction of the Supreme Court Karachi Registry building, the cabinet on the recommendation of Ministry of Law and Justice as endorsed by the Supreme Court Building Committee, approved the transfer of federal courts and tribunals across the city. It approved the summary regarding the operationalization of the Livestock and Dairy Development Board so as to fulfill the legal requirements for the appointment of chief executive, in line with the decisions of the Islamabad and Balochistan high courts. The cabinet gave in principle approval to the Cannabis Control and Regulatory Authority Ordinance 2024 and forwarded it to the Cabinet Committee for Legislative Cases. Under the authority, necessary guidelines would be formulated for the cultivation, extraction, refining, and medicinal and industrial use.

Continued on page 2

## Ethnic parties using issue of missing persons for elections: SC report on missing persons silences many voices including liberals, pro-Indian journalists & foreign trolls: Jan Achakzai

Caretaker Minister for Information says "report of Commission has closed the propaganda shops of many, and let's see what new logic they bring"

**Independent Report**  
QUETTA: The caretaker Provincial Minister for Information, Jan Achakzai has stated that the ethnic parties are exploiting the issue of missing persons for the upcoming elections. These ethnic parties have not only used the issue of missing persons in the past, rather they are doing the same at present, and would do so in future too. The Minister Information denounced the propaganda being made regarding the missing persons of the province. The Minister Informa-

tion was addressing a hurriedly called press conference at Quetta Press club on Wednesday. The Minister Information particularly referred the statement of Baloch Yakiehti Committee activist, Dr. Mah Rang Baloch in which she had alleged that more people have been picked up and kidnapped by authorities in Tonsa Sharif and other parts of Balochistan over the last two days. The Minister rejected these allegations and asked her to produce any report with facts and share with the institutions as they are working and would be in-

vestigated. Jan Achakzai said that Dr. Mah Rang must read the report of missing persons commission that was presented in the Supreme Court the other day. He said that on orders of the Supreme Court, commission of Inquiry on enforced disappearances was instructed to submit a comprehensive report detailing all orders issued to the law enforcement agencies for the production of missing persons. He said that the report has silenced many voices including liberals, pro In-

Continued on page 2

## Supreme Court Justice Mazahir Naqvi resigns amid pending reference

ISLAMABAD (INP): Supreme Court Justice Mazahir Ali Akbar Naqvi has tendered his resignation to the President, citing the decision as a result of the challenging circumstances surrounding his position. Justice Naqvi expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to serve in both the Lahore High Court and the Supreme Court but stated that continuing under the current conditions is untenable. The resignation, once approved by the President, will leave two vacancies in the Supreme Court. It is noteworthy that a reference against Justice Mazahir Naqvi is awaiting consideration by the Supreme Judicial Council. Recently, a 3-member Supreme Court bench dismissed a request for an injunction on the council's proceedings. Justice Naqvi had previously submitted a detailed response to the show cause issued by the Supreme Judicial Council, denying the allegations against him. He emphasized that while the council can receive information, it lacks the authority to act on any complaint against a judge. In his comprehensive reply, Justice Naqvi argued that the council's orders are in violation of established rules, contending that individuals providing information to the council should not play a role in the proceedings as per the rules.



ISLAMABAD: Incharge Health Emergency 1122 Sindh Brig. Tariq and Health Emergency 1122 Punjab Dr. Rizwan Naseer meeting with Caretaker Health Minister Balochistan Dr. Amir Muhammad Khan Jogezaai.

## Solangi says Current situation in country better than 2008, 2013 elections period

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Wednesday reiterated the commitment that general elections would eventually be held on February 8 in the country. Talking to the media, he said that in the past elections were conducted even in the worst conditions. Murtaza Solangi pointed out that the current situation in the country was much better than the years 2008 and 2013. He said that the government had been in constant contact with the Election Commission of Pakistan since the first meeting of the Caretaker Cabinet. The minister said the communication with ECP was underway on the daily basis and his visit was part of the routine communication process. He said he had not met the Chief Election Commissioner Raja Sikandar Sultan.

## Dr Amir Jogezaai says Emergency training center Balochistan to enhance physical, mental abilities

QUETTA (APP): Balochistan Caretaker Health Minister Dr. Amir Muhammad Khan Jogezaai said that training of emergency centres 1122 personnel in Balochistan would enhance the physical and mental abilities. In any emergency, these trained personnel could handle any type of situation specially on road accident, he expressed these views while talking to Health Emergency 1122 Sindh In-charge Brigadier Tariq and Health Emergency 1122 Pioneer Punjab Dr. Rizwan Naseer who called on him at a local hotel in the capital. In the meeting, the functioning of Emergency Centres 1122 in Balochistan was also discussed in detail including mutual cooperation, provision of modern equipment, training of personnel with modern style and handling of other issues. On this occasion, it was decided that both the provinces would provide all possible support to make Emergency centres 1122 fully functional in Balochistan. In this regard, all possible measures would be taken for the training of personnel and provision of equipment. Arrangements would also be made to impart regular training to Balochistan personnel in emergency centres of Sindh and

Continued on page 2

## PML-N candidate for NA-258 Aslam Buledi injured in bid on life

**Independent Report**  
QUETTA: The former Provincial Minister and candidate of PML-N for NA-258, Aslam Buledi was seriously injured by unknown armed men in main city area of Turbat on Wednesday evening. According to the reports reaching here, Aslam Buledi was on routine walk on the main road in Turbat city when some unknown armed assailants approached and restored fire targeting him. As a result, Buledi sustained at least two bullets on his body, he fell down on the road. The area police and administration rushed the sport and shifted him to the teaching hospital Turbat. In the meantime, the armed assailants fled from the scene leaving him in the pool of blood. He was provided immediate medical assistance and later shifted to Karachi for further treatment. Meanwhile, search was started for arrest of the assailants. However, no arrest could be made till ours' going to the press. Aslam Buledi had fielded his nomination papers on ticket of PML-N for NA-258.

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QUETTA: A delegation led by former Federal Minister Agha Hassan Baloch meeting with Governor Balochistan Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar

## PTI founder Imran Khan out of election race

**Independent Report**  
LAHORE (INP): Justice Tariq Nadeem of the appellate tribunal of the Lahore High Court (LHC) Wednesday upheld the returning officer's verdict rejecting PTI founding chairman Imran Khan's nomination papers for constituency NA-122. Imran's nomination papers were rejected from NA-122 (Lahore) and NA-89 (Mianwali) on December 30. The verdict issued by the RO for NA-122 stated that the papers were rejected on "moral" and other grounds. In the detailed decision, the election officer quoted the judgment of the additional session judge (Islamabad) that established the conviction of the respondent related to the offense of moral turpitude.

## Directs to ensure foolproof security for election candidates: Caretaker CM strongly condemns bid on life of Aslam Buledi; seeks report

**Independent Report**  
QUETTA: The caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki has strongly condemned the bid on life of the political leader Mir Aslam Buledi in Turbat. In an official condemnation statement issued here on Wednesday, the Chief Minister sought report of the incident from the Home Department Balochistan. The Chief Minister directed the concerned high ups to ensure foolproof security for the election campaign and candidates contesting the elections. He also directed to the concerned authorities to make the secretary measures more effective in the area. Mir Ali Mardan Domki directed to mobilize all available resources for arrest of the culprits involved in the incident. The Chief Minister also directed to provide best treatment facilities to the injured Aslam Buledi.

## PTI gets back bat symbol as PHC annuls ECP decision

PESHAWAR (Online): Peshawar High Court (PHC) after hearing arguments in PTI intra-party election and election symbol case annulled the decision of Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) and restored the bat election symbol of PTI. The court said that as a political party, PTI is entitled to the election symbol of the bat, and the election symbol should be given. ECP's decision of December 22 is unconstitutional. PTI intra-party election certificate should be released on the website. The case was heard by a two-member bench comprising Justice Ijaz Anwar and Justice Syed Arshad Ali of the PHC, in which the lawyers of the parties objecting to intra-party election of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) gave arguments.



ISLAMABAD: Advisor to PM on Aviation Air Marshal (ret'd) Farhat Hussain Khan cuts ribbon to induct A320 aircraft into PIA fleet at Islamabad International Airport.

## PIA inducts one A-320 aircraft into its fleet

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) has inducted one A-320 aircraft into its fleet. A ceremony to this effect was held in Islamabad on Wednesday. This was one of the two aircrafts which were stuck in Malaysia over payment dispute. Speaking on the occasion, Prime Minister's Adviser on Aviation Air Marshal retired Farhat Hussain Khan said the induction would enhance the revenue of the national flag carrier. He further said the second aircraft would also be inducted in two weeks.

## Two candidates allowed to contest elections: BHC reserves judgment on CPs of Rubina Irfan, Shoab Nausherwani, Faiq Jamali

**Independent Report**  
QUETTA: The division bench of Balochistan High Court (BHC) reserved the judgments on the constitutional petitions against contesting elections filed by Ms. Rubina Irfan, Shoab Nausherwani and Mir Faiq Jamali, here on Wednesday. The division bench of the High Court comprising Mr. Justice Rozi Khan Baraich and Mr. Justice Ejaz Swati heard the election petitions against the decisions of Appellate Tribunals. Ms. Rubina Irfan, Mir Shoab Nausherwani and

## 11 family members found dead in Lakki Marwat

LAKKI MARWAT (INP): A total of 11 bodies, including children and women have been found in a house located in the town of Takhti Khel, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) on Wednesday. According to police statements, the discovery was made by the brother of the deceased household's head upon his return. The initial investigations by the local police suggested that the unfortunate incident is believed to have happened two days ago from the consumption of a toxic substance mixed in the food.



PESHAWAR: Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Lawyers are celebrating after the Peshawar High Court verdict in favor of the party intra-party elections and electoral symbol of bat, at High Court in Peshawar.



QUETTA: Balochistan Caretaker Minister for Information Jan Achakzai talking to media persons.

## Comprehensive strategy being followed to address financial issues of varsities: Governor

**Independent Report**  
QUETTA: The Governor Balochistan, Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar has stated that we are pursuing a comprehensive strategy to resolve the financial issues being faced by all public sector universities in the province. But, it is a fact that the long-standing dream of bringing Balochistan at par in the education sector with the wholehearted assistance of government. We also have to generate new resources for reducing the expenditures and increase income at the university level. The Governor said that the assistance and guidance of the concerned experts is being sought for shifting the electricity system of all public sector universities on solar system and bringing additional land available in the premises of universities under cultivation. The Governor was speaking to different delegations who called on him at the Governor House on Wednesday. He said that at present, it is difficult task to rid the public sector universities of the financial hardships and make them economically self-sufficient. However, the issues being faced by the universities would be overcome soon after creation of new resources of income generation with assistance of the government and at the university level. The Governor stressed that we have to ensure wise use of financial arrangements and human resource to reach our destination. He was confident that we would succeed in transferring the conventional power system on the solar in all public sector universities of the province. While on the other hand, assistance and guidance of the concerned authorities is also being taken for bringing the additional land of the universities under cultivation, he added.

Continued on page 2



## Pakistan warns UNSC's failure to end Israel's war on Gaza risks it's spread to entire region

UNITED NATIONS (APP): Pakistan Tuesday warned that failure of international efforts to halt the "brutal" Israeli war on Gaza risked escalation that could engulf the entire region, as the UN General Assembly debated the use of the veto by the United States in the Security Council last month.

"The Council has been paralyzed due to the resistance and negative vote of a permanent member," Ambassador Usman Jadoon, acting permanent representative of Pakistan to the UN, told the 193-member Assembly—without naming the U.S. "A heavy responsibility rests on those who have enabled the prolongation of this war and the continuing slaughter of innocent civilians in Gaza," the Pakistani envoy pointed out.

The veto is a special voting power held by the permanent members on the Council, whereby if any one of the five — China, France, Russia, the UK and the US — casts a negative vote, the resolution or decision automatically fails.

Tuesday's meeting was held under the Assembly's standing mandate to convene within 10 working days of a veto being cast in the Council.

On Dec. 22, the United States vetoed an amendment proposed by Russia that would have called for "an urgent suspension of hostilities to allow safe and unhindered humanitarian access".

Subsequently, the 15-member Council adopted a watered-down resolution calling for speeding aid deliveries to desperate civilians in Gaza but without the original plea for an "urgent suspension of hostilities" between

Israel and the Palestinian fighters. The vote was 13 in favour to none against, with 2 abstentions (United States, Russian Federation).

In his remarks, the Pakistani envoy said that the Council has regrettably failed in fulfilling its obligation to impose a ceasefire. Pakistan, therefore, reiterates its call for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire, "Ambassador Jadoon said, highlighting that Israel's war in Gaza is brutal—a veritable genocide.

"This latest exercise of the veto reinforces our conviction that the reform of the Security Council should not add more permanent members to its composition," he said, referring to the push by India, Brazil, Germany and Japan for permanent seats in an expanded Security Council -- a move Pakistan and its allies stoutly oppose.

"Israel's indiscriminate slaughter of innocent Palestinian civilians, including children and women, is a flagrant violation of international law, including the principles of the UN Charter, international humanitarian and human rights law," Jadoon said, adding that this genocidal war must be stopped forthwith in accordance with the General Assembly's resounding call for an immediate and unconditional humanitarian ceasefire.

"Pakistan strongly and unequivocally condemns Israel's rejection of a humanitarian ceasefire," he said.

"Beyond the imperative of an immediate and sustainable ceasefire, we must ensure the provision of adequate humanitarian assistance to the besieged population of Gaza," the Pakistani envoy said, upholding the peoples' right to life and dignity.



## Pakistan, Qatar field jet fighters as Exercise Zilzal-II begins

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Air Force (PAF) and Qatar Emiri Air Force have kicked off their joint aerial Exercise Zilzal-II in Qatar fielding latest jet fighters.

The exercise is one of the most complex joint air force exercises, which aims at promoting interoperability between the two allied nations.

The exercise will mimic a near realistic aerial warfare scenario coupled with real-time opportunity for the participating Air Forces to test their operational readiness.

Exercise Zilzal-II, aimed at improving joint planning mechanism, is considered a historical benchmark to further solidify the existing defence partnership between the two brotherly countries.

During the exercise, PAF's newly inducted state-of-the-art J-10C fighter aircraft will flex its muscles against Eurofighter jets of Qatar Emiri Air Force in their first ever face-off in an aerial exercise.



KOHAT: IG Police KPK Akhtar Hayat Khan Gandapur and other officers are greeting with relatives of Martyr policemen, killed by terrorist in Iachi check post attack.

## Zaka Ashraf takes credit for rising PSL

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Chairman Management Committee (MC) Zaka Ashraf has said that the PCB has managed to sell the live-streaming and broadcast rights of two seasons of the HBL PSL 9 and 10 at record high price in the league's history under him.

Addressing a press conference at the Gaddafi Stadium here on Wednesday, he said the PSL live-streaming rights were sold for 1.90 billion rupees showing an increase of 113 percent from the previous edition while the broadcast right were for 6.30 billion rupees, a little less than the base price, which was 45 percent higher than the previous editions.

PCB Chief Operating Officer (COO) Salman Naser and PSL Commissioner Naila Bhatti accompanied the Chairman MC Zaka Ashraf and provided statistics to the media.

Zaka Ashraf also said more stadiums for the promotion of cricket will be added to the existing one, adding one match of the HBL PSL 9 featuring Peshawar Zalmi may be played at the Arbab Niaz stadium if the KPK government handed control of the stadium to the PCB soon.

He made a special mention of the Chief of the Army Staff General Asim Munir, who had asked the Defence Housing Authority (DHAs) managements to provide land to the PCB for cricket. He said possession of the land for a cricket stadium in Islamabad will be shortly handed to the PCB.

Zaka further said that the Punjab government has also committed to hand over control of stadiums in Gujranwala and Sheikhupura to PCB.

Talking about his visit to Australia to meet Cricket Australia (CA) officials for

more stronger ties between the two boards, he said the PCB and CA have agreed in principle to ensure the scheduling of the PSL and the Big Bash League (BBL) does not clash with each other in future.

He said this will keep intact a good pool of players for both the leagues, considering a large number of T20 leagues being played across the globe.

He said that as per the mutual understanding, both the boards will provide frequent tours to the Women, Shaheens, and U 19 teams, which will help players get acclimatized with the conditions in both countries.

About the pitch curators, he said the CA Chairman Mike Baird has offered PCB to send its curators to learn from the pitch curators in Australia and then pass on this knowledge to the others in stadiums across Pakistan.

## PM felicitates Bhutan's Tshering Tobgay on his party's victory in polls

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Wednesday felicitated Tshering Tobgay on the victory of his People's Democratic Party in the parliamentary elections in Bhutan.

Tshering Tobgay, also the former prime minister

of Bhutan, is likely to return on the PM's position after his party won 30 seats in the 47-member parliament, according to the media reports.

"Looking forward to greater cooperation between Pakistan and Bhutan under his leadership," the prime minister wrote on X.

## APHC concerned over surge in Indian state terrorism in IIOJK

SRINAGAR (INP): The All Parties Hurriyat Conference has expressed grave concern over the surge in Indian state terrorism in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

According to Kashmir Media Service, the APHC spokesman in a statement in Srinagar said since 1947 India has been using military might to break the will of the people and suppress their freedom sentiments but has utterly failed in achieving its nefarious designs.

He deplored that India has turned the occupied territory into a garrison where its troops are committing large-scale human rights violations, in fact war crimes. He said, following the Hindutva agenda of communal Hindu organization Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, the BJP-led Indian government has deprived the Kashmiri people of all their basic rights.

The APHC spokesman said the people of Jammu and Kashmir have totally rejected the occupation of their homeland by India and

its illegal and unilateral actions of August 5, 2019. He said the peace and freedom-loving Kashmiris have always displayed their indignation and resistance against the Indian illegal occupation. He said the Kashmiri people have been fighting for their birthright to self-determination for the past over seven decades and they will continue their struggle till complete success. The spokesman said the Indian authorities have put the entire Hurriyat leadership in jails. Thousands of Kashmiris have been illegally detained under black laws including Public Safety Act (PSA), he lamented.

He urged the United Nations, Organization of Islamic Cooperation and European Union to take cognizance of Indian state terrorism and machinations to change the demographic composition of occupied Kashmir. He called for implementation of the UN Security Council resolutions to settle the Kashmir dispute for ensuring durable peace in South Asia.

## Fazlur Rahman achieves great success during Afghanistan visit

ISLAMABAD/KABUL (Online): Maulana Fazlur Rahman, head of Jamiat Ulema Islam, had a great success during his visit to Afghanistan.

According to the sources, a one-on-one meeting between Maulana Fazlur Rahman and Haibatullah Akhundzada was held outside the city of Kabul.

During the meeting, the two leaders also agreed to increase mutual communication between Pakistan and the Islamic Emirates of Afghanistan and to bring peace and stability in the region. Maulana Fazlur Rahman is the first Pakistani leader to have met Mulla Haibatullah.

## British HC calls on Bilawal

ISLAMABAD (INP): British High Commissioner Jean Marriot continued her meetings with the political leaders and on Wednesday she met with Pakistan's Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto here.

## Quick criminal checks and enhanced election security with New Apps

By M.Ilyas

PESHAWAR- Deputy Inspector General of Police Information Technology, Irfan Tariq, stated that modern technology-based policing is imperative, and significant efforts are underway, guided by IGP Akhtar Hayat Khan, to promote it within the police department.

Tariq expressed these views while addressing journalists during the inauguration of two new mobile apps – the e-Police Post App and the Safe Election App. These apps were developed in collaboration with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Information Technology Board (KPITB) at the Central Police Office in Peshawar.

The primary objective of the e-Police Post App is to alleviate the challenges faced by people during daily polling, particularly at various checkpoints.

This app facilitates quick checking of stolen vehicles and criminal records

on the spot, freeing passengers and vehicle owners from the inconvenience of prolonged waits. Similarly, the Safe Election App (SEA) aims to enhance the effectiveness and security of the election security plan, ensuring timely arrival of security staff at polling stations and prompt resolution of issues faced by staff in performing their duties.

DIG IT Irfan Tariq emphasized that, in the modern age, considering public satisfaction and the needs of a democratic society, police apps are designed to deliver better services in a conducive environment.

He highlighted the police department's continuous efforts to adopt technology-based policing and innovative approaches to enhance people-friendly and public service-oriented policing. Tariq noted that the introduction of the e-Police Post app enables immediate identification of criminals and vehicles on the spot.



GWADAR: Deputy Commissioner Aurangzeb Badini presiding over a review meeting regarding polio campaign

## SC report on missing persons silences...

Continued on page 1

dian journalists and foreign trolls of a political party who are always repeating the same old rhetoric.

He mentioned that as per the report, in total 10,078 cases were registered out of which 7,781 have been recovered and only 2,297 cases remained unresolved.

He said that the commission concluded that 1,477 cases which are unresolved are due to the kidnaping for ransom and runaways due to the family disputes, which only leaves 820 people who are actually missing.

Jan Achakzai mentioned that in US there are more than 500,000 missing persons while in UK, around 170,000 people are reported as missing and in India, there are more than 350,000 persons are missing.

Whereas in Pakistan only 820 persons have been

reported as missing, he maintained. In Balochistan, out of 2,752 people, 2,284 have been recovered and 468 are only remaining. He said that it has become a norm of terrorist organizations like TPP and other banned organizations, whenever a new person joins them, they register their name as missing.

Often such missing persons were found dead in an encounter or as suicide bombers, he noted adding that in few instances, these missing persons were found dead in Afghanistan and Iran. He said that "report of Commission has closed the propaganda shops of many, and let's see what new logic they bring."

He said that the ethnic organizations would continue to use the bogey for election and Dr. Mah Rang wants to be Malala 2 so understandably she would be using this propaganda regardless of the facts.

## BHC reserves...

Continued on page 1

Mir Faiq Jamali had challenged the decisions of Appellate Tribunals against rejection and acceptance of their nomination papers.

Meanwhile, the two-member bench of High Court allowed two candidates Salahuddin and Noorullah to contest elections against the decisions of Appellate Tribunals.

The candidates had challenged the decisions of Appellate Tribunals.

Moreover, the High Court also heard the petition of PPP's leader and candidate Mir Jamal Raisani the same day.

The division bench issued notices to both the parties and postponed hearing for Thursday (today).

It may be mentioned here that Jamal Raisani had challenged the decision of Tribunal against rejection of his nomination papers.

## Special Grant of Rs 6.25m approved for Pakistan hockey team's olympic qualifiers

ISLAMABAD (INP): In a boost for the Pakistan hockey team, a special grant of 6.25 million rupees has been sanctioned to facilitate their participation in the qualifiers leading up to the Paris Olympics.

Sources reveal that the national team is currently undergoing rigorous training in Islamabad in preparation for the Paris Olympics. The crucial qualifiers are scheduled to take place in Muscat, Oman, starting January 15.

Following the Olympic qualifiers, the national team is set to compete in the five-a-side Hockey World Cup in the third week of January.

## Afghan spinner Rashid to miss T20I series against India due to Injury

MOHALI (INP): Afghan leg-spinner Rashid Khan has not play the three-match T20I series against India due to injury, skipper Ibrahim Zadran confirmed on Wednesday. According to details, Rashid, a leg-spinner with 347 international wickets across formats, underwent lower-back surgery in November but remains part of the travelling squad which will play the opener on Thursday in Mohali.

Zadran said, "Rashid is not totally fit (but) he is travelling with the team. We hope he gets fit soon."

"Without Rashid, we will struggle but not that much. His experience is important for us but this is cricket, you should be ready

for any kind of situation."

Rashid Khan has not featured in any competitive game since the ICC World Cup 2023 due to an injury and was replaced by Qais Ahmad in the recent series against the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Qais Ahmad, along with Mubeen Ur Rahman, Mohammad Nabi, Noor Ahmad, and Sharafuddin Ashraf will make Afghanistan's spin-attack against India.

The three matches are a tune-up for this year's T20 World Cup in June and Afghanistan will be up against a formidable home side, with skipper Rohit Sharma and star batsman Virat Kohli both back in the short-format team.

## MQM-P says no seat adjustment with PML-N in NA-242

KARACHI (INP): The Mutahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) has once again denied reports that it has reached an agreement with the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) on a seat adjustment in a Karachi constituency.

The party's Convener Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui said on Wednesday that there was no truth in reports that the MQM-P had agreed to a seat adjustment in NA-242. "All such news are baseless," he said categorically.

Siddiqui further said that Mustafa Kamal was the MQM-P's candidate from the constituency.

## ECP to unveil preliminary candidate lists today

ISLAMABAD (APP): The preliminary lists of candidates will be released by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Thursday, and candidates can opt to withdraw their nomination papers until Friday.

According to the spokesperson of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), the process of hearing appeals against the acceptance or rejection of nomination papers by the appellate tribunals for the general elections 2024 concluded Wednesday. These tribunals are being headed by judges of the High Courts. Electoral symbols will be assigned on Saturday, coinciding with the release of the final list of candidates on the same day.

## Emergency training center...

Continued on page 1

Punjab, where training would be provided relating to medical aid, rescue, trauma and first aid service to deal any emergency situation on road.

Speaking on this occasion, Balochistan Caretaker Health Minister, Amir Muhammad Khan Jogaizai said that training of emergency centres 1122 personnel in Balochistan would increase their physical and mental abilities and in any emergency situation, these personnel would bring improvement while dealing public by using advanced method for assistance. Apart from this, he said steps would be taken to make the Emergency Centers in Balochistan fully functional.

He said that hundreds of people were victims of road accidents every year, and for their

timely medical assistance and rescue, the functioning of emergency centers and training of personnel has become indispensable.

He said that 1122 emergency centres in Balochistan were performing their duties with limited resources and training. It was necessary to make it possible to keep them active throughout the day after providing resources that should be used in emergencies. He said that Emergency Centers 1122 besides helping in rescue and relief operations, the trained staffers would take measures to provide information, and awareness to the public in any emergency situation.

Dr. Amir Muhammad Khan Jogaizai specially thanked Brigadier Tariq and Dr. Rizwan Naseer for the functioning of Emergency Centers 1122 in Balochistan.

## Cabinet approves...

Continued on page 1

PM Kakar vowed to continue the anti-polio mission of the government till the complete eradication of the crippling disease.

The meeting offered Fateha for the security officials protecting the polio eradication team who were martyred in a terrorist incident in Bajaur.

The prime minister paid tribute to the martyred personnel and said the State would not forget their invaluable sacrifice for the homeland.

He said the officials sacrificed their lives for the safety of future genera-



HUB: View of site after traffic accident due to over speeding and break failed, at Uthal.



## Senate Body on Climate Change briefed on various aspects of fog

**Independent Report**  
ISLAMABAD: Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination on Wednesday briefed the Senate Standing Committee on Climate Change on various aspects of fog, including its formation, types, frequency in winter, and the related issue of smog: covering its types, causes, and impact.

Chairing the meeting of the Senate Body on Climate Change held at Parliament House, Senator Seemee Ezdi emphasized the challenges posed by fog in urban areas.

Senator Farooq Hamid Naek emphasized that fog is a natural phenomenon, whereas human activities contribute to the formation of smog. He stressed the need to implement measures to combat smog, particularly in areas like Lahore.

The ministry clarified that both carbon-intensive industries and general pollution contribute to smog. It was conveyed that 45 percent of smog is attributed to vehicle emissions.

In discussions about the way forward, the ministry emphasized key factors, such as enhancing fuel quality, implementing mandatory annual certification for vehicles, promoting clean energy and sustainable transportation, adopting cleaner agricultural practices, improving waste management, raising public awareness and education, and implementing urban forestation. Additionally, the ministry suggested installing smog towers as a potential solution, citing their successful installation in China and ongoing efforts in India.

The ministry affirmed that Living Indus has been selected from among 150 applications for the World Restoration Flagship of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, and this achievement was commended by the committee members. Furthermore, the ministry also briefed the committee on the Living Indus initiative, emphasizing its aim to restore the ecological health of the Indus

basin within Pakistan. They highlighted extensive consultations with the public sector, private sector, experts, and civil society, resulting in a comprehensive list of 25 preliminary interventions.

These interventions focus on water and flood management, resource mobilization finance, social inclusion, knowledge base and legislation, pollution control, agri-forestry, and biodiversity. It was conveyed that the financing strategy for Living Indus will concentrate on international support, public finance, community involvement, and public-private partnerships.

Moreover, former Senator Nisar Memon provided a detailed briefing on the new convention on Delta Unite (The Convention on Conservation of Deltas).

He highlighted the challenges of the Indus River, emphasizing that the real issue lies in surface and groundwater, posing a regional and global challenge.



Special Assistant to Prime Minister for Human Rights and Women Empowerment, Mushaal Hussein Mullick, is being presented shield during a seminar on "US policies on the issues of Kashmir and Palestine" Organized by Area Study Center for Africa, North and South America, Quaid-e-Azam University in Islamabad.

## Caretaker minister assures to resolve teachers, students issues

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training, Madad Ali Sindhi on Wednesday assured to resolve teachers and students issues on priority basis.

According to a press release issued here, the minister met with a delegation of daily wagers and assured them to address all genuine issues relating to their profession.

The minister informed that the Cabinet has also

approved the regularisation of 227 daily wagers. He further stated that those daily wagers who passed the test of the Federal Public Service Commission, would have regularization as per the judgement of the high court. The judgement was also upheld by the Supreme Court of Pakistan, he stated.

Madad Ali said that teachers form the nations and they should be facilitated in an appropriate manner.

He vowed that all out efforts would be made to uplift the quality of education in the public sector, especially in the capital.

He said that out-of-school children is also a top priority of the government and for this, steps are being taken to bring them back to school for imparting education. He was of the opinion that these are critical issues and that should be given the highest importance.

## ICCPO meets Kohsar alternative dispute resolution members

**Emphasizes that ensuring the safety of citizens' lives and properties and addressing their current issues remains a top priority for Islamabad Capital Police**

**Independent Report**  
ISLAMABAD: According to the details, the Islamabad

members to find more effective solutions. They evaluated the functionality of the cen-

life routines through community policing. The ICCPO in-



Capital City Police Officer (ICCPO), Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, met with Kohsar Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) members at the Central Police Office Islamabad. On this occasion, the DPO City Zone and SDPO Kohsar were also present, a public relations officer said. He said that the ICCPO discussed citizen issues with the ADR mem-

ber, emphasizing swift resolution and merit-based solutions for citizens' domestic issues, business issues, and other problems.

The members of the alternative dispute resolution highlighted the efforts of Islamabad Capital Police during the recent law and order situations to protect citizens' lives, properties, business centers, and daily

structured the officers of the Islamabad Capital Police to pay special attention to individuals affected by mental illnesses and ensure the protection of recreational areas for citizens.

Moreover, effective arrangements for parking and protection at Sunday markets and shopping centers were also directed to ensure citizens' safety.

## Security personnel briefed for vigilance and rapid response

ISLAMABAD (APP): Security personnel assigned to the High-Security Zone received comprehensive instructions to carry out their duties effectively and respond promptly to any unforeseen incidents.

The meeting, chaired by SP High-Security Zone Saud Khan, gathered officers responsible for overseeing the High-Security Zone. The zone encompasses critical government and private facilities, diplomatic missions, and other essential assets, emphasizing the need for unwavering atten-

tion to their protection.

During the briefing, security personnel were specifically instructed to remain prepared to handle any untoward incidents promptly. Officials were reminded to maintain vigilance during their duties and closely monitor any suspicious vehicles or individuals.

SP High Security Zone stressed the importance of upholding the highest standards of diligence and professionalism among on-duty personnel. Building a positive rapport with



ISLAMABAD: A female traffic police officer is busy in issuing E-challan ticket to a driver for violating traffic rules at Jinnah Avenue.

## ICP achieved a significant reduction in traffic violations in 2023

**Independent Report**  
ISLAMABAD: The Safe City Command and Control Center issued e-challans to drivers who violated traffic laws, such as driving without seat belts, fancy number plates, zebra crossing violations, red signal violations, over-speeding, and using mobile phones while driving.

According to the details, following the special directives of the Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCPO), Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Safe City Islamabad issued 222,195 e-challans in 2023 on different traffic violations, including 4,495 for seat belt violations, 206,747 for

over-speeding, 431 for mobile phone usage during the driving, 2,008 for zigzag crossing, 37,019 for fancy number plates, and 4,619 for red signal violations, a public relations officer said.

He said that there was an increase in the rate of challans for traffic violations in 2023, primarily aimed at reducing violations of traffic laws and minimizing traffic accidents.

CPO Safe City/Traffic emphasized that maintaining peace and security in the federal capital along with safeguarding the lives and property of citizens remains a top priority for Islamabad Capital Police.

## Four plots auctioned on first day

ISLAMABAD (INP): So far four plots were auctioned on the first day of the auction organized by the Capital Development Authority (CDA) here on Wednesday.

On the first day of the auction, a large number of investors participated and intense competition was seen in which plots were auctioned for 7.796 billion rupees.

The three-day auction of plots will continue till January 12 at Gandhara Centre, F-9 Park.

According to the details, on the first day of the three-day public auction of commercial plots, plot number 9 of the blue area was sold for Rs 4.453 billion. Plot No. 53H located in the I-8 center of Islamabad was auctioned for Rs 1.46 billion.

## Ministry launches crack down on unauthorized Hajj bookings

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony has launched a crack-down against firms involved in unauthorized Hajj bookings.

Special teams of the Ministry has started punitive action against "Fifth Pillar Family Takaful Limited" involved in illegal booking of Hajj, said the spokesperson of the Ministry here Wednesday.

He said FIA is investigating the fake company for unauthorized activities and actions will be taken accordingly. He clarified that no takaful company was allowed to book Hajj and Umrah.

## BISP cautions citizens about fraudulent messages

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) has cautioned the citizens about the fraudulent messages being circulated through different mediums including social media and cell numbers about its programmes.

"All the BISP messages are sent from 8171 only and those received from other numbers are fake," the Programme said.

The official social media accounts and website of the BISP can be accessed by the users to get authentic information about its programmes.

The BISP said, "The fake messages claim that the stipends of the beneficiaries have been approved, seek

contact details for transferring amount or promise inclusion in the BISP programme and issuance of the stipends.

"While the real messages from the BISP do not promise provision of any financial assistance without verification and documentation."

For registration it was necessary for intending beneficiaries to visit the council office of BISP with their Computerized National Identity Cards (CNICs) and B-Form for dynamic survey, which was free of charge, it added.

The BISP also never warned any beneficiary to expel her/him from the programme, it said.

## ECP mourns loss of employees in Kashmir gas tragedy

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikandar Sultan Raja and members of the Election Commission on Wednesday conveyed profound sadness and grief regarding the tragic demise of four Election Commission employees due to a gas leakage incident in Kashmir. According to the Election Commission spokesperson, four employees, including an election officer, two data entry operators, and a sub-assistant, tragically lost their lives in Kashmir due to a gas leakage incident. In his message, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) expressed deep condolences.



LAHORE: Visitors are taking interest in different kind of traditional stuff on stalls during "Gusy Fair" at Children Library in Provincial Capital.

## ET Islamabad issues judgments on over 70 appeals

ISLAMABAD (Online): Election Appellate Tribunal of Islamabad High Court (IHC) has ruled on more than 70 appeals against decisions of the Returning Officer (RO) to reject nomination papers of the candidates who want to contest the elections from the three Islamabad constituencies.

IHC Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri and Justice Arbab Muhammad Tahir were constituted as Election Appellate Tribunal to hear appeals against ROs, PTT's expected candidates Zafar Ali Shah, Shoaib Shaheen, Niazullah Niazi, Ilyas Mehran, Aamir.

The decision of Mughal's returning officers to reject the nomination papers was annulled. Appeal against rejection of nomination papers from two constituencies of Islamabad was accepted. After paying his dues, Zafar Ali Shah informed the

court that he was not aware of these dues and no notice was ever given by the concerned institutions to pay the arrears.

Candidate Malik Amir's appeal was rejected due to rejection of nomination papers for concealing dual citizenship. RO's decision was upheld. On December 26th, he submitted nomination papers and concealed dual citizenship. The application to renounce dual citizenship was made on December 28.

The appeal against acceptance of nomination papers of enunch Nayab Ali was dismissed. A registered enunch voter in Multan approached the tribunal against the RO's decision.

Tribunal judge said that there were petty objections which wasted so much time. No one's electricity bill is collected, what's wrong, such time was wasted.

## AIOU admissions to commence from Jan 15

ISLAMABAD (APP): Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) is commencing the admissions for the Spring 2024 semester (first phase) across the country, including AJK and GB, on January 15, 2024 while admissions in second phase will start from March 1.

The admissions in first phase include Matric, FA, I.Com, certificate courses, BS (face to face), MPHil, and PhD programs, said a press release on Wednesday.

The teacher training programs, Associate Degree (BA), Post Graduate Diploma and BS (ODL) programs will be offered in second phase.

Vice Chancellor AIOU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood, has instructed the regional heads of university to enable facilitation centres to support students. The students will be able to use computer and internet facilities in the regional offices of the university. SWIFT Centers have also been established across the country to provide information and support to students.

## SC issues written order about Bhutto reference hearing

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Supreme Court on Wednesday issued a written order pertaining to the last hearing of the Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto reference.

The order said: "In view of the forthcoming elections and as important matters are coming before this court, and as this court wants to hear this reference in detail, it be fixed for hearing in the third week of February 2024, which will also enable us to examine the material filed before us."

It further said, "Raza Rabbani states that he represents Ms. Sanam Bhutto, Ms. Bakhtawar Bhutto Zardari and Ms. Aseefa Bhutto Zardari respectively, the daughter and maternal granddaughters of the late Mr. Bhutto."

"Mr. Zahid. F. Ebrahim was appointed as amicus but states that he had already been approached by Ms. Fatima Bhutto and Mr. Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, the paternal grandchildren of the late Mr. Bhutto.

"We enquired from the learned counsel and others present whether anyone has any objection to Mr. Zahid F. Ebrahim being counsel instead of amicus and none object."

The court said, "Khawaja Haris Ahmed was appointed as amicus but he has disclosed that his father was counsel in a contempt case of Masood Mahmood, who was co-accused/approver in the case, therefore, his name may be withdrawn as amicus."

The order read, "Mr. Salahuddin Ahmed was appointed as amicus and discloses that he is married to the granddaughter of the murdered Nawab Ahmed Khan, therefore, if anyone objects to him being amicus he will withdraw. However, none present object to Salahuddin Ahmed appearing as amicus."

"We commenced by hearing amicus Mr. Makhdoom Ali Khan. He has also filed material contained in two voluminous bound sets."



ISLAMABAD: Political Counselor German Embassy Janine Rohwer called Opposition leader in Senate Dr. Shahzad Waseem.

## PTI withdraws its petition from SC seeking restoration of bat as its election symbol

ISLAMABAD (Online): PTI has withdrawn its petition from Supreme Court (SC) seeking restoration of bat as its election symbol.

Supreme Court (SC) has wrapped up PTI petition for restoration of bat as election symbol as withdrawn.

A 3-member bench of SC presided over by the Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa took up PTI petition for hearing Wednesday. Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar and Justice Mussarat Hilali are part of this bench as well.

At the inception of hearing the CJP inquired from barrister Gohar who he is. Where is Hamid Khan.

Barrister Gohar told he is counsel for petitioner. Justice Qazi Faez Isa remarked "Hamid Khan Sahb you had said day before that you are counsel."

Hamid Khan said our case at present is in Peshawar High Court (PHC). The CJP remarked you have not stood up. Tell us are you not counsel in this case.

Hamid Khan said no he is not counsel in this case. The SC while dismissing the PTI petition being withdrawn remarked no counsel of PTI has raised objection over withdrawal of the petition.

Earlier chairman PTI Barrister Gohar Ali while talking to media men outside SC said today our petition was fixed in SC for hearing but our central case is fixed in SHC today too. Order from PHC will come before 11 a.m today. Therefore, we have withdrawn the petition from SC.

He said the decision from PHC will come in our favor. Barrister Gohar told he is counsel for petitioner. Justice Qazi Faez Isa remarked "Hamid Khan Sahb you had said day before that you are counsel."

It is pertinent to mention here PTI has resorted to SC against PHC decision.



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) spokesperson Shoaib Shaheen talk with media outside Supreme Court.

## Dr Mukhtar to continue services as VC NSU

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prof. Dr. Muhammad Mukhtar would continue his services as Vice Chancellor of National Skills University (NSU) Islamabad till the appointment of a regular incumbent, said a press release issued here on Wednesday.

The Senate of National Skills University (NSU) Islamabad, chaired by the Chancellor/President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, has expressed full confidence in Prof. Dr. Muhammad Mukhtar and believed that his continued leadership would further elevate the University's status, the press release added.

On his arrival in October 2019 as founding Vice Chancellor of the NSU, Dr. Mukhtar and his team faced significant challenges as it was a deserted place occupied by illegal occupants.

Under his visionary leadership, the NSU has transformed remarkably, emerging as a bustling

"Skills Learning Center", and gaining recognition from UNESCO/UNEVOC as a prominent skills providing institution. Prof. Dr. Mukhtar's tenure as the founding Vice Chancellor has been characterized by an unwavering commitment to academic excellence, and innovation. The VC has played a pivotal role in shaping the University's identity and fostering a conducive environment for skills teaching and learning. The appointment of Prof. Dr. Muhammad Mukhtar is a testament to his dedication and exceptional leadership in steering the university through its transformative journey.



ISLAMABAD: Senator Seemee Ezdi, Chairperson Senate Standing Committee on Climate Change presiding over a meeting of the committee at Parliament House.



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**Maulana's mission**

If one of the main purposes of JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman's visit to Afghanistan was to convince the Afghan Taliban to rein in the banned TTP and prevent the terrorist group from using Afghan soil as a launchpad for anti-Pakistan activities, either the message did not get through, or the TTP are in no mood to listen.

The maulana received official protocol upon his arrival in Kabul and on Monday met the 'Islamic Emirate's' Prime Minister Mullah Hassan Akhund. Incidentally, on the day the maulana was meeting the Taliban leadership, the TTP launched a murderous assault on policemen escorting polio vaccinators in Bajaur. At least six police personnel were martyred in the attack.

Mullah Akhund also brought up the issue of Afghan migrants' expulsion from Pakistan with the maulana, decrying the allegedly 'cruel' treatment meted out to his compatriots by this country.

Maulana Fazl, who was accompanied by a delegation, also had Pakistan's top diplomat in Kabul with him during his engagements, indicating that the JUI-F chief's visit has state sanction. According to media reports, Mullah Akhund assured the JUI-F chief that his government bore no malice towards Pakistan, while adding that they would not let Afghan soil be used against any country.

The Afghan Taliban have long denied that their country is being used by terrorist groups to target regional states, while Pakistan has firmly argued that the TTP have havens on the other side of the Durand Line.

While maulana sahib's efforts are welcome, questions arise about how effective these will prove to be in actually bringing down militancy. It should be remembered that in 2022, a delegation of Pakistani Deobandi ulema, led by Mufti Taqi Usmani, made a similar trip to Afghanistan and met both the Afghan Taliban as well as the TTP leadership.

While the Pakistani divines were received with great reverence in Afghanistan, their visit failed to dampen the TTP's appetite for violence against this country. Even if Maulana Fazl is able to convince the Afghan Taliban that controlling militancy is in Afghanistan's interest, will Kabul's rulers be able to rein in their ideological comrades in the TTP?

At the end of the day, both the Afghan Taliban and the TTP — though bound by ideology and worldview — are two different organisations, with separate leadership structures.

For the Taliban, the marching orders are received from the Kandahar-based Mullah Hibatullah Akhundzada, while the TTP has its own hierarchy. The Taliban can and should apply pressure on the TTP to stop attacking Pakistan.

But while some militants may be reverential to the clergy, ultimately they are free agents, and not bound by the usual rules of engagement. Therefore, the days ahead will tell if Maulana Fazl's mission has been a success.

**Zahid Hussain**

The genocide being carried out by Israeli forces in Gaza has entered its fourth month with, on average, a child being killed every 10 minutes and almost the entire population of the occupied enclave becoming homeless. Nowhere and no one is safe in the face of relentless bombardment that has killed over 23,000 Palestinians.

More than two million besieged people are facing the catastrophe of famine with barely any food trickling in. But the international community has failed to stop the worst genocide in recent history. Israel unabatedly continues with ethnic cleansing in the enclave.

While the United States is fully backing the extermination of the occupied population the silence

of the Arab countries over Israel's war crimes is deafening. Many of them are not even willing to endorse a case filed by South Africa against Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), accusing the Jewish state of crimes of genocide against Palestinians.

Their shameful capitulation seems to have encouraged Israel not only to continue its military operation on Gaza but it has also taken the war to Lebanon and other surrounding countries. Israel's prime minister has made his plan clear to push out the entire population from their homes and to resettle Palestinians outside Gaza. The Israeli government has ignored the resolution passed by more than 150 nations at the UN General Assembly calling for a ceasefire.

It's apparent that American patronage and the inaction of the Arab countries has given the Jewish state complete impunity. The latest Israeli military action inside Lebanon has already widened the war beyond Gaza and the West Bank. The threat of regional conflagration is looming large with the increasing American military presence in the Middle East in aid of Israel.

Ironically, it has not been any Arab or Muslim country that has taken up the genocide case to the ICJ but it is South Africa that has challenged the Israeli atrocities. The top UN court will hear this week an application from South Africa alleging that Israel is breaching the 1948 Genocide Convention and seeking measures including the immediate suspension of its military operations in Gaza.

Israel has enjoyed impunity for its crimes against Palestinians for almost four months. But this situation seems to have changed after South Africa on Dec 29, 2023, submitted an 84-page charge sheet against the Jewish state at the ICJ. A well-documented petition filed by the country's legal team maintains that Israel "has reduced and is continuing to reduce Gaza to rubble, killing, harming and destroying its people, and creating conditions of life calculated to bring about their physical destruction as a group".

It further alleges that "acts and omissions by Israel... are genocidal in character, as they are committed with the requisite specific intent... to destroy Palestinians in Gaza as a part of the broader Palestinian national, racial and ethnic group" and that "the conduct of Israel — through its State organs, State agents, and other persons and entities acting on its instructions or under its direction, control or influence — in relation to Palestinians in Gaza, is in violation of its obligations under the Genocide Convention."

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa has compared Israel's policies in Gaza and the occupied West Bank with his country's past apartheid regime of racial segregation imposed by the white-minority rule that ended in 1994. Several human rights organisations have said that Israeli policies towards Palestinians amount to apartheid. South Africa's appeal includes a request for the court to urgently issue legally binding interim orders for Israel to "immediately suspend its military operations in and against Gaza."

There are several other countries that have referred to genocide committed by Israel in Gaza. These countries include Algeria, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba,

Iran, Palestine, Türkiye, Venezuela, Bangladesh, Egypt, Honduras, Iraq, Jordan, Libya, Malaysia, Namibia, Pakistan, and Syria. But it is not yet clear whether they would become a party in the South African case.

It was expected that particularly Arab and Islamic countries would become a party to South Africa's petition, especially since the procedures followed by the ICJ allow it. But barring a few, none of these countries have backed South Africa's appeal. Among the Muslim countries only Türkiye, Jordan and Malaysia have supported the South African case. The Jordanian government said that it's preparing a legal file to follow up on the case.

What is most perturbing is the dubious role played by Saudi Arabia, one of the most powerful Muslim countries. The kingdom has not even publicly declared the Israeli action of killing of women and children in Gaza as genocide. Saudi Arabia is also among the Muslim countries that had reportedly opposed any punitive action against Israel by the Organisation of Islamic

Countries (OIC). Meanwhile, Israel has mounted a concerted campaign to prevent the ICJ from concluding that it has indeed committed genocide in the Gaza Strip. Last week the Israeli foreign ministry instructed its embassies to pressure politicians and diplomats in their host countries to make statements opposing South Africa's case at the ICJ. Israel is also expected to challenge the jurisdiction and seek throwing the case out before lawyers start arguing.

It's going to be a lengthy process of legal battle on the issue and there is no indication that it could prevent the genocide of Palestinians in the occupied territory. But the South African case will help mobilise public opinion across the world against Israel's genocidal actions in Gaza and colonisation of Palestine. The international community, particularly the Arab and Muslim countries, need to do more to stop the killing of women and children by Israeli forces before it's too late. -- Courtesy Dawn

**A new constitutional window****Hafiz Ahsan Ahmad Khokhar**

The Supreme Court in its lifetime disqualification judgment has not only decided the constitutional questions relating to Article 62(1)(f) of the constitution regarding the disqualification period but also admitted the legislative competence of parliament and elaborately overruled its earlier principles laid down in Sami Ullah Baloch case in 2018, with the further explanation that the SC is only there to interpret the constitution and it should not assume the role of reading into or rewriting the constitution.

In the constitutions of 1956 and 1962, as well as in the current 1973 constitution, the provisions governing the qualifications and disqualifications of parliamentarians were historically ascertainable, objective, and contained succinct language that primarily addressed the age, solvency, citizenship, and mental capacity of the individual in question. However, on March 2, 1985, General Ziaul Haq issued the Revival of Constitution of 1973 Order (RCO), amending 67 clauses and sections out of the 280 articles of the constitution.

This step represented the biggest shift in Pakistani history in a single blow, the amendments adding new requirements regarding the applicant's reputation and personal qualities, such as "good character", "adequate knowledge of Islamic teachings", "sagacious, righteous, and non-profligate and honest and ameen", and the refusal to be convicted of a crime involving "moral turpitude".

Article 62 states that "A person shall not be qualified to be elected or chosen as a member of Majlis-e-Shoora (Parliament) unless he is a citizen of Pakistan; he is, in the case of the National Assembly, not less than twenty-five years of age and is enrolled as a voter in any electoral roll in any part of Pakistan, for election to a general seat

or a seat reserved for non-Muslims; and any area in a Province from which she seeks membership for election to a seat reserved for women."

"He is, in the case of Senate, not less than thirty years of age and is enrolled as a voter in any area in a Province or, as the case may be, the Federal Capital or the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, from where he seeks membership; he is of good character and is not commonly known as one who violates Islamic Injunctions; he has adequate knowledge of Islamic teachings and practices obligatory duties prescribed by Islam as well as abstains from major sins; he is sagacious, righteous and non-profligate, honest and ameen, there being no declaration to the contrary by a court of law; he has not, after the establishment of Pakistan, worked against the integrity of the country or opposed the ideology of Pakistan."

Article 63 deals with the disqualification of lawmakers from participating in elections and refers to Articles 63(1)(g), (1)(h), (i) ©, etc, which specify ineligibility for five years even if the individual is accused

of damaging the integrity and sovereignty of Pakistan.

In 2023, parliament amended the Election Act 2017 and limited the period of disqualification to five years. The amendment further states that the procedure, manner, and duration of disqualifications and qualifications should be as specifically provided for in relevant provisions of Articles 62 and 63 of the constitution, and where no such procedure, manner or duration has been provided for the provisions of the Act shall apply. This new amendment was not challenged in the SC.

There is no question under law that the legislatures did not purposefully create any disqualification periods specified in Article 62 of the constitution, except those outlined in Article 63(1)(G) and (H). Since 2008, the Supreme Court has issued number of judgments on this subject such as PLD 2023 SC 42, 2023 SCMR 370, PLD 2020 SC 137, PLD 2015 SC 275, PLD 2020 SC 591, 2018 SCMR 2121, PLD 2018 SC 578, PLD 2018 SC 405, PLD 2016 SC 657, 2013 SCMR 1655, and PLD 2020 SC 591, each with a different interpretation of these provisions, particularly Article 62(1)(f).

Therefore, critics had the opportunity to point out that Article 62 has been a political victimization instrument. It was also not uncommon for opponents to utilize legal technicalities or arbitrary interpretations to single out and disqualify their competitors, giving rise to charges of utilizing the legal system for political purposes. Thus, the electoral process had become more complicated and occasionally un-cleared as a result of the interpretation and implementation of Article 62, which had given rise to legal disputes and judicial lawsuits.

With this backdrop, the Supreme Court assembled a larger bench with seven members to re-examine its earlier judgments and the new legislation introduced as Section 232 of the Election Act 2017 to address the anomalies of the previously referred judgments regarding the period of disqualification related to Article 62(1)(f) of the constitution. The attorney general of Pakistan and the advocates-general of each province and the Islamabad Capital Territory have testified

before the bench on several occasions, supporting the validity and constitutionality of Section 232(2) of the Elections Act, 2017.

In light of this, the Supreme Court needed to take a balanced constitutional approach to preserve the integrity of the democratic process while guaranteeing that the requirements outlined in Article 62 are just, reasonable, and per the needs of modern Pakistani society. The Supreme Court has rightly held that the court should have refrained from reading into the constitution on its own or offering differing views regarding the declaration of regret and disqualification.

In addition, there have been voices calling for a review of the Supreme Court's Sami Ullah Baloch PLD 2018 SC 405 ruling, which the SC has done and given a harmonious interpretation of the constitution. The current ruling of the Supreme Court will significantly alter Pakistan's political and constitutional concerns, remove legal confusions, and provide new guidelines for a relationship that was formed as the triangle of power under the parliamentary system of government. -- Courtesy TheNews

**One of a kind****Mahir Ali**

Across almost six decades of investigative journalism, John Pilger unsparingly torchlit many of what George W. Bush described as "the darkest corners of the world", relentlessly exposing the realities edited out of the mainstream Western media's distorted narrative.

The concept of speaking truth to power may have been sullied by overuse, but Pilger stands out among those who seriously made the effort — and, in the process, made a discernible difference.

It's hard to know where to begin in evaluating his multifarious — and multimedia — contributions to reportage. I first encountered him, indirectly, in the 1980s when ITV in Britain re-broadcast some of his groundbreaking 1970s documentaries. It's hard to be sure, but most probably the first one I viewed was *The Quiet Mutiny*, an account of small but consequential revolts among American troops in Vietnam that invariably went unreported in the US.

This was followed by further reports on Vietnam and Cambodia, in the latter case notably a soul-shattering report on the aftermath of the depredations decreed by the Khmer Rouge, *Year Zero: The Silent Death of Cambodia*. As an eyewitness to the consequences of genocide, he was inevitably appalled when the US and China conspired in a cover-up only because they represented the fact that it was Vietnamese forces that had liberated Phnom Penh.

Pilger, who died on

the eve of 2024, was born in Sydney in 1939 and joined the Australian city's press corps as a teenager before travelling to Europe, beginning with Italy. The Reuters news agency was his first way station in London, from where he moved on to a 20-plus-year residency at the Daily Mirror, where he was elevated to the post of chief foreign correspondent.

Pilger's days at the Mirror were numbered once Robert Maxwell acquired the tabloid, but he found a potentially wider-reaching outlet at ITV, which hosted his film reports, interviews and some of his longer documentaries. Beleaguered as it was in the Thatcher and Blair years, British media — or at least sections of it — stood up to the challenges from the British establishment, the US State Department and CIA, and even the Israeli lobby.

Pilger latched on to the dilemma of the Israeli-occupied territories in the early 1970s, and his pair of documentaries titled *Palestine is Still the Issue* are separated by almost 30 years, illuminating how little has changed. Recently re-watching the second of these documentaries, I was reminded of Pilger's interview technique with subjects he probably found repulsive, notably the Israeli regime's official spokesperson: his tone never got belligerent, but his questions gave them just enough rope to expose the absurdity of their contentions.

There are some conflicts to which Pilger did not turn his attention, including Balochistan and Kashmir, which is a pity. And his area of operations as a forensic investigator across the decades stretched from South Africa, Palestine and Iraq to the cre-a-tion of Bangladesh and the absurdity of 'India shining', as well as Myanmar, East Timor, the US (he witnessed the assassination of

Robert F. Kennedy from metres away), Nicaragua, Venezuela, the Czechosl-ovak Republic and Ukraine, among other regions. His laser-focus on his native Australia related chiefly, but not exclusively, to the horrendous treatment of the colonised continent's indigenous population, and he devoted several documentaries (and thousands of words) to the subject.

Not surprisingly, he also delved extensively into the woes of his adopted country, and his last documentary reflected on a subject that had bothered him for at least half a century: the creeping privatisation and spiralling neg-lect of Britain's vau-nted National Health Service.

As he would have proudly acknowledged, Pilger belonged to a long line of Western journalists who have defied the odds — often their own governments and their allies — to sift the truth from propaganda or PR, and to report what they see, notably Martha Gellhorn, Wilfred Burchett, Paul Foot, Robert Fisk and Seymour Hersh.

Pilger wasn't perfect and very occasionally succumbed to the leftist disease of glossing over the inadequacies or repressive tendencies of regimes justifiably opposed to the long arm of American imperialism. In my humble opinion, it's possible to point out the flaws of the Ortega regime 2.0 or the cruelty of the mullahcracy in Tehran without lapsing into the "Washington consensus", without losing sight of the hypocrisy that unfailingly guides the US worldview. But Pilger was at most a peripheral cult-urist in this sense.

He leaves behind a visual and written legacy that will serve humankind for decades, and although he wasn't alone in his endeavours, in many ways he was one of a kind. -- Courtesy Dawn

**Neoliberal approach****Nazir A. Jogezeai**

The advent of neoliberalism has been marked by the transition from an administrative state, which was previously accountable for both the economy and human welfare, to one that empowers multinational corporations. This transition implements systems and ideologies that reshape individuals into economic entrepreneurs and transfer accountability for domains such as education, healthcare, and security.

This represents more than a mere revival of liberal principles that regard self-sufficiency and independence as prerequisites for self-respect, self-esteem etc. Rather, it signifies a disregard for collective responsibility for the vulnerable and marginalised and an emphasis on enterprise and the capitalisation of existence via calculated investments and actions.

The public service institutions that initially implemented the novel modes of governmentality were educational institutions and universities. But the implementation of neoliberal policies has significantly transformed the discourse, structure, and role of education within society.

Academic institutions, including schools and universities, are undergoing significant changes to cultivate subjects who bear the responsibilities of entrepreneurs and operate in every aspect of their lives. As a result, policy currently frames and justifies education as a venue for con-

structing human capital and fostering economic productivity beginning from early schooling and continuing through higher education.

The underperformance of young individuals on international standardised tests, or their failure to complete secondary education, constitutes a policy issue as it imposes an economic burden on the nation. Put simply, the lack of success exhibited by young individuals in their pursuit of education is perceived as an economic issue, given that education is primarily regarded as economically significant.

A similar argument posits that public education is unproductive, excessively uni-uni-sed, indifferent to the needs of its students, devoid of accountability, and inadequate in fostering the development of human capital. Neoliberal strategies have included market practices such as the chartered status of failing schools in the United States and their quasi-marketisation in other countries.

Public-private partnership (PPP) initiatives, such as voucher programmes, serve as a means to reduce the burden of the state in terms of public education. Lack of investment in education and indifference to the deteriorating quality of education contribute to the desire for PPP. As a consequence, an alternative approach is to propose the privatisation of public education.

Within the framework of neoliberal education, institutions strive to create the illusion that they are fulfilling the expectations of their "clients". This is accomplished through various means, such as strategically prioritising examination-oriented instruction, allo-

cating additional support to students deemed likely to perform well on assessments, attracting academically superior students who will elevate the school's standing, and re-allocating resources away from students with special needs.

Critics frequently consult the works of theorists such as Foucault, who delineates the instruments of disciplinary authority as hierarchical observation, normalising judgement, and their amalgamation within a procedure known as the examination. Normalising judgement creates a consistent benchmark for every learner, whereas hierarchical observation oversees and controls conduct. Curriculum and standardised examinations employ these instruments to quantify and regulate individuals by delineating their worth in relation to a predetermined standard. This stan-dardised approach exacerbates inequ-ities and has adverse effects on teaching, learning, and institutional culture. It compromises inclusion in terms of identities, ideologies, ethnicity and history from the outset.

Furthermore, it undermines holistic human development, erodes the capacity for critical thinking, and most significantly, transforms education into an afterthought rather than something that originates from individual and societal requirements. This mode of education also strengthens social dichotomies and empowers those in authority and the privileged. For continuous attempts to improve education, the emphasis should not be solely on its economic methods and ramifications, but rather on the broader social welfare through public ownership and the promotion of diversity and inclusion. -- Courtesy Dawn



## 11500 policemen to perform duties in general election: CM Sindh

KARACHI (APP): Caretaker Sindh Chief Minister Justice (ret'd) Maqbool Baqar on Wednesday said that a total of 11,500 policemen have been assigned to perform security duty during the upcoming general election. These police officers will be responsible for maintaining law and order on 191 seats, including 61 National Assembly seats and 130 provincial assembly seats. The election is scheduled to take place on February 8.

This he said while responding to the questions asked by the participants of the PN Staff Course of Pakistan Navy War College who called on him here at CM House.

The meeting was attended by provincial ministers Brig @ Haris Nawaz, Mubeen Jumani, Omar Soomro, Ahmad Shah, Chief Secretary Dr

Fakhr Alam, Chairman P&D Shakeel Mangnejo, IG Police Riffat Mukhtar and provincial secretaries. The war course delegation was led by Commandant Navy War College Rear Admiral Azhar Mehmood.

In response to a question, the CM stated that treatment plants were being installed to release treated waste and industrial water into the sea, which would help control the pollution in the seawater.

Additionally, the Sindh government has planted one million mangrove plants in the sea. Mangroves are a natural infrastructure that helps protect nearby populated areas by reducing erosion and absorbing storm surge impacts during extreme weather events such as hurricanes. They are also important to the ecosystem due to their

dense roots, which help bind and build soils.

To another question, the CM said that his government has initiated several schemes to mitigate the impact of climate change.

During a presentation to the staff course, IG Police Riffat Mukhtar highlighted the key challenges faced by law enforcement in Pakistan. He noted that street crime in urban areas, particularly in Karachi, and lawlessness in the katcha areas of Kashmore, Shikarpur, Ghotki, and Sukkur were significant issues. While terrorism was also a challenge, it had been controlled through intelligence-based targeted operations.

The IG emphasized that the police were fully prepared to provide security for the upcoming general elections.



KARACHI: Caretaker Chief Minister of Sindh Maqbool Baqir cut the ribbon along with others during the launching ceremony of 30 green buses of "Peoples City Bus Project" outside Quaid Mausoleum in Provincial Capital.

## Naqvi lays foundation stone of GOR-9 project at DHA phase 9

**Independent Report**  
LAHORE: Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi laid the foundation stone of GOR-9 project at DHA Phase 9, here on Wednesday.

A total of 29 houses would be established for the officers of the Punjab government at GOR-9 and for this purpose 56 kanals of land has been allocated.

Addressing the ceremony of laying the foundation stone of GOR-9, the CM stated, "Earlier, we laid the foundation stone for the construction of residences of low ranked government employees,

and today laid the foundation stone for the construction of official residences."

The government employees have to wait for a long time in order to acquire their residences, he said. "We are striving that the officers should not have to wait for their residences" he added. Mohsin Naqvi apprised that 29 houses are going to be constructed in GOR-9. Hopefully, the residences would be built before the stipulated 15 months timeline. "We are making a consultation jointly with the Chief Secretary for

establishing one main GOR near the Mall Road so that the shortage of official residences can be fulfilled" he said. He said the problems increase manifold due to non-allocation of houses for the staff members and government officers, apprising that concrete measures would be taken with regard to shortage of residences in coming 10 to 15 days. High-Tech design smart houses are being built in GOR-9, he apprised. The problem of residences would be resolved with the establishment of GOR-9, he added.

## AJK PM orders for early arrest of accused of UK based local expatriate

MIRPUR (AJK): (APP) Azad Jammu Kashmir Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwar ul Haq has taken strong notice of the recent cold-blooded murder of a young Kashmiri expatriate by unknown assailants near Islamabad international airport soon after his arrival from the United Kingdom.

The Prime Minister directed the AJK Chief Secretary to stay in touch with the IG Punjab Police to ensure early arrest of the absconding accused, according to an official handout issued here late Tuesday.

It may be mentioned here that the slain youth, hailing from AJK's Dadyal town of expatriates in Mirpur district, was gunned down by unknown

attackers near Islamabad international airport on his return from abroad.

The AJK premier expressed his profound grief and sorrow over this tragic incident and extended his heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family. The Prime Minister has also directed the Chief Secretary of Azad Kashmir to contact the IG Punjab police to ensure the immediate arrest of the accused and the safety of passengers on their return from foreign countries. The AJK PM has also directed AJK Minister for Communications Azhar Sadiq, hailing from Dadyal town, to provide full support and assistance to the bereaved family of the ill-fated assassinated youth.



LAHORE: Visitors and staff are taking interest in the pictures during exhibition at Lahore College for Women University regarding the oppression on Palestinian people.

## Minister announces to establish Tourism Police Unit in Sindh

KARACHI (APP): Caretaker Minister for Tourism, Climate Change and Coastal Development Sindh, Arshad Wali Muhammad has announced to establish "Tourism Police Units" in the province. "This initiative aims to bolster confidence in Sindh as a premier tourist destination", the minister said in a statement issued here on Wednesday.

Secretary Tourism

and Culture, Government of Sindh, Khalid Chachar has formally requested the Home Department to allocate police personnel for deployment at key tourism sites in Sindh. This dedicated force will be trained in tourist-centric policing, focusing on cultural sensitivity, communication and emergency response, creating a welcoming and secure environment for visitors, he said.

## Passing out ceremony held for 96 prison staff's success

HARIPUR (APP): The Passing out ceremony was held at the Prison Staff Training Academy in Haripur on Wednesday marking the successful completion of training for 96 prison staff members.

The event encompassed foundational training for jail warders, along with advanced courses for the promotion of head warders and chief paid warders.

Inspector General (DIG) of Prisons Hazara Division, Muhammad Naeem Khan, graced the occasion as the special guest. Amir Khan, the Superintendent of Central Jail Haripur, also attended the event. Addressing the participants of the ceremony, Academy Commandant Amin Shoaib extended heartfelt congratulations to the

graduating prison staff. He provided a comprehensive overview of the academy's performance and achievements during the training period.

DIG Naeem Khan while addressing the ceremony emphasized the pivotal role of training in enhancing the capabilities of prison staff and the academy's crucial contribution to this process. He assured that funds and necessary facilities would be promptly provided to further bolster the academy's training programs. The ceremony reached its culmination with the presentation of certificates to the accomplished prison staff, marking the beginning of their new roles with the skills and knowledge gained during their training.



RAWALPINDI: A view of the dense foggy weather early in the morning at City.

## KMC to organize annual Marigold Festival on Friday

KARACHI (APP): Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab has said that KMC is going to organize the annual Marigold Festival from Friday at the Frere Hall Lawn which will continue for three days.

A large number of citizens will enjoy this festival in the winter season. The entry of citizens to the flower exhibition will be free.

He said this while inspecting the arrangements of the Marigold Festival on Wednesday during a visit to Frere Hall. Director General Parks and Horticulture Junaidullah Khan, Senior Director Information and Printing and Media Management

Ali Hassan Sajid and other officers also accompanied him. Mayor Karachi said that organizing the Marigold Festival is a tradition of KMC, Marigold is a winter flower and it continued its existence for two months.

It is popular among the people in Karachi, after six months of continuous hard work in Pakistan, this flower shows its bloom. This year again, thousands of colorful Marigold flowers are being decorated on the lawn of Frere Hall attractively for the citizens and it is expected that a large number of people along with their families will enjoy this three-day festival.

## Governor urged to rehabilitate lecturers appointed under projects in merged districts

PESHAWAR (APP): A delegation of lecturers of colleges situated in newly merged districts called on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor, Haji Ghulam Ali here Wednesday and urged him to rehabilitate lecturers appointed under various projects.

The delegation was comprised of districts, including Kurram, Waziristan, FR Bannu, Khyber, Kohat, Mirali Dara Adam Kail, and Alizai. The governor was informed that about 42 lecturers have been suspended by the Managing Unit Higher Education Department.

Speaking on the occasion, the Governor assured cooperation to the delegation and directed the secretary of higher education and Chief Secretary to resolve the issue. He urged lecturers to work with dedication and said that lecturers would

not be removed.

He said that the government is spending a huge amount on the promotion of education and added that it is the prime duty of teachers to focus on the capacity building of students and prepare them to meet the challenges of the current world.

KP Governor stressed upon teachers to promote a culture of research and help students venture into fields of innovation for their development. He said that the effort of teachers is needed to remove the backwardness of underdeveloped areas and to bring people into the mainstream of development. Assuring cooperation with academics, he said that the problems of teachers and educational institutions would be resolved on a priority basis.

## Rawalpindi police launch Pak's first regular school classes for transgenders

RAWALPINDI (APP): In a major development, the Rawalpindi police have launched regular school classes catering specifically to the transgender population of the city.

The classes, conducted at Islamia Higher Secondary School in Liaquat Bagh, have garnered support from the district administration and the Education Department.

A spokesperson for the Rawalpindi police told media on Wednesday that 52 transgender individuals had been enrolled in these special classes, emphasizing the significance of providing education as a fundamental right.

This initiative is aligned with the broader efforts of the Rawalpindi police, which recently established Pakistan's inaugural Transgender

Protection Center, he added.

The spokesperson highlighted the multifaceted approach of the Transgender Protection Center, which extends beyond education. The center has successfully created employment opportunities for over 100 transgender individuals, offering them dignified work. This holistic approach is not only empowering the transgender community but also challenging societal norms.

The Rawalpindi police's pioneering step is expected to set a commendable example for other institutions and communities across Pakistan. By prioritizing education and inclusivity, they are actively contributing to the creation of a more just and equitable society.

## AT allows Dr Yasmin to contest election

LAHORE (Online): Appellate Tribunal (AT) has allowed PTI leader Dr Yasmin Rashid to contest election.

Justice Tariq Nadim of AT has heard the Dr Yasmin Rashid appeal plea against rejection of her nomination papers.

AT accepted appeal plea of Dr Yasmin Rashid from NA-130 besides nullifying returning officer decision.

## Man killed in road mishap

MUZAFFARGARH (APP): One was killed as the passenger van collided with a donkey cart near Noor Shah Talai due to thick fog.

According to Rescue officials, a passenger van carrying devotees was going to Multan and suddenly collided with a donkey cart near Noor Shah Talai Kot Addu area due to heavy fog.

As a result, a resident of Chak No 521 Noor Shah Talai named Majeed Bharani s/o Nabbi Bharani died on the spot.

## 3 killed, ASI injured in encounter

FAISALABAD (APP): Three under-custody accused were killed while an Assistant Sub Inspector (ASI) received multiple injuries during a police encounter in the area of Sadar police station.

Police spokesman said here on Wednesday that Sadar police had caught three accused including Akhlaq alias Akhlaq Don, Waqar alias Qari residents of Chak No. 189-RB Gidari and Shehbaz alias Moota resident of Chak No. 113-RB Badhumali few time ago over their involvement in a murder cum attempt to murder case. The police was carrying these accused for investigation and recovery of case property when some unidentified assailants intercepted the police party near Chak No. 209-RB Joray Bridge.

## Home department report claims significant decline in crime rate

KARACHI (APP): During the tenure of the interim government from August 14<sup>th</sup> to December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Sindh maintained a commendable law and order situation, largely owing to the effective performance of the Sindh Police and Pakistan Rangers Sindh.

A report compiled by the Provincial Home Department, reviewed by the Sindh Caretaker Minister for Home and Prison, Brig. (Rtd.) Haris Nawaz unveiled significant achievements.

Key highlights from the report: Police Actions

Against Crime: 932 encounters and the dismantling of 458 gangs. Elimination of 101 dacoits, arrest of 6,458 criminals, and capture of 2 highway robbers and 11 kidnappers.

Apprehension of 5,373 proclaimed offenders and 10,344 absconders. Recovery of various firearms and ammunition. Actions Against Narcotics:

Execution of 3,657 raids, leading to the arrest of 5,203 accused individuals. Seizure of substantial quantities of ICE, heroin, hashish.



ABBOTTABAD: Deputy Commissioner Abbottabad, Khalid Iqbal presiding over the polio review meeting for anti-polio campaign, in Abbottabad.

## ANF seizes 65 kg drugs in seven operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting seven operations across the country managed to recover 65 kg drugs and arrested 12 accused including four women, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Wednesday.

He informed that 28.8 kg hashish and 1.2 kg opium were recovered from the possession of an accused netted near Chungi No. 26.

10.5 kg hashish was recovered from the possession of six accused including four women arrested near Burhan

Interchange Attock. 8 kg heroin and 2.2 kg Ice drug were recovered from two suspects near Sangjani Toll Plaza Islamabad. 8.4 kg hashish was recovered from two suspects near Bahria Town Phase 4 Islamabad.

In fifth operation, 5 kg hashish was recovered from Khar border area in Khyber. In sixth operation, 1.1 kg hashish was recovered from an area in Gilgit while in 7<sup>th</sup> operation, 175 ecstasy tablets were recovered from the possession of an accused near Labor Colony Peshawar.

## 1500 liter adulterated milk wasted

MULTAN (APP): A team of food watchdogs disposed of about 1500 liters of substandard milk after holding picket at one of the main external routes of the city.

Team of food watchdogs disposed of about 1500 liters of substandard milk after holding picket at one of the main external routes of the city. The checking was conducted at different external and internal routes of the city early in the morning under the supervision of Director Operation South of Punjab Food Authority (PFA) Shahid Maggssi. Over 43 vehicles carrying milk were checked of which milk samples from nine vehicles proved impure and harmful.

## Traffic Police files 26000 cases on unlicensed driving

LAHORE (APP): Lahore Traffic Police, during its ongoing crackdown against unlicensed and under age drivers, filed over 26,000 cases so far, besides impounding thousands of vehicles in the provincial capital.

According to a spokesman of the City Traffic Police, some 9,737 cases have been filed against underage drivers and a new fee schedule for new and renewal of licenses.

## Stipend for artists raised: Amir Mir

LAHORE (APP): Information and Culture Minister Punjab Amir Mir said on Wednesday that stipend for artists in need had been raised, and the allocation for widows of artists had also been hiked.

Speaking at the 20<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Artists Support Fund Committee at Alhama Arts Council, he emphasised the significance of supporting artists' welfare alongside promoting art, recognising their crucial role in maintaining a healthy society. The Artists Support Fund aims to extend financial aid to deserving artists, with simplified disbursement

mechanisms, including Jazz and MobiCash in addition to banks.

The meeting, focusing on reviewing applications for Artists Support Fund and financial aid, concluded with Minister Mir approving a grant of Rs 50 lakh for deserving artists. He directed the Department of Information and Culture Punjab to ensure efficient distribution of allocated funds for artists within this month. The meeting witnessed the participation of Secretary Information and Culture Daniyal Gillani, Additional Secretary Culture Tariq Basra, Sohail Waraich.



PESHAWAR: Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) counsel Ali Zafar (C) and a lawyer of the (PTI) party Qazi Anwar (R), celebrate after the hearing for party's electoral symbol case outside the Peshawar High Court, in Peshawar.



## FTO should accelerate efforts to increase the registration and disposal of complaints

**FTO resolves 8,128 tax-related complaints in 2023: Ombudsman briefs Alvi**

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Wednesday visited the Federal Tax Ombudsman office where he was informed that the institution resolved 8,128 complaints against the maladministration of tax and customs authorities during the year 2023 as compared to 6,106 complaints in 2022.

During the briefing to the president, Federal Tax Ombudsman (FTO), Dr

Asif Mahmood Jah said that the registration of complaints increased by almost 24% as 8,076 complaints were filed in 2023, compared to 6,480 in 2022.

The FTO also provided a relief of Rs 17.74 billion to taxpayers in 2023 as compared to Rs 7 billion in the previous year.

Besides Federal Tax Ombudsman (FTO), the advisors to FTO, regional

heads, and senior officials of the FTO attended the meeting. Dr Asif Mahmood Jah briefed the president about the FTO's overall performance, outreach and initiatives taken for the facilitation of taxpayers.

He informed that FTO provided free-of-charge justice to complainants against the maladministration and high-handedness of tax officials within 60 days. The average time taken for

the disposal of complaints had been reduced to 44 days during the last year.

Highlighting the achievements of FTO, he stated that FTO was a public-relief-oriented organization that had provided tax relief to low-paid employees, teachers, salaried class, pensioners, and purchasers of vehicles through its decisions.

The FTO was making efforts to increase its outreach and registration.



ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi in a group photo with the officials of the Federal Tax Ombudsman (FTO) during his visit to FTO Office.



Mr. Saquib Fayyaz Magoon, SVP FPCCI, is presenting the commemorative shield to Dr. Jeanette Forbes, Scottish Chambers Ambassador for Pakistan. Mr. Asif Inam & Abdul Mohamin Khan, VPs FPCCI; Mr. Khurram Ijaz & Mr. Shakil Ahmed Dhingra, former VPs FPCCI and other prominent business personalities were also present on the occasion.

### Minister says: EV charging stations to come up at 50 locations of Punjab province soon

ISLAMABAD (APP): Provincial Transport Minister Ibrahim Hassan Murad Wednesday said that Punjab was making a big push for electric vehicles in controlling environmental pollution where over 50 charging stations will soon be set up at various points of the province. Talking to a private news channel, he said that CM had issued the first E-Rickshaw license while providing over 10,000 electric bikes will be distributed among graduate university students, adding, 2,000 electric three-wheeler bikes will also be granted to special individuals free of interest. He said that the government's historic initiative aims to become a

manufacturing hub for electric vehicles, EV batteries, and components, adding, that the electric three-wheeler market is the most ripe market right now for electrification.

Minister added that with the adoption of EVs, we will not only positively impact the country's economy but also help in achieving the country's target of net zero emissions. Pakistan's electric vehicle market is gathering momentum and is poised for significant growth in the next few years, he mentioned.

To encourage the shift to electric vehicles, he also emphasized the high quality of electric rickshaws and their role in combating pollution.

### DC Khyber assures

## Businessmen dealing in Pak, Afghan trade of facilitation for smooth sailing of trade

PESHAWAR (APP): Deputy Commissioner Khyber, Sanaullah Khan has said the government believes in the facilitation of businessmen and keeping in view the prevailing harsh economic situation it is need of the hour to take all possible measures for the smooth sailing of trade and commerce in the country.

He expressed these views while talking with a delegation of businessmen dealing in Pak-Afghan trade, according to a press statement issued here on Wednesday.

## Desilting of canals continues in Punjab

LAHORE (APP): Chief Strategic Planning and Reform Unit Agriculture Department Punjab Muhammad Amir Khan Wednesday appealed to the citizens to abstain from dumping dirt and garbage in the canals as the desilting of canals is in full swing. Caretaker Punjab

government after 10 years has launched a comprehensive desilting drive throughout the province to clean 17000km canals in the first phase, he said while talking to a PTV news channel. "The first phase of the project could have been implemented efficiently last year".



LAHORE: Workers busy packing sacks of animal fodder.

### Workers' remittances record \$2.4 bn inflow in Dec

ISLAMABAD (APP): The overseas workers' remittances recorded an inflow of US\$2.4 billion during December 2023, the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) on Wednesday said.

In terms of growth, during the month under review, remittances increased by 5.4 per cent on month on month basis and 13.4 per cent on year on year basis.

Workers' remittances inflow of US\$13.4 billion has been recorded during the first six months of the fiscal year 2023-24.

Remittances inflows during December 2023 were mainly sourced from Saudi Arabia (\$577.6 million), United Arab Emirates (\$419.2 million), United Kingdom (\$368.0 million) and United States of America (\$263.9 million).

### Rupee gains 10 paise against Dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistani Rupee on Wednesday witnessed an appreciation of 10 paise against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs281.12 against the previous day's closing of Rs281.22.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the Dollar in the open market stood at Rs280.5 and Rs283 respectively.

The price of the Euro decreased by 94 paise to close at Rs307.16 against the last day's closing of Rs308.10, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese Yen lost 02 paise and closed at Rs1.93, whereas a decrease of Rs1.139 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs356.97 compared to the last closing of Rs358.36.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal decreased by 02 each to close at Rs76.54 and Rs74.96 respectively.

## EU keen to enhance cooperation with Pakistan in various fields, including trade: Ambassador

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador of the European Union H.E. Dr. Riina Kionka, Wednesday said that the EU is keen on enhancing cooperation with Pakistan and focusing on exploring more avenues of trade, and investments in multiple sectors like information technology, surgical instruments, sports business, women entrepreneurs, education and textile industry.

In an exclusive interview with a private news channel said that the EU was continuing support to Pakistan's economic development, adding, that

the bonds between the two nations are much older which is cementing with each passing day.

Answering a question about educational cooperation, she said our institutional partnerships between universities of EU and Pakistan in the field of science and technology and higher education are seeking more potential for better outcomes, adding, that EU application for 2024 scholarships is open for Pakistani students, they can apply for different study fields through EU program and enjoy their

higher full funded studies in European countries.

She said that highest highest-ever number of Pakistani students have been receiving scholarships to study in European universities under the EU's flagship program this year.

To another question, she said that the European Union was the largest destination for Pakistani exports where the business community diversifies their exports to the EU to take maximum advantage of the EU's GSP Plus scheme for Pakistan which has recently been rolled.



ISLAMABAD: Laborers cutting wood in pieces for selling purpose at his workplace in the Federal Capital.

## Commissioner directs to ensure smooth fertilizer's supply among farmers

MULTAN (APP): Local Commissioner Aamir Khattak ordered to ensure a smooth supply of fertilizers to cope with its increasing demand among farmers.

Chairing a meeting here Wednesday, he maintained not exceeding urea's prices beyond the purchasing limit of farmers. Regarding the preparation for the upcoming general election, Amir Khattak directed to complete all-out arrangements to carry out the needful.

Extending 'full cooperation' to the EC body, he asked to expedite

measures for marking places of polling stations by choosing the dedicated staff to conduct the poll smoothly.

He ruled out compromising on the code of conduct of the Election Commission to hold free and fair elections in the divisions across the country.

The Commissioner was given briefing by the local authority over urea stock, its transportation, checking of local vehicles to curtail smog and pollution as well as a cleanliness drive launched in full swing at the village level on the direction of the Punjab government.

## Pak's EU envoy meets rice exporters to discuss agri trade cooperation

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador of Pakistan to the European Union, Belgium and Luxembourg Anna Baloch on Wednesday held a meeting with the office bearers of the Rice Exporters Association of Pakistan (REAP) wherein they discussed the Pakistan's existing agricultural trade profile in the EU.

The meeting was attended by Chairman REAP Chela Ram Kewlani and committee members of the Association.

The meeting also deliberated over the issues

related to the rice exports to European countries and explored mechanisms for further streamlining the cooperation and complying with market requirements.

Ambassador Anna Baloch keenly listened to the issues and assured her full cooperation to resolve the same to help increase rice exports from Pakistan to Europe. The said meeting was attended by management committee members REAP, Muhammad Noman and Dr. Muhammad Hafeez and Ex-Chairmen REAP Rafique Suleman.

## SNGPL replaces 254 km outdated gas pipeline at cost of Rs 709m last year

MULTAN (APP): Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL) has replaced 254 kilometres outdated gas pipeline in last fiscal year 2022-23 at a cost of Rs 709 million to address the gas leakage complaints. Deputy Chief Engineer Operations SNGPL Multan region, Hussain Zafar, while talking to APP here on Wednesday said that the department had conducted scanning of areas across the region after every three years to examine the condition of sui gas

pipeline. He said that the outdated lines were replaced after scanning. He said that the scanning process was underway at various places to check the pipelines. He informed that they have set target to replace 235 kilometres outdated gas line for current fiscal year as Rs 510 million would be spent on the replacement of lines. He hoped that they would achieve the target easily. The total length of the gas pipeline across the Multan region was 15000 kilometres, he told.

## Business community representatives meet SM Tanveer

**Independent Report**

LAHORE: The representatives of business community of Lahore and Faisalabad met Caretaker Provincial Minister for Industry and Commerce SM Tanveer, here on Wednesday.

Problems being faced by the industry were discussed during the meeting. The delegation congratulated the minister on success of United Business Group in the election of Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI). The minister said, "We have to solve business community problems together. By promoting the industry, the direction of the economy will be corrected. The economy will move forward only when the wheel of the

industry will move."

SM Tanveer said due to efforts of the government and the hard work of farmers, production of cotton had doubled this year. The government would also achieve record production of wheat. One-window facility had been given to investors for setting up new factories.

After Lahore, he said, Business Facilitation Centers (BFCs) were in the final stages of completion in five major cities including Faisalabad. He said the success in election of the Federal Chambers was a manifestation of confidence of the business community in the leadership of UBG. The business community would not be disappointed in anyway, he added.

## Croatian envoy invites Pak workers to explore opportunities in Croatia

KARACHI (APP): Ambassador of Republic of Croatia Dr Drago Stambuk, inviting Pakistani workers to explore employment opportunities in Croatia, said that his country was demographically falling down and it needed human resource especially skilled and young people.

The Croatian envoy, while speaking at a meeting during his visit to Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) here Wednesday, said that Pakistan holds very good human resource, well-educated English-speaking population along with devoted and intelligent businessmen. "I would like to see more Pakistanis coming to Croatia and

working in various sectors of our country particularly the tourism industry, which receives millions of tourists every year and it sometimes becomes very difficult to cope so many visitors", he added.

He informed that Croatia, which is a member of Euro zone, holds fantastic geo-political position with big ports and railways network, hence, work was underway to make Croatia the hub for Central and South-Eastern Europe. Stressing on need of enhancing bilateral relation between Pakistan and Croatia, he said that Croatian Embassy was trying its best to improve trade exchange between the friendly countries.

## Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Four ships namely, Maersk Detroit, MSC Desiree, Blue Bird and Al-Saad carrying Containers, Gas oil and LNG, berthed at Container Terminal, Oil Terminal and Elengy Terminal respectively on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, two more ships, Klima and Sea Runner carrying Coal and Mogas also arrived at outer anchorage of the Port Qasim during the last 24 hours respectively.

A total of nine ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them a Liquefied Natural Gas carrier 'Flex Volunteer' is left the port today (Morning).

A cargo volume of 210,237 tonnes, comprising 192,776 tonnes import cargo and 19,461 tonnes export cargo carried in 4,620 Containers (3,950 TEUs Imports and 670 TEUs export) was handled at the port during the last 24 hours.



MULTAN: Deputy DS Railway Saima Bashir cutting the ribbon during the opening ceremony of the inauguration of the dining sleeper of Bahauddin Zakria Express.

## Gold rates decline by Rs.300

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold decreased by Rs.300 and was sold at Rs. 216,100 on Wednesday compared to its sale at Rs.216,400 on last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs. 257 to Rs. 185,271 from Rs.185,528 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold went down to Rs.169,832 from Rs.170,067 the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola silver decreased by Rs.10 and was sold at Rs.2,650 whereas that of ten gram Silver decreased by Rs.58 to Rs.2,271.94.

The price of gold in the international market decreased by \$3 to \$2,047 from \$2,050, the Association reported.

## PCJCCI keen to learn from China's model of poverty reduction

LAHORE (APP):

Pakistan-China Joint Chambers of Commerce and Industry (PCJCCI) President Moazzam Ghurki said on Wednesday that China's poverty reduction experience in rural areas was a great example and Pakistan and PCJCCI were keen to learn from that model.

Speaking in a think-tank session held here at the PCJCCI Secretariat, he appreciated China's amazing work on poverty reduction and setting precedent for the rest of the world. President PCJCCI added China is very advanced country and it is reaching the next phase of digitalization, whereas in Pakistan "we are still struggling to help people open their basic accounts". However, now Pakistan is actually progressing. There are different banks and

micro finance banks working since 2005.

PCJCCI Senior Vice President Fang Yulong shared that financial literacy plays an important role in poverty reduction, so visits to rural areas for younger generation in Pakistan should be initiated just like Chinese, and conduct some training for men and women so that they could know what financial literacy was, what financial products they have and how they can have access to finances.

He added that finance is basically the blood that runs in economy, if someone needs to open a small scale business, you need finances; if someone wants to have education to improve, to ensure the upward mobility and the social status, they need finances to support their education.



# Maldives upgrades ties with China amid pivot from India

**Monitoring Desk**  
BEIJING: China and the Maldives upgraded their relationship on Wednesday during newly elected President Mohamed Muizzu's first state visit to Beijing, following a campaign in which he cast China's regional rival India as a threat to sovereignty.

Chinese President Xi Jinping, speaking at the Great Hall of the People, called Muizzu "an old friend" as the Asian giant set the stage for further investment in the Indian Ocean archipelago by agreeing to a "comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership".

"China and the Maldives' relations are facing a historic opportunity to carry forward the past

and forge ahead into the future," Xi told Muizzu, Chinese state media reported.

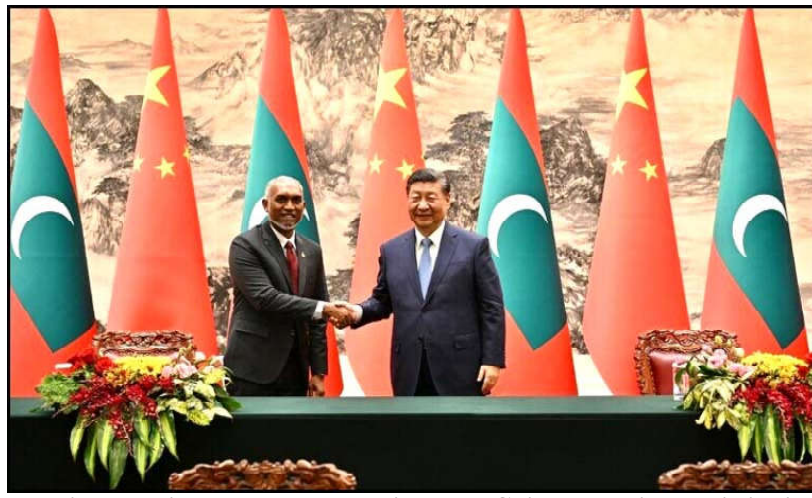
Muizzu took office in November, after winning on his "India Out" campaign platform under which he called New Delhi's huge influence a threat to sovereignty.

His government has since asked dozens of locally based Indian military personnel to leave while talking up opportunities for Chinese investors despite being heavily indebted to Beijing.

Relations between India and China nosedived after soldiers from both sides clashed in the western Himalayas in June 2020, resulting in the death of 20 Indian soldiers and four Chinese troops.

By upgrading ties with the Maldives, China is setting the stage for further investment in a region where India has already seen another neighbour, Sri Lanka, gravitate towards China. "During the talks, President Dr Muizzu expressed gratitude for China's significant role in the Maldives' economic success... and infrastructure development," a statement from his presidential office read following the meeting, adding that "20 key agreements between the two countries" were signed.

The Maldives owes China \$1.37 billion, or around 20 per cent of its public debt, according to World Bank data, making Beijing its biggest bilateral creditor ahead of Saudi Arabia and India.



Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu and Chinese President Xi Jinping sign key agreements in Beijing, China.

## Hezbollah targets Israeli base to avenge Lebanon killings

**BEIRUT (INP):** Lebanon's Iran-backed Hezbollah group said it targeted a command base in northern Israel on Tuesday in retaliation for the killings of one of its commanders and a Hamas leader.

Hezbollah said the attack was part of its response to the killings of top field commander Wissam Tawil on Monday and Hamas deputy leader Saleh al-Aruri on January 2.

The Shiite Muslim movement, a Hamas ally, said in a statement that it had targeted the "enemy's northern command centre" in the Israeli city of Safed

with "several suicide drones".

The Israeli military confirmed that a "hostile aircraft" had crashed at one of its bases in the north, and said that "no injuries or damage were reported".

Hezbollah and its arch-foe Israel have been exchanging near-daily fire across the border since the Israel-Hamas war broke out on October 7.

Tawil—the highest-ranking Hezbollah member was killed since October 7—was buried in his south Lebanon home village of Khirbit Silm on Tuesday.

## Holy Quran desecrated in Jharkhand

**RANCHI (INP):** The Hinduva members desecrated and burned the pages of Holy Quran in the Indian state of Jharkhand.

According to Kashmir Media Service, the incident occurred when the Hinduva members who mostly belonged to RSS, BJP, VHP and Banjrag Dal burned the pages of the Holy Quran in a field near Fatehpur Bazar mosque in Jamtara district. The atrocious action aimed at inciting the religious tensions has been reported before the upcoming state elections.

As news of the incident quickly spread, Muslims strongly condemned the heinous act.

## US, British forces shoot down 21 drones and missiles fired from Yemen

**WASHINGTON (INP):** American and British forces shot down 18 drones and three missiles Tuesday that were launched by Yemen's Iran-backed Huthi rebels toward international shipping lanes in the Red Sea, the US military said.

The attack came a week after 12 nations led by the United States warned the Huthis of consequences unless they immediately halted firing on commercial vessels—strikes the rebels say are in support of Palestinians in Gaza, where Israel is battling militant group Hamas.

"Iranian-backed Huthis launched a complex attack of Iranian designed one-way attack UAVs... anti-ship cruise missiles, and an anti-ship ballistic

missile from Huthi-controlled areas of Yemen into the Southern Red Sea," the US Central Command (CENTCOM) said in a statement.

The drones and missiles were downed by a combination of F/A-18 warplanes operating from the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower aircraft carrier and one British and three American destroyers, CENTCOM said, adding that there were no injuries or damage reported.

The United States set up a multinational naval task force last month to protect Red Sea shipping from Huthi attacks, which are endangering a transit route that carries up to 12 percent of global trade.



People accused of invading and taking over television station TC with weapons and forcing staff to lie and sit down, lie handcuffed on the floor in Guayaquil, Ecuador.

## Will 'never compromise' on Taiwan, China tells US

**Monitoring Desk**  
BEIJING: China vowed on Wednesday it will "never compromise" on Taiwan and told the United States to stop providing military aid, days ahead of a crucial election on the self-ruled island.

China claims Taiwan, which holds elections on Saturday, as part of its territory and has vowed to seize it one day.

The election is being closely watched — includ-

ing by policymakers in Beijing and Washington — as its outcome will impact the future of Taiwan's relations with an increasingly assertive China.

In their first defence talks of the year, held at the Pentagon on Monday and Tuesday, Chinese officials demanded that Washington "stop arming Taiwan, and oppose Taiwan's 'independence'", according to a Chinese defence ministry readout.

## Israel in the dock as International Court of Justice takes up genocide case

**Monitoring Desk**  
THE HAGUE: Israel and South Africa face off at the UN's top court from Thursday, after Pretoria accused Israel of "genocidal acts" in Gaza, charges the Israelis have dismissed as "blood libel".

In an 84-page submission to the International Court of Justice (ICJ), South Africa urged judges to order Israel to "immediately suspend its military operations" in Gaza.

South Africa alleges that Israel "has engaged in, and risks further engaging in genocidal acts against the Palestinian people in Gaza". Israel has angrily hit back at the accusations, with government spokesman Eylon Levy vowing to fight the South African case he described as "absurd blood libel".

Top officials from the two countries will face off in the ICJ's Great Hall of Justice housed in the extravagant Peace Palace in The Hague.

## Pentagon reviews Secretary Austin's not disclosing his hospital stay

**Monitoring Desk**  
WASHINGTON: Both the White House and Pentagon said Monday they would look into why President Joe Biden and other top officials weren't informed for days that Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin had been hospitalized. A Pentagon spokesman pointed to one reason: A key staffer was out sick with the flu.

Even as the Biden administration pledged to look into what rules or procedures weren't followed, it maintained its silence about why Austin had been hospitalized for a week. Late Monday, the Pentagon issued an update saying Austin "is recovering well."

Some Republicans have demanded Austin's resignation, but the Pentagon said he has no plans to step down.

Austin, 70, went to the hospital on Dec. 22 for what the Pentagon press secretary called an "elective procedure" but one serious enough that Austin temporarily transferred some of his authorities to his deputy, without telling her or other U.S. leaders why. He went home the following day. He also transferred some of his authority to Deputy Defense Secretary Kathleen Hicks after experiencing severe pain and being taken back to Walter Reed National Military Medical Center by ambulance and put into intensive care on Jan. 1.

## Judges question Trump's immunity claim in poll subversion case

**Monitoring Desk**  
WASHINGTON: A Washington appeals court questioned Donald Trump's claims that he is immune from criminal charges for trying to overturn the 2020 election, as the former US president on Tuesday warned he could prosecute Joe Biden if he returns to the White House.

Trump looked on as his legal team sought to convince a panel of three judges that former presidents should not be prosecuted for actions they took in office. Trump is due to go to trial in March on federal charges of election subversion.

## Israeli nurse spent Gaza captivity aiding elderly hostages underground

**Monitoring Desk**  
JERUSALEM: A nurse who was among scores of Israelis abducted to Gaza says she spent her captivity in an underground tunnel, treating elderly fellow hostages, some hard of sight or hearing, with meagre medical supplies for which she had to haggle with Hamas.

Nili Margalit was repatriated in a November truce between Israel and Hamas. Interviewed by local TV, she said Palestinian civilians had seized her from her village and "sold" her to the Islamist gunmen who led the Oct 7 rampage that triggered a war.

Unaware that her father, along with some 1,200

other people, had been killed, Margalit, 41, was bundled barefoot into a stifling Hamas tunnel where, she says, hostages had been rounded up, bearing a variety of injuries from their rough handling.

"We were in a state of shock," she told Channel 12 TV. But using basic Arabic learned in the emergency room of a southern Israeli hospital which has Bedouin patients, Margalit informed the Hamas captors that she was a nurse. They agreed to her offer to take charge of hostages' medical needs.

"The elderly ones worried me," she said. "I asked them to list their important medications - for heart conditions."

## Disinformation top risk as elections loom: Davos study

**Monitoring Desk**  
DAVOS: Misinformation and disinformation driven by artificial intelligence ahead of elections in major economies are the biggest global risks this year and next, the World Economic Forum (WEF) warned on Wednesday.

The organisation's Global Risks Report 2024, released ahead of its annual meeting of political and business elites in Davos next week, also warns of the threats posed by climate change, the cost-of-living crisis and war. "Misinformation and disinformation are biggest short-term risks, while extreme weather and critical change to Earth systems are greatest long-term concern," the report said.

"Concerns over a persistent cost-of-living crisis and the intertwined risks of AI-driven misinformation and disinformation."



RAFAH: Palestinian children wait to collect drinking water amid shortages, in southern Gaza.

## Hundreds of Pro-Palestinian protesters arrested after blocking NYC bridges, tunnel

**Monitoring Desk**  
NEW YORK: Pro-Palestinian protesters blocked several New York City bridges and a tunnel on Monday to demand an immediate ceasefire in the three-month-old Israel-Hamas conflict before police arrested hundreds of them and reopened the roadways.

Dozens of chanting demonstrators sat at entrances to the Brooklyn, Manhattan and Williamsburg bridges across the East River, as well as at the Holland Tunnel connecting New York City with New Jersey across the Hudson River, local media reported. Police arrested 325 demonstrators, a New York Police Department spokesperson said, and all of the locations were cleared before noon.

New York City Mayor Eric Adams said the right to protest does not give people the right to block bridges.

"The goal is to peacefully protest without doing major disruption to the city, some people are not just driving to and from."

## Pope calls for universal ban on surrogate parenting, calls it 'deplorable'

**Monitoring Desk**  
VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis called on Monday for a global ban on surrogate parenting, calling the practice "deplorable" and a grave violation of the dignity of the woman and the child.

Francis' remarks are likely to antagonise pro-LGBT+ groups, since surrogacy is often used by gay or lesbian partners who want to have children, and follow his landmark decision to allow priests to bless same-sex couples.

## California sets a special election for US House seat left vacant by exit of former Speaker McCarthy

**Monitoring Desk**  
LOS ANGELES: California Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom on Monday set a mid-March special election date to fill the U.S. House seat vacated by former Speaker Kevin McCarthy. In a statement, Newsom set the March 19 primary date for the 20th Congressional District contest. If no candidate wins a majority of the vote, the top two vote-getters would advance to a May 21 matchup to fill the seat.

The solidly Republican district is anchored in Bakersfield, which cuts through parts of several counties in the state's interior farm belt. The seat is expected to stay in GOP hands.

McCarthy announced in early December that he would step down, two months after his historic ouster as House speaker. The announcement capped a stunning end to a House career for the onetime deli counter owner, who ascended through state and national politics to become second in line to the presidency, until a cluster of hard-right conservatives engineered his removal in October.

McCarthy is the only speaker in history to be voted out of the job. Newsom scheduled the election two weeks after the state's March 5 presidential primary, which will give candidates additional time.

## Gunmen in Ecuador storm TV studio in wave of gang violence

**Monitoring Desk**  
ECUADOR: Gunmen with explosives stormed a TV station on-air in Ecuador on Tuesday during a wave of violence around the nation that prompted President Daniel Noboa to name 22 gangs as terrorist organisations to be hunted by the military.

Police eventually rescued the TV staff and arrested the 13 men who burst into TC's studio during a live broadcast with long-range guns, grenades and dynamites, according to witnesses in the coastal city of Guayaquil.

Elsewhere in Ecuador, at least seven police officers were kidnapped and there were several explosions.

"Thank God, we are alive, because it was an extremely violent attack," said Jorge Rendon, deputy director of the news program that was interrupted.

Noboa, who took office in November promising

to stem drug-related violence, declared a 60-day state of emergency on Monday in response to prison violence — including hostage-taking of guards by inmates — and the apparent escape of Los Choneros gang leader Adolfo Macias over the weekend.

In a revised decree on Tuesday, Noboa declared nearly two dozen gangs terrorist groups, including Los Choneros.

The government has said the violence is a reaction to Noboa's plan to build a new high security prison for gang leaders.

"They have created a wave of violence to frighten the populace," said Admiral Jaime Vela, head of the joint command of the armed forces, adding that the decree made the gangs military targets. Prison transfers of gang leaders have historically led to violence, with hundreds of inmates killed in recent years.

## SFJ besieges Indian consulate in San Francisco with Indira Gandhi float

**Monitoring Desk**  
SAN FRANCISCO: Pro-Khalistan Sikh for Justice (SFJ) blocked and besieged the Indian Consulate in San Francisco, challenging India's National Investigation Agency (NIA) team visiting America with a float depicting the assassination of Indira Gandhi by Satwant Singh and Beant Singh.

Hundreds of SFJ activists took part in the blockade and the rally. The Khalistan freedom car rally marked the 35th anniversary of the martyrdom of Shaheed Satwant Singh and Shaheed Kehar Singh as it journeyed from Berkeley Marina to the Indian Consulate in San Francisco, said the SFJ.

With over 1,000 vehicles, the rally commenced at Marina Berkeley, proceeding towards the San Francisco Indian Consulate. The participants exuded enthusiasm as they passionately chanted slogans in support of Khalistan. The Khalistan Freedom Car Rally, organized by the secessionist group SFJ ahead

of the Khalistan Referendum voting on 28th January in San Francisco, serves as a stark reminder to Modi that "Violence begets violence." "Simultaneously, as reported by Indian media, an NIA team is currently in the United States.

Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, General Counsel of SFJ, pointed out that Modi, who instigated the cycle of violence through the orchestrated assassination of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, should be mindful of the historical response of Sikhs to the violence unleashed by the Indian state on Oct 31, 1984.

He said: "Modi who has started the cycle of violence by orchestrating the assassination of Hardeep Singh Nijjar must not forget the 31 Oct 1984 that Sikhs have always responded to the violence committed by the Indian state."

The Khalistan Referendum voting campaign is being organised under the supervision of the independent Punjab Referendum Commission (PRC).

## Massive winter storm knocks out power in nine US states

**Monitoring Desk**  
NEW YORK: A massive winter storm moving across the eastern half of the US on Tuesday ahead of a forecast brutal freeze this weekend knocked out power to over 302,000 homes and businesses in nine states.

The hardest hit states so far were Georgia with over 65,000 power outages, Florida with over 62,000 outages and Alabama with over 58,000 outages, according to data from PowerOutage.us.

Southern Co operates the biggest power companies in Georgia and Alabama, while NextEra Energy is the biggest power provider in Florida.

Extreme weather is a reminder of the February freeze in 2021 that left millions in Texas and other US Central states without power, water and heat for days, and a winter storm in December 2022 — known as Elliott in the energy industry — which almost caused power and natural gas systems to collapse in

parts of the eastern half of the country. The current storm is blanketing an area from Minnesota in the north to Alabama in the south and from Kansas in the west to North Carolina in the east, according to AccuWeather.com. It is moving toward the US East Coast and the Northeast.

The storm is coming ahead of what will likely be the most frigid weather in over a year since the December 2022 storm blanketed much of the eastern half of the country, according to data from financial firm LSEG.

LSEG projected that natural gas demand, used to heat about half the homes in the country, would reach a daily record of 169.2 billion cubic feet per day (bcfd) on Monday, Jan 15. That is Martin Luther King Jr. Day and the record gas use, which includes exports, is expected even though many businesses and government offices will be closed for a long US holiday this weekend.



DES MOINES: A person uses a snow blower to clear a sidewalk after a snowstorm dumped several inches of snow on the US state of Iowa.



## PM for establishing global fund to ensure worldwide health security

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Wednesday stressed the need to explore mechanisms for global funding that could support nations in need, ensuring that no one was left behind, in the global pursuit of health security. "The call for a sufficiently funded, widely supported country medium-term road-map, as highlighted in the International Health Regulations Core Capacities evaluation, resonates globally. We must invest in open, transparent, and multi-sectoral processes to strengthen buy-in and commitment at all levels," the prime minister said while addressing the inaugural session of the first-ever two-day Global Health Security Summit 2024.

Highlighting the importance of enhancing coordination in the health sector beyond borders, Prime Minister Kakar said "One Health" approach, recognized the interconnectedness of human, animal, and environmental health. "Our commitment should extend to establishing global frameworks that facilitate information sharing, joint re-

search, and collaborative strategies for an effective response during emergencies."

He stressed the need for a strong, visible, active surveillance and tiered public health laboratory system that was integral to early detection, response, and mitigation.

He also called for collaboratively working towards establishing international standards for food safety, harmonizing regulations to ensure the highest level of protection for populations worldwide.

"A cross-sectoral approach to managing antimicrobial resistance requires international collaboration," he said adding "We need a unified front against antimicrobial resistance, with coordinated efforts to develop and enforce global standards for the responsible use of antibiotics and infection prevention," he remarked.

Highlighting the need of collective response to address external and internal health challenge, he said no state in the world could meet the health challenges all alone. Likewise, he said the internal challenges posed by population growth, rapid urbanization

and climate change could not be dealt with by a country alone.

"New diseases, like COVID-19 and climate-induced incidents such as the historic floods of 2022 in Pakistan, are disrupting our citizens' health and causing social and economic impacts. While the developed world has systems in place to timely respond to such health emergencies, a similar ideal system is lacking in the developing world as health systems are relatively weak," he added.

The prime minister said the COVID-19 pandemic had taught us invaluable lessons about the importance of collaboration, preparedness, and a unified response. "It is in this spirit that we convene today, not merely as representatives of our respective countries, but as overseers of global health security."

He called for establishing a shared vision of the world where health security was not a privilege but a universal right and where the strength of a nation's health systems was measured not only by its capacity to respond to crises but also by its ability to prevent, detect, and mitigate health threats.



Special Assistant to Prime Minister for Human Rights and Women Empowerment Mushaal Hussein Mullick addressing a seminar on "US policies on the issues of Kashmir and Palestine" Organized by Area Study Center for Africa, North and South America, Quaid-e-Azam University in Islamabad.

## Mushaal highlights double standards in global discourse on Kashmir & Palestine

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Assistant to the Prime Minister for Human Rights and Women Empowerment Mushaal Hussein Mullick on Wednesday highlighted the prevailing double standards in the global discourse on Kashmir and Palestine.

She was addressing a seminar on "US policies on the issues of Kashmir and Palestine", organized by Area Study Center for Africa, North and South America of the Quaid-e-Azam University.

The event, which saw participation from distinguished speakers including

Ambassador of Iran in Pakistan Reza Amiri Mughaddam, Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed, Ambassador Ali Sarwar Naqvi, and Ambassador Naila Chohan, drew a significant audience comprising students, media professionals, and members of civil society.

Mushaal said the world appeared to be divided between those who supported the oppressive regimes and those who advocated for the rights of the oppressed.

In the contemporary global landscape, she added, moral values and principles took a back seat to economic opportunities,

power dynamics, and materialistic gains.

She pointed out the shifts in the United States policies towards Kashmir and Palestine, which, she said, were dictated by their own strategic interests rather than a steadfast commitment to democratic principles, human rights, and the right to self-determination.

Mentioning the escalating deterioration of the global human rights situation over time, she lamented that genocide had seemingly become an unfortunate new norm in international affairs.

## SC maintains death sentence to Musharraf in high treason case

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Supreme Court of Pakistan on Wednesday maintained the death sentence of former president Pervaiz Musharraf while upholding the verdict of the special court in the high treason case.

The apex court said heirs of former president didn't pursue the case despite the repeated notices, hence the appeal was dismissed. The apex court also turned down the verdict of Lahore High Court (LHC) in which it had terminated the special court.

It noted that the special court announced the sentence to Pervaiz Musharraf on December 17, 2019 and he filed appeal in SC on January 16, 2020.

Petitioner's lawyer Salman Saifdar informed the court that former president

passed away on February 5, 2023 and his appeal was fixed for hearing on November 10, 2023. The lawyer told the court that he had conveyed several messages to the family of ex-president to pursue the case but he received no response.

The court further said that it had served notices to the legal heirs of Pervaiz Musharraf at their available addresses in Pakistan and abroad. The notices were also published in the newspaper, it added.

A four-member bench, headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa and comprising Justice Mansoor Ali Shah, Justice Amin ud Din Khan and Justice Athar Minalal, heard the case. It may be mentioned that the LHC had terminated the special court after declaring it against the law.



QUETTA: Women residents of Marriabad staging a sit-in against non-provision of gas in front of SSGC office.

## Privatization Commission approves structure for 51pc stake sale in PIA

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Privatization Commission Board, chaired by Minister Fawad Hasan Fawad, has greenlit the transaction structure for the sale of a 51% stake in Pakistan International Airlines (PIA). Ernst & Young-led consortium presented the proposal, suggesting the sale of the majority stake along with the division of PIA's assets and liabilities. Despite the government's eagerness for foreign buyers, legal hurdles have surfaced, preventing the sale of a substantial number of shares to overseas investors. Government sources reveal that at least 51% of shares have received approval, with plans to involve a local partner once legal complications are resolved, emphasizing a sale with management control. The caretaker government's endeavors to privatize PIA face a hurdle

due to pending dues of 281 billion rupees. The matter, now approved by the board, will be presented to the Privatization Committee of the Cabinet before reaching the caretaker federal cabinet.

The advisory report, currently incomplete, lacks the valuation of PIA's assets, with a deadline set for the third week of January.

Financial advisers recommend granting the new buyer the option to terminate employees after one year, with proposals to extend this period to three years. Additionally, it is suggested to consolidate non-core assets and liabilities in a holding company, making the federal government responsible for debt and interest payments.

Financial advisers propose transferring 640 billion rupees to the new holding company.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar addresses the Global Health Security Summit.

## Strong protest against low gas pressure, increased utility bills in Quetta

**Independent Report**  
QUETTA: Strong protest was observed against the low gas pressure and increased utility bills of the Sui Southern Gas Company (SSGC) in the metropolis on Wednesday.

The dwellers of Marriabad and adjacent areas staged protest against the issue of gas and its utility bills outside the Regional office of SSGC at Samungli road.

The protestors including women lodged protest against the issue forcefully condemning the SSGC for the issue.

They also staged sit-in in front of the SSGC office. They not only condemned the SSGC admin-

istration but also denounced the provincial government for not taking any action against the issue.

The protestors were very critical of the SSGC on its failure to resolve the issue of low gas pressure in the freezing cold weather of Quetta.

They also criticized the company for sending hefty amount bills to the consumers. They condemned the slab system in the utility bills which caused additional financial burden to them.

Meanwhile, the protestors also marched from Samungli road to the High Court against the issue.

They appealed to the Chief Justice High Court to take notice of the issue.

## ECP directs authorities to provide voter info via SMS

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has instructed the relevant authorities to provide detailed information on voter registration status and constituency details for national and provincial assemblies on 8300. According to ECP spokesperson, the eligible voters can verify their registration status on the voter lists by sending their Computerized National Identity Card (CNIC) number to 8300. Upon sending an SMS to 8300, an automated response will provide details, including the electoral area's name, block code, serial number, National and Provincial Assembly constituency numbers, district name, electoral region name.

## Tribunal dismisses appeals against nomination papers of Nawaz, Maryam

LAHORE (APP): An appellate tribunal on Wednesday dismissed an appeal against acceptance of nomination papers of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supreme Nawaz Sharif for National Assembly constituency NA-130 (Lahore). The tribunal comprising Justice Ahmad Nadeem Arshad announced the reserved verdict and upheld the decision of the returning officer. The tribunal had reserved its verdict on an appeal after hearing arguments of the parties on January 8.

Mahaz chief Advocate Ishfaq Chaudhry had filed the appeal, challenging the acceptance of Nawaz Sharif's nomination papers. He argued that the returning officer erroneously approved Nawaz Sharif's papers, contrary to factual evidence. He requested the tribunal to reject the nomination papers of Nawaz Sharif. Meanwhile, the tribunal also dismissed an appeal against acceptance of nomination papers of PML-N Vice President and Chief Organizer Maryam Nawaz for National Assembly constituency NA-119 (Lahore).

## German Political Counselor meets Senate's Opp Leader

ISLAMABAD (Online): Ms. Janine Rohwer, Political Counselor at the German Embassy, called on Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, Senator Dr. Shahzad Waseem, in Islamabad today.

Matters of mutual interest took center stage as the two sides deliberated on enhancing the bilateral relationship between Germany and Pakistan.

Dr. Shahzad Waseem emphasized Pakistan's deep appreciation for its ties with Germany in diverse sectors.



QUETTA: A delegation led by former Federal Minister Agha Hassan Baloch meeting with Governor Balochistan Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar.

## Two soldiers martyred, two terrorists killed in Lakki Marwat clash

RAWALPINDI (APP): Two terrorists were killed in an exchange of firing with security forces in Lakki Marwat.

According to the ISPR, the troops effectively engaged the terrorists' location as a result of which two terrorists namely Aftab Malang and Masood Shah were killed.

These terrorists remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities against the security forces as well as target killings of civilians. Weapons, ammunition and explosives

were also recovered from them. However, during intense exchange of fire, two soldiers, Sepoy Muhammad Afzal and Sepoy Ibrar Hussain having fought gallantly, embraced Shahadat.

Sanitization operation is being carried out to eliminate any terrorists found in the area as the Security forces of Pakistan are determined to wipe-out the menace of terrorism from the country and such sacrifices of our brave soldiers further strengthen our resolve.

## Four dead bodies recovered from ECP office in Kandhkot

KHANDKOT (INP): Bodies of four persons were recovered from the room of the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) office in Kandhkot, reported on Wednesday.

According to the district health officer (DHO), all four of them, who worked at the office, died due to gas leakage while they were asleep at night.

Police shifted the bodies to hospital for the post-mortem.

## PTI founder, Bushra Bibi not indicted in marriage case

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder chairman and his wife Bushra Bibi were not charged in the alleged illegal marriage case on Wednesday due to the latter's absence.

Senior Civil Judge Qudratullah heard the case. Bushra Bibi's lawyers pleaded for a one-day immunity for not attending the hearing on medical grounds, which was accepted by the court. The case was subsequently adjourned till January 15.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Ombudsman Ejaz Ahmed Qureshi talking with journalists during a meeting.

## KU, SBK Women's varsity Balochistan ink MoU for academic collaboration

KARACHI (APP): The University of Karachi (KU) and Sardar Bahadur Khan (SBK) Women University of Balochistan signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for academic collaboration between the two varsities of both provinces.

Vice Chancellor KU Professor Dr. Khalid Mahmood Iraqi and the VC SBK Women University Professor Dr. Sajida Naureen inked the MoU at the VC Secretariat on Wednesday. According to the MoU, the KU's departments of Education and Food Science and Technology, and Dr. A. Q. Khan Institute of Biotechnology and Genetic Engineering would facilitate the students and faculty of SBK Women University in the first phase and later other departments and centers of the University of Karachi will be included to share their knowledge and experiences with the students and faculty of SBK Women University.

The KU KIBGE and DFS&T would arrange lab

training for the students of SBK Women University, and they would also be guided about the bio-safety, risk management, and on-hand training of various lab equipment. The KU and SBK Women University have also agreed to arrange webinars, seminars, and joint research, besides student and faculty exchange.

On this occasion, KU Professor Dr. Khalid Mahmood Iraqi said that without increasing the literacy rate, we cannot achieve our goals. The only way for Pakistan to move forward is by investing in the education sector and without investing in it, we cannot join the ranks of developed countries. He shared that all kinds of facilities should be provided to the students studying in the backward areas of the country, especially in Balochistan. Chairpersons of the Department of Education, Professor Dr. Rizwana Munir, Professor Dr. Shahina Naz of the Department of Food Science and Technology, Professor Dr. Samina Saeed of the Department of Political Science.

## Zubair Jamali takes notice of Turbat firing incident

**Independent Report**  
QUETTA: The caretaker Provincial Minister for Home, Mir Muhammad Zubair Jamali has taken notice of the attack on the political leader, Aslam Buledi in Turbat. According to an official handout issued here on Wednesday, the Minister Home sought report of the firing incident from Deputy Commissioner Kech. He also ordered to form special teams for arrest of the culprits involved in the incident.

He directed the concerned authorities to give exemplary punishment to the culprits.

## Qureshi moves LHC against rejection of nomination papers

LAHORE (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Vice Chairman Shah Mehmood Qureshi on Wednesday challenged the decision of rejection of nomination papers by the appellate tribunals in the Lahore High Court (LHC) while the party founder's legal team is preparing to move the court.

The PTI founder's team announced that it would appeal against the decision of returning officer who rejected his papers

from National Assembly constituency NA-122 which was dismissed by the appellate tribunal.

Justice Tariq Nadeem announced his decision reserved on Tuesday and upheld the verdict of the returning officer.

Meanwhile, PTI vice chairman and former foreign minister Qureshi on Wednesday challenged rejection of his nomination papers from three constituencies by a tribunal.



LASBELLA: Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) Dr. Amjad Saqib, DG Abdul Jabbar, Zonal Director South Zone Balochistan Munir Jan Sasoli visiting regional office of BISP

## Gilani predicts PPP's victory with heavy margin

MULTAN (APP): Former Prime Minister Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani expressed confidence that the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) would secure a substantial victory in the upcoming elections, attributing this anticipated success to the party's people-friendly policies. Speaking to the public and local influencers gathered at Gilani House on Wednesday, he highlighted the PPP's commitment to safeguarding the rights of the masses and providing them with maximum facilities for a more comfortable life. Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani maintained, that PPP val-

ues the contributions of its dedicated workers and assured that this recognition would persist in the future.

As a democratic political party, the PPP has consistently prioritized addressing public concerns and resolving issues faced by the people. Gilani expressed optimism that, once triumphant in the upcoming elections, the PPP would live up to the expectations of the people. Additionally, the former Vice Chairman, Qasim Bela Sheikh Suhail Akbar, along with numerous associates, declared their decision to join the PPP.