

# Independent

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www.dailyindependent.com.pk

Gwadar

Ph: 2841470/2841473 Vol: XIX No. 226, Rajab 10, 1445 AH Monday January 22, 2024, Pages 04, Price Rs.15

## Bilawal tells PTI workers to support PPP in polls, vows to eliminate politics of revenge

*Says I have experienced the oppression of the PML-N and I would never wish for any political party worker to endure such hardship*

LAHORE (INP): Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari on Sunday urged Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) supporters to rally behind his party in the upcoming general elections, pledging to put an end to the politics of revenge and division.

"I've experienced the oppression of PML-N myself, and I wouldn't want any political party worker to go through such difficulties," he said during a rally in Lahore.

On the occasion, Bilawal targeted the former

coalition partner with strong criticism, questioning how long the people of Punjab would endure the alternating rule of PML-N President Shehbaz Sharif and Wasim Akram plus (PTI's Usman Buzdar) in Lahore.

Accusing the PML-N of engaging in vengeful politics with full force and terrorising workers of the PTI, Bilawal highlighted the PPP's consistent opposition to retaliatory politics and advocacy for the release of political prisoners.

Appealing to the

youth aligned with PTI, Bilawal urged them to cast their votes in the upcoming elections. He empathised with the struggles faced by PPP supporters under the rule of the PML-N and urged the nation to steer clear of the divisive politics of the 1990s.

"Those who used to chant slogans of vote ko izzat do (give respect to vote) are nowhere to be found," he said, referring to former prime minister Nawaz Sharif.

Bilawal reminded that those who now mock the

PPP's limited presence in Lahore have forgotten that the city warmly welcomed Benazir Bhutto, and in turn, she was elected as the prime minister of the country.

The PPP chairman highlighted his 10-point welfare agenda, emphasising that upon assuming power, 17 federal ministries would be abolished and the elites would no longer receive subsidies. Instead, he added, the funds saved from these decisions would be spent on the welfare of the people.



LAHORE: Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari addresses to his supporters during public gathering meeting regarding Election Campaign in connection of the General Election 2024 coming ahead, in Lahore.



A view of group photo as joint military training between Pakistan Army and Royal Saudi Land Forces started at Okara garrison

### Dr. Malik slams incident, demands protection: Two NP leaders survive bid on life in Kech area

**Independent Report**  
QUETTA: Two senior leaders of National Party survived the major attempt on their lives when unknown armed assailants targeted their vehicle with sophisticated weapons in Dasht area of Kech district on Sunday.

According to the reports reaching here, the National Party leaders including Abdul Rasheed and Kuldhar Akram Baloch were on their way in Dasht Khudan area when some armed men resorted to fire targeting their vehicle.

Although the bullets hit the vehicle, but the leaders of National Party riding in

it escaped unhurt in the shootout.

The reports suggested that the vehicle was bullet-proof thus the bullets didn't hurt the leaders of the party.

The party's Secretary General Jan Buledi confirmed the incident and told that both the leaders remained safe in the incident of firing.

Meanwhile, president of party, Dr Abdul Malik Baloch condemned the incident and said that the party leaders were targeted.

He demanded of the government to provide necessary protection to the party leaders.



LAKKI MARWAT: Chief of JUI Maulana Fazlur Rehman addressing students during a ceremony

### New Delhi has no proof of 2019 Balakot strike success, admits ex-Indian envoy

ISLAMABAD (INP): Former Indian high commissioner to Pakistan Ajay Bisaria admitted that India only has narratives but no concrete proof of the success of the 2019 Balakot strikes.

He made this revelation during an interview with The Wire to mark the launch of his recently published book "Anger Management: The Troubled Diplomatic Relationship between India and Pakistan".

"You will perhaps never know for sure how successful the strike was," the former envoy said during the interview.

This is the first time an Indian senior diplomat who was serving as Indian high commissioner in Islamabad at the time of the Balakot strike has admitted to the media that to date India has no proof of the targets the Indian Air Force had boasted it had struck in Balakot.

India had conducted an airstrike in Balakot on February 26, 2019, while

Pakistan responded by conducting airstrikes in Indian-held territory and an ensuing dogfight, Pakistan Air Force (PAF) jets shot down two Indian jets and captured Indian pilot Abhinandan Varthaman.

Earlier when the book was published, a senior source at the Pakistan Foreign Office told a section of the press that the former Indian high commissioner "has certainly given an exaggerated account of the events. The timing of the release of the book is also suspicious. Clearly, he wants to project Modi as a strong leader who has the ability to take bold decisions."

During The Wire interview, conducted by journalist Karan Thapar, Bisaria had, according to Thapar, discussed that the terrorists behind the Pulwama attack of February 19 "lucked out in getting an unprotected target in a convoy of vehicles" and thus "met with unexpected success".

### Pakistan Army, Royal Saudi Land Forces commences in Okara Garrison

RAWALPINDI (APP): The joint military training of the Pakistan Army and Royal Saudi Land Forces organized by the Multan Corps commenced in Okara Garrison.

According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release on Sunday, the military forces of the two countries presented an exemplary military drill at the beginning of the joint training.

On this occasion, the national anthems of both countries were also played during the unveiling of the national flags. The Garrison Commander was the chief guest of the ceremony.

Through the joint training programme, the forces of both countries will have classroom sessions and the opportunity to hone their collective combat skills.

At the end of the opening ceremony, the Chief Guest presented badges of joint training to the officers and men of the forces of both countries.

### Iran, Pakistan flights resume amid easing tensions

KARACHI (INP): In a sign of improving relations between Iran and Pakistan, commercial flights between the two countries have resumed after a brief hiatus.

According to aviation sources, Iran's Mahan Airlines flight arrived in Lahore from Tehran on Sunday, carrying more than 100 passengers. The flight landed at Lahore Airport from Tehran, sources said.

Flights between the two countries were suspended due to Pakistan-Iran tensions over border security and regional issues.



QUETTA: General Secretary Muslim League (N) Balochistan Jamil Shah Kakar and candidate PB-43 Naseem-ur-Rehman addressing a corner meeting at joint Road.

### Pakistan, China agree to enhance cooperation in diverse fields

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and China on Sunday agreed to enhance focus on high-quality advancements in industry, agriculture, information technology, science and technology to ensure tangible socio-economic benefits for the people through the evolution of CPEC.

The agreement was reached during the 4th meeting of CPEC Joint Working Group on International Cooperation and Coordination (JWG-ICC) held here. The meeting, which was chaired by Foreign Secretary Muhammad Syrus Sajjad Qazi and Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs of China, Sun Weidong, exemplified the commitment of both countries to foster international cooperation and coordination.

The two sides reviewed with satisfaction the progress made since the third meeting of the Joint Working Group held virtually on 21 July 2022. The meeting underscored CPEC's pioneering role in strengthening international and regional connectivity while appreciating the open and inclusive nature of this flagship project.

Noting that Pakistan and China were All-Weather Strategic Cooperation Partners and Iron Brothers, the Foreign Secretary reaffirmed the importance of CPEC in promoting win-win cooperation and sustainable development. He also emphasized on welcoming interested third parties to explore mutually beneficial avenues of cooperation.

### Maryam launches election campaign; PTI candidate backs her

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz Chief Organizer and candidate from constituency NA 119 Maryam Nawaz on Sunday formally started her election campaign in the constituency. Addressing a meeting of her campaign team in NA 119, she said that she would never leave the constituency.

She said that progress of each person and family in the constituency was her responsibility and added that people of the constituency had always supported her. She said that she would meet people in the constituency on January 25.

Maryam Nawaz said that she does not consider herself a leader but wanted to serve people. "PML-N Quaid Nawaz Sharif's message of progress would be conveyed to every house," she said and added that the PML-N would win the general elections with a thumping majority. She said that her party had made a development plan for the next five years.

It is pertinent to mention here that PTI candidate Mehar Muhammad Waseem and his supporters would make a formal announcement of joining the PML-N on January 25.

### ECP categorizes over 17,500 polling stations as highly sensitive

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has categorized over 17,500 polling stations as highly sensitive, 32,508 as sensitive, and 42,500 as normal out of a total of 92,500 polling stations nationwide. Polling stations are categorized into A, B, and C groups, determined by their sensitivity levels, official sources told APP.

From over 17,500 polling stations designated as highly sensitive across the country due to concerns of potential unrest, 6,599 are

in Punjab, and 4,430 are in Sindh, all set to be monitored by CCTV cameras.

A total of 2,038 polling stations in Balochistan and 4,344 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have been categorized as highly sensitive. In Punjab, 15,829 polling stations are classified as sensitive, 8,030 in Sindh, 2,068 in Balochistan, and over 6,000 polling stations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa fall under the sensitive category. Responding to a question he said official polling scheme to be revealed 15 days before the scheduled Febru-

### Islamabad dharna poses threat to law & order: Mah Rang attempting to defame Pakistan in name of missing persons, says Jan Achakzai

**Caretaker Minister Information asks Islamabad administration to tackle Mah Rang-led dharna administratively; alleges dharna wala getting foreign funding; says Jaishul Adl doesn't exist in Pak**

**Independent Report**  
QUETTA: The caretaker Provincial Minister for Information, Jan Achakzai has urged the Islamabad local administration to look into and deal the protest dharna being staged by Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC) led by Mah Rang Baloch administratively as it is an administrative matter not a court one.

He said that there are serious threats of any subversive act in the Islamabad dharna and the enemy country's agencies can target the dharna camp just to

blame Pakistan for it later. The Minister for Information was addressing a hurriedly called press conference at the Civil Secretariat on Sunday.

He said that Pakistan has made certain achievements at various fronts against terrorism these days. The major attempt was also foiled by the armed forces recently, he added.

He said that the protest camp staged by the relatives of the terrorists has also been exposed.

Jan Achakzai said that

Mah Rang is trying to defame Pakistan on the matter of missing persons. He said that those being declared missing persons by the protestors in their camp were killed in Iran.

He said that the group staging protest in Islamabad can cause law and order issue in Islamabad, so the administration should tackle the issue dealing with the protestors administratively. The Minister Information alleged that those staging protest in Islamabad want to create law and order situation.



LORALAI: Caretaker Provincial Health Minister Dr. Amir Muhammad Khan Jomezai visiting Teaching Hospital

### Education Ministry reveals 2.62 million children deprived of schooling in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (INP): A recent report from the Federal Ministry of Education has disclosed a startling revelation that a staggering 2.62 million children in Pakistan are deprived of attending school. The data for the report, covering the academic year 2021-2022, is set to be officially released soon.

According to the report's findings, Punjab tops the list with 1.17 million children lacking access to education, followed by Sindh with 763,000, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with 363,000, and Balochistan with 313,000. Additionally, the federal capital, Islamabad, has 80,000 children who are not attending school. The report highlights that 39% of these children are not attending school for various reasons, with Balochistan having the highest percentage of 65% of children out of schools, although Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has a comparatively better educational standard. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 30% of children are not attending school.

Analyzing the data, the report shows a slight improvement from 44% of out-of-school children in 2016-2017 to 39% in 2021-2022. However, at the intermediate level, 60% of students are still deprived of education, while at the matriculation, middle, and primary levels, 44%, 30%, and 36% of children, respectively, are not attending school.

### Govt striving hard to improve existing health facilities: Jomezai

QUETTA (APP): Caretaker Provincial Health Minister Dr. Ameer Muhammad Khan Jomezai on Sunday visited Loralai Teaching Hospital, RHC and MCHC Mekhtar and District Headquarters Hospital Ziarat to inspect health care facilities provided to the patients in the government-run hospitals.

On the occasion, he expressed his displeasure over the absent staff, lack of medicine and poor sanitation, in addition to the dispute between two parties over the land of the hospital and the illegal recruitment in the previous government.

The Minister issued directives to the Deputy Commissioner Loralai and DHO Loralai to form an inquiry investigation committee and probe the land disputes and illegal recruitments and carry out a transparent inquiry. He directed the hospital administration to take necessary steps to further improve the quality of health facilities.

The caretaker provincial minister said the provincial government is striving hard to improve existing health facilities.

### Timely election, the only way out: Shehbaz Sharif

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) president Shehbaz Sharif asserted on Sunday that the nation was ready to enter the election, emphasizing the need for nationwide polls despite challenges.

Talking to a private news channel, he urged all stakeholders to prioritize unity for the country's better interests.

He highlighted the PDM government's dedication to Pakistan's economic survival during its 16-month rule without political agendas. Shehbaz Sharif highlighted the imperative need for rapid economic development in the country, adding that PML-N as a party dedicated to address-

ing the pressing challenges facing the country.

He emphasized that quick economic progress was not only beneficial for the people but overall progress of the nation.

Shehbaz expressed confidence in PML-N securing sufficient seats to form the government at the center. He claimed that "PML-N will 'surprise' everyone in the February 8 election."

Providing insights into the party's preparedness, Shehbaz mentioned that the PML-N has fielded 208 candidates for the 266 National Assembly general seats.

Overall, the party issued 671 tickets for the 859 seats across five legislatures, he added.

## Daily Voice of Masses Independent

### Olive branch?

Dare one hope? Imran Khan's recent overture to "hold dialogue" surfaces as a beacon of potential reconciliation in a political landscape that has increasingly become fraught with venomous rhetoric and hardened stances. However, the ambiguity shrouding the intended recipients of this dialogue raises questions.

Historically, Mr Khan, as the leader of PTI, has taken an unyielding stance against engaging with other political factions — to the extent that he once said he could talk to the militant group TTP, but not "thieves". Such history prompts us to ask: with whom does he now wish to converse, and what has brought about this sudden shift?

Mr Khan's refusal to engage with other political entities despite their willingness to talk has been a hallmark of his political career. His rhetoric not only widened the chasm between the PTI and other parties but also contributed to a fragmented political environment. Such divisiveness is not something Pakistan can afford. Therefore, this newfound desire to initiate dialogue, albeit vague, must be cautiously welcomed, yet scrutinised for its authenticity and direction.

For the dialogue to serve the nation's interest, it must be rooted in the spirit of democracy, involving the country's political stakeholders. History has shown that stability and progress come from collaborative efforts among political entities, not from unilateral decisions or alignments with non-political establishments. It is imperative for the incarcerated PTI chief to clarify that his call for dialogue is not a veiled attempt to negotiate with the establishment, but a genuine effort to bridge gaps with other political parties.

Labelling political opponents — who are simply that, and not enemies to be vanquished — as unworthy of dialogue has done little in the past to foster the environment crucial for democratic discourse. For the nation to move forward, it is essential that political leaders shed animosity and engage in constructive dialogue, prioritising national interest over personal or party agendas.

The onus is now on Mr Khan to elucidate his intentions. It is an opportunity for him to demonstrate statesmanship by extending an olive branch to his adversaries, paving the way to addressing together Pakistan's myriad challenges. The success of an offer for dialogue hinges on its inclusiveness and transparency. For the sake of the nation's democratic health, this dialogue — if it ever occurs — must not be an echo chamber but a platform for genuine engagement among all political stakeholders. Meanwhile, Mr Khan's rivals, including the PPP and PML-N, must respond positively to any sincere overture on his part, rather than bind themselves to elements outside the political realm. Numerous examples establish that it is through dialogue, not discord, that nations forge paths to unity and strength. This nation is waiting for a new chapter of political maturity and inclusiveness to dawn.

## Beyond headlines

Muna Khan

You can't get all your news from headlines. I was reminded of this last month in the US, when reading stories about Harvard president Claudine Gay's resignation following allegations of plagiarism. In reality, her resignation was the result of a well-coordinated campaign which had to do more with race and misogyny than upholding academic principles. But you wouldn't think so reading the headlines.

This campaign to oust the first Black president at Harvard was led by conservative activist Christopher Rufo, who is against DEI (diversity equity inclusion initiatives) and Bill Ackman, Harvard alum and hedge fund billionaire. They were then joined by donors and Republican Elise Stefanik, who headed a Congressional committee looking into accusations of antisemitism on elite campuses. Essentially, they were enraged by Gay's "failure" to condemn antisemitism; ie, pro-Palestinian student demonstrations on Harvard.

"Does calling for the genocide of Jews violate Harvard's rules of bullying and harassment?" asked Stefanik, who herself is a Harvard alum and was removed from an advisory board after she said the 2020 election was stolen from Donald Trump.

"The rules around bullying and harassment are quite specific," replied Gay, "and if the context in which that language is used amounts to bullying and harassment, then we take — we take action against it."

The backlash to Gay's response was swift and calls for her to be removed were amplified. (Incidentally all three universities called to the hearing were headed by women, and only the MIT president

still has her job.)

However, there was little mention of how, in those hearings, Stefanik was framing protest to Israel's occupation of Palestinian land as genocide. At one point, Stefanik described the "call for infitadas as a call to commit genocide against the Jewish people". Even a basic internet search will show that infitadas have not called for eliminating Jewish people. But it was clear no one in the press wanted to make this distinction, perhaps fearing it would be seen as antisemitic. Unfortunately, the most innocuous or seemingly obvious thinking can be framed as antisemitic in the US.

Gay didn't stand a chance.

When the hearings weren't able to produce the desired results, her detractors amplified the accusations of plagiarism. An investigation by Harvard into those claims found "few incidents of inadequate citations" but no wrongdoing. In reality, the right-wing (read rich men) cannot tolerate a Black woman in charge of an institute whose history is rooted in protecting white interests.

Gay resigned on Jan 2, but the trifecta of Ackman, Rufo and Stefanik — as MSNBC's Ali Velshi called them — has vowed to pursue probes into "deep institutional rot" at Harvard. I read this as protecting elite interests, one of which they say is freedom of speech on campuses. But whose speech do they want to protect?

US colleges have never been bastions of free speech because Palestinians, and other marginalised voices, have struggled to tell their stories. However, this is changing as DEI initiatives have allowed new perspectives, and younger generations no longer accept mainstream

media narratives, especially about genocide. The establishment continues to bully them into silence, but I don't know how much longer for.

Advocates of free speech are often the ones who suppress the most marginalised voices. These are usually the same people against DEI initiatives which, they claim, is the only reason Gay got the job. Men like Ackman, with access to formidable resources, are now trying to equate DEI initiatives as racist and/or antisemitic. On the other side are Palestinians and their supporters with far fewer resources but with truth on their side.

The media's focus on Gay's "plagiarism" should remind us how easy it is to distract from coverage on Palestine. I'm not here to say that Gay's story isn't important, but surely there's space in newspapers about Israel's war that is now starving Palestinians. It is also a reminder of how elitist the media is — more keen to talk about palace intrigues at Harvard than starvation in Gaza because that's what its audience wants. This serves politicians like Stefanik well because they don't have to answer questions about their Israeli policies. The media aids them in this.

The interest in Gay's future or Harvard's policies will wane when journalists, editors and media owners realise they can't just serve elite interests. The tide is turning, albeit slowly, and the resistance to this change is immense.

The Israel lobby has upped the ante on keeping its narrative alive, but a new audience is emerging that isn't buying their Kool Aid anymore. This number will grow and won't rely on the media for information. They're already on TikTok; how long before everyone else is too? — Courtesy Dawn

## Security decisions

Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry

Nearly every country facing the kind of security challenges that Pakistan confronts maintains a national security council (NSC) as a principal decision-making body that brings together the civil and military leadership onto one platform. However, in Pakistan, this idea has not been fully embraced.

Gen Ayub Khan constituted a national advisory council to give the impression of collective decision-making by the civil and military leadership. In 1969, Gen Yahya Khan established an NSC for advice. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto constituted a cabinet committee on national security in 1976. Gen Zia also created an NSC in 1985 but abolished it the same year. In 1997, the interim government of Malik Meraj Khalid established a council for defence and national security but the idea was abandoned by the elected dispensation, which preferred the forum of a defence committee of the cabinet.

In October 1998, Gen Jehangir Karamat floated the idea of an NSC for institutionalised decision-making on national security. However, the suggestion was resisted by the Sharif government on grounds that it would give constitutional legitimacy to the army's role in political governance. Gen Musharraf revived the idea in 2004 and set up an NSC as a statutory body, which worked till 2008. In 2013, prime minister Nawaz Sharif softened up the idea but reconstituted it as a national security committee (not council), subservient to the cabinet.

Evidently, the idea of having an NSC could never take root in Pakistan. The story is no different when it comes to the office of national se-

curity adviser. Pakistan had NSAs in 1969, 2004 to 2008, and then 2013 to 2022. Since April 2022, there has been no NSA.

Clearly, there is no consensus in Pakistan about the powers and role of an NSC. Civilian rulers perceive it as a forum to give the military a greater say in political governance, which, they believe, undermines the mandate of elected governments.

A counter argument is given that since an NSC is chaired by the prime minister and includes several leading cabinet members, involving the military leadership in decision-making on critical issues of national security could strengthen, rather than weaken, the hands of the civilian government. Further, given our ground realities, a high-level civil-military forum for collective decision-making could address misunderstandings before these morph into military interventions.

Given the enormous geostrategic changes underway globally and regionally, and instability on our borders with Iran, Afghanistan and India, Pakistan needs an NSC to address security challenges. It is worth noting that national security is now defined more comprehensively as a tripod of traditional security, economic security and human security. Given the interconnected and wider spectrum of threats to national security — external, internal and non-traditional — a whole-of-the-nation approach is needed.

It would also be relevant to look at how the rest of the world is managing decision-making on issues of national security. In the US, the NSC was created in 1947 as the president's principal forum for considering national security and foreign policy matters. It is chaired by the

president and its regular attendees include the vice president, secretaries of defence, state, treasury and homeland, chairman joint chiefs of staff and director of national intelligence. It has become the president's principal arm for coordinating between domestic and foreign policies and across federal agencies. Time has shown that this forum has enabled the president to make informed policy decisions.

In our own neighbourhood, India's prime minister Vajpayee established an NSC in November 1998, six months after the South Asia nuclear tests, and one month after Gen Karamat had proposed the idea in Pakistan. Since then, India's NSC has functioned regularly on all matters relating to the external and internal security of India, with key union ministers and military leaders in attendance. Five NSAs (three with diplomacy and two with intelligence background) have served the country. The NSC has a three-tiered structure, comprising a strategic policy group, an advisory board, and a joint intelligence committee. Pakistan can learn from these and several other examples where national security interests have been better served by institutionalised decision-making. Given that we have border security issues with our neighbours to the east and west, and with the forces of terrorism raising their head again, the next elected government needs to consider setting up a fully empowered NSC, chaired by the prime minister, and also appoint an NSA, so that serious challenges to Pakistan's national security can be addressed collectively and more effectively. — Courtesy Dawn

## Commerce News

### Revenue shortfall to be met with more taxes

**Monitoring Desk**  
ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has committed with the International Monetary Fund to further increase gas prices before February 15<sup>th</sup> — third raise in one year — and also stands ready to impose additional Rs18 billion per month taxes including Rs5 per kilogram levy on sugar. The additional taxes, having an annual impact of Rs216 billion, would be imposed only if the government's income from the Federal Board of Revenue and other sources falls short of the agreed targets, according to a report that the IMF released on Saturday. Caretaker Finance Minister Dr Shamsud Akhtar has given the commitments to the IMF.

The report also disclosed that the caretaker government had missed the

primary budget surplus target of the first quarter of the fiscal year. The IMF board had to give a waiver on this key performance criterion to make Pakistan eligible for the \$706 million loan tranche.

Pakistan would issue a notification of the December 2023 semi-annual gas tariff adjustment determination by February 15, 2024, according to the staff level report.

This is the third gas price increase that would be enforced in the past one year.

In November last year, the caretaker government had increased the gas prices by 1,100%, according to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. The energy ministry claims that the average increase was 172%.

Despite implementing two

increases, circular debt in the gas sector has jumped to over Rs3 trillion as of Nov-end — an addition of Rs938 billion in just five months (Jul-Nov) 2023.

The interim government has committed that the Feb price increase would include maintaining the current progressive slab structure for domestic consumers as well as not disturbing the protection cover enjoyed by the most vulnerable household consumers.

However, the caretaker government has apparently misguided the IMF that the most vulnerable gas consumers were protected from the November 2023 increase. The PBS weekly report showed that the country's poorest segment earning Rs17,000 per month also faced the 1,108% increase in prices.

### PFC plans for global presence of Pakistani furniture

LAHORE (APP): The Pakistan Furniture Council (PFC) has strategically chalked out an ambitious yearly plan to ensure global presence of Pakistani furniture.

Chairing the council's Board of Directors (BoD) meeting here Sunday, the PFC Chief Executive Officer Mian Kashif Ashfaq disclosed the annual plan in which throughout the calendar year, the council aims to showcase its diverse range of furniture products in key international expos. This proactive approach would not only help explore new markets but also captivate the attention of foreign buyers, he added. In order to strengthen the global footprint, the PFC envisions collaborative efforts by fostering partnerships with international counterparts. The plan emphasizes the significance of joint ventures within the furniture industry.



BERLIN: Caretaker Minister for National Food Security and Research Dr. Kausar Abdullah Malik in a meeting with Managing Director, IFW Expo and Management of DLG International Stefan Kresse, on sidelines of Global Forum for Food and Agriculture held in Berlin, Germany.

### Spokesman says: Amendment in Biosafety rules aimed to align with International standards

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of National Food Security and Research on Sunday said that the proposed amendments in Pakistan's National Biosafety Rules (2005) aimed to align with international standards and enhance regulation.

In a press statement, the spokesman of the ministry said that proposed amendments in regulations also aimed at adopting a dual approval approach for planting and

processing respectively as enshrined in 'Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety' concerning GMO imports and focusing on cultivation and food, feed and processing (FFPs).

The other objectives of ongoing processes are to ensure the safe and beneficial integration of GMOs into the country's agricultural landscape, besides fostering collaboration between stakeholders and authorities.

He said that scientific evidence supports the safety of GMOs, with reputable organizations endorsing their consumption, and rigorous testing before approving GMO crops ensures minimal harm to biodiversity and environmental sustainability.

He said Pakistan stands at a pivotal juncture regarding GMO integration into its agricultural landscape.

### IT, solar sectors can significantly boost the economy

ISLAMABAD (INP): Iftikhar Khan, the advisor to the president of FPCCI, stated on Sunday that the IT and solar sectors are both promising and ought to be encouraged.

He said that these industries can boost the struggling economy by pushing IT exports to \$25 billion and lowering the cost of oil imports.

In a statement released today, Iftikhar

Khan advocated for a preferred resolution of the issues facing the IT and solar industries, as well as a reduction in the tax burden on these two significant sectors to enable them to operate at full potential.

Because of the intimate connection between the internet and national development, he said, taxes on the internet and telecom sector should be lowered as well.

### LESCO finds three power pilferers at Wagha

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) Wagha Sub-Division's SDO along with his team checked main transmission lines and power meters during a search operation late last night and found three customers stealing electricity in Hamad Garden area. The company's spokesman told media here Sunday that two accused were stealing electricity by hooking wires on LESCO's main supply lines.

### Aleem Khan vows to introduce reforms in agriculture sector

KHANEVAL (APP): President Iftikhar-e-Pakistan (IPP) Abdul Aleem Khan said on Sunday that IPP would introduce reforms in the agriculture sector and also offer cheap petrol and 300 electricity units to each poor family after coming to power.

He was addressing party workers, ex-chairmen and vice chairman of union councils at Kacha Khoh. He also vowed to provide free of cost electricity to farmers having less than 12.5 acres of land. Similarly, barren land will be made fertile, he added. He alleged that

previous governments could not deliver however IPP would surely offer maximum relief to the masses.

Aleem Khan also promised to provide shelter to waif and strays. IPP will also introduce wash-rooms, and filtration plants and upgrade schools as well as the grades of teachers. About contesting elections from PP 209, he remarked that Ayaz Khan Niazi was his neighbour in Lahore and it was an honour to contest from the constituency. Aleem Khan also promised to ensure record development in the region.



SARGODHA: Farmer busy making traditional sweet item Gurr near Khushab Road.

### Malik Iftikhar urges people to buy 'Made in Pakistan' products

LAHORE (APP): SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry's former president Iftikhar Ali Malik has urged the people to buy 'Made in Pakistan' products to promote the local market that will curtail the import bill and keep the foreign reserves in good shape.

Talking to a traders delegation led by Muslim Khan Buner here Sunday, he added that economically, prioritizing locally made products bolsters the country's industries, generates employment opportunities and increases economic growth. "When people choose Pakistani goods over imported ones,

it strengthens the domestic market contributing to a more robust and self-reliant economy. It also leads to a positive cycle of increased investment, innovation and competitiveness," he argued.

Iftikhar Ali Malik suggested enhanced collaboration between public and private sector to make this initiative successful. He added that government must formulate policies which support local industries, while businessmen must ensure the quality and competitiveness of their products, that align with the ethos of 'Made in Pakistan'.



HYDERABAD: Pakistan Kaim Khani Welfare Trust (PKKWWT) Chairman, General (Retd) Muhammad Yousaf Khan addresses during annual ceremony held at Sindh Museum in Hyderabad.

### NAVTC empowering youth through skill development programs

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTC) is running extensive programs by taking memoranda initiatives to uplift technical training and skill development in the country.

Technical Training and Skill Education has occupied a very important place in the modern-day economy, according to a

news release on Sunday. The Prime Minister's Youth skilled program is a key pillar to empower them with the necessary tools and innovative skills, which will grow globally.

NAVTC invites media friends to join hands with it and have a good look at the programs and initiatives to enhance the technical sector in the country.

# CM announces 15pc quota for news room journalists in residential plots

**Says first time in history of Punjab, 3,300 residential plots granted to the reporters, photographers, cameramen and journalists of the News Room through a transparent balloting mechanism.**

**Independent Report**  
LAHORE: Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi has announced granting residential plots to reporters, photographers and cameramen and 15 per cent quota for journalists working in the news rooms. Addressing a ceremony organised for journalists at the CM Office on Sunday, he said that for the first time in the history of Punjab, 3,300 residential plots had been

granted to the reporters, photographers, cameramen and journalists of the News Room through a transparent balloting mechanism. Reporters will be granted 7-marla residential plots, while cameramen and photographers will be granted 3-marla residential plots through a transparent balloting mechanism. The advertisement for eligibility for acquiring the plot will be advertised on Monday, January 22. Ravi

Urban Development Authority(RUDA) will inform the journalists community about the mode for acquiring the plots. Mohsin Naqvi stated that approximately, one year of the incumbent government has passed. "Whichever city I visit, the only demand being made by the journalists community is to do something substantial for their welfare. Today, we have fulfilled our promise being made with our journalist brothers."



LAHORE: Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Raza Naqvi addressing the ceremony organized in connection with allotment of Residential Plat to Professional Journalist of Punjab.

## IG Punjab reviewed the ongoing works of DIG Security office

**Independent Report**  
LAHORE: Inspector General Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar paid a surprise visit to the under construction office of the DIG Security Division and issued instructions while reviewing the ongoing works of finishing and fixtures.

IG Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar said that after the completion of the civil work, the decoration should be completed as soon as possible according to high standards and no compromise should be made on the quality standard. IG Punjab Dr

Usman Anwar said that police offices and Police stations have been upgraded with the latest resources with the support of Punjab Government and new office of DIG Security Division will be inaugurated soon.

IG Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar further said that police infrastructure development has improved public service delivery to citizens. DIG Security Kamran Adil, DIG Telecommunication Imran Ahmar, SSP Security Division Khalid Mehmood, AIG Operations, SPS, senior officers were present on the spot.

## Flight inquiry helpline 'out of order' at Lahore airport

**LAHORE (INP):** Passengers are facing difficulties in conforming to their flights as flight inquiry lines at Lahore airport are 'out of order'.

According to sources, contact with the flight inquiry section is not being established at the Lahore airport, causing difficulties for the passengers.

We are unable to confirm flights as the schedule is badly affected due to dense fog, the passengers said. The dense fog across the country has badly affected the flight operations. On January 16, four Islamabad-bound flights were diverted to Karachi.

## Talha Mehmood says: Developmental network to be established in Chitral district if elected MNA

PESHAWAR (APP): Due to the negligence of the rulers and elected representatives, the people of Chitral are still forced to live a stone-age life and the roads here are not fit for human beings, people are deprived of their basic rights.

"If I get a chance, I will change the map of Chitral," these views were expressed by Senator Mohammad Talha Mehmood, who is a candidate for the National Assembly seat from NA 1 Chitral in the forthcoming general election to be scheduled on Feb 8, 2024.

Contesting the elections from Chitral on the ticket of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, Muhammad Talha Mehmood said during his

visit to different areas of Tehsil Torkho. He addressed public gatherings there. The people of Veerkop, Shahgram and other areas gave him a warm welcome. The JUI workers welcomed him outside the city and took him in a convoy to the public meeting place.

On this occasion, Haji Shakeel, the candidate of provincial assembly constituency PK-1, former Amir Sher Karim Shah and other members of JUI were also present with him. Senator Muhammad Talha Mehmood, said that when I travelled to Upper Chitral, it seemed that the people here were still forced to live in the stone age.



GILGIT: Chief Secretary Gilgit-Baltistan Abrar Ahmad Mirza chairing a meeting of Secretaries, Divisional Commissioner and Deputy Commissioners at CS Secretariat.

## Rwp Ring Road project to be completed by July 31: Commissioner

**RAWALPINDI (APP):** Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Liaquat Ali Chatta has said that Rawalpindi Ring Road project would be completed by July 31. He informed that the work had been started at the bridges of river Swan and Sial. Thalian Interchange is also being remodeled while the modeling of traffic network of Ring Road and Motorway is also in progress, he said.

He said that Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA) would give a plan for plantation on both sides of the Ring Road.

Over 18 percent physical work of the Ring Road project had been completed, Liaquat Ali Chatta informed.

He said that the Ring Road project would be completed by July 31 and the project would be inaugurated on August 14.

There will be no compromise on the quality of the construction work, he added.

## Firdous says her politics has always been anti-PML-N

**SIALKOT (INP):** Categorically stating that the Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP) candidates did not need other political parties' support for getting elected to assemblies, the party spokesperson Firdous Ashiq Awan on Sunday said that the seat adjustment agreement the IPP had reached with the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) was on paper. In an interview with a private TV Channel

in Sialkot, she said not only her politics had been anti-PML-N right from the very beginning, but voters of her constituency too were opposed to the party.

"I was opposed to any kind of seat adjustment with the PML-N right from the word go," she said. "What happens in the world does have an impact on any country's domestic politics," Firdous said, adding, "For us, Pakistan comes first.

## Persistent use of e-cigarettes badly affects human health

PESHAWAR (APP): The persistent use of e-cigarettes in Pakistani society has exposed the younger generation to serious respiratory, oral and brain issues that may prove fatal in later stages of life.

Besides an increasing possibility of drug addiction and long-term damage to brain and IQ development as well as the respiratory system, constant use of e-cigarettes along with other tobacco products can do even more damage to the human body than conventional cigarette smoking. "Electronic cigarettes

are equally harmful of conventional cigarettes and their regular use can prove fatal due to threats of lung, oral and mouth cancers," said Dr Malik Riaz Khan, Principal Medical Officer, Government Hospital Pabbi, Nowshera while talking to a state run news agency.

Citing reports, he said that about 6.2 per cent of the population used vaping/e-cigarettes while 15.9 million (12.4pc) used smokeless tobacco. "The young adults, especially college and university students, when consumed these products do not realize the long term

harmful impacts of e-cigarettes and at a later stage expose themselves to serious lung related diseases, nicotine addiction, depression and anxiety," he said.

In recent years, electronic cigarettes or vapes have gained popularity among youngsters and students as a fashionable alternative to traditional tobacco smoking. Supporters claimed that e-cigarettes are less harmful than conventional cigarettes but the true intensity of the habit is still unknown to the public. "I started first

naswar, then e-cigarette as a fashion and now conventional cigarette due to unemployment and today I could not go a day without a vape," said Sajid Khan, an e-cigarette smoker of Pabbi.

"These drugs have snatched my happiness and prestige," Sajid Khan said, adding my family had left me abandoned after smoking and I felt angry at myself when children started laughing at me due to my ugly attire.

Dr Riaz said every segment of society, nongovernmental organizations and social bodies are on the same page

to control the alarming use of e-cigarettes, stressing the need for collective efforts to save youngsters from the harmful habit.

Blue Veins and the Provincial Alliance for Sustainable Tobacco Control Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has also urged the provincial government and concerned authorities to remain vigilant of the manipulative ways of the tobacco industry emphasizing the need for concerted efforts to combat these nefarious strategies.

"Governments and civil society organizations must remain active.



KARACHI: View of site after a fire broken out incident at a factory as the fire brigade officials are busy in extinguishing fire and rescue operation, at New Karachi Industrial area of Karachi.

# International News

## President Sisi says Egypt will not allow any threat to Somalia or its security

**Monitoring Desk**  
CAIRO: Egypt's president said on Sunday it will not allow any threat to Somalia, after Ethiopia said it would consider recognising an independence claim by Somaliland in a deal that would give it access to a sea port.

The remarks by President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi were the strongest yet made on the issue by Egypt, which already has frosty relations with Ethiopia, and were a sign that Cairo may get involved in a dispute that has raised fresh tensions in the volatile Horn of Africa.

independence from Somalia in 1991 but has not won recognition from any country. The port lease deal, which was agreed earlier this month but not yet finalised, would be a boon to landlocked Ethiopia and has enraged Somalia.

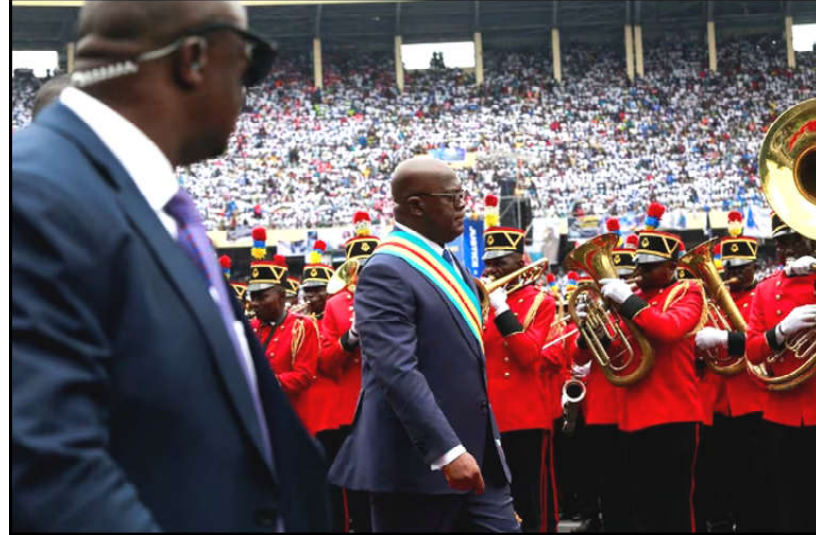
"Egypt will not allow anyone to threaten Somalia or affect its security," Sisi said, speaking at a news conference with visiting Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud.

"Do not try Egypt, or try to threaten its brothers especially if they ask it to intervene," he added.

In a Jan. 1 memorandum of understanding,

Ethiopia said it would consider recognising Somaliland's independence in return for the port access. It would lease 20 km (12 miles) of coastline around the port of Berbera, on the Gulf of Aden, for 50 years for military and commercial purposes.

Ethiopia's current main port for maritime exports is in the neighbouring country of Djibouti. "My message to Ethiopia is that ... trying to seize a piece of land to control it is something no one will agree to," Sisi said, saying cooperation on development was a better strategy.



Democratic Republic of Congo President Felix Tshisekedi arrives to be sworn in for a second term as a president during the inauguration ceremony at Martyrs Stadium in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo.

## Israeli strike on Damascus kills Iran's spy chief in Syria

**Monitoring Desk**  
DAMASCUS: An Israeli strike on Damascus killed the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps's (IRGC) spy chief for Syria and four other Guards members on Saturday, Tehran said, in an attack that tore into a multi-storey residential building.

Iran condemned the strike as a "desperate attempt to spread instability in region", state media reported. "Iran... reserves its right to respond to the organised terrorism of the fake Zionist regime at the appropriate time and place," foreign ministry spokesperson Nasser Kanaani said.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), a Britain-based monitor, said 10 people were killed in the Israeli strike on the Mazzeah neighbourhood of the Syrian capital. The Mazzeah area is also home to the United Nations headquarters, embassies and restaurants.

## Biden cancels nearly \$5 billion more in student debt relief

**Monitoring Desk**  
WASHINGTON: U.S. President Joe Biden on Friday announced student debt cancellation of nearly \$5 billion for an additional 74,000 borrowers, including more than half who earned forgiveness after 10 years of public service as teachers, nurses and firefighters.

The White House announcement brings the total loan forgiveness approved by the Biden-Harris administration to \$136.6 billion for more than 3.7 million Americans.

## India plans to fence off Myanmar frontier

**Monitoring Desk**  
NEW DELHI: India plans to erect a fence along its vast and porous frontier with Myanmar and will scrap a free movement border zone agreement, Indian media reported on Sunday.

The announcement by Home Minister Amit Shah comes after hundreds of troops from Myanmar who were fleeing insurgent attacks crossed into India. The government had "decided to fence the entire open India-Myanmar border".

## Iran launches satellite that is part of a Western-criticized program as regional tensions spike

**Monitoring Desk**  
JERUSALEM: Iran said Saturday it had conducted a successful satellite launch into its highest orbit yet, the latest for a program the West fears improves Tehran's ballistic missiles.

The announcement comes as heightened tensions grip the wider Middle East over Israel's continued war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip, and just days after Iran and Pakistan engaged in tit-for-tat airstrikes in each other's countries.

Meanwhile Saturday, the U.S. conducted new strikes on Yemen's Houthi rebels, who have been targeting shipping in the Red Sea over the war, and Iranian-backed militias in Iraq struck a base housing U.S. troops, wounding several personnel.

The Iranian Soraya satellite was placed in an orbit at some 750 kilometers (460 miles) above the Earth's surface with its three-stage Qaem 100

rocket, the state-run IRNA news agency said. It did not immediately acknowledge what the satellite did, though telecommunications minister Isa Zarepour described the launch as having a 50-kilogram (110-pound) payload.

The launch was part of Iran's Revolutionary Guards' space program alongside Iran's civilian space program, the report said. Footage released by Iranian media showed the rocket blast off from a mobile launcher, a religious verse referring to Shiite Islam's 12th hidden imam written on its side.

An Associated Press analysis of the footage suggested the launch happened at the Guard's launch pad on the outskirts of the city of Shahroud, some 350 kilometers (215 miles) east of the capital, Tehran. Iran's three latest successful satellite launches have all happened at the site.



DAMASCUS: Security and emergency personnel search the rubble of a building destroyed in an Israeli strike.

## '4 survivors' after Russian jet crashes in Afghan mountains

**Monitoring Desk**  
MOSCOW: Four people survived and two are unaccounted for after a Russian plane crashed in mountainous northeastern Afghanistan, the air transport agency Rosaviatsia said on Sunday.

The Falcon 10 business jet was believed to be carrying six people on a hospital flight from India to Uzbekistan and Russia before communication was lost on Saturday evening.

tatively, four are alive. They have various injuries. The fate of two people is being clarified," Rosaviatsia said, citing the Russian embassy in Afghanistan.

The RIA Novosti news agency said two passengers were Russians, one who was seriously ill, and the other husband who had paid for the flight.

The two-engine plane was built by France's Dassault in 1978 and owned by a company called Athletic Group and a private individual.

## UK to upgrade warship defence missile system used in Red Sea

**Monitoring Desk**  
LONDON: Britain's Ministry of Defence said on Sunday it would spend 405 million pounds (\$514 million) to upgrade a missile system now being used by the Royal Navy to shoot down hostile drones over the Red Sea.

The Sea Viper Air Defence system will be upgraded with missiles featuring a new warhead and software enabling it to counter ballistic missile threats, the MoD said in a statement.

The contracts were awarded to the British division of MBDA, a missiles joint venture owned by Airbus, opens new tab, BAE Systems, opens new tab and Leonardo, opens new tab, the MoD said.

"As the situation in the Middle East worsens, it is vital that we adapt to keep the UK, our allies and partners safe," defence minister Grant Shapps said in the statement.

"Sea Viper has been at the forefront of this, being the Navy's weapon of choice in the first shooting down of an aerial threat in more than 30 years."

## How much carnage is enough, wonders UN General Assembly chief

**Monitoring Desk**  
WASHINGTON: "How much carnage is enough to call for a ceasefire" in Gaza, wondered the president of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) at a gathering of non-aligned nations in Uganda on Friday.

"That situation (in Gaza) behooves us to ask: how much is enough? And does the very concept of enough even exist in this setting?" asked UNGA President Dennis Francis as the death toll in Gaza carnage exceeded 25,000.

António Guterres aired similar sentiments in an earlier statement, telling the world: "We cannot allow what has been happening in Gaza to continue.

We need an immediate humanitarian ceasefire." Addressing a gathering of 120 nations in Kampala, the Ugandan capital, the UNGA chief said the only viable pathway for both Israelis and Palestinians to have peace "is through a negotiated political solution based on the two-state solution".

Secretary General

### Aneeq inaugurates free medical camp at Badshahi Masjid

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed inaugurated a health camp at Badshahi Masjid here on Sunday, and stressed the need for collective efforts to establish a healthy society.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony and a seminar on 'Role of mosques, mimbir and mehrah for healthy society', he said there were more than 250,000 mosques in the country, which should be made a centre of medical and other facilities. He added that these mosques should be given the status of community centres.

Caretaker Federal Minister Health Dr Nadeem Jan, Punjab Health Minister Dr Jamal Nasir, Minister Auqaf Sayed Azfar Ali Nasir, Chairman Ruet-e-Hilal Committee Abdul Khabeer Azad, Joint Secretary Ahmad Nadeem, Secretary Auqaf Dr Tahir Raza Bukhari and others were also present.

Aneeq Ahmed said that medical camp had been established at historic Badshahi Masjid and other mosques of big cities like Karachi, Rawalpindi and Islamabad in which dentists, ultrasound, sugar screening and other facilities are being provided free of cost to people.

The religious minister appealed to consider mosques in the lists of priorities as these could play an effective role in developing and establishing healthy society. He termed education and health the major aspects of any society and stressed the need to extend great importance toward these vital sectors. Well-being is not an inheritance but a process of continuity that is achieved over time, he added.

Addressing the worker convention at the PML-N House at Paris Road Saturday night, he said the youth were valuable asset to the country and they should keep unity in their ranks. He said the PML-N was a symbol of development and prosperity, and whenever the party came to power, Sialkot, the city of Allama Iqbal, witnessed unprecedented development. Various educational institutions were built, women's university was established, and motorways were made. The former minister said Sialkot was a stronghold of the PML-N. Candidates from PP-46 and PP-47 Chaudhry Faisal Ikram and Muhammad Manshaullah Butt, respectively, City President PML-N Muhammad Rafique Mughal, Former Mayor Sialkot Chaudhry Toheed Akhtar, District Youth Coordinator Umer Chachi and City Coordinator Hafiz Chand Sheikh were also present.

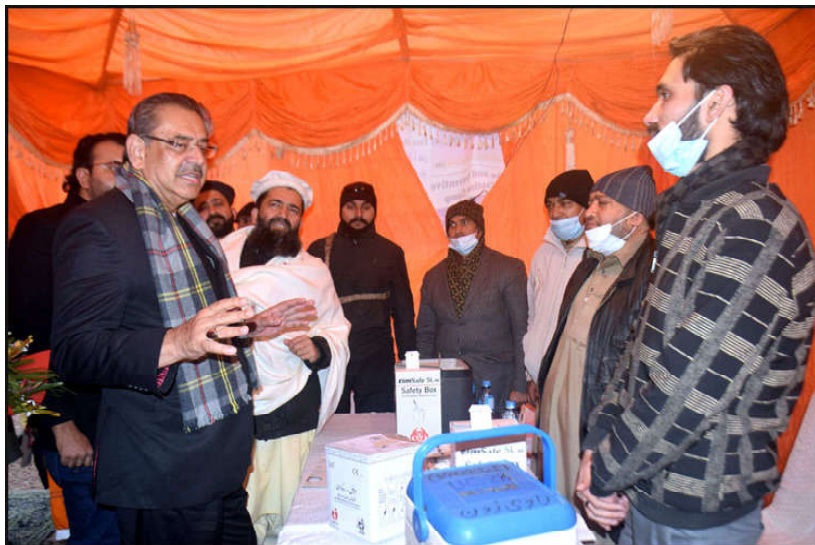
### China-Pak companies sign \$43 mln new energy order

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan's leading distributor of solar energy products, MaxPower signed a USD 43 million order with China's new energy company, CHISAGE ESS. According to CHISAGE, they have supplied over 300,000 units of inverters and will provide a full range of low-voltage single-phase and three-phase hybrid inverters as part of the order.

### Khursheed assures PPP would save Pakistan economically

SUKKUR (APP): PPP leader Syed Khursheed Ahmed Shah on Sunday confidently declared his party will win the upcoming general elections. "InshaAllah, the next government will be of the Pakistan Peoples Party".

Addressing a gathering here, he assured that the People's Party would save Pakistan economically. He said that the PPP Government in Sindh has accomplished a lot, endured oppression, and faced challenges but has never left the field.



LAHORE: Caretaker Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed Khan along with Abdul Khabeer Azad, Chairman of Ruet-e-Hilal Committee, Pakistan visiting free medical camp titled role of Mimbir and Mehrah in Healthy Society organized by Primary and Secondary Healthcare Department Punjab at Badshahi Masjid.

### Non-state actors threat to regional, national security: Mushahid

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Senate Standing Committee on Defence, Mushahid Hussain Sayed highlighted the significance of the current scenario, dominated by turbulence and transformation. In this context, he analyzed China's Global Security Initiative (GSI) as a new framework for peaceful resolution of security issues, since GSI focuses on security as being indivisible, based on respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of states. It seeks also to promote a security governance framework, including A.I., cyber security and related security threats based on accepted international norms of behavior enshrined in the UN Charter and international law.

### Sardar Mahtab firms to supports PTI

ISLAMABAD (INP): Sardar Mahtab Abbas has boldly declared that he has never cared about the consequences for principles. According to details, following his expulsion from the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Sardar Mahtab Abbas has reacted to the party's previous decision, stating that he is contesting the upcoming elections independently. He clarified that he did not seek a ticket from the PML-N, as he believes it's not the time for political compromises.



MALAKAND: Amir Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan Siraul Haq addressing annual ceremony of Khatam-e-Bukhari at Daraul Aloom Taleem Sakhakot.

### Pneumonia claims lives of 8 children in Punjab in 24 hours

LAHORE (INP): As many as eight children died of pneumonia and related cases in different areas of Punjab in a single day amid intense cold weather.

### Citizens participation and awareness: Seminar held on Balochistan Livelihood & Entrepreneurship

LAHORE (INP): The seminar was held on the citizens participation and awareness under auspices of Balochistan Livelihood and Entrepreneurship Project (BLEP) in Zhob on Sunday.

### Asghar Khan Achakzai says: Those making politics in name of religion as well as Zai & Khaili failed

CHAMAN: The provincial president of Awami National Party (ANP) Asghar Khan Achakzai has stated that those making politics in name of religion as well as Zai and Khaili have failed and now the people would vote to the candidates of ANP on the basis of their character.

### Alvi for blacklisting proven bank fraudsters, directs banks to refund Rs 2.74 million to fraud victims

ISLAMABAD (Online): President Dr Arif Alvi has asked the Banking Mohtasib to take up the matter of banking frauds with the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) to get essential SOPs issued so that proven fraudulent personnel's CNICs could be blacklisted, placed at Central negative list, and no Banking/financial facility could be extended to them by the Banking industry.

The President issued these directions while rejecting two separate representations filed by the United Bank Ltd (UBL) and Bank Alfalah Ltd (BAL) directing the banks to pay Rs 1.9 million and Rs 0.744 million respectively to their customers who fell victim to online banking fraud at the hands of fraudsters.

As per details, Mr Qaiser Mehmood who was holding an account with UBL received a call from a number resembling the Bank's helpline and the caller advised him to activate his disabled digital banking app. He activated his app, after which Rs 2 million were transferred from his account through multiple transactions. Similarly, Brigadier Muhammad Arif Shaikh received a call from fraudsters asking him for his banking credentials to remove some technical flaws from his account. Later, an amount of Rs 994,000 were transferred from his account through 19 transactions. They asked their respective banks to refund their money, but to no avail.



KARACHI: Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM-P) Convener, Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui along with Farooq Sattar, Mustafa Kamal, Nasreen Jalil and others waving hands to their supporters during public gathering as part of Election Campaign in connection of General Election 2024, at Jinnah Bagh.

### ECP initiates actions against candidates over violation of election code

ISLAMABAD (INP): The monitoring teams of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) have initiated the process of issuing notices and imposing fines against candidates involved in the violation of code of conduct.

The active monitoring teams of the ECP in this regard took action against the candidates in various districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on the violation of the code of conduct. Similarly, monitoring teams of the Election Commission are also active in Punjab.

In Nankana Sahib, a warning was issued to election candidates for displaying Panaflex and billboards. Panaflex and other promotional materials have been removed from Jhelum, Rawalpindi, Islamabad, Sargodha and Bhakkar.

Panaflex hoardings have also been put up in Chinot, Faisalabad, Nankana, Kasur, Lahore and Multan. Provincial Election Commissioner Punjab has issued strict instructions to District Monitoring Officers in this regard.

### Five die, two injured in fog-related accidents

ISLAMABAD (INP): At least three people were killed and two others were wounded in a fog-related road accident in Kasur on late Friday night.

According to private news channel, an accident occurred at the Kutchery Road in Pattoki where a truck collided with a trailer parked on the road side due to dense fog, killing three persons on the spot and injuring two others.

Police and rescue teams reached the spot after getting information and shifted the dead and injured to a nearby hospital. In another incident, two people died when a passenger van crashed into a loader near Jehan Khan on Jhang Road in Bhakkar.

According to Rescue officials, the fatal smash between the passenger van and loader resulted in on-the-spot deaths of two passengers, while seven other travellers sustained injuries. They said that the accident occurred due to dense fog engulfing the area.

found non-compliant with the SBP's directives regarding the implementation of monitoring systems to detect fraudulent transactions. He added that multiple consecutive transactions were conducted but it did not raise alerts and allowed the money to pass through the system. He noted that the banks also failed to establish the legitimacy of transactions in terms of Section 41 of the Payment System and Electronic Fund Transfers Act, 2007. He said that the banks failed to submit any proof of compliance with the directions of SBP despite being given ample opportunity. He concluded that malpractice and maladministration stood established on part of the banks and they were liable to make good the financial loss of the complainants.

The President, therefore, rejected the representations of UBL and BAL and directed them to pay Rs 1,998,500 and Rs 744,000 to Mr Qaiser Mehmood and Brig Muhammad Arif Shaikh respectively.



KARACHI: Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM-P) Convener, Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui along with Farooq Sattar, Mustafa Kamal, Nasreen Jalil and others waving hands to their supporters during public gathering as part of Election Campaign in connection of General Election 2024, at Jinnah Bagh.

### “Take care of your tongue,” Ahsan warns Bilawal on debate challenge to Nawaz

SHAKARGARH (INP): PML-N leader Ahsan Iqbal on Sunday infuriated over People's Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto over challenging Nawaz Sharif on an election debate.

"It is not the level of Nawaz Sharif to debate with an 'under-training'," Ahsan Iqbal here said. "I am warning Bilawal to take the name of our leader with due respect," PML-N leader said. "We know, how to reply, if he doesn't care of his tongue," he warned.

PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto in a media interview has challenged the PML-N candidate for prime minister's office to hold a television debate with him.

Political temperatures are getting high in the country as the February 08 date of Pakistan's general elections coming near. Political opponents using scathing language and exchanging allegations before the election date.

PPP Chairman and former foreign minister Bilawal Bhutto, targeting the PML-N and its top leadership. In an interview he challenged that the PML-N's candidate for prime minister's office to hold a debate on television with him.

"Nawaz Sharif didn't learn from his mistakes and playing final innings of his political career," he said. "He will continue the politics of victimization after coming into power. He has to take revenge from Adiala Jail Superintendent and judges," Bilawal said.

### Siraj asserts national progress requires breaking free from family-led parties

MARDAN (INP): Jamaat-e-Islami chief Sirajul Haq stated on Sunday that on Feb 8, the people of Pakistan will shape the future by rejecting what he described as "political jokers" through their votes.

In an indirect reference to the PML-N and PPP, Siraj asserted that national progress was not possible without liberation from the two parties led by powerful families. While speaking during a ceremony here, Siraj stated that if the JI came into power, they would dismantle the system inherited from the British, eliminate the existing VIP culture and introduce reforms in the bureaucracy. The JI chief expressed his commitment to eradicating non-development expenditure and using these funds for orphans and disabled individuals.