

# Independent

dailyindisb@gmail.com Chief Editor: Syed Farooq Shah www.dailyindependent.com.pk Islamabad

Vol. XIV No. 27 Reg. mails-B/ID-445 Friday February 02, 2024, Rajab 21, 1445 A.H. Ph: 2158688, 2158997 Pages 4: Rs. 12

## Despite security challenges, ECP fully ready to stage polls on Feb 8

*CEC says any efforts to hinder electoral process and affect security to be dealt with iron fists*

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja stated on Thursday that despite existing security challenges, the upcoming elections will be held on February 8. The Election Commission is fully prepared to conduct the elections with the support of law enforcement agencies and the Pakistan Army. He expressed these views while addressing an important meeting

held by the Election Commission to discuss the deteriorating law and order situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan and its impact on the general elections. The Election Commissioner made it clear that despite terrorism, security challenges, and incidents affecting the electoral process, the elections will not be postponed and will take place on schedule. He urged

everyone not to harbor any misconceptions or doubts in this regard. He warned that decisive measures would be implemented against any elements attempting to undermine peace and security during the electoral process. Apart from the members of the Election Commission, Caretaker Federal Minister of Interior, Federal Secretary of Interior, DG-IB, Chief Secretary and IG of Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa Province and Balochistan Province, representatives of other agencies, the Secretary Election Commission, and other senior officers participated in the meeting. Addressing the participants of the meeting, the CEC expressed his concern over the deteriorating law and order situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, especially the incidents of attacks on Election Commission offices and political meetings.



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



ISLAMABAD: The Ambassadors-Designates of Russia, Italy and Mongolia presenting their diplomatic credentials to President Dr. Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

## President for expanding trade, cultural ties with Russia, Italy, Mongolia

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr. Arif Alvi on Thursday urged the need to further expand trade, economic, cultural and people-to-people relations with Russia, Italy and Mongolia. He said that Pakistan offered immense investment opportunities for foreign investors, who should benefit from its business-friendly environment by investing in various economic sectors. The president expressed these views while talking to the ambassadors-designates of Russia, Italy and Mongolia, who separately called on him at the Aiwan-e-Sadr and presented their diplomatic credentials.

Speaking to the Ambassador-designate of the Russian Federation to Pakistan, Albert P. Khorev, President Alvi expressed Pakistan's desire to further strengthen bilateral relations with Russia in the fields of trade, economy, tourism and culture. He expressed the hope that the new ambassador would further promote bilateral ties between the two countries. Talking to the Ambassador-designate of Italy to Pakistan, Marilina Armellini, the president highlighted the need to further enhance bilateral trade between the two countries. He said that Italian investors should benefit from

the investment opportunities under the Special Investment Facilitation Council in various sectors. He stated that the Pakistani diaspora was playing an important role in the development of Italy and was acting as a bridge between the two countries. He also asked the ambassador to help in expediting the issuance of visas to Pakistani students. Speaking to the non-resident Ambassador of Mongolia to Pakistan, Tuvshin Badra, the president said that both countries needed to further promote trade, economic, and cultural relations for the mutual benefit of the two sides.

## Govt approves increase in prices of 146 essential life-saving medicines

*Decision taken due to rising prices of raw materials in global market; PM Kakar directs Drap to speed up actions against smuggling of drugs*

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Thursday directed to improve the performance of the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) and accelerate action against drug smugglers and hoarders. Chairing a meeting of the Federal Cabinet, the prime minister instructed to compile the recommendations for necessary legislation regarding the de-regulation of drug prices and its onward presentation before the Parliament by the next elected government.

Addressing the cabinet meeting, he said the government was taking all possible steps to provide medicines to the common man at reasonable prices. He further said the government was framing such policies which would benefit the common man and also help develop the pharmaceutical industry. The cabinet approved the increase in the prices of 146 essential life-saving medicines, keeping in view the rising prices of their raw material in the

global market under the hardship category. The meeting was informed by the Ministry of National Health Services and DRAP that through the online portal of the Authority, citizens could file complaints regarding the non-availability of medicines in the market. On the recommendation of the Ministry of Finance, the cabinet approved the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the Competition Commission of Pakistan and the

State Administration of Market Regulation (SAMR) China. Under the MOU, exchange of information and technical capacity would increase between the two countries. The cabinet, on the recommendation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, allowed renowned Pakistani psychologist Muhammad Saleem Khan Tareen to receive the award of Member of the British Empire from King Charles (III), in honour of his services in the field of psychology. It also allowed Air

Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu to receive the Gold Medal for Aeronautical Merit awarded by Italy, in recognition of his services for the increased cooperation between the air forces of the two countries. The cabinet approved the decisions taken in the meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Energy (CCOE) held on January 26, besides endorsing the decisions of the Cabinet Committee on Legislative Cases taken on January 26 and 31, 2024.

## Caretaker govt fully prepared & committed to hold elections on Feb 8: Solangi

KARACHI (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Thursday said that the caretaker government was fully prepared and committed to conduct general elections on February 8. He was addressing a seminar on "Challenges and Roadmap for the New Government", organized by the Press Information Department. The minister said that as the government's spokesperson, he had been reiterating the caretaker government's commitment for holding elections as per the schedule given by the Election Commission of Pakistan. "The election process should continue in any case

and major issues facing the country, including economy, foreign policy, local governments, governance and civil service reforms, should also be discussed to find their solution," he remarked. Solangi said that despite many flaws in the democratic system and electoral process, everyone was in agreement that the electoral process should not be stopped and elections should be held. He said that since the formation of the caretaker cabinet on August 17, 2023, the government had been consistently reiterating its commitment that the elections would definitely be held and also on the scheduled date of February 8.



QUETTA: Caretaker Interior Minister Dr. Gohar Ejaz addressing a Press conference regarding holding of peaceful elections

## CT Interior Minister chairs meeting on law & order, preparations: It's ensured to provide peaceful and conducive environment for general elections, says Dr. Gohar Ejaz

*65,522 personnel of law enforcement agencies to be deployed for security during elections in Balochistan, CS briefs Federal Interior Minister*

QUETTA: The caretaker Federal Minister Interior, Dr. Gohar Ejaz has stated that it is being ensured by the government with all stakeholders to provide peaceful and conducive environment for the upcoming general elections to be held on February 8 in the country. He said that the caretaker government is determined to ensure, free, fair and peaceful elections in the country including Balochistan. The caretaker Interior Minister was chairing a high level meeting on the law

and order here on Thursday. The Chief Secretary Balochistan, Shakeel Qadir Khan briefed the visiting Interior Minister about the law and order situation and preparations of the caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar. Also present in the meeting were caretaker Provincial Minister for Home, Captain (Retd) Mir Muhammad Zubair Jamali, Additional Chief Secretary Home, Zahid Saleem, Inspector General of Police, Abdul Khaliq Sheikh and other concerned high ups from civil bureaucracy and military. It may be mentioned

here caretaker Minister Interior arrived in the provincial metropolis to review the preparations for elections besides the law and order situation in the province on special directives of the caretaker Prime Minister. Speaking on the occasion, the Interior Minister said that he is visiting the provinces for review of the preparations of elections on special directives of the caretaker Prime Minister. Dr. Gohar Ejaz directed to the concerned authorities to provide peaceful and conducive environment for the elections.

## Nawaz vows to remove KP people's sense of deprivation

SWAT (APP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz Quaid Muhammad Nawaz Sharif on Thursday said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had been deceived in the name



of change during last 10 years rule of Pakistan Tahreek-e-Insaf and vowed to remove sense of the deprivation of its people.

Reiterating to bring positive socioeconomic changes, Nawaz Sharif said that the people of KP were in fact deprived of development under the guise of so-called change.

Addressing a public gathering in Mingora, he said that all sectors in KP were badly affected by poor governance of the PTI government. Neither the promise of construction of 350 dams was fulfilled nor five million houses were constructed or 10 million jobs created, he added. Where were 10 billion trees, he asked. Nawaz Sharif said during his last government, there was no loadshedding while price hike was controlled and peace was restored in Swat.

His party if voted to power, would again expedite the pace of economic development, besides taking steps to reduce price hike and inflation, he vowed.

## Security forces gun down two notorious terrorists in DI Khan

RAWALPINDI: The security forces on Thursday gunned down terrorists ring leader Ashraf Sheikh, the high value target, along with his accomplice Burhan Ullah after an intense exchange of fire during an intelligence-based operation (IBO) in Dera Ismail Khan District. According to an Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release, weapons, ammunition and explosives were also recovered from the killed terrorists who remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities, including target killing of innocent civilians. "Sanitization operation is being conducted to eliminate any other terrorist, if any, found in the area. Locals of the area appreciated the operation and expressed their full support to eliminate the menace of terrorism," the ISPR said.



KHUZDAR: Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari addressing a public meeting in connection with election campaign.

## 'If anyone can resolve missing person issue, it's me', says Bilawal

KHUZDAR: Former foreign minister and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, addressed a fervent crowd in Khuzdar on Thursday, asserting himself as the key to resolving the issue of missing persons in Balochistan. Bilawal claimed that no other federal politician empathises with the pain and suffering of the region's people like he does. During the public meeting, Bilawal emphasised the PPP's commitment to fighting for the rights of the people of Balochistan, stressing that the party

does not bow down to external pressures. "Yes, people know that PPP is the only party that does not bow before anyone... we are ready to fight all forces but we cannot compromise on people's rights," he declared. Bilawal further asserted that the PPP is uniquely positioned to address the challenges faced by Balochistan, claiming that if the 18th Amendment and NFC Awards introduced during the tenure of former president Asif Ali Zardari had been fully implemented, many of the ongoing conspiracies in Balochistan would have ceased.



ISLAMABAD: The CDWP meeting presides over by Deputy Chairman Planning Commission Mohammad Jehanzeb Khan. Secretary Planning Awaiz Manzoor Sumra, senior officials from Planning Commission and Federal Ministries/Divisions participated in the meeting, while Chairman/ACS (Dev) from Provincial Governments also participated in the meeting.

## Govt. pursues extradition of fugitive journalist

ISLAMABAD: Interpol has declined the Federal Ministry of Interior's plea for the re-arrest of journalist Syed Fawad Ali Shah, who fled Pakistan after facing multiple charges. The journalist, accused under conspiracy, secret, and cybercrime acts, managed to slip away despite bail from the Islamabad High Court, prompting international pursuit. Speaking anonymously,

a senior government official disclosed that Fawad Ali Shah's evasion led to a renewed effort by Pakistani authorities to bring him to justice. However, Interpol's refusal highlighted discrepancies in the case's eligibility for international intervention. Following Fawad's escape abroad, a fresh case was lodged against him by the Federal Investigation Agency's counter-terrorism wing. The file, now sealed, underscores the gravity of

Fawad's alleged offenses and the government's determination to secure his return. Undeterred by Interpol's rebuff, the government is mobilizing diplomatic channels with Thailand and Malaysia to facilitate Fawad's apprehension and extradition to Pakistan. This latest development underscores the complexities surrounding Fawad's case and the lengths to which authorities are willing to go in pursuit of justice.

Daily Voice of Masses  
**Independent**

**Double down**

Two verdicts in two days. A 14-year sentence for 'corruption' to accompany a 10-year sentence for 'divulging state secrets'. First, his top lieutenant, and now his spouse also convicted and jailed.

And still, former prime minister Imran Khan's troubles are far from over. What new depths will the state plumb as it makes clear its antipathy towards him?

The days leading up to the Feb 8 elections may hold more 'surprises'. For now, we may only sit and spectate as facts, procedures, laws and institutions bend to the will of those who think that no elected leader deserves a free pass — until they decide they do.

Mr Khan and his wife, Bushra Bibi, have been convicted for under-declaring the value of a jewellery set they received as a gift while the former was still in office. The verdict has been delivered via an accountability court judge who, just days before the last general election, had also convicted this year's front-runners in the Avenfield reference.

That judgement was overturned in November last year. Most commentators believe this one will not last too long, either. Incidentally — or perhaps by design — the same judge is also supposed to hear a similar case involving items retained from the state's gift repository. The matter involves several cars allegedly retained by Messrs Nawaz Sharif, Yousuf Raza Gilani and Asif Ali Zardari in violation of Toshakhana rules.

However, given how completely the judge's attention and energies have been devoted over the past month to delivering the 'accountability' brand of justice to Mr Khan and his spouse, he seems to have had very little time to spare for any other of the matters pending before him. He retires soon, in March, after 11 years in NAB's accountability courts. Most accountability judges are appointed for three. During that extended tenure, he has judged four former prime ministers, all brought before him when their free passes ran out.

A word, too, on NAB, an institution that seems to exist only to cycle through political targets based on the whims of the powers that be.

The bureau has gained notoriety over the years for swooping in, guns blazing, when a politician's free pass has been revoked. It digs up all manner of 'corruption' cases against the targeted politician, effectively drowning them under a wave of litigation.

Sometimes, a conviction or two is secured through legal proceedings based on weak evidence and conducted without regard for due process. Unsurprisingly, most cases and convictions collapse within a few years, and those once accused of serious malfeasance eventually return as political martyrs.

It is a rinse-and-repeat cycle that has gradually deprived the idea of accountability of any legitimacy whatsoever. As this latest conviction shows, nothing seems about to change.

**Years of un wisdom**

F.S.Aijazuddin

Memoirs of retired Indian and Pakistani diplomats contain accounts of their postings to Islamabad and New Delhi, spent in professional pugilism and recollections in tranquillity.

Former Indian high commissioner Ajay Bisaria's book *Anger Management: The Troubled Diplomatic Relationship between India and Pakistan* belongs to that genre. Its adversarial counterpart is former Pakistan HC Abdul Basit's *Hostility: A Diplomat's Diary on Pakistan-India Relations*.

Bisaria served in Islamabad for 20 months before being summarily 'expelled' in 2019—the first among his 24 predecessors to suffer this indignity. His book is the most comprehensive survey to date of the first seven years in a conflict that could well score a century. It is structured to cover seven decades and some years, from 1947 into 2023. It could carry the subtitle 'Seven Pillars of Unwisdom'.

According to him, three ideas "of identity, territory, and security have populated scholarship on the subcontinent". They recur in his narrative. He tells us that "a lesson all Indian envoys to Pakistan learn at some point or the other: Pakistan policy in India is driven personally by India's prime minister".

Since independence, India has drawn its elected PMs from the same democratic pool, installed by popular vote. The PM's authority is unequivocal, except in the instance of the paloo-tied control exercised by Sonia Gandhi during PM Manmohan Singh's tenure. In contrast, leadership in Pakistan has passed from governors general, to nominated or self-appointed presidencies, to selected PMs.

Many of them have articulated their views on foreign policy. None has done so as poetically as the late PM A.B. Vajpayee: "The tools of diplomacy are words, eyes, and signs; Words, eyes, and signs; plus forks and knives; First you shake hands; Then wring them in repentance."

Bisaria notes that personal chemistry between subcontinental leaders has often raised their people's hopes: "Duos of leaders had held great promise of breakthroughs [...]: Zia and Rajiv, Benazir and Rajiv, Sharif and Gujral, Sharif and Vajpayee, even Sharif and Modi, seemed to signal new phases of constructive engagement."

He recalls: "In the 1960s, Rajeshwar Dayal managed to persuade Nehru to give Ayub Khan a chance, despite Nehru's instinctive suspicion of the dictator. Natwar Singh became an advocate for Zia in the 1980s despite Mrs Gandhi's aversion to him. Pakistan's envoy Jehangir Qazi, through his quiet diplomacy with Advani, managed to get the Agra Summit of 2001 in place giving Musharraf a chance to make his case."

He singles out Vajpayee for his "sincerity and balanced approach" towards Pakistan. Amongst Pakistani leaders, he thinks "Zia was perhaps the most consummate diplomat for Pakistan who tried to sweet-talk India while running a nuclear programme and a jihad" in India's Punjab.

Bisaria remembers PM Singh's remarks in 2006 that "borders cannot be redrawn, but we can work towards making them irrelevant [...] just lines on a map". Singh's sponsorship of the Satish Lamba/ Tariq Aziz plan came as close to a working formula for Indo-Pak ties as the two nations will ever reach. On taking over, PM Modi shelved it. In former HC Shivshankar Menon's words, "the two countries fell into a repetitive pattern or dance of en-

agement and disruption". It is to Bisaria's credit that, despite being "more of a Europe and Russia hand", he accepted the Islamabad assignment with courage. He describes his life there as "never lonely". "Followed everywhere, watched closely, photographed on cell phones by swarms of men in shalwar kameez, Indian diplomats become either peaceniks or hawks [...] seldom left in the middle."

Bisaria offers his successor nine unequal pillars of wisdom: cross-border security, coincidence of leadership, safe diplomacy, the role of global forces and multilateral institutions, aspirations of the people, quarantining territorial disagreements, accepting Pakistan's volatile structure of governance, minority is—sues and economic aspects of the relationship.

Peering into August 2047, when India and Pakistan will celebrate a centenary of independence from each other, Bisaria sees three scenarios: "Business as usual; conditional optimism; and conditional pessimism."

Those who recall the struggles over Northern Ireland may remember the response of the then British PM John Major when he was asked what his solution for the Irish question was: "We can do one of three things. We can go backwards, or stay where we are. Neither is a policy. Or we can go forward."

By the end of February, there should be a new government (conceivably led by Nawaz Sharif) in Islamabad. By June 2024, predictably, Narendra Modi will have returned to serve a third term. In which direction will they take us: backwards, mired in history, or forward? -- Courtesy Dawn

**Rich man's polls?**

Syed Sheheryar Raza Zaidi

The general elections to determine Pakistan's fortunes are just around the corner. On Feb 8, 2024, the people of Pakistan will come out to vote for a party or candidate who they believe is competent enough to rule for the next five years. Much has been said about the level playing field being prepared for a particular party or the lack thereof for another. Yet, Elections 2024 are no different to general elections of yesterday. Yes, the 'favourites' of the powers that be may have changed, but the underlying idea of the general elections being the rich man's playground continues to be true.

An election in the truest sense of the word is the people's choice of an individual who will represent them in a particular body. As is customary, elections involve canvassing, ie, reaching out to the masses to market oneself as one whose merits outweigh those of his or her opponents and result in such a person being 'elected'.

That said, in Pakistan elections have always been about a particular economic class from which emerge individuals of a particular gender to fight it out amongst themselves and to use their financial muscle that can help them get the votes.

A look at the majority of the members who have been elected over the past 50 years to parliament makes this idea clear. A big chunk of the people (read: men) voted into power are either large landowners, sugar barons and construction tycoons or business magnates, whose foray into national and provincial politics is backed by a enormous financial

clout. This is where the title of the piece comes from.

Meanwhile, the gender difference is appalling. Of the total number of candidates (5,121) contesting for the general seats in the National Assembly, 4,807 are male and only 312 are females (two candidates from the transgender community). For all their claimed progressiveness, even the three leading political parties have allotted only a handful of seats to women nominees. While there are reserved seats for women in parliament, there is little to show that parties are taking a significant stride towards plugging the gap between men and women candidates for the general seats. At the other end, female voters make up around 46 per cent of the total eligible voters — an improvement from the past but one can still see how women are being shortchanged in elections as they are in every other facet of life.

Having established that Pakistan's general elections have an unhealthy obsession with men at the helm of affairs, we can dissect the financial clout which has become the very foundation of Pakistan's electoral activity.

The Election Act, 2017, hailed as a complete code of polls in Pakistan, actually facilitates the triumph of rich men over those with fewer resources in the electoral arena.

Section 132 of the Act specifies the amount a candidate is allowed to spend. As per the said law, a candidate for the National Assembly on their own and through his supporters and political party cannot spend more than Rs10 million and for a candidate of a provincial assembly

that cap is Rs4m. Now contrast that with the average household income in Pakistan which stands at around Rs75,000.

This means that for an average person in Pakistan to be able to spend even close to the spending limit for election to the National Assembly, they will need to save all their income for over a decade. That's not even the irony. The irony is that the spending limit only applies where a candidate permits such expenditure. If expenses are incurred for a candidate which he or she does not permit, in light of Section 132 of the Election Act, those expenses are not considered part of the candidate's official expenses to which the limit applies.

To add fuel to the fire, no spending limit exists for political parties, just as long as their expenditures are duly accounted for, legally sourced and not directed towards a particular candidate. This is why when you open your browsers to surf the internet, watch videos or scour your television, you see various political parties advertising themselves having bought valuable ad space and airtime worth millions of rupees. It is only natural then for such political parties to gravitate towards candidates who can finance these splurges.

The purpose here is not to relegate a rich man to the comforts of their expensive homes but to lay bare how the 'level playing field' being sought by one and all should actually be realised for aspirational women and socially challenged individuals rather than for the same pensioners who continue to rule the roost in Pakistan. -- Courtesy Dawn

**Commerce News**

**Trade deficit narrows to \$1.879 billion in Jan 2024**

**Dr. Gohar Ejaz announces positive trend in Pakistan's exports**

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Interior Commerce and Industries, Dr. Gohar Ejaz on Thursday said that trade deficit narrowed to \$1.879 billion in January 2024 from \$2.689 billion in January 2023.

This is a substantial improvement from last year, said a press release issued by the Ministry of Commerce. Caretaker Federal Minister for Interior, Commerce and Industries, Dr. Gohar Ejaz, is announcing a positive trend in Pakistan's exports. He said: "Pakistan's

Exports in Jan 2024 have increased by 26.9% to \$2.786 billion from \$2.195 billion in Jan 2023." Dr Gohar said that imports during the same period decreased by 4.5% to \$4.665 billion from \$4.884 billion.

The caretaker minister said that Pakistan's global trade figures for the period of July 2023 - January 2024, show that Pakistan is steadily expanding its international trade footprint.

Exports totaled

\$17.766 billion, up 12% from \$15.831 billion during the same period in the previous Financial Year (FY), he said. He further said that imports contracted by 16% to \$30.010 billion as compared to \$35.836 billion in the same period in the last FY.

The overall trade deficit has decreased by 39% to \$12.244 billion as compared to \$20.005 in the previous year, he added. In absolute terms, during Jul-Jan 2024, exports increased by almost \$2 billion, and Imports

decreased by \$6 billion, and the trade deficit contracted by \$7.8 billion. He said: "These positive trends reflect our government's unwavering commitment to promoting trade and economic growth."

We will continue to implement policies that support our exporters, diversify our export base, and enhance trade facilitation. I am confident that Pakistan is on the right track to achieving its trade goals and becoming a leading player in the global economy."



**ETHIOPIA:** Finance Minister Dr. Shamsad Akhtar, exchanging views with Ethiopian State Minister of Finance Eyob Tekalign Tolina during the meeting. The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on Thursday explored different avenues for economic cooperation during a bilateral meeting took place here in Islamabad at the Ministry of Finance.



**A meeting with District Administration regarding 7th Agriculture Census was held at Provincial Census Coordination Centre (P3C), PBS, Regional office Karachi under the chair of Chief Statistician, Dr. Naemuz Zafar in Islamabad.**

**Senate body discusses implementation status on various commodities**

**Independent Report**  
ISLAMABAD: The Senate Standing Committee on Commerce on Thursday discussed the implementation status of recommendations on various commodities made by the committee over the last three years.

A meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on Commerce was held here in Parliament House, presided over by Senator Zeeshan Khanzada.

The Chairman of the Trading Corporation of Pakistan (TCP) briefed the committee members on the progress of different commodities.

He mentioned that TCP was in the reconciliation process, and while the Sindh government had already responded, the other provincial governments were still in the process of responding.

**Gold rates up by Rs.800 per tola**

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold increased by Rs 800 and was sold at Rs 216,300 on Thursday compared to its sale at Rs. 215,500 on the last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs. 686 to Rs.185,442 from Rs 184,756 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold went up to Rs 169,989 from Rs. 169,360, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

**Dr Saif says: Startups can apply for funds from March 2024**

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication, Dr Umar Saif, has said that startups in Pakistan can apply for funds from March 2024.

The government has allocated Rs 2 billion for the Pakistan Startup Fund to enhance venture capital investment in the country. The fund is designed to offer financial assistance to startups, with each receiving 30% support,

while venture capitalists will contribute the remaining 70% of the capital.

Dr. Umar Saif highlighted on social media that Pakistan has over 85 startup incubators and more than 4,000 startups.

He said that startups face challenges after the incubation stage, struggling to secure external venture capital (VC) for building scalable products and achieving product-market fit.

**Chicken, eggs prices reach at Rs 460 per kg, Rs 415 per dozen**

ISLAMABAD (APP): The price of poultry chicken reached Rs 460 per kg and the price of poultry eggs reached Rs 415 per dozen in the open market in the twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi.

The meat of the poultry chicken has reached Rs 800 to 810 per kg in the open market,

according to the survey conducted by APP here on Thursday.

The price of poultry chickens and eggs has been going above Rs 415 to 420 per kg and dozen for the past few months, which is getting away from the purchasing power of consumers day by day.

**CPI inflation recorded at 28.3% in January**

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Consumer Price Index (CPI) based inflation increased to 28.3 percent during January 2024 as compared to the corresponding month of last year.

The inflation had increased to 29.7 percent during last month (December) whereas it was recorded at 27.6 percent during January 2023, according to data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) on

Thursday.

On a month-on-month basis, the CPI increased to 1.8 percent in January 2024 as compared to an increase of 0.7 percent in the previous month and an increase of 2.4 percent in January 2023.

On the other hand, the rural CPI increased to 25.7 percent on a year-on-year basis in January 2024 as compared to an increase of 27.9 percent in the previous month and 32.3 percent in January 2023.

**VCUVAScallson Chairman IPO**

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Vice Chancellor of the University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences (UVAS) Lahore, Professor Emeritus Dr Nasim Ahmad on Thursday called on Chairman IPO-Pakistan and discussed matters related to scientific research for promoting the agriculture and livestock sector of the country.

Continuing the robust engagement between IPO-Pakistan and the leading research and product development universities,

**Ethiopia, Pakistan discuss Economic Cooperation**

ISLAMABAD (Online): The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and Pakistan on Thursday explored different avenues for economic cooperation during a bilateral meeting took place here in Islamabad at the Ministry of Finance.

Dr. Eyob Tekalign Tolina, State Minister of Finance, led the Ethiopian delegation while the

Pakistan side was led by H.E. Dr. Shamsad Akhtar, Finance Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

Governor of the State Bank of Pakistan H.E. Jameel Ahmad and senior officers of the Ministry of Finance of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan were also present during the highly level engagement between the two countries.

## Punjab Governor says: Education, health sectors very important and for the development of any country

**Independent Report**  
LAHORE: A delegation of an international non-governmental welfare organization, led by Alan Glasgow, Regional Director of Mercy Corps, met Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman at the Governor's House Lahore. The delegation briefed the Punjab Governor about the work on TB control, clean water supply, agriculture, climate change, humanitarian response and poverty alleviation in the province.

Speaking on the occasion, Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman said that education and health sectors are very important and for the development of any country. He further stated that it is very important to develop these sectors. He appreciated the services of the international non-governmental organization in the field of health, especially TB eradication Program and education. The Punjab Governor said that provision of clean drinking water is very important

because many health problems are caused by consuming contaminated water. He said that public private partnership is a successful model. Governor Punjab further said that youth are the most valuable asset of the country. He said that along with formal education, the aspect of moral education is also important. Governor Punjab said that as Chancellor, he has given instructions to the Vice Chancellors to give special attention to the character building of the youth.



**PESHAWAR:** Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah witnessing signing of MoU between KP IT Board and Alkhidmat Foundation.

## LHC orders for purchase of buses by private schools for children afresh

LAHORE (Online): Lahore High Court (LHC) has issued written order on the petitions seeking court's order for eradication of smog. The court has ordered that the private schools should purchase buses for children and the private schools be registered afresh. Justice Shahid Karim of LHC has issued written order on the petitions in connection with eradication of smog here Thursday. The court has ordered school education

department to conduct registration of private schools afresh besides directing private schools to purchase buses for children. 50 percent children in private schools will travel by these buses from home to school. It has been said in the decision that two years back School Education department was directed to purchase buses for private schools but school education department has not got implemented this order.

## Jl to hold public meeting on Feb 3

**FAISALABAD (APP):** The Jamat-e-Islami (JI) would hold a public meeting at Dhobi Ghat ground [Iqbal Park], here on February 3. JI Ameer Siraj-ul-Haq will address the public gathering. Party spokesperson told the media on Thursday that a meeting was held at party secretariat, Al-Markaz Islami, Chiniot Bazaar, with District Ameer Prof Mahboob-uz-Zaman Butt in the chair to discuss electioneering.

## Man killed during dacoity

**FAISALABAD (APP):** A man was shot dead over resistance during a dacoity in the area of Sadar police station. A police spokesman said here on Thursday that armed bandits stormed into the house of one Umair Farooq in Yousuf Town and took the family hostage at gunpoint. The house owner, after receiving information, also reached the house and offered resistance. The dacoits opened fire at him and fled. The victim succumbed to his bullet injuries in the chest on the way to hospital.



**MULTAN:** Caretaker CM Punjab Mohsin Naqvi talking to media persons during his visit to Nishtar Hospital 02.

## Naqvi lays foundation of Multan Cadet College project

**Independent Report**  
MULTAN: Caretaker Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi broke the ground by operating a crane and laid the foundation of Multan Cadet College to kick off work on a mega project meeting a longstanding demand of the people of Multan here Thursday. The cadet college will be completed in Dec 2025 under a Rs 1678 million project. The cadet college would be built on the 919 Kanal area in Multan and would have the capacity to accommodate 450

students. Secretary of Housing and works gave a detailed briefing to the chief minister on the project stating that the cadet college would have two hostels, a faculty hostel, officers mess, multi-purpose hall, and a Masjid besides residences for officers. On the occasion the CM said that the Punjab government has already released Rs 124 million to begin construction work. Meanwhile, Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab, Syed Mohsin Naqvi, inaugurated the new building of Model Police Station (PS) Seetal Mari. During his visit to the city of Saints here on Thursday, the caretaker, CM Punjab, visited different sections of the police station, including the community room, VSO room, front desk, and SHO room. He lauded Inspector General Dr Usman Anwar for his initiatives to provide relief to the masses. He also held a virtual inauguration of 36 more model police stations in the province.

## Political parties relying upon social media to shape public opinions

**ABBOTTABAD (APP):** Through social networking websites and increasing penetration of internet access, political parties and candidates from across the board are using social media platforms to get engaged with voters for shaping their opinions during the general election 2024 campaign. Prior to this general election, political campaigns were primarily conducted through traditional media channels such as television, radio, and newspapers. The increasing use of social media platforms, which proved their efficiency during the local bodies' elections 2020, is now

providing a level playing field for all participants enabling even the smaller parties and independent candidates to reach a wide range of audience. Social media serves as a platform for alternate narratives and diverse voices that may be marginalized in mainstream media outlets. It enables citizens to access a wide range of perspectives and information sources, facilitating informed decision-making during the election process. In Hazara Division, social media has become a game-changer during the local bodies' elections 2020 when the present Tehsil Mayor of Haripur, Sami Ullah Khan, launched a comprehensive campaign on social media. This brought a dramatic transformation in the first phase of the Local Body elections campaign in district Haripur where the young independent candidate has won the race of Tehsil Mayor against the two seasoned PML-N and PTI ticket holders with a huge margin. This trend continued in the second phase of LG elections in the remaining six districts of the region, where candidates utilized this tool very effectively and reached their target audience, achieving their goals. During the current

## KP Finance Minister inaugurates Kohat Sewage Treatment Plant

**Independent Report**  
PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister for Finance, Excise and Taxation and Anti-Narcotics, Ahmed Rasool Bangash on Thursday formally inaugurated the Kohat Sewerage Treatment Plant costing Rs.6 billion and Mallam Women Business and Community Center costing Rs.589 million started under the auspices of WSSC Kohat. While inspecting the under-construction parts of both the projects, he expressed satisfaction over the pace and quality of the work and directed the authorities concerned to complete these important projects of public interest in the stipulated time.

On this occasion, the Chief Executive WSSC Kohat Arif Rauf gave a detailed briefing about the importance and usefulness of the projects and the quality of work. Meanwhile, the Minister also inaugurated the Kohat Industrial Estate Security Development Project. On this occasion, MD Small Industries Development Board Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and President Kohat Chamber of Commerce and Industries gave useful suggestions to the Minister of Finance besides identifying the obstacles in the development of small industries in Kohat.



**LAHORE:** Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman in a group photo with delegation of an international non-governmental welfare organization, led by Alan Glasgow, Regional Director of Mercy Corps at Governor's House.

## LAHORE: Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman in a group photo with delegation of an international non-governmental welfare organization, led by Alan Glasgow, Regional Director of Mercy Corps at Governor's House.

# International News

## Putin vows to make military gains in Ukraine as he meets with his campaign staff

**Monitoring Desk**  
MOSCOW: President Vladimir Putin vowed Wednesday to push back Ukrainian forces to reduce the threat of attacks on Russian territory as he met with activists running his campaign ahead of the March presidential election that he's all but certain to win. Asked about plans for the military campaign in Ukraine, Putin said the line of contact needs to be pushed back to "such a distance from our territory that will make it safe from Western-supplied long-range artillery that Ukrainian authorities use

for shelling peaceful cities." He added the Russian military has been doing just that, "pushing the enemy back from vital populated centers." "This is the main motive for our guys who are fighting and risking their lives there—to protect the Motherland, to protect our people," he added. Ukraine has struck inside Russia recently, including a Dec. 30 attack on the border city of Belgorod that killed 25 people, injured over 100. Putin also said Russian investigators concluded that Ukraine used U.S.-sup-

plied Patriot air defense systems to shoot down a Russian military transport plane in the Belgorod region on Jan. 24. Russian authorities said the crash killed all 74 people onboard, including 65 Ukrainian POWs heading for a swap. Ukrainian officials didn't deny the plane's downing but didn't take responsibility and called for an international investigation. Putin said Russia wouldn't just welcome but would "insist" on an international inquiry on what he described as a "crime" by Ukraine.



**Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orban attends a European Union summit in Brussels, Belgium.**

## Israel and Lebanon are prepping for a war neither wants, but many fear it's becoming inevitable

**Monitoring Desk**  
BEIRUT: The prospect of a full-scale war between Israel and Lebanon's Hezbollah militia terrifies people on both sides of the border, but some see it as an inevitable fallout from Israel's ongoing war against Hamas in Gaza. Such a war could be the most destructive either side has ever experienced. Israel and Hezbollah each have lessons from their last war, in 2006, a monthlong conflict that

ended in a draw. They've also had four months to prepare for another war, even as the United States tries to prevent a widening of the conflict. Here's a look at each side's preparedness, how war might unfold and what's being done to prevent it. The 2006 war, six years after Israeli forces withdrew from south Lebanon, erupted after Hezbollah captured two Israeli soldiers and killed several others in a cross-border raid. "Our people are back. 207 of them. We return home no matter what," Zelensky said in a social media post. Russia's defence ministry said "195 Russian servicemen... were returned home". The exchange was brokered by the United Arab Emirates — which has played a role in several previous swaps.

## Humanitarian 'collapse' facing Gaza, warns UN

**Monitoring Desk**  
GAZA CITY: Artillery fire pounded southern Gaza early on Wednesday as Israel said it had begun "flooding Hamas tunnels" and mediators sought a halt to the nearly four-month hostilities. The focus of the fighting in recent weeks has been Khan Yunis, the southern Gaza Strip's main city, where a constant barrage of air strikes and shelling rent the air all night. The health ministry recorded 125 deaths across southern Gaza in the latest Israeli strikes. United Nations agencies' chiefs said a bitter row over the main aid organisation for Palestinians could "have catastrophic consequences for the people of Gaza". Major donors, including the United States and

Germany, have suspended funding to the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, over accusations that several staff members were involved in the Oct 7 raids in Israel. Withholding the funds was "perilous and would result in the collapse of the humanitarian system in Gaza", the heads of the UN agencies said in a joint statement. Meanwhile, mediation efforts gathered pace following a Sunday meeting of top US, Israeli, Egyptian and Qatari officials that produced a proposed framework for a new truce and prisoner release. The Israeli army said on Wednesday its troops had killed 15 "terrorists" in northern Gaza, and captured 10 "militants" during an attack on a school where they were allegedly hiding.



**A Palestinian man carries bags of flour distributed by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas, in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip.**

## China quietly expanding influence in Taliban-ruled Afghanistan

**Monitoring Desk**  
KABUL: While most of the world treats Afghanistan's Taliban government as a pariah, China is growing diplomatic and economic links — and Kabul is happy for the attention. Top-level meetings between officials, new mineral deals, and the upgrading of transport routes between the two countries are regularly championed by Taliban government officials. While Beijing has

played down the formality of these growing links, it is steadily increasing investment and exposure — a relationship that could benefit both parties, analysts and diplomats say. "The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan is a challenging terrain, but the characteristic of the Chinese is to go where no one else goes, trying to gain advantages," said Valerie Niquet, an analyst with the Foundation for Strategic Research in Paris.

## Bulldozers knock down 600 years old mosque in New Delhi

**Monitoring Desk**  
NEW DELHI: Bulldozers have knocked down a centuries-old mosque in India's capital, a member of the building's managing committee said on Thursday, during a demolition drive to remove "illegal" structures from a forest reserve. The demolition comes at a sensitive time in India with nationalist activists emboldened in their long campaign for the replacement of several prominent mosques with Hindu temples. The Masjid Akhoni in New Delhi, which its caretakers say is around 600 years old, was home to 22 students enrolled in an Islamic boarding school. It was torn down on Tuesday in a forest of Mehrauli, an affluent neighbourhood dotted with centuries-old ruins from settlements predating modern Delhi. Mohammad Zaffar, a member of the mosque's managing committee, told AFP that it had not received any prior notice before a demolition carried out "in the dark of the night."

## Ukraine and Russia swap 400 POWs

**Monitoring Desk**  
KYIV: Russia and Ukraine traded hundreds of prisoners of war on Wednesday, just a week after Moscow said Kyiv had shot down a plane carrying captured Ukrainian soldiers to an exchange. The crash of a Russian military cargo plane near the border with Ukraine — which Russia said killed 65 Ukrainian POWs — had thrown doubt on future prisoner swaps between the two sides. But in a series of coordinated announcements, both sides hailed the latest agreement to free more than 400 people captured dur-

## Pentagon calls out Chinese companies it says are helping Beijing's military

**Monitoring Desk**  
WASHINGTON: The United States on Wednesday added more than a dozen Chinese companies to a list created by the Defense Department to highlight firms it says are allegedly working with Beijing's military, as part of a broader effort to keep American technology from aiding China. New additions to the list, first reported by Reuters, were posted on the Department of Defense website and include memory chip maker YMTC, artificial intelligence company Megvii, lidar maker Hesai Technology and tech company NetPosa. Amid strained ties between the world's two biggest economies, the updated list is one of numerous actions Washington has taken in recent years to highlight and restrict Chinese companies that it says may strengthen Beijing's military.

A spokesperson for the Chinese embassy in Washington said China opposed the move and called it an abuse of state power, adding that it ran counter to the US's "alleged commitment to market competition and international fair trade." Hesai Group said it does not sell products to any military in any country and it does not have ties with any military. The company said it was disappointed to be added to the list. YMTC, and Megvii did not immediately respond to requests for comment. While being placed on the list doesn't involve immediate bans, it can be a blow to designated companies' reputations and represents a stark warning to US entities and companies about the risks of conducting business with them.

## Alvi for improving legal framework to strengthen transparency

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Thursday emphasized the need of improving the legal framework to further strengthen transparency in government spending and financial accountability. Speaking at a meeting during his visit to the Auditor General of Pakistan (AGP) office, the president said transparency could be improved by documentation of the economy and digitizing the government's transactions. AGP Muhammad Ajmal Gondal briefed the

president about the role and performance of the office. President Alvi said that the use of modern technology would improve the performance of the AGP. He stressed the need to create public awareness about the AGP's role, its activities and the audit findings. He said the parliamentary oversight was important to ensure the judicious use of the public money and promote transparency in the government departments. President Alvi appreciated the AGP's role in

improving parliamentary oversight and transparency in the government sector. He said the Auditor General's role in identifying flaws and stabilizing the government's financial management system was very important. During the meeting, the Auditor General of Pakistan informed the president about the role of the institution in the process of financial accountability. "The office of the Auditor General of Pakistan is taking steps to make the

audit process more effective." It was informed that the Auditor General had completed 95% compliance audits in the fiscal year 2022-23. Improvements in audit and accounting processes would promote transparency, accountability and good governance, the meeting was told. Similarly it was informed that steps were underway to incorporate advanced technology platforms and artificial intelligence tools into the audit process.



ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi being briefed about the role and performance of the Auditor General of Pakistan (AGP), during his visit to AGP Office.



ISLAMABAD: Group photo of Kohsar University Delegation at National Emergencies Operation Center (NEOC) of NDMA.

## Pak calls for full implementation of ICJ judgment on Gaza; urges UNSC to play mandated role

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan on Thursday called for the full implementation of the International Court of Justice (ICJ)'s provisional judgment on Gaza requiring an immediate and unconditional ceasefire, urging the UN Security Council to play its mandated role for the purpose.

"Pakistan also calls for the full implementation of ICJ's provisional judgment to uphold human rights, dignity, and identity of the Palestinian people as per the UN Charter, relevant resolutions, and international law. The implementation of these provisions

requires an immediate and unconditional ceasefire to bring about an end to the suffering faced by the people of Gaza," Foreign Office spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said in her weekly press briefing. Expressing deep concerns about the ongoing oppression of Palestinian people, she strongly condemned the Israeli attack inside the Ibn Sina Hospital in Jenin which she said fell in the category of war crimes being perpetrated against the Palestinian people. "These ongoing

atrocities go against the spirit of the provisional measures decided by the International Court of Justice to protect the people of Gaza," she remarked. Besides, she said the suspension of funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) also went against the spirit of the ICJ's provisional measures. We urge reconsideration of the decision to suspend funding of UNRWA which has a crucial role in protecting and supporting the Palestinian people, she remarked.

## PTI's intra-party elections to be held on Feb 5

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI)'s intra-party elections will be held on Feb 5 (Monday).

The schedule of the internal elections has been issued. Party's federal election commissioner issued the schedule.

In a statement issued on the social media website, the party said all registered voters will be eligible to take part in voting throughout Pakistan on the designated places for polling to elect a panel or a candidate of their choice.

All the party members registered till Jan 31 would be eligible to take part in voting. Details of the panels taking part in elections will be available on the official website of the PTI.

## Unified forces gear up for upcoming poll security

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a review meeting led by the District Election Officer (DRO), representatives from all constituencies, law enforcement, and key institutions have convened to strategize for the upcoming general elections-2024.

ICT spokesman Dr Abdullah Tabasum on Thursday said that notably, commanding officers from the Pakistan Army on election duty and SSP operations were present, emphasizing the gravity of the situation. The assembly delved into a comprehensive review of the anticipated challenges on election day and potential threats, as special attention was given to security measures at sensitive polling stations in the federal capital constituencies, he added.

He further said that the highlight of the meeting was the unanimous approval of a robust security plan for the impending elections. A collaborative effort is set to unfold, with the Pakistan Army, Pakistan Rangers, sensitive institutions, and the police working in unison to execute the approved security blueprint.

This strategic alliance aimed to ensure a secure and smooth electoral process, marking a pivotal step towards a transparent and protected democratic exercise in 2024, he concluded.

## Aneeq says Ministry to reveal hajj training, biometric schedule next week

Independent Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed Thursday said that the ministry plans to release the comprehensive training and biometric schedule for Hajj pilgrims next week, aiming to provide enhanced facilitation for the pilgrimage.

Talking to the Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to Pakistan, Nawaf bin Saeed Ahmad Al Maliki, regarding the finalization of

preparations for the impending Hajj pilgrimage, the minister said Pakistani pilgrims now have the convenience of completing their Saudi Visa biometrics from the comfort of their homes.

The minister said that the implementation of distinctive initiatives aimed at improving the facilitation of Pakistani Hajj pilgrims this year. Furthermore, the completion of Hajj arrangements is progressing well in advance of the established schedule.

## Provision of facilities to public basic responsibility of govt: Wafaqi Mohtasib

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Wafaqi Mohtasib, expressing satisfaction on FGEHA's report about implementation of its recommendations, on Wednesday said that the provision of necessary facilities to the general public was one of the basic responsibilities of all government agencies.

The Federal Government Employees Housing Authority (FGEHA), in its report submitted to the Wafaqi Mohtasib Secretariat, stated that it had implemented all the recommendations made by the Wafaqi Mohtasib's Inspection Team, following its visit to the organization in response to the public complaints.

The Wafaqi Mohtasib's Inspection Team had directed the FGEHA to place the seniority list of the allottees on its website, to be duly updated after every 30 days along with preparing the billboards and placing instructions for the visitors at the key places in English as well as in Urdu.

It also instructed that the applicants may be apprised of the objections/deficiencies with regard to their requests for transfer of plots and houses within three days in addition to provision of two additional printers for facilitating the public/visitors.



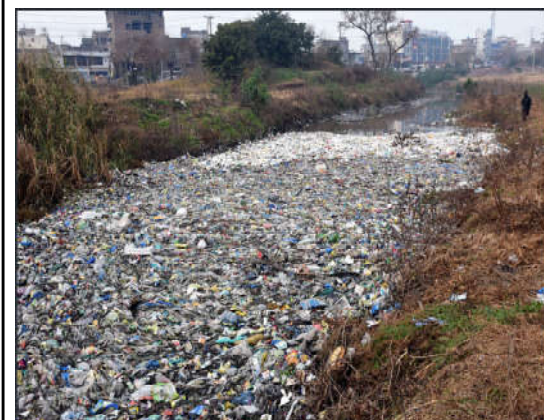
LAHORE: Former Chief Minister Punjab and Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) President, Chaudhry Parvez Elahi arriving for case hearing, at District Court.

## DG EPA says: EPA converts 1985kgs confiscated plastic bags into green benches

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA) has successfully converted around 1985 kilograms of confiscated banned single-use polythene bags into green benches and planters in its effort to contain maximum damage to the environment and nature. Director General, Pak-EPA, Farzana Altaf Shah flanked by Director Labs and National Environmentally Quality Standards (NEQS), EPA, Dr Zaigham Abbas held a joint media briefing intended to apprise the environmental journalists on the promising development of the environmental watchdog transforming plastic prohibition into a win-win opportunity for the consumers and industries. DG Farzana Altaf Shah said plastics had catastrophic effects on human health, environment and endanger marine life. "Plastic pollution

has become more visible both on land and in waterways around the world. Annually 459.75 Million tons plastic is produced globally. Till 2019 accumulatively 9.5 Billion Tons plastic has been produced. Annually 350 Million Tons of waste is generated globally, out of which, 35% from single-use plastics. Pakistan alone produces 3.3 Million Tons of plastic waste that is equivalent to height of two K2 mountains.

The crisis prompted 175 nations to adopt a resolution at UNEA in 2022 to develop an international legally binding instrument to end plastic pollution from source to sea by 2024," she said. She added that as a first step, Pak EPA imposed a complete ban on polythene bags (manufacture, import, sale, purchase, storage and usage) in Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) under Polythene Bags Regulations.



ISLAMABAD: A view of garbage dump in a Nalla on a green belt alongside Islamabad Expressway near Kurri road, as needs to attention for concern authority.

## CDWP okays Rs2 bln project, recommends 3 projects worth Rs136.6 bln 3 to ECNEC

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Central Development Working Party (CDWP) here on Thursday approved a development project worth Rs.2 billion and recommended three projects worth Rs. 136.660 billion to the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) for further consideration.

The CDWP meeting was chaired by Deputy Chairman Planning Commission Mohammad Jehanzeb Khan while among others, it was attended by Secretary Planning, Awaiz Manzoor Sumra, senior officials from Planning Commission and Federal Minis-

tries and Divisions and Chairman ACS (Dev) from provincial governments.

CDWP considered projects related to energy, physical planning housing and transport and communications sectors were considered in the meeting.

The forum approved a project related to the physical planning and housing sector, specifically focusing on the "Construction of Liti-gants Facilitation Center for Liti-gants of District Courts in Sector G-10/1 Islamabad," with a cost of Rs. 1,989.990 million. The primary objec-

tive of the project is to establish a facility catering to the needs of litigants and lawyers. It will include various amenities such as the Liti-gants Facilitation Center, Cafeteria, Multipurpose Hall, Banks, Dispensary, Shop, Bar Room (Male and Female), Prayer Hall, Library and Day Care, Office of IBA and IBC, along with Soft & Hard Landscaping and Internal Road.

A project related to Energy sector under the title "Expansion of 48MW Jagran Hydro-power Station (Phase-II) in District Neelum, AJ&K (Revised)," with a cost of Rs. 14,744 million.

## Pakistan, Maldives agree to strengthen bilateral ties

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and Maldives on Thursday agreed to strengthen bilateral relations and explore avenues for enhanced cooperation, particularly focusing on trade and environmental initiatives.

The bilateral relations were discussed during a telephonic conversation between Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar and President of Maldives Dr Mohamed Muizzu.

"The purpose of the telephone call was to follow up on the discussions during their meeting held on December 02, 2023, on the sidelines of the 28th Session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP28) in Abu Dhabi," a Prime Minister Office news release said.

## 12 killed, 14 injured in multiples road mishaps in IIOJK

MIRPUR-AJK (APP): Twelve people were killed while 14 other sustained injuries in different road accidents that occurred in Indian illegally occupied Jammu And Kashmir (IIOJK) State on Wednesday late.

According to a report received from across the Line of Control (LoC), a series of road accidents in the forward Baramulla and Kishtwar districts of Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) have resulted in the loss of 12 lives and left 14 individuals injured.

One of the accidents occurred when a vehicle carrying passengers skidded off the road and plunged into a deep gorge on the Uri-Baramulla road, near the other side of the LoC.

## Solangi grieved over demise of Saraiki novelist Aslam Rasulpuri

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Thursday expressed deep grief and sorrow over the death of Saraiki novelist, researcher, critic and intellectual Aslam Rasulpuri.

In his condolence statement, the minister said that the literary services of late Aslam Rasulpuri would be remembered for a long time. By editing the Sindhi poets Sachal Sarmast, Bedil Sindhi and Hamal Leghari's Saraiki poetry, Aslam Rasulpuri brought out the harmony of the sources of Sindhi and Saraiki traditions of Sufism.



ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to Prime Minister (SAPM) on Human Rights and Women Empowerment, Mushaal Hussein Mullick, take keen interest in a painting during seminar and exhibition title "Reflections of Resilience Showcasing Kashmiri Identity and Solidarity Through Art".

## Kashmiri artists & poets playing significant role in highlighting Indian HR abuses: Mushaal

ISLAMABAD (APP): Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IIOJK).

Mushaal lauded the creative initiative of engaging and empowering the youth of both Pakistan and Kashmir to express support for the Kashmiri freedom struggle through art.

She said the musicians from Kashmir had composed songs that reflected the sentiments of resistance in the people of IIOJK which resonated locally and globally.

She said that visual artists, filmmakers, and photographers from the region were recognized for their contributions in depicting the harsh realities of life in Kashmir through political cartoons, illustrations, documentaries, and powerful images. She also acknowledged the literary contribution of Kashmiri poets and writers for providing a voice to the Kashmiri people through verses, novels, short stories, and essays.

The event brought together young Pakistani and Kashmiri artists, creating a platform for an artistic exploration of Kashmiri identity and resilience and expressing solidarity with the people of Indian Illegally



ISLAMABAD: CDA workers busy in preparing center path of road for plantation in the Federal Capital.

## NDMA, KUM inks LoA collaboration in disaster management

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) think tank National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM) and Kohsar University Murree (KUM) have formalized a transformative cooperation through the signing of a Letter of Agreement (LoA) on Thursday in the field of disaster management.

Chief Coordinator NIDM, Tanveer Piracha, and Vice Chancellor KUM, Prof Dr Habib Ali Bokhari officiated the signing ceremony of LoA at NDMA (HQs), a news release said. The agreement under-

scores a commitment to a collaborative partnership between the two entities for building institutional capacities and advancing knowledge, expertise, and innovation in the field of disaster management and related areas.

The collaboration between NIDM and KUM is assured to contribute significantly to the development of innovative solutions in disaster risk reduction and knowledge exchange in disaster management, reinforcing their shared dedication to creating a safer and more resilient future.