

# Independent

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ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi addressing the 3rd edition of Hosting Business Net 2024, a platform to promote financial inclusion and digital transformation, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

## President Alvi for financial inclusion of weaker segments of society through digital transformation

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Monday called for enhancing the inclusion of deprived sections of society, especially women and persons with disabilities, in the mainstream economy through digital transformation of the financial sector for socio-economic development.

The president was addressing the third edition of Hosting Business Net 2024, a platform to promote financial inclusion and digital transformation, and recognize the contributions of companies working in the sector.

The ceremony was attended by businessmen and diplomatic community members,

the President Secretariat Press Wing said in a news release.

The president said that the Pakistani people were a vibrant nation, and the country, blessed with abundant natural resources, needed to invest in their intellectual development and capacity building.

He also highlighted that Pakistan could not progress without the inclusion of 26.2 million out-of-school children in the education system.

Educating such a large portion of the population would require thousands of new schools and additional resources, he observed, adding, "If left unaddressed, Pakistan would export raw

labour without any value-addition."

The president cited the example of China which had lifted millions of its people out of poverty by investing in their education and health.

He said that financial inclusion was not possible without political inclusion of the people.

He opined that technology should be utilized for internet voting (i-voting) and Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs).

The president also hailed millions of young voters who had expressed their confidence in the democratic system.

He highlighted the need for setting priorities, making good deci-

sions and efficiently utilizing human resources for progress of the country.

President Alvi said that the low tax-to-GDP ratio was a perennial problem in Pakistan, adding that overcoming that issue would help reduce its reliance on foreign loans.

He said that banks were offering business loans for women on easy terms and conditions, however, there was a lack of awareness about micro-credit facilities for women.

He urged the banks to enhance their outreach by introducing cashless banking in far-flung areas through customized products and services.

CEO of Transformation Hub Iftikhar Hussain highlighted that BizNet was an ecosystem that had brought together the best minds by promoting increased collaboration, commitment and innovation.

He underlined the pivotal role played by the banking sector in adopting the latest financial solutions paving the way for user-friendly banking transactions.

Speaking on the occasion, CEO of Airlinks Communication Muzaffar Piracha apprised the audience that digitization of the economy was the first step towards financial inclusion which was not possible without advancements in the mobile industry.

## State to defend civil servants, act against 'violent trolls': PM Kakar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar on Monday vowed that the State of Pakistan would defend the civil servants in discharging their constitutional duties and act against those "violent trolls" involved in blackmailing and pressuring them.

The prime minister, in a statement, said that the people of Pakistan had spoken with a clear voice on February 8 and had given

a split mandate.

"Some elements with a proven track record of violent behaviour and vigilantism (however) are now using different tricks, including weaponisation of social media in blackmailing, vigilantism and pressuring civil servants to switch their loyalties from the State of Pakistan to the violent gang," he added. Such action, he said, was a clear violation of the Article 5 and other articles

of the Constitution and the laws of the land.

"The State of Pakistan shall defend the civil servants in discharging their constitutional duties, act against these violent trolls and ensure exemplary punishment to them."

Prime Minister Kakar said that there should be no doubt about the government's commitment to the noble civil servants serving the State and the people of Pakistan.



ISLAMABAD: Leaders of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) addressing a Press conference

## PTI-backed candidates to join Sunni Ittehad Council in bid to grab reserved seats

PM's candidate Omar Ayub asserts PTI will form govt in Centre; ensure release of party founder

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Barrister Gohar Khan Monday announced that independent candidates backed by the party will officially join the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) in the National Assembly (NA) as well as in provinces including Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP).

The development comes a day after PTI's senior leaders, Barrister Gohar, Omar Ayub, along with SIC head Sahibzada Hamid Raza, visited the Majlis Wahdat-e-Muslimeen (MWM) Central Secretariat in Islamabad and held discussions on prospects of closer cooperation in parliament and at the provin-

cial level.

MWM Chairman Allama Raja Nasir Abbas Jafri, Vice Chairman Allama Ahmed Iqbal Rizvi, and others were also present.

The meeting discussed the country's political situation and important issues in the wake of recently held elections and their outcome. The party, which could not directly take part in elections due to the non-allotment of electoral symbol, wants its share of reserved seats for women and minorities by using the platform of other like-minded parties.

Addressing a joint press conference in Islamabad today, Barrister Gohar said the PTI-backed independent candidates are

required to join any party within three days following the issuance of notification under the law.

He said the decision to join SIC has been taken with consensus and demanded the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to allot the PTI reserved seats in line with the law.

The PTI top leader said the PTI will also submit documents to the ECP in this regard today.

During the presser, the PTI leader also reiterated the rigging allegation claiming that his party had won 180 NA seats in the February 8 polls. However, as per the result issued by the ECP, the PTI-backed candidates have won as many as 92 seats in the National Assembly.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate, Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani presiding over a Senate House Business Advisory Committee meeting at Parliament House.

## Missing Baloch Students Case: IHC expresses dismay over absence of Caretaker PM

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday ruled that the caretaker prime minister should be removed from his office as he failed to answer in the missing Baloch students' case. The Caretaker Prime Minister Anwarul Haq Kakar didn't appear before the court in person for second time in the case pertaining to the non-recovery of Baloch students. "The Prime Minister didn't appear in the court for second time. He was summoned because he was answerable for all this," Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani remarked.

Earlier, Justice Kayani had remarked that death sentence should be handed down to those behind forced disappearances.

The people involved in such disappearances should be awarded death

sentence twice, he said during the last hearing. Justice Kayani said that defence secretary, interior secretary, DG ISI and DG MI are government officials and therefore PM was summoned because he was answerable for it.

All these officers are also responsible for this and no one is beyond the law, court ruled.

"Where are caretaker ministers, interior secretary and defence secretary," Justice Kayani questioned. The court remarked that 12 missing students have not been recovered yet. Attorney General Mansoor Usman said that there were eight missing students yet. "Three consecutive governments couldn't do anything for missing persons," the court ruled and added that it is utter failure of state institutions.

## Senate rejects criminal law amendment bill 2023

ISLAMABAD (APP): Upper House of the Parliament on Monday rejected a bill to amend the Pakistan Penal Code, 1860 and Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898 The Criminal Laws (Amendment) Bill 2023 with a majority vote.

Chairman Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani was in the chair when Senator Mushtaq Ahmed, presented a motion for consideration and passage of the bill, but it was rejected by the Upper House.

When asked to vote on the bill by the chairman, as many as 24 lawmakers voted against the legislation, while 14 members of the Senate expressed support in favour of the bill.

## Produce petitioner who wanted to get Feb 8 elections cancelled: SC

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa on Monday ordered the officials to present the petitioner before the court after he sought to withdraw his plea through which he had demanded declaring the Feb 8 elections null and void and adjourned hearing till February 21.

The chief justice ordered the SHO concerned to trace Brig @Ali Khan and present him before the three-member bench which also comprises Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar and Justice Musarrat Hilali.

Making it clear that the country's top court will hear the matter, Chief Justice Isa remarked whether

such persons filed petition only to get instant fame.

While noting that Brig @Khan had requested to withdraw the petition on Feb 13, the very day it was filed, the court questioned as if publicity was the sole goal by resorting such tactics.

The application was shared the entire world through media, the chief justice noted, adding that he should come and the court would hear the matter.

In a report, the apex court was informed that the petitioner could neither be approached through the address given in the plea nor the WhatsApp service.

## US, Chinese diplomats calls on Shahbaz Sharif

ISLAMABAD (Online): The Chinese and American diplomats have separate meetings with President PML-N Shehbaz Sharif on Monday.

According to the sources privy to development, the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the newly formed government in Pakistan and the possible challenges it would face and to inform about the support required to fight it.

Chinese ambassador to Pakistan Jiang Zaidong reiterated to increase the pace of CPEC and to provide diplomatic and economic support to the newly formed government. The Chinese ambassador assured full support for Pa-

kistan, in regional security and foreign infiltration in Pakistan.

Within 24 hours of the Chinese ambassador's meeting, American ambassador Donald Bloom also met with Shahbaz Sharif.

In the meeting, it was assured to provide all possible support for the situation arising after the election and the challenges faced by the newly formed government.

The American ambassador also assured to play a role in the negotiations between the government of Pakistan and the financial institutions. The American ambassador said that Washington wants full cooperation from the newly formed government in Pakistan.

## Caretaker govt ensured equal treatment to all political parties: Solangi

Urges patience as probe continues into ex-commissioner's rigging allegations

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi Monday said that the caretaker government had strived to ensure equal treatment to all political parties.

Addressing the Senate House Business Advisory Committee, he said that the caretaker government's primary task was to ensure free, fair, and transparent elections in the country, which required the cooperation of all political parties.

The caretaker administration endeavoured to foster close coordination with all stakeholders in that regard, he added. Murtaza Solangi extended his grati-

tude to the Senate chairman and senators for their steadfast support to the caretaker government.

Senate Chairman Sadiq Sanjrani and members of the House Business Advisory Committee commended Solangi for his role during the Senate sessions.

The Senate chairman praised the minister for his important contribution to smooth functioning of the Upper House of Parliament.

The senators hailed the minister for responding to questions in detail during the question hour sessions.

Meanwhile Caretaker Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Monday said a

high-level investigation committee was constituted to investigate the allegations leveled by former Commissioner Rawalpindi Liaquat Ali Chhatta regarding rigging in the general election.

Talking to media persons after attending the meeting of Senate Standing Committee on Information and Broadcasting, he urged patience as the legal process was currently underway.

The people should have trust in institutions and the judicial process, he added.

He remarked that the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) was currently investigating the allegations of rigging. The minister stressed the significance of waiting for the results of the ongoing legal proceedings.

## IHC suspends victory notifications of three PML-N NA candidates

Tariq Fazl Chaudhry, Anjum Aqeel, and Raja Khurram Nawaz's notifications suspended

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday suspended the victory notifications of three Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) candidates of the National Assembly.

A two-member bench of the IHC — comprising Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb and Justice Arbab Muhammad Tahir — issued the order against PML-N's Tariq Fazl Chaudhry, Anjum Aqeel, and Raja Khurram Nawaz.

Chaudhry had won with 102,502 votes, as per unofficial results from the NA-47 constituency, but his victory was challenged by his rival candidate.

Aqeel had secured victory from the NA-46 constituency and bagged 81,958 votes. However, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)-backed independent candidate Aamir Mughal challenged it. The court also suspended the notification of the victory of Raja Khurram Nawaz's NA-48 con-

stituency, which was challenged by the PTI-backed candidate Ali Bukhari.

The elections are marred by allegations of rigging and they picked up pace after former Rawalpindi commissioner Liaquat Ali Chhatta's startling revelations about the alleged rigging that took place under his watch.

Major political parties have called for an independent and judicial investigation into the allegations, with some already on the streets against the election results.



DUBAI: Ambassador, Faisal Niaz Tirmizi, Pakistan's Envoy to the UAE inaugurates the Pakistan Pavilion during Gulf Food Exhibition at World Trade Centre.

## Ambassador Tirmizi inaugurates Pakistan Pavilion at World Trade Center Dubai

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador of Pakistan to United Arab Emirates Faisal Niaz Tirmizi Monday inaugurated the Pakistan Pavilion at the World Trade Center Dubai.

On this occasion, he visited various stalls and had detailed discussions with the Pakistani exhibitors.

According to the Press Counselor of Pakistan in Dubai, the Pakistani ambassador to the UAE also spoke to media after

inaugurating and visiting the pavilion set up by the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP).

Ambassador Faisal Niaz Tirmizi said that almost a hundred Pakistani companies associated with the food industry have gathered here, which is a welcome sign.

He said that Pakistan's exports especially rice and meat have increased significantly compared to last year.

## Daily Voice of Masses Independent

### PML-N challenge

On Friday night, PML-N leader Khawaja Saad Rafique took to X to highlight the challenges facing politicians in forging a new government in Islamabad in the absence of a clear mandate for any single party. "No party has [an] absolute majority in the National Assembly," he reminded other stakeholders, largely the PPP. Therefore, he said, "the formation of government is the joint responsibility of all the parties in the parliament, [and] not just PML-N". Alternatively, he suggested that PTI-backed independent members form a government with PPP support.

Although it is unclear whether Mr Rafique's words reflect his own or his party's position, the gist of his message posted after a party huddle reportedly chaired by Nawaz Sharif is that governing the country would be akin to wearing a crown of thorns amid chaotic political and economic conditions, and that his party had no desire to claim it.

He is not the only PML-N politician to hint at stepping back from the party's initial stance of entering into a coalition with the PPP and others as spelled out by Mr Sharif in his post-election speech after it became clear that the N-League hadn't won enough seats to make a government on its own.

Many are understood to have advised their leader against forming a minority government at the centre, especially after Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari announced support for a PML-N-led set-up in exchange for the top constitutional offices and a PPP government in Balochistan.

It may be a unique experience for Pakistan but parliamentary democracies everywhere have seen minority governments supported by other parties function quite well. In India, the Congress supported the minority Janata Dal government in the 1990s. If the PPP is demanding too much, PML-N can negotiate a deal. Give-and-take is essential as the PPP also has much to lose if the system is derailed. Even a rowdy PTI would not want to rock the apple cart of democracy once it has made its point on rigging. Governing a politically and economically distraught nation would indeed be tough for the PML-N without sufficient numerical strength in parliament.

Divergent political interests might occasionally thwart or slow down legislative and economic reform. But should these hold back the three-time PM from accepting the challenge because of fear of the unknown, or losing the support of the PPP and others at some point? That hardly makes sense. The people have given a split verdict. Now it is time for all political stakeholders to respect it. The biggest responsibility rests with the PML-N. Mr Sharif should not only put away his fears to form a minority government, he must also realise that the nation has deep wounds to heal. A politician of his stature can overcome hurdles. It is a challenge he should accept.

## Young voters

Huma Yusuf

A general election is like a democratic health check. In its wake, comes the prognosis: will Pakistani democracy live or die? The widely discredited polling process points to terminal illness. But many pro-democracy Pakistanis believe we have identified a possible cure in the form of the youth vote.

The local and international media has a clear narrative: the triumph-against-all-odds of PTI-affiliated candidates was delivered by social media savvy young voters; their engagement with TikTok videos and AI-generated rallying cries has checked the excesses of elite institutions and vested interests. Ahsan Iqbal attributed polling results to a "youth rebellion against traditional politics" and called for "older parties... [to] create spaces for these segments in their party structures".

But has democratic backsliding truly met its generational match? In some ways, this election was bound to belong to the youth: our country's median age is 22.7 years, and more than 56.8 million eligible voters were under 35. But will young voters remain engaged in a sustainable way?

An election is chaotic. This year's polls invited acts of defiance, which suited Imran Khan's politics of disruption. Were the youth votes cast akin to an expletive against entrenched political actors and institutions? Or do they signal a revival of political engagement in the sense of policy development, institution building and service delivery?

The signs do not breed optimism. Firstly, the key issues that matter to young Pakistanis — inflation, education, employment — received only scant attention in parties' manifestos. As

service delivery falters, young voters will be disappointed.

Indeed, while they may have cast votes, young Pakistanis have been voting with their feet for the past few years. A survey from the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics last year found that 67 per cent of young Pakistanis want to leave the country in pursuit of employment. The number of Pakistanis emigrating tripled between 2021 and 2022, with the trend continuing last year.

Youth electoral fervour is also disengaged from Pakistan's political economy and structural challenges, which must be addressed as a prerequisite to democratic revival. A VOA/Ipsos survey in the run-up to the elections found that 74pc of young voters trust the military, while 58pc rank the Supreme Court as the second-most trusted institution. Such beliefs are hardly the precursor to a status quo shake-up.

Research from the University of Cambridge's Centre for the Future of Democracy may shed light on the youth phenomenon in these elections. The 2020 Youth and Satisfaction with Democracy report (which maps global trends) found that satisfaction with democracy is declining most rapidly among 18-34 year olds, with 55pc of global millennials (born between 1981 and 1996) expressing dissatisfaction. This is largely driven by the inability of democratic governments to address youth unemployment, wealth inequality and other forms of 'economic exclusion'.

That said, the report identified an interesting quirk: countries with populist leaders like Khan logged a 16 percentage point jump in satisfaction with democracy among voters aged

under 35 years during the first few years of a populist's tenure. This turnaround effect was noted irrespective of whether the populist leader was left- or right-wing. And it occurred despite the polarising effects of populist politics, which should be anathema to democracy.

But the report also found that an uptick in youth satisfaction with democracy under populist politicians is short-lived, with satisfaction de-c-lining gradually after four years, and precipitously after two terms. In other words, as populists either turn authoritarian to preserve power, or temper their excesses in order to succeed as mainstream politicians, they lose their youthful support, and democracy suffers again.

The conduct of Imran Khan and his supporters in opposition will steer the nature of youth political engagement, with perceptions of complexity a key risk. In all scenarios, it would be a shame for all parties and democracy champions not to seek to sustain youth participation.

We need more data to better understand Pakistan's demographic political trends. This should include tracking various forms of political engagement beyond casting ballots. Everything from social media engagement and protest to consumer boycotts counts, and acknowledging this will help clarify how to sustain youth engagement. We must also nuance the debate: the youth bloc is not a monolith, and grassroots circumstances will shape different young voters differently. Giving them due respect at a granular level — through participation in local government bodies — is likely to be a key step in sustaining engagement.

-- Courtesy Dawn

## Let students thrive

Neda Mulji

We've had a history of academic pressure to chase marks in tests, good grades at the end of the term and, in many schools, students still get ranks that benchmark them against their peers. Most assessments test the preparation of content; they do not test understanding of concepts. Students select the more 'important' content they know they will be tested on, and memorise that. Studying skills aren't necessarily taught, which means students must learn these skills on the go. Those that haven't mastered the art of preparation or the ones who haven't managed to develop the endurance to focus and write material from memory do not manage to get good marks as they have not mastered test-taking skills.

When teachers are truly skilled, they aren't only great at teaching but also guiding and monitoring. Traditionally, the teachers who have made a lasting impact on their students are the ones who focus on holistic development — those that are skilled enough to teach, motivate students and enable them to thrive.

Usually, these teachers empower students with a level of self-confidence that makes them able and willing to learn. They teach them the ropes to break down tasks to make it easier for themselves and they encourage them to plan ahead of time so they can acquire greater control on the mountain of work that comes their way. Most successful teachers keep a close eye on the students' studying habits, their turning in of assignments, their responses in class and their interest in their own progress.

Thriving is not just about learning but also about the willingness to do better and the innate drive to accomplish the next big task. Student motivation is key to learning. However, unfortunately, most teachers manage to kill motivation by warnings and threats of failure and disaster. How teachers connect and communicate with students may be the key to enabling students to thrive. A teacher's positivity and belief in the student's ability can turn the tide towards progress.

Most students need health and well-being programmes at school to support them through their academic journey. Back in 1995, when WHO, Unesco and Unicef jointly introduced the 'health promoting schools' approach, 90 countries around the world adopted it. Pakistan was not one of them. Ninety per cent of countries now provide at least one meal during the school day. Pakistan is not one of them.

Clean water and sanitation, eye-testing services, a doctor on the premises and vaccine administration and monitoring facilities, counselling were all part of the health programme. In 2010, Pakistan collaborated with Unesco after a report established that 61pc of government schools in Pakistan lacked drinking water and a staggering 56pc were without toilet facilities. A decade later, basic facilities are available in a fragmented and inconsistent manner, if at all.

The global Education 2030 agenda, initiated by Unesco, reiterates a set of eight Global Standards to help improve the lives of one billion school-going children. Pakistan has committed to these goals and yet, given the

scale of the improvements needed, we may well miss this bus too.

In the absence of such programmes across the board, teachers have an all-encompassing role at school where they have to plug in their expertise to fill in many gaps. They have to screen students for bad eyesight by using their own judgement in class, they write to parents to monitor nutrition when the child doesn't bring in a healthy snack, they act as first-aid respondents when children are hurt and they provide emotional support in the absence of school counsellors. The list is endless and the teachers' duties go far beyond their ba-sic job description. In many schools, teachers find themselves having to don their superwoman capes to take care of every contingency, and this can well take them away from their core work as a subject specialist. While every school year presents new challenges, it also opens new opportunities for growth. Relaxing the controlling grip on children may help them find learning fun. Instead of forcing them to read from their books, reading to them may help. Letting them teach whatever they know may help them get more involved in learning. Enabling them to track their own progress and set goals helps them take responsibility and develop a work ethic.

There is a world of possibilities where different strategies can be applied to achieve targeted outcomes, especially if the tried and tested means are not yielding results. Ignacio Estrada said it aptly: "If a child can't learn the way we teach, maybe we should teach the way they learn." -- Courtesy Dawn

## Commerce News

### MoU signed to make Pakistan food self-sufficient

ISLAMABAD (APP): A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Monday signed between Green Corporate Initiative and Organic Pakistan to Revolutionize Agriculture to ensure food sovereignty and environmental sustainability in Pakistan.

The Green Corporate Initiative (GCI) and Organic Pakistan (OP) have officially inked MoU to spearhead a transformative journey towards smart and sustainable agriculture, environmental conservation, and urban farming practices to make Pakistan food self-sufficient.

The agreement signed for ensuring Pakistan to move from food import and dependency to a self-

sufficient food exporting nation.

The partnership is also aimed to improve the status of the farmers by bringing them into the mainstream economic development, particularly the agriculture policy debate.

The MoU, signed at the Green Corporate Initiative Pvt. Limited's head office, establishes a robust framework for collaboration between Green Corporate Initiative and Organic Pakistan, with a shared vision to make Pakistan food self-sufficient.

Through strategic partnerships, knowledge exchange, and innovation-centric initiatives, both organizations aim to foster resilience, sustainability,

and inclusivity within the agricultural sector.

Commenting on the MoU, Shahid Nazeer, Chief Executive Officer, Corporate Green Initiative said, "This partnership marks a significant milestone in our collective efforts to drive smart sustainable development and environmental stewardship in Pakistan. By combining our expertise, resources, and networks, we are poised to create lasting impact and empower communities across the country."

Nadeem Iqbal, Chief Executive Officer, Organic Pakistan, said, "We are excited to embark on this journey of collaboration with the Green Corporate Initiative.



LAHORE: People are busy buying secondhand toys at a Landa bazaar in Provincial Capital.

### Railways finalize plan to procure 230 passengers coaches

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways is finalizing a plan to procure 230 passenger coaches and 820 High Capacity Wagons under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) aiming help to improve the speed of the trains and ensure adherence to fixed timings.

"Out of the total, around 46 Completely-Built-Up (CBU) passenger coaches have been procured up till now while the remaining 184 would be manufactured in the country and the coaches would be able to travel at

the speed of 160km/h," said an official in the Ministry of Railways.

He said Pakistan Railways is putting maximum efforts to complete rehabilitation and reconstruction work on the railway track along with improving the speed of the locomotives to carry passengers to their respective destinations on time.

The infrastructure, including the track and signaling system from Karachi to Peshawar, Main Line-I (ML-I), and doubling of track from Lahore to Peshawar (462.20 Km).

### PSX witnesses bullish trend, gains 586 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bullish trend on Monday, gaining 586.79 points, a positive change of 0.98 percent, closing at 60,459.75 points against 59,872.96 points the previous trading day.

A total of 261,799,826 shares valuing Rs 9,907 billion were traded during the day as compared to 314,247,768 shares valuing Rs12.243 billion the last day. Some 330 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 170 of them recorded gains and 139 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 21 remained unchanged. The three top trading companies were PIAC(A) with 21,406,500 shares at Rs 11.06 per share, WorldCall Telecom with 20,034,698 shares at Rs 1.23 per share, and Pak Refinery with 15,164,705 shares at Rs 25.33 per share. Rafhan Maize Products Company Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 373.35 per share price.



DUBAI: Ambassador, Faisal Niaz Tirmizi, Pakistan's Envoy to the UAE while talking to a Pakistani exhibitor during the Gulf Food Exhibition at Pakistan Pavilion, World Trade Centre.

### SECP says: 2,651 new companies incorporated in January

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has registered 2,651 new companies in January 2024, showing an increase of 10 percent compared to the corresponding period last year.

The total number of registered companies now stands at 212,108. Total capitalization (paid-up capital) with regard to newly incorporated companies is Rs5.2 billion, said a news release.

In January, around 58 percent of companies were registered as private limited

companies, 38 percent as single member companies, and 4 percent as public unlisted companies, not-for-profit associations, trade organizations, limited liability partnerships, and foreign companies.

Five foreign companies also registered their place of business in Pakistan. Around 138 foreign applicants were registered through eServices. Almost 99.85 percent of companies were registered online. The information technology sector took the lead with regards to incorporation with 356

companies, trading with 319, real estate development and construction, and services with 277 each, tourism with 145, education with 116, food and beverages with 94, corporate agricultural farming with 93, e-commerce with 72, engineering with 65, chemical with 61, power generation with 58, marketing & advertisement, and textile with 55 each.

Furthermore, pharmaceutical, mining & quarrying with 53 each, healthcare with 48, fuel and energy with 45.

### POL import bill shrinks by 12.06% in 7 months

ISLAMABAD (APP): The imports of the overall petroleum group contracted by 12.06 percent during the first seven months of the current fiscal year (2023-24) as compared to the corresponding period of the last year, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported.

The total imports of the petroleum group during July-January (2023-24) stood at \$ 9,332.322

million against the imports of \$ 10,611.727 million during the same period of last year. Among petroleum commodities, the import of petroleum products declined by 25.94 percent, from \$ 4,889.799 million last year to \$ 3,621.420 million during the period under review year whereas petroleum crude dipped by 3.96 percent from \$ 3,100.481 million to \$ 2,977.671 million.

### Gold rates increase by Rs 1,100

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold increased by Rs 1,100 and was sold at Rs 214,300 on Monday compared to its sale at Rs 213,200 on last trading day. The price of 10 grams of 24karat gold also increased by Rs 943 to Rs 183,728 from Rs 182,785 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold went up to Rs 168,417 from Rs 167,553, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

### CDNS attains Rs 1030b targets in fresh bond

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Central Directorate of National Savings (CDNS) has attained a target of Rs 1030 billion in fresh bonds in the current fiscal year, from July 1 to February, 19.

The CDNS surpassed the annual target and achieved the target of Rs 1.6 trillion in fresh bonds in the current fiscal year, the senior official of CDNS told APP here on Monday.

He said this was a Rs 200 billion additional annual target than the target of Rs 1300 billion for the previous financial year 2021-22.

"The CDNS has set a reviewed saving target of Rs 1.4 trillion for the current financial year (2021-22) which will

promote savings culture in the country," he said.

Given the current market trend in the country, the ambitious target had been set to improve the savings culture further, he added.

The official said that work was being done on institutional reforms in CDNS and new reforms and innovations were being introduced.

"At this time Automated Teller Machine (ATM) has also been introduced in CDNS which will provide enough facilities to the users," he added. Replying to a question, he said the CDNS had collected an investment of Rs 55 billion by January 9, 2023-24, through Islamic investment bonds.



LAHORE: A blacksmith is busy at his workplace cutting large pieces of iron and making molds.

### FCCI proposes separate ministry to produce skilled human resources

FAISALABAD (APP): Engineer Ahmad Hassan, former Vice President and Convener FCCI (Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry) Standing Committee on R&D, has proposed a separate and dedicated ministry to produce highly skilled human resources which could be exported to other countries to almost double the existing foreign remittances.

Addressing a meeting of the standing committee, he said that our current exports are only \$20bn while remittances are

\$30bn but still there is a gap of \$20-25bn.

He said, "We must focus on exporting highly skilled manpower to overcome this trade gap. The economy is facing multiple challenges and fundamental administrative changes are needed to resolve the issues. We are exporting unskilled and semiskilled workers which are sending \$30bn remittances. The proposed ministry may be tasked with identifying the specific needs of each potential country and produce human resources in that particular area."

## Equipping students with IT, AI crying need of hour: Governor

MULTAN (APP): Governor of Punjab, Muhammad Baligh Ur Rehman has said that equipping students with Information Technology (IT) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) is the dire need of the hour.

Addressing a convocation of a private institute here on Monday, he stated in the modern era, acquiring knowledge of modern sciences and arts is essential for progress and success. He informed that hard work and consistency play a crucial role in the journey of progress.

Instead of reacting to false and misleading information on social media, ensure a research-based approach, the governor advised the students adding that reacting against corruption

should be based on real data and facts from international organizations.

Rehman noted that destruction and violent protests were extremely detrimental to the country. He said that determining those who merely talk against corruption and those who take practical actions was imperative.

The governor said success in education is possible through collaboration with the private sector. Honesty and high moral values are the keys to success in practical life, he maintained.

Vice Chancellors (VCs) of public and private universities besides parents and graduating students were in attendance.



ABBOTTABAD: Rescue officials trying to remove a vehicle stuck in snow covered area after the heavy snowfall of winter season, which more decreases the temperature below in minus degree Celsius, at Nathiagali area in Abbottabad.

## Gandapur says: Party leadership to decide joining of political party for formation of KP govt

PESHAWAR (APP): Talking to media here outside Peshawar High Court (PHC) he said a legal team was looking into matters related to joining any political party, however, the final decision would be taken by the party chairman. Gandapur said that after coming to power, he would take measures to make the province financially.



PESHAWAR: A delegation of District Bar Association Charsada meeting with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Haji Ghulam Ali.

## Wani seeks independent probe into mass rape incidents in occupied Kashmir

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prominent Hurriyat leader and Vice Chairman Jammu Kashmir National Front (JKNF) has demanded an independent and international probe into mass-rape incidents committed by the Indian occupation forces in the Indian-held territory of Jammu Kashmir.

In a statement issued here on Monday, Wani said that the occupation forces deployed in the restive region have been involved

in heinous crimes. Use and abuse of power, harassment and humiliation and sexual abuse, he said, were among the dirtiest war tactics the Indian army has been using to suppress Kashmiris' legitimate struggle for the right to self-determination.

He said that being a vulnerable segment of society, the Kashmiri women have been the worst victims of Indian belligerence.

Referring to the dreadful incident of

Kunan and Poshpora mass rape, the Hurriyat leader said that the horrific incident was a big blot on the face of Indian democracy and the state that has been using rape as a weapon of war against Kashmiris.

Highlighting the pain and agony of the rape victims, he said that it was disgusting to see that the Indian rulers and their henchmen in the territory have shamelessly tried to cover up and conceal the facts to save the bloody cul-

## Ghafoor Baig says: Complaints of federal employees swiftly addressed

PESHAWAR (APP): In-charge Federal Ombudsman Regional Office Abbottabad, Abdul Ghafoor Baig on Monday said the complaints of federal employees related to misadministration are being addressed on a swift basis and no negligence towards this end is tolerated.

He said to make the general people abreast of the effectiveness and importance of the office of Federal Ombudsman, open katcheries are being held through print and electronic media are released.



MIRPUR: Chief Justice of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Raja Saeed Akram Khan and the judges of the Supreme Court are meeting the bar officials under the leadership of the newly elected President District Bar Association Chaudhry Shakeeluz Zaman.

## 686,711 students access PITB's Higher Education Portal

LAHORE (APP): The Higher Education Portal (HEP), developed by PITB for the Higher Education Department, is a centralized platform enabling public colleges in Punjab to have daily reporting of essential data. This centralized system facilitates seamless data reporting, fostering enhanced efficiency and transparency in higher education administration throughout the province.

In this regard, PITB Chairman Faisal Yousof stated, "HEP signifies a significant stride towards modernizing and digitizing the higher education.

## Child falls to death in water tank

PESHAWAR (APP): A three-year-old child was killed after falling into a water tank in Jamrud tehsil of Khyber district on Monday. Police said the incident occurred in Bakarabad area of Jamrud where a three-year-old child, named Hayan, son of Amir fell into a water tank during play.

The area people retrieved the child from the water tank and shifted him to Tehsil Headquarters Hospital Jamrud.

Doctors at the hospital did their best to save the child however, the child breathed his last at the hospital.

## KP Governor lauds lawyers' role in development, prosperity, strengthening of democracy

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ghulam Ali on Monday said that lawyers have an important role in maintaining the rule of law and establishing a justice-based system in society.

"Lawyers have always played a positive role in the country's stability, development, prosperity and democracy. They are the most important part of the judiciary and the delivery of justice," he said during a meeting with a delegation

of Charsadda District Bar Association here at Governor House.

The governor said that the role of a lawyer in any society is very important especially in the provision of justice, adding that the lawyers' community has a great responsibility to uphold the supremacy of law and ensure justice for the poor and middle-class of the society.

He urged lawyers to play an important role in the speedy disposal of cases and the provision of

justice to the victims.

Earlier, the delegation led by the President of the Bar Association Mujibur Rahman Advocate informed the Governor about the problems and difficulties faced by the District Bar Association and requested for his cooperation to solve them.

He especially mentioned that the revenue cases of Charsadda were referred to Peshawar and caused inconvenience for both lawyers and the masses.

## International News

## Gaza Health Ministry says Over 29,000 Palestinians have been killed in Israel-Hamas war

### Monitoring Desk

RAFAH: More than 29,000 Palestinians have been killed in the Gaza Strip since the start of the Israel-Hamas war, the territory's Health Ministry said Monday, marking another grim milestone in the deadliest round of violence in the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to continue the offensive until "total victory" against Hamas, raising fears that troops will soon move into the southernmost town of Rafah on the Egyptian border, where over half of Gaza's

2.3 million people have sought refuge from fighting elsewhere.

The United States, Israel's top ally, says it is still working with mediators Egypt and Qatar to try to broker another cease-fire and hostage release agreement. But those efforts appear to have stalled in recent days, and Netanyahu angered Qatar, which has hosted Hamas leaders, by calling on it to pressure the militant group.

The Health Ministry said 107 bodies were brought to hospitals in the last 24 hours. That brings the total number of fatalities to 29,092 since the

start of the war.

The ministry does not distinguish between civilians and combatants in its records, but says around two-thirds of those killed were women and children. More than 69,000 Palestinians have been wounded, overwhelming the territory's hospitals, less than half of which are even partially functioning.

The Health Ministry is part of the Hamas-run government in Gaza but maintains detailed records of casualties. Its figures from previous wars in Gaza have largely matched those of U.N. agencies, independent experts and even Israel's own tallies.



Former Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra arrives at his family compound following his release.

## Netanyahu could surprise Israelis with Hamas deal next week

TEL AVIV (INP): Israel has sent negotiators for truce talks in Cairo as requested by U.S. President Joe Biden but they did not go back for further talks because Hamas' demands were "delusional," Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Saturday.

On the other hand, as per unverified online reports, Benjamin Netanyahu could surprise Israelis with a Hamas deal for the release of hostages in the next week.

Israel would not give in to "international dictates" regarding a statehood agreement with the Palestinians, which he said could only be reached through direct negotiations without preconditions.

The Egyptian and Qatari-mediated talks to try to reach a ceasefire in Gaza and secure the release of over 100 Israeli hostages being held in the Hamas-ruled territory have yet to produce results. A round of inconclusive talks in Cairo ended on Tuesday.

## Famine becomes latest threat in Gaza's north

GAZA STRIP: Like many in northern Gaza, Shadi Jenina has resorted to desperate measures to stave off hunger for his five children — grinding up animal feed into flour.

"We're looking for food for birds, animals and livestock... such as barley, corn, wheat and fodder. We grind them and make flour," Jenina, 40, explained.

"The bread is dry and not suitable for humans but we're forced to eat it," he said, adding they struggle to feed their children. The Gaza Strip was already one of the poorest places in the Middle East even before Israel declared a complete siege on the territory.

Though much of Gaza was reliant on food aid, enough of it was entering the territory to largely meet the needs of its 2.4 million inhabitants.

But now, after more than four months of war that has flattened huge swathes of the Strip, Gazans are inching closer towards famine, according to the UN's World Food Programme.



Volunteers distribute rations of lentil soup to displaced Palestinians in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip.

## US threatens to veto new Gaza ceasefire resolution

### Monitoring Desk

WASHINGTON (Online): The United States Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield warned that if the Algerian proposed resolution calling for a humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza were to come up for a vote at the UN Security Council as drafted, it would not be adopted by Washington. In a statement Saturday, Thomas-Greenfield said the United States has been working on a deal between Israel and Hamas which would see the release of hostages and bring a pause in the fighting for at least six weeks.

"Over the last week, President Biden has had multiple calls with Prime Minister Netanyahu, as well as the leaders of Egypt and Qatar, to push this deal forward. Though gaps remain, the key elements are on the table," the ambassador said. "We believe this deal represents the best opportunity to reunite all hostages with their families and enable a prolonged pause in fighting, that would allow for more lifesaving food, water, fuel, medicine, and other essentials to get into the hands of Palestinian civilians who desperately need it," she said.

## UN special envoys in Doha to discuss future of Afghanistan

DOHA (Online): In less than a year the second UN gathering with national and regional envoys to Afghanistan are set to meet in Doha on Sunday (today), however, there is still uncertainty about whether Taliban leaders would attend it or not.

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres spokeswoman said that the two-day conference, which is being hosted by the secretary general will include stepping up col-

laboration with Taliban-led Afghanistan with a better-coordinated reaction to the country in Central Asia. Taliban administration's participation is still unknown on the eve of the gathering in gas-rich Qatar, which provided a home to the Taliban during years of peace negotiations with the US. After the Taliban leadership refused to attend the first conference in May, the UN has now invited them again to the Doha convention.

## Landslide buries houses Nuristan, many killed

### Monitoring Desk

ISTANBUL: At least five bodies were retrieved from mud after a landslide buried houses in eastern Afghanistan, local officials said on Monday. The landslide hit at least 20 houses in the Tatin village of the Nurgram district in the eastern Nuristan province, the Kabul-based Hurriyat Radio English reported.

Efforts to recover others are underway, it added.

Provincial officials expressed fears that the number of casualties may increase.

## UN likely to vote on Gaza ceasefire

WASHINGTON (Online): The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) will meet on Tuesday to demand an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza.

The meeting has been called on a resolution drafted by Algeria.

The UN Security Council resolution needs at least nine votes in favor and no vetoes by the United States, Britain, France, China or Russia to pass the resolution. Thousands of people have taken to the streets in Europe to protest against the war in Gaza.

## ICJ to hold hearings on Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories

### Monitoring Desk

HAGUE (Online): International Court of Justice (ICJ) in the Hague will open a week of hearings on the legal consequences of Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories today.

Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad al-Maliki will speak first in the legal proceedings.

Meanwhile, at least 127 Palestinians have been martyred in Israeli strikes on Gaza in the past 24 hours. The week-long proceedings, which began at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague on Monday, come as Israel continues its devastating war on Gaza.

The assault has killed more than 29,000 Palestinians since October 7.

The case is separate from the genocide complaint South Africa filed at the ICJ

against Israel for its alleged violations in the ongoing war.

It focuses instead on Israel's occupation of the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem since 1967.

The Palestinians seek all three areas for an independent state.

Palestinian representatives, who speak first on Monday, will argue that the Israeli occupation is illegal because it has violated three key tenets of international law, the Palestinian legal team told reporters on Wednesday.

They say Israel has violated the prohibition on territorial conquest by annexing large swathes of occupied land, violated Palestinians' right to self-determination and imposed a system of racial discrimination and apartheid.

## Don't let Israel attack Rafah, Irish foreign minister warns EU

### Monitoring Desk

BRUSSELS: The European Union "must do everything possible" to pressure the Israeli government into not attacking Rafah, Irish Foreign Minister Micheál Martin said on Monday in Brussels.

Martin said the "level of inhumanity that's now happening within Gaza" has shocked the world, referencing Israel's ground and air offensive to defeat Hamas in response to the October 7 terrorist attack.

The Israeli government has been preparing to launch a full-scale ground offensive into Rafah, the southernmost city in Gaza near the border with Egypt, despite international fears it will lead to massive civilian casualties.

Luxembourg Foreign Minister Xavier Bettel said he has warned Israel that the country is in danger of losing "the last sup-

port they have in the world" should they attack.

Martin called on Hamas to release the Israeli hostages taken in the October 7 attack and to surrender their weapons and for a humanitarian ceasefire.

The Irish foreign minister also called for sanctions on Israeli settlers in the West Bank. EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said the unanimity required among EU member states to impose the punitive measures was still missing.

German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said tensions were growing in the West Bank and that the violent actions of Israeli settlers against Palestinians must be addressed by the Israeli government. Expressing her support for sanctions, Baerbock said the EU "must make it clear to extremist settlers" that breaking law will not go unanswered.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate, Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani exchanging views with American Business delegation led by Ahmed Nadeem Khan, Chairman and President of Miracle Saltworks Collective Inc. USA during meeting held at Parliament House in Islamabad.

## Pakistan's policy endeavours on track to achieve disaster resilience against floods: Solangi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Monday told the Senate that the country's policy endeavours keeping in view its growing vulnerability due to climate catastrophes were on track to achieve disaster resilience against floods.

Responding to a motion tabled by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) Senator Muhammad Humayun Mohmand to discuss the pressing issue of water resources, floods and water mismanagement in Pakistan, especially in the wake of the devastating floods in 2022 and in 2010, the minister provided a brief overview of the country's response to floods through policy interventions.

He said that after three years deliberations post 2010 floods, the Ministry of Water Resources had finalized the National Flood Protection Plan-IV, which was approved by the Council of Common Interests (CCI) on May 2, 2017.

However, all the four provinces including Gilgit-Baltistan, and Azad Jammu & Kashmir, after the enactment of Model River Act 2016, were instructed to change and implement the law according to their requirements, he added.

"The Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces have implemented the law whereas it's approval in the other provinces is in different stages," the minister said.

Solangi noted that under the National Plan for Flood Telemetry Programme, some 707 telemetry stations would be established on different small and big rivers across the country. The project concept or PC-I had been made, and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) had assured its assistance for developing 45 stations, he added.

The Punjab and Sindh provinces, he said, continued to work rapidly on expansion and innovation of all their barrages, whereas the work had been completed in Punjab and progress on Sukkur and Guddu barrages in Sindh was underway.

## ECP committee kicks off probe into Liaquat Chattha's allegations

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) high-level investigation committee on Monday initiated its inquiry into the allegations raised against the former commissioner of Rawalpindi, Liaquat Ali Chattha.

Sources privy to the matter said that the committee has taken the initiative by reaching out to the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) to acquire the transcript of Liaquat Ali Chattha's recent press conference.

On the other hand, six district returning officers (ROs) from Rawalpindi Division have already furnished their written statements, categorically refuting the allegations leveled by the former commissioner.

Furthermore, the committee plans to extend its scrutiny to encompass statements from ROs across 13 constituencies of the National Assembly and 26 constituencies of the provincial assembly within the Rawalpindi Division.

The inquiry stems from a series of startling events, notably former commissioner Liaquat Ali Chattha's resignation on Saturday, citing election irregularities.

Addressing the media at Pindi Cricket Stadium, Chattha expressed remorse over his actions, acknowledging wrongdoing and advocating for accountability. "I have done injustice in Rawalpindi Division; I should be punished for it, along with others involved," he stated solemnly.

Chattha's resignation, coupled with his candid admission of guilt, has sparked a ripple effect across the political landscape. He recounted the pressures he faced, including social media scrutiny and the expectations of overseas Pakistanis, which led him to contemplate suicide.

## Journalists should do court reporting with more responsibility: IHC CJ

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad High Court's (IHC) Chief Justice Aamer Farooq on Monday said that journalists should do court reporting with more responsibility.

He said the media was the fourth pillar of state and today was an era of electronic and social media after the print media.

He was addressing the oath-taking ceremony of the newly elected office-bearers of Islamabad High Court Journalists Association (IHCJA).

The chief justice congratulated the new-elected body of IHCJA and said that the role of media was imperative to aware the public about court proceedings. The reporters should, however, avoid reporting of unnecessary and irrelevant discussions during the hearings.

He said that when a court gave a verdict it became a matter of public domain. The verdicts could be criticized but at the same time the facts should be reported correctly.

The chief justice said that they were answerable as public office-holders.

Errors in decisions could be possible and that was the reason that the people used to approach the apex court.

"Every institution has its own respect," he said, adding that only the facts should be reported instead of personal criticism.

Chief Justice Aamer Farooq reiterated that he could understand the compulsion of the media-persons that they required some "spicy content", but it was important for them to do a responsible and standard journalism.

IHC's Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri, President Islamabad High Court Bar Association (IHCBA) Naveed Hayat Malik, Additional Attorney General Munawar Dogal, Deputy Attorney General Raja Arshad Kayani, Assistant Attorney General Azmat Bashir Tarar, Secretary General RIJUA Asif Bashir Chaudhry, senior journalists Saghir Ahmed Chaudhry, Aamer Saeed Abbasi, Afzal Javed, President Supreme Court Press Association Aqeel Afzal and others also attended the ceremony.



LAHORE: Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi inspecting the Newly Installed Beds after inauguration of upgraded Surgical Block, Medical Block and Admin Block at Services Hospital.

## CM inaugurates upgraded blocks of Services Hospital

LAHORE: Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi's unwavering commitment to serving humanity has transformed Services Hospital into a state-of-the-art facility within a remarkable span of just 4 and a half months.

Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Monday inaugurated the upgraded surgical, medical, and administrative blocks of Services Hospital, where he inspected the modernized wards and expressed satisfaction over the provision of contemporary medical equipment and beds. He also visited nursing counters and doctors' rooms, directing the swift operationalization of all operation theaters and emphasizing the importance of regular cleanliness management in the upgraded blocks.

The CM also inaugurated a digital data storage system for patient records, a significant step towards modernizing healthcare services. He commended the high quality of the hospital's upgradation. Secretary Communication and Works provided a detailed overview of the upgradation work, while Secretary Health highlighted the enhanced treatment facilities in the upgraded blocks. Mohsin Naqvi urged the completion of the new lab and diagnostic center at Services Hospital, giving specific instructions to the Principal of SIMS (Services Institute of Medical Sciences) in this regard.

Talking to the media after the inauguration, Mohsin Naqvi recalled his visit to Services Hospital six months ago, stating his shock at the dire state of the facility at that time, remarking that he wouldn't even send an enemy there for treatment. He praised the rapid transformation of Services Hospital into a state-of-the-art facility within 4 and a half months.

The ongoing upgradation covers an area of 3 lakh 11 thousand square feet, including the addition of 24 new, state-of-the-art operation theaters, in the 1600-bed hospital.

## China congratulates Pakistan for holding elections smoothly

BEIJING (APP): A Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson on Monday congratulated Pakistan for holding general elections of the national and provincial assemblies in a steady and smooth manner and hoped that the political parties in Pakistan could work together to form a new government after the polls.

"We noted that general elections in Pakistan were held in a generally steady and smooth manner, and we offer our congratulations," Mao Ning said during her regular briefing which resumed here after a 10-day pause in the wake of the Chinese New Year and Spring Festival holidays.

"As a close and friendly neighbour, China fully respects the choices of Pakistani people and sincerely hopes that relevant parties of Pakistan will work together to uphold the political solidarity and social stability after the elections," she added.

The spokesperson said that China and Pakistan were all-weather strategic cooperative partners and China hoped to work with Pakistan to build on the traditional friendship, deepen practical cooperation in various areas and accelerate the building of an even closer China-Pakistan community with a shared future in the new era for the benefit of the peoples of the two countries.

## Four persons killed, nine injured due to rains

PESHAWAR (APP): Four persons were killed and nine were reported injured due to rains, said the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) on Monday.

Two houses were destroyed completely while two were partially damaged.

In a statement, Director General PDMA Muhammad Qaiser Khan said that all kinds of emergency services are being provided and all the district administrations were informed about the spell of rain.

## Rs 35.6 bln program being launched to eradicate fatal diseases: Health Minister

PESHAWAR (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Health, Dr Nadeem Jan on Monday said that a mega project worth Rs35.6 billion was being launched to eradicate fatal diseases including sugar, HIV AIDs and hepatitis in the country.

He said that a Rs six billion program has been prepared for the control of sugar disease besides projects were being launched for the eradication of AIDs HIV.

He was addressing a function after inaugurating a modern labour room at the Basic Health Unit (BHU) Kotkay in Charsadda district.

The minister said that providing the best healthcare facilities to patients at their doorsteps was the top priority of the government.

He said that basic health units are being strengthened in terms of medical staff, equipment and medicines.

The minister said the promise of rehabilitation of the flood-affected BHU has been fulfilled and termed the cooperation of the World Health Organization for rehabilitation of the BHU as highly praiseworthy.

Nadeem Jan said that people of the area would now get quality treatment and medicine facilities at their doorsteps.

The minister said responsibilities rest on the shoulders of officials of the health department to ensure the best use of the BHU for the betterment of the people.

He said that timely availability of the staff and provision of better healthcare facilities was the prime responsibility of the health department.

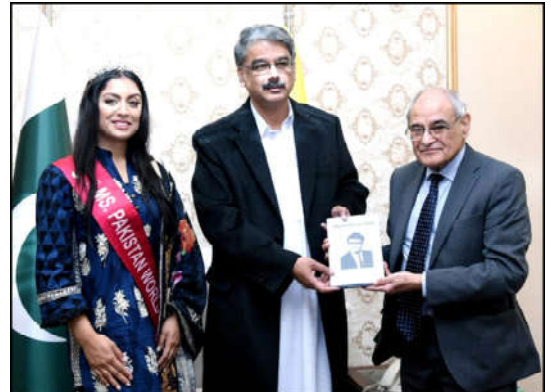
"If the performance of BHUs is good then there will be minimum load on big hospitals and precious lives would be saved" he said.

## Terrorists attack police vehicle on security of polling in Tank

TANK (APP): The armed terrorists here on Monday attacked police armoured vehicle on security of polling at NA-43, Tank cum Dera Ismail Khan.

According to initial reports shared by the police spokesman, some armed terrorists attacked police armoured vehicle on security duty for polling station at Kot-Azam in Tank.

The polling process was halted for some time due to the attack.



ISLAMABAD: Professor Dr. Abd-ur-Rasheed presenting his book to Prime Minister Azad, Jammu Kashmir Choudhary Anwar-ul-Haq.

## Call for action to build fair, rights-based, equitable & ecologically just world

ISLAMABAD (APP): We need to lose our fear, for them to lose their power — is a challenge posed by us as we conclude the World Social Forum 2024. The power imbalance that fosters systematic and structural inequalities and the compounding crises that comes along with it, drives us to lose our fear to stand up and speak up against all forms of injustices. It must be understood as a systemic design that leads to gross violations of human rights for a vast majority of the global population. The statement further narrated: The wealth of billions built on the material exploitation of workers who struggle to access basic services, appears to have grown twice as much wealth as the rest of the world even during the time of a global health crisis, where most of the people struggled to make ends meet. This highlights that we need to redistribute power, put the people at the heart of just, equal and sustainable world we want.

Thousands of people representing various civil society organizations signed a civil society statement on thematic assembly on economic inequality and justice. The Assembly was organized at the World Social Forum by Oxfam, Fight Inequality Alliance, Asia Feminist Coalition, ActionAid, LDC Watch, South Asia Alliance for poverty eradication, and Asia Center. The joint statement was issued by Mustafa Talpur, head of advocacy for Oxfam Asia, a news release said.

The statement said:



GILGIT: Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Haji Gulbar Khan presiding over the meeting regarding the land reforms committee at CM Secretariat.

## FGEHA launched 12 housing, apartment projects since 2001

ISLAMABAD (APP): Director General Federal Government Employees Housing Authority (FGEHA) Captain (retired) Muhammad Zafar Iqbal on Monday informed the committee that the housing authority had launched 12 housing and apartment projects from 2001 to 2023, under which an amount of Rs. 56 billion had been collected so far. During a meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on Housing and Works held here under the chairmanship of Haji Hidayatullah Khan, the DG clarified that allocations had been made from those candidates who qualified for the relevant schemes. However, he said, the Thallian Housing Scheme has been discontinued due to land-related issues, and those who were allocated the plots, would be accommodated in the upcoming schemes according to the established criteria. The chairman of the body while raising concerns over delay in the projects asked investigation into this matter. Additionally, the chairperson requested the information regarding the financial and tangible advantages associated with the allotted plots.

The officials from the Ministry of Housing and Works clarified that the delay in the projects stemmed from technical issues.

One of the reason for the postponement of the two-day auction of class-III commercial plots in sector G-13/G-14 and the fuel station plot in the Mauve Area is that a writ petition was filed by Quaid-e-Azam University (Q.A.U.), claiming a share in the sale proceeds from the auction of commercial plots in G-14/4 and the Mauve Area.

DG Zafar Iqbal further explained that they were compliant with the Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) and were persistent in expediting the auction before Ramadan, but they were given two options either to dispose of this case or to give sufficient time to the university. It was reported that G-14/1 and G-14/2 and G-14/3 are partially completed with an approved project cost of Rs. 6127.90 million for G-14/1 and Rs. 1499.43 million for G-14/2 and G-14/3.

## LHC dismisses petition seeking removal PTI from list of political parties

LAHORE (Online): Lahore High Court (LHC) has dismissed the petition seeking removal of PTI from the list of political parties.

The petition seeking removal of PTI from list of political parties came up for hearing before single bench of LHC led by Justice Baqar Ali Najafi Monday.

The petitioner Afaq Ahmad advocate while making chairman Election Commission (EC) and secretary EC respondents took the plea EC has declared PTI intra party election illegal. Election symbol has been withdrawn from PTI. No office bearer of the party is there and no party in the name of PTI exists in EC.

## AIOU to hold Karachi convocation on March 3

ISLAMABAD (APP): The convocation of Allama Iqbal Open University (Sindh Chapter) will be held on March 3, 2024, at AIOU Regional Campus in Karachi. This convocation is exclusively for registered students from Sindh province, said a press release on Monday.

The graduates will be conferred with degrees and gold medals.

## EC issues notice to Ijaz ul Haq

ISLAMABAD (Online): Election Commission (EC) has issued notice to Ijaz Ul Haq, successful candidate from NA -163 Bahawalnagar during hearing of the election petition.

The court adjourned the hearing of the case till February 27.

A two members bench of EC comprising member KP Ikram Ullah and member Balochistan Muhammad Shah Jatoi heard the election petition Monday.

Shaukat Basra, the candidate who lost the election brought with him the Holy Quran. He said he swears on the Holy Quran he had won the election.

Member KP said you should not swear on the Holy Quran. There is separate place for it.

## Capital Police hosts session on Policing and Journalism



ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Capital Police organized a session focusing on Policing and Journalism at Central Police Office Islamabad, a public relations officer said.

He said that, the Islamabad Capital City Officer (ICCPO) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, crime reporters from renowned media organizations, and senior police officers were present on the occasion.

During the session, the journalists raised issues, and recommendations for further improvements in measures taken by Islamabad Capital Police for the convenience of the citizens were presented.

Moreover, different aspects of Islamabad Capital Police's daily operations and various dimensions of public communication and publicity were also discussed.

Addressing the session, ICCPO Dr Akbar Nasir Khan highlighted the crucial role that the field of journalism plays in societal improvement. He emphasized that Islamabad Capital Police continues its efforts to maintain regular interaction with journalists, aiming to disseminate timely and fact-based news.