

# Independent

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## Caretaker setup leaves behind useful strategy safeguarding national interests: PM

Expresses gratitude to cabinet members, officers, staff for successful operations of caretaker setup;

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Thursday said the caretaker setup in a short span of time had left behind a useful strategy for the upcoming elected government that would ensure public welfare and protect national interests.

"The caretaker government always gave priority to national interests

while taking policy decisions as it believed to work together for national stability and development," the prime minister said while chairing a meeting of the federal cabinet at Prime Minister office.

He said the government had improved the national economy, adding "we are leaving country's economy in a better condition than before".

He appreciated and thanked his cabinet members and the civil servants for their tireless efforts during short tenure of the government.

The federal cabinet expressed satisfaction over the steps taken by the caretaker government regarding restructuring of various institutions, promotion of foreign investment and providing facilities to businesses.

Appreciating the prudent leadership of Prime Minister Kakar on behalf of the federal bureaucracy, the cabinet secretary said that he had taken important difficult decisions in interest of the country, which would have far-reaching results.



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



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Minister for Information Murtaza Solangi and Caretaker Federal Minister of National Heritage & Culture Syed Jamal Shah along with Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan H.E. Mitsuhiro Wada cutting cake to celebrate the 64th Birthday of His Majesty the Emperor.

## KMC Council to form committee to discuss street crimes situation with IGP

KARACHI (APP): Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab on Thursday agreed to a proposal to form a committee consisting of City Council members to deal with the increasing street crimes in Karachi, which would meet the Sindh police chief and discuss the crime situation in the city. The meeting Karachi Metropolitan Corporation - KMC's Council was chaired by the Mayor Karachi in the council hall of the KMC head office here.

On this occasion, a proposal was also made by the members of the House to form a committee consisting of City Council members to deal with the increasing street crimes in Karachi, to which Barrister Murtaza Wahab termed it as timely and said that a committee consisting of members of the House will be formed today which will meet with IGP Sindh.

He said every political party will be represented in the committee to inform the law enforcement

agencies about the crime situation in Karachi and to urge immediate steps in this regard. He said that the proceedings of today's meeting of the city were held in a good manner and hoped this would continue in future sessions of the council so that the members of this council could provide relief to the citizens of Karachi from various problems.

The Mayor Karachi said that according to the tradition of the city council, the meeting of the council is postponed after the death of a member, so today's meeting is also postponed, the next meeting will be held on March 8, 2024. Deputy Mayor Karachi Salman Abdullah Murad also participated in the meeting. During the meeting, prayers were offered for Shaheed UC Chairman Sabir Ali Magsi of Pakistan Peoples Party from Malir District UC 9 Bakhtawar Goth who was reportedly killed in the incident in Gulistan-e-Johar and Parveen Murad Baloch member of City Council.



KARACHI: Mayor Murtaza Wahab presides over the City Council session in the Provincial Capital.

## CS chairs meeting of Provincial Task Force on Polio Eradication

KARACHI (APP): The Chief Secretary Sindh on Thursday chaired a meeting of the Provincial Task Force on Polio Eradication and discussed matters related to upcoming weeklong anti-polio drive to be started from February 26, 2024.

The meeting was informed that over 10 million children across the province will be immunised, for which 80,000 polio workers will perform their duties to accomplish the task.

The CS was informed that thousands of polio workers in the 30 districts

will be part of this vaccination drive.

The meeting was attended by Commissioner Karachi Muhammad Saleem Rajput, Secretary Health Syed Mansoor Abbas Rizvi, Additional IG Karachi Khadim Rind, Coordinator Emergency Operations Center Sindh Irshad Ali Sodhar, and other relevant officials. All district commissioners and deputy commissioners also participated in the meeting via video link.

The meeting reviewed the overall situation of the polio virus and its containment efforts.

## Federal cabinet approves Ramadan relief package

ISLAMABAD (Online): Federal cabinet has approved Ramadan relief package. Relief package over Rs 7.49 billion will be given at utility stores. Ramadan relief package will be applicable from March 4.

Concession will be given on 19 basic commodities through targeted subsidy.

It may be mentioned that ECC had approved Ramadan relief package at utility stores last week.

## Pakistan 'achieves' 25 of 26 targets set by IMF for second review

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan has achieved 25 out of 26 targets set by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a second review, sources said on Thursday.

According to a report compiled by the finance ministry, Pakistan has achieved 25 targets of the international lender, the sources said and added that a report has been dispatched to the IMF.

The condition set by the IMF not to take loans from the SBP was fulfilled, while the payment of the international loans was also made on time. Tax refunds and power sector pending payments were also made on time by Pakistan, the report said.

Pakistan's total liquid foreign reserves reach \$ 13.097 billion

KARACHI (APP): The total liquid foreign reserves of Pakistan stood at US\$ 13,097.8 million while foreign reserves held by State Bank reached \$ 8,012.8 million in the week ended on February 16, 2024.

The State Bank of Pakistan, in a statement issued here on Thursday, informed that foreign exchange reserves held by the central bank decreased by \$ 44 million to \$ 8,012.8 million due to debt repayments during the week under review. Meanwhile net foreign reserves held by commercial banks stood at \$ 5,085 million. Total liquid foreign reserves held by the country, in the previous week ended on February 9, 2024, were \$ 13,149.1 million.

## Pakistan won't allow spread of false propaganda on social media platforms: Solangi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi said on Thursday that some elements were using social media platforms to incite violence, which was an illegal activity.

Addressing a press conference along with Prime Minister's Special Representative on Interfaith Harmony Hafiz Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi, he said the government would take strict action against such illegal activities under the law.

He said that freedom of expression under Article 19 of the Constitution was not unlimited, rather it was subject to law of the land.

Under Article 19, derogatory remarks against ju-

diary, armed forces and brotherly countries were not allowed, Solangi remarked.

He said that the companies earning billions of dollars from the social media platforms could not abdicate themselves from the responsibility if their platforms were used to disturb law and order in any country and incite people to violence and hatred, he maintained.

The minister said that social media platforms X (formerly Twitter), YouTube, Facebook and Instagram had been continuously used for propaganda, lies, defamation of government officials and harassment, and the companies owning these platforms would have to control this illegal activity.



ISLAMABAD: Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori meeting with Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar, MQM leaders Dr. Farooq Sattar and Mustafa Kamal also present in the meeting.

## PPP ready to cooperate in federal government with no power sharing: Kaira

ISLAMABAD (APP): Leader of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), Qamar Zaman Kaira on Thursday affirmed PPP's willingness to be part of the federal government without seeking a share in power.

Talking to a private news channel, he highlighted PPP's commitment to national interests and willingness to offer cooperation to the treasury benches, even without holding ministerial positions.

Although coalition governments are typically

perceived as weak, he said adding that they can also be strength if managed effectively with unity.

Answering a query, he said that even in these difficult situations, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) attitude towards reconciliation and progress has been undemocratic.

Furthermore, responding to the news about his candidacy for the Governorship of Punjab, Qaira stated that the decision rests with the party leadership.

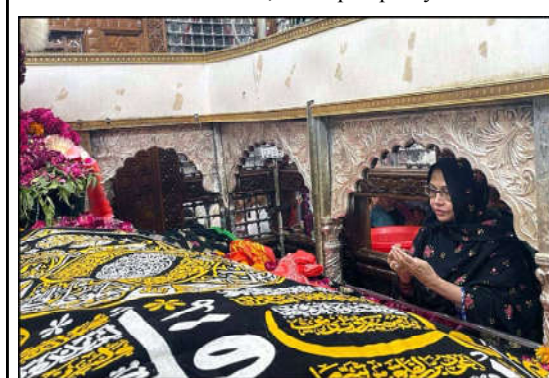
## Faryal Talpur pay visit to Ghari khadabakh graveyard

LARKANA (APP): Central President of Pakistan People's Party Ladies Wing Faryal Talpur has attended the memorial of martyrs of democracy in Ghadi Khudabakhsh Bhutto.

Faryal Talpur visited the shrines of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto, Quaid Awam Zulfikar Ali Bhutto,

Mother of Republic of Pakistan Ex-Prime Minister (Benazir Bhutto) Begum Nusrat Bhutto, Martyr Mir Murtaza Bhutto and Shahnawaz Bhutto and laid wreaths at the shrines.

On this occasion, Faryal Talpur also prayed for the security, prosperity and prosperity of Pakistan.



SEHWAN: Peoples Party (PPP) Leader, Faryal Talpur offers Fatha at the grave of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar during her visit to Sehwan Sharif.

## Sindh CM orders further probe in BSEK results issue as inquiry committee held board officials responsible

KARACHI (APP): The Sindh Caretaker Chief Minister Justice @ Maqbool Baqar, approving the inquiry committee's report on manipulation in results of SSC-II examinations on Thursday, directed the Anti-corruption Establishment to further probe the entire exam team of Board of Secondary Education Karachi.

The three-member inquiry committee, in its report submitted to the CM Sindh, held the entire examination and IT teams of BSEK responsible for glaring mistakes in results and recommended probing their malafide through the anti-corruption establishment along with departmental action against all delinquent officers, said a statement issued here.

The inquiry committee pointed out in the report the non-seriousness, non-professional attitude

and inefficiency of board employees and alleged that the board Chairman failed to introduce reforms and streamline the old and new streams while failing in maintaining the record as well as imparting training of new systems to teachers involved in the assessment of answer sheets were also observed.

The Inquiry Committee comprising Secretary School Education Dr Shereen Mustafa (Chairperson), Additional Secretary Universities and Boards Afshan Rubab, and Zuzain Katkar Section Officer of U&B dept was constituted by the Caretaker Sindh CM and tasked to probe into allegation of manipulation in result of annual examination of SSC Part -II 2023 by the Board of Secondary Education (BSE) Karachi.

The Inquiry Committee submitted its report and

recommendation to Caretaker Sindh Chief Minister Justice (ret'd) Maqbool Baqar on February 21 which the CM approved and sent to the chairman of the board to implement as recommended by the committee. The committee during its proceedings, observed that none of the employees, called for a hearing and the statement, was serious which is evident from their written statements while it was also clear what the actual exam results were before they were announced, and how many changes were made during the announcement and publication process.

The committee requested the actual result CD/USB for comparison, but it was not provided while the then Acting Controller of Exams Imran provided a written statement which only partially served its purpose.

## Governor Sindh to be from MQM-P, accedes PML-N

KARACHI (INP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) has agreed to give Sindh governorship to Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P).

Sources said that the PML-N has assured the MQM-P to elect the governor of Sindh from the party.

Whoever was suggested by MQM-P would be appointed the governor of province, the PML-N assured. There was possibility that the MQM-P would suggest to retain the governorship of Kamran Khan Tessori.

## PPP gets 20 reserved seats for women in Sindh Assembly

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) secured 20 reserved seats for women in the Sindh Assembly as the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) issued a notification for returned candidates on reserved seats.

According to details, the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan's (MQM-P) six women lawmakers would make it to the Sindh Assembly on the reserved quota while the Grand Democratic Alliance got one woman seat.

The PPP secured six minority seats while the MQM-P bagged two. The ECP is yet to decide the fate of one woman and one minority seat as the Sunni Ittehad Council also approached it to get the reserved seats.

In the house of 168 lawmakers, the PPP's strength is 113 after the joining of independent candidates and issuance of reserved seats. The MQM-P is the second largest in the provincial assembly with 36 seats. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) backed independent candidates emerged victorious on 13 general seats and the decision on their reserved seats is yet to come

## PM, Sindh governor discuss country's political situation

ISLAMABAD (APP): Governor of Sindh Kamran Tessori on Thursday called on Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar wherein they discussed the overall political situation in the country.

Leaders of the Muttahida Qaumi Move-

ment Pakistan Dr Farooq Sattar and Mustafa Kamal also attended the meeting, a PM Office press release said.

The Sindh governor and MQM leaders lauded the prime minister for the steps taken by his government for the economic stability in the country.



MUZAFFRABAD: Women activists of International Forum for Justice shouting slogans during protest ahead of Kashmiri Women's Resistance Day 23rd February, in the city.

## Apex Court Misreporting of judgment in proscribed literature case created misunderstanding

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Supreme Court of Pakistan on Thursday said that many misunderstandings have been created owing to the misreporting of a judgment on the release of a person accused of distributing the proscribed literature.

A press release issued by the SC in the matter said that an impression was being given as the apex court violated the Second Constitutional Amendment (interpretation of Muslim) and has directed to abolish the sections of offenses against religion. This impression is completely wrong, it said.

It stated that the SC has ruled that even the accusations of the FIR in this case are believed they didn't merit the applications of sections charged but rather section V of the Criminal Law Amendment Act 1932 related to the dissemination of proscribed literature un-

der which the maximum punishment of publishing proscribed books is six-month imprisonment.

The press release said that the SC accepted the bail of the accused and ordered for his release keeping in view the rulings of Islam, constitutional sections and principles of law and justice, as the concerned person has already spent more than one year in prison.

It further said that it is sad that in such cases sentiments are inflamed and Islamic rulings are used to be forgotten. The written judgment has quoted the relevant verses of the Holy Quran in this context, he added. It said that Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa tried to ensure that the interpretation of the law by the court be aligned with Islamic sources of law as well as the country's constitution.

**On a leash**

It is a done deal. Despite several hiccups and one party's many ifs and buts, negotiations over the configuration of the next government concluded rather abruptly late Tuesday.

Under the understanding reached between the PPP and PML-N, Islamabad will get another coalition government headed by Shehbaz Sharif less than seven months after the last one was dissolved. PPP co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari will be the PML-N and PPP's joint nominee for president, the Speaker of the National Assembly will be from the PML-N, while the Senate chairmanship and the KP and Punjab governorships will go to the PPP.

The two parties will also jointly form a government in Balochistan. Though the spoils have been quite generously divided, the PPP's support for the PML-N government will not be guaranteed in all matters.

Under what seems to be a confidence and supply arrangement, the PPP will vote with the PML-N only on motions of confidence and spending bills. For all else, the PML-N may be on its own.

Meanwhile, in its new incarnation as the Sunni Ittehad Council — and likely to emerge as the single largest party in the Lower House barring any further engineering — the PTI will sit on the opposition benches and is poised to take the opposition leader's slot.

With legislative power thus distributed, this government will likely prove to be the most formidable political test faced yet by Mr Sharif, who ruled without any real opposition the last time around. And it won't just be parliament that will be testing his mettle. His government is likely to face a public legitimacy crisis due to the circumstances in which it will come into being: it is already being accused of attempting to govern on a stolen mandate by parties that collectively represent the vast majority of those who voted on Feb 8. Does Mr Sharif expect to deliver in such circumstances? His biggest task will be to clean out the Augean stables left behind by his own administration, especially where the economy is concerned.

With a vast section of the public angry over the election results and the citizenry in general nearly bankrupted by relentless inflation, he will not find it easy to introduce the much-needed major changes to the economy without running into resistance. Considering the beating his party has taken in the polls, will his priority be to push ahead during such times at the expense of what little political capital it has left or to do what all politicians do when they realise their own interests are on the line, i.e. find a short-term fix and leave the heavy lifting for whoever comes next? Mr Sharif has said he wants to 'save' Pakistan. Many will be watching to see how long his resolve lasts.

**Economic cost of internet, social media shutdown**

By Qamar Bashir

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



Pakistan, like any nation, faces challenges in balancing the interests of its people, businesses, and the state. Decisions made by authorities, including interim governments, can sometimes prioritize immediate or specific objectives over broader economic and social impacts. The act of slowing down or terminating internet services, including access to social media platforms, is a significant decision that can have far-reaching consequences. Such actions, while intended to serve particular goals, can inadvertently hinder the country's economic vitality by affecting business operations, trade, investment, and exports. They also pose risks to employment rates and GDP growth, potentially exacerbating poverty levels across the nation.

The internet and social media are modern-day lifelines for commerce, communication, and information exchange. Restricting access to these services can be likened to constricting the arteries of the nation's economy, impeding the flow of business and innovation. While security and regulatory concerns are valid, solutions should be sought that balance these needs with the preservation of open and free internet access

to support the nation's socio-economic development.

According to international internet and social media watchdogs, during the 2024 elections in Pakistan, there were widespread disruptions to internet and mobile services on the orders of the Interior Ministry on the lame and excuse of "maintain law and order." Ironically, despite the assurance of the government and the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority multiple regions experienced internet blackouts and mobile network disruptions on the very election day. Independent watchdogs like NetBlocks confirmed these outages, indicating a significant impact on connectivity. Furthermore, the Open Observatory of Network Interference (OONI) reported that specific websites, including those of the PTI political party and investigative news platforms, were blocked prior to the elections. Cloudflare Radar observed significant drops in internet traffic for several local ISPs on the day of the elections, indicating widespread service disruptions.

The direct losses incurred to the nations can easily be calculated by inserting vital information in simple formulas. For example, Given Pakistan's GDP of \$1.24 trillion in February 2023 and forecasted merchandise trade of \$95.96 billion in 2024, the daily GDP for 2024 is approximately \$15.85 billion. With per day merchandise trade roughly at \$1.23 billion and assuming a 50% impact on merchandise

trade due to closures, the daily loss from shutting down the internet is about \$615 million. For Twitter, the daily loss stands at approximately \$14.25 million.

The indirect costs of internet shutdowns on businesses, trade, and investment are significant and multifaceted. Internet shutdowns disrupt economic activities, leading to losses in e-commerce, delays in time-sensitive transactions, increased unemployment, and interruptions in business-customer communications. These disruptions result in financial and reputational risks for companies, affecting both local businesses and international trade and investment.

For instance, in specific cases like Algeria, internet restrictions impacted various sectors, including the tourism industry, where businesses faced material losses due to hindered communications with customers and missed reservation deadlines.

In India, the economic impact of internet shutdowns was quantified at \$1.9 billion for the first half of 2023 alone, highlighting the substantial direct economic losses incurred due to such disruptions. These shutdowns not only affect the immediate economic output but also have long-term consequences on investor confidence and the country's digital infrastructure.

Such actions not only impose direct economic losses on an already strained economy but also lead to broader socio-economic

instability. They not only infringe upon basic human rights guaranteed by the Constitution of Pakistan and international human rights standards but also erode the country's democratic fabric by undermining the freedom of information and press. The irony is stark as these actions, meant to secure political gains or regulate the political narrative, result in billions of dollars in losses to the national economy, contributing to its vulnerability. This situation leaves political parties wary of assuming power in the aftermath of the 2024 elections, given the looming economic challenges compounded by such disruptive practices.

When a country's actions to block social media platforms, slow down the internet, and disrupt internet services lead to widespread condemnation by international bodies like the United Nations, Amnesty International, and Transparency International, as well as foreign leaders and institutions, the resulting costs can be multifaceted and significant.

These costs extend beyond direct and indirect economic impacts to include the erosion of the country's soft image, which can lead to further financial, business, tourism, and soft capital losses.

The erosion of a country's soft image can be even more detrimental in the long term. Condemnation by international bodies and foreign leaders can lead to a decline in investor confidence, reduced

foreign direct investment, and a negative impact on the country's diplomatic relations and international standing. This can further result in decreased tourism revenues, as potential visitors may choose to avoid a country perceived as politically unstable or repressive in terms of digital rights.

Moreover, the disruption of internet services can hinder innovation and the digital economy's growth, essential components of modern economic development. It can also affect the country's attractiveness as a destination for international events, conferences, and cultural exchanges, further impacting its soft capital and potential revenue streams.

Overall, the indirect costs of such actions, compounded by international condemnation, can significantly hinder a country's economic growth, international reputation, and ability to engage in global commerce and diplomacy effectively.

To safeguard the right to internet and social media access, ensuring economic, business, trade, and innovation opportunities remain unhampered, a comprehensive and collaborative approach is essential. Governments, alongside legislative bodies, must enact and enforce laws that protect internet access as a fundamental right, with a clear emphasis on transparency, accountability, and adherence to international human rights standards.

This legal framework should be designed to prevent unwarranted internet shutdowns, maintain neutrality, and ensure open access, with independent regulatory bodies established to oversee compliance and enforce regulations.

Additionally, policies should mandate transparency in actions by both government and ISPs, especially concerning decisions that may affect internet access, ensuring any restrictions are justified, transparent, and subject to public scrutiny.

Moreover, civil society, the judiciary, and political entities must play active roles in advocating for and protecting internet freedom. This involves promoting digital literacy to empower citizens to demand their digital rights, strengthening data protection to build trust in digital services, and supporting the pivotal role of independent media and civil society in holding power to account.

International cooperation is also vital, as global collaboration fosters a supportive environment for internet freedom, sharing best practices and advocating for digital rights on the world stage. Inclusive policy making, involving a broad spectrum of stakeholders, ensures diverse interests are represented and the public good is protected, fostering an environment conducive to growth, innovation, and the free exchange of ideas.

**Commerce News****Pakistan aims lifting bilateral trade with Saudi Arabia upto \$20 billion: Gohar Ejaz**

ISLAMABAD (APP): Observing that the current trade volume falls short of expectations, Caretaker Federal Minister for Commerce and Industry, Gohar Ejaz said in Riyadh Thursday that Pakistan wanted to lift bilateral trade with Saudi Arabia upto \$20 billion.

Addressing the Pakistan-Saudi Business Forum, the minister said that legislation would be

enacted to promote bilateral investment between the two brotherly countries, according to press statement issued by Commerce Ministry here.

Dr. Gohar Ejaz, who is heading a delegation of Pakistani industrialists, also met with the Saudi Minister of Commerce, Dr. Majid bin Abdullah Al-Kassabi. The meeting focused on enhancing investment in sectors such

as construction, digital economy, and infrastructure between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

The Pakistani delegation included Punjab Minister S.M. Tanveer and notable businessmen; Arif Habib, Muhammad Ali Tabba, and Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI) President Atif Ikram. Ejaz mentioned that a Free Trade Agreement

(FTA) between Pakistan and Gulf countries had been ratified.

Speaking at the forum, Chairman of the Saudi Business Forum Hassan Al Hazawi stated that bilateral trade between the two countries has increased by 35 percent.

The Saudi Minister of Commerce commended efforts to strengthen bilateral trade relations and praised Gohar Ejaz.



LAHORE: President Dr. Arif Alvi in a group photo with a delegation of the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry, who called on him, at Governor House.



Caretaker Federal Minister for IT and Telecommunication, Dr. Umar Saif chairing 6th Board of Directors meeting of National Information Technology Board (NITB) in Islamabad.

**Pak inks agreement to export skilled workers to S. Arabia in construction sector**

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Assistant to the Prime Minister, Jawad Sohrab Malik has signed an agreement recently with NESMA & Partners for the export of skilled Pakistani labor to Saudi Arabia. The agreement was signed at the Embassy of Pakistan in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, said a press release received here on Thursday.

The agreement marks a pivotal collaboration between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, paving the way for the export of a substantial Pakistani workforce to contribute to Saudi Arabia's ambitious

infrastructure and development goals.

NESMA & Partners, as the leading construction company in Saudi Arabia, holds responsibility for numerous mega-projects within the kingdom.

The agreement would provide Pakistani workers with the opportunity to showcase their expertise and contribute to the success of these critical infrastructure projects.

Jawad Sohrab Malik highlighted the exceptional reputation of Pakistani workers for their dedication and hard work.

**PSX stays bullish, gains 355 points**

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bullish trend on Thursday, gaining 355.19 points, a positive change of 0.58 percent, closing at 61,914.34 points against 61,559.16 points the previous trading day.

A total of 324,830,445 shares valuing Rs 13.966 billion were traded during the day as compared to 362,771,035 shares valuing Rs12.492 billion the last day. Some 352 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 185 of them recorded gains and 143 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 24 remained unchanged.

**ICCI invites Saudi importers to import agricultural products from Pakistan**

ISLAMABAD (APP): President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari on Thursday invited the Saudi importers to import agricultural products from Pakistan to meet their consumption.

He said that Pakistan produces quality food products and Saudi Arabia is an import-based market receiving supplies from foreign markets.

He urged Saudi Arabia to import agricultural products from Pakistan at competitive prices to meet the needs of its consumers.

He said this while talking to Fadel Abdallah, General Manager, Al-Shaq Trading Est of Saudi Arabia during his

visit to ICCI.

Ahsan Bakhtawari said that Pakistani wheat, rice, fruits, and vegetable has great potential in the Saudi market and assured that ICCI would fully cooperate in enhancing exports of these products from Pakistan to Saudi Arabia.

He said that Pakistani meat, poultry products, textiles, IT products, surgical instruments, sports goods, leather products, and construction materials can also find good a market in Saudi Arabia.

He urged the Pakistan and Saudi Arabia to focus on further improving bilateral trade and investment relations that would create new jobs and bring prosperity to both countries.



HYDERABAD: Participants visiting a stall during Job fair at Isra University.

**Trade Conference 2024: Ambassador Tirmizi highlights opportunities for Pakistani companies in Middle East**

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates Faisal Niaz Tirmizi, has highlighted opportunities for Pakistani companies in the Middle East (ME), particularly in the UAE, focusing on sectors such as dairy, meat, fruits, vegetables, and non-food products.

He emphasized the country's trade potential at the Pakistan Middle East Trade Development Conference 2024, held at the Pakistan Association Dubai (PAD) auditorium,

according to a news release received here from Dubai.

The conference, organized in collaboration with Pakistan's Embassy, the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) and Engro-Pakistan, was attended by Pakistani exhibitors participating in Gullfood-2024 and the Emirati business community.

The event aimed to exchange ideas to explore trade relations between Pakistan and the Middle East, providing networking opportunities for Pakistani

traders, particularly with UAE buyers.

Ambassador Faisal Niaz Tirmizi explained that the UAE market was continuously growing, offering ideal opportunities for dedicated Pakistani companies with sound business plans to maximize their potential.

Panel discussions during the conference focused on developing strategies to enhance market penetration and overcome challenges effectively.

**Rupee gains 17 paise against dollar**

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Rupee on Thursday gained 17 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 279.32 against the previous day's closing of Rs 279.49.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 279.5 and Rs 282.3, respectively.

**Mobilink Bank witnesses 72% revenue growth**

ISLAMABAD: Mobilink Bank achieved multiple financial milestones in 2023, solidifying its position in the banking industry. With a revenue of PKR 41,053 million, representing 72% growth from the previous year, the Bank's performance underscores its commitment to excellence and innovation, particularly in its support for women and Small and medium-sized enterprises

(SMEs). Mobilink Bank's commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) is exemplified through its flagship initiative, the Women Inspirational Network (WIN) program and MobilinkHER Women Returnship Program, which have emerged as a catalyst for change. Through WIN, the Bank has empowered over 5,000 female entrepreneurs with essential digital and business skills.

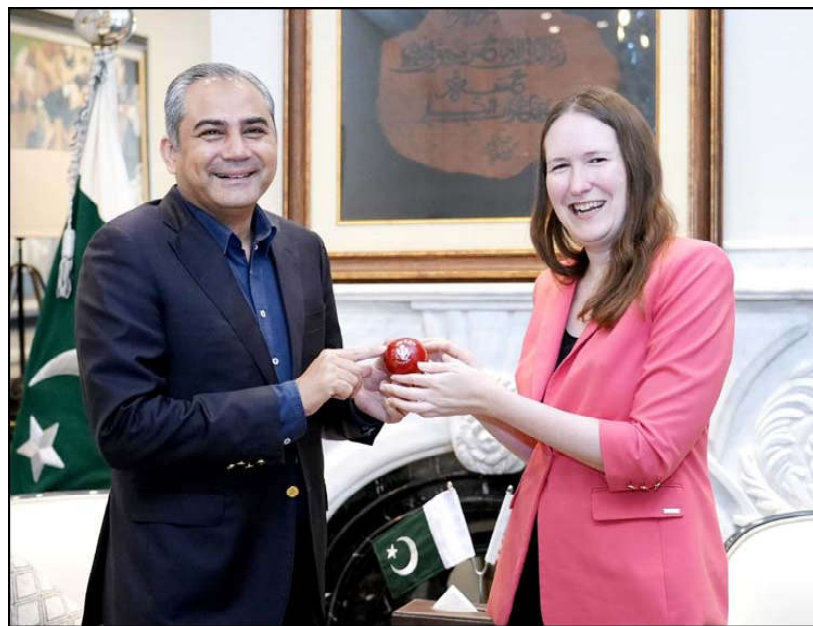
## Promotion of sports vital for the establishment of a healthy society: Baligh

**Independent Report**  
LAHORE: The Dutch Hockey Club team and the HEC Pakistan team participating in the Shuhada Punjab Police Hockey Series called on Governor Punjab, Muhammad Balighur Rehman at Governor House Lahore. During the meeting, Chief Organizer Chairman Khawaja Junaid briefed Governor Punjab about the series. Speaking on this occasion, Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman said that the promotion of sports is very important for the establishment of a healthy society. He said

that hockey is our national game and hockey players have brought laurels to the country. He expressed hope that we will once again regain our lost position in this field. He welcomed the teams and officials to the Governor House on this occasion. Governor Punjab said that the sports legends are the heroes of the nation who brought glory to the country through their outstanding performance in their respective sports. He further said that sports equipment of best quality is manufactured in Pakistan and the city of Sialkot is

famous for manufacturing sports equipment. Governor Punjab said that it is a matter of great pride for us that the high quality footballs produced in Sialkot have been used in last year's FIFA World Cup. He said that sports are an important means of strengthening ties between people of different countries.

Speaking on the occasion, the Dutch player who was part of the delegation said that Pakistan is a beautiful country and Pakistani people are very hospitable and friendly.



LAHORE: American Consul General Ms. Kirstin Hawkins presenting gift of cricket ball to Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Raza Naqvi.

## Minister stresses govt role in fostering growth of pharma sector

**Independent Report**  
LAHORE: Caretaker Punjab Health Minister Professor Dr Javed Akram Thursday said he expected the new government would play its role in promoting the pharmaceutical industry. "Pakistan's pharmaceutical industry has a good position in the world and should be happy over its progress," the minister said during his visit to 16th Pak Pharma and Healthcare Expo at the Lahore's Expo Centre. The two-day Pak Pharma and Healthcare Exhibition was held by the Prime Event Management with the support of Pakistan Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association (PPMA). He said a lot of progress in science also transformed the pharmaceutical businesses across the globe.

## SFA distributes food licenses

**KARACHI (APP):** Sindh Food Authority (SFA), distributed food licenses to the business community engaged in food businesses in a ceremony held at Deputy Commissioner's office Khandkot - Kashmore. Director SFA Masood Bhutto along with Deputy Commissioner Ameer Fazal Awasi distributed food licenses, said a statement issued here on Thursday. Speaking on the occasion, Director SFA Masood Bhutto said that on directives of DG SFA Agha Fakhar Hussain, SFA has been made more effective at the district level across the province and now SFA teams will conduct regular inspections in district Kashmore.

## Railway police foil narcotics smuggling attempt

**PESHAWAR (APP):** Railway Police in Peshawar conducted a successful operation at Peshawar City Station, apprehending two women for smuggling narcotics via train. The suspects were caught by SHO Jamal Abdul Nasir and other officers based on suspicion at the internal passage of Peshawar City Station.

## 3-day Intl congress of soil science concluded at PMAS-AAUR

**RAWALPINDI (APP):** Chairman Higher Education Commissioner (HEC) Dr. Mukhtar Ahmad here on Thursday urged the scientists and researchers to play a leading role in conservation, land and water resources and guide the policy makers in the evolving research priorities. He also stressed on the management of soil through the latest technologies for maximum agricultural production to meet the country's demand for food. The Chairman speaking as chief guest at the concluding session of the three-day 20th International Congress of Soil Science at Pir Mehr Ali Shah Arid Agriculture University Rawalpindi (PMAS-AAUR) stressed the need to adopt latest agricultural practices to address the country's food security and emphasized the importance of protecting and improving natural resources, particularly soil for increasing agriculture production in the country. The event was organized by the Institute of Soil & Environmental Sciences (ISES).

## 1400 plots allotment: CM fulfills promise made with journalists

**LAHORE (APP):** Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi has fulfilled his another promise made with the journalist community by allotting over 1,400 plots in RUDA Maskane-Ravi project. Distribution of allotment letters among journalists was inaugurated by Caretaker Punjab Information Ministers Amir Mir at a ceremony, held at Alhama Arts Council. RUDA Chief Imran Amin and DGPR Rubina Afzal participated in the ceremony. Amir Mir said that a high-level committee conducted a lengthy scrutiny to finalise the list of eligible journalists. He said RUDA was itself intimating those journalists who were declared eligible for getting plots.



HYDERABAD: Gypsy women searching the valuable items from heap of garbage at Latifabad area.

## PKMT Youth Wing protest Rally against Sponsorship of KFC in PSI-9

**Independent Report**  
SHIKARPUR: Pakistan Kissan Mazdoor Tahreek-PKMT Youth Wing District Shikarpur took out a protest Rally against Massacre in Palestine by Israel and sponsorship of KFC in PSI-9 by Pakistan here on Thursday. According to reports reached here that the Pakistan Kissan Mazdoor Tahreek-PKMT Youth Wing District Shikarpur took out a Rally from Mirani Park to Shikarpur Press Club Shikarpur in protest against the Massacre of innocent people in Palestine by Israel and ill attitude of Pakistan Cricket Board-PCB for having sponsorship from KFC of the Israeli Company. Speaking on the occasion Najeullah Jatui, Ali Gul Solangi, Zubair Ahmed and others said that the whole world is boycotting the products of Israel and our PCB is going to run the PSL-9 with the sponsorship of KFC the Israeli Company which is so shameful for all of us. The angry protesters while taking placards and banners in their hands raised slogans against Israel and opposed the act of PCB for PSL-9 with the support of KFC Company. The activist of Pakistan Kissan Mazdoor Tahreek-PKMT have demanded from Government of time to immediate withdrawal from the sponsorship of KFC Company for PSL-9 and impose Ban over any kind of advertising of KFC and other Israeli products in our Country Pakistan.



RAWALPINDI: Chairman World Peace Jirga Program Rayatullah Khan addressing press conference at Pindi press club in the city.

## Jinnah House attack case: ATC extends interim bail of sisters of PTI founder

**LAHORE (Online):** Anti Terrorism Court (ATC) Lahore has extended interim bail of Aleema Khanum and Uzma Khanum sisters of PTI founder in Jinnah House attack case. The interim bail pleas of Aleema Khanum and Uzma Khanum came up for hearing before ATC Thursday in Jinnah House attack case. Aleema Khanum and Uzma Khanum appeared in the court during the hearing of the case. The court extended interim bail pleas of Aleema Khanum and Uzma Khanum till March 12.

## KPHC gives licenses to Category-I hospitals

**PESHAWAR (APP):** Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Healthcare Commission (KPHC) here Thursday organized a ceremony to give licenses to Category I hospitals of the province. The ceremony was held in the Postgraduate Medical Institute Hayatabad Medical Complex. The hospitals that were given licenses include Alfalah Hospital Abbottabad, Bahadur Khan Hospital Bakhela, Jinnah Teaching Hospital Peshawar, Irfan General Hospital Peshawar, Sahab Orthopedic Hospital Peshawar, PIMS Hospital Peshawar, Abaseen General Hospital Peshawar, Kuwait Teaching Hospital Peshawar and Bacha Khan Medical Complex Swabi. Addressing the ceremony, Chief Executive Officer KPHC, Dr. Nadeem Akhtar said that licenses were given after examining the health delivery infrastructure of these hospitals adding that license is mandatory under KPHC Act 2015.

# International News

## Kremlin says Biden calling Putin a 'crazy SOB' debases the U.S.

**MOSCOW (Internews):** The Kremlin said on Thursday that Joe Biden had debased the United States by calling Russian President Vladimir Putin a "crazy SOB", casting the U.S. president's remark as part of a failed "Hollywood cowboy" act. The U.S. president made the "crazy SOB" remark as part of a sentence about threats to the world - including "that guy Putin and others", the risk of nuclear conflict and the existential threat to humanity from climate change. "The use of such language against the head of another state by the president of the United States is unlikely to infringe on our president, President Putin," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said. "But it debases those who use such vocabulary." Peskov said the remark was "probably some kind of attempt to look like a Hollywood cowboy. But honestly I don't think it's possible." "Has Mr Putin ever used one crude word to address you? This has never happened. Therefore, I think that such vocabulary debases America itself," Peskov said, adding that such language was a disgrace for the United States. Putin ally Dmitry Medvedev, who served as president from 2008-2012, said the existential threat to the world came from "useless old geezers, like Biden himself". Medvedev said Biden was "senile" and "ready to start a war with Russia". The war

in Ukraine, the death of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny and U.S. assertions that Russia plans to put a nuclear weapon in space have led to the biggest crisis in relations between Russia and the West since the Cold War. Some Russian and U.S. diplomats say they do not remember a time when relations between the world's two biggest nuclear powers were worse, including during the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. Biden said last week after prison officers announced Navalny's death in a Russian penal colony that it was "a consequence of something that Putin and his thugs did." Navalny had previously accused Putin of trying to kill him, an allegation the Kremlin denied.



GAZASTRIP: A man records the names of the deceased during the funeral of Palestinians killed in overnight Israeli strikes at a cemetery in Rafah.

## As war with Russia enters third year, US aid to Ukraine hangs in the balance

**WASHINGTON (Internews):** Top Biden administration officials spent last weekend in Europe trying to soothe the jitters over the prospect of U.S. military aid to Ukraine ending, assuring counterparts from Paris, Berlin and Kyiv as the war enters its third year that Washington will somehow come through. Just two days later, the Republican Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, Mike Johnson, who has so far blocked passage of a bill that includes \$60 billion in new funding for Ukraine, posted a picture of himself smiling with former Republican President Donald Trump, who has opposed aid for Kyiv. The contrast underscored the challenges facing the Biden administration if Congress fails to approve more military assistance, which Ukraine desperately needs to hold off Russian invaders. So far, President Joe Biden's administration has ruled out discussing a plan B. Trump, frontrunner for the Republican presidential nomination and a long-standing critic of the NATO alliance.

## Ship abandoned in Red Sea faces unknown fate, sources say

**LONDON (INP):** A cargo ship abandoned four days ago in the Gulf of Aden after it was hit by missiles fired by Yemen's Houthis is still floating despite taking in water, and could be towed to nearby Djibouti, industry sources said. Shipping risks have escalated due to repeated drone and missile strikes in the Red Sea and Bab al-Mandab Strait by the Iran-aligned Houthis since November. U.S. and British forces have responded with several strikes on Houthi facilities but have so far failed to halt the attacks.

## Israeli continues air strikes in Gaza, China urged UNSC for ceasefire

**GAZA (Online):** Nineteen Palestinians were martyred and several injured in unabated Israeli air strikes on refugee camps in Gaza during the last twenty four hours. According to Wafa news agency, Israeli army continued bombardments on Nuseirat refugee camp and the Zeitoun neighborhood. In the Nuseirat camp in central Gaza, Israeli air strikes on the home of the al-Daalis family martyred 17 people and wounded dozens of others. In Zeitoun, local journalist Ihab Nasrallah and his wife were martyred. Their three children were also badly burned in the attack. Britain and Jordan have air-dropped four tons of aid including medicines, fuel and food at a hospital in northern Gaza. Britain's Foreign Office said the UK-funded aid was delivered by the Jordanian Air Force. British Foreign Secretary David Cameron said in a statement that thousands of patients will benefit and the fuel will enable this vital hospital to continue its life-saving work. China has urged the UN Security Council to push for ceasefire in Gaza. A Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said during a regular briefing in Beijing that protracted Palestinian-Israeli conflict has resulted in a devastating humanitarian situation in besieged enclave. She said that China will continue to work with the rest of the international community to push the Council to take further actions that are meaningful for de-escalation.



Farmers riding tractors arrive in front of Madrid's Puerta de Alcalá square during a protest against the European Union's agricultural policy.

## UK Parliament in turmoil after a debate over a Gaza cease-fire raised fears for lawmakers' safety

**Monitoring Desk**  
**LONDON:** The chaotic debate over a cease-fire in Gaza reverberated through Britain's Parliament on Thursday as the speaker of the House of Commons faced calls to resign, and lawmakers said they feared for their safety amid pressure from all sides of the issue. After more than six hours of sometimes heated debate on Wednesday, both the governing Conservative Party and the Scottish Na-

## Fresh aggression: US, UK launch five strikes on Yemen's Hudaydah

**SANA'A (Online):** The United States and Britain have conducted fresh aerial assaults on Yemen's strategic western province of Hudaydah. The al-Masirah television network reported three airstrikes on Ras Issa area in Hudaydah's a-Salif district late on Wednesday. Earlier in the day, it added, four similar air raids also targeted al-Jabana and al-Arj areas in Hudaydah. Meanwhile, the US Central Command (CENTCOM) said in a statement that its forces had carried out four strikes on areas in Yemen, targeting "seven mobile anti-ship cruise missiles and one anti-ship ballistic missile launcher" in the act of aggression. It claimed that the targets "presented an imminent threat to merchant vessels and to the US Navy ships in the region." CENTCOM also said that its forces had shot down a "one-way attack unmanned aircraft system."

## Iran says Israel continues to violate Palestinians' right to self-determination

**UNITED NATION (Internews):** The International Court of Justice, the UN's top court, on Thursday continued its hearing from dozens of states and three international organizations who question the legality of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories. Representatives from countries including China, Iran, Iraq, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon and Libya were expected to deliver their positions during the third day of the hearing at the ICJ, also known as the World Court. Speakers from the UAE, Egypt and Saudi Arabia have already demanded Israel end its occupation of the Palestinian territories, with the Kingdom's envoy to the Netherlands Ziad Al-Atiyah stating Israel's continued actions were legally indefensible. Safadi closed his remarks, saying "Palestinians are being killed in the hundreds every day in Gaza."

## South Africa's parliament impeaches top judge

**Monitoring Desk**  
**WESTERN CAPE:** In a historic move, South Africa's parliament has impeached one of the country's top judges for misconduct. An investigation found that John Hlophe, the leading judge in Western Cape province, tried to influence justices at the country's top court in a case relating to former President Jacob Zuma.

## Turkey calls for Gaza ceasefire, two-state solution at G20 meeting

**ANKARA (Internews):** Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan called on the international community to take a more active role towards an urgent ceasefire in Gaza and a two-state solution to the conflict during talks at the G20 meeting in Brazil, a Turkish diplomatic source said. Turkey, which has harshly criticised Israel for its attacks on Gaza and backed measures to have it tried for genocide at the World Court, has repeatedly called for a ceasefire. Unlike its Western allies and some Gulf nations, NATO member Turkey does not view Hamas, the Palestinian militant group which runs Gaza and on Oct. 7 carried out an attack inside Israel that prompted the Israeli campaign, as a terrorist organisation. Fidan told a G20 foreign ministers meeting in Rio de Janeiro on Wednesday that the "savagery in Gaza must be stopped, and discussed steps to achieve an urgent ceasefire and get more aid into the enclave during talks with counterparts from the United States, Germany, and Egypt, the source said. "Steps that can be taken to achieve a full ceasefire as soon as possible were discussed," during talks between Fidan and U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, the source said, adding Fidan also discussed "concrete steps" to stop the fighting with German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock. "The fact that a decision on a ceasefire did not come out of the U.N. Security Council once again, has shown that reform is a must," Fidan told a session at the G20 meeting, according to one of his aides, referring to a third U.S. veto on a ceasefire call at the 15-member body. Ankara says the U.N. Security Council must be reformed to be more inclusive and representative of the world.



LAHORE: President Dr. Arif Alvi addressing the recognition ceremony of officers of the Federal Insurance Ombudsman and representatives of insurance companies, at Governor House.

## Ashrafi denounces misuse of apex court ruling ambiguities

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister's Special Representative for Religious Affairs, Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi, and Pakistani Diaspora in the Middle East and Islamic Countries, Thursday denounced attempts by certain individuals to exploit ambiguities arising from the Supreme Court verdict in the Mubarak Ahmed Sani case for political purposes.

Addressing to the media persons with the Caretaker Minister for Information, Broadcasting, and Parliamentary Affairs, he asked the detractors of verdict to use legal avenues to address issues, rather than opting for

street protests or violence. This is particularly crucial, considering the impossibility of allowing the use of banned material in Pakistan.

Urging the Punjab government to submit a review petition to the Supreme Court of Pakistan, he emphasized the fundamental belief in the finality of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as the last Prophet of Allah, which was an integral part of the Muslim faith.

According to the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, this matter is settled. Every Muslim is entrusted with safeguarding the sanctity of the finality of the holy Prophet (PBUH).



ISLAMABAD: Mr. Murtaza Solangi, Caretaker Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting inaugurating a 'Display Centre' at Directorate of Electronic Media and Publications (DEMP).

## Over 5000 cops to perform security duties at PSL matches; no road closures planned

KARACHI (APP): The Sindh Police, under the leadership of IGP Sindh Rifat Mukhtar Raja, has devised a comprehensive security strategy for the upcoming Pakistan Super League season 9 matches in Karachi.

In a recent high-level meeting, officials briefed the IGP that approximately 5600 police personnel would be deployed to ensure the safety of the event. Moreover, the plan emphasizes minimal disruption to the city's normal traffic flow, with no permanent closures of roads or thoroughfares unless necessary for security reasons.

During a high-level meeting led by IGP Sindh Rifat Mukhtar Raja, comprehensive security and traffic arrangements for the upcoming PSL season 9 matches in Karachi starting February 28<sup>th</sup> were meticulously deliberated upon. The meeting addressed

the prevailing law and order situation, identified challenges, and formulated proactive measures to ensure a smooth and secure environment. Detailed guidelines were issued to effectively address any potential security concerns and uphold public safety throughout the cricket series.

IGP Sindh emphasized the significance of incorporating input and suggestions from other law enforcement agencies into the development of a robust security and traffic plan. Additionally, he stressed the importance of consulting with representatives and officials from the PCB to ensure a collaborative approach. Furthermore, the Sindh Police Chief underscored the necessity of assigning security duties to competent, dedicated, and seasoned officers and personnel to safeguard the PSL event effectively.



LARKANA: Deputy Commissioner Larkana, Sharjeel Noor Channa administers polio-vaccine drops to a child during anti-polio immunization campaign, in Larkana.

## DC Larkana chairs meeting to review Polio drive

LARKANA (APP): Deputy Commissioner Larkana Dr. Sharjeel Noor Channa has directed the officials of the health department to make proper arrangements to make the polio campaign a success so that no child misses out on the polio vaccine.

He expressed these views today while presiding over a meeting in the committee room of the Commissioner's office. The meeting was attended by DHO, PPHI, WHO and other concerned authorities.

On this occasion, the previous polio campaign was reviewed. However, the officials of the health department also gave a briefing to the deputy commissioner regarding the polio campaign.

On this occasion, the Deputy Commissioner said that polio teams should be appointed at the UC level and committees should be established to monitor

them. He said that the micro-plan should be strictly implemented so that no child misses out on polio vaccination. He said that the set target should be ensured in any case because polio is a dangerous disease.

He said that the Sindh government wants to take special care of the polio campaign.

On this occasion, the Deputy Commissioner gave instructions to the police administration to make proper security arrangements.

After that, the Deputy Commissioner inaugurated the Polio campaign by giving polio drops to children in the Commissioner's office and a rally was also held, which was led by Deputy Commissioner Sharjeel Noor Channa.

Determined to succeed in every way, don't stop drinking the drops of protection.

## Sindh Assembly's session summoned for oath taking of newly elected MPAs

KARACHI (INP): The Sindh Assembly's session for the oath-taking of the newly elected MPAs has been summoned on Saturday (February 24).

As per details, Governor Sindh Kamran Tessori approved Caretaker Chief Minister Sindh Maqbool Baqar's recommendation and called the first session of the Sindh Assembly on Saturday.

The newly elected representatives of the Sindh Assembly will take oath in the first session of the legislative assembly.

It is pertinent to mention here that Pakistan People's Party (PPP) emerged victorious after bagging a record 84 general seats in the Sindh Assembly.

With reserved seats for women and minorities, the PPP's strength in the Sindh Assembly would be over 100 for the first time.

## DIG Larkana takes notice of murder

LARKANA (APP): Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Larkana on Thursday took notice of the incidents of killing and injuring a woman in the jurisdiction of different police stations in Larkana and Shikarpur districts.

He directed to restore law and order and submit their reports of both districts of SPPs, DSP and SHOs.

The DIG said that incident of wounding the wife of Banahun Khan, in the jurisdiction of of Sehar Police Station of Deukari Taluka, and asked for a report from SSP Larkana.

On the other hand, DIG Larkana will take notice of the murder of three persons Abdul Karim Chandio, Abdul Nabi Chandio, Dadao Chandio and wounding of a woman Musmat Hakimian due to the old dispute in village Jaffar Chandio of Humayun police station of Shikarpur district.

## PPP to steer country out of economic crisis: Senator Imam

HYDERABAD (APP): Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Senator Malik Imam Din Shauqeen has said that his party was given the mandate by the people and it would steer the country out of economic and other challenges.

Talking to APP in Tando Adam, he said that it is evident that no single political party was in the position to form a government alone. Indeed, this is a challenging situation, and the upcoming government will address the acute economic crisis currently faced by the country.

Senator Shauqeen said that the PPP obtained more seats than before in Sindh, and heading towards forming a government in the province. Meanwhile, the PPP is supporting the Pakistan Muslim League (N) to form a government at the federal level.

## Four notorious robbers killed in police encounter

SHEIKHUPURA (INP): Four notorious robbers killed and arms recovered in exchange of fire with police here on Thursday.

According to details, the police on a tip-off intercept a four-member gang of robbers engaged in picket looting at Kala Khatai Road in Ferozewala area of Sheikhupura. Upon sight of police, the robbers started firing and attempted to flee which led to an encounter.

In cross firing, all four robbers were killed. The police recovered arms from possession of the killed robbers wanted in dozens of criminal cases. The police confiscated the weapons and the bodies were shifted to hospital for medico-legal formalities.

## Solangi calls for promoting trend of research among people

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Thursday called to promote the trend of research among people.

Delivering his speech at the launching ceremony of the Display Center of the Directorate of Electronic Media and Publications at Pak-China Friendship Center, he said the tendency of reading books and writing was decreasing in the digital era.

He said that the Directorate of Electronic Media and Publications (DEMP) had worked hard to promote the trend of reading and writing among the people.

"This organization has done a great job in a short time with hard work", Murtaza Solangi said while

appreciating the performance of the DEMP.

The minister said that the quality of books and periodicals at the display center was high from both the content and printing point of view.

He congratulated the officers and staff of the DEMP on the inauguration of its first Display Center at Pak-China Center and hoped that as planned it will open more display centers at the mausoleum of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Lok Virsa and Islamabad Monument at Shakar Parian. Earlier Executive Director General DEMP Imrana Wazir briefed the minister about the vision behind the creation of DEMP and its mission.

## PMSA strengthening collaboration with Royal Oman Police Coast Guard

KARACHI (APP): Under the terms of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the Pakistan Maritime Security Agency (PMSA) and the Royal Oman Police Coast Guard (ROPCG), a delegation from Pakistan, headed by Rear Admiral Intiaz Ali SIM (T.Bt & BAR, Director General (DG) of PMSA has visited the OPCG Command HQs in Muscat, Oman for the 2<sup>nd</sup> high-level meeting.

This meeting followed an invitation from the Commander of OPCG, as a continuation of the 1<sup>st</sup> annual high-level meeting held between the heads of both organizations in September 2022 at PMSA HQs in Karachi, Pakistan, according to a news release issued here on Thursday.

The discussions during the visit revolved around the provisions of the MoU regarding maritime cooperation and the exchange of crucial information. Staff Brigadier (Engineer) Ali Saif Khalafan Al Muqabli, Commander OPCG, commended PMSA's efforts in enforcing maritime law effectively across all Maritime Zones of Pakistan.

Both organizations' commanders affirmed their commitment to continuing cooperation in areas of mutual interest, including Maritime Safety & Security, Prevention & Fight against Organized Maritime Crimes, and Maritime Environmental Protection, within the framework of the MoU.

The PMSA delegation also inspected OPCG Fleet units/boats to assess operational readiness. They also met with Major General Abdullah Bin Ali Al Harthy, Deputy IG of Police & Customs for operations, and the Maritime Security Center (MSC) in Oman.

## KUJ hosts reception in honour of Caretaker Minister for Information

KARACHI (APP): Karachi Union of Journalists (KUJ) organized a reception in honour of Caretaker Provincial Minister for Information, Minority Affairs, Social Protection, and President of the Arts Council, Muhammad Ahmed Shah at the Karachi Scouts Club here on Thursday.

The event was attended by Muhammad Ahmed Shah, President of Karachi Press Club Saeed Sarbazi, President of the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists GM Jamali, KUJ President Ijaz Ahmed, General Secretary Aajaz Jamali, and various other journalistic organizations.

Muhammad Ahmed Shah, expressed his gratitude to the KUJ for organizing the event in his honor and stated, "My relationship with the journalistic

fraternity spans my entire life. After taking the oath, my first visit was to the Karachi Press Club."

He expressed hope that the elected government of the Pakistan Peoples Party will address journalists' issues promptly.

He also prayed for senior journalist Ajmal Khattak, who passed away recently.

Saeed Sarbazi, President of the Karachi Press Club, remarked that since the arrival of the incumbent government, Muhammad Ahmed Shah has done a lot for the welfare and prosperity of journalists.

President of the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists GM Jamali said, "Even when not in government, Muhammad Ahmed Shah maintained strong ties with journalists."



LARKANA: People visiting at the world famous archaeological site of Moen-Jo-Daro.

# Fast decision-making essential for national development: President

## Independent Report

LAHORE: President Dr Arif Alvi has underscored the need for taking fast decisions to put the country on the path of progress and prosperity. He said that slow decision-making has hindered the process of national development. He expressed these views while addressing the recognition ceremony of officers of the Federal Insurance Ombudsman (FIO) Secretariat, CEOs and MDs of Insurance Companies, organized by the Federal Insurance Ombudsman, at Governor House, Lahore, today.

The President said that the institutions of Ombudsmen had played a commendable role in providing speedy and free-of-cost justice to the aggrieved complainants against the administrative injustices of government organizations. He congratulated FIO on the its outstanding performance by providing monetary relief to the tune of over Rs. 5 billion to the aggrieved policyholders.

The President also re-

marked that Pakistan had tremendous potential to grow but it required honesty and fast decision making to put it on the right track. He stressed that honesty must be the foundation stone with a key focus on integrity and fair play. He stated that institutions of the country were required to do justice. The President added that he firmly believed in merit, saying that he had never asked for any favour for anyone during his tenure as the President. He expressed the hope that Pakistan would turn around as it was urged with enormous potential and talented youth.

Federal Insurance Ombudsman, Dr Muhammad Khawar Jameel, highlighted the role of FIO in providing justice to the policyholders against the maladministration of insurance companies.

He said that under the guidance of President Dr Arif Alvi, FIO had significantly improved its performance and processed 6000 complaints last year.

The President also distributed recognition shields among the representatives of

insurance companies and officials of FIO for their valuable services in the provision of timely relief to insurance policyholders against the maladministration of insurance companies.

Later, a delegation of Lahore Chamber of Commerce and industry also called on the President and discussed the economic situation of the country and issues related to mental health, breast cancer and women empowerment. He urged the business community to take steps for the economic empowerment of women enabling them to actively participate in economic activities.

Speaking on the occasion, the President said that the country was facing various challenges such as stunting, malnutrition and 26.2 million out of school children. He said these challenges needed to be addressed on priority basis.



Pakistan Ambassador to the US, Masood Khan meeting with delegation of USAID led by Zeinah Salahi, Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator. Other members of the delegation included Peter Young, Asia Bureau Director for South & Central Asia, Adeline Joshua and Brittany Brown.

## Abdul Aleem Lashari posted as Chairman STBB

KARACHI (APP): Caretaker Chief Minister Sindh has accorded approval for posting of Abdul Aleem Lashari, an officer of EX-PCS (BS-20) as Chairman Sindh Textbook Board (STBB), Jamshoro with immediate effect.

According to a notification, in pursuance of Section-4(2) of Sindh Textbook Board Ordinance, 1970 read with Section-2 of amended Act 2022, the Competent Authority i.e Sindh Chief Minister, accorded approval and posted Abdul Aleem Lashari as Chairman of Sindh Textbook Board, Jamshoro, by relieving Akhtar Hussain Bugti, PSS officer (BS-20) of the additional charge of the post.

## Robbers gun down shopkeeper over resistance

KARACHI (INP): Armed robbers gunned down owner of a mobile phone shop over resistance during a robbery in Organgi Town, Karachi on Thursday.

According to details, armed robbers barged into a mobile phone shop in Organi Town's Sector XI near Siddique e Akbar Mosque and started looting valuables.

Over resistance, the robbers gunned down 35-year-old Yameen and fled the scene with looted cell phones and cash.

Police said that the incident seems to be target killing over personal grudge as a young nephew of the deceased was also present in the shop who remained safe in the firing.

## Minor girl found dead from water tank

KARACHI (INP): A minor girl who has been missing for four hours was found dead in a water tank in Karachi's Shah Latif Town.

According to details, Akhtar Bhatti, the father of the deceased girl alleged that someone killed his daughter.

The father told police that the girl had been missing for four hours and the family was trying to locate her whereabouts.

"Upon searching, the girl was found dead from a water tank near her residence in Abdullah Goth of Shah Latif Town," he added.

On the other hand, the police shifted the dead body to a hospital for legal formalities while investigations are underway.

Earlier in February 2022, in a similar incident dead body of a missing child was found in the water tank of a house in Korangi.

## Over 10 million children to be immunized in Sindh

KARACHI (APP): The Caretaker Health Minister of Sindh Dr Saad Khalid Niazi on Thursday said a week-long anti-polio campaign will be started in February across the province during which around 10.6 million children under 5 years of age will be immunized by administering polio drops.

According to a statement issued here on Thursday, the Caretaker Health Minister said children aged 6 months to 5 years would be provided Vitamin A dose

to boost their immunity.

Dr Saad Niazi said 70,000 teams were formed to achieve the 100 percent target of polio immunization across the province. He said the campaign will be continued till March 3, 2024.

To ensure foolproof security of polio teams, 3700 cops would be deployed, the Health Minister said adding that polio is incurable and the only way to stop it from spreading is to ensure vaccination of the children.

## 1094 vehicles impounded, documents of 949 vehicles seized during road checking drive

KARACHI (INP): As many as 1094 vehicles were impounded while the documents of 949 vehicles were seized during road checking campaign of Sindh Excise and Taxation department to collect tax from owners of tax defaulting vehicles.

A total of 9429 vehicles were checked till the third day of the campaign,

said a statement on Thursday.

According to the details, 2367 vehicles were checked in Karachi, 2627 in Hyderabad, 1521 in Sukkur, 1306 in Larkana, 930 in Mirpur Khas and 678 vehicles were checked in Shaheed Benazirabad till the end of the third day of the road checking campaign.



HYDERABAD: Former Secretary Irrigation Sindh Engineer, Khalid Memon along with Dr. Waliullah Qazi, Vice Chancellor Isra University and others cutting inaugural ribbon during the inauguration of 7th Job and Trade Fair 2024 held at Isra University in Hyderabad.

## District Judge Shikarpur ordered to Deputy Commissioner Shikarpur for removal of Encroachment from Shahi Bagh land

SHIKARPUR: District and Session Judge Shikarpur Manoo Mal Khagajia ordered to Deputy Commissioner Altaf Ahmed Chachar for removal of illegal encroachment from the land of Historical Shahi Bagh within 15 days.

According to details that the huge area of 7 - 15 acres of ancient Shahi Bagh was illegally leased out to one late Suleman Shaikh by the then Taluka Nazim Zafar Ali Shaikh vide lease Deed dated 13.02.2010, though that lease deed dated 13.02.2010 has also been

cancelled by the then Administrator/Deputy Commissioner Shikarpur Syed Hassan Raza Shah vide his order dated 08.05.2017. But still that public property is in illegal possession of legal heirs of the late Suleman Shaikh. As Authorities of Municipal Committee Shikarpur have been failed to protect the public property and this case is classic example of their negligence.

Therefore the Deputy Commissioner Shikarpur being head of District Administration is required to take over of suit land measuring 7-15 acres.