

# Independent

Member APNS & CPNE

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QUETTA: Caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki being briefed during his visit to Provincial Election Control Room established at Home Department for holding general elections on February 8. Commander-XII Corps Lieutenant General Rahat Naseem Ahmad Khan, Provincial Election Commissioner Mohammad Farid Afridi and others high ups are also present.

## All set to hold general elections on 16 NA, 51 PA seats in Balochistan today

Altogether 1,696 candidates in competition runs for 67 seats:

**In all 51, 379 polling staff and 65,521 security personnel to be deployed for conducting elections in peaceful manner in province; 5,026 polling stations established; 1,651 polling stations declared highly sensitive**

**Independent Report** QUETTA: All is set to hold general elections on 16 general seats of National Assembly and 51 seats of Provincial Assembly in Balochistan today (Thursday).

mal while 2,249 and 1,651 polling stations have been declared as sensitive and highly sensitive respectively.

According to the official sources, a total of 65,521 security personnel would be deployed for conducting elections in peaceful manner in the province. They are included: 19,082 from Army, 31,895 from Police, 14,544 from Levies and 5,094

Altogether 1696 candidates are in the competition run for all 67 general seats of the National and Provincial assemblies. They are included 429 candidates contesting elections on National Assembly seats while 1,267 candidates are in the run for 51 Provincial Assembly's seats.

For the polling, in all 5,026 polling stations have been established in all 36 districts of the province.

Out of them, 1,126 have been declared as nor-

## Caretaker CM urges voters to use right of franchise without any fear today

**Independent Report**

QUETTA: The caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki has urged the voters to use their right of franchise without any fear as all the necessary arrangements have been finalized for the elections in the province today (Thursday).

The caretaker Chief Minister was on visit to the provincial control room established by the provincial Home department here on Wednesday.

Also present on the occasion were the Corps Commander Lt. General Rahat Nasim Ahmed Khan, caretaker Provincial Minister for Home, Mir Zubair Jamali, Chief Secretary, Shakeel Qadir Khan, Additional Chief Secretary Home, Zahid Saleem, Inspector General of Police,

Abdul Khaliq Sheikh besides other senior civil and military high ups.

Speaking on the occasion, the caretaker Chief Minister said that all the necessary arrangements have been made for the elections in Balochistan.

He said that there is a need to look the routine incidents and incidents of crimes linked with the elections separately.

He mentioned that deployment of 66,214 jawans of the Pak army, FC, police and levies has been made for the elections.

He said that the funds were released by the Election Commission and provincial government timely.

While on the other hand, the distribution and dispatchment of the polling material has also been completed in the province, he maintained.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar chairs a meeting of the Royal Foundation of Gilgit Baltistan.

## Commissioner imposes ban on double riding of bike in Quetta

QUETTA (INP): Commissioner Quetta Division Hamza Shafqaat on Wednesday imposed a complete ban on double riding of motorcycles in Quetta division till Thursday night given security reasons.

He said that Quetta snap-checking had been extended, and vehicles and motorcycles without number plates were being stopped. He said that special directives were issued to concerned officials to arrest those walking outside without ID cards in Quetta.

All the bazaars, markets etc. around the polling stations will remain closed till Thursday night in Quetta, Commissioner Quetta Division said.

He also urged the people to cooperate with security forces to maintain peace in the area.

## Communication infrastructure, imperative for GB development: PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Wednesday said that development of the proper communication system and other necessary infrastructure in Gilgit-Baltistan was important to ensure sustainable development of the area.

"The construction of a communication system and other necessary infrastructure can further promote the tourism sector of Gilgit-Baltistan and create opportunities for economic development in the region," he said while talking to a 17-member delegation of Royal Foundation of Gilgit-Baltistan, headed by Raja Nazimul Amin.

Prime Minister Kakar said Gilgit-Baltistan was rich in natural resources and the people of the area were very hospitable.

He said that a positive trend in tourism had been witnessed in the area after the upgradation of Skardu Airport to the international airport.

He said multiple countries were showing keen interest to collaborate with Pakistan in the tourism sector.

The prime minister directed the authorities concerned to devise a strategy to work out a sustainable solution to the issue of electricity in Gilgit-Baltistan.

He also directed to devise a plan for enhancing the quota of GB students in the higher education and technical education sectors of all provinces of the country.

He said the overall development of Gilgit-Baltistan was linked with the social integration across the area.

## 28 dead, 50 others injured in two separate explosions in Pishin and Killa Saifullah districts

**Blasts target independent candidate office in Pishin, JUI-F's leader in Killa Saifullah on eve of general elections**

**Independent Report** QUETTA: At least 28 people were killed and 50 others injured in two separate explosions targeting election candidates' offices in Pishin and Killa Saifullah districts on Wednesday.

The caretaker Chief Minister Mir Ali Mardan Domki announced three-day mourning to mourn the loss of lives in both attacks.

Caretaker Information Minister Jan Achakzai said in a presser.

The first attack claimed at least 16 people's lives while 25 were injured after an explosion took

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## Hafiz Hamdullah survives assassination attempt

**Independent Report**

CHAMAN: Senior Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Fazl (JUI-F) leader Hafiz Hamdullah on Wednesday survived an assassination attempt in Balochistan's Chaman area.

In a statement, the police said unidentified assailants opened fire on Hafiz Hamdullah's vehicle near Maizai Adda in Chaman. However, the suspects escaped after the JUI-F leader's security retaliated with firing. Meanwhile, the senior politician remained unhurt in the assassination attempt.

This was the second time JUI-F leader Hafiz Hamdullah came under attack as Pakistan witnessed a surge in terrorist activities, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan, since the outlawed militant group Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan ended its ceasefire with the government in November 2022.



QUETTA: Scenes of devastation after a bomb exploded near the election office of an independent candidate in Khanozai Pishin, Quetta, while security officials are collecting evidence.

## Transparent, peaceful election's our national responsibility: Governor

**Independent Report**

QUETTA: The Governor Balochistan, Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar has underlined the need for robust effective coordination among all concerned institutions to ensure free, fair and peaceful elections in the province.

He said that it is our national obligation to conduct free and fair elections.

Under the given situation, Governor exhorted the law enforcement agencies and concerned departments to make tough security measures all over the province especially at the sensitive polling stations.

He said that this is not mere elections rather it is an exercise to hand over the authority of country and provinces to the real elected representatives by using right of franchise.

The Governor expressed these and similar other views in a statement issued here on Wednesday.

He said that it is very important to make effective coordination between all regional and district police officers and other concerned officers and the Election Commission so as to conduct the free and fair elections in peaceful manner.

He stressed that the responsibility of keeping strict vigil on the suspected persons in and around the polling stations rests with the government and general public as well.

He said that this also becomes national duty of all political parties and masses to ensure free and fair elections, besides the government and its concerned departments.

He said the overall development of Gilgit-Baltistan was linked with the social integration across the area.

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## Caretaker government stood by commitment of holding elections on Feb 8: Solangi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi said on Wednesday that the caretaker government had stood by its commitment of holding general elections on the schedule given by Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP).

Addressing the inaugural ceremony of Media Coordination and Facilitation Center established by Press Information Department here, he said tomorrow

morning the voting would start and by midday half of the polling would have been done.

Referring to speculations, he said there were doubts and concerns in people's minds regarding the elections.

"We stood by the promise of holding polls and elections are being held (tomorrow), putting aside all fears and rumours," Murtaza Solangi maintained.

The minister said that

**Continued on page 2**



QUETTA: Polling staff receiving polling material at distribution Centre for General Elections 2024.

## Bilawal says PPP free of any bias, represents centre

KARACHI (INP): Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhatto Zardari said that only his party held public gatherings across Pakistan in connection with the General Elections 2024 which he said showed PPP's support in all parts of the country.

While talking to a private news channel, the PPP Chairman said that he went

to every part of the country for the election canvassing and received a 'great response' from the people. He said that his election campaign across the country is tantamount to the 'fact' that only the PPP represents the center.

Bilawal also took a jibe at the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) for 'restricting' its election campaign to 'few' parts of the country. "The PML-N held electioneering in only a few constituencies and once again proved itself to be a party of Punjab," he added.

The PPP Chairman said that the PML-N's leadership could not spare even half an hour to come to Karachi and run the election campaign in the port city. "The PML-N has also failed to turn to South Punjab and Balochistan."

"Those who raised 'Vote Ko Izzat Do' (Respect the vote) slogans did not go to three provinces," Bilawal added.

He said that prime minister aspirants across the world hold debate ahead of the elections to present their manifesto and plans. "It is regretful that PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif did not accept my debate challenge," he added.

Citing a comparison held by former finance minister Hafeez Pasha, Bilawal said Sindh is well ahead of Punjab in every sector.

The PPP chairman expressed confidence in his party to secure a majority in the general elections 2024, saying that their supporters would be celebrating on February 8.

## Pakistan shuts border crossings with Iran, Afghanistan

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Foreign Office (FO) on Wednesday said border crossings with Afghanistan and Iran will remain closed to ensure full security during the general elections in Pakistan on Feb 8.

Talking to X (formerly Twitter), FO spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said: "To ensure full security during the general elections, border crossings with Afghanistan and Iran, would remain closed both for cargo and pedestrians."

Furthermore, the spokeswoman said that normal operations would resume on Friday.

The announcement came hours after back-to-back blasts that hit Balochistan's Pishin and Qila Saifullah, killing at least 28 people.

Pakistan has witnessed a surge in terrorist activities, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan, since the outlawed militant group Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan ended its ceasefire with the government in November 2022.



QUETTA: On the special directives of the caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki injured of Killa Saifullah bomb blast being shifted to CMH Quetta through helicopter

## Election Commission Secretariat security tighten after deadly Balochistan blasts

ISLAMABAD (INP): After two deadly explosions in Balochistan claiming over two dozen lives, the security measures at the Election Commission Secretariat have been significantly intensified, with all unauthorized access to the premises being strictly prohibited.

A thorough search operation, led by bomb disposal squad personnel, was conducted throughout the Election Commission building. Sniper units were also deployed to maintain vigilance, while security personnel were put on high alert to swiftly respond to any potential threats. Additionally, a comprehensive search op-

eration was extended to the vicinity surrounding the Secretariat.

Simultaneously, security protocols in the federal capital have been elevated, with all law enforcement officers, including the police, instructed to remain stationed within their designated areas.

The recent blasts in Balochistan, specifically in the districts of Pashin and Qila Saifullah, resulted in the loss of more than 25 lives and left numerous individuals injured. The initial explosion occurred in the Khanuzai area of Pashin district, claiming 15 lives and injuring several others. Another blast occurred out-

side the JUI(F) office in Qila Saifullah, resulting in the deaths of 13 individuals.

Rescue teams swiftly responded, transporting the deceased and injured to nearby hospitals. Preliminary reports suggest that the explosions may have been suicide attacks.

Security sources have indicated that the election office of independent candidate Isfandiar Kakar was targeted in the Pishin Khanuzai blast. The Medical Superintendent of Khanuzai Hospital confirmed receiving 15 bodies and treating over 30 injured individuals, many of whom are in critical condition.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Murtaza Solangi inaugurates "the Media Coordination and Facilitation Center" for Election Coverage at the Principal Information Department, Federal Information Secretary Ms. Shahera Shahid and Principal Information Officer Dr. Tariq Mahmood Khan also present on the occasion.

## India-Pakistan fans face sticker shock for T20 World Cup tickets

LAHORE (INP): Cricket enthusiasts worldwide are buzzing with anticipation as the ICC T20 World Cup draws closer. However, ticket prices for the highly anticipated India-Pakistan match in New York have sparked excitement mixed with sticker shock.

The T20 World Cup will be held in the United States and West Indies, with the India-Pakistan match scheduled for June 9th in New York.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) implemented a random bal-

lot system instead of a first-come-first-served approach, giving all applicants an equal chance at securing tickets.

While the initial ballot period has closed, remaining tickets will go on sale on February 22nd. Prices start at a staggering \$175 (approximately Rs. 49,500) for the minimum "Standard" stand, with "Standard Plus" and "Premium" seats going for \$300 (Rs. 84,500) and \$400 (Rs. 1,13,200) respectively. This news has generated mixed reactions. While some fans are excited about the opportunity to witness

this historic clash live, others express concerns about the high prices, calling them exclusionary and potentially limiting access for less affluent fans. The high cost highlights the growing commercialization of major sporting events, raising questions about affordability and accessibility for passionate supporters.

For those unable to attend the match in person, various broadcasting channels will likely telecast the game, offering an alternative way to experience the excitement.

## Caretaker government stood...

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the caretaker government had taken all possible steps for ensuring the conduct of free and transparent elections.

He said after oath-taking of caretaker government on August 17 last year, in his first press briefing here the very next day, the first question he was asked about the elections and his answer was that elections would be held on the timeframe given by the ECP.

Murtaza Solangi said that this country was established under constitutional democracy and constitutional federal parliamentary system was the foundation of its political system.

He said he as spokesperson of the government had reiterated time and again that elections would be held on the time given by ECP.

"When the date of February 8 was given, our consistent answer was that the polling stations will open at 8.00 am on Thursday February 8", he added.

The minister said that announcement of unofficial results would start tomorrow evening and, the official results will be released by the ECP within three days time period.

He said there were many challenges and problems in holding elections but the government was not discouraged by anything.

The minister said that Ministry of Information and Broadcasting facilitated the media and provided authentic and verified news to

the public through the relevant institutions.

He said that the Press Information Department had set up Media Facilitation Center to facilitate both local and foreign media in coverage of elections.

Federal Information Secretary, Shahera Shahid said that all possible facilities would be provided to the journalists in the Media Coordination and Facilitation Center here and other cities as well.

She said that Press Information Department had been establishing such centres during elections in the past as well and it had a experienced officers and staff.

On the elections, anyone could approach the centre set up by PID for getting information and assistance, she maintained.

Principal Information Officer (PIO) Dr Tariq Mahmood Khan in his opening remarks at the inauguration ceremony of Media Coordination and Facilitation Center, stated that Media Coordination and Facilitation Centers had also been established in PID offices across the country. He informed the media persons that a total 4,763 accreditation cards had been issued to journalists who wanted to cover the elections.

Out of total, PIO said, that around 1219 cards were issued in Islamabad, 776 in Lahore, 878 in Karachi, 363 in Peshawar, 167 in Quetta, 132 in Hyderabad, 482 in Faisalabad and 746 in Multan.

Media Coordination and Facilitation Center will also provide transportation facilities to journalists, Dr. Tariq Mahmood added.

In that regard, different routes had been finalised to cover the election process.

During the coverage the computer facility for Journalists as well as refreshment arrangements had also been made, he said.

"Our app and Media Helpline will also work continuously during the election process in case of help needed by any journalist," he said.

The PID staff would provide their best services round the clock in these centres, he added.

Similarly, the Director General Public Relations Karachi, Lahore, Quetta, Peshawar, Hyderabad, etc informed about arrangements made to cover the electoral process in their respective provinces. They assured to provide all out support to the journalists during the coverage of general elections 2024.

Earlier Caretaker Minister for Information and Broadcasting Murtaza Solangi inaugurated the PID Media Coordination/Facilitation Centre.

This center has been exclusively established to facilitate local and international journalists covering the upcoming election.

The Centre aimed to provide journalists with all the necessary facilitation under one roof, ensuring access to reliable information and logistical support throughout the electoral process.

## Bannu police repulse terrorists' attack on Miryan police station

PESHAWAR (APP): An attack by the terrorists on Miryan police station was repulsed by the police, making the terrorists run for their lives and flee the area, police said on Wednesday.

According to police, the terrorists attacked Miryan police station from two sides resulting only in damage to the thermal cameras installed on the walls of the police station.

In retaliation for an effective police response, the terrorists escaped from the area. No loss of life was reported in the attack.

It merits mention here that last month police eliminated a terrorist in the Terriram area in the vicinity of Miryan police station during an operation.



ISLAMABAD: Members of the Royal Foundation of Gilgit-Baltistan present a cultural robe as a souvenir to caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.

## Elections 2024:

### Tough contest expected on Lahore's 14 NA seats

LAHORE (INP): Tough contest was expected on Lahore's 14 National Assembly (NA) seats in February 8, general elections.

Bigwigs were contesting polls on 14 NA seats tomorrow as Pakistan was heading towards general elections tomorrow after months of electioneering.

Pakistan People's Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari will contest the election with Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's Attaullah Tarar on NA-127, Lahore.

The PPP chairman hopes to repeat history by winning the elections from Lahore like his maternal grandfather and Pakistan's first elected prime minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

On NA-130, former three-time prime minister and PML-N supreme Nawaz Sharif will take on Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf-backed candidate Dr Yasmin Rashid, who was currently in jail in May 9

riots cases.

On NA-123 tough contest is being expected between PML-N President Shehabz Sharif, Jamaat-e-Islami's Liaquat Baloch, and Afzal Azeem.

Maryam Nawaz will contest the election against independent candidate Shehzad Farooq in NA-119, while Saad Rafique will contest polls against PTT's backed candidate Sardar Latif Khosa on the NA-122 seat.

Istekham-e-Pakistan Party's Abdul Aleem Khan will contest elections against Ali Aijaz on the NA-117 seat, while Hamza Shahbaz will contest polls against PTT's backed candidate Aliya Hamza on the NA-118 seat.

On NA-120, PML-N's Sardar Ayaz Sadiq to contest polls against Usman Hamza, while IPP's Awn Chaudhry will contest polls against Salman Akram Raja on the NA-128 seat.

## PSL fever heats up with countdown clock at Gaddafi Stadium

LAHORE (INP): Cricket fans in Pakistan received a thrilling reminder of the approaching Pakistan Super League (PSL) season 9 with the installation of a countdown clock outside the iconic Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore.

Following a tradition, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) unveiled the clock near the main gate of its headquarters, igniting excitement for the highly anticipated tournament.

Similar to previous seasons, the clock was installed two weeks ahead of the scheduled start date, generating a festive atmosphere around the stadium.

Complementing the timer, the clock features captivating visuals, including:

Portraits of the captains representing each franchise team, allowing fans to connect with their favorite players.

The tournament's official slogan, "Khul key Khel," prominently has been displayed, reinforcing the spirit of open and energetic play. The countdown clock serves as a symbolic reminder of the approaching action, further escalating the anticipation among fans across the nation.

With the tournament dates confirmed and visuals adding to the excitement, the installation marks a significant step towards the commencement of PSL 9.

While the clock serves as a visual cue, it's crucial to remember the months of preparation and planning

that go into organizing a successful tournament.

Fans can expect further announcements regarding team schedules, player drafts, and other exciting developments in the coming weeks.

The PSL has established itself as a premier cricketing event, not just in Pakistan but globally.

The countdown clock installation highlights the tournament's significance and stands as a testament to the passion and dedication of players, organizers, and cricket enthusiasts alike.

With the countdown officially underway, cricket fans can gear up for a thrilling season filled with electrifying matches, exceptional talent, and unforgettable moments.

## Original CNIC mandatory for casting vote: ECP

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has advised people to bring their Computerized National Identity Card (CNIC) to cast vote on the election day.

The ECP, in a message, said no person would be allowed to cast his vote at the polling station without having original CNIC.

No other document including a copy of CNIC, passport and driving license would be acceptable for casting a vote.

The commission further said anyone having an expired CNIC can cast his/her votes.

## APHC urges UN to put pressure on India to resolve Kashmir dispute

SRINAGAR (INP): The All Parties Hurriyat Conference has appealed to the United Nations to put pressure on India to settle the lingering Kashmir dispute as per the relevant resolutions of the UN Security Council.

According to Kashmir Media Service, illegally detained APHC leaders, Molvi Bashir Ahmed Irfani, Abdul Ahmad Parra and Bilal Siddiqi, in their separate messages from jails in Srinagar and Jammu region said Kashmir dispute between Pakistan and India has become a nuclear flashpoint in South Asia.

They said peace will continue to elude South Asia till the Kashmir dispute remains unresolved. They said the dialogue is the best way to settle this long-pending dispute.

They urged the UN to impress upon India to stop its state terrorism in illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir and fulfill its promise of giving the Kashmiris their right to self-determination.

At least 12 people were killed and 25 others injured in the second explosion, Information Minister Achakzai confirmed.

He said JUI-F leader Maulana Abdul Wassay, who is contesting elections from PB-3, remained unhurt in the attack.

Achakzai said terrorists would not succeed in their objectives and added that the war would continue until the elimination of the last terrorist.

Following the explosion in Killa Saifullah, many vehicles caught fire.

Deputy Commissioner Yasar Bazai told Geo News that most of the injured are in critical condition. "The Balochistan government is sending helicopters from Quetta to evacuate the injured."

He added that a high alert has been issued across the district. "To ascertain the nature of the explosion, the bomb disposal squad team reached the site of the incident."

The blast site has been sealed for investigation, he stated.

Superintendent of Police (SSP) Akhtar Achakzai told media that investigations into the nature of the explosion are underway.

He added that the JUI-F candidate was not present at the election office when the blast took place.

"Security arrangements have been beefed up in Killa Saifullah," the SP said.

Meanwhile, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has taken notice of the blast and summoned a report from Balochistan chief secretary and Inspector General of Police (IGP).

A spokesperson for the ECP said directives have been issued to take action against those involved in such incidents.



QUETTA: Blood donations are being given at Civil Hospital for those injured in the Khanuzai-Pishin blast.

## Giants rally to stun Dubai by 19 runs in a low scoring battle

DUBAI (INP): Gulf Giants, through an exhibition of superb teamwork and resilience, fought tooth and nail to defend a meager total of 126 for 9 in 20 overs and pull off a 19-run win over Dubai Capitals in the 24th match of the DP World ILT20 season 2 at the Dubai International Stadium. This was the lowest total defended in the history of this tournament.

UAE's 18-year-old left-arm spinner Aayan Afzal Khan bagged two wickets at a crucial stage of the match while his skipper James Vince produced two runs out to derail Capitals' chase towards the easy target.

Dasun Shanaka pushed Capitals closer to the target through an unbeaten 24 but last man Haider Ali became the third batter to fall for a run out. Capitals were thus bowled out for 107 in 18.3 overs.

Capitals' Olly Stone (4 for 14) and Scott Kuggeleijn (3 for 29) ran through Giants' batting line-up with a lethal combination of accurate pace and judicious use of slower deliveries to restrict Giants to 126 for 9 in 20 overs.

The Gulf Giants were reeling at 17 for 4 at one stage but were lifted out of disaster by skipper Vince (32) and Shimron Hetmyer (34) through a 51-runs partnership for the fifth wicket in 42 balls. Capitals made a mess of the ride towards the target losing both their openers for 30 runs. The first to go was their skipper and opener David Warner for 11 caught by Chris Jordan at mid-off to Jamie Overton, followed by opener Rahmanullah Gurbaz.

## Black Caps thrash inexperienced Proteas by 281 runs in first test

MAUNGANUI (INP): New Zealand hammered the inexperienced South Africa by 281 runs with the help of four wickets claimed by Black Caps seamer Kyle Jamieson in the first Test at Bay Oval on Wednesday.

The visiting South African team showed a resistance against Black Caps but it ended with their dismissal for 247 and the hosts notched their second-biggest Test victory by runs.

It should be mentioned here that New Zealand was a step closer to a maiden series win over South Africa after 17 previous failed attempts, dating back to 1931.

Given their struggles, the vastly inexperienced Proteas will need a dramatic turnaround to win the second and final Test, starting on Tuesday in Hamilton.

The tourists were forced to name a depleted tour squad with most first-choice players involved in their domestic Twenty20 competition.

New Zealand took control with 511 in their first innings and never looked like losing when the tourists — fielding six debutants — were dismissed for 162.

The hosts declared at their overnight 179-4 before play began on Wednesday, leaving South Africa to chase an unrealistic target of 529.

Jamieson ensured they never came close, taking 4-58 and producing key

double-strikes at the start of the second and third sessions.

The most crucial wicket was that of David Bedingham, who raced to a career-high 87 off 96 balls before he mistimed a pull shot to midwicket soon after tea.

It ended a 105-run stand with Keegan Petersen, who also failed to control a Jamieson short ball on 16.

The day's response had begun disastrously for the tourists when debut opener Neil Brand and Edward Moore departed inside the day's first four overs.

South African captain Brand was bowled for three by a late inswinger from his New Zealand counterpart Tim Southee.

Moore went for a duck after driving a Matt Henry delivery to cover.

A resolute 63-run stand for the third wicket was broken by Jamieson, who snared Raynard van Tonder at first slip for 31 before Zubayr Hamza's attempted pull shot on 36 flew gently to mid-on.

Spinner Mitchell Santner extracted turn to wrap up the tail and finish with 3-59, matching Jamieson's six scalps for the match.

Rachin Ravindra was named man of the match for his 240 in New Zealand's first innings.

Kane Williamson also shone with the bat, scoring a century in each innings to continue a brilliant run of Test form.



QUETTA: A view of large number of vehicles for delivering polling material in polling stations for General Elections 2024.





## Governor urges masses to exercise right to vote

**Appeals people to maintain brotherhood in election**

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali has urged the masses to participate in the electoral process abiding by the norms of democracy and respecting the electoral rights of each other.

In a message issued here in connection with general elections, the KP Governor also urged the masses to cooperate with the administration, police and polling staff for the peaceful conduct of the electoral process.

He said that KP people had always expressed mutual respect in elections and hoped that the election would be completed in the province in an atmosphere of peace and mutual coexistence.

KP Governor advised the masses to remain patient and avoid creating unnecessary rush in polling stations. He said that law enforcers are fully prepared to meet any untoward incident adding that political workers should respect the democratic rights of each other and maintain decorum and discipline during elections keeping in view the basic norms of democracy.

Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali has appealed to the people of the province to complete the election process peacefully by maintaining the environment of brotherhood during this democratic process on election day and extending full cooperation to the administration, police, security agencies and polling staff.

In a statement issued here on Wednesday, the KP Governor said that the election is a democratic process and it is the tradition of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to maintain a peaceful, conducive and pleasant environment on election the polling station and the people of the province will have to maintain this wonderful tradition.

The governor said that everyone has the right to use their opinion and expressed the hope that the leaders, and youth workers of different political parties in the polling camp will spend the day in a friendly environment.



**KARACHI: Army personnel standing alert on the eve of General Elections 2024 at Korangi Girls College.**

## Rasool Bangash says: ECNEC approved two projects for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

**Independent Report**  
PESHAWAR: Executive Committee of National Economic Council (ECNEC) approved two projects for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, Caretaker Finance Minister Ahmed Rasool Bangash.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister for Finance, Excise Taxation and Narcotics Control Ahmed Rasool Bangash said that every possible effort is being made to provide basic facilities to the people of the province and possible measures are being taken for the development of the province and the restoration of infrastructure.

He expressed these views while representing the province while participating in a Zoom meeting regarding Executive Committee of National Economic Council in his office on Wednesday. Additional Chief Secretary Planning and Development Intiaz Hussain Shah, Finance Secretary Aamir Sultan Tareen and other officials have participated in the meeting.

In the meeting, ECNEC approved PC-1 of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Rural Roads Development Project (KP-RRDP) with the cooperation of Asian Development Bank (ADB), in which 1337 km of roads and 62 bridges are planned. The total cost of the project is Rs. 105.45 billion, of which 13.5% is provincially shares and 86.5% is ADB funded.

The project will provide access to rural areas, upgradation and rehabilitation of flood-affected roads will be made possible.

## Journalists under RUDA LHC seeks reply from respondents on petition against allotment of plots

LAHORE (Online): Lahore High Court (LHC) has sought reply from the respondents on March 13 in respect of the petition filed against allotment of plots to the journalists under Ravi Urban Development Authority (RUDA).

The court did not issue stay order regarding allotment of plots to journalists in its written order.

The court however made RUDA advertisement conditional with final decision of the court.

Justice Tanvir Ahmad issued written order of Tuesday hearing on the petition of information department employees Khawaja Muhammad Sami Ullah, Muhammad Rafiq and others.

The counsel of the petitioners told the court Punjab Journalist Housing Foundation (PJHF) is an institution. This institution works under Information Department. The mandate of PJHF is working for the welfare of journalists. The forum mandate is to provide plots to journalist's free of cost and without profit.

The counsel for the petitioners told the court under rules the quota of employees of Information Department on this forum has been earmarked in 2004 law. Issuing forms is job of PJHF.

The counsel for petitioners told the court RUDA is development authority. It has nothing to do with it.

The court inquired what is your objection over the persons to whom quota has been given.



**KARACHI: A member of the polling staff places information posters for voters outside a polling station in a school building for general election, in the Provincial Capital.**

## KP CS reviews arrangements for general elections

PESHAWAR (APP): Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry along with IG Police Akhtar Hayat Khan, Additional Secretary Home Abid Majeed and Commissioner Peshawar Muhammad Zubair visited the office of Provincial Election Commissioner Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He reviewed the preparations with reference to general elections and polling materials. The Provincial Election Commissioner briefed the delegation about monitoring and control room established in the office. On this occasion, Joint Provincial Election Commissioner Aziz Bahadur gave a detailed briefing about the monitoring system.

## 2.6 mln people to cast votes in Sargodha

SARGODHA (APP): A total of 2,668,700 voters are set to exercise their right to vote for five National Assembly and ten Provincial Assembly seat of general election 2024 in Sargodha district. According to a spokesman for ECP office Sargodha, a total of 1,417,495 male voters and 1,251,205 female voters would cast their votes on February 08. For the general elections, a total of 1698 polling stations have been set up in Sargodha district, of which 513 are for male voters and 471 are for female voters, and 714 are combined polling stations.

## Five injured in IED blast on former MPA's car

PESHAWAR (APP): At least five people were injured in an IED blast near car of former MPA Naseer Ullah Wazir in South Waziristan.

According to police all the injured were shifted to hospital.



**KARACHI: Caretaker Provincial Minister for Information Muhammad Ahmed Shah giving directions to Staff during his visit to Election Cell establish at Information Department.**

## Election campaign ends as polling process to begin at 8 am today

KARACHI (APP): The election campaign for general polls scheduled on February 08 (Thursday) has ended at the mid night of Tuesday as mainstream political, religious parties' and independent candidates tried their best to convince their voters in city of nearly 20 million population.

The Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan, Jamaat-e-Islami, Pakistan People's Party, PML (N), Tahreek-e-Labaik Pakistan and the independent candidates organized the rallies, public and corner meetings of their workers and made them aware about their manifestos.

PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, Jamaat-e-Islami Emir Sirajul Haq, Hafiz Naem ur Rehman, MQM Pakistan's Convenor Dr Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, Dr Farooq Sattar, Mustafa Kamal, PML N's Nehal Hashmi, Zubair Ahmed, Saleem Zia, TLP's leadership addressed public meetings in different areas of the mega city to convince their electorates and vote for their parties in February 8 election.

According to Provincial Election Commissioner Sharifullah, "All arrangements have been completed and polling material including ballot papers have been handed over to the concerned polling official while transport facilities were also provided to them to take them towards the designated polling stations."

The security arrangements were also adopted with thousands of Police, Rangers and Pakistan Army personnel have been deployed at designated places to maintain peace and order.

The CCTV cameras were also installed at highly sensitive polling stations in the city where 22 National Assembly (NA) and 47 Sindh Assembly members would be elected by more than 8.2 million registered voters.

The security forces held flag marches to enforce strict security measures during general elections. The control rooms had been set up at centre.

## Rangers conduct extensive flag march across Karachi ahead of election

KARACHI (APP): Pakistan Rangers Sindh has implemented stringent security protocols across Karachi in anticipation of the upcoming general election scheduled for February 8<sup>th</sup>.

As per a spokesperson for the Rangers, a coordinated flag march involving Pakistan Rangers Sindh, the Pakistan Army, and the local police was carried out on late Tuesday night across various neighborhoods of Karachi in preparation for the impending elections.

The extensive flag march covered key areas such as New Karachi, Saba Cinema, Power House Chowranghi, Disco Mor, UP Mor, Liaquatabad, Golimar Chowranghi, Post Office, Sindh Hotel, Sharifabad, Nazimabad No. 4, Gol Market, Baldia Town, Ruby Mor, Furniture Market, Chandni Chowk, Tank Gulshan, Bismillah Market, Chulshan Ghazi Mor, PTC Saeedabad, Musharraf Colony, Naval Colony, Hub River Road, Orangi Town, Habib Chowranghi, Ghani Chowranghi, Manghorr Road, Banaras Bridge, Kasbah Mor, Kasbah Colony, Katti Pahari, Jamshed Pump.



**KARACHI: Polling staff members leave a collection point after collecting polling materials for general election, in Provincial Capital.**

## PEC KP says: All arrangements for election completed 15, 696 polling stations for 21.928mn voters setup in KP

PESHAWAR (APP): All arrangements have been completed by Election Commission of Pakistan for free and transparent election in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where over 21.928 million registered voters would decide fate of 713 candidates contesting for national assembly seats and 1,814 candidates of provincial assembly seats on Thursday (tomorrow).

Provincial Election Commission (PEC) Spokesman told APP on Wednesday that all arrangements for February 8, 2024 general election were completed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including merged tribal districts where over 1,80,000 trained polling staff were deployed for polling duties.

He said that there are over 11,944,383 million male and 99,83,737 million female who exercise right of votes in KP including merged tribal districts. Similarly, 4,180 polling stations were set up for male, 4,287 polling stations for female and 6000 collective polling stations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, he said, adding that 4,178 polling stations were declared highly sensitive and 5,925 sensitive where police and security personnel would be deployed for smooth conduct of the election process.

As per ECP's Code of Conduct, there would be a complete ban on electioneering and persuading voters within 400 meter distance of the polling stations and only polling camps of the polling parties could be established at 400 meters distance in rural areas and 100 meters in urban areas of the province.

The spokesman said that district returning officers, returning officers, police and administration would ensure implementation of ECP's code of conduct during the polling process and can take strict action against violators. He said that 45,440,000 ballot papers were printed for elections and foolproof security.

## Three coaches of goods train derailed near Jahanian

KHANEWAL (APP): Three coaches of a Karachi-bound goods train derailed near Jahanian in Khanewal district on Wednesday morning.

Divisional Superintendent Railways Multan division Kashif Farooq Butt reached the spot leading an official team to initiate a track clearance exercise under his supervision.

Railways Multan spokesman quoting DS Railways, said, the train operations would not be affected due to the derailment.

He said that trains would continue to operate through loop lines.



## Shooting claims life of women in Karachi

ISLAMABAD (APP): A woman was shot and dead at Ahsanabad Area of Karachi on Tuesday night, according to police.

Some unidentified persons fired bullets at the victims' head identified as Ramsha, a resident of Lyari.

Law enforcement officials promptly responded to the scene, and started investigation after recovering the deceased woman's mobile phone and personal belongings, a private news channel reported.

## PO among three accused held

MULTAN (APP): A proclaimed offender (PO) among the three accused was arrested with as many motorbikes recovered from their possession.

According to a police source, a team of muhafaz squad registered as number-5 stopped a suspected motorbike.

While checking the identification through E police app, it was discovered that the motorbike was stolen and its case number 2029/2023 registered with Basti Maluk police station.

## Minister Information says: Arrangements finalized for general elections

**Independent Report**  
PESHAWAR: Provincial Caretaker Minister for Information, Barrister Feroze Jamal Kakakhel Wednesday said that all the necessary arrangements had been completed for general elections that was the mandate of caretaker government.

Addressing a press conference here, the minister said that control rooms had been established by election commission, home department and police to monitor the election process.

He said that Quick Response Force had also been deployed to meet any emergency in an effective way.

He said that steps had been taken for security of sensitive polling station adding that about 15000 polling stations had been established among which some are declared sensitive.

The minister said that strict action would be taken that were planning to challenge of state.

Regretting May 9 incident, he said that youth were misguided on the day by certain elements to fulfill their nefarious designs.

He said we must join hands to end mutual hatred and perception of mistrust.

He said that decision had not been taken to suspend internet service however the service might be suspended in areas where needed.



**LAHORE: Punjab's Election Commissioner Ijaz Anwar Chohan talking with media persons at University of Engineering, in Provincial Capital.**

## Interior Sindh Minister visits polling stations

KARACHI (APP): Caretaker Home Minister of Sindh Brigadier (Rtd) Hariz Nawaz on Wednesday visited various highly sensitive polling stations of the metropolis and reviewed the security arrangements.

He visited the polling stations set up at DJ Science College (Burns Road) and Ghulam Abbas School (Maripur Road). The minister also visited the centre set up for distribution of election materials at CMS Boys School, Napier Road.

He said that ensuring the implementation of the code of conduct and SOPs issued by the Election Commission of Pakistan and conducting peaceful elections is the first priority of the caretaker government.

He appealed to the public to cooperate with the police and other law enforcement agencies to maintain peace and report any suspicious activity immediately.

He further said that aerial firing and display of weapons will not be tolerated and immediate action will be taken against those who take the law into their hands.

## NA-43 Tank anticipates exciting electoral battle

PESHAWAR (APP): In the upcoming 2024 general elections, the Tank district is gearing up for fierce competition in the National Assembly constituency NA-43 Dera-cum-Tank and PK-108.

This constituency comprises one seat in the National Assembly consists of two tehsils of Dera Ismail Khan Kulachi and Paharpur areas and one in the Provincial Assembly.

With a total of 392,214 registered voters, including 214,790 men and 177,424 women, the electoral landscape in NA-43 is marked by its diversity. The constituency boasts 353 polling stations.

The influential tribe association of Bettani, Jattatar, Kundi, Gandapur, Marwat and Mehsud holds considerable sway in the district.

Three prominent candidates are vying for the NA-43 seat including Maulana Asad Mahmood Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, Dawar Khan Kundi, Tehreek-e-Insaf, Abdullah Nangyal Bettani Independent and Muhammad Ramzan Shori Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan.

In the previous 2018 elections in the said constituency which was NA-37, Maulana Asad Mahmood from Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam secured victory with 28,746 votes. In the same constituency, runner-up Habibullah Khan Kundi of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf secured 15,840 votes and Dawar Khan Kundi Independent 13,567. Looking back at the 2013 elections in NA-25, Dawar Khan Kundi of PTI emerged victorious with a substantial 73,000 votes, while Maulana Asad Mahmood secured 67,000 votes.



**KARACHI: Provincial Election Commissioner Sindh Sharefullah being briefed during his visit to display center at Karachi South.**

## Commissioner visits election material dispatch centers

HYDERABAD (APP): Nawabshah Dispatch Center the Returning Officer NA-207 Subhash Chandar and other officials briefed the Commissioner regarding the distribution of election material and attendance of polling staff along with security and transportation facilities.

RO also informed that all presiding Officers were provided complete polling material under the security of police and the Pak Army. The commissioner expressed his satisfaction with the dispatch work.

Later Commissioner visited Govt Higher Secondary School Qazi Ahmed where election material was being distributed for NA-208.

## Germany provides Eur45m support to Pak on Technical Development Cooperation

ISLAMABAD (Online): Dr. Kazim Niaz, Secretary for Economic Affairs Pakistan, and Mr. Alfred Grannas, German Ambassador to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, witnessed the ceremony for signing of Euro 45 million agreements on Technical Development Cooperation for starting new bilateral cooperation projects. These new agreements are the result of a longstanding and trustful partnership between the two countries.

The newly commissioned projects align with the German development cooperation thematic areas of Climate

and energy, just transition; Sustainable economic development, training and employment; Health, social protection and population policy. All on going and new projects work hand in hand with a holistic approach building synergies for well-rounded solutions to effectively tackle complex and global challenges like climate change and inclusion of vulnerable groups such as women and youth.

Both parties highlighted the immense efforts taken in the past decades. The impact of the German development cooperation is proof for a successful cooperation

targeting the development sectors in need. Germany stands Shana ba shana with Pakistan.

Ambassador Alfred Grannas: "The German-Pakistani development cooperation has left its footprints in the country. With the agreement we signed today, we aim to continue our joint path towards a sustainable future in Pakistan. Recently Svenja Schulze, our German Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, said 'international cooperation doesn't just help others. Above all, it helps us, because global problems can only be solved

together'. Secretary Dr. Kazim Niaz: "We deeply appreciate the strong support that we have received on technical development cooperation. It would contribute to the Socio-economic development of the country".

The German development cooperation has been supporting Pakistani Government initiatives for over 60 years. We work together with our partners in support of their socio-economic reform agenda contributing to a sustainable, crisis-proof development.



Dr. Kazim Niaz, Secretary, Ministry of Economic Affairs, and Mr. Alfred Grannas, German Ambassador to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, witnessed the ceremony for signing of Euro 45 million agreements on Technical Development Cooperation for starting new bilateral cooperation projects on 7th February, 2024 in Islamabad.



Chairman Businessmen Group & Former President KCCI Zubair Motiwala speaks at a meeting of Special Committee for Small Traders held here at Karachi Chamber of Commerce & Industry. President KCCI Ifthikhar Ahmed Sheikh, Senior Vice President Altaf A Ghaffar, Vice President Tanveer Ahmed Barry, Chairman Special Committee for Small Traders Majeed Memon and PCLC Chief Hafeez Aziz are also seen in the picture.

### PM AJK chaired meeting about agriculture, livestock

MIRPUR (APP): A meeting of the AJK Department of Agriculture and Livestock, held in the state metropolis on Wednesday, tabled various healthy ideas and recommendations for boosting the livestock besides enlarging the per-acre yield of agrarian products in the state to meet local needs.

While chairing a meeting AJK PM Chaudhry Anwar ul Haq expressed that agriculture and livestock were very potential sectors in which people could invest and make significant gains.

He said that efforts should be made to convince people, attract them, and encourage them to get involved in agriculture, especially by focusing on planting fruit trees.

He further added that the development of the

agriculture and livestock sectors could be instrumental in creating employment opportunities. He directed the concerned authorities to provide maximum facilities to farmers.

"There is a dire need to focus on agriculture and guide the farmers to adopt scientific methods of cultivation to maximize crop yield," he stated. He further expressed that besides promoting poultry farming and animal breeding, interest-free loans must be provided to youth who want to set up dairy farms.

The AJK PM also directed the Secretary of Agriculture and Livestock and other relevant authorities to submit a detailed report about all completed and incomplete projects from the last five years within a week.

### Wheat output forecast over 28.86 million metric tons during current season

ISLAMABAD (APP): The wheat output in the country during the current season is likely to reach over 28.86 million tons, which would further help in cementing the efforts of the government to achieve sustainable agriculture growth and economic development.

Wheat cultivation relies heavily on irrigation water, so the ample water supply as reported by IRSA along with record planting areas indicated the potential for another strong harvest during the crop season 2024-25, said Intiaz Ahmad Gopang Food Security Commissioner in the Ministry of National Food Security and Research.

However, the actual production outcomes will depend on factors such as

growing conditions and accessibility of essential inputs particularly fertilizers, he told APP on Wednesday. Additionally, weather patterns in March and April crucial for the grains' development and maturation will significantly impact the final output, he added.

He said that according to the provincial crop reporting services, wheat production for the Punjab Province was forecast at 23.50 million metric tons, and Sindh at 3.3 million metric tons respectively.

Meanwhile, the output for the provinces including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan was expected to reach at 1.474 million metric tons and 21.274 million metric tons respectively.



LAHORE: Workers of WAPDA are busy in repairing Transformers on electric poles alongside a road, in Provincial Capital.

### Kyrgyzstan interested in boosting business ties with Pakistan: Kyrgyz Envoy

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador of Kyrgyzstan to Pakistan Ulanbek Totuiaev on Wednesday said that his country was interested in further boosting its business ties with Pakistan to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes.

He stressed that both countries should develop sustainable business relations as they have good potential to cooperate in many sectors of the economy.

He said that a business delegation from Pakistan should visit Kyrgyzstan to explore joint ventures and business partnerships, said a press release issued here.

The ambassador said that Kyrgyzstan was importing pharmaceuticals, sports goods, and other products from Pakistan while it was exporting dry fruits, and agricultural products to Pakistan and added both countries should do business in more products as they have good potential for it.

He assured that his embassy would cooperate

with Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) in the initiatives for promoting business linkages between the private sectors of both countries.

Speaking at the occasion, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry said that Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan can cooperate in many areas including agriculture, industry, energy, and tourism.

He said that the geographical location of both countries offers good potential to increase collaboration and play a role in promoting regional trade in their respective regions. Pakistan can provide Kyrgyzstan with easy access to many promising markets including the Middle East and South Asia, he added.

Bakhtawari said Similarly, Kyrgyzstan can provide Pakistan with easy access to the Central Asian States. Therefore, strong trade and economic relations would be very beneficial for both countries and regions.



FAISALABAD: Irrigation department worker clearing a Rakh Branch canal with the help of caterpillar during canal cleaning campaign

### Exports increase by 7.89 % to \$17.7bln in 7 months

ISLAMABAD (APP): The exports from the country witnessed an increase of 7.89 percent during the first seven months of the current fiscal year (2023-24) compared to the corresponding period of last year, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported.

According to the latest PBS data, exports from the country increased up to \$17.782 billion during July-January (2023-24) as against the exports of \$16.481 billion in July-January (2022-23), showing a growth of 7.89 percent.

On the other hand, imports into the country

declined by 14.11 percent to \$30.949 billion this year against the imports of \$36.034 billion last year.

Based on the figures, the trade deficit during the first seven months of the current fiscal year was recorded at \$13.167 billion against the deficit of \$19.553 billion last year, showing a sharp decline of 32.66 percent. Meanwhile, on a year-on-year basis, the exports from the country increased by 24.72 percent in January 2024 compared to the exports of the same month of last year. The exports during the month were recorded at \$2.790 billion as against the exports of \$2.237 billion in January 2023.

### Rain brings respite for citizens, serves as tonic for crops

MUZAFFARGARH (APP): The city of Muzaffargarh and suburbs received gentle rainfall Wednesday morning which brought a wave of relief and joy to people. "The light showers, which graced both urban and rural areas is of vital importance for human health and agriculture sector," said experts. Dr. Fakhar ul Islam talking to APP stated that the rain would surely help reduce diseases in the areas as dry winter spell was causing issues of breathing, cough and some others.

Despite the drop in temperature accompanying the rainfall, the residents welcomed the change in

weather. For the agricultural community, the rainfall brought a glimmer of hope as farmers anticipated positive impacts on their crops, particularly wheat. Farmers Ameer Hamza, Ifikhar, Sajid Qureshi and some others expressed optimism that the rain would serve as tonic for the crops. It also helped farmers saving millions of rupees on irrigation.

Environmentalists from Muhammad Nawaz Sharif University of Agriculture hailed the rainfall as a much-needed respite, noting its potential to mitigate air pollution and improve air quality.

### Naqvi chairs 3<sup>rd</sup> Chambers of Commerce Coordination Committee meeting

**Independent Report**  
LAHORE: Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi presided over the 3<sup>rd</sup> Punjab Chambers of Commerce Coordination Committee meeting held at CM office, here on Wednesday.

Punjab Cabinet, Chief Secretary, IG Police and secretaries concerned specially participated in the meeting. The participants in the Chamber of Commerce Coordination Committee accorded a standing ovation and paid tributes to the exemplary performance of the CM. They credited CM Naqvi for the establishment of 6 Business Facilitation

Centres in Punjab. Kashif Anwar President LCCI acknowledged that the day and night work being undertaken by the CM for the well-being of the masses has set a unique example of rendering public service. President Sargodha Chamber of Commerce and Industry Imtiaz Dogar said that neither any Chief Minister has done such a huge amount of work since the inception of Pakistan nor "we have seen such an amount of work being done by any other".

President Federation of Pakistan Women Chambers said that Mohsin Naqvi before the completion of his tenure has set an emulating precedent for the coming government.

Shamim Aftab Women Chamber Sargodha said that no caretaker government had shown such an exemplary performance as of CM Mohsin Naqvi, adding that Mohsin Naqvi rendered his exemplary services with an extraordinary speed.

Ansar Ali President Jhang Chamber said "We have not seen such an excellent CM in the history of Punjab."

The CM while addressing the meeting stated that the traders and industrialists can play a pivotal role for bringing improvements in the national economy.

### Gold rates up by 400 per tola

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold increased by Rs.400 and was sold at Rs.215,500 on Wednesday compared to its sale at Rs. 215,100 on the last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs.343 to Rs.184,756 from Rs.184,413 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold went up to Rs.169,360 from Rs. 169,046, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola and ten gram Silver remained stagnant at Rs. 2,600 and 2,229.08 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market increased by \$5 to \$2,053 from \$2,048, the Association reported.

### ITU appoints Dr Saif to Digital Innovation Board for entrepreneurship alliance

ISLAMABAD (APP): The International Telecommunications Union (ITU) has appointed Dr Umar Saif, to the Digital Innovation Board of the Innovation Alliance for Entrepreneurship.

The Digital Innovation Board was established to provide strategic guidance, expertise, and advocacy regarding its mission of building critical local enablers and fostering innovation and entrepreneurship in digital development, to create a more inclusive and equitable digital future for all. This accomplished group brings a wealth of personal expertise,

leadership, and dedication to drive forward the Alliance's collective vision of an equitable and sustainable digital future for all, said a news release issued here on Wednesday.

Dr. Umar Saif is currently serving as Pakistan's caretaker federal minister for Information Technology & Telecommunication. The alliance was set up to bridge the global digital innovation divide and to support ITU members as they work towards an equitable digital future.

The Pakistan's IT & Telecom Minister joins 17 other eminent individuals, who have all been nominated in their personal capacity and based on their track record in innovation.



ISLAMABAD: A man is displayed Asel Cock attraction for customers alongside a road, in Federal Capital.

### European stock markets drop, Shanghai extends gains

LONDON (APP): European stock markets dropped on Wednesday as traders reacted to more mixed earnings and weak German data, while Shanghai extended a rally on measures aimed at supporting China's ailing economy.

Analysts said sentiment was hit also by expectations that the Federal Reserve was unlikely to cut US interest rates as soon as March, as inflation stays high.

In Europe, official data Wednesday showed industrial production in Germany fell for a seventh straight month in December, capping a year of manufacturing weakness in Europe's largest economy. Frankfurt's DAX index was down 0.3 percent in midday trading.

### Pak-China cooperation provides stable, safe operation of CPEC

BEIJING (APP): Okasha, a 24-year-old electrical engineer, feels delighted to drive the Orange Line Metro Train (OLMT) built in Pakistan's eastern Lahore city under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) framework.

"It's a wonderful experience, I am so proud that I am serving the nation by working as a driver in Pakistan's first-ever mass rapid urban transit train service. I consider it a public service," he told Xinhua. As an early-harvest project of CPEC, the Orange Line project was jointly constructed by China Railway Group Corporation and China North Industries Corporation, and it was put into operation on Oct.

25, 2020 in the capital city of the eastern Punjab province.

The young engineer has been working on the project for the last three years. He started driving the train following a six-month-long training course designed and taught by Chinese instructors, which included technical and safety components.

"We are made so perfect in it that we can expect and handle all types of fault or crisis situations," he said, emphasizing their ability to manage operations independently.

Haseeb Ahmed Janjua, operations planning manager at OLMT, praised the guidance provided by Chinese experts in a conversation with Xinhua.

# US lawmakers reject \$17.6 billion Israel aid bill

WASHINGTON (INP): US lawmakers voted Tuesday to reject a standalone Israel aid bill denounced by critics as a "cynical" bid to thwart a cross-party border security and foreign assistance package that would include cash for war-torn Ukraine.

Republicans in the House of Representatives scheduled the vote after the Democratic-led Senate released a bipartisan bill Sunday pairing billions of dollars for Israel and Ukraine with some of the strictest immigration curbs in decades.

But support for that \$118 billion package has dwindled, with Donald Trump—who is running for a second White House term—pressuring Republicans to avoid handing Presi-

dent Joe Biden a legislative victory ahead of November's election.

Republican House Speaker Mike Johnson said after the border and foreign aid bill was unveiled that it would be "dead on arrival" if it reached the lower chamber of Congress. The standalone Israel bill would have provided \$17.6 billion in military aid for the country, which is strongly supported by the vast majority of lawmakers in both parties as it responds to the deadly October 7 attacks by Hamas militants.

But 167 Democrats voted no after Biden had threatened to wield his veto, angered that the legislation appeared aimed at undermining the larger package, hammered out af-



People gather to inspect the remains of a wrecked police vehicle that was destroyed by reported Israeli bombardment at Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip.

# UN calls Rafah invasion war crime; Hamas responds to truce offer

**Monitoring Desk**  
UNITED NATIONS: The UN aid coordination office (OCHA) warned on Tuesday that Israel's invasion of the densely populated southern city of Rafah would constitute a war crime.

"We, as the UN and member states, can bear witness," OCHA spokesperson Jens Laerke told journalists. "We can make it clear that under international humanitarian law, indiscriminate bombing of densely populated areas may amount to war crimes."

The concerns arose as OCHA reported an "increase in strikes" in Rafah governorate, with thousands of Gazans seeking refuge in the city, including those fleeing intense fighting in Khan Yunis.

"To be clear, intensi-

# Hamas proposes 135-day Gaza truce with complete Israeli withdrawal

DOHA (Online): Hamas proposed a ceasefire to quiet the guns in Gaza for four-and-a-half months, during which all hostages would go free, Israel would withdraw its troops from the Gaza Strip and an agreement would be reached on an end to the war.

Israel's government spokesman said Israel was studying the offer intently, with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu due to hold a news conference later on Wednesday.

Israel's Channel 13 TV quoted an unidentified official as saying some aspects were not acceptable and officials were debating whether to reject the proposal or seek modifications.

The Hamas offer, the contents of which were first reported by Reuters, is a response to an earlier proposal drawn up by U.S. and Israeli spy chiefs and delivered to Hamas last week by Qatari and Egyptian mediators.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken discussed the offer with Netanyahu after arriving in Israel following talks with the leaders of Qatar and Egypt, the countries that have acted as mediators in the conflict.

There remain major gaps between the two sides: Israel has previously said it will not pull its troops out of Gaza or end the war until Hamas is wiped out. But sources described Hamas as taking a new approach to its longstanding demand to end the war, now proposing this as an issue to be resolved in future talks rather than a pre-condition for the truce.

A source close to the negotiations said the Hamas counterproposal did not require a guarantee of a permanent ceasefire at the outset, but that an end to the war would have to be agreed before final hostages were freed.

# Houthi claim fresh Red Sea ship attacks

**Monitoring Desk**  
DUBAI: Yemen's Houthi rebels said on Tuesday they had struck US and British ships in two attacks in the Red Sea, the latest among dozens of incidents that have disrupted global shipping.

Houthi spokesperson Yahya Saree said the first attack on Tuesday "targeted the American ship Star Nasia, while the other targeted the British ship Morning Tide".

The Houthi "will carry out more military operations against all hostile American-British targets" in self-defence, Saree warned on X, formerly Twitter.

Security firm Ambrey had initially reported a drone attack on a British-owned cargo ship off Yemen but later said a projectile had targeted the Barbados-flagged vessel.

It was launched from a small boat sighted near the ship, Ambrey said, adding that the projectile did not impact the ship but exploded nearby, causing minor damage. There were no casualties among the crew, the British firm said.

# Nikki Haley campaign requests Secret Service after security incidents

WASHINGTON (Internews): Republican presidential contender Nikki Haley, the last remaining rival to Donald Trump in the primary race, has requested U.S. Secret Service protection, the campaign said on Monday.

While the campaign did not disclose any specific threats that prompted the request, Haley, the former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, was targeted in two "swatting" incidents, once on Dec. 30 and once on Jan. 1.

# Palestinians hope Blinken visit can deliver Gaza truce before Rafah assault

DOHA (Internews): The top U.S. diplomat met Saudi Arabia's de-facto ruler on Monday during a Middle East visit Palestinians hope will clinch a truce before a threatened Israeli assault on Rafah, a border city where about half the Gaza Strip population is sheltering.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken arrived in Riyadh at the start of his first trip to the region since Washington brokered an offer, with Israeli input, for the first extended ceasefire of the war.

Blinken's meeting with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman lasted about two hours.

State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said Blinken and the crown prince had discussed regional coordination to achieve "an enduring end" to the crisis.

"The Secretary underscored the importance of addressing humanitarian needs in Gaza and preventing further spread of the conflict," Miller said in a statement. Blinken did not answer reporters' questions as he returned to his hotel. The ceasefire offer, delivered to Hamas last week by Qatari and Egyptian mediators,

# 100,000-year-old human footprints found in Morocco

**Monitoring Desk**  
LARACHE: Archaeologists in Morocco have unearthed more than 80 human footprints dating back around 100,000 years and believed to be the oldest in North Africa.

The footprints, probably left by five homo sapiens, including children, were discovered on the coast of Larache, a city 90 kilometres south of Tangier, by archaeologists from Morocco, Spain, France, and Germany.

"This group (of homo sapiens) was crossing the beach towards the sea, probably in search of food and shellfish."



U.S. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) listens to questions during the weekly Democratic Caucus lunch press conference at the U.S. Capitol building in Washington, U.S.

# Russian missile strikes on Ukrainian cities kills three

KYIV (Internews): Russia launched missile strikes on Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities during Wednesday morning's rush hour, killing three people, injuring at least a dozen more and setting fires across the capital, Ukrainian officials said.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that two people had been killed in the capital Kyiv and one person in Mykolayiv in the south of the country.

"Another massive attack against our state. Six regions were under the enemy's strike. All our services are now working to cope with the consequences of this terror," Zelenskyy said on the Telegram messaging app.

The Ukrainian air defence shot down 44 missiles and drones out of 64 launched by Russia in several waves of the attack, said Valeriy Zaluzhnyi, Ukraine's armed forces commander.

# Miss Japan gives up crown after affair

TOKYO (INP): The Miss Japan crown will remain unclaimed this year after its Ukraine-born winner relinquished the title over reports of an affair she had with a married doctor.

Karolina Shiino's nomination in January first sparked debate after some right-wingers questioned the Miss Japan title being awarded to a naturalised Japanese citizen.

Then a scandal erupted over her private life after the weekly Shukan Bunshun magazine reported on her extra-marital relationship—a no-no for beauty pageant contestants, who are held to squeaky-clean moral standards.

Japanese entertainment personalities who have affairs, dabble in drugs or suffer other scandals also often find themselves shunned by their fans and employers.

The Miss Japan Association said it had accepted a request from Shiino to return the crown for "personal reasons", adding that there would be no Miss Japan for 2024.

Shiino said she wanted to "deeply apologise" to those involved, including the man's wife.

# Spanish farmers blockade roads for second day against EU policies

MADRID (Internews): Spanish farmers blocked major highways with their tractors for a second day and disrupted access to port terminals as anger spreads in Europe's countryside against high costs, bureaucracy and competition from non-EU countries.

"Some countries don't respect the rules, they don't have quality controls," said Juan, who grows lemons in Andalusia, and was on a blockade in front of the access to Malaga port.

Current lemon prices have ruined his business this year. "They don't want them not even if I give them away," he told national broadcaster TVE.

Fed up by the market situation and encouraged by similar protests in other European coun-

# EU eyes 90pc cut to greenhouse gases by 2040

**Monitoring Desk**  
STRASBOURG: The EU on Tuesday urged a 90-per cent cut to its greenhouse gas emissions by 2040, even as the bloc's transition to a greener future was clouded by a widespread farmers' revolt.

"Based on the best available science, and a detailed impact assessment, we are recommending that the 2040 target should be a 90pc emission cut" compared to 1990 levels, said the EU climate commissioner, Wopke Hoekstra.

He called for a "fair transition" that will still allow EU businesses to thrive and ensure "nobody is left behind" as the bloc seeks to become carbon-neutral by 2050.

# Court rejects Trump's claim of immunity from prosecution

**Monitoring Desk**  
WASHINGTON: Donald Trump does not have immunity from charges he plotted to overturn his 2020 election defeat, a federal appeals court ruled on Tuesday, bringing the former US president a step closer to an unprecedented criminal trial.

A three-judge panel of the US Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit rejected Trump's claim that he cannot be prosecuted because the allegations relate to his official responsibilities as president.

"We cannot accept that the office of the Presi-

# Death toll in Indian firework factory rises to 11

**Monitoring Desk**  
NEW DELHI: The death toll in a firework factory explosion in India has risen to 11 and the two owners have been arrested, police said on Wednesday, a day after the devastating blast.

District police chief Sanjeev Kumar Kanchan confirmed 11 deaths, while more than 150 people were injured.

The fiery blast sent chunks of rock and metal flying far from the destroyed factory complex in Harda town, in India's central Madhya Pradesh state.

"A whole concrete column landed in my property," said Sargam Jain, who works around 100 metres from the factory site.

"There was a deafening noise and the earth shook."

# Indonesian students demand president stay neutral before poll

JAKARTA (Internews): Around 100 students marched in Indonesia's capital Jakarta on Wednesday to protest what they say is political interference by outgoing president, Joko Widodo, in the presidential election to be held on Feb. 14.

While Jokowi, as the president is known, has not explicitly endorsed any of the three candidates in the election, he has made highly publicised appearances with frontrunner Prabowo Subianto, whose running mate is the president's eldest son, Gibran Rakabuming Raka.

In Indonesia, sitting presidents are allowed to campaign for candidates provided they do not use state resources and take official leave to do so, but incumbents have typically remained neutral.

Jokowi has faced mounting allegations of ethical breaches and meddling in the election, especially after a top court tweaked eligibility rules in October, allowing Gibran to run.

# Japan Airlines crash: Air traffic controllers call for 'significant' staff increase

TOKYO (Internews): A labour union representing air traffic controllers in Japan has called for a "significant increase" in staff to improve the safety of operations at airports in the wake of a deadly crash at Tokyo's Haneda airport last month.

The statement issued late on Tuesday by the chair of the transport workers' union executive committee did not say staffing issues contributed to the Jan. 2 crash between a Japan Airlines (JAL) jet and a smaller Coast Guard turboprop.

An investigation is ongoing into the runway collision in the wake of the world's third-busiest airport in which all 379 people on board the Airbus (AIR.PA), opens new tab A350 passenger jet miraculously survived, but five of the six crew on the smaller Coast Guard aircraft died.

Authorities have released control tower transcripts showing the Coast Guard plane was ordered to go to a holding area on a taxiway near the runway as the JAL plane came into land, but questions remain as to why the plane then entered the runway seemingly unnoticed.

We strongly urge the realisation of a significant increase in the number of air traffic controllers," Masato Yamazaki said in the statement, adding that speculation about the cause of the crash risked putting mental strains on controllers.

As an emergency measure in the wake of the accident, authorities ordered air traffic control towers at Haneda and other airports across the country to constantly monitor radar systems for possible runway intrusions.

# Snow, ice disrupt trips home for millions ahead of Chinese New Year

**Monitoring Desk**  
BEIJING: Freezing rain, snow and ice have snarled traffic in central, eastern and southern China as millions of people travel home ahead of the Spring Festival holiday in the blistering cold that has swept through parts of the country over the past week.

Southern Hunan and central Hubei provinces bore the brunt of the severe weather, which deteriorated over the weekend, slowing highway traffic to a crawl, cancelling hundreds of trains and delaying flights.

The disruptions coincide with the biggest mass travel migration in the world as people across the country flock home to see their families for the Chinese New Year holiday, which officially begins on Saturday.

Over the past few days, videos across Chinese social media showed images of people stranded on trains and



People gather as a medical transport vehicle carrying the body of Chile's former President Sebastian Pinera arrives at a medical facility after Pinera died in a helicopter crash, in Valdivia, Chile.

# Anger at Turkish gov't spills over at earthquake anniversary vigil

HATAY (Internews): More than 10,000 people gathered early on Tuesday to hold a vigil for the first anniversary of the devastating earthquakes that hit southeastern Turkey, as some protested what they called government negligence in the aftermath.

The magnitude 7.8 tremor, the deadliest disaster in Turkey's modern history, levelled towns and parts of cities in the country's southeast and neighbouring Syria.

